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Children's Network

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AWARDS  
CEREMONY

April 14, 2022





# LIFETIME ADVOCATE

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## MARLENE HAGEN

Director,  
San Bernardino County  
Children and Family Services

Marlene Hagen served as the Director of Children and Family Services (CFS) in San Bernardino County from December 2014 to December 2021. She spent 24 years employed with the County serving our most vulnerable population; the children in our communities. After receiving her Master of Social Work degree from Loma Linda University and completing an internship with the County, she began her career as a Social Service Practitioner with CFS. She provided services to children and families in several different specialized areas including Family Maintenance, Family Reunification, Adoption and Guardianship Services. She also became certified as a Forensic Interview Specialist, providing a much needed service to children who had been severely abused.

Marlene rose through the ranks over her 24-year career with CFS. She promoted from Social Service Practitioner to Supervising Social Service Practitioner before moving into management and executive leadership positions. She held positions as a Child Welfare Services Manager and Deputy Director before being promoted to Assistant Director and ultimately, Director of CFS. She made a lifetime commitment to protecting the safety and well-being of the children in our community using a collaborative approach to meet the needs of the children and families in San Bernardino County. Marlene understands that no single agency can do this work alone.

As part of this collaborative approach, Children and Family Services partners with many public and private agencies to provide a wide array of services to children and families including parenting education, counseling, family support and visitation, independent living skills and well-being events for our youth, relative and resource family caregivers. Marlene's steadfast focus on the safety, permanency and well-being of the children and families residing in San Bernardino County, is exemplified in her commitment to ensure our youth receive the services and resources they need to graduate from high school and are prepared to continue their post-secondary education in college or trade school. She believes in providing our youth with the tools and support to succeed in their education, will help ensure they succeed in becoming successful, self-sufficient adults.

Her exposure to the needs of vulnerable children began early in her life growing up and sharing her home with foster children. She learned that service to others, especially vulnerable children, was the path she wanted to take and she has spent the last 24 years working to ensure as many children as possible were able to experience safety, permanency and well-being.

# BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

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**VALENTINA VELA** Clinical Therapist I,  
San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health

When referring to Valentina Vela, LCSW, one of the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) psychiatrists recently described her as "God's Blessing to Children Youth and Collaborative Services (CYCS)," and anyone who has worked with Val understands these sentiments. Val is now a Clinical Therapist II with CYCS, promoting from a Pre-Licensed Therapist when she started with DBH in 2016.

At CYCS, Val is known for her extraordinary work in several capacities. With Juvenile Court Behavioral Health Services (JCBHS), she has worked closely with Children and Family Services (CFS), Juvenile Court, DBH psychiatrists, and DBH nurses to conduct 2nd Opinion Evaluations of children and youth to explore diagnostic dilemmas and treatment options. Her warm, collaborative approach towards the process and her comprehensive reports have established the high standard for the program.

In this last year, Val has assumed a lead role at DBH in creating a process with our CFS partners for CFS youth who are awaiting placement. She is also actively involved in the teaming process with these youth during this transition. She understands the nuances of the challenges that staff and youth face and incorporates her knowledge into both her program development and her clinical consultation.

At CYCS, Val is a champion of the Trauma-Informed System approach. Along with her other colleagues, Val led CYCS in monthly activities focused on improving staff communication and connection. Their work together has been particularly critical as a response to the stress of the pandemic.

Val has served as a mentor to her colleagues both formally and informally. She generously shares her clinical knowledge and understanding of the field, and is the first to volunteer for tasks and is always open to new challenges. Anyone who interacts with Val for more than a few moments will experience her effusive sense of humor and her ever-present kindness.

