

**LOVE
WINS**



SCRV
SANTA CLARA RIVER VALLEY

Pride

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SERVING TEENS IN THE SANTA CLARA RIVER VALLEY
SINCE 2007
MYONESTEP.ORG

FREE Sunday Brunch & Community Resource Fair to engage and promote wellness for LGBTQ+ youth, their families and community allies.

**Sunday, June 23, 2024
11:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.**

PROGRAM



WITH
GRATITUDE
FOR YOUR
INVESTMENT

Brittany Botts-Volaski
Elena Brokaw
Pedro A Chavez & Francisco S Estrada
Joseph Dobzynski, Jr.
Kate English
Jazmin Gavilanes & Ramses Prado
Nancy Grass
Tracy Hanna
Susan Johnson
Carlos Juarez
Mia Martinez
Stephanie Montag
Shauna McGee
Maddie Sifantus
Sidney Stull
Joseph Summers
Christina Villasenor
Nouphine "Phin" Xaypangna



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CHURCH OF SANTA PAULA

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www.uucsp.org

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(ages 13-23)

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Simi Valley: First Thursday at 3:30
(no meeting in July)

info@diversitycollective.org
ruyouthgroup@gmail.com
805.422.5984



www.diversitycollective.org
You are welcome here.

PROGRAM

- Opening Ceremony
- Welcome
- Brunch
- Welcome Back Program
- Hot Spots
- Poet
- Emotional Wellness Activity
- Model of Pride
- Folklorico Dancers
- Special Recognition
- Closing
- Dance! Dance! Dance!



Christina Villaseñor

Elena Brokaw



FEATURING



Angelina Leños (she/her) is a Ventura County Youth Poet Laureate Emeritus and a first-year MFA student at Fresno State. Angelina regularly serves as a Poetry Out Loud coach and a Poet-Teacher, mentoring youth in poetry recitation and creative writing. Additionally, Angelina is a member of California Poets in the Schools' Board of Directors.





A COMMITMENT TO THE ONE STEP PROMISE

The One Step A La Vez mission is to serve the communities of the Santa Clara River Valley by providing a safe environment for 13–19-year-olds and preparing informed, empowered youth who are equipped with the tools to lead; cultivate cultural awareness; bridge the gaps of inequality; and advocate for fair, just and healthy individuals and community.

Thank you to our generous sponsors!



Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (J.E.D.I)

Our Commitment To Build a Fair and Just Society

One Step A La Vez is committed to the values of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (J.E.D.I). These are action-driven behaviors that we practice throughout all levels of our organization. Our history in addressing systemic barriers deepens our commitment to these values. We are a community-centric organization serving teens who identify with their Latino background, culture, and roots and our board, staff, donors, and volunteers represent the diversity found in the community we serve.

We have adopted hiring practices to ensure that we have culturally proficient staff that connect with the struggle faced by many of our teens. This makes us empathetic to understanding their issues and leads to effective youth outcomes.

J.E.D.I is at the heart of our mission as we believe that every teen – regardless of who they are – deserves an equal opportunity to thrive and succeed in school, work, and life. To cement these values is a moral imperative but also the foundation for building strong, resilient, and healthy communities. One Step A La Vez is rooted in the struggle towards social and racial justice and equality and our commitment continues as we serve the needs of the historically underserved and underrepresented throughout the Santa Clara River Valley.



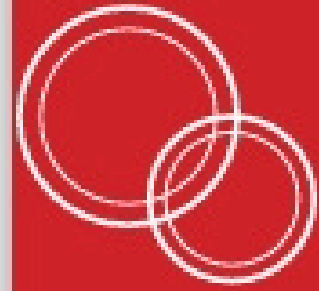
Committee Leadership

Pedro A Chavez, Chair
 Brittany Botts-Volaski, Co-Chair
 Amanda Garza, Staff Liaison

Members

John Bennett
 Brian Clay
 Chiara DiMarco Lopez
 Francisco S Estrada
 Nancy Grass
 Kristen Lopez DiMarco
 Maria "Coco" Macias
 Tay Evans
 Jaslynn Villanueva-Evans
 Cynthia Salas Salgado
 Zandra Tadeo
 Zack Tinwong
 Deirdre Weaver
 Tommy Weisbecker
 Vibay Weisbecker






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MONTH**

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

-Margaret Mead



From:
Carlos Juarez



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805.290.5525**

Rotary



Club of Santa Paula

THE FOUR-WAY TEST

Of the things we think, say, or do

The Four-Way Test is a nonpartisan and nonsectarian ethical guide for Rotarians to use for their personal and professional relationships.

