

# CONNECTING OUR VOICES: OUR COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

A PLATFORM FOR  
EMPOWERMENT & COMMUNITY

INSPIRING CHANGE, ONE VOICE AT A TIME

NEWSLETTER: QUARTER 1 / ISSUE 1 / MARCH 2024



## OUR MISSION

Our **mission** is to be a community - and comprehensive data-driven model that focuses on creating conditions that support youth 18 years and younger in staying healthy and creating healthy environments.



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## QUOTE OF THE QUARTER



“The leaders come up from the volunteers that do the work and it’s amazing because they do these incredible things in their community that they never thought they had the power to make happen.”

**Dolores Huerta**



# A REFLECTION BY OUR PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Greetings to all friends, colleagues, community partners, and families!

This first issue of the Connecting Our Voices quarterly newsletter has been 4.5 years in the making, thanks to so many wonderful and dedicated people.

It was a long work in progress that began even before those 4.5 years, but for many people in the communities of northern New Mexico, it has taken decades.

Yet, at the same time, it is the fruition of collaborations and partnerships to promote that which all of us dream of in our Heart of Hearts-Wellness for All!

The work highlighted in this newsletter and those that follow is a tribute and celebration of individuals who dedicate their lives to 'Wellness for All' and for those who have touched our lives to continue this work.

All of us know or hear the statistics of how substance use disorders affect our communities, but we don't always hear about the resiliency of the community, much less celebrate it.

With that we will use this newsletter as a platform to celebrate and amplify the people, the work, the culture, the resilience, the talent, the wisdom, the voices that connect all of us!

## JORGE GONZALES



**Jorge Gonzales**

**Connecting Our Voices, Program Director**

March COV Newsletter, 2024

Jorge is the youngest of six children and dedicates his work to each of them and his parents for their love, support and sacrifices they made for him. He has coordinated community health and leadership programs for youth and adults for nearly two decades; he has also conducted health research on topics that include tobacco use & prevention and underage drinking prevention.

Jorge is the Program Director of the SAMHSA funded project, Connecting Our Voices, that utilizes the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF). He is a strong believer in the SPF process because it embraces community inclusion and honors their voice in developing and implementing comprehensive substance abuse prevention activities. As part of the framework, he is especially passionate about cultivating partnerships and identifying local champions/leaders and keepers of local knowledge and wisdom.

# YOUTH INTERN SPOTLIGHT

After being involved with NLBHA's Connecting Our Voices Introductory to Behavioral Health Internship for close to two years now, I can confidently say that it has been the best and most eye-opening experience of my life. With its tight-knit, flexible work, I have been able to grow as an intern, as well as a person.



Summer 2023 Interns

This internship has given me the opportunity to speak to city and state officials, learn about the legislative process, work closely with community businesses, and has even given me the opportunity to speak in on a committee meeting in Santa Fe's very own capital.



Advocacy, Policy, and Legislation Trip to the State Capital 2023



Advocacy, Policy, and Legislation Trip to the State Capital - Espanola Day 2023

Not only have these experiences helped me build endless connections, gain confidence, and better my public speaking abilities, but they have also solidified my desire to help my community. This internship has given me the means and tools to have confidence that I will create change. I thank NLBHA everyday for helping my strive and giving me the opportunities to make a difference!

## KEILA AGUIRRE



**Keila Aguirre**

**NLBHA Youth Intern**

March COV Newsletter, 2024

Keila M. Aguirre is a 17-year-old junior at Espanola Valley High School. She was a Spring 2023 Youth Intern and a Summer 2023 Youth Intern with the National Latino Behavioral Health Association (NLBHA). Keila is a member of the student council where she holds the position of 2nd Vice President. She is also on the tennis team and serves as the secretary of the National Honor Society.

Keila is dedicated to her academic pursuits and has a passion for community service. She actively engages in extracurricular activities, which help her develop leadership skills and a strong work ethic. Keila's involvement and commitment to her school and community has allowed her to make a positive impact on the lives of others.



# COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

**Diego López** is a community leader, artist, and filmmaker with a unique and authentic style. López is a Chicano from northern New Mexico, son of renowned artists Benjamín J. López and Irene López. López is currently Executive Director of a non-profit organization, Hands Across Cultures, which believes "La Cultura Cura".

