



## Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless

December 2020

As 2020 comes to an end, Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless stands in awe of our partners; colleagues, shelter, outreach and health care community partners, and volunteer community members who have stepped forward in such a powerful way to support our collective COVID-19 response to protect our homeless community.

We are grateful for each of you and the contributions each of you have made to this successful effort.

ACHCH would like to take a moment to honor a few exceptional heroes who have been nominated by their peers and for their work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To those honored below, and all of you, thank you for helping to protect and save lives and build a stronger, healthier community.



## COVID-19 SUPERHERO

**Dr. Harrison Alter, MD**

**Interim Medical Director  
Alameda County Health Care  
for the Homeless**

Dr. Alter has been an amazing leader, teacher, convener and champion for the work of ACHCH in response to COVID-19.



Starting in March, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Alter ended a sabbatical early to step in as a volunteer in a clinical leadership role overseeing Project Roomkey in Alameda County. During this time his role extended beyond Project Roomkey, including supporting field-based testing, Personal Protective Equipment trainings and day-to-day COVID consultation for outreach and shelter providers, and shelter decompression efforts.

In June, he joined ACHCH as our Interim Medical Director.

Dr. Alter's calm and steady wisdom has been the foundation of our response to the pandemic, and his humor has seen us through more than a few tough moments. From day one, he graciously offered his expertise to a provider community full of fear of this new unknown world, and he has continued to share the latest medical updates in an approachable way that educates, informs and empowers.

Dr. Alter, your impact on our community is immeasurable. We thank you.

## 2020 COVID-19 Community Hero Award



**Alejandra (Ale) del Pinal**

Founder

Punks With Lunch

Ale has demonstrated



exemplary leadership and vision throughout the pandemic.

At the very beginning of the pandemic, the Punks With Lunch (PWL) collective committed themselves to continuing services by scaling down their volunteer pool significantly and determining safety measures to minimize risk as much as possible while still providing their homeless participants the services they needed to stay as healthy and well as possible.

Ale led the collective through a complete overhaul to assure that policies and protocols were informed by the ever-shifting

public health standards. She spent hours of unpaid time researching to better inform preparation and distribution efforts and assure minimal risk of COVID spread between volunteers and participants. Ale participated in multiple local and regional street outreach and harm reduction coalitions and the policies that PWL created were shared widely and adopted as best practice in the field.

Everyone that has worked with Ale and Punks With Lunch continue to be inspired by Ale's leadership, during and pre-COVID. She does this with no hazard pay (or pay at all), no personal safety net, and complete and total humility.

## Kate Dettmer

Senior Program Manager of Coordinated Entry Services  
Abode Services

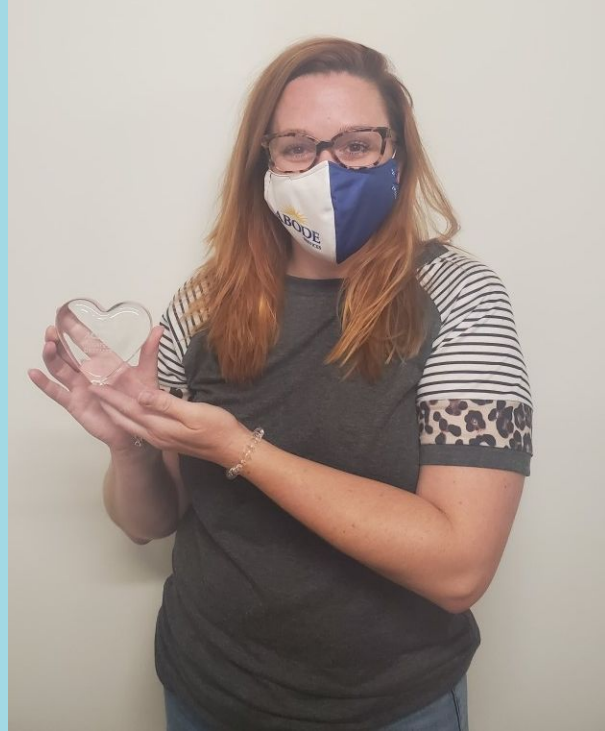
Kate's leadership, operational skills, flexibility, compassion, and quick thinking have been invaluable to support the COVID-19 response.

Alongside Abode staff, Kate led an outbreak response team in Livermore, outreaching affected encampments in over 100 degree weather. During the SCU Lightning Complex fires, she quickly

mobilized and led outreach teams to identify and evacuate unsheltered persons living in the south and east county evacuation zones who were potentially in the path of the wildfires.

With the opening of Safer Ground hotels, Kate displayed incredible focus in mobilizing staff and programs to support efforts in getting the most vulnerable people off the streets and out of encampments.

Kate exemplifies the tremendous role that her organization, Abode Services, and its staff have played as a key partner in Alameda County's Operation Comfort, Safer Ground, and Street Health team programs; all very crucial in our community response to COVID-19 among people experiencing homelessness.



## Ruby Capurro-Durkee

Housing Navigator

Housing Consortium of the East Bay



Ruby started with Housing Consortium of the East Bay (HCEB) in late March, just weeks before the shelter-in-place was ordered, and she has worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to support the most vulnerable residents at Home Base with obtaining housing, resources, supplies, and medical referrals.

