

STORIES FROM OUR NETWORK

2020



LEADING
from within

Purpose

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.

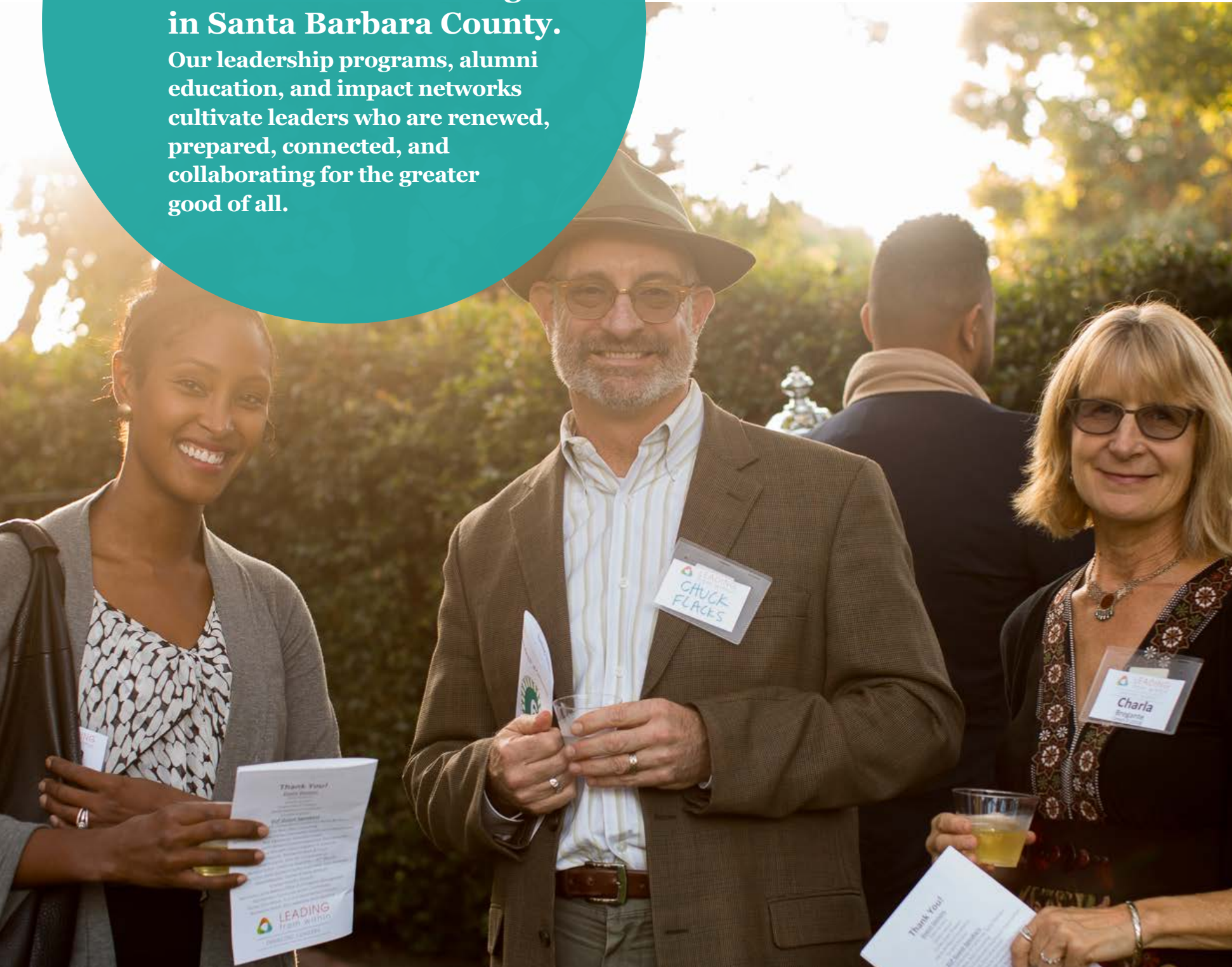


PHOTO: Alumni gathered at Emerging Leaders celebration event. (left to right) Zahra Nahar-Moore (Emerging Leaders alumni), Chuck Flacks (Courage to Lead alumni), and Charla Bregante (Emerging Leaders alumni).

In the tumult of 2020, adapting how one serves has been a challenge across the social sector. Some leaders are overwhelmed by demand; others struggle with meeting needs in novel ways. The pandemic and economic instability it created has emphasized the discrepancies our sector works to resolve. We seek to rise to the renewed call for social justice, and fulfill our purpose by offering our best work.

