



CONGRATULATIONS HONOREES!



KAISER
PERMANENTE®



Tracy Abrams



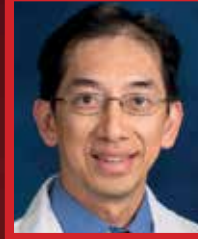
Elias Cueto



Kerry Forde



Louise Lu



William Tseng

mhs MENTAL
HEALTH
SYSTEMS



Veronica Aguilar



Laura Linton



RanDee McLain



Laura Otis-Miles



Delrena Swaggerty

neighborhood
HEALTHCARE



Zulma Curet



Yesenia Granero



Michelle Hughes



Leslie Munoz



Wendi Vierra

health inside. welcome in.
truecare™



Andrea Lewiston



Cheryl McMahan



Devarshi Nath



Marie Ann Russell



Eileen Sapinoso

HEALTHCARE HEROES AWARDS 2021

San Diego's Healthcare Heroes Panel Discussion

Experts provided insights, best practices and available mental health resources in San Diego.

To view the panel discussion go to sdbj.com/2021_Healthcare_Heroes_Awards

MODERATOR



Cathryn Nacario
CEO



Cathryn Nacario is the Chief Executive Officer of NAMI San Diego. She is passionate and dedicated to serving all those impacted by mental health challenges. Her fusion of nonprofit and for profit work is an excellent combination for bringing business acumen and compassion together for business growth and prosperity to serve more individuals and their caregivers living with mental health concerns.

PANELISTS



Yvette A. Aguayo, LMFT
Manager, Otay Mesa
Psychiatry Clinic



Yvette began her career with Kaiser Permanente in 2013, and brings 20 years of behavioral health care experience to her current role. Yvette has hosted region-wide trainings on Behavioral Health Interventions for First Responders during COVID, training more than 300 mental health professionals. Yvette is a San Diego native and prides herself in keeping her community safe.



Gabriel Rodarte, M.D.
Behavioral Health
Medical Director



Dr. Gabriel Rodarte, MD is triple board certified in family medicine, psychiatry and addiction medicine. He is a graduate from Dr. Rodarte graduated from the University of California San Francisco School of Medicine in 2002 after completing his undergraduate degree at Harvard University. He joined Neighborhood Healthcare in 2007 after graduating from the Combined Family Medicine and Psychiatry Residency Program at UCSD with an emphasis on addiction disorders. The San Diego County Medical Society named him a "Top Doctor" in psychiatry for eight consecutive years.



Wendy Broughton, PsyD
Chief Operating Officer



Dr. Wendy Broughton, COO joined MHS in 1998 overseeing budget and contract execution ensuring client-centered clinical services. She engages business development and profitable growth. She maintains CCAPP credentialing, and is committed to the guiding principles of People, Culture, and Growth.



Shayna Walker, M.D.
Behavioral Health
Clinical Director



Dr. Shayna Walker, MD has spent the last 14 years supporting and guiding individuals battling with mental health issues. She graduated from Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University in 2007 and started at TrueCare in 2013. She is also a board certified provider and a member of NCMS, AMP and APA.

Mental Health Experts Assess Need for Care

Demands on the System Are Increasing; Panelists Urge Self-Care, Too

■ BY BRAD GRAVES

The **San Diego Business Journal** recently honored 20 Healthcare Heroes — professionals who have given exemplary service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“In a year defined by one of the biggest healthcare crises of modern times, we owe so much to the many healthcare workers who sacrificed, and demonstrated incredible leadership, courage and compassion in our community,” said **Barb Chodos**, president and publisher of the San Diego Business Journal. “We are humbled to be honoring these individuals who contributed so much during these difficult times.” The winners are profiled on the following pages.

Since May was Mental Health Awareness Month, the awards presentation included a lively panel discussion about mental health. Four professionals from the field spoke about self-care as well as best practices for the workplace — whether the general world of work or the specific world of running a mental health care facility.

“

"Prior to 2020, 1 out of every 5 Americans had experienced a mental health concern or crisis during the past year. Now, the ratio is 1 in 3."

CATHRYN NACARIO

Cathryn Nacario, CEO of the **National Alliance on Mental Illness** in San Diego, served as the event's moderator.

With the coming of COVID-19, she said, there has been an increase in mental health concerns. Prior to 2020, 1 out of every 5 Americans had experienced a mental health concern or crisis during the past year. Now, the ratio is 1 in 3.

Some 18% of Americans experience anxiety, she said, while almost 7% experience depression.

“We are definitely seeing an escalation” in such conditions, Nacario said, as well as increased substance abuse.

Help can be as close as a call to 2-1-1 or 9-1-1, Nacario said. There is also a San Diego “Warm Line” at (800) 930-9276 for people who need a listening ear. The latter service operates from 3:30 p.m. to 11 p.m.

The panel discussion as well as the rest of the Healthcare Heroes event is available on the San Diego Business Journal website at https://www.sdbj.com/2021_Healthcare_Heroes_Awards/

The Need to Talk About It

“It’s really important to normalize mental health discussions and the experience of emotional highs and lows. It’s perfectly normal right now,” said **Wendy Broughton**, Psy.D., who is chief operating officer of **Mental Health Systems**. “More than ever, people have these heightened levels of anxiety. There’s a lot of uncertainty right now. There’s more isolation than folks are used to. There’s a little bit of buildup for folks, and we have to create some space and understanding for that.”