1. Is it the **TRUTH**?
2. Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?
3. Will it build **GOODWILL** and **BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?
4. Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned?

Francisco Solis Estrada

"If you give us the chance, we can perform. After all, Ginger Rogers did everything that Fred Astaire did. She just did it backwards and in high heels." -Ann Richards, former Texas Governor

I was born in Oxnard California to migrant parents from Mexico. My mother worked in the strawberry fields of Oxnard and my father in agriculture as well. As a young boy I loved dancing in my mother's high heels around the house and playing bank with my cousins. In elementary school I would get bullied and beaten by other boys in school because I was different. My mother decided to move to a smaller town where I was embraced by my teachers and friends. I went to Cal State Northridge University and received by BA in Liberal Studies. I have been working in the banking industry for over 30 years. In 1999 I met my soulmate Pedro A. Chavez, and we were married in 2005. I currently have a management position with Citizens Business Bank, in the leadership council of Diversity Equity and Inclusion and was awarded the employee of the year in 2023.

Vibay Chandran Weisbecker

"Believe in yourself, work hard, love who you are, and ignore the naysayers."

I was born in Kolkata, India, and grew up moving around the country with my family because my father was a colonel in the Indian Army. From a young age, I felt different and was often teased at school. My mother always comforted me and made sure my teachers looked out for me. Often, as a young person, I felt like a stranger among people and questioned my self-worth. I channeled my feelings into studying, reading, and making art. This dedication led me to complete my engineering degree and land my first job while still an undergraduate, which took me to England and then the US. In America, I found a community where I could be myself. I met my husband, Thomas, in Los Angeles 14 years ago. He is the light of my life, and together we have created a tranquil life for ourselves. I continued my connection to learning, and graduated with a Master's in Project Management from Pennsylvania State University. My education and experience have enabled me to transform technology for companies like Warner Brothers, British Telecommunications, and Mindbody, among others. Thomas and I now live in Santa Paula with my parents, and I lead a team of engineers and program managers at a start-up company that creates cutting-edge technology using artificial intelligence for the insurance industry.

PRIDE



Nancy Grass, Ph.D.

"Life is good, but rarely easy!"

After failing out of college in the 1980s to marry and have kids, I returned to school to earn my BA, MA and PhD. I am currently the Chair of Communication and Media Studies at Santa Monica College, and have been teaching Communication Studies for over 25 years. I have been with my partner, Deirdre, for 26 years, and together we raised two amazing kids. We are now proud grandparents to three beautiful grandsons. Together we own Nanni and Deeda's Toy Store and Gather and Play Board Game Cafe in Santa Paula.

Deirdre Weaver

Favorite pastime: ping pong! It's purely joyful, and reminds us that we can always strive to be better, and have fun doing it!

As a musician, songwriter, entrepreneur, and educator, my journey from New York City to Santa Paula has been an incredible adventure. I met the love of my life when I walked into a coffee house, then owned by my now wife, Nancy Grass. Twenty-six years later we have three beautiful grandchildren, own a toy store, and a board game cafe on Main Street in Santa Paula, where we share our passion for creating spaces that foster community and spread joy. I am also proud to be a board member of the Santa Paula Chamber of Commerce, and an administrator for the last 12 years at Santa Monica College.



Thomas J. (“TJ”) Weisbecker

“Our highest calling in life is health. Second is compassion.”

I was always a little different than my peers, but thanks to the unconditional love and support of my family, I hardly knew it! Born in 1981 in Marin County, I moved to Southern California in 1989. I graduated from Crespi Carmelite High School, and returned to the Bay Area to study philosophy and design. After graduating from the University of San Francisco in 2003, I worked as a youth minister for the Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles for eight years, while attending graduate school at Loyola Marymount University, where I graduated in 2011 with a master’s in theology. It was a challenge being a member of the LGBTQ+ community while working for the Catholic Church, so I became a member of the United Church of Christ. For two years I was the youth minister and Director of Congregational Life at the UCC Cathedral of Hope in Dallas, Texas, the world’s largest LGBTQ+ Christian Church, before returning to California for post-graduate studies at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto. I moved with my husband Vibay to Santa Paula’s Harvest community in 2021. We met online in 2009, married in West Hollywood in 2013, and together have overcome significant discrimination as an interracial gay couple, as well as challenges from my own congenital medical illness. I was born with a condition called Klippel-Trenaunay Syndrome, which has deeply affected my outlook on life: There’s simply no time to waste! Take care of yourself, love the people around you, and do what makes you happy.

Amanda Garza

“There is nothing more beautiful and powerful than someone who chooses to be themselves!”

