

Headlines

NATIONAL
SOCIAL WORK MONTH

Justin Melvin Standing up for Foster Youth with Mental Illness

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Years of Service

Photo Gallery

**Customer Service
Champions:
Nicole Banks and
Laura Pacheco**

**EHSD Social Media
Giveaway Winner**

CONTRACOSTA
COUNTY

EMPLOYMENT &
HUMAN SERVICES

*Building Brighter
Futures Together*

New Tech for EBT Cards Means Improved Security

By Tish Gallegos, Community Relations/Media Manager

Swapping out the old for new EBT printers was a big job for EHSD IT's Applications Team during February. Along with Workforce Services and EHSD's Clerical staff, they handled preparations for the EBT Card transition. Working late into the night on February 21st, they ensured a smooth "go-live" process, facilitating the technology upgrade for food and cash benefit EBT cards.

"During the EBT cutover activities, various teams worked tirelessly to ensure a seamless and successful migration," explained **Veronica Underwood**, Senior Systems Analyst. "The cutover involved replacing county administrative equipment and installing new systems to support the transition. Rigorous testing was conducted to prevent disruptions and ensure all processes functioned smoothly, ultimately contributing to the project's success."



Veronica Underwood with the new EBT card equipment now at every EHSD District Office.

Veronica also noted that the preparation prior to the cutover weekend, including the dissemination of information and the coordination of resources, played a critical role in the overall success of the project.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is replacing EBT cards to increase protection for EBT cardholders and reduce theft of benefits. The skimming of EBT cards has been a

growing problem across the country over the past few years, with thousands of dollars stolen from those who receive food and cash benefits. Most EBT cardholders were able to receive reimbursement, but the theft caused undue financial hardship for many.



Pleasant Hill – (L-R): Lisa Collado, Bernadette Rees, Rosalie Uy and Robert E. Raines

California is the first state to launch new EBT cards with chip/tap technology, to help provide more secure transactions:

- **Chip** - More sophisticated authentication process
- **Tap** - Contactless technology, transmits data with just a tap of the card
- **Magnetic Stripe** - New technology is embedded in the stripe
- **Card Security Code (3-digit number)** - Allows card use for online purchases
- **SUID** - County code and case number displays under the cardholder's name

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New Tech for EBT Cards Means Improved Security

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Staff at District Offices worked late into the night to be ready for the cut-over.



Hercules – (L-R): Najah Duran, James Gibson, Carlos Colmenares, and Hoa Van (not pictured)



Richmond – (L-R): Barbra Opdyke, Evangeline Bondoc, Veronica Underwood, and Christina Navarro (not pictured)



Lindsey Lindayen provided IT Network Support



Antioch – (L-R): Uju Chimara, Theresa Bradshaw, and Monica Russo-Olson

Building Brighter Futures Together

Karthik Moorthy (not pictured) from the County's DoIT Team was on call

Thanks to the collaboration of this team, EHSD can help ensure improved security as we continue to offer accessible support and resources to our community members.

More information about the EBT Card upgrade, including FAQs, is available on ehsd.org.

IT Helpdesk Has New Self-Service Portal

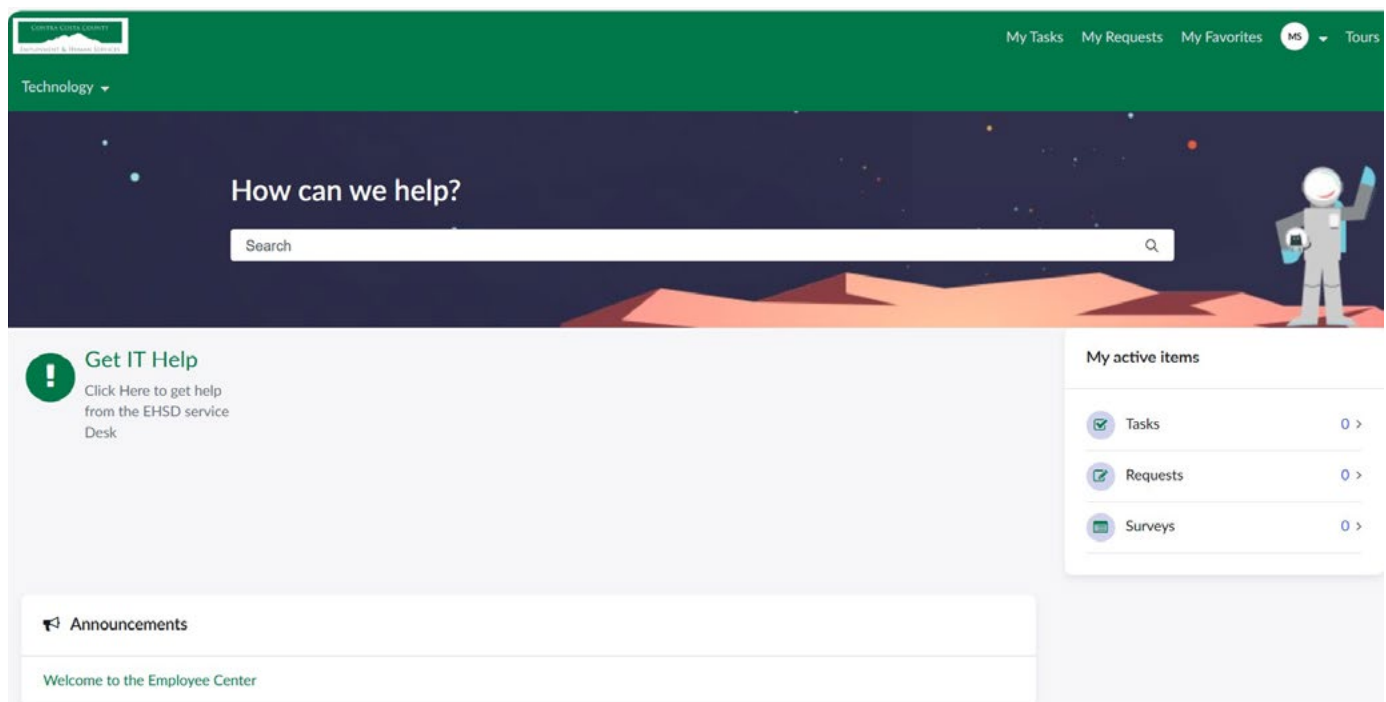
By Michael Roark, EHSD Information Technology Operations