Dr. Gabriel Rodarte, M.D., behavioral health medical director for **Neighborhood Healthcare**, spoke about the perceived stigma surrounding mental illness. It seems to vary with age.

“It does seem like the younger generation is much more knowledgeable and accepting of the idea of having depression, of having anxiety,” Rodarte said. “And it seems like the stigma is not as strong for younger people as it is for older generations. That’s exciting for me ... and it makes me hope that we can actually

... connect with these patients and provide them the services that they need.”

Rodarte also spoke of the need to treat people with addictions.

“

"We talk about the stigma with mental health; it's even worse with addictions in medicine."

DR. GABRIEL RODARTE, M.D.

“We need to talk about this,” he said. “... We need to decrease the stigma. We talk about the stigma with mental health; it’s even worse with addictions in medicine.”

Addiction is often viewed as a moral failing. “It just isn’t,” Rodarte said. “This is a biological condition that needs to be treated, and we’re seeing that more and more in the research that we do on this. So we need to really decrease that stigma, we need people to access services and we need to have those services available.”

Back to Work

One timely mental health topic for the summer of 2021 is the atmosphere in workplaces opening up after being closed during the pandemic.

The phenomenon makes her happy and proud, said **Yvette Aguayo**, LMFT, who is manager of **Kaiser Permanente’s** Otay Mesa Psychiatry Clinic. There are things employers can do to make that process smoother, she said.

“

"Right now, it's pretty essential that we express a sense of empathy and understanding."

YVETTE AGUAYO

“As we’re getting back into business, it’s essential that we maintain a sense of safety for our employees, openly demonstrating COVID-related protocols for your business, such as masking, social distancing properly, making sure that we’re cleaning and keeping our work areas and work stations sanitized,” she said. Such steps “will be very helpful in keeping the anxiety of your workforce at bay.”

Aguayo recommended that employers be flexible on the subject of remote working. And generally be understanding.

“Right now, it’s pretty essential that we express a sense of empathy and understanding. Some of our workers simply want to be heard and validated for the experience that they have been experiencing at home,” she said.

Caring for the Caregivers

Those who care for people with mental conditions deserve praise, said **Dr. Shayna Walker**, M.D., behavioral health clinical director at **TrueCare**. (The organization was formerly known as North County Health Services.) She said she is always heartened when caregivers show up at appointments along with patients.

Self-care during this trying time is essential.

“We need to take care of our wellness. It’s super important to do it every day,” Walker said.

Both Aguayo and Broughton used an analogy from the airline world. If there is an emergency and the oxygen masks drop from the ceiling, a caregiver needs to don their own mask first. Only then should they help a loved one put on a mask.

The same is true for mental health. One should attend to their own mental health needs before tending to others.

Asked for tips for maintaining mental health, Walker recommended doing small things that give a person joy or peace. A short trip to the park, or a 5-minute dance break, or a small amount of time with a favorite story, book, movie or show can help a person, she said.

“Every hour, every minute, take a step back, take a break, take time off,” she said.

A person may need to build such time-outs into their daily schedule.

“

"We need to take care of our wellness. It's super important to do it every day."

DR. SHAYNA WALKER, M.D.

“Sometimes if it’s not on my calendar, it doesn’t happen,” she said, noting that occasions such as date night ought to be scheduled.

Broughton, of Mental Health Systems, said she sets aside time for breaks on her calendar. The organization’s CEO, **James C. Callaghan Jr.**, does it. And since Broughton does it, her employees feel as if they can do it too.

“It’s just cascading permission throughout the agency to take care of our mental health, our physical health, our spiritual health, just to be able to be present to one another,” Broughton said.

A Lot to Look Back On

The pandemic is now completing its second spring. “There have been lots of highs and lots of lows, but some good things have come from this year,” said Walker.

“

"It's really important to normalize mental health discussions and the experience of emotional highs and lows."

WENDY BROUGHTON

Those good things include therapists’ ability to connect to patients via telehealth services. Walker said she would like to see that continue permanently. A second good thing is that patients have done very well at keeping their appointments with their therapists. Aguayo noted that Kaiser Permanente has had to increase staffing because of this phenomenon.

As for the future?

“I think we’re just going to [have to] be nimble and flexible as we move forward,” said Walker. “Every day and month, it’s just going to shift and change. We’re going to keep adjusting. Being stagnant is not the thing of the future.” ■

Kaiser Permanente Honors Healthcare Heroes

Jane Finley Highlights the Work of KP Employees

■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

Kaiser Permanente San Diego honored five of its employees at the San Diego Business Journal 2021 Healthcare Heroes Awards, an event that showcased the great achievements of San Diego's healthcare providers throughout the pandemic, within their companies and in the community.

Kaiser Permanente's Senior Vice President and Area Manager, **Jane Finley**, presented the honorees and highlighted their contribution to the organization's impactful work in public health.

"I'm pleased to be here today to recognize five healthcare professionals whose leadership throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, enabled Kaiser Permanente to respond quickly to the challenges posed by the virus and ensure our patients and our community had access to safe, quality healthcare," Finley said.

As healthcare workers have faced the pandemic on the frontlines, Kaiser Permanente recognized the tireless and courageous efforts of a few individuals who embody their mission in healthcare.

"In the early days of COVID-19, there was a tremendous amount of uncertainty as the world responded to the pandemic. Even now, we are learning new information about the virus daily. Providing high-quality, compassionate healthcare during a constantly changing and evolving pandemic requires dedication, resiliency and passion. I'm honored today to share with you five individuals who demonstrate those qualities and more."



