

Headlines



**With Gratitude,
from Oneika
Tinsley**

**Leadership Honor
Tamia Brown**

**Shout Out to
Our New Grads!**



Tamia Brown Receives Distinguished Service Award

By Christine Anuszkiewicz, Community Relations/Media

The East Bay Leadership Council (EBLC) recently recognized outstanding regional leaders at its [2025 Installation Awards event](#), held on July 31st. Among this year's honorees was Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County (WDBCCC) Executive Director **Tamia Brown**, who received the prestigious Ellen O. Tauscher Distinguished Service Award.

This award highlights Brown's visionary leadership and her dedication to advancing workforce opportunities throughout Contra Costa County. Under her direction, WDBCCC has helped connect countless individuals to career pathways that provide not only income, but also dignity, independence, and stronger futures for families and communities.

In a recent EBLC profile, Brown reflected on the deeper meaning behind the recognition: "Winning this award stimulates a new level of motivation for me. I am inspired to keep improving, pushing boundaries, and to continue working to improve the economic opportunities for the people in our communities."

Brown was celebrated alongside other honorees, including Rebecca Rozen, Advocate of the Year, and AssetMark, recipient of the East Bay Leadership Medal. Together, the awards reinforce EBLC's mission to celebrate leadership, strengthen community partnerships, and inspire lasting impact across the region.



Tamia Brown, Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County, honored with the Ellen O. Tauscher Distinguished Service Award, pictured with Contra Costa Employment & Human Services Director **Marla Stuart** and Carol Mascali, District Representative for Supervisor Candace Andersen.

*Building Brighter
Futures Together*

Headlines Wins National Award!

By Tish Gallegos, Community Relations/Media Manager

And the Savvy Award winner is... *Headlines*!

EHSD's monthly staff newsletter has earned national recognition with its first-ever award from **3CMA, the City-County Communications & Marketing Association**. 3CMA is an organization made up of government communicators from across the U.S. and Canada.

Alan Wang, Larena Baldazo, and Tish Gallegos of Community Relations/Media (CRM) attended the Savvy Awards event at the association's annual conference in Las Vegas September 2nd–5th. They share the honor for Best Digital Interactive–Electronic Newsletter (population 150K+) with CRM team members **Dede Guest**, graphic design contractor; **Deb Johnson**, Senior Clerk; and **Christine Anuszkiewicz**, our agency temp Admin. Specialist (now in a permanent post at Contra Costa Health Plan).

The CRM Team is especially grateful to all of you, our EHSD staff members, for your stories,

Savvy Judges' Comments about *Headlines*

This newsletter is a wonderful example of design, writing and video coming together to produce an informative publication for employees. An impressive number of topics are covered in the example provided. The thoroughness of the newsletter is a credit to all of the Department representatives who had a hand in producing this issue. The videos highlight human interest stories anyone can relate to and serve to make the newsletter come to life and jump off the page.

contributions, and support that make our digital publication possible.

Producing *Headlines* each month is a labor of love. We see it as a reflection of you, our dedicated EHSD staff. It is a joy to showcase the exceptional way you deliver services in support of our residents each day.

Keep sending us your story ideas, shout outs, and news to Headlines@ehsd.cccounty.us.

From 1,100 entries, EHSD's digital interactive staff newsletter earned one of only 90 awards!

< The moment *Headlines* was announced a Savvy Award winner.



Deb Johnson and Christine Anuszkiewicz celebrate the team's success.



< Tish Gallegos, Alan Wang and Larena Baldazo accept the award on behalf of the entire CRM Team.



The Savvy Award – Celebrating Excellence in all we do.

Block Party Brings Services to East County

By Tish Gallegos, Community Relations/Media Manager

East County residents enjoyed a one-stop shop for County services and plenty of fun at the 2025 Contra Costa County Block Party in Antioch on August 28th.

EHSD was well represented with nearly 20 staff members showcasing eight different programs. The Antioch Community Center buzzed with activity as attendees cuddled with adoptable pets, explored a fire engine, registered to vote, signed up for library cards, and learned about programs such as CalFresh and Medi-Cal.

From answering questions to sharing resources, EHSD staff energized the event with their commitment to supporting, protecting, and empowering families. Their outreach showed how EHSD makes a difference every day.

The Block Party will return in 2026, bringing County services and connections to another community in Contra Costa.



Communications team and event coordinators at the 2025 Block Party.



Thomas Weisbrich and Jennifer Gomes-Figueira from the Area Agency on Aging.



Navigator team members Joanna Thieme and Cecilia Felan in action.



EHSD Web Producer Larena Baldazo supporting the CCTV livestream.



Erica Hsia and Allison Borsuk-Georgandas from Adult Protective Services.



Griselda Tovar De Magana from the Community Services Bureau.



Barbie Guardino representing In-Home Supportive Services.

EHSD Director Testifies on CSBG's Vital Role

By Christine Anuszkiewicz, Community Relations/Media

On Tuesday, August 19th, EHSD Director **Dr. Marla Stuart** traveled to Sacramento to testify before the California Senate and Assembly Human Services Committees at the bi-annual hearing on the 2026–27 Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) State Plan. The purpose of the hearing was to evaluate the effectiveness of CSBG-funded programs across the state, which provide crucial support to individuals and families who are not fully served by other safety-net programs.

Dr. Stuart participated as part of the second of two panels, alongside three nonprofit agency representatives. In her testimony, she underscored the importance of CSBG as “the safety net for the safety net,” explaining that the program fills critical gaps for community members who, due to immigration status or income levels just above federal poverty thresholds, are ineligible for traditional services such as CalFresh or Medi-Cal.

Contra Costa County leverages nearly \$1 million in CSBG funding (\$945,470) to address three community-identified priorities:

- Affordable housing and emergency shelter: Partnerships with Bay Area Legal Aid, Greater Richmond Interfaith Project (GRIP), Hope Solutions, and STAND! For Families Free of Violence prevented 3,590 utility shutoffs and helped 141 people experiencing homelessness secure safe housing.
- Food insecurity: Collaborations with Loaves and Fishes and Monument Crisis Center provided 3,378 meals and distributed 9,189 boxes of groceries.
- Underemployment and living wage jobs: Partner organizations, including Opportunity Junction, Monument Impact, and Rising Sun Center for Opportunity, removed barriers to employment and provided training, helping 120 adults obtain jobs at or above a living wage.

Dr. Marla Stuart warned legislators that proposed federal policy changes, including HR 1 and the President's budget proposal, could significantly reduce or eliminate major safety-net programs such as CalFresh, Medi-Cal, and CSBG. With 41% of Contra Costa households relying on safety-net assistance in 2024, she stressed that cuts would leave thousands without essential resources.



EHSD Director **Dr. Marla Stuart** testifies before the California Senate and Assembly Human Services Committees on August 19, 2025, in Sacramento, urging legislators to preserve funding for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program.

