

Headlines



Recognizing Staff with 35 Years of Service



Celebrating Eligibility Work Month

Mercedes Ybarra,
EHSD's Karaoke Queen

Fostering Hope at Immigration Forum

By Joanna Thieme & Natalie Aguilar, EHSD Navigators, Workforce Services

EHSD Navigators **Joanna Thieme** and **Natalie Aguilar** played an integral role at the Immigration Forum held at Willow Cove Elementary School in Pittsburg on Saturday, January 25th. Organized by Stand Together Contra Costa (STCC), this forum provided an opportunity for immigrants in the region to access resources, gain legal knowledge, and connect with support systems in their community.

Joanna and Natalie worked tirelessly at the EHSD booth providing personalized assistance and information on vital programs and services such as CalFresh, Medi-Cal, CalWORKs, General Assistance, and the Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI). Their efforts focused on educating attendees about eligibility criteria, application processes, and the benefits for which they may be eligible.

Both Joanna and Natalie approach their work with empathy and a deep commitment to the community. Joanna's keen attention to detail and her ability to explain complex systems in simple terms ensured that individuals left the booth feeling empowered. Natalie's warm and approachable demeanor helped attendees feel comfortable asking questions and seeking guidance.

Together, they created an inclusive and supportive environment for all who sought their help.

The forum also featured "Know Your Rights" workshops, led by William Colin from Catholic Charities East Bay, equipping attendees with crucial knowledge about their legal protections and options. Joanna and Natalie worked in collaboration with EHSD's Community Services Bureau

healthcare providers, and other local organizations to offer a well-rounded network of support for the immigrant community, highlighting the importance of



Joanna Thieme and Natalie Aguilar supporting the community at the Immigration Forum in Pittsburg.

bridging gaps for residents to receive the services they need.

The forum was not just about providing information; it was about fostering hope and belonging in a space where immigrants often feel vulnerable.

Joanna and Natalie's dedication and compassion left an impact on those they assisted, proving that meaningful change begins with a personal connection and a willingness to help. Their contributions served as a testament to the power of community-focused work in creating brighter futures for all.

CalWORKs On-the-Job Training Success!

By Leilani Lunch, Staff Development Supervisor, Internal Operations

EHSD Staff Development is excited to announce that new graduates of CalWORKs On-the-Job Training are ready to go!

The first group of Social Service Program Assistants I (SSPAI) successfully completed our newly implemented CalWORKs On-the-Job Training Unit.

After completing CalWORKs Eligibility Training, under the guidance of **Karen Labaniego** and **Laura Burris**, this enthusiastic group is eager and well-prepared to serve our customers. They will be officially reporting to their new units this week.

Please join us in welcoming our new members.



CalWORKs Training Grads (L-R): Hoshang Noory, Araceli Perez, Kayla May(Kennie), Adilene Rodriguez, Cierra Dunn, Noorullah Haidari, Darnell Jones, Anjana Singh, Jovana Lara, Mia Jacobs, Rocio Jacobo, Julie Bliss.

*Building Brighter
Futures Together*

Medi-Cal & CalFresh ETU Grads

By Leilani Lunch, Staff Development Supervisor, Internal Operations

Our EHSD team welcomes several dedicated workers who recently completed the Eligibility Work Training Unit (EWTU).

The Social Service Program Assistant I (SSPA1) training involved an intense, five-month, paperless Medi-Cal and CalFresh training program. This

enthusiastic group graduated on January 3, 2025, and have been deployed to their on-the-job training units.

Please join us in welcoming the newest members of our EHSD Team!



ETU Graduates: Seated (L-R): KiYanna Harrison, Delilah Prater, Dominick Myers Silva, Chenyi Yuan, Joleen Berrios, Tamika Powell
Second Row (L-R): Jonesha Harris, Bianca Moore, Miranda White, Svetlana Lapina, Cynthia DeCastro, Nicole Ramey, Christina Nelson, Fatima Davis, Angelique Picot, Kieley Singh, Ashleigh Kimlinger, Michelle Buzas
Back Row (L-R): Malu Palma, Cecil Ross, Kyle Hicks, Jessica Steggal, Charles Lopez, Gavin Baker



35 Years of Service

A LONG AND REWARDING JOURNEY

By Alan Wang, Community Relations Media Specialist



Reaching a 35-year milestone in public service is a rare achievement, and this year EHSD proudly recognizes five distinguished employees who began their careers in 1989!