Jane Finley
 Senior Vice President
 & Area Manager
 Kaiser Permanente

Elias Cueto

The next honoree was **Elias Cueto, M.S.**, who serves as Assistant Medical Group Administrator for Primary Care, Pediatric, and Urgent Care Services at Kaiser Permanente. In this role he leads these departments across 14 medical office buildings throughout San Diego comprised of more than 400 physicians and more than 600 advanced practice providers, nurses, and nonclinical personnel.

"I'm honored to receive this recognition on behalf of our KP workforce (and their families) for the dedication to providing exceptional care for our communities," Cueto said.

Finley said he led primary care, pediatric and urgent care strategy and tactics throughout the pandemic. Additionally, Cueto is a member of the Kaiser Permanente COVID Vaccination Tiger Team and he helped develop strategies for setting up five KP vaccine centers across San Diego County.

"He advanced Kaiser Permanente's virtual and remote care as well as care delivery of in-person care and designated safe venues; for example, drive-thru care sites," Finley said. "Eli led the redeployment of physicians and staff to manage the demand for virtual care. He also led the creation and deployment of Kaiser Permanente's COVID testing drive-thru locations."

Cueto started his career with Kaiser Permanente as a temporary employee over 20 years ago in a Cardiology chart room while pursuing a Bachelor's Degree at San Diego State University in Business Management and a Master's Degree in Global Leadership at the University of San Diego.

In addition to his work in healthcare, he's a proud father of four and enjoys adventurous dates with his wife, traveling, and barbecuing with friends and family.



Elias Cueto
 Assistant Medical
 Group Administrator
 for Primary Care,
 Pediatric, and Urgent
 Care Services
 Kaiser Permanente

Kerry Forde

Kaiser Permanente honored Chief Nurse Executive **Kerry Forde, RN, BSN, MSc, CPHQ, CPHRM, CPPS**, who oversees all inpatient nursing operations at Kaiser Permanente's two acute care hospitals, including 689 licensed beds.

"I am extremely humbled to receive this recognition following the pandemic as it recognizes the professional and personal commitment of all nursing leaders during this time," Forde said.

Finley said that Forde was tasked with ensuring high quality "compassionate care for those providing nursing care and those receiving care at our two Kaiser Permanente hospitals during COVID-19."

"She designed and implemented safe, high quality nursing care practices during the uncertain and changing demands of COVID-19 and worked tirelessly to support direct care givers who dealt with the heavy demands of caring for COVID patients and their families during the pandemic," Finley said.

Prior to her work with Kaiser, she held positions at Sharp Healthcare and the UK's National Health Service. Forde hails from London, England where she started her nursing career at Westminster Hospital specializing in gynecological oncology nursing and became a registered nurse midwife.

Forde holds professional certifications in quality, risk management and patient safety, and is a certified legal nurse consultant. She also serves on the Board of Directors for Promises2Kids, a nonprofit organization serving the needs of foster children in San Diego County.



Kerry Forde, RN, BSN, MSc, CPHQ, CPHRM, CPPS
 Chief Nurse Executive
 Kaiser Permanente

Louise Lu

Among the honorees was **Louise Lu, Pharm.D.** Area Pharmacy Director, for Kaiser Permanente. Lu leads the strategic vision and goals for 17 outpatient pharmacies, two inpatient pharmacies, three ambulatory infusion pharmacies, and clinical service programs in the San Diego area.

"This award symbolizes the courage, compassion and sacrifices from our pharmacy and interdisciplinary healthcare teams as we overcame the many challenges of COVID-19," Lu said.

She has been influential in various initiatives at Kaiser Permanente to improve service, quality and affordability and implement new technologies and pharmacy services.

"Louise redesigned and implemented home delivery prescriptions to Kaiser Permanente members to ensure patients received needed medications despite the disruptions caused by COVID-19," Finley said.

"She also redesigned and implemented convenient prescription ordering and pickups for 19 Kaiser Permanente pharmacies across San Diego. Louise has overseen the process to safely and effectively deliver COVID-19 vaccines at five Kaiser Permanente locations throughout San Diego County resulting in more than 350,000 vaccinations to date."

She received her Pharm.D. from the University of California, San Francisco and completed a PGY-1 Pharmacy Residency at Kaiser Permanente, San Diego. Since 2001, Lu has worked at Kaiser Permanente in various leadership roles.



Louise Lu, Pharm.D.
 Area Pharmacy
 Director
 Kaiser Permanente

Dr. William T. Tseng

The final honor for Kaiser Permanente's Healthcare Heroes went to **Dr. William T. Tseng, MD, MPH** who serves as Assistant Area Medical Director and President of the Professional Staff.

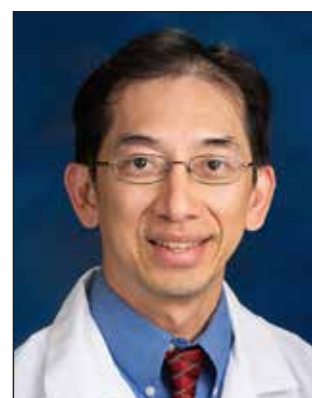
During the awards presentation, Tseng dedicated the honor to his colleagues and fellow physicians who continue to battle the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We were tired, we were exhausted — we didn't have time for our loved ones and we kept going," Tseng said. "We were quarantined from our wives; we were quarantined from our children. We are still fighting. We're hopeful, we are almost there — let's do this together, thank you."

