

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Circular

JULY 2023 - SEPTEMBER 2023



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT
slobehavioralhealth.org

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- **Ana Isabel Cabezas, Psy.D**, Diversity & Multicultural Inclusion Coordinator
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- **Anne Robin, L.M.F.T.** Behavioral Health Administrator
- **Nasseem Rouhani**, Behavioral Health Specialist
- **Kendra Scott**, Veterans Service Administrative Assistance
- **Karina Silva Garcia, Ph.D**, Program Manager, Prevention & Outreach
- **Katherine Soule, Ph.D**, Director UC Cooperative Extension & Youth, Families, & Communities
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Anne Robin Interview

Content by Annika Morse

On February 1st, Behavioral Health Director Anne Robin's retirement was announced. After over 40 years working in behavioral health systems, Anne is set to retire on August 1. I had the pleasure of interviewing Anne shortly after news of her retirement was released, and her wise, gracious responses about her career, goals, and aspirations are certainly worth sharing.

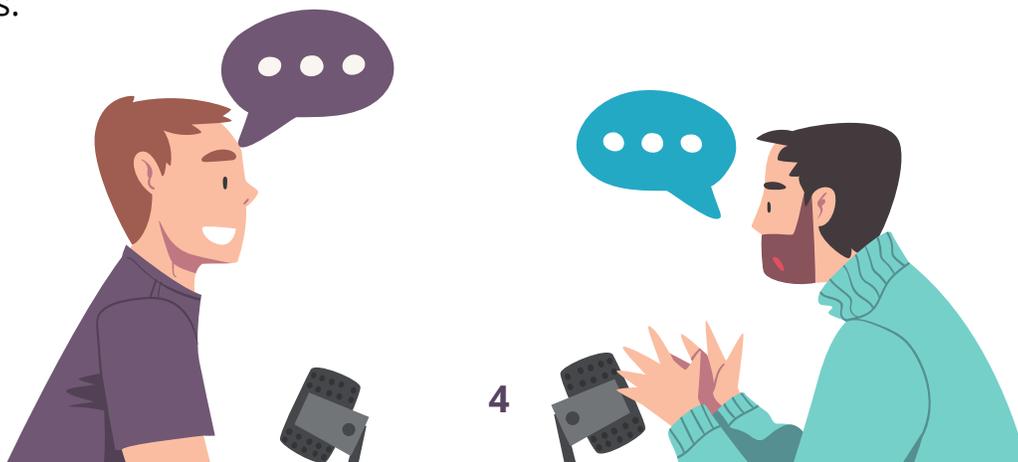
Anne has worked in San Luis Obispo County's Behavioral Health Department (SLOBHD) since December of 2013. Prior to this time, she worked as Butte County's Behavioral Health Director. She also worked at Telecare Sacramento's SOAR program, was the Assistant Director for Tuolumne County, and with Mental Health Systems, Inc. of San Diego County.

During her time at SLOBHD, Anne has seen the department "become a broader support system for the folks - we serve." Specifically, Anne has overseen the addition of drug and alcohol services in large magnitude, case management services for adults, the Latino Outreach Program, Justice Services, a residential treatment facility for drug and alcohol services, and Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) expansions.

Anne reflected on the myriad of ways in which SLOBHD has taken on DEI as an initiative during her time in the department. For example, the department has added a dedicated position focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Also, staff have strengthened their commitments to serving people within a cultural context that makes sense to them. Furthermore, the department has taken steps to ensure that community members who are underserved have a voice and are represented.

Still, Anne remarks that "we still have a lot of change to do" as we work towards building "better supports for a diverse community as the county becomes more diverse." It is imperative that we develop strategies to "engage folks who have been at the periphery of our treatment and our community."

Notably, this work does not come without challenges. Anne addressed the difficulties that arise when working with individuals who don't believe that diversity is important, deny that we have an issue with racism, or don't recognize the need for equity in our communities.



Anne Robin Interview (Continued)

"If we look at history; if we look even at banking and real estate and some of the other historical areas within our county that have impacted people of color, there are still vestiges of that," Anne said. "They may not be as obvious as they had been once because laws have changed, but there are still vestiges of that. And I think it's still a challenge for people to accept the fact that we have work to do in the equity and diversity fields without just retreating into a defensive position."

Instead of forcefully hitting this conflict head-on, Anne remarks that we should instead ask that these individuals "look at what your life situation has presented to you that has given you those values and compare it with other things that are happening now. And maybe we address some of your belief systems with fact, with other experiences, with more knowledge."

When asked about achievements at SLOBHD that have felt most meaningful to her, Anne commented that she is proud of helping to foster a sense of teamwork in the department.