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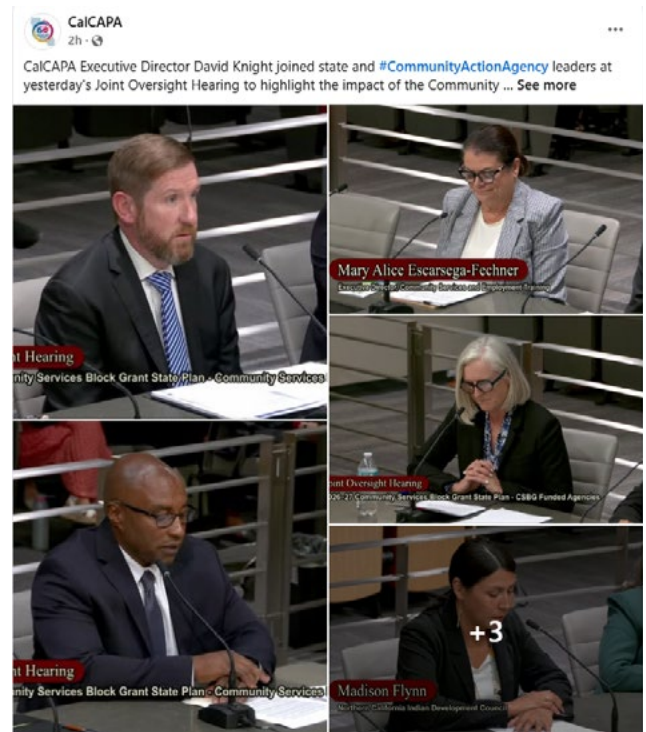
EHSD Director Testifies on CSBG's Vital Role

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Dr. Stuart closed her testimony by acknowledging the nonprofit partners whose voices amplify the urgency of maintaining CSBG funding. Representatives from Loaves and Fishes, STAND!, and Opportunity Junction spoke about the devastating impact that funding reductions would have on their ability to feed families, shelter survivors of violence, and connect workers to living-wage jobs.

"If we cannot have an economy that fairly distributes resources, then we must have a safety net that ensures stability for the 41% of Contra Costa households who lack sufficient resources."

– Dr. Marla Stuart



EHSD Director **Dr. Marla Stuart** with CalCAPA Executive Director David Knight and other state and community leaders at the bi-annual Joint Oversight Hearing before the California Senate and Assembly Human Service Committees.

By the NUMBERS

CSBG in Contra Costa County

\$945,470

in CSBG funding supports local priorities

3,378

meals served to residents in need

41%

41% of Contra Costa households received safety-net assistance in 2024

3,590

households kept utilities on or restored

141

individuals moved from homelessness to safe housing

9,189

boxes of groceries distributed

120

adults secured living-wage jobs

Why It Matters

- CSBG is the “safety net for the safety net.”
- Fills gaps for residents ineligible for traditional aid.
- Keeps families stable while strengthening the local economy.

Share Your Voice: Impact Fund Survey

Contra Costa County is calling on residents to help shape the future of local services and resources by sharing their ideas through the Community Impact Fund survey. This countywide effort asks community members to weigh in on priorities like affordable housing, food security, youth programs, public health, and economic opportunity—ensuring that funding decisions reflect the real needs and voices of the people who live here.

The survey is open through the end of September, with results to be shared at the October 21st Board of Supervisors meeting. By participating, residents can directly influence how future County dollars are directed to projects that strengthen equity, safety, and opportunity across all five districts.

As highlighted in [Contra Costa News](#), the current Board of Supervisors—Chair Candace Andersen, Vice Chair Diane Burgis, along with Supervisors John Gioia, Ken Carlson, and Shanelle Scales-Preston—is encouraging community members to share their ideas. Together, they emphasize that resident feedback is essential to shaping programs and investments that will create lasting impact across the County.

Make your voice count. Visit contracosta.ca.gov/ImpactFund to take the survey and learn more about the Community Impact Fund.



**CONTRA COSTA COUNTY
COMMUNITY IMPACT FUND SURVEY**

Take a short survey to help us understand your priorities for how one-time funds should be used to address urgent community needs. Your feedback will guide County leaders as they decide how to distribute these limited resources in ways that matter most to you and your neighbors.



*Building Brighter
Futures Together*

Meet Contra Costa's New BASSC SLC Cohort

By Karen Labaniego, Staff Development Supervisor, Internal Operations

Contra Costa County is proud to announce the supervisors selected to represent us in the 2025–2026 Bay Area Social Services Consortium (BASSC) Supervisors Learning Collaborative (SLC) SLC sessions. These individuals were nominated for their commitment to public service, leadership in the workplace, and passion for making a difference in our communities. Join in celebrating their accomplishments and supporting them in this exciting opportunity.

The BASSC SLC is a prestigious professional development program that brings together supervisors from social service agencies across the Bay Area to build leadership capacity, strengthen collaboration, and elevate service delivery across counties.



Tammy Gochenouer
*Social Work Supervisor II,
Continuing Services*

Tammy has dedicated more than 14 years to serving Contra Costa County, with the past five years as an Eligibility Work Supervisor at the Medi-Cal CalFresh

Service Center (MCSC). Her experience spans multiple programs, including Welfare to Work and CalWORKs, where she previously served as a Social Service Program Assistant. Tammy also plays a critical role as one of our CalFresh Intercounty Transfer (ICT) Coordinators, facilitating smooth transitions between counties and promoting regional collaboration.

Before entering public service, Tammy honed her skills in customer service, time management, and team leadership as an Escrow Officer and in retail management. These foundational experiences enrich her leadership style and effectiveness as a supervisor.



Tonika Gillard
*Eligibility Work
Supervisor, MCSC*

Tonika brings a strong educational background and deep passion for child welfare to her role. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology

from Fresno State and a master's in counseling from the University of Phoenix. Since beginning her journey with Contra Costa County in 2016, Tonika has served six years as an Emergency Response Social Worker before being promoted to Continuing Services Supervisor in July 2023.

Tonika is deeply committed to supporting children and families during difficult times. She finds great meaning in helping families navigate challenges and celebrates every successful reunification as a testament to the power of hope and healing.

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Meet Contra Costa's New BASSC SLC Chort

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Cynthia Smith

*Program Coordinator,
VESTIA*

Cynthia's journey from Ecuador to Contra Costa County has been driven by her unwavering dedication to service, equity, and community empowerment. As

a former Peace Corps volunteer, she led sustainable agriculture and environmental education projects and even rescued neglected animals. Back home, she continued her service as a wetland biologist and Volunteer Coordinator for Animal Services, where she oversaw over 100 volunteers, launched innovative outreach programs, and advocated for staff as an early union leader.

Now leading the Volunteer & Emergency Services unit at EHSD, Cynthia manages critical community aid programs, coordinates large-scale donor efforts, and maintains strong partnerships with organizations like VESTIA. Her leadership ensures that thousands of vulnerable residents receive the support they need with compassion and efficiency.



