

STORIES FROM OUR NETWORK

2019



LEADING
from within



122
AGENCIES

Non-profits, School Districts,
Government, and Community
Based Organizations

Leading From Within invests in people who drive and create change in Santa Barbara County.

Our leadership programs, alumni education, and impact networks cultivate leaders who are renewed, prepared, connected, and collaborating for the greater good of all.

The Leading for Community Impact program helped me build bridges among community partners in my cohort because we are all working towards the same goal: creating a voice and better serving the families in our community!

Maria Aguila
County of Santa Barbara
LCI alumni

Many social sector leaders find their way into their profession because of a passion to serve. They are compassionate people who cannot see people in need and do nothing.

To change systems to make life better for people, one needs to know how to use their voice to exercise influence and how to listen to the voices of others. Our Leading From Within participants complete our programs and are more courageous in using their voice to improve our communities and advocate for others.

“It took me quite a long time to develop a voice, and now that I have it, I am not going to be silent.”

Madeleine Albright

How do you use your voice?

Tell us your story.

We thank the Santa Barbara Foundation for its generous support of our programs and mission.



Welcome Letter

Dear Leading From Within friends,

I just finished watching an episode of “The Voice.” No joke. The show may well be the only reality TV this music lover ever actually enjoyed watching. The concept is simple: artists try to connect with the judges and audience strictly through the power of their voice. I do not think it is too far a stretch to say that it is a pretty good metaphor for much of what we do in the nonprofit sector. We connect people’s passions, talents, and resources to serve a need, address a challenge, or make a change.

The strongest voice is often that which harnesses the power of the larger group, articulates a critical message in terms of ‘we’, and taps into our common humanity. In my experience, this holds true regardless of scale, whether we are looking inward at how we lead a team of professional colleagues or outward at how we work to get a message heard in the larger community.

The greatest personal impact of my time as a Katherine Harvey Fellow (KHF) was that it introduced me to those whose voices I rarely encountered. Although I have previously worked in both the public and for-profit private sector, the vast majority of my adult life has been spent in community work – specifically in the nonprofit sector. My KHF cohort, on the other hand, was primarily made up of those who worked in the for-profit sector. Together we discovered our common interests and turned the lessons we learned into a new program now known as Youth Making Change (YMC). We believed that the valuable tools we developed as young professionals could be shared with an even



PHOTO: Geoff Green uses his voice to provide higher education to every Santa Barbara County high school graduate through the SBCC Promise Program.

younger generation. For more than a decade now, YMC has empowered our community’s youth to learn the tools of philanthropy and use them to raise their own voices and those of their peers, thanks to the KHF program.

I have spent much of my nonprofit career struggling with the puzzle of how to amplify those voices that are too infrequently heard, while facilitating conversations across deep divides in experience, perspective, and goals. If we truly want to solve our community’s biggest problems,

“The strongest voice is often that which harnesses the power of the larger group, articulates a critical message in terms of ‘we’, and taps into our common humanity.”

and we trust that individuals can tell their own stories best, we must make space for those stories to be heard. We must offer the tools for people to raise their voices.

We can and must be better at inviting new voices into our work. Our work toward creating “a more perfect union” is dependent upon hearing different people’s stories, believing them, and making our culture, institutions, and organizations inclusive of them, and Leading From Within is helping to lead the way.

Here is to lifting all voices and building a community and world that works for all.

Geoff Green
Chief Executive Officer
Santa Barbara City College Foundation
Katherine Harvey Fellow Alumni

FINDING HER VOICE

Karin Powers

Finance and Human Resource Director
North County Rape Crisis & Child Protection Center
Emerging Leaders Alumni
LFW Alumni Collaborative Leadership Council

Karin Powers graduated from Cal Poly at the age of 40. If she had not been motivated by her back injury, she may have not attended college. She serves as the Finance and Human Resource Director for the North County Rape Crisis and Child Protection Center (NCRCCPC), where she has worked for the past 12 years and plans to stay until she retires.