"I've done nothing without a fabulous team," Anne remarked. "They're not my achievements; they're all of our achievements because I sometimes throw out ideas, and sometimes provide some leadership and advocacy for certain programs or ideas, but really, nothing happens without the team. And the team is fabulous."

In wise words of advice, Anne expressed hopes that our organization can flourish by understanding the realities of operating with limited resources. While there is so much that our organization would like to do and offer, Anne recognizes that we don't always have the resources for all of it. As a result, it is imperative to prioritize appropriate growth and support of existing programs. Furthermore, Anne emphasized the importance of giving up old things when they are no longer of service. In summary, she hopes that we, as a department, "don't lose track of the good in pursuit of the perfect."

As Anne looks towards retirement, she envisions that she will continue to work in behavioral health for a few years in consulting and supporting the County in ways that she can. She also hopes to continue to be active in the community through volunteer work. I concluded our interview by asking Anne about what she is most looking forward to in retirement.

"What I really hope to do is work in my garden, take care of my critters; I want to learn how to shear my own sheep... I want to be able to just wake up in the morning and say, 'okay, what do I want to do today?'"

Thank you, Anne, for your incredible work at SLOBHD!

International Day of the World's Indigenous People

August 9th, 2023

International Day of the World's Indigenous People is designed to raise awareness of the needs of Indigenous communities across the globe. The date, August 9th, marks the inaugural meeting of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations held in Geneva in 1982.

Worldwide, there are 476 million indigenous individuals, making up less than 5% of the world's population. There are an estimated 7,000 various Indigenous languages and 5,000 different Indigenous cultures. Throughout history, the rights of Indigenous individuals have been violated. Resultingly, modern Indigenous communities are disproportionately disadvantaged, vulnerable, and poor.

This history of discrimination, lack of opportunity, and trauma has impacted the health of these communities. In 2019, 18.7% of Indigenous people in the United States experienced mental illness. Studies indicate that alcohol and other drug use begins at a younger age for American Indian/Alaska Native individuals in comparison to other ethnic groups. Furthermore, suicide rates among American Indian/Alaska Native adolescents are more than twice that of white adolescents.

Notably, there are many barriers to mental health care for Indigenous/Native communities in the United States. These barriers include lack of funding for the Indian Health Service, residence in rural/isolated locations, mistrust of government services, lack of cultural humility in serving this population, language barriers, and poverty/unemployment.

To learn more about this issue, utilize the following resources:

- [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)
- [Mental Health America](#)
- [American Psychiatric Association](#)



Suicide Prevention Month

September 2023



September is Suicide Prevention Month. During September, the Behavioral Health Department collaborates with local agencies to reduce suicide by increasing culturally sensitive services, messaging, and community-based efforts that engage all members of the community.

As the month of September approaches, check back at the following link for more information about Suicide Prevention Month events:

[County of San Luis Obispo Suicide Prevention Month](#)



Resources:

- **National Suicide Prevention Line:** Text or call 988
- **Central Coast Hotline:** Text or call 800-783-0607 (Confidential mental health guidance, crisis, and suicide prevention hotline available 24/7)
- **Línea de Prevención del Suicidio y Crisis:** 1-888-628-9454
- **La línea de intervención en Crisis de Central Coast:** 800-783-0607 (Es una línea confidencial donde podrá acceder a herramientas e información para atender la salud emocional, al igual que prevención de crisis y de suicidio. Funciona las 24 horas del día, los 365 días del año y es gratuito.)

Latinx Heritage Month

September 15 - October 15, 2023

Content by Karina Silva Garcia, PhD

As a proud Latina immigrant, I deeply value my background and culture. I was born and raised in Jalisco, Mexico. I came to the United States at 13 years old and navigating multiple US systems (e.g., schools, communities, society) gave me first-hand experience with the challenges endured by immigrants, but also the resilience within us. I value the efforts of many immigrant families, including my own. I understand firsthand experience that with support, sharing knowledge, and access to resources, I can be an immigrant and a doctor. It takes family, community, and all of us to impact someone's life. I know our perseverance and our voice matter in this country. During Latinx Heritage Month, we acknowledge the vital role that Latino/x individuals have played in shaping our country's history, culture, and society. We celebrate the resilience, strength, and diversity that define our community, embodied by individuals from diverse backgrounds and identities.

President Lyndon B. Johnson, in 1968, signed a bill establishing National Hispanic Heritage Week, which was expanded to a month-long celebration in 1988. We understand the historical significance of this event is crucial. From September 15th to October 15th, this commemoration honors the rich cultures, cherished traditions, and invaluable contributions of Latino/x individuals in the United States. It is a time to recognize and appreciate the immense impact that Latino/x individuals have made on our country.