Ayaba Adams

*Eligibility Work
Supervisor, CW Field*

As of August 2025, Ayaba celebrates 18 years of dedicated service with Contra Costa County. She began her journey in 2007, training as an Eligibility Worker for six

months before transitioning into a specialized role in CalWORKs, CalFresh, and Medi-Cal. For over a decade, she maintained an active caseload, administering benefits and delivering essential support to families in need.

In 2021, Ayaba advanced to the role of Lead Worker, where she spent two years guiding and mentoring new Eligibility Workers through the training program. In November 2023, she came full circle, returning to the CalWORKs field—this time as an Eligibility Work Supervisor. Her career reflects a deep commitment to public service, leadership, and community impact.

Congratulations to Tammy, Tonika, Cynthia, and Ayaba!

Your dedication and leadership are inspiring. We look forward to seeing the impact you'll make as part of the BASSC Supervisors Learning Collaborative, and the innovative ideas you'll bring back to Contra Costa County.

*Building Brighter
Futures Together*

EHSD SHOUTOUTS

Congratulations to these EHSD staff members for recently achieving a significant accomplishment!



Celebrating Our New MSW Graduates!

Roslyn Gentry, Children & Family Services Director

Jason Colon, Dave Bothwell, Teroll Melton, Nidia De Leon and Melany Rodas all obtained their MSW degrees through the Employee MSW Title IV-E program.

The next info session on how to enroll is scheduled for October 7th, 10 a.m. to 12 noon, and 2 to 4 p.m., and will be announced via STARS. We'd love for employees from all Bureaus to consider attending and applying.



Dave Bothwell



Teroll Melton



Nidia De Leon



Melany Rodas

Jason Colon, photo not available.

Shout Out! Claudia Gonzalez

By Méloody Saint-Saëns, J.D., Division Manager - Contra Costa Alliance to End Abuse

Claudia Gonzalez, ASA III for the Alliance to End Abuse, graduated August 8th with her master's in public health. Huge congrats to her! You can watch her convocation [here](#).

This has been a two-year-long journey and we are so very proud of Claudia. Please join me in congratulating her.



Claudia Gonzalez of the Alliance to End Abuse

If you or a colleague have a work-related milestone or accomplishment, we want to hear about it. Email a 2-3 sentence description and photo to EventsCommittee@ehsd.cccounty.us and you may get a "shout out" in *Headlines* or on EHSD Live!

Level Up Your Watch Party!

Huddle with your team in front of the big screen to watch ***EHSD Live!*** on September 24th.

All Watch Parties will receive:

- > LIVE shout out on the broadcast
- > FREE popcorn to enjoy during the event
- > Feature in the October issue of *Headlines*

EHSD
Live!

WEDNESDAY
Sept. 24th
11 a.m.

Join on
Zoom:
HERE

NEW... Level it up!

EHSD Web Producer **Larena Baldazo** will join one lucky group in person for an extra special feature of your team LIVE during the event!

Register your Watch Party per the instructions.

In your email, tell us WHY you want us to join your Watch Party. What stands out about your unit/group? How will you celebrate your Watch Party? We welcome costumes, decorations, a song – anything creative and fun!

How to register:

1. Plan a Watch Party (5+ viewers) to watch EHSD Live! on Wednesday, September 24th.
2. Email EventsCommittee@ehsd.cccounty.us by **Wednesday, Sept. 17th** and include:
 - Names of each staff member
 - Location where you will watch together
3. Reserve a conference room with a big screen for the Zoom event.
4. Get ready for a spotlight on EHSD Live!
5. Send us a group photo for October *Headlines*.

Bake Wars: Antioch's Sweetest Showdown

By Theresa Ramos, Contract/Clerical Temp, Workforce Services

Move over, reality TV bake-offs – the real action was at EHSD Antioch on August 12th, when Welfare-to-Work and Assessment Units faced off in a sugar-fueled contest known as Bake Wars!

The competition brought together WTW Units C4B, C4D, C4M, and Assessment Units C4E & C4F for a friendly challenge to see who could wow coworkers with the best homemade confections. Each treat went for just \$1, giving everyone a chance to taste, vote, and support their colleagues' culinary creativity. Proceeds went to support the East County WTW Pizza Party.

The event wasn't just about cakes, cookies, and candies – it was about bringing people together. Staff filled the room with laughter, friendly competition, and maybe just a little sugar rush. Supervisors, eligibility workers, and social workers alike joined in, creating a warm, collaborative atmosphere that was as sweet as the desserts themselves.

After all the votes (and bites) were tallied, C4M rose to the top as the proud winners of the very first Antioch Bake Wars! Their spread of sweets won over both hearts and taste buds, making them the reigning champs until the next delicious showdown.

The Bake Wars also doubled as a perfect photo op. Smiling teams from each unit showed off their creative spreads, while the victorious C4M crew posed proudly with their winning display. From frosting-covered masterpieces to trays of tempting bites, every team brought their A-game (and maybe their family recipe secrets).



Bright smiles and even brighter lemon bars from the crew behind team "Easy-Peasy Lemon Squeezy!" C4D Unit (L-R): **Deborah McKim, Monica Montano, Susanna Arevalo, Lydia Barron** (Eligibility Work Supervisor), **Brenda Cholico**, and **Tonia Quinones**

The AIS "Sweet Factory" team brought color, creativity, and plenty of homemade goodies! C4C, C4E & C4F Units (L-R): **Gaova Vu, Doris Edlund** (back row), **Andrea Evans** (front row), **Tanisha Burton** (Social Work Supervisor I), **Cindy Magee, Livier Johnson Villalobos** (front row); **Aldine Woodman** (back row); **Tonia Spencer** (Social Work Supervisor I) (front row), **Jelilah Winter**, and **Maria Jauregui** (back row)



The "Local Pantry" team table served up banana bread, carrot cupcakes, and fruit tarts, all made with a local flair! C4B Unit (L-R): **Chaytan Sexton, Matthew Nelson, Theresa Ramos, Andrea Goodlow**, and **Gail Decatur** (Eligibility Work Supervisor)

The "Busy Bakery" team buzzed with energy (and honey-sweet treats) at their bee-themed table! C4B Unit (L-R): **Chaytan Sexton, Matthew Nelson, Theresa Ramos, Arreana Goodlow** and **Gail Decatur** (Eligibility Work Supervisor)



Celebrating Diversity Day: “Resilient Roots, Strength in Unity”

By Iliana Choate, Program & Project Coordinator, Information & Systems

Staff Development Specialists **Lorena Martinez Castillo** and **Jay David**, along with Program & Project Coordinator **Iliana Choate**, had the opportunity to attend the inspiring Diversity Day hosted by the Santa Clara County Social Services Agency and its dedicated employees.

