



July 2023
Summer Issue



The Guild Gab



Janie Guthrie
President 2021 - 2023

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Eden Garcia-Balis, LMFT
Chief Executive Officer
AMCS

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The Prez Sez

The Guild has been very productive so far this year, starting off with our **Annual Membership Meeting** luncheon in January. What a pleasure to meet so many of our supporters and members in person! Our FUNdraising is going strong with several successful events so far – a **Royal Tea**, a **Theater Night** with *The Music Man*, and restaurant events at **Tony P's**, **The Good Pizza**, and **Hacienda Playa**.

In April, the Board voted to discontinue our traditional **Holiday Home Tour**. We are very grateful to the many homeowners, sponsors, volunteers, and ticket purchasers who supported our Tour during its 37 years.

Eden's Epistle

Depression is a prevalent mental health condition that affects people of all ages, including seniors. Unfortunately, depression in older adults often goes unnoticed and untreated, leading to distress and a decline in their overall well-being. Recognizing the signs and understanding the underlying causes of depression in seniors is crucial for offering the necessary support. Common signs of depression in seniors include persistent sadness, loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities, difficulty sleeping, changes in appetite, irritability, and feelings of hopelessness. These can be the result of a variety of factors ranging from chronic health conditions,

The Holiday Home Tour always had been the Guild's biggest fundraiser, generating more than \$50,000 for the last Tour in 2019.

Without the Holiday Home Tour, we are restructuring our fundraising to fulfill our mission of raising funds to support **Airport Marina Counseling Service**. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to give AMCS more than \$45,000 in fiscal year 2022. We hope to exceed this amount for the fiscal year 2023.

Currently, the Guild is planning two major annual FUNdraisers. Stay tuned for the details as we finalize them. Of course, we will continue to sponsor our popular smaller events. If you have any suggestions for a WMHG

loneliness and social isolation to the loss of loved ones, decreased mobility and limited access to healthcare. Nevertheless, there are many ways to combat depression in seniors. **Encourage open communication:** Creating a supportive environment where seniors feel comfortable discussing their emotions and concerns is crucial. Encourage them to express their feelings and actively listen without judgment. **Promote social connections:** Combating isolation is vital. Encourage seniors to participate in social activities, join clubs or community groups, or engage in volunteer work. Video calls or social media can also be a great way to foster these connections. **Provide access to mental health resources:**

FUNdraiser - big or small, please reach out to me. We love to hear from our supporters and sponsors with FUNdraiser ideas.

We have several FUNdraisers scheduled through the end of the year, including our popular **Taco Tuesday Takeout** in September, a **holiday baking demonstration** in November, and our **4th Annual Holiday Lights Tour & Contest**. Please see the calendar section on page 5 for more details.

Thank you for all your support and contributions. Together we are making a positive impact on the mental health of our community. Enjoy your summer and I look forward to seeing you at upcoming FUNdraisers.

Ensure that seniors have access to mental health professionals. **Encourage healthy lifestyle habits:** Encouraging regular exercise, a balanced diet, and adequate sleep can significantly contribute to managing depression symptoms. Physical activity, in particular, has been shown to improve mood and overall well-being. **Foster a sense of purpose:** Engage seniors in activities that provide a sense of purpose and fulfillment, such as pursuing hobbies, engaging in creative outlets, or mentoring younger individuals. This can enhance their self-esteem and overall life satisfaction. With the right strategies in place, we can make a positive difference in the lives of seniors affected by depression.