The vision of "Hands" is: culture as the foundation of human growth; spirituality as the strength of the people: each person's need to love and be loved; family preservation; and the pursuit of human potential. The mission of the organization is to improve the health, education and well-being of the people of Northern New Mexico through family-centered approaches deeply rooted in the multicultural traditions of their communities.

Lopez is a firm believer in team collaboration. He partners with the National Latino Behavioral Health Association as a Strategic Prevention Framework Community Liaison for the "Connecting Our Voices" Workgroup.

Diego López is the 100% Rio Arriba Initiative team leader and the President of the 100% Rio Arriba Community Health Council. With his team, he helps to spearhead creative prevention, art, and film projects across northern New Mexico.

"In order to grow and continue the healing of our communities from the long-endured trauma and suffering, it is essential that we come together as creative entities. It is vital to collaborate in ways

## DIEGO JOAQUÍN LÓPEZ



**Diego Joaquín López**  
**Hands Across Cultures, Executive Director**  
March COV Newsletter, 2024

Discover the incredible work of Diego Joaquín López and his team. Check out the non-profit organization **Hands Across Cultures** and experience the transformative power of "La Cultura Cura" by visiting their website at [handsacrossculturesnm.org](https://handsacrossculturesnm.org).

Step towards a better future by learning more about the **100% Rio Arriba Initiative** at [www.100nm.org/rioarriba/](https://www.100nm.org/rioarriba/). Don't miss the opportunity to be a part of something truly impactful and meaningful.



# COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

that are unique, exciting and bring vibrancy to the zeitgeist of Northern New Mexico. We need it now more than ever.”

In 2007, López completed his Master’s in Screenwriting from the College of Santa Fe and his Bachelor’s of Arts with a focus in Media Arts from the University of New Mexico in 2001. He has showcased his work nationally in festivals, museums, galleries and collaborative exhibitions. López has been privileged to participate in several community and professional murals, as well as, creative shows, most recently “Española Leadership Lowrider Bike Club Showcase” at the Spanish Colonial Art Museum in Santa Fe, NM. He is currently working towards the 100% Rio Arriba Summit and a new Cinco de Mayo Artist Exhibition this spring.

López paints primarily in oils and acrylics. Utilizing a visually bold yet fine-handed style, Lopez’s body of work envelops an intrinsic struggle combining iconic symbolism and a dark cultural mysticism. López draws inspiration from the roots of heritage colliding with the raw emotion of present day life. López brings an enthusiastic and culturally skilled background to his work, and has established rapport and respect in the communities he serves.



Immerse yourself in the vibrant energy of the **Lowrider Bike Club** exhibit, where stunning designs and intricate details come to life. Explore the art of customizing and transforming bikes into works of art, showcasing the creativity and artistry of the club's members.

The Lowrider Bike Club exhibit will be on display until April 27, so mark your calendars and head straight to the museum. To learn more about this exhibit and the Lowrider Bike Club, [click here](#) to read an article written by New Mexico Sun.

Discover the inspiration behind the bikes and the journey of the club members. Visit the Lowrider Bike Club exhibit at the Museum of Spanish Colonial Art today!



# 2024 NATIONAL LATINO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS NOW OPEN!



### 2024 National Latino Behavioral Health Conference “¡Juntos Podemos!”

#### Taking Action to Improve Latino Behavioral Health

The National Latino Behavioral Health Association (NLBHA) cordially invites you to submit a workshop proposal to present at the 2024 National Latino Behavioral Health Conference “¡Juntos Podemos!” Taking Action to Improve Latino Behavioral Health, which will be held at the Hyatt Regency on the San Antonio Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas from August 23 - 24, 2024.

NLBHA encourages experienced trainers, emerging leaders, researchers, and behavioral health professionals from diverse backgrounds and organizations with experience in addiction, recovery, co-occurring conditions, integrated care, and prevention to submit presentation workshop proposals for 90-minute breakout sessions.

We are looking for innovative workshop presentations that are culturally and linguistically informed and will inform and educate the behavioral health workforce serving Hispanic and Latino populations.

Our overarching goal for this conference is to highlight and present programs, practices, interventions, and innovative approaches to serving Hispanic and Latino communities.