This year’s theme, *Resilient Roots, Strength in Unity*, echoed a powerful message shared throughout the event: “*Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are not bad words*,” a sentiment emphasized by both the Social Services Agency Dignitaries and Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors President Otto Lee.

The day began with a dynamic panel discussion and Q&A session featuring a diverse group of speakers: Chuck Cantrell, San Jose Planning Commissioner; Richard Konda, Executive Director of the Asian Law Alliance; Anecita Miller, Principal Investigator for Parenting to Achieve Wellness for Native Americans through Indigenous Knowledge; and Daniel Moretti, Program Management Director of PRIDeNet. Their insights sparked meaningful conversations around community, representation, and resilience.

Following the panel, attendees explored a vibrant array of informational booths and community tables, including the Pride Study, Office of County Counsel, Veteran Services Office, Latino Caucus SEIU, County Animal Services, Black Infant Health, El Comite, and several employee committees representing Native American (NAEC), African Ancestry, and Asian & Pacific Islander communities (APIEC), and many more. Vendor booths added to the festive and inclusive atmosphere.

The program continued with a multilingual “Welcome,” remarks from Supervisor Otto Lee and SSA dignitaries, and a soulful performance by Mr. Leo Rhythm and Soul Band.

Cultural presentations included [El Grito Folklorico](#), APIEC dancer Thu Phuong, and the [NAEC Ohiya Cultural Enrichment Pow Wow Singers and Dancers](#).

For the first time in Diversity Day’s 12-year history, the event featured an LGBTQ+ performer, Kendoll, and comedians Avery Harmon and Terry Dorsey, adding a fresh and joyful dimension to the celebration.

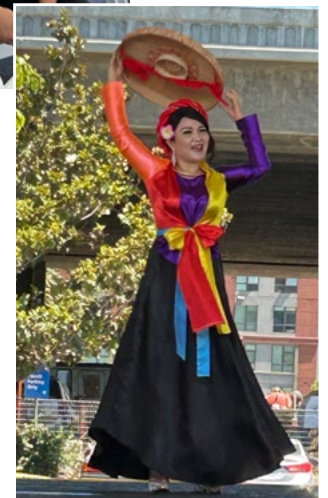
Diversity Day 2025 was a vibrant reminder of the strength found in unity and the importance of honoring every voice in the community.



Lorena Martinez Castillo & Jay David



Native American Pow wow



Thu Phuong- Dancer Asian & Pacific Islander Employee Committee

Read Contra Costa Community Read of Twain-Inspired “James”

Contributed by Contra Costa County Library

The Contra Costa County Library is excited to announce that the 2025 Read Contra Costa book is “James” by Percival Everett.

Everett’s novel, which won both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for fiction this year, is a powerful retelling of Mark Twain’s “Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.” The story is told from the perspective of Jim, an enslaved man who runs away after he discovers he’s about to be sold and separated from his family.

Read Contra Costa is an annual event that brings the community together through the shared experience of reading and discussing the same book. The program runs from Tuesday, September 2nd through Saturday, November 8th.

“The power of a community read is in its ability to bring people together through a shared narrative, and ‘James’ by Percival Everett is the perfect book to spark that connection,” said County Librarian

Alison McKee. “This novel can serve as a catalyst for important dialogue. We believe its themes will resonate with readers across our county, and

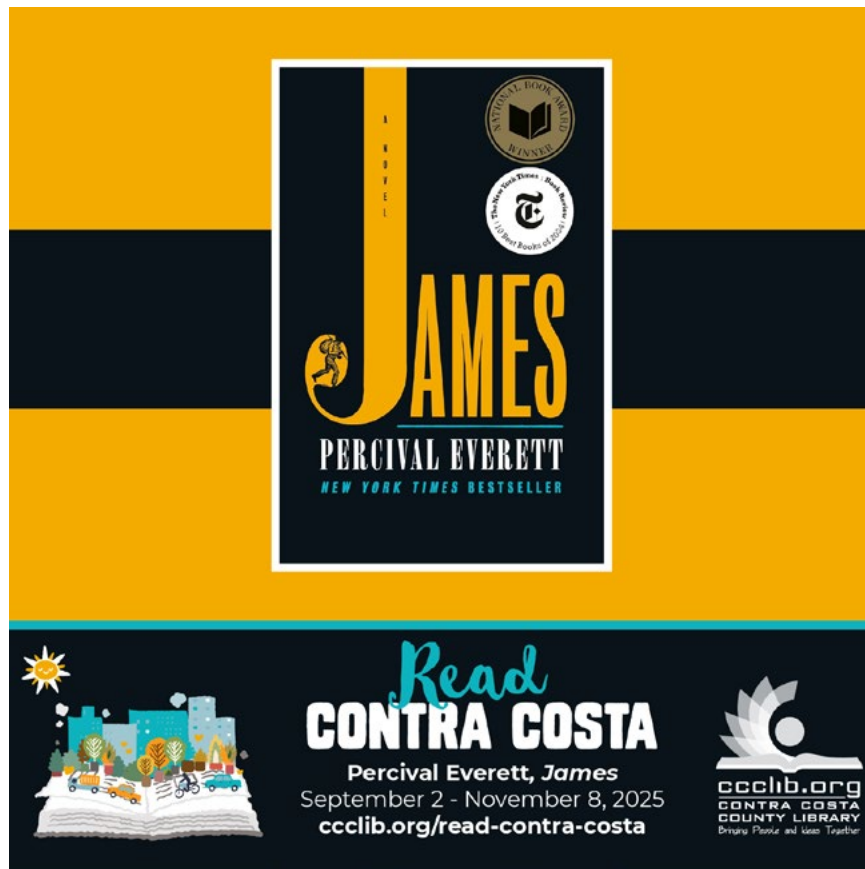
we look forward to the rich and meaningful discussions that will follow.”

You can join in reading “James” and sharing your thoughts. Find the book in hardback, eBook, and eAudiobook formats. Look for upcoming announcements about special events related to Read Contra Costa. Booklists and information on finding local book clubs will be available at

ccclib.org beginning September 2nd.

This year, the Contra Costa County Library is partnering with Los Medanos College and the Richmond Public Library to bring this program to the community.

For more information about how to participate through the Richmond Public Library, visit richmondlibrary.org beginning September 2nd.