That year, the powerful 7.1 Loma Prieta earthquake shook San Francisco, George H.W. Bush was president, the World Wide Web had just been developed, and the Soviet Union was still in existence. Amidst these historic events, **Barbara Opdyke, Ralonda Davis, Robyn Currie, Karen Walls, and Faye Fields** embarked on careers that would span decades of dedication to Contra Costa County.

They started in entry-level positions and some of them worked their way up to supervisory and managerial roles. Regardless of their paths, they have achieved something few employees can claim. Over the years, they have witnessed colleagues come and go, adapted to technological advancements, and navigated evolving policies and regulations. Yet, through all the changes, one constant remains: each of these veterans emphasizes the enduring value of face-to-face interactions with clients as a cornerstone of their work.

Reflections from the Honorees

- **Barbara Opdyke**, Clerk-Specialist, WFS West CalWORKS & General Assistance (1305 Macdonald Ave, Richmond):
“Be dedicated to your job. Don’t be afraid to ask questions and learn as much as you can.”
- **Ralonda Davis**, Social Services Program Assistant, WFS Medi-Cal Service Center (4545 Delta Fair Blvd, Antioch):
“I have enjoyed my coworkers and helping others. It’s been incredibly rewarding to assist our customers.”



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35 Years of Service

A LONG AND REWARDING JOURNEY

Continued from previous page

Reflections from the Honorees

- **Robyn Currie**, Division Manager, WFS East Employment Services (4545 Delta Fair Blvd, Antioch):

“I take pride in helping promote my supervisors and staff. I love being a resource for my team.”

“Be the best version of yourself. Seek guidance when needed, work hard, stay positive, and keep moving forward.”



- **Karen Walls**, Eligibility Work Supervisor, WFS West CalWORKS (1305 Macdonald Ave, Richmond):

“If you want to grow, make yourself noticed. Express your interest, get involved in committees, and seek opportunities.”



- **Faye Fields**, Social Services Program Assistant, WFS Medi-Cal Service Center (300 Ellinwood, Pleasant Hill):

“I have truly enjoyed working with my colleagues and serving the community. Now, I’m ready for a new chapter.”

I’ll keep working, but first, I’m taking six months to rest.”



Celebrating a Legacy of Service

Our long-serving honorees’ commitment and impact over the past 35 years are an inspiration to all. Congratulations to **Barbara, Ralonda, Robyn, Karen,** and **Faye** on this remarkable achievement!

These five dedicated workers will be honored at the EHSD Years of Service event on February 19th at the Pleasant Hill Community Center. Other honorees include EHSD staff members who reached milestone years of service (10, 15, 20, 25, and 30) during **2024**. Attendance is by invitation.



Acclaimed Photographer Captures Bay Area Cultural Landscape

By Laura Locke,
Community Relations/Media Contributor

[Lewis Watts](#) has devoted his life to his craft.

A documentary photographer who now lives in Richmond, Watts picked up his first camera in 1972, began taking photos of “everything that was in front of me,” and hasn’t stopped since.

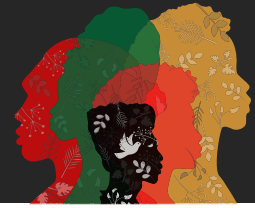
Through original photography, archival research and visual storytelling, Watts has elicited widespread acclaim for his body of work spanning more than 50 years.

Before his arrival in West County, photography took Watts to Southeast Texas, New Orleans, South Central Los Angeles, Cuba, South Africa, Paris, and London. Prominent exhibitions have featured his work at San Francisco MOMA, The Oakland Museum of California, The Smithsonian Institution National African Museum Project, Washington, D.C., and many other venues.

He focuses on the “cultural landscape,” including the people, communities, and ephemera primarily of the [African Diaspora](#), especially in San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, and [Richmond](#), where he’s based.

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BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH



African American Parade, Harlem NY (2007) © Lewis Watts



Martin Luther King Way, West Oakland (1993) © Lewis Watts

Acclaimed Photographer Captures Bay Area Cultural Landscape *Continued from previous page*

“I’m interested in the people who came West from the ‘[Great Migration](#)’ after World War I and what they brought with them,” he says. That along with “the beautiful coastline” and “the rich history of the Rosie the Riveter era, and the fact that Richmond was one of the main destinations for African Americans during the [Second] Great Migration (1940-1970)” inspired Watts to move there from Marin in 2000. He also gathered archival material for the nearby [Rosie the Riveter Home Front National Historical Park](#).