Finley noted that Tseng's clinical and strategic leadership were essential to Kaiser Permanente's successful response to COVID-19 and he is also the co-lead of Kaiser Permanente's COVID Vaccination Tiger Team.

"Dr. Tseng has worked tirelessly with San Diego's chief medical officers and other community healthcare leaders to formulate and execute the effective response to the pandemic," Finley said. "Dr. Tseng is the physician lead for Kaiser Permanente's patient safety initiatives and was instrumental in adapting patient safety protocols to address COVID."

Tseng joined the Southern California Permanente Medical Group (SCPMG) at Kaiser Permanente San Diego in 2000, and he balances his time between in-hospital patient care, physician education, residency teaching program, hospital safety, and Diversity Council. He is actively involved in the board of the San Diego County Medical Society, CMA, Mayor's advisory group, APAPA and UPAC. ■



Dr. William T. Tseng, MD, MPH
 Assistant Area
 Medical Director
 & President of the
 Professional Staff
 Kaiser Permanente

Tracy Abrams

Kaiser Permanente recognized **Tracy Abrams MSN, RN, NE-BC, CPHQ**, Chief Nursing Officer and Assistant Medical Group Administrator where she supports Ambulatory Practice Services. She started her career with Kaiser Permanente 17 years ago, serving in Perioperative Services, Primary Care and Quality.

"This recognition is in honor of the teamwork and commitment displayed by the entire leadership team - remaining flexible and committed to keeping everyone safe," Abrams said.

Finley highlighted the ways Abrams has helped shape the organization's COVID-19 response. For instance, Abrams is a member of Kaiser Permanente's COVID Vaccination Tiger Team, which developed and led the health group's vaccination strategies.

"Tracy led ambulatory care services, strategy and tactics throughout the pandemic," Finley said. "She focused on education and training specific around the pandemic related to care delivery, PPE, social distancing and facility modifications. Tracy has developed and deployed internal employee health and safety surveillance programs to quickly address any COVID exposure concerns."

Abrams graduated from Georgia Baptist College of Nursing and earned her Master of Science from the University of Phoenix. Currently, she is enrolled in the Doctor of Nursing Practice program at Grand Canyon University.

Her advanced certifications include Nurse Executive, Board Certified and Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality. She is a recently retired Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Air Force Reserves Nurse Corps, having served as both enlisted and officer.



Tracy Abrams, MSN, RN, NE-BC, CPHQ
 Assistant Medical
 Group Administrator
 & Chief Nursing
 Officer for Ambulatory
 Practice Services
 Kaiser Permanente



Lead the way to a healthier workplace culture.

As a leader, you're uniquely positioned to influence the health of your employees. Making sure employees get the support they need to develop healthier lifestyles can positively impact your bottom line. Learn more at kp.org/choosebetter.

Choose Better. Choose Kaiser Permanente.



KAISER PERMANENTE®

| Business

Mental Health Systems Honors Healthcare Heroes

COO Wendy Broughton Supports Mental Health Systems Employees

■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

During the pandemic, **Mental Health Systems (MHS)**, has played an important role in Operation Shelter to Home, an initiative that housed homeless individuals at the San Diego Convention Center. The non-profit organization was founded in 1978 to provide innovative and cost-effective mental health and drug and alcohol recovery services to families, homeless individuals and veterans.

Mental Health Systems honored five of its employees at the San Diego Business Journal 2021 Healthcare Heroes Awards, an event that showcased the great achievements of San Diego's healthcare providers throughout the pandemic, within their companies and in the community.

"It's important to acknowledge the sacrifice our healthcare workers make," said Mental Health Systems' Chief Operating Officer, **Wendy Broughton**. "It can often times be a decision between being present for patients most in need or family feeling the absence due to long hours and tireless efforts dedicated to eradicating COVID."

Broughton presented the honorees and spoke to how MHS has supported their healthcare heroes as they execute critical work at the convention center and every day to help San Diegans in need.

"I impress over and over again that you have to put the oxygen mask on first," Broughton said. "It's counterintuitive for healthcare workers to even consider putting their needs first but it is essential during a pandemic especially one in which no one anticipated would last this long."

Delrena Swaggerty

The first honoree for Mental Health Systems was Vice President, **Delrena Swaggerty, MFT** who has been with the organization since 2002. She currently oversees contracts that serve transition age youth, adults and veterans who suffer with severe mental illness and alcohol and drug addiction.

"Thank you for recognizing me as a Healthcare Hero," Swaggerty said. "This award symbolizes the success we achieved serving the homeless at the Convention Center."

In addition to her current position, Swaggerty serves as the Past President for the Mental Health Contractor's Association, an organization that works closely with County Behavioral Health leadership to improve services to San Diego County residents.

"Delrena has an amazing, upbeat leadership style who is the absolute glue for everyone at the convention center temporary shelter," Broughton said. "She facilitated an art therapy project for homeless that is now on mobile display, traveling around the region. She truly is one of the most compassionate people I know and well deserving of this recognition."

Swaggerty graduated from the University of San Diego with a B.A. in Philosophy and a M.A. degree in Marriage and Family Therapy and she has been licensed since 2001.



Wendy Broughton,
PsyD
Chief Operating
Officer
Mental Health
Systems

Veronica Aguilar

One of the honorees for Mental Health Systems was Program Manager, **Veronica Aguilar** who has been with the company since 2004. In her current position, Aguilar has overseen several programs that include working with the homeless population, youth and family, and adults with severe mental illness challenges.