Leading From Within's answer to these new challenges has been to seek out our network in new ways, listen, and strive to offer connection among peers to counter the remoteness of social distancing. Our focus shifted from set programs to finding new ways to meet and serve our leaders where they are. We have experienced so many amazing stories along the way, and Stories From Our Network 2020 is dedicated to sharing some of these with you.

“Our deepest calling is to grow into our own authentic self-hood, whether or not it conforms to some image of who we ought to be. As we do so, we will not only find the joy that every human being seeks—we will also find our path of authentic service in the world.”

Parker Palmer

How are you living your purpose in a year of adaptation?

Tell us your story.

To reach out follow directions on the back cover.



Thank you to the Santa Barbara Foundation who believes in uplifting and investing in our mission and leaders like you.

Welcome Letter



Dear Leading From Within friends,

Start with YES. These words are set in bold type on a print where I sit each day. The sentiment is so simple and easy for me to employ. If I meet every opportunity with “yes”, it offers me new prospects for learning and personal growth. Yes is a constant reminder for how I want to show up. I find great freedom in this positive first step. I have been called an optimist and always employ this attitude no matter if the call comes from a friend in need, or someone offering a chance to be part of something new. This attitude has led me on some fantastic paths over the years so I am always ready to start with Yes!

Here at the end of 2020, my three little letters are sometimes hard to face! There are so many challenges, distractions and roadblocks. Everywhere lurks another reason to pull in and not participate. Especially poignant now is the need for love and leadership. When every community is facing new challenges it makes sense to look to one another for ideas to adapt to those strange times. Leading From Within has come to the rescue for many with adaptive offerings. During this year of pandemic, civil unrest and political turmoil this creative way of serving the leadership community has been a bright spot for many in the Leading From Within family. While the normal way of gathering for groups has had to change,

PHOTO: Diane Adam, Community Organizer and Katherine Harvey Fellows Alumni welcomes us to these stories of purpose with her spirit of “Yes!” and uplifting peers.

“When every community is facing new challenges it makes sense to look to one another for ideas to adapt.”

Leading From Within has committed to adapting programming and “Adaptive Peer Offerings.” I have said yes to a number of offerings from a book learning circle to a cooking class to meditations...all things I would not have been able to participate in before. Leading From Within has created a relevant space for nonprofit leaders to keep connected in order to move thoughts and ideas forward in support of each other.

An important aspect of leadership is adapting while learning. The adaptive offerings are a creative space for alumni to gather in a non-competitive and grateful way. I find the time in these offerings a respite and I look forward to each because I have made new connections with people I would not have otherwise gotten the opportunity to know. I am certain that we will see some powerful new collaborations come out of adapting to the times.

The leaders (Connie, Frederick, Gabriella and Michael) highlighted here work in education, art and activism. All are great examples of success in the world of nonprofit leadership. Even though they come from vastly different places and areas of expertise they have a shared love of learning, a renewed sense of the need for active listening, and a healthy attitude of questioning. Especially evident is a huge respect for the leadership circles created with alumni from the various programs they have gone through at Leading From Within. These circles are another way Leading From Within has adapted to Covid and I am sure some of the new ways of being together will persist.

Challenges are also opportunities. The adaptive offerings have taken the challenge of the times and turned out some fantastic opportunities to connect, learn and grow with our peers. The greatest thing is that people from all of the leadership programs (Katherine Harvey Fellows, Courage to Lead, Emerging Leaders and Leading for Community Impact) can come together for a simple moment or a serial program. The fact that we have been forced to connect with technology during this time only serves to broaden the links that Leading From Within has created among people with leadership in their hearts. As 2020 winds down there are plenty of places to see trouble and turmoil and seemingly few things to be thankful for. If we take the challenges and try to find opportunities within, change the frame, and look at things differently, gratitude will follow close behind.

I am looking forward to another Leading From Within opportunity or adaptive offering in which to employ my “YES!”

In gratitude for this community,

Diane Adam

Co-creator, Touchstone Central Coast

Thank you to all those who have contributed to this piece, and for all their hard work along the way: Jocelyn Piazza, Sarita Relis Photography, Elissa Scholessor/Visual Voice, Writer Dean Zatkowsky and all of our alumni who are featured.