If you need help from the IT Team, we have an exciting new way for you to request support! On February 21st, we launched the **Employee Self-Service Portal** in ServiceNow, making it easier than ever to request IT equipment and software—all with an automated approval process.

What This Means for You:

- ✓ **Save Time:** Access the [Employee Self-Service Portal](#) directly from the Intranet main page or find it under the **Help/Resources** tab in the **IT Links** section. Simply fill out a brief form to submit your request.
- ✓ **Direct Communication:** Once you submit your ticket, you can track its status and communicate directly with the technician handling your request—all within the portal.
- ✓ **Training Available:** You can access online training via [SMART](#).
- ✓ **Ongoing Support:** Our IT change management team is here to help! If you have questions or run into challenges, reach out to the **IT Helpdesk at 1-7200** or email ehsd_helpdesk@ehsd.cccounty.us.

Thank you for your support and partnership as we enhance the technological experience at EHSD!



Feeling the Love this Valentine's Day? We Did!

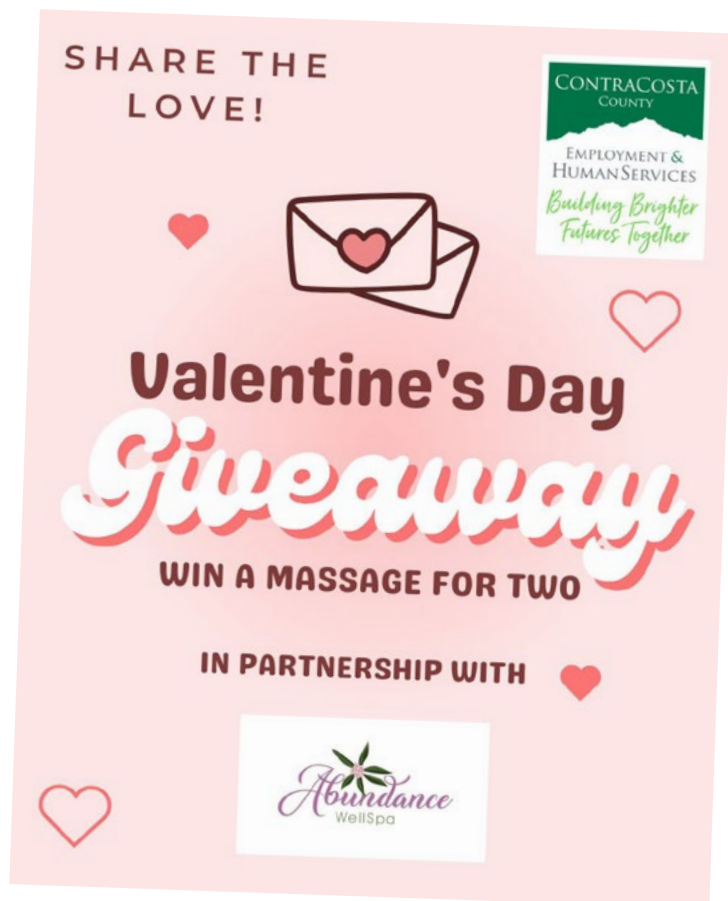


By Larena Baldazo, Web Producer, Community Relations/Media

On February 12th, EHSD's Community Relations team launched our very first social media giveaway. Employees who follow EHSD on Facebook were invited to 'comment to win' by sharing how EHSD has helped them build a brighter future. Check out the Facebook post and comments [here](#).

We received 52 heartfelt submissions, making it a challenge to choose just one winner! "The Community Relations/Media Team carefully reviewed each response to select the lucky recipient of our Valentine's Day Giveaway.

Congratulations to **Renee Resendez**, CSB Social Work Supervisor, whose touching contribution earned her a special prize—a Himalayan Salt Room massage for two, generously donated by [Abundance WellSpa](#) in Antioch. The wellness spa was thrilled to support this initiative and looks forward to future collaborations with EHSD.