Beyond Books: Library's 2025 Ad Launch

By Brooke Converse, CCC Library PIO/Marketing & Communications

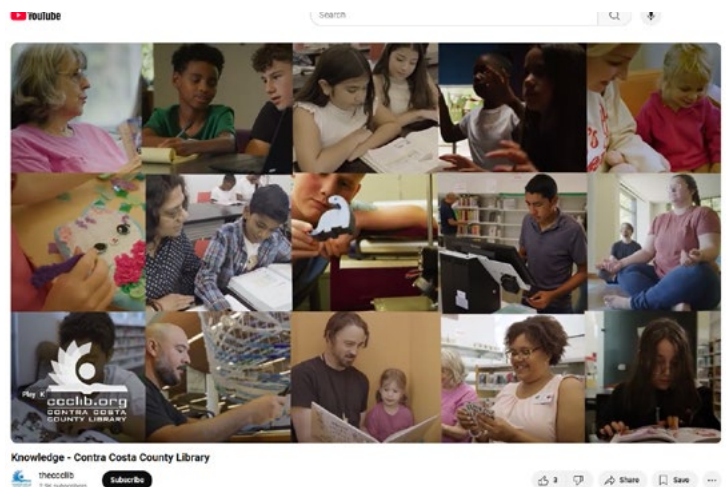
The Contra Costa County Library is shining a spotlight on its wide range of programs and services through a new series of commercial ads launched on YouTube in August 2025. The campaign underscores that today's libraries go far beyond books, offering spaces for creativity, knowledge, community, and growth.

The ads are built around five core themes:

- **Creativity:** Celebrating the library as a hub for imagination, skills, and innovation. [Watch Creativity.](#)
- **Knowledge:** Positioning the library as a foundation for lifelong learning, well-being, and discovery. [Watch Knowledge.](#)
- **Community:** Highlighting the library as a welcoming space where people can connect, share, and find support. [Watch Community.](#)
- **Kids & Parents:** Showcasing the library as a place for families to read, learn, and play together. [Watch Kids & Parents.](#)
- **Focus:** Demonstrating how the library helps people set and achieve personal goals and even find second chances. [Watch Focus.](#)

Each short video emphasizes that the Contra Costa County Library is more than shelves and study spaces—it's a dynamic community partner. With resources ranging from literacy programs to maker spaces and digital tools, the ads invite residents of all ages to reimagine the role of the library in their lives.

The full set of video ads can be found on the Library's official YouTube channel: [Contra Costa County Library – @theccclib](#).



The 2025 Contra Costa County Library ads showcase the many ways libraries support learning and connection.





Marcy Hara, New APS Division Manager

By Caroline Foudy, Deputy Director, Aging & Adult Services

We are pleased to announce **Marcy Hara** as the new Aging Adult Service Bureau, APS Division Manager.

Marcy has a long and distinguished career in social work, spanning over two decades in various capacities.

Marcy's journey began at a skilled nursing facility in Walnut Creek, where she served as the Social Services Director for two special care units and held the role of Admissions and Marketing Director. This experience sparked her passion for working with older adults and hearing their life stories.

In 2000, Marcy joined Contra Costa County Children & Family Services. She worked as a direct service social worker and a staff development specialist, focusing on training and curriculum development. Her expertise includes over 17 years of training social workers on a wide range of topics, including mandated reporting. Marcy's leadership skills were also recognized as she served as a supervisor in Emergency Response, Staff Development, and Resource Family Approval.

Most recently, Marcy has taken on a Temporary Upgrade (TU) role as the APS Division Manager. This involves temporarily filling the responsibilities of a higher-level position due to the absence of a regular employee. She expresses gratitude for this opportunity to work in Adult Protective Services with a dedicated team.

On a personal note, Marcy has been happily married for 36 years and has two adult children who are also married. She enjoys spending time with her energetic 3-year-old grandson.

*Building Brighter
Futures Together*

Fall Prevention Week: Stay Strong, Live Well

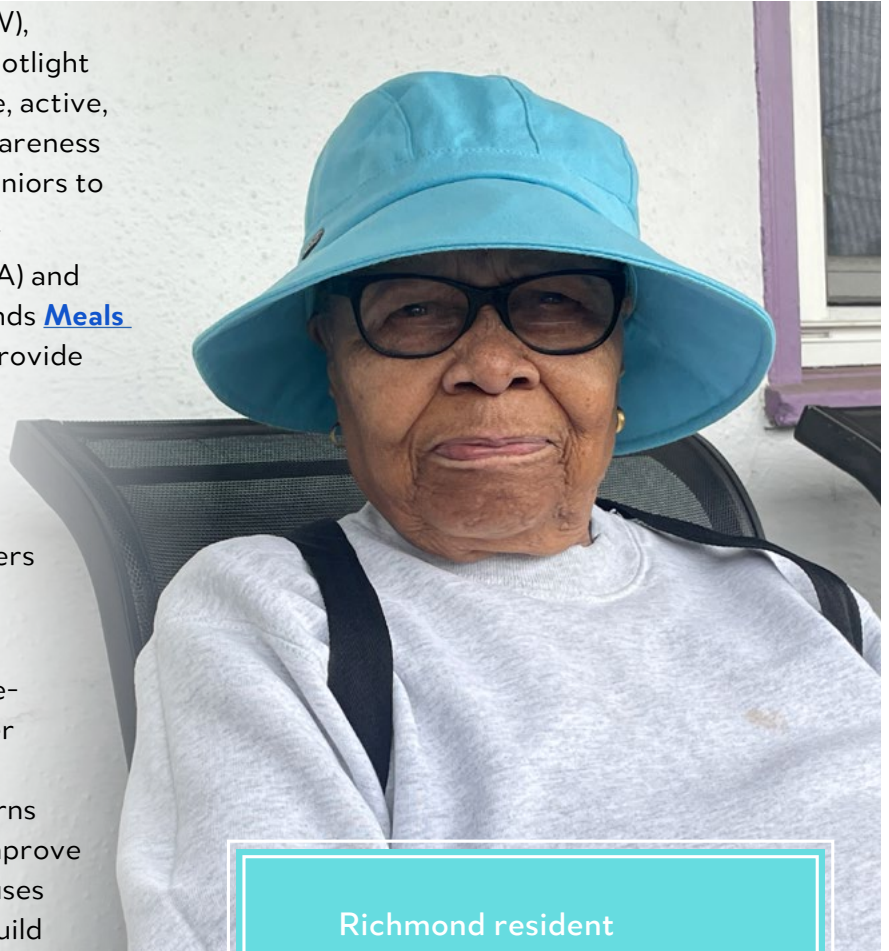
By Christine Ugaitafa, Senior Staff Assistant, Aging and Adult Services

Fall Prevention Awareness Week (FPAW), observed September 22–26th, shines a spotlight on strategies to help older adults stay safe, active, and independent. The campaign raises awareness about reducing fall risks and empowers seniors to live confidently without the fear of falling.

Through the Older Americans Act (OAA) and Measure X, the Area Agency on Aging funds [Meals on Wheels Diablo Region \(MOWDR\)](#) to provide caregiver support and fall-prevention services. These include the Dignity at Home program, which offers home modifications and assistive devices for adults 60 and older, as well as for caregivers supporting them.

Because staying active is key to fall prevention, MOWDR also offers evidence-based exercise programs such as A Matter of Balance and On the Move. A Matter of Balance helps participants manage concerns about falling, reduce risks at home, and improve strength and flexibility. On the Move focuses on biomechanics and walking control to build confidence and mobility.