UPHOLDING HOPE

Connie Alexander

Co-Founder & Co-Executive Director | Gateway Educational Services
Courage to Lead Participant

Connie comes from a long line of activist women, devoted to the idea that if you see something wrong, you must try to fix it. As a child of San Francisco in the 70s, Connie explained “there was a lot going on: Women’s rights, the Black Power Movement, emergence of the LGBTQ community. That was all around me, and my parents were very engaged.” While her mother was a Teamster and a union organizer, her Father was an Activist and Pastor: “I spent part of my childhood making picketing signs.”

As an advocate for education and youth, Connie explained, “My parents would always tell me your education is one thing no one can ever take from you.”

As an avid reader in her youth, Connie became a voracious listener in her work. In the early stages, she and Co-founder Audrey Gamble thought they would focus only on education assessments and tutoring. “Students stayed with us, and we really got to know them,” Connie explained. “We began to see the needs of our families. Food insecurity; housing insecurity; with all that on top of the family, of course children are struggling.” Not only does Gateway Educational Services help children with their education, but it really bridges the gap between home life and education.

During Covid and distance learning, Connie observes a new challenge. “Our introverts are thriving. Our extraverts are struggling. They need more social engagement...We’re asking schools to carry a part of our social sector they were not designed to carry. That’s why our nonprofit sector is even more important now.”

Getting kids on track requires commitment and accountability. “As Audrey, my Co-Founder always says, ‘We don’t have magic wands; just pencils.’” Connie went on to explain her and Audrey’s journey, “It’s taken a lot of courage for two black women to step out and do this. We want children to have what we didn’t have, and we want children to have what we did have.”

Connie’s Courage to Lead cohort had recently begun when Covid hit. Collectively, participants and facilitators decided to pause their program until it is safe to reconvene for in-person gatherings. However, Connie explains “I still meet with my leader circle regularly; I love my small group. We went virtual right away, and that’s a couple of hours every month when I get to unpack some stuff. I also do Wednesday meditation with Ed (Leading From Within).”

“When you give up hope, the darkness wins. My ancestors had hope. I have a legacy and a responsibility to uphold that hope.”

After the death of George Floyd, Connie approached Leading From Within to host a conversation about race. She and James Joyce III (recognized for “Coffee With A Black Guy”) led the discussion with nonprofit and community leaders. Among other connections, the event inspired a series of race-themed conversations.

“We live very segregated lives, and we’re not honest about it. I think it’s important to have that conversation. On one hand, the nonprofit sector collaborates and communicates well, but there’s a disparity there, too.” Connie’s activist impulses kicked in when putting together a virtual gathering of nonprofit leaders of color, “just to get together and say, ‘how are you doing?’” They check in with one another and discuss things that are not often talked about in large gatherings, such as the challenge of access to funding.

Facing each challenge as it comes, Gateway boasts an enviable record, having sent nearly seventy underrepresented children to college. “Our college readiness program is definitely a shining star and we are very proud. We started this journey in a little room with a couple of tables and chairs and a few families ready to start the journey with us. Those families knew their kids were in a safe place and trusted us that their kids were going to do well,” says Connie.

“When you give up hope, the darkness wins. My ancestors had hope. I have a legacy and a responsibility to uphold that hope.”



PHOTO: Connie Alexander upholds hope and empowerment through education.

ART AND TRANSFORMATION

Frederick Janka

Executive Director | Carolyn Glasoe Bailey Foundation
Santa Barbara Arts Advisory Committee
Courage to Lead Alumni

“We can only be transformed for the better through art, and I am a passionate believer in that,” says Frederick Janka, Executive Director of the Carolyn Glasoe Bailey Foundation. Frederick makes no secret of his respect for the value of art in troubled times: “Artists are second responders.”

Frederick’s leadership journey began in Santa Barbara, where the self-described “art-crazy” teenager landed an internship at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art and developed a longtime friend and mentor in Director of Education, Patsy Hicks.

During his tenure as Development Director at the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, Frederick worked on a project where artists co-created with the community – in this case, the Latinx community – building a connection to the museum through service.

“What is inspiring is to see this increased agency of artists in their willingness and passion to support their communities, as well as social justice initiatives. The contemporary art term for it is ‘social practice.’ It’s an art form now. Social justice is becoming an institutional imperative, not least because artists are calling for it.”

In Frederick’s view, Covid-19 forced a reckoning in this realm of the art world. “We’re seeing a real questioning of established systems, priorities and hierarchies in the art world. Ultimately, it’s forcing institutions to *listen*. To voices outside the institution, but also within. Leadership in many arts institutions are being forced right now to deal with the fact that they haven’t been listening, they haven’t been thinking about their full team and their real value.”