# BEHAVIORAL HEALTH (SCHOOL BASED)

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## ONTARIO-MONTCLAIR SCHOOL DISTRICT (OMSD)

For more than 25 years, Ontario-Montclair School District (OMSD) has been a true advocate for children and youth. After conducting a needs assessment of the community and reaching out to its community providers, OMSD found ways to fund its first two resource centers (then called collaboratives). These two resource centers brought not only comprehensive case management programs that consisted of a multidisciplinary team and mental health services, but initiated after-school programs for students, a pathway to college for all students, obtained a van, and funded a driver that takes students and families to and from medical appointments at no cost.

OMSD's intent has always been to remove barriers and increase access to services. OMSD is fully aware that education is only successful if children feel safe, have their basic needs met, and have supports in place that go beyond academics to reach their full potential. Throughout this time and in partnership with the San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), OMSD has expanded to three Family Resource Centers and was one of two innovative school districts to open a Behavioral Health Center (OMSD Counseling Center) in partnership with DBH to expand their mental health services to students in higher need.

During the pandemic, OMSD's priority has been to support staff, students, and families on dealing with this difficult time, getting the technology equipment needed for students to have access to their services via telehealth. During the first year, all staff received different trainings, with one of them being "How to Recognize a Student in Crisis." Trainings focused on supporting staff and students, early identification of mental health, case management needs, and how to build resilience and overall well-being. Presentations were also provided to parents in English and Spanish so they can support their kids, get familiar with resources available, and how to access them.

One success story highlights how OMSD serves families: A few years back, OMSD was contacted by a police officer at a home responding to a domestic violence call. They found an injured woman with a seven-year old and an infant, who was without food and formula. OMSD responded to the call and in collaboration with the officer, we were able to create a safety plan, connect the mom with a local food bank that provided formula, food, and other necessities for her and her children. She agreed to work with OMSD and a few months after, she was able to support her children on her own, keep them safe, learned about her legal rights, and accessed mental health services for her and her children. She reconnected to her out-of-state family that she was not able to access when she was in the abusive relationship and ended up moving back to be closer to them and have their support so that she could go back to school. When she left, she called to tell OMSD that she wanted to donate the few pieces of furniture she owned to another person that may be starting their path to wellness the same way she did.

This is how you have a district that fully supports the well-being of their students. Last year, OMSD funded one outreach consultant at each school site, a position that is dedicated to support students and families. They also expanded the number of clinicians at the counseling center and in the case management program. There is still much to do, but OMSD is committed to meeting kids and youth needs for more than two decades.

# CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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**JAMIE SUE STREET** Supervising Social Service Practitioner,  
San Bernardino County Children and Family Services

Jamie Sue Street is a graveyard Supervising Social Service Practitioner (SSSP) working from 10 p.m. to 10 a.m. at Children and Family Services. Many times she is the only SSSP working while overseeing the Child and Adult Abuse Hotline After-hours Response Center (staff responding to after-hours concerns of abuse and/or neglect) and Kidz Korner. Kidz Korner is a location where children are temporarily located while awaiting placement, including high-needs youth that are returning from AWOL status. These youth may be under the influence, be exhibiting difficult behaviors, and an overall challenge for CFS staff. Jamie Sue excels with these youth – she successfully works to deescalate the youth on a regular basis and supervising them in her office while multitasking and ensuring their safety. In addition, she provides support to her graveyard staff so they can focus on the other youth and tasks needed during this minimally staffed shift.

In addition, Jamie Sue has assisted in watching COVID-positive dependent youth at our Isolation Quarantine Shelter (IQS) during the last year in addition to her role as a graveyard supervisor. IQS has been difficult to staff, but Jamie Sue plays an active role in minimizing the fear of supervising youth with COVID to other staff in attempts to recruit additional support to the program.

Jamie Sue is extremely reliable and dependable and CFS appreciates her teamwork across the regions in this challenging COVID environment.



