

SVCN Nonprofit Impact Awards 2023

Nonprofits of the Year
ELEVATE COMMUNITY CENTER +
RAZING THE BAR

Patricia A. Gardner Changemaker Award
CHAD BOJORQUEZ +
CLAUDINE SIPILI

Emerging Nonprofit Leader Award
KATIE BLEVINS +
CRIS UNCIANO JR.

Nonprofit Ally Award
SHERRI SAGER

Collaborative Impact Award
GUERRERAS OF THE ¡SÍ SE PUEDE!
COLLECTIVE

Be Our Guest 2023

NONPROFIT
IMPACT
AWARDS

SVCN!

If you missed Be Our Guest 2023, we would love to tell you more about our Nonprofit Impact Award recipients. Congratulations to the recipients and thank you to the nominators.

Nonprofits of the Year

SVCN's Nonprofit of the Year Award was presented to the [Elevate Community Center](#) and [Razing the Bar](#).

[Elevate Community Center](#) was founded in 2021 with a mission to support historically underserved communities in obtaining long term self-sufficiency and financial stability. In furtherance of this mission, Elevate provides financial literacy education, as well as legal services in domestic violence and family law, criminal record clearance, landlord/tenant disputes, legal services for small businesses, as well as general civil litigation. The Founder and Executive Director, Sharine Xuan, graduated from Santa Clara University School of Law in May, 2021 with a social justice certification. The concept of Elevate Community Center was born from a research paper Sharine wrote in law school, advocating for the use of Cognitive Behavior Training in criminal justice reform.

Razing the Bar is a peer-to-peer led community. Razing the Bar serves TAY (transition age youth) 18-24 in Santa Clara County who have primarily been impacted by the foster care and juvenile justice systems. Razing the Bar provides housing and mentorship to youth who are transitioning of foster care, the juvenile justice system, and who are experiencing homelessness. Dontae Lartigue is the current CEO and Co-Founder. Dontae founded Razing the Bar in response to his experiences in foster care; his goal was to fundamentally rebuild how agencies serve under-resourced foster youth populations. Razing the Bar became a 501(c)3 nonprofit in 2018.

Patricia A. Gardner Changemaker Award

In 2020, we renamed our longstanding Changemaker Award to the "Patricia A. Gardner Changemaker Award" to honor SVCN's former long-time CEO, Patricia Gardner. Patricia's vision of nonprofit power in unity strengthened many community-based nonprofits and their work throughout the County.

This year, the Patricia A. Gardner Changemaker Award was awarded to two community leaders with years of impact: **Chad Bojorquez** and **Claudine Sipili**.

Chad has dedicated two decades to homelessness, first experiencing it firsthand, then a progressing career in direct service, and currently as the Chief Program Officer of Destination: Home, investing in solutions to end and prevent homelessness. Chad was a founding member of the Lived Experience Advisory Board (LEAB), is a senior fellow of American Leadership Forum (ALF), a graduate of Leadership San Jose, a two-time Most Valuable Player in the international sport power soccer, and holds a bachelor's degree in business psychology from Palo Alto University. Chad is the proud father of five children and loves his wife, Mayra.

Claudine, Director of Lived Experience and Innovation at Destination Home, passionately advocates for recognizing the humanity of those impacted by homelessness in efforts to end it. Her own experience with homelessness fuels her commitment to positive change and sustainable solutions for others in similar circumstances. Claudine champions the inherent dignity of every individual, regardless of their housing situation. She holds pivotal roles on influential boards, including the Santa Clara County Continuum of Care (CoC) Governance Board, as

the Northern California Co-Chair of the UCSF BHHI Statewide Lived Expertise Advisory Board and as a member of the Abode Services Board of Directors.

Emerging Nonprofit Leader Award

Katie Blevins (Humane Society of Silicon Valley) and **Cris Unciano, Jr.** (Bill Wilson Center) have been named recipients of the Emerging Nonprofit Leader Award. This award is for individuals who are in their first 10 years of nonprofit experience, shaping the sector through their energy, creativity, and exceptional leadership.

After many years working in the tech industry, **Katie Blevins** has found her passion working at Humane Society Silicon Valley (HSSV). She firmly believes that everyone deserves to have a pet in their life and is honored to lead many community-focused programs that support HSSV's "Keeping Families Together" strategic initiative. These programs include the Pet Pantry program that provides free pet food to families in need and mobile veterinary clinics that provide vet care to pets that may not have access otherwise. Katie looks forward to more opportunities to support our community's pets and the people that love them.

For 8 years, **Cris Unciano** has been making the world a better place. Following a stint in the United States Army, Cris knew he wanted to continue to help others. Currently the Director of Bill Wilson Center's Here4You Call Center, Cris leads a team of 24 to assist callers with locating shelter and basic need services. Prior to Bill Wilson Center, Cris was a Program Manager for five years with HomeFirst, overseeing veteran's services and assisting clients to determine eligibility for rapid rehousing. Cris is committed to helping the unhoused in Santa Clara County resolve their homelessness quickly and safely.

Nonprofit Ally Award

Sherri R. Sager, Senior Vice President and Chief Government Relations Officer of Stanford Medicine Children's Health/Lucile Packard Children's Hospital, has been awarded the Nonprofit Ally Award. This award is given to a government, private partner, Board member, or volunteer who has demonstrated an extraordinary level of commitment to the goals and work priorities of Santa Clara County nonprofits in 2023.

Sherry joined Lucile Packard Children's Hospital (LPCH) in 1994. As the Chief Government Relations Officer, she is responsible for developing and enhancing relationships and partnerships with elected and appointed officials; policy makers; healthcare providers; families, community leaders, members and organizations; business leaders; and industry trade associations. In addition, her portfolio includes building a vibrant grassroots and grassroots advocacy network; developing partnerships on public policy issues, analyzing legislative initiatives and their impact on LPCH and children, community education classes and community benefit programs and sponsorships. Sherry has a BS in Political Science from Santa Clara University and a MPA from San Jose State University.

Collaborative Impact Award

The **Guerreras of the ¡Sí Se Puede! Collective** are the recipients of the Collaborative Impact Award. This award honors collaborations that have created and nurtured an impactful partnership that inspired action and addressed this year's challenging circumstances.

When the pandemic reached San Jose, the ¡Sí Se Puede! Collective jumped into action and launched a team of Guerreras ("Warriors"). This group of residents, including youth, were trained by the Santa Clara County Public Health Department and served on the frontlines by going door-to-door to share resources, information, COVID tests, and reassurance to families who were looking for answers.

The Guerreras come from a long line of promotoras who were trained on health, justice and popular education in Mayfair. Most had been part of local campaigns for children's literacy, environmental justice, education, housing and more. Many are also worker-owners of their own business co-ops. Together as Guerreras, they reached over 250,000 people in the County.