"It's an honor to be a recipient of the Healthcare Heroes Awards. It was a humbling experience to have helped vulnerable individuals during the pandemic," Aguilar said.

During her 17 years with Mental Health Systems, she has served in multiple positions from Supervisor, Program Supervisor, and Program Manager.

"Veronica showed tireless oversight, 7 days a week with interventions, crisis support, and medication management at the convention center," Broughton said. "She linked more than 800 homeless people to MHS storage connect centers, keeping their personal belongings safe and secure. She is small but she is mighty."

Aguilar earned her undergraduate degree from the University of San Diego and her M.S. from National University. She is originally from Tijuana, Mexico and came to live to San Diego when she was 10 years old, and currently resides in Chula Vista.



Veronica Aguilar
Program Manager
Mental Health
Systems

RanDee McLain

Mental Health Systems honored Program Manager, **RanDee McLain**, who leads Courage to Call, a helpline that provides supportive services to current and former service members and their family members. She has worked with MHS since 2014 and her work has engaged families, homeless individuals and veterans with needed mental health and counseling services.

"Thank you so much for considering me as one of this year's honorees. The work we did at the convention center was truly a highlight of my career," McLain said. "We had an opportunity to help people when they needed it most. I am forever grateful I was able to be a part of this amazing, collaborative effort in the shelter to home project."

McLain is a licensed social worker and she earned her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and Sociology from San Diego State University and her master's degree from the USC School of Social Work.

"RanDee passionately guided the Courage to Call team at the convention center counseling corner serving homeless veterans and aiding medical staff in triage and collaboration," Broughton said. "She has courageous leadership and is deeply committed to the military space."

McLain served in the U.S. Navy and has volunteered with organizations such as the San Diego Enforcers, California Veterans Legal Task Force and the San Diego Veterans Coalition.

"A special part of this year was working with our veterans," McLain said. "As a veteran myself, helping



RanDee McLain
Program Manager
Mental Health
Systems

this community is especially rewarding. 2020 was a year of a global pandemic, it was amazing to see our community partners come together, reduce barriers and increase access to care."

Laura Linton

Mental Health Systems also highlighted the work of Dual Recovery Specialist with City Star ACT, **Laura Linton** who has worked with MHS for the past 19 years. She works closely with county programs to connect non-profit and for-profit companies providing services to homeless and high needs populations.

"Winning this award means that there is increased visibility for mental health and substance use providers," Linton said. "Often, mental health and substance use providers during crisis are the silent heroes. Hopeful the world is starting to see the importance of mental health across the spectrum."

During the pandemic, Linton was at the forefront of the Shelter to Home program initiated in response to COVID-19.

"Laura is a powerhouse of endless enthusiasm engaging convention center homeless and recovery groups," Broughton said. "She coordinated 800 linkages to needed substance use disorder and mental health programs. She is an incredibly inspiring example."

After spending nearly two decades working within Mental Health Systems, she has made a name for herself due to her dedication and collaborative abilities. Linton holds a B.A. in psychology and rehabilitation and a certification in Substance Use Disorders.

Dr. Laura Otis-Miles

Among the MHS honorees was **Dr. Laura Otis-Miles**, who serves as the organization's Senior Vice President. During her tenure she has brought success to behavioral health operations that are supported through County, State and Federal funding, including Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) and Supportive Housing and Homeless Storage Connect Centers.

"I'm honored to be recognized for operation of our Convention Center services," Otis-Miles said. "Thank you to the SDBJ, MHS Executive Team, and my Counseling Corner colleagues!"

She has been with Mental Health Systems since 2010 and in 2015 she assisted with MHS' expansion into the San Francisco Bay Area.

"Laura has shown expert leadership demonstration at the convention center homeless shelter collaborating with key partners from behavioral health services and the housing commission," Broughton said. "She is incredibly dedicated and what we like to call fondly, 'scary smart.'"

Otis-Miles has 17 years of experience working within San Diego County. She completed her postdoctoral fellowship at the University of California, San Diego, Department of Psychiatry and Veterans Affairs San Diego, where she was later appointed to the Clinical Faculty. ■



Laura Linton
Dual Recovery
Specialist
Mental Health
Systems



Dr. Laura Otis-Miles
Senior Vice President
Mental Health
Systems



IMPROVING LIVES

PROVIDED CRISIS STABILIZATION AND REASSURING COUNSELING AT THE CONVENTION CENTER TEMPORARY SHELTER DURING THE COVID CRISIS WITH COURAGE AND COMPASSION.

MHS HONORS OUR 2020 HEALTH CARE HEROES.

RanDee McLain, Program Manager, passionately guided the Courage to Call team at the Convention Center Counseling Corner serving homeless veterans, and medical staff collaboration.

Veronica Aguilar, Program Manager, contributed tireless oversight 7 days/week interventions, crisis support, and medication management.

Delrena Swaggerty, Vice President, provided amazing upbeat leadership and absolute glue for everyone at Convention Center temporary shelter.

Dr. Laura Otis-Miles, Senior Vice President, had an expert leadership demonstration at the Convention Center homeless shelter collaborating with key partners from Behavioral Health Services and Housing Commission.

Laura Linton, Dual Recovery Specialist, engaged Convention Center homeless in recovery groups and she coordinated 800 linkages to needed substance use disorder and mental health programs.

MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEMS

mhsinc.org

Neighborhood Healthcare Honors Healthcare Heroes

CEO Dr. Rakesh Patel Presents Honor to Employees

■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

Neighborhood Healthcare honored five of its employees at the San Diego Business Journal 2021 Healthcare Heroes Awards, an event that showcased the great achievements of San Diego's healthcare providers throughout the pandemic, within their companies and in the community.