# COMMUNITY BASED PROVIDER

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**LUCHA MUNOZ** Family Support Worker,  
El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center

Lucha is a Family Support Worker at El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center. Through her role, Lucha provides home visitations to expecting parents as well as parents/caregivers with children 0 – 5 years of age in the High Desert area. Besides her paid role at El Sol, Lucha volunteers her time as a radio host for a Christian radio station in the High Desert, where she promotes the well-being of families in her community. As the radio host, Lucha is able to invite consuls from the Mexican Consulate, as well as immigration attorneys, to provide free updates and information to the community.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Lucha would organize events and would invite community stakeholders to keep her community informed about local resources. Furthermore, Lucha volunteers her time at food banks to ensure she contributes to erasing the gap that leads to food insecurity in her community. More than before, during the pandemic, Lucha volunteered her time and collected clothing donations to distribute. Lucha also assisted in the distribution of backpacks for children in need. Lucha's contributions have been recognized by members of congress, as well as County representatives.

Lucha has positively impacted many families, such as a family that lost their job due to COVID-19. Lucha was able to help them find diaper donations, backpacks, a baby crib, dinner for Thanksgiving, and sanitizing supplies. Additionally, Lucha assisted a single parent who was experiencing domestic violence regain custody of her child after contacting her resources. Lastly, Lucha assisted a young girl who did not have any form of identification. She spoke directly to the Mexican Consulate and they provided her a matricula consular and Mexican passport free of charge. This young woman also received resources to continue with her college education. Thanks to Lucha's dedication, she was able to stop selling face masks outside of stores in order to afford her identification.

Lucha is giving and dedicates her free time to be of service to her community, which she considers a form of demonstrating love. She believes in being compassionate and lifting others up. Lucha's loving, compassionate, and empathetic attitude is what guides her work and sets her apart from others.

# EDUCATION

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**MONICA HATCHER** Principal,  
San Bernardino Juvenile Court Schools

Monica Hatcher began her career in service working as a Recurrent Probation Corrections Officer at the Central Valley and West Valley Juvenile Detention and Assessment Centers (JDAC) from 2002-2006. During this time, she quickly recognized both her calling and passion for working with at-risk youth, and also started working for County schools as a substitute teacher. Committed to improving the lives of those in detention, she routinely accepted long-term contracts that kept her working within the detention facilities.

Monica served as a teacher for fourteen years and has now served as the Principal of the San Bernardino Juvenile Court Schools for the last six years. During her time, Monica has created and implemented a variety of programs that have been of benefit to the youth attending school at the Day Reporting Centers, and specifically within the JDACs. Some of the programs include Alternative Learning Experiences (field trips within the JDACs) and Back to School Night for the youth and their parents. One of the most highly anticipated events among the youth is the petting zoo, which serves as a source of therapy. She also created the STEAM lab, working with Garner-Holt Animatronic Academy on the Zspaces and 3-D Printing program. She established the Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) which dramatically decreased the school suspension rate and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, she secured lap-tops for the students and arranged for all of them to have full technology upgrades. During the pandemic, Monica was instrumental in transitioning the educators to the virtual learning format to ensure there was no interruption of educational services to the youth in custody. Recognizing the hard work and dedicated efforts of the youth, she established the tradition of hosting a high school graduation ceremony for youth in custody, which family members can attend, and over the span of her career, has proudly graduated approximately 200 youth.

The youth in Monica's care believed in themselves because she believed in them, and the staff under Monica's supervision trust her, because they know she cares about them and the youth. Monica is driven by the passion for the work she does, and has a long-term career goal of establishing change in alternative education, as well as creating juvenile education diversion programs. Monica is an excellent leader who continues to shine her light through her demonstration, professionalism, and compassion as she continues to improve the community we serve by enriching the lives of those who we serve.

# EDUCATION

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**KEVON LEE** Peer Support Associate,  
San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools

At the tender age of five-years old, Kevon was placed in the foster care system, due to being shot during a drug-related incident involving his parents. The trauma suffered from the incident and separation from his family led Kevon down a path of depression. He turned to food to overcome the emptiness he was feeling and Kevon developed an eating disorder, becoming extremely obese. As a teenager, Kevon's weight was the bunt of his peer's jokes. While he was able to laugh it off externally, internally it added to his depression.

