

January 2022  
Winter Issue



# The Guild Gab



Janie Guthrie  
President 2021 - 2023

## Special Interest Articles:

- Meet Our Members 2
- Holiday Lights Tour 3
- Celebrating 60 Years 4



Eden Garcia-Balis, LMFT  
Chief Executive Officer  
AMCS

## Highlights:

- Membership 4
- Fundraising 5
- Calendar 5



## The Prez Sez

### Happy New Year and Happy 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to the Guild!!!

What a roller-coaster year we experienced in 2021! During these times, the Guild stayed strong to accomplish our mission to raise funds to support **Airport Marina Counseling Service (AMCS)**. Thanks to the dedication of our amazing board members, wonderful volunteers, and supporters, we had successful virtual and takeout FUNdraisers throughout the year. I hope you were able to participate in one of those events which included a **virtual wine tasting, Taco Tuesday Takeout, virtual cooking demonstration with Robin** to learn about **Pumpkin. . . Beyond Pie** for your Thanksgiving feast, and our **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Holiday Lights Tour & Contest** in

## Eden's Epistle

Happy New Year!

As we get ready for a 2022 that will hopefully be less focused on COVID and more focused on reconnecting with the people we know and love, I want to thank the Guild for its incredible support throughout the pandemic.

More than ever, you have risen to the occasion and been there to make sure AMCS can continue to flourish and fulfill its mission.

And, of course, we are asking

December. The funds raised are needed more than ever during the stress of the pandemic with record numbers of clients at AMCS.

We are all looking forward to 2022 and celebrating the **60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Guild**. Over these 60 years of service, the Guild's mission of providing financial support to AMCS has never changed. It is amazing how Mary Ellen Cassman, along with her friends and neighbors, had such a powerful vision. Even though at time of inception they were addressing an unspoken word, *mental health*. Oh, how the times have changed. Now we hear about mental health almost every day in the media.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone on our virtual **Annual Membership**

for the Guild's help once again at our **Spring Celebration** – our biggest fundraising effort of the year!

The **17<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring into Well-Being Celebration** will be held on **Thursday, May 19** and will recognize long-time Playa del Rey resident **Val Velasco, the Vice President of the Los Angeles Board of Airport Commissioners**.

Val has been a valued supporter of the clinic and we are so excited to recognize

**Meeting on January 26**, when we kick off our yearly membership and support campaign, along with our **60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**. Please be on the lookout for our emails with information about the meeting and upcoming **FUNdraisers!!!** Our first fundraising event on the schedule for 2022 is a fabulous **virtual champagne and sparkling wine tasting on February 10**. So, mark your calendar. If you are not receiving our emails, please let us know at [info@westchestermhg.org](mailto:info@westchestermhg.org).

We cannot thank you enough for your continued support. You are making such an enormous difference with mental health in our community for all ages.

Wishing everyone a healthy 2022!!!

her and her contributions to our efforts. Please mark your calendars!

Please know that everything we are able to accomplish is because of the incredible support we get from the Guild, and we are truly grateful for everything that the Guild has and continues to do for the clinic.

Here's looking forward to a fabulous 2022!

*Eden*

**Meet a Member – Felicia St. Denis**



Felicia St. Denis is a new member of the WMHG. You probably know her best as the owner of Flowers by Felicia in Playa del Rey. Felicia grew up in Seattle and came to California when she was 20 and discovered Playa del Rey. She has never left and lives in Playa del Rey with her husband and two kids in college. Felicia got involved with the WMHG 20 years ago,

when each local flower shop had a home to decorate for the Holiday Home Tour. As the years went by, those shops closed up but she continued to help because she could see how much it meant to the community. Her beautiful and unique floral arrangements captured the holiday themes and made our home tours so special. In her spare time, she loves walking on the beach

with her beloved beagle, reading and hanging out with her kids. Felicia says one of the reasons she became a Guild member are the people associated with the WMHG and AMCS. She appreciates more than ever the need for awareness about mental health. Thank you, Felicia, for becoming a member of the WMHG and for all your generous support to the community.