Meet a Member – Nancy Virts



Nancy Virts was born in Schenectady, NY but moved to San Jose, CA with her parents when she was 3 months old. She met her husband Jay at the University of Santa Clara and they married the day after graduation. They moved to Los Angeles where Nancy began a PhD program in economics at UCLA and Jay studied math at UCLA and then engineering at USC under a fellowship from the Hughes Aircraft Company which is now Raytheon. Jay and Nancy bought their home in

Westchester after Nancy received her PhD in 1986 and Jay began working at Hughes. They have 2 children. Don and his wife live in Philadelphia where he works in finance. Maureen is an audiologist at UCLA medical center. Nancy is now retired after a 30-year career as a professor at Cal State Northridge. For the last 6 years, she was the Chair of the Economics department. Nancy was introduced to the WMHG by Candy Yip who asked her to volunteer as a

docent for the Holiday Home Tour. She believes that better access to mental health care is fundamental to solving many of the problems plaguing our community and is happy to support the Guild in making this possible. Nancy loves hiking, reading, photography, attending Comic-Con and volunteering at the South Coast Botanic Garden as a docent in the butterfly pavilion and discovery cart. Thank you, Nancy, for being on the WMHG Board bringing your insightful ideas and supporting our mission.

Meet a Member – Julie Porter



Julie Porter is a native Californian and spent her childhood in Wasco, a small community north of Bakersfield where her Dad was the Superintendent of Schools.

Her college years were spent in Fresno, and upon graduating, she began a 37-year career in Human Resources Management at Sears, then Fruehauf Tank Division and later *The Fresno Bee*. Along the way, she and a partner acquired an alpaca ranch and raised them for their fleece, participated in

trade shows and competitions. In 2011, she moved to Playa del Rey to be with her recently widowed sister, Jane St. John. Her son followed with his wife and two sons and transferred to the Google offices in Venice from the Mountain View headquarters. They live in the Mar Vista area now and Julie enjoys time with them. Julie was drawn to the WMHG and the AMCS events by her sister Jane and has been a sponsor of the Spring Into Well-Being event for several years. As a board member of the WMHG, she has gravitated to the Guild

Crafters because of her interest in crocheting and other crafts. Julie also is the Guild's archivist organizing boxes of our documents, Having grown up in a small town, Julie especially appreciates the neighborhood feel of Westchester and Playa del Rey and the positive participation of so many individuals and groups who support the mental health needs of our community. Thank you, Julie, for your creative craft skills and generous support to AMCS and WMHG events.

Meet a Member – Edgar Saenz



Edgar Saenz, a seventh-generation Texan, found his true home when he and his wife, Kathy, moved into Westchester in 2002. Since then, he has volunteered around the neighborhood, made friends and become involved in local nonprofits, including the AMCS. He was a judge pro tem serving in assignments across the county. Edgar has volunteered his legal services pro bono and brought suit to reduce the impacts of local development. He led the

Westchester Rotary Club as president, continues to serve on its board as chair of International Service, and returns next year as co-president.

Edgar is a Westchester lawyer specializing in trusts and estates. He has gained wisdom from his clients: the importance of physical and mental health, of living with purpose, the priority of family, and staying socially engaged. He enjoys his five-minute commute, but relishes the chance to ditch the car and walk to work.

In his personal life, Edgar finds joy in travel, country music, reading, Rams games, Wordle, chess, gardening, happy hour (Cinco and Mo's), community service, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. He recognizes the importance of mental health in achieving happiness and success and being a good citizen. His exposure to the Guild came through the Guilded Cage gift shop and the Holiday Home Tour. Thank you, Edgar, for your dedicated community involvement and generous support to WMHG and AMCS.



4th Holiday Lights Tour & Contest Set

Once again, we are beginning to plan our next **Holiday Lights Tour & Contest**, which we expect to occur **Dec. 10-26**. We hope to feature approximately 25 homes in an outdoor decorating contest.

Last year's tour-goers selected as their **Fan Favorite** the home of Nancy and David Voss on Fowling Street, Playa del Rey. This year we expect that prior first-place winners will be noted on the Tour map, but will not participate in the Contest.

Tour-goers made a \$10 donation which provided maps to the homes and an online ballot to vote for their favorite home. **Ticket sales and sponsors raised more than \$15,000 to support AMCS.** We will again be seeking sponsors for the event, in the hopes of raising at least as much as we did last year.

If you have any suggestions or comments for the Holiday Lights Tour & Contest, or would like to help plan this year's event, or if you know of any **homeowners or sponsors who would like to participate**, please let us know at info@westchestermhg.org.