### CALL FOR PROPOSALS TIMELINE



**ALL WORKSHOP PROPOSAL APPLICATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY FRIDAY, March 31st, 2024, AT 5:00 PM PST**

- 03.31.24** - Call for Proposals Closes
- 04.30.24** - Selected Proposals will Receive Confirmation Notification via Email
- 6.1.24** - Deadline for Presenters/Co-Presenters to Register for the Conference
- 6.15.24** - Deadline for Updates/Changes to Presentation
- 6.22.24** - Deadline to Submit Presentation/Handouts to be Made Available Online During Conference

All applicants will be notified of their selection or non-selection by email by **April 30, 2024**.

All workshop proposals must be completed online for consideration. For more information, please visit the NLBHA website (<https://nlbha.org/2024conference/>).

# 2024 JOSIE TORRALBA ROMERO SCHOLARSHIP

## NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS!

The **Josie Torralba Romero (JTR) Scholarship Fund** was established to honor the memory of its namesake, a remarkable leader and one of the founding members of the National Latino Behavioral Health Association (NLBHA).

NLBHA's mission is to enhance the quality of mental health care and treatment outcomes for Latino communities, as well as to influence national behavioral health policy and reduce disparities in funding and access to services.

The JTR Scholarship is a great opportunity for Latino students in New Mexico who are passionate about social work, psychiatry, psychology, counseling, substance abuse, or mental health programs. The scholarship aims to inspire and empower the next generation of mental health professionals by providing financial assistance to deserving students.

If you are a full-time student enrolled in an accredited college and meet the eligibility criteria, don't miss this chance to pursue your dreams and positively impact your community.

For more details about the application process and guidelines, please visit the NLBHA website (<https://nlbha.org/news/2024-2025-jtrscholarship/>).

Remember, the deadline for the JTR Scholarship is **April 30, 2024, 5 pm MST**.

### JOSIE TORRALBA ROMERO



**Josie Torralba Romero**  
March COV Newsletter, 2024

November 4, 2014, marked the tenth anniversary of the passing of Josie Torralba Romero, first President of the National Latino Behavioral Health Association (NLBHA). One of Josie's greatest dreams was to see NLBHA established and flourishing. A major player in the formation of NLBHA, Josie's work and involvement was crucial to the progress NLBHA has made since its establishment in 2000. NLBHA will celebrate its twenty-fourth anniversary on September 20, 2024.

Josie had enormous dedication and love for our Latino community and through her work, helped improve the services of the country's mental health, social service and child welfare. She has been praised as one of the early pioneers of social work education in San Jose and as a staunch supporter and advocate for preparing culturally competent social work students to work effectively in communities of color.



# UPCOMING EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

**Connecting Our Voices (COV) Substance Misuse Prevention Youth Advisory Internship Opportunity**

The National Latino Behavioral Health Association's (NLBHA) Connecting Our Voices (COV) program is seeking Youth Advisory Interns for their Youth Advisory Council! The Youth Advisory Council's purpose is to build the skills of young people, in Southern Rio Arriba County and Northern Santa Fe County to prevent underage drinking, substance use, youth suicide and improve overall behavioral health for their communities. Youth interns will receive training to produce youth-authored messages delivered through media, culturally appropriate videos, and presentations for the public.

This internship is ideal for youth who have an interest in affecting positive community change and who want to build skills around leadership, public speaking, advocacy & policy, and creating media campaigns.

**Location:** Northern Rio Grande Heritage Area office in Española and virtually via Zoom  
**Dates:** Immediate until May 31st  
**Compensation:** Educational stipend of \$16 per hour  
**Schedule:** 8-10 hours per week

**To qualify, you must:**

- Be between the ages of 16 to 18 at the start of the program
- Live within the area of Southern Rio Arriba and Northern Santa Fe County

**Apply by emailing your resume and contact information today!**

**Apply Now!**

**Contact**

**Cynthia P. Lentini**  
 Co-Program Director  
 Connecting Our Voices  
 505.927.7769  
 cymilene@nlbha.org

## Youth Advisory Internship Opportunity

Are you aware of the opportunity to gain valuable work experience and make a difference in your community? The youth advisory internship with Connecting Our Voices offers an exciting chance for youth aged 16-18 to apply their skills and knowledge in a supportive environment. To learn more, please contact **Cynthia Lentini** at [Cynthia@NLBHA.org](mailto:Cynthia@NLBHA.org).