"Working at EHSD has been an incredibly fulfilling experience, providing me with countless opportunities to grow both personally and professionally. From the very beginning, I've been able to develop my skills, take on new challenges, and advance in my career. The support and training offered here have allowed me to grow in ways I never imagined. Every day, I see how our services help individuals and families overcome challenges, whether it's through housing support, food assistance, or providing guidance when it's needed most. The impact we have on the community is something I hold close to my heart, and it's a privilege to contribute to such meaningful work. I'm excited to continue this journey with EHSD and look forward to being part of this amazing team for many years to come, as I continue to grow and promote within the organization. I'm committed to supporting the community and helping to build brighter futures for everyone we serve." – Renee Resendez

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Feeling the Love this Valentine's Day? We Did!

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"I personally have been on both sides of the desk with EHSD. I was a CalWORKs recipient and through the program I was able to obtain my AA in Social Science. I never would have guessed that one day I would be a part of this fantastic team, who is there to help others when times are hard. Since becoming an employee, I have also received a promotion. I'm so grateful to be on the other side so that I can help another young person see outside of their circumstance and dream bigger dreams than one could have imagined." – Anicia Henry

"I started working at EHSD since March 2024, (almost my 1 year anniversary) and it has been nothing but great! I've been through many training opportunities which have allowed me to grow as a person but also as a leader. I can't forget to mention the diversity that's in EHSD. It's amazing, all different backgrounds, walks of life, and cultures. I love being part of a community that serves the community." – Yajara Gonzalez

"I have been with the County for 20 years. It's been an honor to grow and have the opportunity to give and receive guidance and resources. I have had the privilege of contributing to and assist not only clients but our employees in many different capacities. EHSD is helping to build brighter futures." – Talenda Stamos

"Everyone in the Department deserves this for all their dedication & hard work." – Theresa Bradshaw

"When I was pregnant with my daughter 20 years ago EHSD helped me with MediCal, Food Stamps, and Cash Aid. They helped me gain office experience through a volunteer position with VESTIA and then I moved to temp agency position with EastBay Works. Once I gained enough experience, I was able to apply for an Intermediate/Experience Level Clerk position and have been working with Community Service Bureau for the last 17 years serving children and families in Contra Costa County. It has been full circle moment."

– Tiffany Mullner



"EHSD transformed my life, first a parent in the Head Start program and then as an employee. EHSD has provided me with professional development and has invested in my well-being and in turn

I have provided 30 years of commitment to helping Contra Costans overcome poverty and prepare their children for success in life. What a wonderful feeling!"

– Christina Castle-Barber



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Feeling the Love this Valentine's Day? We Did!

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"I have worked in the field of Social Services for 26 years and counting. I just started my career for Contra Costa EHSD on 12/18/2024. While it does not seem like this would have been enough time to build a brighter future, you'd be surprised. My goal for many years was to retire at my previous employment at 55. Which I did. My other goal was to get a job at a non-Cal PERS County and continue to work another 7-10 years to build that bright future. I am doing exactly that and that is my purpose here. I am pleasantly surprised to say that it's not all business. The people were so amazing. I feel the warm welcome. From management on down to my co-workers in my CNQ unit everyone has welcomed me with open arms and kindness. I have been in Antioch, Martinez and Hercules offices. My main office is Antioch but no matter what office I was in I have to say everyone was nice and smiled and said hello and made me feel welcome and comfortable. I do feel like I will continue to learn and grow professionally while encouraging others to take advantage of opportunities to assist them in learning and growing as well. My mission on Earth is to continue to learn and grow my emotional and cognitive health so I can be an example for others who I hope will want to do the same."

– Danette Palladino

"Working within EHSD has been a wonderful experience. I've been fortunate to be surrounded by professional and caring colleagues."

– Deborah McKim



"Being a single mom for many years has been a rollercoaster ride. But thanks to EHSD, I had the golden ticket. Funding prom dresses, sports activities, and school photos weren't easy. I had

amazing co-workers that supported me through some tough days, with encouragement and high-fives (okay, maybe not literal high-fives). Without this fantastic job, I'd probably be stuck in the realm of "what ifs". I've been able to build a brighter future not just for myself, but also for my three incredibly strong, talented and loving daughters that I am so proud of."

– Elisa Subias



Workforce Services Builds on Expertise at New Paths Conference

By Annie Barrett, Deputy Director of Workforce Services

In January 2025, Workforce Services proudly sent eight dedicated Social Service Program Assistants and Eligibility Work Supervisors to the New Paths Conference in Modesto. Over three dynamic days, our staff participated in insightful workshops and engaged in meaningful networking with eligibility professionals from other counties.

The conference provided a valuable platform for exchanging ideas, comparing processes, and

learning best practices from peers. Attendees also had the opportunity to share their own expertise, contributing to a collaborative and enriching experience.

Staff returned from the conference inspired, with a deeper understanding of regulations and a renewed commitment to serving our most vulnerable populations—further strengthening EHSD’s mission.



Top: EHSD staff connected with their counterparts from other counties during the New Paths Conference.