**Meet a Member – Linda Peterson**



After growing up in a small North Dakota city, where she also went to college, **Linda Peterson** graduated from Yale Law School. After a judicial clerkship in Washington, D.C., she practiced law with the international firm Sidley Austin in both Washington and Los Angeles. After retirement, Linda volunteered at the Guilded Cage, and Linda and her husband Gene White

offered their home for the 2007 Holiday Home Tour. Since that time Linda has been very active as a volunteer with the Guild, serving as an officer, including four years as President, co-chairing the Holiday Home Tour for several years, and serving on many committees, including the publicity committee she now chairs. Linda credits the Guild for introducing her to

the community and to many very good friends. Linda and Gene enjoy travel, having been to all seven continents, and look forward to traveling more someday. In the meantime, Linda reads, takes long walks, and makes quilts. Thank you, Linda, for your outstanding leadership and hundreds of hours of volunteer services to WMHG and AMCS.



**Meet a Member – Mary Ellen Cassman**



**Mary Ellen Cassman** was born in Atlantic City, NJ where she grew up with her father (a lawyer), her mother (a Latin teacher), and her older brother. She graduated from Wellesley College in 1944 and worked in New York City for IBM and the Red Cross. She ventured west to serve as a resident assistant at Stanford University where she fell in love with CA. She returned to the east coast to marry her sweetheart who she had known since the third grade, Alan Cassman. Alan just graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Law School and the newlyweds drove to CA and ultimately settled in Westchester in 1951. The mother of three children, Mary Ellen was the consummate volunteer in

leadership positions in the PTA, as a photographer for the local newspaper and in political campaigns. She managed the successful campaign of Pat Russell for L.A. City Council, the first woman to be elected to that position. Mary Ellen obtained her teacher certification and taught English at Orville Wright Junior High School. Mary Ellen is a 'cause' person and has devoted her talent and gifts to lifting the lives of others. The clear need for mental health services in the Westchester community was one of Mary Ellen's heartfelt causes back in the late 1950s when such needs were commonly viewed with skepticism. She was undeterred as she developed community support to establish the Westchester

Mental Health Guild, which, in turn, led to the opening of the Airport Marina Counseling Service. She served as the Executive Director of the AMCS for 19 years and, since her retirement, has stayed involved as a member of the WMHG and AMCS Boards. In addition, Mary Ellen and Alan worked for decades to build and serve as Board Members of the Westchester YMCA, which provides vital services to so many in the community. As Mary Ellen Cassman approaches the ripe age of 99, we salute and express our deep gratitude for her creative leadership, staunch determination and lifelong dedication that have produced and sustained WMHG, AMCS and the Westchester YMCA, organizations that continue to enrich our community.





### Contest Lights Up the Community

Our **Second Annual Holiday Lights Tour & Contest** was another successful COVID-safe event. This year we had 20 homeowners in Westchester and Playa del Rey participating in the tour.

Tour-goers selected the home of **Jon and Tina Vanderjagt** on **West 78<sup>th</sup> Street** in Westchester as the **Fan Favorite**, while our judges selected the home of the **Greenwald family** on **Riggs Place** in Westchester for the winner of the **Best Lights** award, the home of **Paul Condran** on **Ramsgate Avenue** in Westchester for the **Most Whimsical** award, and the home of **Gwen and Jim Vuchsas** in Playa del Rey as the **Best Theme** with its Peanuts theme.

Our judges this year were last year's two first-place winners **Robert Milligan** and **Jeanne Ronay**, along with the **Honorary Mayor of Westchester, Marsha Wietecha**. The Milligan and Ronay homes were also on the tour as last year's winners, but did not participate in the contest.

We had eleven generous sponsors for this year's tour, including **Jane St. John, Otis College of Art & Design, Westchester Rotary, Zacha Homes, the Drollinger Family Charitable Foundation, Edgar Saenz, the Stephanie Younger Group, Playa Venice Sunrise Rotary, the Woman's Club of Playa del Rey, the Suarez Team, and the Home Town News**. In addition, other financial support was received from **Heather and Kevin Ivey, Cantalini's Restaurant, Flowers by Felicia, Hacienda Playa, and the Emerson Community Gardens**.