**ALL EYES on EVHS!**

**April 14th 12-3**

Join us for a day of community pride and celebration at EVHS. We need you to be a part of showing our students and staff that the community cares.

Music, Art, Games, Service Projects, Community Resources and More!

Call or text Principal Miller (505) 927-1546 to sign up!!!

## All EYES on EVHS!

Join the vibrant community of EVHS for a day of community pride and celebration, where music, art, games, service projects, community resources, and more await you.

April 14th 12 - 3 PM

Call or Text **Principal Miller (505) 927-1546** to sign up.

**Registrations Now Open**

**2024 National Latino Behavioral Health Conference**  
 "¡Juntos Podemos!"  
 Taking Action to Improve Latino Behavioral Health

**Hyatt Regency San Antonio Riverwalk San Antonio, Texas**

**August 23-24 2024**

**Now Available**

- Call for Papers
- Conference Registration
- Hotel Registration
- Sponsorship/Exhibitor Opportunities

[WWW.NLBHA.ORG](http://WWW.NLBHA.ORG)

**National Latino Behavioral Health Association NLBHA**

## 2024 National Latino Behavioral Health Conference

Join us for the 2024 National Latino Behavioral Health Conference in the beautiful San Antonio, where we will take collective action to improve Latino Behavioral Health.

Visit [WWW.NLBHA.ORG](http://WWW.NLBHA.ORG) for more information!

Nick Salazar Center for the Arts presents

An evening with **Jimmy SANTIAGO BACA!**

**Friday, April 12**  
 AN ALL-AGES, FREE EVENT!  
**DOORS OPEN @5:00PM**  
**PERFORMANCE BEGINS @6:00PM**

**WHERE:**  
 NMMC Española Campus  
 Nick Salazar Center for the Arts  
 921 N Paseo de Oñate 87532

**FEATURING:**

- Tacos served to the first 100 people by 3-time Food Network Champion Fernando Ruiz of Escondido
- Car show by the Española Lowrider Museum Coalition
- Local artisan vendors
- Youth dance performance by Moving Arts Española
- Music by Andrea Michelle Lucero
- Poetry readings by local renowned poets Adan Trujillo and Adan Baca
- One-hour reading by Jimmy Santiago Baca

**QUESTIONS:**  
 747-2265 • [tj.hilton@nmmc.edu](mailto:tj.hilton@nmmc.edu)

## An Evening with Jimmy Santiago Baca!

Don't miss this amazing opportunity to come together as a community and celebrate the arts at "An Evening with Jimmy Santiago Baca!"

Friday, April 12  
 921 N Paseo de Oñate 87532

Questions? Contact **Tj.Hilton@NMMC.edu 747-2265**.

## CELEBRATE WITH US!

MARCH	APRIL	MAY
<u>Women's History Month</u>	<u>National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day</u>	<u>Mental Health Awareness Month</u>
<u>National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week® (NDAFW)</u>	<u>Sexual Assault Awareness Month</u>	<u>National Prevention Week</u>



# STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

## CONNECTING OUR VOICES

### PROGRAM STAFF



**Jorge Gonzales**  
Program Director  
[Jorge@NLBHA.org](mailto:Jorge@NLBHA.org)



**Cynthia Lentini**  
Co-Program Director  
[Cynthia@NLBHA.org](mailto:Cynthia@NLBHA.org)



**Delubina Montoya**  
Program Coordinator



**Elizabeth Rodriguez Diaz**  
Program Specialist  
[Elizabeth@NLBHA.org](mailto:Elizabeth@NLBHA.org)

**Connecting Our Voices: Our Community Newsletter** is the perfect opportunity to showcase your talents and achievements. If you want to be featured in the next edition, please reach out to newsletter editor Elizabeth Rodriguez Diaz at [Elizabeth@NLBHA.org](mailto:Elizabeth@NLBHA.org).

Additionally, we invite you to be a part of our monthly Connecting Our Voices Coalition Meeting. This meeting will be held on the 4th Thursday of each month, either virtually or in-person. If you are interested in attending, please contact us for details and an invitation.

Don't miss this opportunity to connect with fellow community members and contribute your voice to vital discussions. Your presence and participation will make a difference.

Let's come together and strengthen our community through the power of communication and collaboration.

National Latino Behavioral Health Association **NLBHA**