Center (L-R): **Carlos Palacios** (West Ongoing), **Antaniya Zeno** (East Intake), **Nicole Oyler** (East Intake), **Detrona Stith** (CBEST EMCAP), and **Dianna Bogut** (Central Intake)

Below: Attendees engage in insightful workshops and discussions at the New Paths Conference, fostering collaboration and learning among counties.



CSB Recruitment Efforts

By Larena Baldazo, Web Producer, Community Relations/Media

To gain more visibility for the Community Service Bureau’s (CSB) open Teacher and Site Supervisor positions, Community Relations teamed up with Division Manager **Amy Wells** and CSB Director **Scott Thompson** to launch a year-long Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) ad campaign at two Contra Costa County DMV offices.

“I am excited that we have been able to pursue another avenue for teacher recruitment,” says Amy. “The DMV is a lively location, and I am hopeful that it will generate some teacher interest.”

At the beginning of the year, the ad launched at the El Cerrito DMV office until the opportunity to run it at the Concord office opened up.

Next time you’re waiting in line at the DMV to take a driver test or to renew registration, look for our ads – and maybe encourage the person next to you to apply!

CSB’s Head Start recruitment ad launched with DMV at the beginning of the year and will run through the remainder of 2025.





MARCH 27, 2024

Plan Your Watch Party for EHSD Live!

It may not be *The Bachelor* or the last episode of your favorite TV series, but you can still plan a watch party for EHSD Live!, our all-staff event. Our next episode is on Thursday, March 27th, and we want you and your team to huddle in your favorite conference room and watch together. Use someone's device to sign into the Zoom, and we'll give your team a LIVE shout out as you wave and say hi to everyone watching.

Mark your calendars for EHSD Live! on March 27th to hear from your colleagues, get the latest departmental updates, have a little fun, and maybe get spotlighted or win a prize!

Watch for the Zoom link in your email soon.

If you have a group of five or more staff members who watch from beginning to end, we'll include a photo of your watch party in the April issue of *Headlines*.

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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](#)



Celebrating Dedication and Service

On the afternoon of Wednesday, February 19th, EHSD celebrated with staff members who reached milestone service anniversaries—10, 15, 20, 25, 30, and 35 years—in 2024. The event featured awards, heartfelt acknowledgments, a video montage of the honorees, nostalgic pop culture highlights, and raffle prizes generously donated by EHSD’s Executive Team.

A heartfelt thank you and congratulations to our 171 honorees for your dedication and contributions over the years!

10 YEARS

Aging & Adult Services

Pamela Bello
Greg Brooks
Antony Brown
Donald Brown
Laura Daviess
Ana C Echezarreta
Aiesha N Green
Deborah Leftridge
Zaria Minor
Elsa Perez
Jeanne Polk
Pedro A Ramos

Margaret Crabtree
Alysia Dellaserra
Nicole Hefner
William T Hodson
Kalimah Larry
Ashley Longmire
Cheryl L Manion
Teroll Melton
Tasha Mizel
Cheryl Orr
LaTasha M Shepherd
Stella Truong
Nelida Villanueva
Penny Williams
Claudia Yarber

Joel Dela Cruz
Alicia Pena
Monique Young-Edwards

Workforce Development Board

Charles Brown III
Noramah Burch

Workforce Services

Yesenia Acosta
Catrina Beverly
Kylie Bigornia
Analilia Ceja
William Chatham
Michelle Collins
Elizabeth R Crowe
Magnolia Cruz-Allas
Joshua Dominguez
Tanya Frank
Roosevelt Gipson Jr.
Cheryl Ann Harvey
Barbara Henry
Jessica Jimenez
Sharee R McKey
Janae P Moore
Ashley Payne
KimLien Pruner
Robert E Raines
Clarissa Ramirez
Diane J Ridgley
Angelique Robinson
Farheen Samad

Tina Scott
Evette N Thomas
Toni Thomas
Esperanza Valencia
Rose M Vargas
Chantia Wade
Sherry Wattley
Julie Wayne
Joleen Yuhre

Administrative Services

Ronald Berry
Jacqueline Mendiola
Nancy Opek
Joel Rees
Michael Roark

Children & Family Services

Angel B Arias
Monique M Broussard
Kellie L Case
Janice Corrales

Community Services

Ivan Alvarado
Maria Arrambide
Ellen J De Senna

15 YEARS

Children & Family Services

April Bolin
Todd M Lenz
Jennifer Lund

Community Services

Martha Alvarez
Juan Bernal
Tracy Lewis
Ayana McLeod
Anjana Pathak
Drema Santes
Griselda Tovar De Magana
Niluka Wannan Arachchilage

Continued on next page



CLICK the play button to find your friends in the video montage.