With the sponsors, nearly 600 tickets sold, and numerous additional donations, the tour brought in more than \$15,000. Expenses were limited to the preparation of lighted signs for the homes on the tour, and prizes for the four winners.

Tour-goers paid \$10 for tickets, which gave them a list of addresses, two maps and a chance to vote for their favorite. In addition, each ticket purchaser was entered into a prize drawing for a **New Year's celebration gift basket**, donated by members of the Guild Board of Directors. The basket winner was long-time Guild supporter **Denise Senzaki**.

We hope to get back on schedule with our **38<sup>th</sup> Holiday Home Tour on November 6, 2022**, but we may also continue hosting the Holiday Lights Tour next December. If you have any suggestions or comments, would like to help plan our tours, or know of any homeowners who would like to participate in either tour next year, please let us know at [info@westchestermhg.org](mailto:info@westchestermhg.org).

Thank you to the homeowners, judges, sponsors, tour-goers and all other donors and participants in our second **Holiday Lights Tour & Contest!**



*Congratulations*  
**ALL**



**VOTED FAN FAVORITE**



**BEST LIGHTS**



**MOST WHIMSICAL**



**BEST THEME**



**OUR LUCKY GIFT BASKET WINNER!**

We've turned the calendar page on a new year – *thankfully!* We're hoping this year brings good health and a continuation of the new 'normal' in the way of activities.

We have had to be extra clever in our fundraising efforts these last two years since we haven't been able to hold our Holiday Home Tour, our biggest fundraiser, due to COVID. We've just finished our highly successful **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Holiday Lights Tour** and have many events scheduled for 2022.

This year, like last, will be a combination of in-person events and virtual events. Our first order of business will be our **Annual Membership Meeting**, held **via Zoom**, on **January 26, 2022**, where we will kick off our **60<sup>th</sup> Diamond Anniversary** celebration! *Sixty* years of supporting **Airport Marina Counseling Service** as they work tirelessly to provide affordable mental health care and train mental health professionals. Give yourself a pat on the back for your past support!

How can you help? The easiest way to show your support is to **join the WMHG** – it's as easy as using the enclosed envelope to send us a check, or scan the QR code (pg.5) if you would like to show your support via Paypal, credit card, Venmo or Zelle. Our **Jewel Supporter** level is only \$35, or you can be a **Diamond Supporter** for \$60 or a **Double Diamond Supporter** for \$120! This annual support from you is vital as we continue to raise money for AMCS.

Your support opens up the possibilities to all of our activities. Although our events raise money throughout the year, your membership support is a vital first step and this serves as the base for our fundraising events. Won't you be a *gem* and join us?! If you have friends who would be interested in joining and want some additional information, please feel free to have them contact me at 310.962.9850 or robingadams01@gmail.com.

Thank you for your generous support of the **GUILD CRAFTERS** during 2021.

We continued to make **face masks** of course, but we also had the opportunity to be part of the Annual Meeting and sold some of our **handmade items**. In November, we were part of the Holiday Fair at St. Jerome's Church for two days and we had a great time. Among other things, we sold a **cork wreath, ornaments, towels and microwave cozies**. We made more than \$1,200. We still have an inventory of various items so if you need more **towels, a knitted hat or a special little gift**, please let me know and I will be happy to show you what we have. In early February we will try to continue our little group of crafters and offer some new items.

Wishing you all a happy and healthy New Year.

*Annika*      dabackman@yahoo.com

## WMHG Celebrates 60 YEARS

**First Annual Meeting of the New Year**  
via ZOOM ~ January 26, 2022 at 10 a.m.

The **Westchester Mental Health Guild** is an amazing group of dedicated and caring volunteers and is the fundraising arm of the **Airport Marina Counseling Service**. The Guild will be celebrating its **60<sup>th</sup> year of service in 2022**. After all these years WMHG has been an integral support to AMCS.

We will share with you throughout the year what the WMHG has accomplished and its astonishing growth and contributions to support mental health services. However, in light of rising Omicron and variant cases this month, the Guild's first and foremost concern is to keep everyone's health safeguarded. So in the comfort and safety of your home or office, the first WMHG meeting of the new year, which will be the **Annual Membership Board Meeting**, comes to you **via Zoom** on **January 26, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.** We look forward to seeing you!