Frederick takes pride in the ethos of the Carolyn Glasoe Bailey Foundation. “What we have consistently done is listen to artists. We look to artists. And we are very clear about making an effort to compensate them for their insight and their creativity, ideas and their work, and their *labor*.”

Back in 2016, while he was Development Director at the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, Frederick attended Leading From Within’s Courage to Lead program. “One of the biggest takeaways has been our leader circle. To this day we meet once a month. It’s a great sounding board, and a critical community of support.”

PHOTO: Frederick Janka uses his connection with community to inform his passion for the transformative power of art.

“Arts have proven to be transformative. Arts provide options.”

“It’s almost a sinister way to put it, but it’s nice to have a cabal of social sector executives where we can share our challenges, mistakes and successes. Directors often feel alone, but whatever you’re dealing with, someone else is dealing with it too.”

Frederick bristles at the suggestion that nonprofit collaborations might be fraught because executives are also competing for donors. “That’s the biggest misconception in the nonprofit world. It’s an ecosystem of relationships that only works better when we’re collaborating and sharing.”

Currently a member of the Arts Advisory Committee for the City of Santa Barbara and the Santa Barbara Advisory Board for KCRW, Frederick is unwavering in this: “Arts have proven to be transformative. Arts provide options. It’s exposure to different ways of thinking and seeing. Without creative thinking, there are no *options*.”

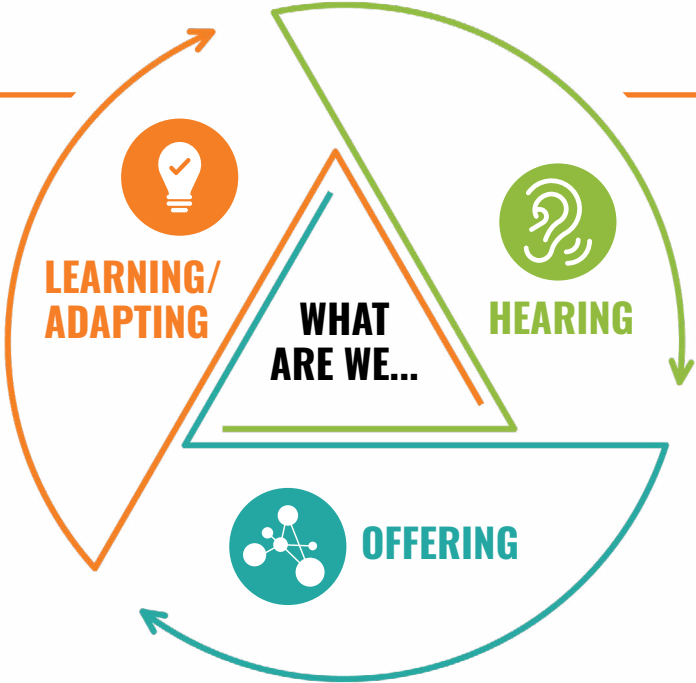


ADAPTING OUR SUPPORT THROUGH 2020

In adapting to 2020 our impact model has come to life in new ways. Three of four our programs have gone virtual. Over **500** alumni and participants have access to our adaptive offerings.

Our adaptive Peer-based offerings

How Leading From Within is supporting the needs of the network and social sector during Covid-19



HEARING NEEDS

- Support in self care/ staff care/ childcare
- Leadership strategies during complexity/crisis
- Enabling difficult, constructive conversations
- Staying connected with others while operating remotely
- Supporting learning/ action toward Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice
- Activating the network toward more effective social sector advocacy

OFFERINGS

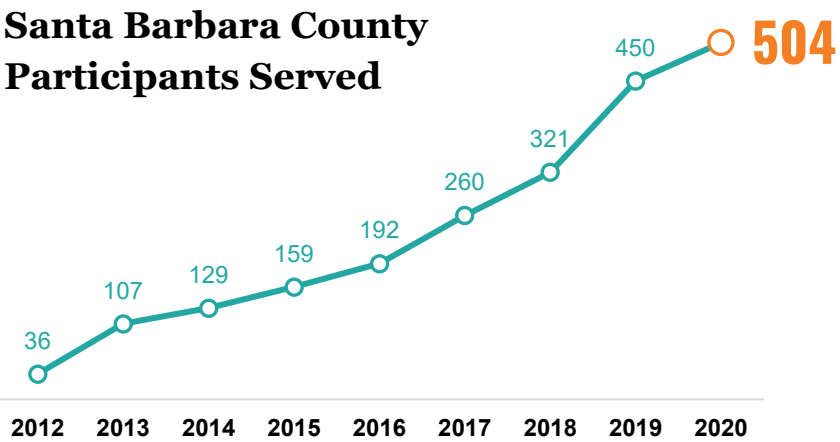
- Leader Circles (Peer Learning Circles)
- Leadership Book Learning Circle
- Meditation offerings
- Extended (Individual) Executive Coaching
- Community Snapshot of the Pandemic
- Building Your Self Care Toolbox Workshop
- On-call Clearness Committees
- An Open Conversation on Race