Watts graduated from UC Berkeley with a BA and MA before teaching there, and later at UC Santa Cruz, where he is Professor Emeritus of Art.

Now at age 79, his Black History Month starts with a “Harlem of the West Jazz Party” celebrating SF’s [historic Fillmore District](#) of the 1940s & 50s, when after-hours jazz and blues clubs lined the streets. The historically-Black neighborhood inspired “Harlem of the West,” the book he co-authored.

Despite the accolades, Watts remains low key. In class, he always kept focus on his students. “That was my responsibility, to help people develop their own vision.”

Beyond his countless photographs, Watts’ legacy will certainly include the more than 10,000 students he taught, inspired, and believed in.



Installation, Rosie the Riveter Visitor's Center, Richmond CA (1983)
© Lewis Watts



Photographer Lewis Watts: Black Portraiture(s) Conference, Newark NJ (2022)

Contra Costa County Celebrates Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



“Celebrating Our Shared Humanity” was a fitting theme for the tribute to the life and legacy of a true leader. On Tuesday, January 21st, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors honored Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., during its 47th Annual Commemorative Event at the County Administration Building in Martinez.

As part of the celebration, the Board honored Adult Humanitarian of the Year, Rodney “Alamo” Brown, and Student Humanitarians of the Year, Soha and Imran Sohail Guller, from San Ramon Valley High School in Danville, CA. Their passionate leadership, advocacy, and community service have improved the lives of



Soha and Imran Sohail Guller from San Ramon Valley High School, Student Humanitarians of the Year

Contra Costa County residents and reflect the spirit of Dr. King’s work and achievements.

“No work is insignificant, and we are fortunate to honor a Humanitarian and two Student Humanitarians of the Year, who bring to life Dr. King’s vision through their service to our community,” said Board Chair Supervisor Candace Andersen.

The celebration also featured keynote speaker Mitchell Hopson who is a strategic financial and business operations professional. Mitchell is an active community member serving on various volunteer boards and organizations.

Performances by Dougherty Valley High School Choir, Stephen Sharpe the Poet Laureate for the City of Richmond, and an Invocation given by Reverend Dr. Carole McKindley Alvarez rounded out the ceremony, bringing a sense of unity, reflection, and inspiration that further elevated the celebration of Dr. King.



For more information, visit [47th Annual Celebration: January 21, 2025 | Contra Costa County, CA Official Website.](#)

Dougherty Valley High School Choir

The Year of the Wood Snake

Ring in the Year of the Wood Snake continues until February 12th when, traditionally, the Lantern Festival culminates Lunar New Year festivities. Lunar New Year is the most important holiday in China and the 15-day observance is widely celebrated in many countries, especially those with a significant overseas Chinese population. The 2025 Lunar New Year began on January 29th.

Lunar New Year signals the arrival of spring and the first new moon. The Year of the Snake symbolizes renewal and regeneration. The sometime maligned reptile is celebrated and revered across the Eastern hemisphere and is expected to bring positive transformation and new beginnings.

This year could bring even more promise given that it's the *Year of the Wood Snake* which happens just once every 60 years, according to

the Chinese Zodiac cycle. Either way, people born in the *Year of the Snake* are known for being wise beyond their years, resilient, even-tempered, sensitive, and charming.

Learn more about Lunar New Year, ways to celebrate, food traditions, and more by visiting the Smithsonian's [National Museum of Asian Art website](#).

Locally, you may want to check out an upcoming Bay Area celebration:

[Oakland Chinatown Lunar New Year Parade](#) - Saturday, February 22nd, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
[Chinese New Year Festival & Parade](#) - several San Francisco events including the parade on Saturday, February 15th

Wishing all a happy and prosperous Year of the Snake!





Eligibility Work
MONTH

Standing Ovation for Eligibility Workers

By Larena Baldazo, Web Producer, Community Relations/Media

On Tuesday, January 21st, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors proclaimed January as Eligibility Work Month, in addition to hosting the 47th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ceremony. The theme for the event was “Celebrating Our Shared Humanity” and there was no better way to tie in the 85 EHSD Eligibility Workers who were present that day.