Kevon was able to find hope in mentors, faith, and his grandmother, who he feels is his angel on Earth. Through hard work and perseverance, he was able to turn everything into positive energy, and made his struggles his mission. Today, Kevon is an activist for anti-bullying, education, and at-risk youth. He shares his traumatic story with the world to inspire and empower others to not give up and understand the power of their own voice. Kevon's powerful message has reached and empowered hundreds of youth and adults in the Inland Empire.

Kevon is a recent graduate from California State University, San Bernardino, and is pursuing a master's degree in Higher Education Leadership and Student Development. He currently works as a Peer Support Associate for San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, Children Deserve Success Program, where he shares his message of resilience and persistence to show how he overcame being in the foster care system, experiencing homelessness, and every adversity in his young life. Kevon is the co-chair of the Inland Empire Youth Advisory Council (IEYAC). IEYAC discusses the local laws impacting youth homelessness by learning, educating, and advocating and collectively working to prevent and end youth homelessness in the Inland Empire. He advocates for homeless and foster youth at state and local levels with California Youth Connection (CYC), a youth-lead organization who empowers each other and their communities to transform the foster care system through legislative policy and practice change. He is also a first-time children's book author of "Kevon's Big Field Day, We Should All Have a Chance."

Kevon's ultimate goal in life is to leave the next generation of youth inspired and empowered to become great and understand how to use the power of their voice. His dream is to attain his PhD in Educational Leadership and give back to the youth and continue impacting the lives of young adults.





# FOSTER PARENT

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## MARIA CORONEL

Maria Coronel is one of the most supportive foster parents that we have ever had the opportunity to work with. She accepts children who come from severe trauma and shows them the support and love they so deserve. She has fostered many youth (including hard cases), making the most of her foster parenting skills. Many of the children she fosters stay in her care for a long period of time, with a few of them still there in extended foster care, choosing to start their adulthood under her roof. The youth come with behavior issues, educational deficiencies, and lack of trust for people in general. She helps those youth see the good in people, which allows them the opportunity to reach their full potential. Maria makes sure to celebrate their birthdays, encourages them to do well in school, participate in extracurricular activities, and allows them to work to save their money. The world would be a better place if San Bernardino County had more foster parents like Maria.

# MEDICAL

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## **DR. DAMADARA RAJASEKHAR** Pediatrician, Private Practice, and President, American Academy of Pediatrics, Chapter 2

Dr. Damadara Rajasekhar is a practicing pediatrician (MD) in the High Desert region of San Bernardino County. He also provides neonatal ICU care for infants and newborns. He is one of the most dedicated and respected practitioners in the region, well-known by his patients, colleagues, and professional organizations for his deep understanding of healthcare needs of children ages 0-5 and beyond. He has been involved with integrating Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) for many years, making sure to work with families on risk factors and challenges that will impact their child's well-being, especially in instances of child abuse. With the onset of COVID-19, Dr. Rajasekhar became aware of the increase of child abuse due to home isolation, parental frustration, and lack of healthy coping mechanisms, and as such, he adjusted his protocols to work directly with parents as well as young children. He increased the frequency of visits with children (insisting on in-person visits, as opposed to only telehealth) and a greater number of "well-checks" at parents' homes to gain insight into the home environment that was affecting children's health.

Dr. Rajasekhar serves as the president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Chapter 2, in California, whose mission it is to ensure the care and well-being of child and youth patients, always with an eye towards mitigating negative health factors including application of ACEs and effects of childhood trauma and abuse. Dr. Rajasekhar also served as chief of medical staff at Victor Valley Community Hospital and is familiar with hospital-physician interactions related to quality of care provided to tender-aged patients in California hospitals. He is a member of the provider advisory committee (PAC) at Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP), with a focus on ensuring health care coverage for low-income families and children, often the most underserved and with highest correlation to child abuse victimization.