LEARNING/ADAPTING

- Engaging participant connections in the digital space
- Collaborating with partner agencies to provide new content and resources
- Extending proposed offerings to continue meeting the expressed needs of the network

GROWTH

We cultivate a growing network of leaders who work across Santa Barbara County to advance the common good.



OUR 3-PART COMMUNITY IMPACT MODEL

1. LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Train, develop, connect, and support all social sector leaders in a shared leadership practice, culture, and experience.



We serve leaders at multiple levels of the social sector.



Senior-level professional leaders
Courage to Lead



Rising social sector leaders
Emerging Leaders



Northern Santa Barbara County professional leaders
Leading for Community Impact



Volunteer Leaders
Katherine Harvey Fellows

2. ALUMNI COMMUNITIES

Cultivate ongoing learning and access to resources and opportunities for collaboration among Leading From Within alumni.



3. IMPACT NETWORK

Design and create community impact vehicles that seek to facilitate fertile ground for social innovation and collaboration among the network.



Leaders who are renewed, prepared, connected, and collaborating for the greater good of all.

MENTAL WELLNESS

Michael Kenji (Maka) Takahara

Health Education Specialist | Department of Health & Wellness (UCSB)

Katherine Harvey Fellows Alumni

If you wonder if positivity is contagious, Michael Kenji (Maka) Takahara's laugh might make you a believer. While his career focuses on practicing mental health and wellness for his students, "Mondays with Maka" on the UCSB Student Affairs YouTube channel has been a hit with his colleagues and students around campus.

As a Health Education Specialist, "I try to help people develop strong positive relationships and find meaning in their lives. I define 'meaning' as using your strengths and your talents to contribute to something bigger than yourself."

Connectedness is a frequent theme in Maka's worldview, and a greater challenge during the pandemic. "The generation entering college right now is more anxious and depressed than any prior generation. They often feel like they are the problem; that if they just had more self-discipline, worked harder, or didn't give in to distraction, then they wouldn't feel so bad. This pathological critic in their own head telling them they're not good enough drains their energy and makes their struggle harder. The pandemic makes it worse for everybody. It cuts off their routines for social support."

Maka helps students develop self-compassion, to recognize, "I'm not alone, it's not going to last forever, and it may help me be more compassionate to someone else who is suffering."

I can learn from this experience and I can start again."

Maka's empathy has been learned through experience. Working at a camp for people with disabilities, including those with Cerebral Palsy, he learned to communicate through word boards and experienced a transformative epiphany: "People are people. I dropped my preconceptions, and I realized that giving to others feeds my soul."

Maka's career started at UCSB through a connection with a friend, it's exactly the sort of "everything is connected" moment that Maka refuses to take for granted: "Everything I've become is because of the people I have met."

"I know what it's like to struggle and I know what it's like to be supported. I want to be that person in support."

Thriving in his role, however, wasn't automatic. "Early in my job, I didn't know what I was doing," he says, laughing. Supervisor Sabina White demoted Maka and supported him for 19 years in growing his career. "That was a tremendous gift. When I see someone struggling, I remember how I suffered, and Sabina was there to help me overcome that. As someone who's been at the university for 30 years, I know what it's like to struggle and I know what it's like to be supported, and I want to be that person in support."



PHOTO: Maka Takahara draws insight from his life experiences and peer engagement to help others foster positive relationships and find meaning in their lives.

Maka's enthusiasm for learning informs his approach to teaching. "I want my interns to believe in our mission to help people thrive. I want to develop their skills that contribute to that mission and give them opportunities to use those skills. I want them to learn something more, because in an internship one should leave with transferable skills and have fun."