She also plays an active role in COVID-19 prevention, providing screenings, and proactively referring residents to Operation Comfort when they are symptomatic.

Ruby is a true go getter, a gem, and a hero of the frontline providers of

today. ACHCH recognizes Ruby as one hero among many, in community organizations such as HCEB, who have stepped forward to play crucial roles in our community's fight against COVID-19.

# Margaretann Fortner

Intervention Lead

CityServe of the Tri-Valley

Margaretann has been steadfast on the front lines during this pandemic, working closely with partners in Livermore, Dublin, and Pleasanton to identify and support unsheltered individuals who are most vulnerable and medically at-risk for housing placement.

In addition to identifying and leading responses to COVID-19 outbreaks in local encampments, Margaretann organized meals through Open Heart Kitchen and made rounds at motels on a bi-weekly basis to ensure people were stabilized, had medical issues addressed, helped each person sign up for vital documents, benefits, and assisted accessing service to address employment, financial, and addiction issues. She referred over 100 individuals to emergency shelter, including Safer Ground.

Margaretann's superpower is her attitude for collaboration and the genuine care for each individual she is serving. She recognizes that it is not enough to place someone in a home without following up to make sure they are successful and sustainable, and stays with people until she feels confident that they are going to be successfully independent. Margaretann is humble and goes well beyond the call of duty when no one is looking.



# Aaron Horner

Homelessness & Creative Housing Division Program Administrator

First Presbyterian Church of Hayward

Aaron, with his colleagues at First Presbyterian Church, didn't know what he was getting into when he signed up to lead the church's first warming center in the winter of 2019. The warming center quickly filled and became an ongoing winter shelter. When COVID-19 arrived, it left First Presbyterian and South Hayward Parish's staff and



residents facing the unknown.

He led his heroic staff to stand with the people they served; learning and responding to the twists and turns of COVID-19. Aaron created protocols which protected staff and residents from harm and brought aboard paramedics and volunteers to help in that effort.

Aaron freely shared what he was learning through his experiences with the ACHCH community of shelter providers, and through this, he humbly and honestly created a sense of confidence and trust among other providers across the county who were

facing the same fears. He led his staff through some terrifying outbreak situations which they quelled with their hard work. Everyone around Aaron has learned from his bedrock of strength, faith, and ingenuity. His work and example strengthens our community in our common COVID-19 response.

## Melissa Moore

Street Health Community Health Outreach Worker  
Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center

A former resident of the 580/Grove encampment, Melissa started doing advocacy work supporting people living in encampments in the Castro Valley, Hayward, and San Leandro areas in 2019. She worked to change public opinion and support encampment residents with supplies and food.

When COVID-19 arrived, Melissa worked tirelessly to inform encampment residents, distribute protective equipment, supplies, and resources. She worked as an advocate and educator alongside a loose-knit group of local grassroots activists linking groups, including St. Vincent de Paul in San Leandro and the City of Hayward, to support unsheltered people in an area of Alameda County with little health care



outreach services before the launch of the new Street Health teams.

Melissa stood by residents who were affected by the abatement of an encampment during COVID-19, using her peacemaking and community building skills to negotiate a win-win outcome for the residents. She obtained COVID-19 tests and ensured access to emergency housing for the residents.

Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center hired Melissa as a Community Health Outreach Worker when ACHCH created a Street Health Team for the area. While taking on this new role, she has continued her advocacy efforts to organize unsheltered persons to fight against abuses of their civil and human rights. We all salute Melissa's peacefulness, compassion, focus, and dedication to her friends and neighbors.

## Mukund Raguram

Street Health Community Health Outreach Worker  
LifeLong Medical Care Street Health



Mukund hit the ground running, as a Community Health Worker, leading the new Lifelong Street Health Team in Berkeley. He worked tirelessly to connect encampment residents to health care, weaving together Lifelong and ACHCH health care services with community-based care provided by volunteers among the Berkeley Outreach Coalition and others in the Berkeley area.

His incredible work was instrumental in identifying and successfully referring individuals into the Safer ground sites in Berkeley and his ongoing work with the guests has supported their connections to health care and social services.

Mukund's efforts represent the tremendous impact a new provider in a new program can make in a short time. It has been inspiring to witness his success, and that of his street health team, in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Dr. Danielle Williams, MD

Oakland STOMP (Street Medicine)  
Roots Community Health Center

Dr. Williams has been an inspiring partner since the start of the pandemic, stepping up countless times to support outbreak responses in encampments, bringing field-based testing to the streets, and referring countless vulnerable households to Safer Ground.

She stood out in the early days of the COVID-19 response; working tirelessly and being available on weekends, holidays, and always responding where help was needed to provide ROOTS' focused, client-centered testing services in quick response to real and potential outbreaks.



Dr. Williams has always provided a reassuring voice of reason and care on weekly ACHCH community COVID-19 calls, sharing her best practices with the community of outreach providers. She does all this while she continues her work as a street medicine provider, continuing to be a trusted doctor and healer to the hundreds of people she serves on the streets.

## THANK YOU HEROES!

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