I am from Fillmore, California, and currently working as the Teen-Center Coordinator at One Step A La Vez. I started as a volunteer with One Step, and quickly realized I really enjoyed helping the youth, and developing bonds with them at the center. I support the LGBTQ+ community because I have family in the community, and I believe it is important for everyone to feel supported and be able to express who they are.

PRIDE!



John Garcia

I grew up in a conservative region of Reno, Nevada. I felt different from all the other kids growing up, but this didn’t stop me! In my teenage years, I was on the boys basketball team, ran cross country, was on the ski team, and ran track and field. I was also involved in student council, serving as Class President for all four years of high school. I was also very involved in several youth leadership programs. I attended the University of Nevada-Reno, where I studied business administration and political science. While attending college, I interned for the then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. I landed my first professional position at a financial institution, and worked my way up to my Regional Manager for Florida, Virginia, Maryland, and Washington D.C. For the past twenty years, I used my platform to serve on various boards that aimed to progress the LGBTQ+ community, including helping to run pride celebrations in every city where I called home. After 20 years in the financial world, I entered the non-profit world for the YMCA as Administrative Coordinator, where I aimed to make a positive difference for Ventura County residents. I recently married the love of my life, Dr. Nicholas Bennett, and together we live in Santa Paula with our two beautiful puppies, where we truly enjoy making new friends.

Apisak “Zack” Tinwong

“There’s nothing wrong with you. There’s a lot wrong with the world you live in.”
– Chris Colfer

I am from Thailand, and I met my husband, Brian, in 2006 in Hawaii. We then moved to Thailand and returned to university to pursue our Master’s degrees while working full-time jobs. I worked as an E-Commerce Manager for several 5-star hotel brands like Accor and Marriott. Brian was the Head of the Science Department at BCC, one of the oldest schools in Thailand. After over a decade, just before the pandemic, we decided to move back to the USA to be closer to Brian’s family. Now, we reside in Santa Paula. Stepping into new career paths, Brian returned to a management role at Applebee’s, while I work two jobs at Dee Thai Restaurant and as a Home Care Giver. Our 18-year journey has not been easy, especially given our crossed cultures, different backgrounds, families, and beliefs, but LOVE WINS!





Tay Evans

I am from Centreville, Illinois, and currently live in Santa Paula. I came here with my wife, Jaslynn, in 2020, after relocating from San Diego for the military. We have been married for 10 years, and we support the LGBTQ+ community because we know how important is it so feel inclusive in a society that isn't always welcoming. We enjoy being part of the local LGBTQ+ community, which connects us with individuals who share the same lifestyle, fostering a sense of belonging, and reduces feelings of isolation. For the both of us, showing up and showing support for our fellow LGBTQ+ community empowers individuals to stand up for their rights and the rights of others. Being part of the LGBTQ+ community is about more than identity; it's about support, advocacy, and the ongoing fight for equality and acceptance.



Jaslynn Villanueva-Evans

I am from the beautiful island of Oahu, Hawaii. I currently reside in Santa Paula with my wife, Tay. We moved here in 2020, after relocating from San Diego for the military. We have been married for 10 lovely years, and we support the LGBTQ+ community because we know how important is it so feel inclusive in a society that isn't always welcoming. We enjoy being part of the local LGBTQ+ community, which connects us to people who share the same lifestyle, fostering a sense of belonging, and reduces feelings of isolation—a feeling that is all too familiar to us! I believe that showing support for our fellow LGBTQ+ community empowers individuals to stand up for their rights and the rights of others, creating a more just and equitable world.

Zandra Tadeo

"You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore." -Cesar Chavez.

I am the proud daughter of immigrant parents, I was born and raised in Ventura, California, where my parents worked tirelessly in the agricultural fields under extreme working conditions. My parents' hardship fuels my passion to continue fighting for the rights of others and has led me to earn a BA in Psychology and a master's in social work. I have dedicated my life to service, advocacy and healing. My husband Oscar and I recently moved to the beautiful city of Santa Paula where we have been embraced and welcome by a community of extraordinary and likeminded individuals. As a mental health clinician for over 24 years I have witness, the negative impact on the mental health of LGBTQ individuals because of discrimination and lack of rights. Being an LGBTQ+ ally means a full-time commitment to diversity, inclusion and respect. Helping to create a platform for activism to fight homophobia and transphobia, and taking action for LGBTQ rights, promoting equality, safety, mental health, visibility, representation, and legal protections for LGBTQ individuals.