Celebrating Dedication and Service

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Workforce Services

Karina Eddy
Rusty Hume
Maria R Munoz
Samantha Perazzo
Phyllis Young

Administrative Services

Yin Ko-Young

20 YEARS

Aging & Adult Services

Jocelyn Briggs
John Gavieres
Ke Saepharn

Children & Family Services

Kimberly Baker
Anne Dimas
Jared Kitchen
Debbie Penovich

Community Services

Ana Araujo
Phimpha Darasaeng
Ana DeParra

Workforce Services

Annie Barrett
Rosana Estrada
Krista Holguin
Ryan Madison

Carolyn McWalters
Danielle Moye
Vernadette Pina
Shirley Rudy
Linda Taber

Administrative Services

Luz Raygoza-Gonzalez
Maria Vargas-Carrera
Kristina Miller

25 YEARS

Aging & Adult Services

Victoria Cunningham
Carolyn Foudy
Barbie Guardino
Martha Hankins
Charlene Thomas
Linda Trombettas
Erica Trujillo

Children & Family Services

Veronica Arreola
Lorna Baker
Monica Cummings
Marie-Julie de la Fuente
Trudy Emanuelson
John Galvin
Keisha Kelly
Neisha Spratt
Edyth Williams

25 YEARS

Community Services

Deborah Drake
Rita Loza
Yolanda Williams

Workforce Services

Joyce Arguelles
Elizabeth Benson
Tamara Cunha
Jennifer Dodson
Martha Espinoza
Yolonda M Grandberry-
Kelly
Long Luu
Adriana Martinez
Cassandra O'Neal
John Rees
Mauricio Sevillano
Keisha Stephney
Sheila Walker

Administrative Services

Iliana Choate
Shawn DeLaTorre
Jon Ebeling
Leilani Lunch
Maria (Malou) Lyttle
Bradley Michaels
Lori O'Donnell
Bernadette Rees
Meuy C Saechao

Elisa Subias
Veronica Underwood

30 YEARS

Aging & Adult Services

Anthony Macias

Community Services

Veronica Monroy

Workforce Services

Crystal Baulwin
Stephen A Quesada

Administrative Services

Valerie Chatman
Wurn Waa Phan
Alicia Samuel
Patricia Viveros

35 YEARS

Workforce Services

Robyn Currie
Ralonda Davis
Barbara Opdyke
Karen Walls

Administrative Services

Faythe Fields



Years of Service Photo Gallery
click the file folder

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Celebrating Dedication and Service

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Thank you to our team of volunteers who helped at the event, as well as our Executive Team, Deputy Directors and their support staff who helped us with preparations to recognize our honorees' dedication and commitment over the years. Special thanks to the Community Relations/Media Team: **Deb Johnson**, Clerk-Senior Level; **Alan Wang**, Media Relations Specialist; **Larena Baldazo**, Web Producer; and **Tish Gallegos**, Division Manager for their extraordinary work in producing this event.

Thank you!

Mandated Reporter Training: Valuable CAPC and CFS Partnership

By Mari Solis, CFS Staff Development Specialist

The partnership between the **Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC)** and **Children & Family Services (CFS)** remains a crucial collaboration, particularly in **mandated reporter training**. Mandated reporters, including teachers, healthcare workers, law enforcement, probation officers, mental health professionals, and social service providers are legally required to report suspected child abuse or neglect. All EHSD employees are mandated reporters and are required to receive the annual Mandated Reporter training online via SMART.

As the first line of defense in preventing and addressing child maltreatment, their role is critical.

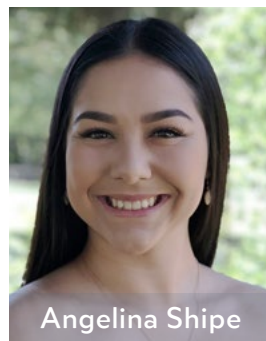
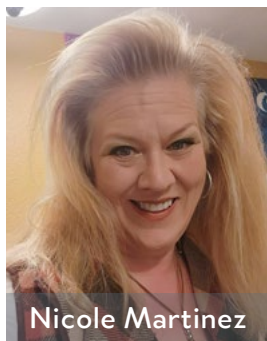
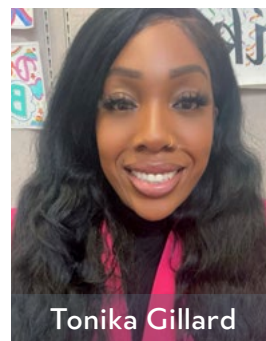
Through this collaboration, CAPC and CFS ensure that mandated reporters not only meet legal requirements but are also equipped with the knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions that safeguard the well-being of children and youth in our communities.

A warm welcome and thank you to our current CFS social worker volunteers, who bring valuable insights to the CAPC/CFS mandated reporter co-training efforts:

Georgette Shipe
Jamie Rucki
Stacy Wood
Tonika Gillard

Nicole Martinez
Chelsea Abreu
Mari Solis

These CFS co-trainers provide additional expertise on screening, assessment, and investigative processes, enhancing the overall training experience. CAPC’s Community Education Coordinator, Angelina Shipe, leads the program in partnership with CFS Staff Development Specialist, Mari Solis. Together, they ensure that mandated reporter training aligns with current laws, procedures, and best practices in child abuse awareness and prevention throughout Contra Costa County.



Not Pictured:
Chelsea Abreu

Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month



The Board of Supervisors proclaimed the month of February 2025 as Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month.

So, what is Teen Dating Violence exactly, and how does it impact our community?

Teen dating violence is a serious public health issue defined as physical, psychological, or sexual abuse; harassment; or stalking of any person ages 12 to 18 in a past or present romantic or consensual relationship.