"At Neighborhood we focus on removing the barriers to health and happiness by providing access to care, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic," said Neighborhood Healthcare's Chief Executive Officer, **Dr. Rakesh Patel, MD**. "We pride ourselves in our innovation which is demonstrated by our accelerated move to mobile health teams and telehealth services. We will continue this commitment to our patients and communities as the pandemic subsides."

Patel presented the honorees and underscored how each of them have made a unique impact on the organization and the San Diego community.

"I'm proud of how our dedicated healthcare workers, patient care managers, community partners, and generous donors support our patients' ability to access the quality, compassionate care they need regardless of their situation or circumstances," Patel said. "Equally so, I'm grateful for their continued efforts to ensure that we address the whole person, including behavioral health, for patients and our fellow team members. Doing so ensures that we promote healthier and more prosperous communities. We do this not for selfish reasons, but because we know we are better together!"

Leslie Munoz

The first honoree was **Leslie Munoz**, Director of Operations and Women's Health Services at Neighborhood Healthcare. After college, she started as a volunteer at the organization and was officially hired on in 2010 and has since held multiple positions that engage with women's and prenatal health.

"I'm truly honored to be recognized for this award, and I thank my team and colleagues for the wonderful work they do for our communities," Munoz said.

During the event, Patel highlighted how Munoz played an important role in executing the organization's strategy for COVID-19 testing and vaccinations.

"Leslie has worked many late nights and weekends planning and executing the mass COVID testing and vaccine rollouts," Patel said. "Her contributions have allowed us to vaccinate more than 30,000 people."

Munoz earned her degree in Ethnic Studies at California State University, Fullerton. Additionally, she is an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) and she received her Lean Six Sigma Green Belt Certificate from UCSD extended learning.

Outside of her work with Neighborhood Healthcare, she serves as a board member of the Valley Center Chamber of Commerce.



Dr. Rakesh Patel, MD
Chief Executive Officer
Neighborhood Healthcare

Dr. Zulma Curet, MD

Neighborhood Healthcare also honored **Dr. Zulma Curet, MD**, a board-certified pediatrician who has been committed to practicing in underserved communities for over 8 years.

"Receiving this award has reminded me of my purpose as a physician," Curet said. "I am truly grateful and honored for being recognized for my service to the community."

Raised in Oceanside, Curet practices at Neighborhood Healthcare and continues to embrace her service of working in a community healthcare setting.

"Neighborhood honors Dr. Zulma Curet for her response to provide clear, accurate information through her numerous appearances on TV news as well as videos about also continuing to provide care to our pediatric patients," Patel said. "Dr. Curet shares her knowledge and passion to keep our communities healthy and happy."

She obtained her undergraduate degrees from the University of California Riverside and then went on to obtain her medical degree at the UCSD School of Medicine and completed her pediatric residency at the Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center.

In addition to her work with Neighborhood Healthcare, Curet is the co-founder and co-host of the Future Minority Doctor Podcast.



Dr. Zulma Curet, MD
Pediatrics
Neighborhood Healthcare

Wendi Vierra

Neighborhood Healthcare spotlighted Director of Operations for Behavioral Health, **Wendi Vierra, PhD**. She has spent over 20 years in behavioral healthcare and is dedicated to improving the lives of those she serves and the communities they reside in.

"It is an honor and privilege to serve our community and work to eliminate inequities to provide quality healthcare to all," Vierra said.

She thrives on building collaborative partnerships to remove visible and invisible barriers and improve access to services for those in need. Vierra has extensive experience designing, implementing, and managing high quality programs using data driven tools to direct service needs and transform how we deliver care.

"At Neighborhood we honor Wendi Vierra, our Director of Operations for Behavioral Health for her continuous support and leadership to keep our behavioral health department running smoothly and efficiently in a time of increased need for mental health support," Patel said. "Wendi has been critical in responding to the needs of our patients and community, especially through our partnership with Interfaith."

Vierra is committed to addressing social inequities that have substantial impacts on health and she has a PhD in Behavioral Health Psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology and an undergraduate degree in Psychology with a minor in Physiology from San Diego State University.



Wendi Vierra, PhD
Director of Operations,
Behavioral Health
Neighborhood Healthcare

Michelle Hughes

Neighborhood Healthcare honored **Michelle Hughes, PharmD, BCPS, BCACP** who serves as the organization's Director of Quality and Population Health. She has been with Neighborhood since 2017 and prior to her current role she served as a Clinical Pharmacist and Quality Manager.

"I'm grateful to serve in a role that influences the health of our communities," Hughes said. "Thank you, Neighborhood, and SDBJ for honoring me as a Healthcare Hero."

Hughes is a Board-Certified Pharmacotherapy Specialist (BCPS), Board Certified Ambulatory Care Pharmacist (BCACP) and a Voluntary Clinical Instructor at the UC San Diego Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences.

"Neighborhood honors Michelle Hughes for her tireless work in community outreach to our patients to improve their health outcomes especially for diabetes and overcoming barriers in accessing care," Patel said. "Michelle's team has also been critical in maintaining our quality measure scores by contacting patients through text and phone calls to educate and schedule for COVID vaccinations."

She earned her bachelor's degree in biochemistry from Austin College, her PharmD from the UC San Diego Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences (SSPPS) and completed her PGY1 Residency at Palomar Health and her PGY2 Specialty Residency-Transitions of Care.