To highlight the work done by EHSD’s Eligibility Workers, the presentation included a video featuring **Kelsey Entwistle**, SSPA.

What do EW’s do? They determine eligibility and renewals and conduct case management for CalFresh, CalWORKs, Childcare, Welfare-to-Work, Medi-Cal, General Assistance, Foster Care, Adoptions, and Kin-Gap.

In Contra Costa County, 42% of our households receive one or more of these programs and rely on our eligibility workers to help them obtain the resources they need to counteract the impacts of the poverty they are experiencing.

To close the presentation, EHSD Director **Marla Stuart** quoted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964: “Poverty is one of the most urgent items on the agenda of modern life. There is nothing new about poverty.

What is new, however, is that we have the resources to get rid of it.”

Marla went on to say “Our eligibility workers – your eligibility workers – provide a pathway to these resources that help the most vulnerable individuals and families in our County who are experiencing ... poverty.”

All EHSD colleagues in the Board chambers together recited [EHSD’s Mission](#) to alleviate poverty. The Board of Supervisors received it with a standing ovation, and each warmly shared their thanks and appreciation to EHSD’s invaluable Eligibility Workers. See a quick recap of the presentation and the Board of Supervisors’ remarks [here](#).



Kelsey Entwistle shares her experience as an SSPA, and what she finds most rewarding. **CLICK** the play button to watch.



EHSD Eligibility Workers received a standing ovation as the Board of Supervisors proclaimed January to be Eligibility Work Month.

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month 2025

Respect is an action and mindset that can transform relationships.

“Respect That” is the theme for Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM) in February, highlighting the importance of treating partners with dignity, listening to their viewpoints, respecting their boundaries, and valuing their autonomy. TDVAM is a nationwide effort to bring awareness to teen dating violence and stop dating abuse before it starts.

Teen dating violence can take many forms, including physical, emotional, verbal, and digital abuse. The consequences of such experiences can be far-reaching, affecting a teen’s self-esteem, mental health, and academic performance.

Parents and guardians play a critical role by fostering open communication about relationships and modeling respectful behavior. Educating teens about their rights and boundaries can empower them to make informed decisions.

TDVAM 2025 serves as a reminder that everyone can be part of the solution to end teen dating violence. Through education, open dialogue, and community involvement, we can build a culture where healthy, respectful relationships are the norm for future generations.



Learn more

[Love is Respect website](#) and read their [2025 TDVAM Action Guide](#).

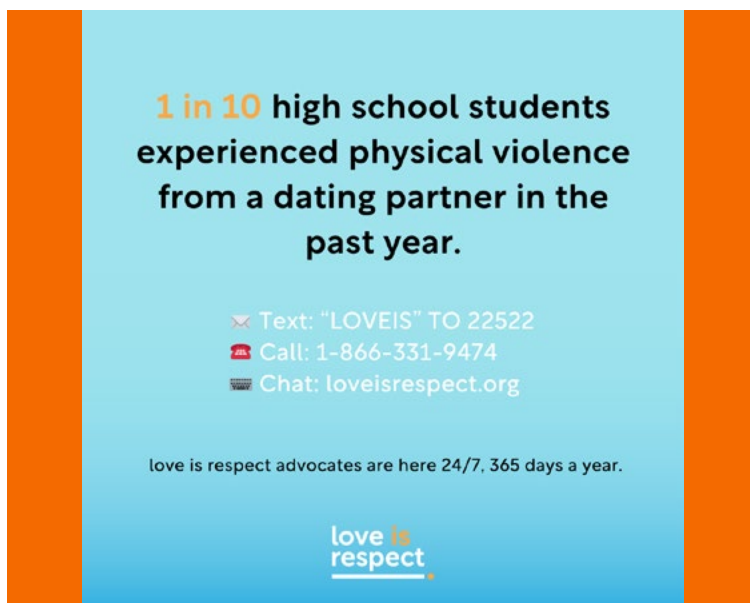
Listen to the [“1 in 3” Bay Area youth-led podcast](#) developed by STAND! For Families Free of Violence’s Youth Against Violence Program to hear the discussion about the ins and outs of teen dating violence

Resources

[STAND! For Families Free of Violence](#) - 24/7 Crisis Hotline 1(888) 215-5555

[Community Violence Solutions](#) - 24/7 Crisis Hotline 1(800) 670-7273

[Family Justice Center](#) - Monday-Friday 9am-5pm (510) 974-6366



Click with Caution: Keeping Youth Safe in the Digital Age

By Corinna Espino, MSW and CSEC Services Program Coordinator, CFS

“Click with Caution” is a newly launched campaign that addresses the critical issue of child trafficking and online exploitation. EHSD’s Children and Family Services (CFS) Commercially & Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Services Program Team kicked off the campaign with presentations as part of Human Trafficking Prevention Month in January.