During Latinx Heritage Month, I encourage you to embrace opportunities to learn about and appreciate the unique contributions made by Latino/x individuals in various fields, such as education (e.g., Jaime Escalante), healthcare (e.g., Dr. Catalina Esperanza Garcia and Dr. Helen Rodríguez-Trías), business (e.g., Ramona Ortega and Beto Perez), science (e.g., Mario Molina, José M. Hernández), sports (e.g., Pelé and Ana Gabriela Guevara Espinoza), art (e.g., Frida Kahlo), music (e.g., Celia Cruz, Vicente Fernandez), community leadership (e.g., Dolores Huerta), among many others. Let us also take a moment to reflect on the challenges and systemic barriers that Latino/x individuals face, including discrimination, inequities, and underrepresentation. By acknowledging these obstacles and working towards creating a more just and equitable society, we can ensure that the contributions and voices of Latino/x individuals are valued and uplifted.

As we celebrate Latinx Heritage Month, let us honor the rich history and culture of the Latino/x community, extending our commitment to fostering an inclusive, equitable, and welcoming society in San Luis Obispo and far beyond. I am proud to be part of the SLO County Behavioral Health team, which remains dedicated to fostering a more just, welcoming, and equitable community for all.

El Mes de la Herencia Latina/x

15 de septiembre - 15 de octubre

Por Karina Silva Garcia, PhD

Como orgullosa inmigrante latina, valoro mucho mi origen y mi cultura. Nací y crecí en Jalisco, México. Llegué a Estados Unidos a los 13 años y el hecho de navegar por múltiples sistemas estadounidenses (por ejemplo, escuelas, comunidades, sociedad) me dio experiencia de primera mano con los retos que afrontan los inmigrantes, pero también con la resiliencia que llevamos dentro. Valoro los esfuerzos de muchas familias inmigrantes, incluida la mía. Comprendo por experiencia propia que con apoyo, compartiendo conocimientos y acceso a recursos, puedo ser inmigrante y doctora. Se necesita a la familia, a la comunidad y a todos nosotros para influir en la vida de alguien. Sé que nuestra perseverancia y nuestra voz importan en este país. Durante el Mes de la Herencia Latina, reconocemos el rol vital que los individuos latinos/x han tenido en la formación de la historia, la cultura y la sociedad de nuestro país. Celebramos la resistencia, la fuerza y la diversidad que definen a nuestra comunidad, representando a individuos de diversos orígenes e identidades.

En 1968, el Presidente Lyndon B. Johnson firmó un acuerdo por el que se establecía la Semana Nacional de la Herencia Hispana, que en 1988 se extendió a un mes. Entendemos la importancia histórica de este evento es crucial. Del 15 de septiembre al 15 de octubre, esta celebración hace honor a las ricas culturas, apreciadas tradiciones e invaluable contribuciones de los individuos latinos en los Estados Unidos. Es un momento para reconocer y apreciar el gran impacto que las personas latinas/x han tenido en nuestro país.

Durante el Mes de la Herencia Latina/x, les animo a que aprovechen las oportunidades para conocer y apreciar las contribuciones únicas realizadas por personas latinas en diversos campos, como la educación (por ejemplo, Jaime Escalante), la medicina (por ejemplo, la Dra. Catalina Esperanza García y la Dra. Helen Rodríguez-Trías), los negocios (por ejemplo, Ramona Ortega y Beto Pérez), la ciencia (Mario Molina, José M. Hernández), el deporte (Pelé y Ana Gabriela Guevara Espinoza), el arte (Frida Kahlo), la música (Celia Cruz, Vicente Fernández), el liderazgo comunitario (Dolores Huerta), entre muchos otros. Dedicemos también un momento a reflexionar sobre los retos y las barreras que se enfrentan las personas latinas, como la discriminación, la desigualdad y la falta de representación. Si reconocemos estos obstáculos y trabajamos para crear una sociedad más justa y equitativa, podremos garantizar que las contribuciones y las voces de las personas latinas sean valoradas y elevadas.

Al celebrar el Mes de la Herencia Latina/x, honremos la historia y cultura de la comunidad latina/x, extendiendo nuestro compromiso de cultivar una sociedad inclusiva, justa y amable en San Luis Obispo y más allá. Estoy orgullosa de ser parte del equipo de Salud y Bienestar del Condado de San Luis Obispo, que sigue dedicado a promover una comunidad más justa, más agradable y más equitativa para todos.

RESOURCES



BIPOC AFFIRMING
RESOURCES
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LGBTQIA+ AFFIRMING
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