Yesenia Granero

The final honoree for Neighborhood Healthcare was Diabetes Patient Care Coordinator, **Yesenia Granero**. She has worked with Neighborhood for eight years and prior to her current role, she worked as a Comprehensive Perinatal Health Worker, offering prenatal education, lactation consulting and basic nutrition to prenatal patients.

"Getting recognized as a Healthcare Hero by SDBJ, has been very emotional and overwhelming, but extremely happy. Hearing Dr. Patel talk about me was joyful," Granero said.

Her passion has always been helping those in need and those that are found in unusual circumstances. She said that she believes it is important to create a peaceful environment at home and at work so people can continue to grow and learn.

"Yesenia Granero is known for being patient, gentle and kind," Patel said. "An example of her quality of care is when she treated a homeless patient with low blood sugar. After she was able to dramatically improve the patient's blood sugar, she went above and beyond to secure food for the patient from a local church."

Granero is currently enrolled in the Licensed Vocational Nurse program at Southwestern College, and since this is her first time attending college, she said she has been getting a lot of help from her two sons, who are 18 and 22 years old. ■



Michelle Hughes,
PharmD, BCPS,
BCACP
Director of Quality and Population Health
Neighborhood Healthcare



Leslie Munoz
Director of Operations & Women's Health Services
Neighborhood Healthcare



Yesenia Granero
Diabetes Patient Care Coordinator
Neighborhood Healthcare



We proudly salute our healthcare heroes



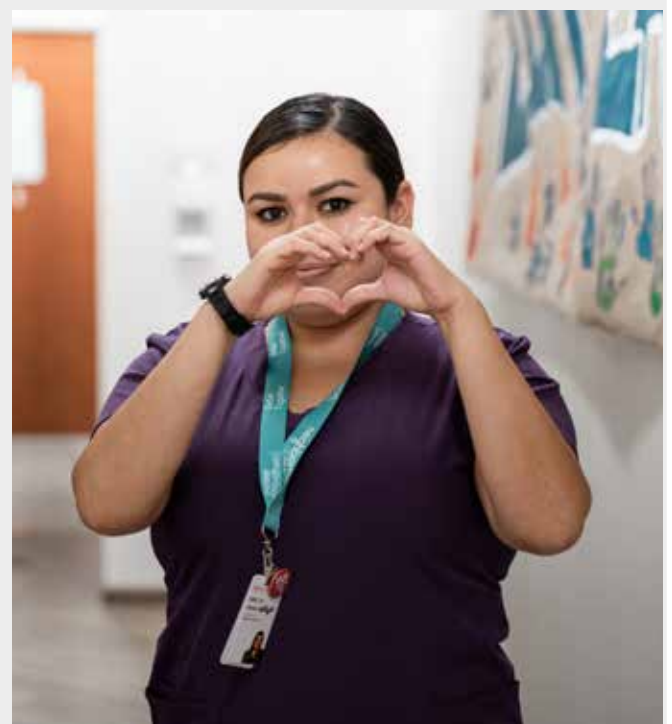
We recognize our healthcare heroes for supporting our mission to provide quality, compassionate care for everyone regardless of situation or circumstance.

As a private, non-profit community health organization, Neighborhood serves 278,000 medical, dental, and behavioral health visits for 78,000 people annually. We can do this because of our healthcare heroes!

We offer a range of programs and resources that address the unique barriers our patients face on their road to health and happiness. After all, we're Better Together.

Services Offered

- Family Medicine
- Pediatric Care
- Women's Health
- Behavioral Health
- Dental
- Podiatry
- Chiropractic
- Acupuncture



nhcare.org

better together

TrueCare Honors Healthcare Heroes

CEO Michelle Gonzalez Spotlights the Work of TrueCare Employees

■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

Since 1971, **TrueCare**, formerly North County Health Services, has brought patient-centered care to San Diegans. The San Marcos-based healthcare organization serves more than 57,000 total patients across San Diego and has about 685 staff members, according to TrueCare's 2020 annual report.

TrueCare honored five of its employees at the San Diego Business Journal 2021 Healthcare Heroes Awards, an event that showcased the great achievements of San Diego's healthcare providers throughout the pandemic, within their companies and in the community.

TrueCare's Chief Executive Officer, **Michelle Gonzalez**, presented the honorees and highlighted their contribution to the organization's impactful work in public health.

"It's important to recognize that the individuals who are serving on the front lines, are not only individuals who our patients and communities turn to, but are experiencing many of the same issues, challenges, and hardships they are committed to helping others address," Gonzalez said.

"In other words, our front-line healthcare workers are tasked with giving care, but they also need care. At TrueCare we are committed to continuing to care for our patients and our communities at large, while also prioritizing the health and well-being of our Physicians, APP's and our workforce at large."



Michelle Gonzalez
President & CEO
TrueCare

Cheryl McMahan

The first honoree was **Cheryl McMahan, MPA**, Director of Community Engagement at TrueCare. She has been with TrueCare since 2012 and has served in a variety of roles that focus on community outreach and health education.

"This recognition means the world to me. Community health has always had my heart, it brings me joy and fulfillment to support people who need and deserve it," McMahan said.

Gonzalez noted that McMahan is well known in the community not only for her connections but "because she is a compassionate connector."

"Cheryl demonstrated incredible commitment to our communities in 2020," Gonzalez said. "With her leadership, TrueCare distributed more than 446,000 pounds of food to patients and community members. Her efforts assured that during some of the darkest moments of the pandemic, families had sufficient food and peace of mind."