Dr. Rajasekhar believes in the physician-patient relationship as a key factor in providing good health care for patients and especially for his pediatric patients. He has been extremely active in working with the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health to ensure a vaccination protocol for his childhood patients, as well as their families and guardians to ensure their health and ability to attend school. He also believes in the need for physician leadership to advocate for high-quality patient care in the world of pediatrics and serves as a spokesperson for the prevention of child abuse.

Dr. Rajasekhar is passionate, caring, and committed to improving the lives of his children and families through top-quality medical care and integration of ways to directly address and heal childhood trauma and abuse, including prevention of childhood abuse in all forms. There is no one more deserving, in our opinion, than Dr. Rajasekhar, for his time, energy, spirit and sincerity in giving children their best lives possible in a holistic way.

# DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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**KURT ROWLEY** Deputy District Attorney,  
San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office

Deputy District Attorney Kurt Rowley works in the District Attorney's Child Abduction Unit. For the past 15 years, his assignment has been to locate children who have been unlawfully taken from a parent or guardian, in many cases by the other parent, as part of a custody dispute. Because it is not uncommon for the abducting parent to flee the country, Kurt is a subject matter expert in international treaties that deal with abducted children.

Kurt has worked tirelessly with his team to locate and safely return abducted children, and where required, criminally prosecutes abductors. Due to his steadfast commitment, hundreds of children have been successfully returned to their homes.

Kurt acts as an important resource for local law enforcement and is a statewide expert in child abduction laws. He remains on-call 24 hours-a-day for law enforcement encountering a child abduction scenario. With cases that implicate criminal, civil, and international law, his counsel is critical in order for law enforcement to quickly and properly respond to crisis situations where time might be of the essence.

Amber Alerts have become known nation-wide as a tool that allows abducted children to be found. They would not be possible without people such as Mr. Rowley, who quickly and skillfully helps identify whether a child has truly been abducted.

Child abuse takes many forms. While not all abducted children suffer physical abuse, most can experience significant psychological and emotional trauma as a result of an abduction. More importantly, the abduction of a child pulls that child outside the influence of the laws that protect her or him. When a child "disappears from the radar," the risks to that child's welfare becomes extremely difficult to calculate. For a decade-and-a-half, Kurt Rowley has exerted every effort to reduce that risk.

Kurt's steadfast commitment to the safety and welfare of children, rarely given proper appreciation, provides a remarkable beacon for us all. Kurt truly serves the cause of justice for our society's most vulnerable members.

# PUBLIC DEFENDER

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**ALANA MOORE** Social Service Practitioner,  
San Bernardino County Public Defender's Office

Alana Moore is the type of social worker that once you work with her, you can clearly see that social work picked her. She advocates and supports children with direct action and a powerful voice.

It was evident two years ago when Alana was placed within the juvenile division of Public Defender's office, that she was a perfect fit to be the office's social work representative for San Bernardino County's Coalition Against Sexual Exploitation (CASE) program. Working with Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) youth is not an easy task; it takes an individual with an unwavering passion, consistent and patient nature, relentless advocacy and networking skills, as well as a strong understanding and education about this population. Alana has embodied these traits, and has learned these roles through and through.

Through direct intervention, Alana has been a trusting mentor and stable support for the CSEC youth (at times, she has been the only trusting adult they have on their side). Alana has built relationships with County and community organizations that can provide service to CSEC youth, as well as surrounding counties. Alana attends the youth's court hearings for additional support and testifies as an expert on CSEC. She is available night and day for these youth, in any emergency situation. It is not a requirement of her job to go this extra mile; Alana does so because it truly assists in the betterment and rehabilitation of these youth.

Through indirect intervention, Alana conducts trainings on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) to County and community primary point of contacts for these youth. She sheds light and educates on the epidemic of CSEC in San Bernardino County, what the red flags/indicators of CSEC looks like to identify this population, and what services and resources are available for them.