The mission of the NCRCCPC—to reduce the incidence of and vulnerability to sexual assault, child abuse, and human trafficking by providing education and prevention skills to community children and adults and to alleviate the trauma experienced by survivors of these crimes by providing direct services—spoke to Karin on a deeply personal level. As a survivor of domestic violence and sexual assault, Karin understands the lifesaving value of her organization.

“To be able to give back and let survivors know that there is a non-judgmental, safe place for them to go is priceless,” she said.

When Karin talks about her work, it brings her to tears. “I’ve answered the crisis hotline for 10 years and accompanied victims during law enforcement interviews, forensic evidence collection, and court proceedings. As difficult as it is for me, it’s devastating for the survivors,” she explained.

Karin works with survivors in the North County of Santa Barbara. Her organization helps survivors use their voice to share their stories, enabling them to get the help they need.

Karin credits the Emerging Leaders program (ELP) with helping her find her own voice. When her executive director recommended she apply to the Leading From Within program, she was reluctant. She did not see herself as a leader. Eventually, she talked herself into participating, knowing it would be beneficial to “crawl out from under my rock.”

Little did she know, that decision would change her life.

“The Emerging Leaders program made me want to have a voice and made me realize that I did have a voice.”

“The Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) made me want to have a voice and made me realize that I did have a voice,” she said. She admits she was feeling dismissed and unappreciated by a coworker when she happened to attend a workshop featuring a guest speaker who said, “It’s not up to that person to see me as an equal but it’s up to me to see myself as equal.”

“That,” says Karin, “was the most aha moment of my life!”



PHOTO: Karin helps survivors use their voice to share their stories, enabling them to get the help they need.

As her confidence grew, so did her responsibility at the NCRCCPC. “At the beginning, I was working under the radar, feeling like I didn’t have a strong finance background and trying to prove I was worthy of the director title,” she said. “It took me a while to realize how much my opinion and knowledge of nonprofit management [were] respected.”

Karin is now part of a senior team at the rape crisis center. “One of the most powerful lessons I learned from the ELP is the importance of supporting our employees and eliciting honest feedback from them on a regular basis. They also have a voice that needs to be heard.”

“I’m still growing and I know I have 10 more years in this job. So why shouldn’t I push myself to do more and be more?” That’s one of the reasons she is active with the LFW Alumni Collaborative Leadership Council, which ensures that leaders in the North County continue to learn and grow together.

“When I started this journey, I didn’t see myself as a leader or a nonprofit professional, but ELP changed my life,” says Karin. “I’ve never been more comfortable in my own skin and I know that my voice matters.”

GIVING VOICE TO THE VOICELESS

Frank Rodriguez

Policy and Communications Associate

CAUSE (Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy)

Emerging Leaders Alumni

Frank Rodriguez is the person you want advocating for you. The son of immigrants from Jalisco, Mexico, and a first-generation UCLA grad with a master's Degree in Latin American studies from the University of Texas at Austin, Frank has both the knowledge and experience to help the families he serves. Frank works as the policy and communications associate for CAUSE (Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy), a nonprofit that is building grassroots power to invoke social, economic, and environmental justice through policy research, leadership development, organizing, and advocacy.

Frank's passion — protecting the rights of marginalized populations in Santa Barbara County — stems from his own personal experience. His mother cleans houses and his father tended the bar at La Cumbre Country Club before eventually moving back to Mexico. Frank got his first job as a busboy at the country club, where he met a group of families who sponsored his attendance at Bishop Garcia Diego High School. There, he started a chapter of MEChA, a movement created in Santa Barbara in 1969 with a mission to empower the Chicana community. "I was bridging two worlds: my Mexican home, which was safe and comfortable, and the more affluent world that felt alien to me," Frank explained. "There are

a lot of tensions being in two worlds and that experience politicized me."

After graduating from UCLA, Frank stayed in Southern California and was involved with labor, electoral, and community organizing. "I saw the power of collective bargaining and wanted to be a positive voice to the immigrant community," he said.