Caregivers and older adults who may qualify are encouraged to explore these programs. A Matter of Balance classes begin September 2nd at the Lafayette Community Center and September 8th at the El Cerrito Community Center. Visit the [Area Agency on Aging | EHSD “Caring for Seniors”](#) section for details about fall-prevention resources and other OAA programs that help older adults live safely and independently. For additional support, visit [Information & Assistance | EHSD](#).



Richmond resident Elizabeth Gregory benefited from a new handrail installed through the Fall Prevention Program, funded by MOWDR. The improvement allows her to safely enjoy her front patio again, showing how small changes can make a big difference.

Oneika Tinsley Reflects with Gratitude

By Alan Wang, Media Specialist, Community Relations/Media

Sometimes the best reminder of your impact comes from the voice of a client who has truly felt the warmth and generosity behind your everyday work.

For Oneika (Ah-neh-kah) Tinsley, that moment came when she turned to EHSD during a difficult chapter in her life. After losing her job at the California Department of Motor Vehicles, she found herself caring full-time for her grandmother with Alzheimer's. When her unemployment benefits ran out, Oneika applied for public assistance. She braced for judgment and indifference, but instead she was met with compassion.

Her first social worker took the time to listen and provide thoughtful support, not knowing she had only \$7 left in her bank account. That same sense of care continued with her next two workers, **Adriana Martinez** of CalWORKs and **Jilliana Davis** of Welfare to Work, who encouraged her and helped restore her confidence. Oneika recalls how each one "bent over backwards" to make sure she felt respected and seen.

“*I never felt like just another case. Each person went out of their way to help me move forward.”*

Through a quick referral, she was connected with **Rene Tucker**, an Employment Placement Counselor (EPC) for the Contra Costa WORKS (CCWORKS) program at the Workforce Development Board (WDB), which offers subsidized on-the-job training to build valuable skills and prepare participants for permanent employment. Oneika participated in

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Oneika Tinsley, grateful for the encouragement and support she received through EHSD's Workforce Development Board.

Oneika Tinsley Reflects with Gratitude

Continued from previous page

computer and Excel training, and today she is gaining real-world experience working as a clerk in EHSD's Staff Development office at 2600 Stanwell Dr. in Concord.

Reflecting on her journey, Oneika says she never felt like "just another case." Instead, three different workers—who didn't even know one another—treated her with dignity and encouraged her to take a leap of faith towards a brighter future.

"They made me feel empowered," she explains. "The way they instilled confidence in me has been an amazing experience."



To hear Oneika share her story in her own words, **CLICK** the play button on the video and listen to her heartfelt gratitude for the work you do every day.

How to Connect Clients to CCWORKS

Helping Clients Take the Next Step

The CCWORKS program gives CalWORKs-eligible clients the chance to gain hands-on skills, build their résumés, and explore career paths through short-term, subsidized job placements. Opportunities with nonprofits, government agencies, and local businesses provide supportive environments where participants can grow and prepare for long-term employment.

Your Role

- Share CCWORKS success stories like this with CalWORKs recipients and encourage them to learn more about the program by reaching out to their Welfare to Work (WTW) Social Worker or Employment Specialist
- Consider becoming a host worksite and play a vital role in helping individuals start their path to employment success, while also gaining the support of a motivated trainee.
- Email CCWORKS@ehsd.cccounty.us for more information on participation in CCWORKS or becoming a host worksite.

The Impact

Connecting clients to CCWORKS is more than a job placement. It's an opportunity to build confidence, discover new strengths, and move toward lasting self-sufficiency. Your support makes all the difference.

VESTIA Scholarships - Transforming Potential into Possibility for Former Foster Youth

By Cynthia Smith, Program Coordinator, Volunteer & Emergency Services



EHSD's Volunteer & Emergency Services collaborates closely with our nonprofit partner, VESTIA. Together, we are honored to support the remarkable young people of Contra Costa County who have experienced foster care and are now pursuing their dreams through higher education. Through our **2025 Foster Youth Scholarship Program**, we are proud to have awarded **over \$50,000** in scholarships to **40** remarkable students this year.

VESTIA scholarships include: the *Need to Succeed Scholarship*, *Andrea Washington Perseverance Scholarship*, *Taylor Family Foundation Scholarship*, and *STEM Scholarship* – recognizing and supporting the unique talents

and perseverance of our foster youth. These resilient scholars continue to rise above the many challenges they've faced, and we couldn't be prouder of their determination and achievements. Congratulations to each one of you – your strength and commitment are truly inspiring!

A heartfelt thank you goes out to our generous donors, particularly the **Vogt-Morentz Charitable Fund & Taylor Family Foundation**. Their support is helping build a brighter, more stable future for students who need it most.

If you'd like to make a difference in the life of a former foster youth, please consider donating at: <https://vestiainc.org/foster-youth-scholarships/>

Empowering Futures at 2025 Youth Summit

By Christine Anuskiewicz, Community Relations/Media

Contra Costa youth are invited to step into the spotlight at the 2025 Youth Summit, a full day dedicated to inspiration, discovery, and preparing for the future. The event will be held on Saturday, September 20th, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Los Medanos College in Pittsburg.



PRESENTED BY: SUPERVISOR SHANELLE SCALES-PRESTON, CONTRA COSTA COUNTY, DISTRICT 5

Youth Summit 2025
EXPLORE. ELEVATE. LEAD.

Save The Date

PREPARING YOUTH FOR WHAT'S NEXT

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 20 2025

LOS MEDANOS COLLEGE, PITTSBURG, CA. 94565
8AM TO 4PM

RAFFLE PRIZES

- 4 MOVIE TICKETS
- AIR PODS
- GO-PRO HERO ACTION CAMERA
- DRONE
- IPAD AIR
- ELECTRIC BICYCLE & MORE!

FREE EVENT

ACTIVITIES

- INSPIRING KEYNOTES
- INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS
- SKILL DEVELOPMENT
- CAREER EXPLORATION
- GAMES & ACTIVITIES
- TECH DEMOS
- FOOD TRUCKS
- NETWORKING
- LIVE DJ, MUSIC & DANCING

The Youth Summit continues the vision of the late Supervisor Federal Glover, who first launched the gathering to uplift and motivate local youth. This year's summit carries that legacy forward, offering students in grades 6–12 a chance to build confidence, develop leadership skills, and connect with the community.

Highlights of the 2025 program include keynote speakers Dr. Julia Garcia, Nicki Joiner, and EJ Carrion, each bringing powerful messages

about wellness, leadership, and success. Students will also participate in interactive workshops on topics such as self-discovery, entrepreneurship, digital wellness, financial literacy, advocacy, and career readiness.

The experience goes beyond the classroom. Attendees can enjoy a live DJ, cultural performances, tech demonstrations, games, and outdoor activities, creating an atmosphere that blends fun with growth. Raffle prizes such as an iPad Air, AirPods, an electric bicycle, and more will make the day even more memorable.