Alana and a team recently have created a new training regarding how to work with youth that are dealing with complex trauma, and how to implement a harm reduction approach in assisting this vulnerable population. This training has been certified to train San Bernardino County probation officers.

Alana has selflessly dedicated herself to working with CSEC youth. She truly goes above and beyond in creating the most productive environment and implementing the needed tools for the ultimate success of these youth.

# PROBATION (COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS)

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**NOELLE CIRILO** Supervising Probation Officer,  
San Bernardino County Probation Department

Noelle Cirilo, Supervising Probation Officer (SPO) for the Community Corrections Legal/Law Enforcement Unit, has served with Probation for 20 years. She has worked for the past three years leading the day-to-day operations of the youth Day Reporting Centers (DRCs). She and her team have capitalized on the diverse youth resources of San Bernardino County to provide a sustainable system of high quality intervention, prevention, family engagement, and community services programs. Youth participation at regionally based youth DRCs have shown a steady increase, as youth and their families seize opportunities to participate in activities and services.

SPO Cirilo has a pattern of effectiveness in her duties. She led the implementations of the Probation Youth Day Reporting Center Community Service Program, which combines learning goals and community service. The goal is to enhance our youth, community and local agencies by providing opportunities for individuals and groups of youth to assist others and improve communities. Implemented in October 2020, the program has provided opportunities for community service to 218 unduplicated youth and completed 54 events throughout San Bernardino County. Events have included, but are not limited to pull up and pick food drives, backpack giveaways, clothing drives, household essentials giveaways, COVID-19 protective equipment and sanitizer giveaways, and holiday events. She capitalized on the county's resources by establishing community service collaborations with community partners: Isaiah's Rock, Young Visionaries Youth Leadership Academy, IE Rebound, Community Action Partnership, Desert Manna, Mojave Desert Land Trust (MDLT), and others.

She and her team have increased the profile of the youth DRCs by recruiting parents and youth to attend quarterly family nights and family engagement activities. Events held in all regions are well attended by youth, their parents, siblings, and in many cases grandparents. As a result County partners Department of Behavioral Health and Public Health, San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, and various community-based organizations were able to provide families with direct resources and/or resource information.

The efforts of SPO Cirilo have established a milestone of achievement to build upon. So much more can be said, but the highlights provided capture her work ethic and results best. All of the aforementioned efforts have contributed greatly to enhancing services provided to San Bernardino County youth and families. Although this was a team effort, SPO Cirilo has been at the forefront of leading our efforts. She definitely deserves special recognition. If it weren't for her exceptional performance, this may not have happened as effectively.



# PROBATION (DETENTION CORRECTIONS)

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**MARSHE MARSHALL** Probation Corrections Supervisor I,  
San Bernardino County Probation Department

Marshe Marshall is someone whose compassion and dedication to the youth in our community for more than a decade has resulted in increasing their potential for successful rehabilitation and reintegration. His intelligence and hard work over the past year in particular have exemplified the mission, vision, and values of the Probation Department.

Following the passage of Senate Bill 823 in 2020, the San Bernardino County Probation Department began an ambitious project to meet the requirements of the legislation by repurposing an existing facility to provide for the treatment of youth whose offense met very specific criteria. Marshe began working to prepare the High Desert Juvenile Detention & Assessment Center facility for its conversion into a more home-like environment, which has come to be known as the Gateway to ARISE facility. In addition to changes to the facility, she has also played (and continues to play) a pivotal role in changing the perspectives of the facilities staff to embrace the treatment oriented philosophy. She developed training for the ARISE staff to teach Stages of Change. She also developed calming rooms at the facility, which are for youth to utilize after being involved in a code or other stressful situation, when their emotions are heightened and they are more prone to destructive behaviors. She created a vocational assessment to identify the youth's level of interest in various professions, to better guide programming decisions in the facility going forward.