"The ability to be part of a union where people feel respected is powerful," Frank explained. "My mom could work for 10 hours with no overtime, field workers often suffer without adequate water, and others work without access to clean bathrooms or paid maternity leave."

Frank's love for policy work led him to the University of Texas at Austin. He wanted to gain experience in the field with a large Mexican population, while pursuing a masters degree in Latin American studies. While Frank embraced the two-step, he's a Cali kid at heart and sought opportunities to return home.

He was thrilled to find CAUSE, where he has worked for the past three years, focusing on tenant rights and electoral issues. It is a community organization with an allegiance to labor and electoral politics, encapsulating many of the causes that Frank cares deeply about. "I am able to work on immigration and tenant rights policy, while at the same time building community and electoral power alongside community partners."

"It's daunting to think of all that's happening, even in our small town, and to be able to engage in conversations with social sector leaders that I wouldn't connect with otherwise was fruitful."

Many of Frank's local connections came from his participation with the Emerging Leaders Program. "The Emerging Leaders Program helped me map out the community landscape and connect with other nonprofits in a systemic way that I appreciated," he said. "It's daunting to think of all that's happening, even in our small town, and to be able to engage in conversations with social sector leaders that I wouldn't connect with otherwise was fruitful." Frank also appreciates that Leading From Within supports social sectors in the North County, working to benefit the larger region.

Frank still has his Emerging Leaders journal and this intentional writing gave him "a bolt of energy to reflect on myself." If he is not writing about policy reform, then his journal is filled with hip-hop lyrics.

PHOTO: Frank believes in the power of collective bargaining and is a positive voice for the immigrant community.



PEOPLE ARE AN ORGANIZATION'S GREATEST ASSET

Leading From Within invests in people who drive and create change in Santa Barbara County and beyond.

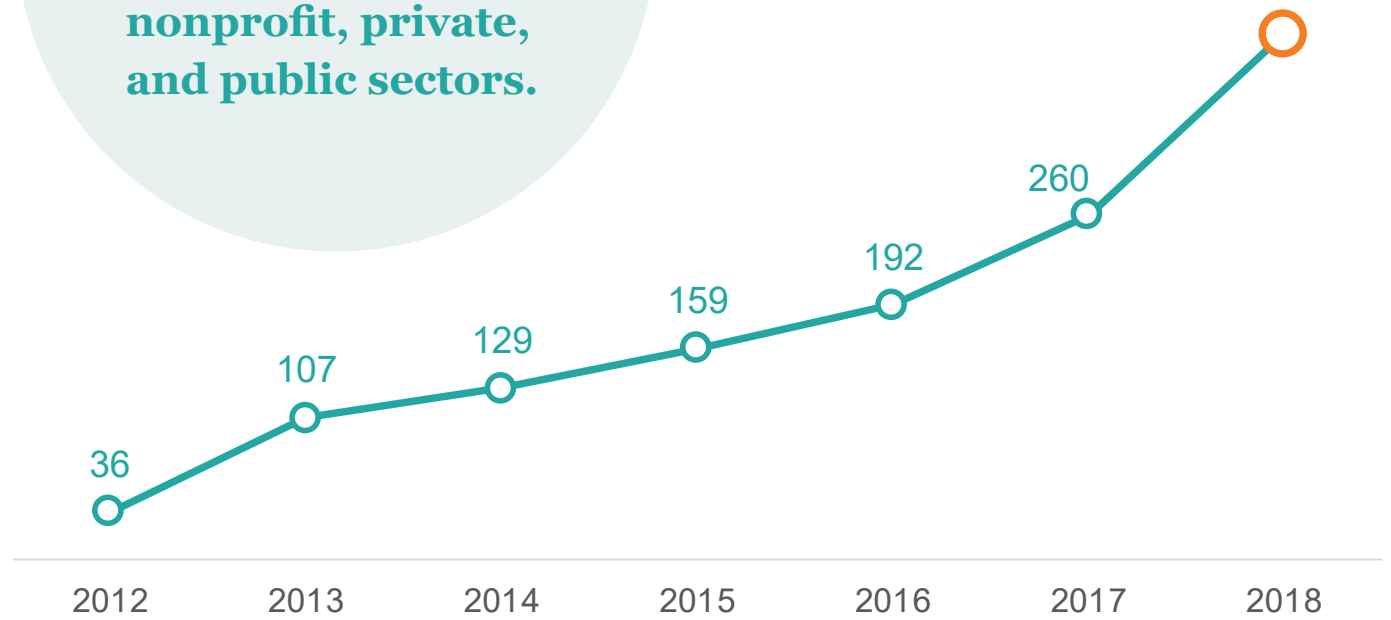
Our work ensures we keep and grow the people the sector cannot afford to lose, people who are strengthening our communities, environment, and economy.