Community partners will be on hand to connect young people with health, wellness, and education resources, along with pathways to college, apprenticeships, and career opportunities.

Each attendee must register individually at <https://www.youthsummitdistrict5.com>. More information is available by contacting the Office of Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston at (925) 608-4200 or BOS5@bos.cccounty.us.



Watch a preview video here: Youth Summit 2024

MISSION POSSIBLE

An all-day, in-person conference focused on understanding violence prevention from a public health lens.

Conference objectives will include:

- 1) Building a shared understanding of violence prevention by caring for the community and one another, and
- 2) Exploring housing opportunities for the community.



REGISTER HERE

Wednesday, November 5, 2025
8:30am - 4:00pm

Pleasant Hill Community Center
320 Civic Drive
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523



FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER
SAFETY | HEALING | COMMUNITY



SEPTEMBER IS

NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH



BE READY, TAKE ACTION, STAY SAFE

Sign up for Contra Costa County emergency alerts



CWSAlerts.com



(925)655-0111



CWSStaff@so.cccounty.us



PREPAREDNESS TIPS:

Create an emergency plan for your household

- Talk to your family about what to do if there is an emergency

Make an Emergency Kit

- Customize your kit based on your everyday needs

Stay Informed

- Once you receive an emergency alert, tune into local TV, Radio for updates

Mobile Clinics Bring Healthcare to Students

Contributed by Contra Costa Health



Contra Costa Health (CCH) is bringing health care directly to college campuses with the launch of new mobile health clinics serving students at Contra Costa College, Diablo Valley College, and Los Medanos College.

Starting this week, the clinics will visit each campus on a weekly basis, providing free school and sports physicals, confidential reproductive health services, and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. The program expands on the successful high school mobile clinic model already in place across the county.

“College is a time of transition and learning. With classwork, jobs, and daily demands, health can fall lower on the list,” said Dr. Grant Colfax, CCH Director. “By bringing care to campus, we are removing barriers and giving students an easy way to focus on their health.”

Students under 21 can access reproductive health services regardless of insurance status. Physical exams are available for those who have Medi-Cal, Contra Costa Health Plan (CCHP), or are uninsured. The same services are also available to uninsured students or those with Medi-Cal/CCHP who are age 21 and older.

The Contra Costa Community College District (4CD) is partnering with CCH to bring these services to students. “We encourage our students to prioritize their physical and mental health, and this is just one example of how our colleges empower students to care for their well-being,” said Chancellor Mojdeh Mehdizadeh.

Each mobile clinic is staffed with a nurse practitioner, registered nurse, health education specialist, and mobile clinic operator—

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Mobile Clinics Bring Healthcare to Students

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ensuring students receive comprehensive, professional care on-site.

CCH leaders emphasize that this expansion supports students during a critical time of growth and independence. By meeting students where they are—in their own learning environments—the mobile health initiative reinforces the County’s commitment to accessible, equitable, and preventive health care.

Mobile Clinics at a Glance

Services Offered:

- Free school & sports physicals
- Reproductive health services (confidential)
- STI testing & treatment
- Health education

Who Can Use the Clinics?

- Students under 21: reproductive health services regardless of insurance
- Students with Medi-Cal, CCHP, or no insurance: all services (any age)

Clinics Schedule

- **Contra Costa College** (San Pablo)
Wednesdays, 1 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
(except 2nd Wednesdays)
- **Diablo Valley College** (Pleasant Hill)
Wednesdays, 1 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
(except 2nd Wednesdays)
- **Los Medanos College** (Pittsburg)
Mondays, 1 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
(excluding holidays)

Appointments:

- Call 925-608-5350
- Submit an online request form



Family Navigators Kick Off a Season of Fall Connections

As summer gave way to fall, the Employment & Human Services Department (EHSD) continued its strong tradition of community outreach across Contra Costa County. In September, Family Navigators were on the ground at neighborhood gatherings, resource fairs, and back-to-school events—building trust, linking residents with vital programs, and ensuring families knew where to turn for support. Their presence not only connected people to services but also reinforced EHSD’s commitment to being a visible, reliable partner in every season.



Navigator **Casey Costa** and Barbara Aguilar, AUSD Social Worker

July 31st: Antioch Middle Schools Registration

District 3 Navigator **Casey Costa**, along with Barbara Aguilar, Antioch Unified School District’s Social Worker and designated Foster Youth & McKinney-Vento liaison, partnered to provide crucial registration-day resources and assistance to families. They guided parents and students through enrollment steps, connected them with district programs, and shared information on housing, academic support, and community services to ensure a smooth start to the 2025–26 school year.

August 5th: National Night Out – Contra Costa County

Family Navigators joined celebrations across

multiple communities—Martinez, Pittsburg, San Pablo, Walnut Creek, and Concord. **Sandra Figueroa, Natalie Aguilar, Joanna Thieme, Cecilia Felan, and Al Gibson** represented EHSD, welcoming neighbors, sharing resources, and strengthening partnerships at these nationwide gatherings designed to enhance safety and community connection. Events featured BBQs, children’s rides, music, and interactive booths.

August 9th: Rock the Block Party – Rodeo

Hosted by New Horizons Career Development Center, this day of unity featured vendors, games, prizes, and community resources. Navigators **Sandra Figueroa** and **Joanna Thieme** connected with families and shared EHSD services.

August 15th: Community Celebration

Navigator **Casey Costa** participated in an afternoon of connection with students, families, educators, and partners. The event highlighted the power of schools and neighborhoods working together.

August 16th: Bay Point Community Resource Fair

Navigator **Casey Costa** engaged with community members at a fair offering career-building resources, workforce training, free professional headshots, clothing giveaways, and children’s activities

August 22nd: World Breastfeeding Week – Concord

Navigators **Sandra Figueroa** and **Cecilia Felan** attended the Concord WIC office event, providing resources and support for mothers and babies across Contra Costa.

August 28th: Contra Costa Block Party – Antioch

Navigators **Joanna Thieme** and **Cecilia Felan** joined residents for games and a scavenger hunt designed to raise awareness of community resources.

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!

Exceptional Service: Samira's Commitment to Excellence in IHSS Payroll

By Stephanie Rojas, Account Clerk Supervisor, Aging & Adult Services



In an era where customer service is often automated, the IHSS Payroll Department at Contra Costa County is proud to offer personalized, daily assistance.

It is a rare and commendable quality when an employee consistently goes above and beyond, and **Samira Saboor**, Account Clerk – Experienced Level, truly embodies this level of dedication.

Kind, well-spoken, and highly knowledgeable, Samira plays an integral role in every aspect of IHSS Payroll. Samira approaches her work with respect, professionalism, and unwavering efficiency. She is always willing to assist, ensures calls are returned promptly, and provides thorough support to both providers and colleagues alike.