Survivors of teen dating violence have an increased risk for truancy, dropout, teen pregnancy, suicide, having eating disorders, and

engaging in other harmful behaviors such as use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.


The Contra Costa Alliance to End Abuse, and STAND! For Families Free of Violence, work together to educate Contra Costa's youth, school staff, parents and service providers about teen dating violence and encourage the community to participate in activities that raise awareness and empower teens. Learn more: <https://www.standffov.org/youth-services/>

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NATIONAL
SOCIAL WORK MONTH

Personal Experience Fuels Justin Melvin's Advocacy

By Alan Wang, Community Relations Media Specialist

A photograph of Justin Melvin and his mother sitting outdoors. Justin is on the right, wearing a black t-shirt and has a beard and tattoos. His mother is on the left, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt. They are sitting at a table with a water bottle and a mug. The background shows a chain-link fence and some greenery.

Justin Melvin with his mother who he says suffered from mental illness and was imprisoned when he was 16 years old.

With his relaxed demeanor and effortlessly cool style, **Justin Melvin** embodies the ideal social worker for young adults navigating the transition from foster care to independence. As part of the Transition Age Support Services Unit (TASSU) within Children and Family Services (CFS), Justin supports 18- to 21-year-old former foster youth receiving assistance through California Assembly Bill 12 (AB 12), also known as the California Fostering Connections to Success Act.

AB 12 aims to provide critical resources—including housing assistance, case management, and access to education and employment—to help young adults establish stability. While it offers a structured path forward, the journey isn't always easy.

“A high percentage of foster youth experience trauma, PTSD, depression, or anxiety that prevent them from making a successful transition to adulthood—things they may or may not want to work through,” Justin explains.

What makes Justin especially effective in his role is his personal connection to the struggles his clients face.

“When I was 16 years old, my mother committed a nonviolent crime in which she damaged property. Despite having a documented mental health history, she did not receive mental health treatment, nor was she given the opportunity to participate in a mental health diversion program,” says Justin.

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NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK MONTH

Personal Experience Fuels Justin Melvin's Advocacy

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“Instead, she was given 22 years in prison. That was the hardest thing about my childhood. But it really made me want to do what I do,” he shares. “Sometimes these youth are perceived negatively based on how court reports are written. This has helped me be empathetic and compassionate while staying curious about the individuals I serve.”

Among his many tattoos, one holds deep personal significance: an endless doorway with his mother's name at the top. “It represents her battle with mental illness—the feeling that there's no light at the end of the tunnel during times of struggle,” he says.

- Justin approaches his
- work with humility and
- a willingness to learn.

Beyond advocating for better mental health support, Justin approaches his work with humility and a willingness to learn. “I try to be as open as possible because if you ever think you know everything about this job, it's time to hang it up. There's just so much to learn.”

Justin's ability to connect with young adults on a personal level makes him more than just a caseworker—he's a mentor, a guide, and, for many, the first stable support system they've ever had. Whether he's helping a client secure housing, navigate the complexities of higher education, or simply lending an empathetic ear, Justin remains steadfast in his mission: to empower former foster youth with the tools and confidence they need to build the future they deserve.

*Building Brighter
Futures Together*



CLICK the play button to hear more from Justin Melvin and his motivation to address mental illness in foster youth.



This tattoo on Justin's left forearm depicts an endless doorway with Justin's mother's name on the top. He says it represents his mother's battle with mental illness and how it may appear that there is no light at the end of the tunnel in times of struggle.



Unlock Your Potential with the 2025 Mentoring Program

By Iliana Choate, Staff Development Specialist, Administrative Bureau

Are you ready to take your career to the next level? The 2025 Mentoring Program is your chance to gain fresh insights, develop new skills, and broaden your professional network within EHSD. Whether you're looking for guidance or new opportunities, this program is designed to empower you for success!

Why Apply?

- Gain a new perspective on your career
- Develop valuable skills
- Expand your network with EHSD professionals

Apply Today and discover how exciting it can be to learn and grow!

Download Your Application Form now!

Mentee Applications: [Click here to open the Mentee application](#)

Want to learn more?

Join our **Informational Session March 5th**. Contact us Mentoringprogram@ehsd.cccounty.us

Don't miss out on this opportunity—apply today and step into a brighter future!

Celebrating Our County's Government Communicators

By Larena Baldazo, Web Producer, Community Relations/Media

From posting to social media, to producing podcasts, handling media inquiries, publishing newsletters, telling our stories through video, and even planning staff Karaoke contests – government communicators work to keep our community members and staff engaged and informed.



Kristi Jourdan is the Director of the Office of Communications and Media for Contra Costa County.

The Office of Communications & Media's Kristi Jourdan, Contra Costa County PIO, presented the Contra

Costa team of County and City PIOs from various communications offices before the Board of

Supervisors to proclaim February 21, 2025, as Government Communicators Day.

“In a democracy, informed citizens are empowered citizens, and effective communication helps residents understand how to engage and advocate and make their voices heard on issues they care about,” said Kristi Jourdan as she presented to the Board during the February 25th meeting.