OUR 3-PART COMMUNITY IMPACT MODEL



Leading From Within alumni serve professionally in the nonprofit, private, and public sectors.

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY PARTICIPANTS SERVED 396



Zahar Nahar-Moore, LFW alumni, Direct Relief, is a board member of planned Parenthood of the Central Coast

78%

of Emerging Leaders report they have taken on projects or stepped into roles that impact the larger community.



Monique Limón, LFW alumni, is a current California state representative and is running for California State Senate

15

alumni are in roles of democratic civic engagement locally and statewide, including city councils, school boards, county commissions, and other elected bodies.



Danny Rabara, LFW alumni, UCP Work Inc., serves Santa Barbara and the surrounding region

75

the number of Leading From Within leaders serving northern Santa Barbara County.

USING VOICE AS A CONNECTOR

Wendy Sims-Moten

Executive Director, First 5 Santa Barbara County
President, Santa Barbara Unified School Board
Emerging Leaders Alumni

Wendy Sims-Moten has served as Executive Director of First 5 Santa Barbara County for the past two years. However, she was passed up for the position when she first applied five years ago.

At that time, Wendy had been with First 5 for 13 years, working her way up from departmental assistant to business manager. She was being primed for another promotion. “I was told that I was not fully qualified,” she said.

But that temporary setback turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

“That experience forced me to take a look at who I was and how I was perceived. It made me think about what I wanted and how I needed to get there,” she recalled. A natural leader, Wendy knew she wanted more professionally, whether it was at First 5 or elsewhere. Fueled by that delay, she completed her undergraduate degree, often doing coursework at 2 am, as she juggled her job and family.

“It was a transformative experience and I learned that difficult conversations and disappointments can be preparation for something greater on the other side,” she said. “Not everything that is hurtful or challenging is bad. Sometimes the storm is clearing a path for something greater.”

When the executive director position opened up again five years after the initial “not yet.” Wendy

was better prepared and poised to accept the responsibility.

In the interim years she learned a great deal about herself, gaining experience through service with other organizations. Wendy saw a great deal of inequity and strives to impact change. That is one of the reasons she ran for the Santa Barbara Unified School Board, where she now serves as President. She explained the other reason was to give voice to a population that was not at the table.

“I felt that my voice wasn’t being represented and as an African American woman, I knew it was important to convey that perspective,” she said. She hopes to inspire others who may see themselves in her story.

“I appreciated that ELP didn’t tell you what you have to do, but reinforced the importance of listening to your own voice.”

“Voice is a powerful connector,” she said. “You must listen to your own voice to be confident.” It is a lesson she learned from the Emerging Leaders Program (ELP). “I appreciated that ELP didn’t tell you what you have to do, but reinforced the importance of listening to your own voice,” she said. Another important lesson: “You can lead



PHOTO: Wendy, as an African American woman, uses her voice to convey an important perspective not always represented.
CREDIT: Paul Wellman/ Santa Barbara Independent

from wherever you are. Titles do not define who you are – you define who you are.”