A Night at the Theater FUNdraiser

WMHG partnered with **Music West, Inc.** for a successful summer fundraiser. On July 13, 14 & 15th, many guild members and friends attended **The Music Man**, a musical performance by the community theater ensemble at El Segundo Performing Arts Center.



Thank you to the **Remington family, Mark Calde** and the cast, crew and supporters for enabling this fundraiser which **gave back 50% for each ticket sold** by the Guild, which sold 108 tickets.

Guild members and guests experienced the efforts of some seasoned performers as well as many young performers to present this musical and celebrating **Music West's 20th anniversary.** Thank you to all board members and guests for supporting this fundraiser.



Mahalo

Board members and supporters of the Guild and AMCS were met with aloha as they gathered for a Happy Hour in the lovely backyard of Myra and Rick Kriwanek on Thursday, June 22. Hawaiian dancers entertained the guests and refreshments were served. The **Luau Social** was a way to extend our organization's appreciation and gratitude to those supporting mental health services and dedicated to well-being.





Nancy Edwards •Heart of Gold• Myra Kriwanek



Belle of the Guild

Gail Ruhlen

\$20,000. for AMCS



Annual Meeting 2023

The **Annual Membership Meeting 2023** was held January 25th in the Covenant Presbyterian Church Social Hall. Guest speaker Mishele Vieira, CPO®, a Certified Professional Organizer and owner of *Away with Chaos*, enlightened members and guests with useful tips on decluttering and organizing their spaces. A savory lunch from Cantalini's fueled the group for shopping the wares of the Guild Crafters and purchasing raffle tickets to win an array of beautiful baskets, services, and a homemade quilt by Linda Peterson. The event culminated with members and friends recognized for their dedication during the past year, and presentation of a check for \$20,000. to Eden Garcia-Balis for AMCS.

Congratulations and Thank You

- Heart of Gold
- Heart of Gold
- Belle of the Guild
- Certificates of Appreciation

- Nancy Edwards
- Myra Kriwanek
- Gail Ruhlen
- Jill Knepper
- Lisa Schwab
- Christina Vanderjagt
- Margarita Adair
- Petra Castellanos
- Stephanie Younger

The Guild is **actively searching for a speaker** of interest for our **next Annual Membership Meeting** to be held in **January 2024**. If you know of a dynamic speaker on a subject matter of interest to our members, preferably relating to mental health, please contact Myra Kriwanek, 1st VP at info@westchestermhg.org.

Certificates of Merit



Royal TEA with Royalty

The Westchester Mental Health Guild's **RoyalTEA** was held on **May 6, 2023**. Approximately 125 guests 'sipped and supped' on tea, scones, fruit, sandwiches and dessert, had photos taken with **King Charles III** and participated in the raffle and hat contest. A good time was had by all!

The support of our guests was instrumental in raising more than **\$7,000 for Airport Marina Counseling Service** so they can continue to offer affordable mental health care and train mental health professionals. We had a wonderful community event and helped AMCS at the same time.

Many were curious about some of the food items we served. The blueberry, raspberry and almond scones came from Torrance Bakery. The mini Florentine quiche were from Pavilions. To get a copy of the recipes for the coronation chicken salad and orange blossom tea cakes, contact Robin Adams at 310.962.9850 or robingadams01@gmail.com.

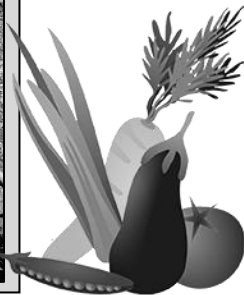
Thank you to all who participated in the RoyalTEA. We hope you attend our future events.

Membership / Support

The heat is on and we're halfway through our membership year! We've enjoyed the **RoyalTea**, **The Music Man** performances and several restaurant fundraisers.