In addition to communication representatives from OCM and EHSD (**Larena Baldazo, Deb Johnson, and Tish Gallegos**), PIOs from Public Works, Clerk-Recorder, District Attorney, Los Medanos College, the Contra Costa County Office of Education, City of Danville, and the City of Martinez attended the Board presentation.



“In a democracy, informed citizens are empowered citizens, and effective communication helps residents understand how to engage and advocate and make their voices heard on issues they care about,”

– Kristi Jourdan



Our Public Information Team members represent various departments and cities throughout Contra Costa County.

Outreach Roundup

SAT, FEB 1: EHSD/4 Our Family Navigators Support Local Food Distribution Event

On Saturday, February 1, EHSD 4 Our Family Navigators participated in a food distribution event at The BAY Church in Concord. **Natalie Aguilar** and I, **Sandra Figueroa**, set up an outreach table where we provided valuable resources and assisted attendees with Medi-Cal and CalFresh applications.

With approximately 200 attendees, the event proved to be an excellent opportunity to connect with the community. From what we understand, this distribution takes place every Saturday from 1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m., and our Navigators team of nine will rotate to ensure ongoing support. We look forward to continuing our presence and assisting those in need.



Sandra Figueroa and Natalie Aguilar

THU, FEB 6: TK/Kindergarten Readiness Fair in Brentwood

On February 6th, Navigators **Joanna Thieme** and **Casey Costa** participated in the TK & Kindergarten Readiness Fair in Brentwood, offering valuable resources to families. They assisted parents and guardians in accessing essential information to support their children's



Navigators Joanna Thieme and Casey Costa, SSPA's, WFS

transition into early education. Their presence ensured families received guidance on school readiness, enrollment processes, and available community resources, helping to set young learners up for success.

WED, FEB 19: West Contra Costa Career Fair at the Hercules Community Center in Hercules

The Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County (WDBCCC) in partnership with the Bay Front Chamber of Commerce invited Contra Costa County EHSD (CCC-EHSD), to be a resource exhibitor to participate in the West Contra Costa Career Fair.

FRI, FEB 21: Healthy Hearts, Healthy Lives Resource Fair

The Information & Assistance (I&A) Program, alongside numerous community agencies, participated in the Healthy Hearts, Healthy Lives Resource Fair at the Martinez Senior Center. This event introduced seniors to a wide range of county resources designed to support their social service needs. With over 100 attendees, it was a valuable opportunity for I&A to engage with the community and connect seniors to essential services.



Teresa Gonzalez, I&A Social Worker, brought lots of resource information to share with seniors.

Customer Service Champions

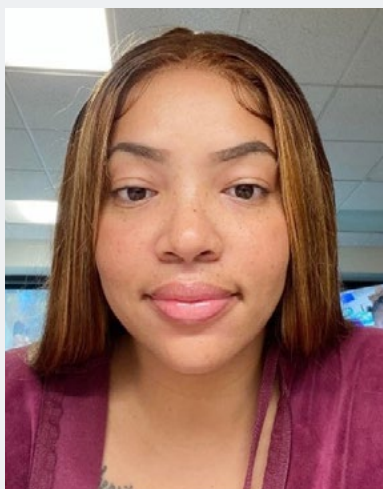
These individuals are being recognized for going the extra mile by delivering excellent service to our customers. They went above and beyond in their willingness to help and demonstrate EHSD's emphasis on providing exemplary customer service. Congratulations on a job well done!

Reliable, positive and professional

Nicole Banks

By Aryanna Jefferson, Senior Clerk, CFS Central

I would like to acknowledge Senior Level Clerk **Nicole Banks** at our Central office location. She is an exceptional coworker who consistently goes above and beyond!



Nicole is not only reliable but also has a fantastic attitude and is a joy to work with. Whether it's managing tasks with impeccable organization, or helping when things get busy, Nicole does everything with a smile. Nicole's attention to detail and willingness to assist others sets them apart.

Nicole is always approachable and patient, making team members feel heard and valued, treating everyone with professionalism and kindness, and ensuring fairness and respect in all interactions. Her inclusive approach fosters a positive and collaborative work environment.

Nicole brings professionalism combined with a great sense of humor -- a true asset to the team!

Laura Pacheco

By Bobby Stange, ASA III, Contracts and Grants Unit

Exceptional Mentorship and Teamwork

I want to recognize **Laura Pacheco**, Administrative Services Assistant III, for her outstanding mentorship and teamwork. Laura



has been an invaluable mentor to me and our new team member, Courtney Murphy, guiding us through the contract process with patience and expertise. Despite her own workload, Laura always finds time to help us and maintains a positive outlook.

Laura collaborates seamlessly with various bureaus and is an exceptional communicator. She is a problem solver, an active listener, and always maintains a positive attitude. Her direct approach and transparency set clear expectations, making her a reliable colleague. Laura's strategic thinking and ability to build partnerships greatly enhance our team's capabilities.