John Garcia Bennett

I grew up in a conservative region of Reno, Nevada. I felt different from all the other kids growing up, but this didn't stop me! In my teenage years, I was on the boys basketball team, ran cross country, was on the ski team, and ran track and field. I was also involved in student council, serving as Class President for all four years of high school. I was also very involved in several youth leadership programs. I attended the University of Nevada-Reno, where I studied business administration and political science. While attending college, I interned for the then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. I landed my first professional position at a financial institution, and worked my way up to Regional Manager for Florida, Virginia, Maryland, and Washington D.C. For the past twenty years, I used my platform to serve on various boards that aimed to progress the LGBTQ+ community, including helping to run pride celebrations in every city where I called home. After 20 years in the financial world, I entered the non-profit world for the YMCA as Administrative Coordinator, where I aimed to make a positive difference for Ventura County residents. I recently married the love of my life, Dr. Nicholas Bennett, and together we live in Santa Paula with our two beautiful puppies, where we truly enjoy making new friends.




Cynthia Salas Salgado

I am a dedicated advocate for equity and inclusion, with a background in biochemistry from Iowa State University. Passionate about closing the achievement gap from 0 to 22, I work to mentor and prepare emerging leaders in my community. As a product of Head Start Programs, I attribute my success to the support of my parents, family, community leaders, teachers, and strong women mentors. I am committed to empowering others to reach their full potential, to advancing racial equity through data-informed strategies. With a career spanning both healthcare and education sectors, I am known for my strategic guidance and advocacy for marginalized communities. In my role as Equity Services Manager at Ventura County Behavioral Health, I led the Office of Health Equity and Cultural Diversity, providing pivotal guidance on implementing federal statutes and welfare institution codes. I served as the DEI Chair for the County of Ventura for three years, fostering initiatives to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion across the county. Additionally, I dedicated two years to serving as President of the Latino Town Hall, amplifying the voices of the Latino community. I am a board member of One Step A La Vez. In my current role leading outreach and engagement efforts at Ventura County Office of Education for the Migrant Education Program, I make meaningful contributions to educational equity. I enjoy reading about x-ray crystallography, engaging in arts, practicing combat sports, and spending time in nature with my two dogs, Albert Einstein and Michelle Besso!

Nanni & Deeda's

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Café

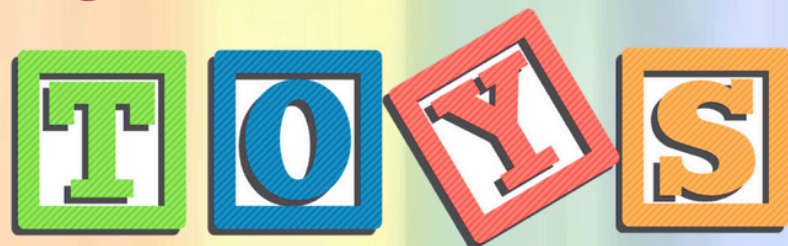
 Happy Pride Month!

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PRIDE
MONTH**

**Best Wishes on a
successful Pride!**

**Shauna
McGee**



WITH GRATITUDE FOR YOUR SERVICE



Los Chicos



Jesus Fernandez
PHOTOGRAPHY

One Step A La Vez
Making Changes One Step at a Time
421 Sespe Ave, Fillmore CA

SERVING TEENS IN THE SANTA CLARA RIVER VALLEY

SINCE 2007

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Gabriela Reyes
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Susan Johnson
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Brittany Botts-Volaski
Ruben Felix Negrete
Sal Fuentes
Mia Martinez
Gabriela Reyes
Nancy Rodriguez-Hernandez
Christina Villaseñor

- LEADERSHIP**
 Co-Executive Directors
Pedro A Chavez
 Strategic Relations & Advancement

Jazmin G Gavilanes
 Teen Programs & Impact



HELPING TEENS TAKE THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS A POSITIVE FUTURE

Teen Wellness Center
 Our after-school teen center serves as a safe and inclusive place and the home base for all of our programs and services.

Adelante
 Empowers our teens to find their voice to address issues of social justice and equality.

Bienestar
 Provides access for teens to on-site mental health services, case-management counseling and support groups.

Conocimiento
 Evidenced-based prevention program that helps youth with adverse childhood experiences access wellness education and leadership development while breaking down small-town rivalries that lead to positive behavioral changes.

Evening Reporting Center
 Youth are referred through the Ventura County Probation Agency or through members of the community (school, community members, law enforcement) and complete their court-appointed community service requirements and are also provided individual case management.

Food Access
 Staff, youth and volunteers coordinate our twice-monthly food distributions to local families to combat hunger and food insecurity.