The Team, including **Kimberly Baker**, Quality Assurance Division Manager, **Alysia Dellaserra**, Policy Analyst, and **Corinna Espino**, CSEC Services Program Coordinator, gave comprehensive virtual presentation to CFS staff and partners. They revealed sobering statistics about child trafficking in the United States, where it represents a \$32 billion industry and includes victims with an average age between 12-14 years old.

"Child trafficking can happen to anyone, and it's never their fault," emphasized Corinna Espino. She detailed how traffickers often use sophisticated grooming techniques, progressing through stages of targeting, trust-building, and isolation before exploiting their victims.

Of particular concern is the increasing role of technology in exploitation. According to a study from the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescents Medicine*, children who engage in four or more particularly risky online behaviors – such as disclosure of personal information, harassing behaviors, meeting/friending people online, sexual behaviors online, and downloading images from file-sharing programs – face the highest risk of becoming victims. Common tactics to lure children and youth into trafficking online include false job advertisements, fake tutoring resources, deception on gaming platforms, and fake giveaways.

The team provided practical guidance for parents and caregivers to protect children online. "Prevention starts with awareness and open communication," Corinna noted.

Recommended safety measures include supervising young children’s internet use, reviewing apps before downloading, and maintaining open discussions about online safety.

Community members are encouraged to join the prevention effort by sharing campaign materials with the hashtags #HTPM and #clickwithcautioncampaign. Suspected exploitation can be reported to the Contra Costa County Child Abuse Hotline at 1(877) 881-1116) or the Human Trafficking Tip Line (925) 957-8658.

For more information about child trafficking prevention or to access resources, contact CFSCSEC@ehsd.cccounty.us.



EHSD'S GOT TALENT: A NIGHT OF MUSIC, LAUGHTER, AND CELEBRATION

By Alan Wang, Community Relations Media Specialist

It was a night of celebration and reconnection as more than 150 EHSD employees gathered to cheer on their favorite performers at the 2nd Annual "EHSD's Got Talent" karaoke contest.

"What a fabulous night. It was my first time, and this was just what we needed," said **Christina Barber-Castle**, CSB Division Manager.

Held at The Retro Junkie in Walnut Creek, the event featured 20 contestants who took the stage to showcase their vocal talents across a variety of genres, including rock 'n' roll, rap, soul, funk, and Tejano music.

The top three finalists shared \$500 in prize money, while attendees had the chance to win \$300

in gift cards through a series of free drawings. More than just a competition, the evening was designed to strengthen EHSD's culture of kindness, reunite colleagues who have worked in various roles over the years, and celebrate National Eligibility Work Month.

"Great job by the entire team last night. I had a blast, and it was my first time attending," said **Stacy Watkins**, with EHSD Facilities and Safety unit. "The turnout was incredible—I've never seen such a great crowd for karaoke on a work night!"



Buttery smooth **James Gibson** swoons the crowd just before removing his jacket.

Mercedes Ybarra, EHSD's Karaoke Queen



More than 150 EHSD employees cheered on their contestant friends and fellow employees.

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EHSD'S GOT TALENT: A NIGHT OF MUSIC, LAUGHTER, AND CELEBRATION

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Adding to the night's festivities, the Executive Team personally contributed \$200 toward pizza to keep the party going from 5:30 to 10 p.m.



LaTosha Stockholm sung her way into the finals with "Heart Breaker" by Pat Benatar and placed 2nd overall. **CLICK** on the arrow to see the night's action.

The judging panel featured **Christine Anuskiewicz** from EHSD's Community Relations/Media team, who studied at a music conservatory and built a successful career in the professional audio industry; Eric Bergerson, a **community member** and self-proclaimed audiophile; and Chris Verdugo, Operations Director for Contra Costa TV (CCTV). Interestingly, this new panel of judges ended up selecting the same three finalists from last year's competition.