Fundraising is what we're all about! We continue our fundraising efforts to support **Airport Marina Counseling Service** as the need for affordable mental health care continues. Participating in our events helps us raise money, but our basic funding for AMCS comes from your membership/support. We welcome all to become members/supporters – you choose how involved you want to be, but remember that FUN is the best part of FUNdraising!

It's so easy to help – just **send us a check** (send to WMHG 7891 La Tijera Bl. Westchester, CA 90045), or go to our website **westchestermhg.org** to **pay by credit card, Paypal or Zelle**. We have our **Jewel** level for **\$35**, **Diamond** level for **\$60**, or **Double Diamond** level for **\$120**. 90% of your membership/support money goes to AMCS. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Robin at 310.962.9850 or robingadams01@gmail.com.



Creative Crafters

We have a great group of creative people who volunteer their time and materials to make wonderful handcrafted items to sell to benefit the Guild and AMCS. The **Guild Crafters** make a variety of practical gift items, including knit and crochet afghans and hats, insulated casserole caddies to carry food to potluck meals, microwave bowl caddies to protect your hands after heating, crocheted hanging kitchen towels, tote bags, table runners, mug rugs, and coasters. In addition, they also create some unique decorative items.

You will have two opportunities to purchase Crafters' creations this fall. First is the **Westchester Arts & Music Block Party**, on **Sept. 23**, from 12-7 p.m. on Emerson Avenue in Westchester. They will also sell again at **St. Jerome's Catholic Church holiday sale on November 18-19**, 5550 Thornburn Street, Los Angeles.

In the meantime, if you are in need of any of the Crafters' unique handmade items, or would like to contribute fabric, yarn, buttons or other craft supplies, please contact Annika Backman at dabackman@yahoo.com.



Guild Gardeners

Myra Kriwanek, 1st VP Guild member finds joy in the garden with Board member, Tina Vanderjagt who manages the **Emerson Avenue Community Garden**. Together they discover how gardening brings pleasure and positive mental health to their lives as they watch the fruits of their labor grow into beautiful flowers, fresh fruits and vegetables. Known as the **Guild Gardeners**, Myra and Tina provide fundraising Tea Parties in the garden as WMHG and AMCS auction items.

Tues	September 12	Taco Tuesday Takeout
Sat	September 23	Shop WMHG Crafters Items at WAM
Thurs	November 9	Robin's Annual Holiday Baking Demo (Zoom)
Sat-Sun	November 18-19	Shop WMHG Crafters Items at St. Jerome's Craft Fair
Sun-Thurs	December 10– 26	Fourth Annual Holiday Lights Tour & Contest

CALENDAR

Please visit our website www.westchestermhg.org for ticket purchases and additional information.

Please note events are subject to change.



Westchester
Mental Health Guild

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

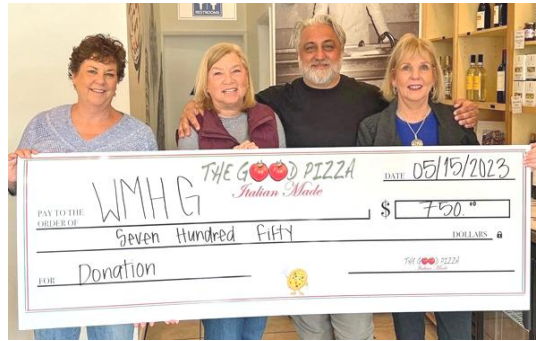
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**Westchester
Mental Health Guild**
and Airport Marina
Counseling Service

 are on
Facebook

Visit our website
www.westchestermhg.org

Contact Us
info@westchestermhg.org



★ **Community Partners**

It takes a village.

GOOD PIZZA
Nando De Stefano

HACIENDA PLAYA
Pat, Manager

TONY P's Dockside Grill
Tony Palermo

MUSIC WEST, Inc.
Mark Calde, President

We acknowledge and thank these valuable
allies for their ongoing support.

Newest Board Members



Welcome
Sheila Miller-Nelson
and Pam Finkel



Guild members
dining for a cause.

Westchester Mental Health Guild
c/o AMCS
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