Circle of Care
 A monthly community collaborative representing different service providers, community stakeholders, and county and local agencies that work together to find community-based solutions.

Thank you to our Institutional Funders, Foundations and Community Partners!



Membership is FREE

One Step Center Hours

Monday – Friday
 1:00 P.M. – 7:00 P.M.

Open to teens ages 13-19

Food Share Hours

Every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month from 3:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.

Contact Us

421 Sespe Ave

Fillmore, CA 93015

Office: 805-625-7067

One Step Center: 805-625-7066

Info@MyOneStep.org

MyOneStep.org

Scan to learn more.





Pride in the Age of Equality

By Pedro A. Chavez



It's that time of the year again where members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies celebrate Pride, a month-long series of festivals, proclamation and flag raising ceremonies, socials and other community-centric gatherings held in cities, counties, and states across our nation. But what does Pride mean in the age of equality? It wasn't too long ago that our community faced the daily bombardment of homophobic and discriminatory assaults on our civil liberties. And yes, it was fueled by hate and ignorance. Hate caused by the fear of the unknown. History has taught us that people fear what they don't understand, and we've witnessed that injustice play out in our lifetime.

For members of the LGBTQ+ community it's been a long and emotional struggle with scars that have only been healed through love and self-acceptance. However, we lost so many friends and family along the way through death or rejection. The damage caused by constant bullying, homophobia both internal and external, discrimination and violence has had a detrimental impact on our minds, our bodies, and souls. Isolation and the lack of socio-emotional support led many down a path of destructive behaviors including drug and alcohol addiction, risky sexual behavior to mental health issues and eventually suicide. For those of us who survived the trauma, we must continue to live and tell our story as our lives have become symbols that societal change and progress is possible.

So let me share with you a bit about my life and the struggles I faced growing up to eventually become who I am today. I grew up in the age of AIDS, where being gay was synonymous with dying of the virus. Growing up in the 1990's and seeing how gay people were bashed, harassed, and discriminated was difficult to witness first-hand. Discriminatory laws and policies swept the country including "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" preventing gays and lesbians from serving openly in the military in 1993 and the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996 which barred recognition of same-sex couples to marry. Increased hate crimes to members of the LGBT community were rampant and the nation mourned the senseless murder of 21-year-old Matthew Shepard on Oct. 12, 1998. At home my uncle lost his battle with HIV and subsequently died of AIDS in 1997, and being gay was a topic that wasn't much talked about. So, imagine my experience growing up as a youth in that era? The assaults on gays and lesbians were happening in real time everywhere I turned.

I had to hide deep in that closet and keep the secret of being gay to myself until I was ready to embrace self-acceptance which didn't happen until I was around 21 years of age. Like so many, I always knew I was different but didn't realize what that really meant early on. Being gay or lesbian is not a choice. However, accepting your authentic self is the struggle we deal with when we are not supported and embraced by our family, community, and society. The actual choice one makes is about how one accepts themselves and finally comes out of the closet. It's a personal journey that one must face in their lifetime, and everyone's path is not the same. For some who are loved and embraced by their family it comes early on in their youth and for others it comes when one achieves independence. Others are chained against self-acceptance by fear and personal trauma imposed on them by family, religion, or societal constructs. Many attempt to live straight or dual lives to please others but end up coming out later in life because they can no longer bear their repressive state. No matter your age, you get to a reflection point in your life when you start the process of shedding the layers of self-hate and oppression that have held you back for years and that's when one's journey of healing begins.

In 1999, I left my college experience and headed straight into the trenches of the LGBT civil rights movement where I started a career in the non-profit sector and engulfed my passion not only for marriage equality but for the health and social services of those marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented. In 2005, I followed my heart and moved to Ventura County from Washington D.C. Love is what saved my life and this year I'm proud to celebrate 18 years of marriage to my husband, Francisco S. Estrada. Marriage equality has transformed the lives of so many same-sex couples including mine, and lead many to form families, raise children and build healthy relationships that are thriving.

Today I stand as the first openly gay Council Member and now Vice Mayor in the City of Santa Paula and the first openly gay person of color elected to any public office in Ventura County. As a proud Gay Latino, it's imperative to use my voice to share the impact that equality has made in the lives of the LGBTQ+ community. I carry the torch of responsibility for those countless LGBT community activists and leaders that have paved the way and made equality possible.

So, Pride in the age of equality means that there's hope for a better future where LGBTQ+ people are accepted and embraced for who they are. But it's also about healing and ensuring that we don't stop advocating for a world that treats us equally with dignity and respect no matter our sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

#LOVEWINS!