The Annual Meeting will kick-off with a **60<sup>th</sup> Diamond Jubilee Anniversary Membership Drive** announcement for all of its members, welcome renewing and new members and recognize supporters and community sponsors. **AMCS Executive Director Eden Garcia-Balis, LMFT and CEO**, nominated for the **Los Angeles Business Journal Women in Leadership Award**, will be giving updates on the AMCS and share her latest news on mental health issues.

*(continued on pg. 5)*



**FUNdraising in 2022** ★

2022 is the **60<sup>th</sup>** anniversary of WMHG and an exciting time for the Guild with many fundraising events planned. January is our **annual membership meeting** now Zooming on **January 26<sup>th</sup>**. **Tony P's Docksides Grill** will host our fundraiser event the week of **January 24<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup>**. Please enjoy lunch or dinner (or both!) during that week and help raise money for WMHG. On **February 10<sup>th</sup>** we have planned a **Champagne Tasting Zoom** with **Bill Priestley**, sommelier. The price is **\$90** for two bottles of wine (one champagne, one sparkling wine from CA), and **John Kelly chocolates**. Bill Priestley has led us in several wine tastings and is a wonderful host and sommelier. Look for more information on our website and emails to follow.

*The King and I* will be performed in El Segundo July 14, 15 and 16 and we plan to sell tickets. A portion of those proceeds will be donated to WMHG.

With your support we have possibilities for more fundraising activities throughout the year. This means more **restaurants**, more **cooking demonstrations**, maybe even getting together for a **fashion show** if Covid allows! Please continue to be a 'gem of a supporter' to WMHG and plan to be active with our events.

If you have a **fundraiser event idea**, please let me know. You can email me at [Iveyhouse@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Iveyhouse@sbcglobal.net)

*Heather Ivey*



**Taco Tuesday Takeout Triumphs**  
October 12, 2021



Monday - Thursday	January 24-27	Tony P's Dining FUNdraiser – Coupon on back page
Wednesday	January 26	Annual Membership Meeting (Zoom)
Thursday	February 10	Champagne Tasting (Zoom)
Thursday	May 19	AMCS Spring Gala Event
Thursday- Saturday	July 14 - 16	Music West Production of <i>The King and I</i>
Sunday	November 6	38 <sup>th</sup> Holiday Home Tour

**CALENDAR**

**Check [www.westchestermhg.org](http://www.westchestermhg.org) for news and updates**

**WMHG Celebrates 60 YEARS**



*(continued from pg. 4)*

Learn what the Guild has planned for events throughout the new year. There is always something exciting and rewarding to get involved with no matter how much or little time you have. Please join us!

To Zoom on January 26, 2022 for our Annual Membership Meeting, go to our website: [www.WestchesterMHG.org](http://www.WestchesterMHG.org). A link will be provided the week before for you to Zoom.

*Myra*



[westchestermhg.org](http://westchestermhg.org)





Westchester  
Mental Health Guild

c/o Airport Marina  
Counseling Service  
7891 La Tijera Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90045

\* \* \*

Westchester  
Mental Health Guild  
and Airport Marina  
Counseling Service



Visit our website  
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Contact Us  
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## Dockside Dollars Fundraiser

0124

### WESTCHESTER MENTAL HEALTH GUILD JANUARY 24-27, 2022

Present this coupon to your server and Tony P's  
will donate 20% to your organization!  
*Not valid with any other promotions*

ENJOY  
11:30am - 9:00pm  
Monday through Thursday  
Jan 24 - 27

Takeout Orders and  
Patio/Outdoor Dining  
Available  
[www.tonyp's.com](http://www.tonyp's.com)

**Additional Coupons** may also be found on our website: [www.westchestermhg.org](http://www.westchestermhg.org)



## Welcome New Board Members

Julie Porter  
Sue Henderson



## Tribute Cards

Remember to purchase  
Tribute Cards to honor family  
and friends. Tribute Forms are  
available on our website.