McMahan was raised in Fallbrook and she earned her undergraduate degree in Kinesiology Health Science from California State University San Marcos and her Master of Public Administration from California State University Dominguez Hills.

Outside of her work with TrueCare, she serves as the Chair of the Farmworker CARE Coalition based out of North County San Diego.



Cheryl McMahan,
MPA
Director of
Community
Engagement
TrueCare

Andrea Lewiston

TrueCare honored Chief Human Resource Officer, **Andrea Lewiston**, who oversees all areas of its human resources functions. Gonzalez applauded Lewiston as a "courageous advocate" who is consistently looking out for their workforce.

"She understood and embraced the belief that by prioritizing the TrueCare team, we were in essence prioritizing our patients and our communities," Gonzalez said. "She has never lost sight of the fact that our staff are humans before they are resources and that the best leaders must first become even better servants."

Prior to her current role, Lewiston began her career working part-time as a human resources representative at a hospital in El Centro on the border of California and Mexico. It was there that she discovered her passion for human resources and the underserved community.

"This award is humbling to me and is truly shared with all of our staff who make TrueCare such a wonderful, thoughtful and care-oriented place to work," Lewiston said.

She received her bachelor's degree in communication and media management from San Diego State University. Lewiston is also a member of the Society for Human Resource Management and she is currently working on her Master's in Organizational Leadership from Johns Hopkins University.



Andrea Lewiston
Chief Human
Resource Officer
TrueCare

Dr. Devarshi Nath

TrueCare also spotlighted **Dr. Devarshi Nath**, the lead clinician at San Marcos QuickCare who has been with the organization for the past decade.

"I am humbled and grateful beyond words for this recognition and by the dedication of my colleagues who rose to the medical challenge of our time," Nath said.

While presenting the award, Gonzalez noted Nath's "tremendous devotion and bravery" in his work.

"Throughout the pandemic, he remained on the front lines nearly every day to serve our patients directly, often putting himself at risk to care for our most vulnerable," Gonzalez said. "Dr. Nath, you have demonstrated your ability to face any crisis and you are a true inspiration."

Nath was born the son of Bengali Indian immigrants in a blue-collar suburb of Cleveland and he was the first person of color to attend his public elementary school.

He completed his undergraduate degree in Biology at Johns Hopkins and MD from the University of Connecticut. Since 1998, he has practiced in rural Appalachia, suburban Oregon, and as a civilian contractor for the U.S. Army. Additionally, he built and operated a tiny charitable clinic in Northeastern India.



Dr. Devarshi Nath, MD
Lead Clinician
San Marcos
QuickCare, TrueCare

Dr. Marie Ann Russell

TrueCare honored **Dr. Marie Ann Russell**, who serves as the organization's Chief Medical Officer and Chief Operations Officer.

"This award represents the commitment of TrueCare staff who labored tirelessly through the pandemic to ensure quality care is delivered to the communities we serve," Russell said.

She joined TrueCare at the height of the pandemic, and Gonzalez said that she "quickly rose to every call of duty." Russell brings 20 years of experience in clinical leadership roles with the Indian Health Service and recently retired from the United States Public Health Services at the rank of Captain.

"From the onset, she has demonstrated a steady, unwavering and authentic commitment to assist everyone around her to be their best," Gonzalez said. "She understood the need and the power in mobilizing many in order to battle COVID. Dr. Russell is effective yet humble and consistently demonstrates that being a hero is never about a title but instead always about the actions."

She earned her degree in International Relations, from the College of William and Mary, and received her Doctor of Medicine from the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences. Russell is a board-certified internal medicine physician and has her Master's of Public Health from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.



Dr. Marie Ann Russell,
MD, MPH
Chief Medical Officer
& Chief Operations
Officer
TrueCare

Eileen Sapinoso

The final honoree for TrueCare was **Eileen Sapinoso, MSN, RN**, Director of Nursing, a position she has held since 2019.

"As a healthcare professional, receiving this recognition is meaningful to me because I share it with those who demonstrate courage, resilience, adaptability, compassion, patience and kindness every single day — I am honored to be among them," Sapinoso said.

During the awards presentation, Gonzalez said that "at TrueCare, it's important that we have the best and that's why we have Eileen."

"For Eileen, being a caretaker for others is more than a calling — it's actually part of her DNA. Working in tandem with our administrative and clinical teams throughout the pandemic, she was a vital link to information and education for patients and staff. She embodies the notion that caring is the essence of nursing."

Prior to her current role, Sapinoso served as the Director of Acute Care and Director of Clinical Education and Staff Development at Kaiser Permanente San Diego. She is a native San Diegan who earned her undergraduate degree in nursing from Mount Saint Mary's University in Los Angeles and her MSN from the University of San Diego. ■



Eileen Sapinoso,
MSN, RN
Director of Nursing
TrueCare



Drive-thru Vaccine Clinic

Free COVID-19 Vaccinations

SATURDAY, JUNE 12

8:00AM-12:00PM

MiraCosta College

1 Barnard Drive, Oceanside, CA 92056

Protect yourself and the community by getting your free COVID-19 vaccine at our drive-thru event open to the public!

- No appointment needed
- Vaccines available for your employees and their families
- Single dose or dual dose available
- First come, first served – while supplies last

Questions? Call (760) 736-6777
or visit www.truecare.org

Vaccinating
ages 12+

In partnership with



Health inside. Welcome in.
truecareTM
truecare.org