Gian Gutierrez left it all on the stage and won 3rd overall with his song "That's What Friends Are For," by Dionne Warwick.

Mercedes Ybarra (CSB Comprehensive Services Assistant Manager) took first place with her rendition of Como La Flor by Selena. **LaTosha Stockholm** (WFD Specialist) claimed second with All Jacked Up by Gretchen Wilson. **Gian Gutierrez** (Fiscal Secretary) secured third place with a heartfelt performance of That's What Friends Are For by Dionne Warwick.

The event was a resounding success, bringing together staff from different backgrounds and departments to share in an evening of joy and camaraderie. Beyond the music and competition, it was a testament to EHSD's vibrant workplace culture—one that values connection, appreciation, and a little friendly fun. As excitement lingers from this year's event, anticipation is already building for next year's "EHSD's Got Talent" contest, promising another unforgettable night of music and celebration.



Mercedes Ybarra had the audience singing along with her as she captured the title for the second year in a row.



Ericka Leyva impressed the audience with an emotional song by Ana Gabriel, "Demasiado Tarde."



Karaoke Contest Volunteers: **Deb Johnson, Paige Lewis-Villa, Karen Esquivel, Larena Baldazo** and **Marla Stuart**, EHSD Director (seated).

Outreach Roundup

Youth Job Fair Reaches High School Students

EHSD recently participated in a Youth Job and Internship Fair, sponsored by the City of Antioch. High school students from Deer Valley High School, Dozier Libbey Medical High School, Antioch High School, Bidwell High School, Prospects High School, and Live Oak High School were all invited to participate.

Jose Merlos, HR Analyst, and **Denicia Watley**, Senior Clerk, were there to represent EHSD. Although many high school students in attendance did not meet the minimum qualifications for positions with EHSD yet – high school diploma or equivalent and being at least 18 years of age – our team provided information about entry-level opportunities within EHSD and discussed the various career paths available within our department and across the County.

If you are aware of any events or initiatives that would benefit from Personnel’s outreach efforts in collaboration with your

bureau, please let us know. You can access the EHSD Personnel intranet page to identify your bureau’s designated Personnel support team.



West Contra Costa Education Fair

Navigator **Sandra Figueroa** was at Richmond High School for the West Contra Costa Education Fair, a family-friendly event on Saturday, January 25th.

Sandra had a busy table and handed out many CalFresh and Medi-Cal applications. She also connected with some who asked that she follow up by phone.

“I am always surprised by the positive feedback I receive when I explain my job to people,” Sandra says. “They are impressed that De Jean has a Navigator and that Contra Costa County has 4 Our Families Navigators who they can make contact with for answers to questions and resources.”

The event had a large turnout with mostly school-related organizations, City of Richmond, and all the elementary, middle school and high schools from West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD). San Francisco University plus local community organizations such as the City of Richmond, Contra Costa Health, Lifelong Medical, Brighter Beginnings, RYSE Center, Project Avary, and many more. A dance group from Hercules High School provided entertainment, and overall, it was a great way to get the word out about what EHSD Navigators do and, specifically, the Measure X Navigator at La Vonya De Jean Middle School.



Sandra Figueroa with **Sonia Bustamante**, Chief of Staff for Contra Costa County District I Supervisor **John Gioia**.

Connecting community members with local resources for a stronger future!



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Outreach Roundup *Continued from previous page*

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Resource Fair in Richmond

Unaccompanied youth are students who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and are considered homeless. EHSD Navigators **Sandra Figueroa** and **Cecilia Felan** provided resources and support at the Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Resource Fair on Thursday, January 30th, in Richmond. They were there along with other local agencies to share resources for housing, health, food, work and group support. Attendees were offered clothing, backpacks, supplies for both school and hygiene, as well as transportation passes.

Building Brighter Futures Together

EHSD Navigators Support Concord's Weekly Food Distribution

EHSD's 4 Our Families Navigators attended a food distribution event at The BAY Church in Concord on Saturday, February 1st. **Natalie Aguilar** and **Sandra Figueroa** provided resources and assisted with Medi-Cal and CalFresh applications. Approximately 200 people attended this event that takes place every Saturday from 1 to 3 p.m.