Having been with Contra Costa County IHSS Payroll for two years, she takes great pride in

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Celebrating Darlene Ramos

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



I would like to recognize and celebrate our Children's Services System Support Specialist, **Darlene Ramos** as a true

Customer Service Champion. Darlene has consistently demonstrated an extraordinary level of dedication and professionalism in her role at our central location. She is the first person our team turns to when we need assistance with CWS, and she approaches every request—no matter how complex—with patience, thoroughness, and a solutions-focused mindset. Her strong problem-solving abilities and exceptional critical thinking skills not only resolve immediate issues but also strengthen our team's overall efficiency and effectiveness.

What makes Darlene truly stand out, however, is the way she delivers this support. She brings a positive, approachable, and encouraging attitude to every interaction, making her colleagues feel supported and valued. Her willingness to go above and beyond ensures that staff are never left without guidance, and her reliability has made her an indispensable part of our daily operations. Darlene models the very best qualities of customer service: knowledge, compassion, responsiveness, and teamwork.

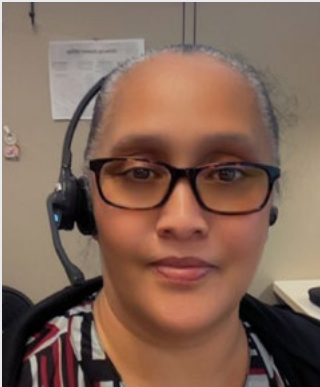
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Customer Service Champions

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Dedication in Action: Josette Alvarado & KimLien Pruner

By Emilio Alvarez, Workforce Services Specialist



Josette Alvarado



KimLien Pruner

At the Medi-Cal Service Center, two team members consistently stand out for their dedication and professionalism: **Josette Alvarado** and **KimLien Pruner**, both Social Service Program Assistants.

Josette and KimLien not only excel in their daily responsibilities but also frequently volunteer for overtime to help meet the center's critical needs. Their commitment is especially clear in the way they handle specialized, one-time case action requests. These efforts ensure that benefits are delivered accurately and on time to some of our community's most vulnerable members.

From proactively reaching out to customers with uncovered RCs to advocating for individuals eligible for aid restoration, Josette and KimLien demonstrate compassion, initiative, and an exceptional standard of customer service. Their reliability and tireless work ethic make them invaluable assets to the EHSD team.

Samira Saboor

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her work. Her commitment to excellence was recently acknowledged by Ms. Anna Humaydan, one of her providers, who could not say enough wonderful things about the exceptional service Samira provides.

Before joining Contra Costa County IHSS Payroll, Samira honed her skills as an Account Clerk in payroll at Mount Diablo School District, providing comprehensive support to teachers and school staff. Prior to that, she served as a Case Manager at the nonprofit Monument Impact, delivering intensive employment services to help participants achieve self-sufficiency.

We are fortunate to have Samira as part of our team at Contra Costa County IHSS Payroll.

Darlene Ramos

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Her contributions extend far beyond technical support—she fosters a collaborative work environment where staff feel comfortable seeking help, knowing they will be met with kindness and professionalism. Through her dedication, Darlene not only makes our work smoother but also reflects the values and mission of our department at the highest standard. She is a shining example of what it means to be a Customer Service Champion, and I am proud to recognize her for her outstanding contributions.

*Building Brighter
Futures Together*

CONTRACOSTA
COUNTY

EMPLOYMENT &
HUMAN SERVICES

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](#)



Engagement Series Coming to an Office Near You

Iliana Choate, Program and Project Coordinator for the DEIA Unit, is pleased to invite staff to an upcoming Engagement Series. The sessions, held throughout various department locations, are a meaningful opportunity to connect, share ideas, and help shape the strategic priorities that will help guide the Executive Team's vision for 2026.

These sessions are designed to foster open dialogue, build community, and reflect on the changes we hope to see in the future. We are

confident these changes can positively impact both the participants we serve and the dedicated staff who support them every day.

Stay tuned for STARS announcements with details on dates, times, and locations. We encourage everyone to attend and be part of this collaborative effort.

Iliana looks forward to engaging with you, hearing your perspectives, and working together to create a stronger, more inclusive future.

*Building Brighter
Futures Together*

SERVICE AWARDS | NEW EMPLOYEES | RETIREES

SERVICE AWARDS

30 YEARS

Teresa Jackson, Social Worker III, CFS

20 YEARS

Collette Rodas, Associate Teacher-Project, CSB
Sandra Sanchez, Associate Teacher-Project, CSB
Talenda Todd, Soc Svc Staff Dev Specialist, Internal
Operations

15 YEARS

Khammaly Phonthavy, Infant Toddler Teacher-Project, CSB
Amy Wells, Human Services Division Mgr, CSB

10 YEARS

Susanna Arevalo, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Princess Ibrahim, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Christina Karnsouvong, Clerk-Specialist Level, Internal
Operations
Jackie Page, Social Worker, WFS
Cari Ann Sparacino, Comprehensive Svcs Asst Mgr-Pr, CSB
Daniel Young, Administrative Svcs Asst III, Internal Operations

NEW EMPLOYEES

Meghan Foreman, Clerk-Experienced Level, WFS
Sakari Lewis, Clerk-Experienced Level, WFS

Jasmine Ostorga, Student Intern II, CSB
Ana Padilla, Clerk-Experienced Level, WFS

RETIREES

Mary Jones, Clerk-Senior Level, WFS
Sonico, Child Nutrition Cook-Project, CSB

*Building Brighter
Futures Together*

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

September 2025

- **HEALTHY AGING MONTH**
- **INTERGENERATIONAL MONTH**
- **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MONTH**
- **SEPTEMBER 1** – Labor Day (holiday)
- **SEPTEMBER 7** – Grandparents Day
- **SEPTEMBER 15** – “Celebrating All Ages” Campaign Launch
- **SEPTEMBER 15 to OCTOBER 15** – Hispanic Heritage Month
- **SEPTEMBER 16** – National IT Professionals Day
- **SEPTEMBER 21** – International Day of Peace
- **SEPTEMBER 22** – Fall Prevention Awareness Day
- **SEPTEMBER 22** – Autumn Equinox
- **SEPTEMBER 23** – Rosh Hashanah
- **SEPTEMBER 24** – *EHSD Live!*
- **SEPTEMBER 26** – Native American Day



October

- **HEAD START AWARENESS MONTH**
- **BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH**
- **NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH**
- **COMBINED CHARITIES**
- **OCTOBER 2** – Yom Kippur
- **OCTOBER 6** – Child Health Day
- **OCTOBER 16** – National Boss’s Day
- **OCTOBER 24** – United Nations Day
- **OCTOBER 31** – Halloween



We Care... You Care

[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more about nominating a coworker and see page 28

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

Facebook and X @ContraCostaEHSD
Instagram @HumanaCosta



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

October 2025 issue – submissions due Tuesday, September 16, 2025

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

September 4 or 18 • 4 to 6 p.m.

October 2 or 16 • 4 to 6 p.m.

November 6 or 20



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