Marshe Marshall has been known as a "go-to" person and receives requests almost daily from those seeking her expertise and insight on how to expand programs and best utilize resources. Marshe has also developed and implemented programming that works to break generational cycles. She does this by engaging with youth who have children in parenting and bonding classes. Nightly video calls are arranged for the youth to interact with their child and weekly visits are held on site. Youth are encouraged to record themselves reading books to their child that can be played at various times, and support changes in the ways the youth see themselves.

Her willingness to take on these challenging tasks and see them through to their successful fulfillment is a testament to her desire to see the youth overcome barriers and succeed. She also manages to extend a warm disposition to members of community based organizations, other agencies, fellow staff and of course the youth themselves. Marshe has shown astounding patience and demonstrated compassion to the youth in the program by engaging in the difficult work of fostering respect for others and dignity towards all.

# PUBLIC HEALTH

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**MAHEALANI HITE** Public Health Nurse II,  
San Bernardino County Department of Public Health

Mahealani Hite is a public health nurse for the Yucca Valley Children and Family Services (CFS) offices and serves in the RX4Kids capacity. Mahealani, or “Mahea” for short, is the only public health nurse that actively serves the CFS clients in Yucca Valley, Lucerne Valley and 29 Palms. Mahea has developed an incredible relationship with the members of the multi-disciplinary team serving the Yucca Valley area. Her coworkers frequently pass along praises of her hard work.

Due to the nature of the work that Mahea is responsible for on a day-to-day basis, she has a unique understanding of the services available to the children in her region. Geographically, the region tends to be underserved. Mahea has proven herself a valuable asset in linking clients to necessary services and bridging the gap for the vulnerable children on her caseload to receive the help they need.

Mahea is tasked with completing nursing assessments and developmental screenings for children in her region to assist in child abuse investigations and case management. Mahea is also assigned a caseload of children who are considered to be medically at-risk or medically fragile and require a higher level of nursing supervision and oversight. She also provides public health nurse oversight for foster youth who have been prescribed psychotropic medications. In addition to her regularly assigned duties, Mahea has been integral in the San Bernardino County COVID-19 pandemic response serving as a medical branch coordinator and vaccinator in hard-to-serve areas countywide. She also regularly accepts assignments from other regions without complaint and has the knowledge base to serve as an RX4Kids nurse countywide providing the best possible services to our most vulnerable populations.

# VOLUNTEER

## **ZEYNEP GRAVES**

Court Appointed Special Advocate,  
California Court Appointed Special Advocates Association

Zeynep Graves is a CASA, or, Court Appointed Special Advocate for youth in the child welfare system. She is constantly going above and beyond for Tim, the youth she has been appointed to. In her day job, Zeynep serves as a full-time attorney. It is in her spare time that she makes the effort to volunteer her time to Tim. This makes no difference as the time she spends with her youth is much more than any other volunteer on my caseload.

Tim has experienced much trauma in his life and did not form positive attachments with an adult in early childhood. Zeynep makes time to call Tim and check in with him during the week. Tim now understands that he can call Zeynep whenever he needs someone to talk to. Thanks to Zeynep's consistent support, Tim has started to develop a positive attachment with Zeynep. This is critical to Tim's future, as support from one adult can reduce his risk for suicide and substance use, and can increase his ability to form meaningful relationships with others. In order to be successful in his life, Tim will need other relationships as well. Zeynep understands this and has helped him find a mountain biking club in his area, so that he may be a part of a team, and be under the direction of a coach. Zeynep's goal is not just about advocating for the now, but for the future as well. Because Tim has shown such growth and stability, he is eligible to be placed with a resource or "foster" family when he is ready. This is something that some youth in foster care are never granted. In order to maintain this for Tim, Zeynep has again gone above and beyond by remaining his CASA, even when he moved out of the county, and is now a five-hour drive round trip for Zeynep. She has completed much research in mental health to better understand Tim and provide him with the best support possible. She attends monthly meetings for Tim and is currently working to become his Educational Rights Holder, beyond her duties as a CASA. This will enable Zeynep to have a closer relationship with his teachers and education plan to communicate Tim's wants and needs in school. This is all in addition to the court reports she writes for the Juvenile Dependency Court every six months. Zeynep is a superstar volunteer that goes above and beyond her role, shining bright for those who have been dimmed.