Our EHSD Navigator team of nine will continue to support community members each week at this food distribution event, taking turns to staff it.



We Care...You Care

We Care...You Care is how we recognize our peers, emphasizing internal customer service. **We Care...You Care** nominations tie directly to one or more of our six Core Values. The program gives you the opportunity to show your coworkers how much you appreciate them. If you work with someone who deserves special recognition for internal customer service, check out the We Care...You Care link to the guidelines, then fill out a nomination form and submit it to the supervisor of the person you are nominating.

We Care guidelines: [We Care... You Care Guidelines](#)
We Care nomination form: [We Care... You Care Nomination Form](#)



A Classic Way to Say “I Do”

Contra Costa County Clerk-Recorder’s Office is offering couples the opportunity to exchange vows at the iconic Cobra Experience Museum in Martinez on Friday, February 14th. The Clerk-Recorder’s office has also opened additional wedding appointments at its office to accommodate the high demand on Valentine’s Day.

Couples must purchase a marriage license before their ceremony appointment at the County Clerk-Recorder’s office in Martinez.

Visit www.contracostavote.gov or call (925) 335-7900 for more information and to make an appointment.

Destination Weddings

AT THE COBRA EXPERIENCE MUSEUM

Ceremonies will be performed at:
777 Arnold Dr # 200, Martinez



VALENTINE’S DAY WEDDING CEREMONIES



Appointments available from 10:00 am - 3:00 pm
For reservations, contact our office at (925) 335-7900



Contra Costa County Clerk-Recorder
Office www.ContraCostaVote.gov



Keeping It Fun!

This hardworking and dedicated team of multi-program intake workers from the CMF Unit at 4545 Delta Fair knows how to have fun. They take their job seriously, but they also know how to party!



CMF Unit: (L-R): Jennifer Dodson, Monique Cooper, Lena Lawrence, Shirley Rudy, Shaquilla McCoy, and Linda Taber
Kneeling: Lito Co (Supervisor)



Customer Service Champions

These individuals are being recognized for going the extra mile by delivering excellent service to our customers. They went above and beyond in their willingness to help and demonstrate EHSD's emphasis on providing exemplary customer service. Congratulations on a job well done!

Recognizing Outstanding Dedication

By Nicole Banks, Senior Level Clerk, Children & Family Services

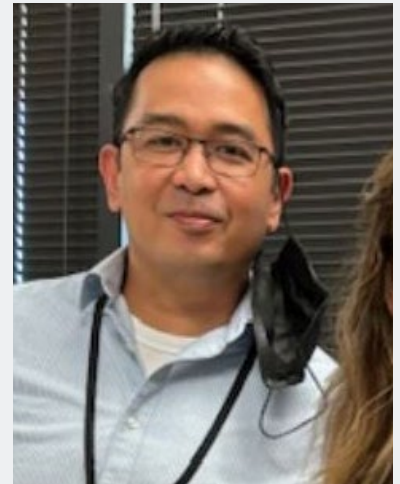
Timothy Brown

I would like to acknowledge Senior Level Court Clerk **Timothy Brown** at our Central CFS office location. When describing a good coworker that's reliable, dedicated, supportive, helpful, efficient, and hard-working, we think of Tim. He is always on top of his work. He completes his tasks in a timely manner, and is always available to answer questions and help us when we need.



Christian Javier

I would like to acknowledge Senior Level Court Clerk **Christian Javier** at our Central CFS office location. He comes to work with a positive attitude which brightens up our team's day. He is always here to help us and demonstrates a willingness to learn more. His constant efforts to do his best mean a lot to our team. Thank you for all you do and keep up the good work!



Building Brighter Futures Together

SERVICE AWARDS | NEW EMPLOYEES | RETIREES

SERVICE AWARDS

30 YEARS

Beverly Brown, Comprehensive Svcs Man -Prj, CSB

25 YEARS

Debra Bidwell, EHS Division Manager, CFS
Theresa Bradshaw, Clerical Supervisor, WFS

20 YEARS

Leticia Cifuentes, Master Teacher-Project, CSB
Marie Gandara, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS

15 YEARS

Ditas Bautista, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Susan Childers, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Marta Cook, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Delores Hall, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Wendy Hauser, Eligibility Worker III, WFS
Karina McAfee, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Rupinder Sandhu, Soc Svc Staff Dev Specialist, WFS
Nicole Tomas, Soc Svc Program Assistant, CFS
Maria Torres, Comprehensive Svcs Man -Prj, CSB