Continued on next page

Special Dates in March

Submitted by Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Core Team

March is a special month in our calendar as it is the month of renewal. The flowers bloom, the air warms and the daylight extend for more time for fun in the sun. We celebrate Inclusion through holidays in March 2025 including but not limited to:

- Entire Month: Women's Month
- Zero Discrimination Day (March 1)
- Ramadan Begins (March 1)
- International Wheelchair Day (March 1)
- World Hearing Day, World Wildlife Day (March 3)
- National Safety Day, Employee Appreciation Day, Ramakrishna Jayanti, Mardi Gras Carnival (March 4)
- Ash Wednesday (March 5)
- Lent (March 5-29)
- International Women's Day (March 8)
- Daylight Savings (March 9)
- Holi (March 13th – 14th)
- Pi Day, World Sleep Day (March 14)
- St. Patrick's Day (March 17)
- International Day of Happiness (March 20)
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21)
- World Water Day (March 22)
- World Tuberculosis Day (March 24)
- Employee Appreciation Day (March 7)
- Easter (March 30)



Customer Service Champions

Laura Pacheco continued from previous page

Beyond her professional skills, Laura is dedicated, hardworking, and organized. She focuses on continuous improvement and brings a personal touch to her work. Her attention to detail and understanding of broader objectives make her an exceptional team member.

I am grateful to work alongside Laura and respect her immensely. Her commitment to excellence and positive attitude makes her a standout team member. Thank you, Laura, for your hard work and mentorship.

SERVICE AWARDS | NEW EMPLOYEES | RETIREES

SERVICE AWARDS

30 YEARS

Kenya Jones, Eligibility Work Supervisor, WFS

25 YEARS

Casey Costa, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Giselle McNeill, EHS Division Manager, WFS
Lachelle Overton, Clerk-Senior Level, WFS

15 YEARS

Blanca Alejo De Lorenzo, Teacher-Project, CSB
Eve Quezon, Social Worker, AAS
Blanca Sanchez, Master Teacher-Project, CSB

10 YEARS

Kylie Bigornia, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS (Oct 2024)
Chris Cho, Accountant III, Internal Operations
Yesenia Martinez, Soc Svc Program Assistant, CFS
Cynthia Mendoza, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS

NEW EMPLOYEES

Madhav Budhathoki, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS
Shantal Green, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS
Jennifer Guerrero, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS
Hongfeng (Rose) Ge (tentative), Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS
Natasha Huffstutler, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS
Kris Kaufmann-Brown (temp), EHS Director of Admin, Admin
Vrinda Kaushik, Clerk Experienced Level, WFS
Evelyn Kondo-Cohen, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS
Fabian Landeros, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS
Sheila Membreno, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS

Elizabeth Morales, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS
Christine Nguyen, Advanced Level Secretary, Admin
Doritina Phenix, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS
Auzuray Pittman, Eligibility Work Supervisor, WFS
Francesca Rapahel, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS
Megan Stewart, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS
Derrick Thai, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS
Sofia Vazquez, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS
Eddy Vien, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS
Linda Yamaguchi, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS
Eilan Zeng, Soc Svc Program Assistant I, WFS

RETIREES

Faythe Fields, Soc Svc Program Assistant, Admin
Martha Hankins, Soc Svc Program Assistant, AAS
Lenita Harrison-Winston, Children's Services Clerk Specialist, CFS
Diana Harryman, Clerk-Senior Level, Admin
Shari Horton, Clerical Supervisor, WFS
Anthony Macias, Social Worker, AAS
Diane Martin, Clerk-Specialist Level, WFS

Gordon McMahon, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Lori O'Donnell, Soc Svc Program Assistant, Admin
Cassandra O'Neal, Eligibility Work Supervisor, WFS
Stephen Quesada, Eligibility Work Supervisor, WFS
Ronald Steggall, Info Sys Programmer/Analyst IV, Admin
Jolanta Ustaszewska, Soc Svc Program Assistant, Admin
Sandra Zepeda-Lopez, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS

Are you planning a retirement celebration for a staff member and would like to present them with a retirement certificate? **If so, please contact Deb Johnson at djohnson@ehsd.cccounty.us or (925) 608-4904.**

SPREAD THE WORD

March 2025

- NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK MONTH
- NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH
- MARCH 5 – Mentoring Program Informational Session (email MentoringProgram@ehsd.cccounty.us)
- MARCH 8 – International Women’s Day
- MARCH 9 – Daylight Savings Time Begins (spring forward)
- MARCH 14 – Pi Day
- MARCH 17 – St. Patrick’s Day
- MARCH 20 – Spring Equinox
- MARCH 29 – Ramadan ends at sundown
- MARCH 31 – Cesar Chavez Day

April 2025

- SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS & PREVENTION MONTH
- CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH
- NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT MONTH
- APRIL 1 – April Fool’s Day
- APRIL 4 – National Walk to Work Day
- APRIL 12-20 – Passover
- APRIL 15 – Tax Day
- APRIL 20 – Easter
- APRIL 22 – Earth Day
- APRIL 23 – Administrative Professional’s Day

Building Brighter Futures Together

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.



FREE VIRTUAL ORIENTATIONS

March 6 or 20 • 4 to 6 p.m.

April 3 or 17 • 4 to 6 p.m.

May 1 or 15 • 4 to 6 p.m.



For more information about becoming a Resource Parent visit us at www.ehsd.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 10

Want to know what else we’re doing at EHSD?

Facebook and X @ContraCostaEHSD
Instagram @HumanaCosta
Like us on Facebook



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

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