To Maka's surprise a colleague of Maka's asked him to join the board of the Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (APIA). The experience awoke his "Asian-ness." Growing up in Monterey Park, the first Asian suburb in the US, Maka never knew

a white person. "I was aware of my heritage, but I didn't understand what it meant to be a 'model minority,' and how that was used against black people. I learned so much."

In a recent collaboration with Leading From Within, Maka led a session on *Building Your Self-Care Toolkit During Covid*. An alum of the Katherine Harvey Fellowship, Maka values his kindred spirits. "The relationships have been fantastic. I've learned a lot about our community from this cohort, not as an activist, but as a learner. I'm learning a lot about the good people in our community, and it makes me hopeful."

POWER AND VOICE

Gabriela Macias-Mota

Program Director | Future Leaders of America
Emerging Leaders Alumni

“A t Future Leaders of America (FLA) we treat students like individuals, and at that age that’s transformative,” says Gabriela, having attended FLA’s Youth Leadership Conference in 2006, before entering the ninth grade.

Gabriela Macias-Mota considers the questioning of patriarchal power structures as a personal passion, but she is equally committed to helping others find their own power and voice, something she has done for the past six years at FLA.

The experience turned into opportunity when Gabriela graduated from UCSB in 2014 without a clear direction. “I wanted to be a teacher, but at the time I was undocumented, so that wasn’t an option.” But that summer, one of her friends working at FLA invited her to join them at Youth Camp as a volunteer. The team got to see Gabriela in action, “They liked the way I worked with youth, they liked my problem solving, and they offered me a job.”

After some organizational upheaval, she and a new Executive Director found themselves stepping up to an enormous challenge: “We were handed this organization that was in a fragile state. It was really tough. As a Youth Organizer, I was 22 and working with students that were sometimes 17 or 18 years old.”

There’s an old saying that experience is the toughest teacher, because the test comes before

the lesson. Gabriela’s openness with students left her vulnerable when a conflict arose with a student’s mother. “I was fortunate to have a team that supported me, but there were also legitimate criticisms I took to heart and corrected. It made me sharper at my work.”

Gabriela’s confidence was also bolstered by success when she and her students advocated for the Oxnard Unified High School District to align A-G requirements with graduation requirements, giving every graduate the opportunity to apply for the University of California and California State Universities. “Cautious of the challenge we were taking on, I hadn’t experienced that kind of change, but by the end I was 100% committed to community organizing.”

“It’s the transformative power of people learning to use their voice for the good.”

Gabriela notes that leadership is primarily service. “Leadership training filters out into society because we’re creating advocates. Students learn to advocate for themselves, and when they see how it works, how needs expressed can be met, they realize they can do that for their community and families. It’s the transformative power of people learning to use their voice for the good. I don’t think it has gotten easier to speak

out against injustice but what has changed is my confidence in my capacity to do so, I know that I can, and I believe that I should.” With Covid-19, Future Leaders of America had to make adaptations; in person connection was out of the equation, “We have twice-a-month youth meetings in the five regions we serve, now all digital. Our summer youth camp for 140 was eventually cancelled. We switched to a three-day online program and offered scholarship prizes to encourage attendance.”

Gabriela attended Leading From Within’s Emerging Leaders program in 2018, and those connections continue to influence her. “With Emerging Leaders it was such a diverse group of people. Participating in Leader Circles with my peers was huge. It was hard for me to ask for help, and it was hard to talk about the challenges at work, but these individuals were so warm and supportive, and have been through it too.”

“I also enjoy Leading From Within’s intellectual spaces; I went to a couple of book readings, and recently participated in an emotional intelligence workshop. I appreciate the evolution this year and the opportunity to stay connected and keep learning.”

Gabriela’s commitment to advocacy and community organizing now leads to a new direction. “My dream has been to pursue a career in the legal field. I grew up undocumented, so the law has always been a huge presence in my life. It’s an area so dominated by men, even pursuing this is an act of resistance.”

An act of resistance, but also a call to service. “We need more community lawyers. For people of color, for immigrants, for youth in detention, for victims of trafficking. And that’s why law school is next for me.”

“We have to question who holds power, all the time.”



PHOTO: For Gabriela Macias-Mota, community organizing and equal access to legal support offer a path of transformative change.

How are you living your purpose in a year of adaptation?

Share your story with us directly or on our Facebook or Instagram



Help us support pathways to authentic leadership and purpose.

Contact Ed France at
Ed@leading-from-within.org or
805-203-6940 or visit our website at
www.leading-from-within.org.