10 YEARS

Alicia Barrera, Eligibility Work Supervisor, WFS
Ann Bennett Nutt, Social Worker III, CFS
Tanya Castro, Eligibility Work Supervisor, WFS
Anjelica Chaidez, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Jetzabel Diaz, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Camerina Grijalva, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Faye Herald, Soc Svc Program Assistant, CFS
Kamaljeet Kaur, Eligibility Work Supervisor, WFS
Andrea Kurek, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Angela Mackusick, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Lynne McGraw, Secretary-Journey Level, WFS
Adriana (Camberos) Mendoza, Associate Teacher-Project, CSB
Melany Rodas, Clerk-Senior Level, CFS
Aijah Smith, Social Worker, AAS
Joanna Thieme, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Monica Thomas, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Basker Veeraswami, Clerk-Experienced Level, AAS
April Whytus, Social Worker III, AAS

NEW EMPLOYEES

Ryan Baker, Clerk-Senior Level, WFS
Sophia Brown, Secretary-Advanced Level, Admin
Andrew Ding, Info Sys Prog & Analyst IV, Information & Systems
Carter Dohoney, Clerk-Experienced Level, Admin
Kevin Grays, Clerk-Experienced Level, Admin
Joshua Hammond, Clerk-Senior Level, CFS

Gena Kohl, Public Administrator Program Assistant, AAS
Victor Namuche, ASA II, Admin
Jackie Polsley, Account Clerk-Advanced Level, Internal Operations
Shandy Willie, Soc Svc Program Assistant, AAS
Aldine Woodman, Clerk-Experienced Level, WFS

RETIREES

Christine Athaus, Clerk-Senior Level, WFS
Lynette Watts, Senior Staff Assistant, AAS
Katherine Williams, Clerk-Senior Level, WFS

SPREAD THE WORD

February 2025

- BLACK HISTORY MONTH
- TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION MONTH
- LUNAR NEW YEAR (JANUARY 29 – FEBRUARY 12)
- FEBRUARY 1 – National Freedom Day
- FEBRUARY 2 – Groundhog Day
- FEBRUARY 7 – National Wear Red Day
- FEBRUARY 14 – Valentine’s Day
- FEBRUARY 17 – Presidents’ Day (Holiday)
- FEBRUARY 28 – Linus Pauling Day
- FEBRUARY 28 – Ramadan begins in the evening



Is there room in your home for one more?

Make a change in a child’s life and become a Resource Parent/ Family for a foster child. Contra Costa County needs your support to provide care for children 0–18 years of age. Please join us for a virtual orientation and learn more about becoming a caregiver.



March 2025

- NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK MONTH
- NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH
- MARCH 5 – Ash Wednesday
- MARCH 8 – International Women’s Day
- MARCH 9 – Daylight Savings Time Begins (spring forward)
- MARCH 14 – Purim
- MARCH 17 – St. Patrick’s Day
- MARCH 20 – Spring Equinox
- MARCH 27 – April 4 Passover
- MARCH 29 – Ramadan ends at sundown
- MARCH 31 – Cesar Chavez Day



Building Brighter Futures Together

FREE VIRTUAL ORIENTATIONS
 February 6 or 20 • 4 to 6 p.m.
 March 6 or 20 • 4 to 6 p.m.
 April 3 or 17 • 4 to 6 p.m.



For more information about becoming a Resource Parent visit us at www.ehds.org. If you belong to an organization or community group interested in learning more about Resource Family Approval/ foster parenting, we can schedule an individual session for your group, in English or Spanish. To register for a class, please call (925) 655-4230 or email ResourceFamilies@ehsd.cccounty.us

We Care... You Care
 CLICK HERE to learn more about nominating a coworker and see page 17

Want to know what else we’re doing at EHSD?
 Facebook and X @ContraCostaEHSD
 Instagram @HumanaCosta
 Like us on Facebook



Friends gather at EHSD’s Got Talent night, (L-R): Irene Figueroa, Christina Castle-Barber, and Ellen DeSenna.

We appreciate you closely following our [Submission Guidelines](#) to ensure that your news and photos appear in *Headlines*.

March 2025 issue – submissions due Tuesday, February 18, 2025