“When I think about the power of one’s voice to influence and inspire, one of my favorite quotes by Howard Thurman comes to mind,” she said, quoting: ‘There is something in every one of you that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself. It is the only true guide you will ever have. And if you cannot hear it, you will all of your life spend your days on the ends of strings that somebody else pulls.’ Trusting her inner voice is what guided Wendy to pursue one of her passions – advocating for education in

the first five years of life and supporting Santa Barbara’s students to be prepared for a world that has yet to be created. She hopes that young people will learn from their setbacks – and persevere.

Wendy said the ELP expanded her leadership skills in addition to giving her time to reflect. She credits her mother, a nurse, for demonstrating leadership and listening with graciousness and understanding. These influences inspired Wendy’s own leadership formula: “F3SOHR2,” representing faith, family, friends, a sense of humor, and Ron and RJ, her husband and son.

LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF OTHERS

Christopher Tucker

Executive Director
Garden Court
Courage to Lead Alumni

Garden Court independent living community in downtown Santa Barbara is transforming low-income senior housing on a national level and significantly improving the lives of its residents. The pioneering power of Garden Court is due to the innovative talent of its Executive Director, Christopher Tucker, and to the forward-thinking nature of Santa Barbara's Housing Authority.

Garden Court, a congregate housing community serving low-income, often previously homeless seniors, is a model of how federal tax credits can subsidize public housing and create a loving, supportive home to an elderly population. Garden Court is the first in the nation to provide near assisted living services to low-income seniors for an average cost to the resident of \$850 per month. The model is so successful that Garden Court will open a second site in early 2020. Known as Gardens on Hope, the 89-unit building already has a needs-based wait list.

Chris' interest in seniors started in high school, when he worked at a senior center washing dishes and bussing tables. That experience provided his first glimpse of the "silver tsunami," a metaphor used to describe a groundswell of seniors and their growing, unmet need for housing and services. "In many other countries, like Mexico, 90 percent of seniors live with their families," Chris explains. "But in the U.S. 90

percent live outside the home, contributing to a significant housing crisis."

"Seniors have become marginalized in our country both physically and psychologically," says Chris. "That isolation is compounded because it's rarely discussed."

Chris is passionate about giving a voice to those issues—and has the professional background to be effective. After graduating from UCSB, Chris enrolled in the Peace Corps, educating seniors about natural disaster prevention. He received dual master's degrees; in public health from Boston University, where he volunteered with AmeriCorps, assisting seniors in an international public housing community. His thesis focused on how to provide public housing with services such as transportation, health advocacy, meals, and adult education to seniors.

He also earned his second master's from Harvard, majoring in education, a training that inspired the life-long learning curriculum offered at Garden Court, keeping seniors engaged in cultural adventures, artistic expression, music, daily exercise, and meaningful community service.

"Three decades of community building experience has shown me that intergenerational projects bring people of all ages and walks of life together. This creates something purposeful and leads to greater levels of enduring trust, positive self-identity, and joyful fulfillment," Chris explained.

"It's incredible to talk with our residents and hear their personal stories; they have lived a remarkable span of great social and technological change!" he said. Chris admits he is innately interested in people and their unique experiences.

The key to sharing stories is active listening, a skill he says he learned from his participation with Courage to Lead. "The listening skills I acquired from Courage to Lead have made a significant difference to me as an employer with my staff and with the residents who are most reluctant to trust," he said. "I'm better able to help our most at-risk clients by building bridges of trust, and this in turn allows residents to stay in one place long enough to foster friendships, romances, and even reunite with family members."

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Giving people a second chance is a big part of the equation. "My heart is with the people you see on the street who are homeless and older and who may believe that they have nowhere to go," he said. "My proudest personal moments are when residents share that Garden Court is their favorite place they've ever lived. I'd like to make that feeling a reality for as many people as possible."

PHOTO: Chris is passionate about giving voice to the unmet needs of seniors in our community.



How do you use your voice?

Share your story with us on our Facebook and Instagram.



Support the people using their voice to strengthen our community.

Contact Ken Saxon at Ken@leading-from-within.org or 805-770-3232 or visit our website at www.leading-from-within.org.