# ORGANIZATION

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## SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE CHINO VALLEY, INC.

In September 2020, Soroptimist International of Chino Valley, Inc., reached out to the Coalition Against Sexual Exploitation (C.A.S.E.) to request a presentation on Domestic Minor Trafficking. After the presentation, the attendees felt compelled to do more to support the minor victims of trafficking and asked how they could help. Soroptimist International of Chino Valley opted to donate backpacks. The backpacks were filled with personal items, food gift cards, and notes of encouragement, so when a member of law enforcement comes in contact with adult or minor victims during patrol or sting operations, the victims would be given a "Dignity Bag." Many victims only have the clothes they have on (which may be inappropriate for the weather) or haven't been allowed to eat/sleep/bathe for long periods of time. In total, eight generous Soroptimist women donated twenty-four fully-loaded backpacks.

Upon receiving the bags, C.A.S.E. contacted the San Bernardino County Human Trafficking Task Force and provided their team with half of the backpacks. The other packs were distributed to Children and Family Services for the Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) system-involved youth who are brought into the CFS offices while awaiting placement. The remaining bags were provided to a local non-profit that provides advocacy and mentoring services to minor and adult victims of trafficking. This generous act allows victims to have something of their own and provides them with essential items to help care for their physical needs, while hopefully finding refuge and hope for a better future.

The women of Soroptimist International of Chino Valley Inc., including Janice Jimenez, Charleen King, Annie Lemento, Yvonne Rodriguez Lawson, Paula Cheatham, Donna Young, Nancy Sakurai and Karen Haughey excelled in their community efforts to support minors who have been victims of human trafficking and child abuse.

# HUMAN SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

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**DEBRA BRANSON** Supervising Fiscal Specialist,  
Human Services Administrative Support Division

Over the last 25 years, Debbie Branson has been an integral part of the Human Services team. She consistently displays values of humanity, diligence, respect and public service. She is an ideal professional in all of her administrative duties and then goes above and beyond expectations to support our children, team, and mission.

Debbie has been the person the children may never see, but who nonetheless is consistently working relentlessly on their behalf. Her commitment to the children and her willingness to triumph through any challenge necessary to obtain what was needed in the best interest of the children is valuable. A prime example is when in light of multiple obstacles, she found creative ways to make special travel arrangements for a special visit with grandparents for the holidays. Debbie always demonstrates that this isn't just a job for her, but that she is passionate to make sure the children feel welcome, comfortable and cared for.

Debbie also indirectly plays a vital role in support of Children and Family Services (CFS). She always presents herself in an extremely professional manner, and models a team-oriented approach that encourages the people she works with to commit to caring for our fellow community members. Over the years, Debbie has earned the respect of her peers and become a role model in the field.

Debbie is also an asset to the children by assisting the social workers by being a one-stop-shop of sorts, whether it is providing a security blanket, clothing, or beds for children so they may be reunited with their family.

Debbie has many talents that are of value to our efforts to serve our children. Among her strongest attributes is her integrity. As a Supervising Fiscal Specialist, Debbie has made Human Services a much stronger organization. Her work ethic, pleasant personality, professionalism, and dedication are exceptional. She has made a measurable impact over the past 25 years as a passionate advocate for children and families in our county.

Her dedication in quickly procuring necessary items for children is unsurpassed. It is not possible to discuss all areas of her work within the confines of this submission. In short, Debbie has consistently demonstrated innovation and creativity in delivering lasting results. Our children and families are better served and our social workers, administrators and partners acquire the resources they need because we all have Debbie Branson in our corner.