

January 2025
Winter Issue



The Guild Gab

Celebrating our 20th Issue



The Prez Sez

Dear Friends,

2025 is starting off with challenges. The devastating Los Angeles fires have affected our friends and family. Many have lost everything, their homes, memories, sentimental attachments, and family heirlooms passed down for generations. As individuals of all ages deal with this catastrophe, the need for mental health services will be in high demand.

I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude for the dedication and support you have shown for our mission of raising funds for **Airport Marina Counseling Service (AMCS)** to provide affordable mental health services to those in need.

This past year, our board organized several fundraising events,

Eden's Epistle

As wildfires and high winds continue to impact multiple parts of Los Angeles City and County, our hearts break for those who have lost their loved ones, their homes, livelihoods, and communities.

We know that both those impacted directly and those who have friends and family who have been impacted can feel lost at this moment – even first responders can experience PTSD and additional stress.

During crises like this, therapy is critical because it

including a **Wine Pairing Dinner, Fashion Show, Restaurant Dining, and Holiday Lights Tour & Contest**. We also introduced a new fundraiser, **Havana Casino Nights**, which was such a success we are planning another one in September. Additionally, the **Guild Crafters** were hard at work selling their wonderful handmade merchandise at craft fairs. Thanks to your support and generosity we grossed approximately **\$48,000** from our FUNdraisers.

As we look forward to the year ahead, we remain steadfast in our commitment to raise \$50,000 for AMCS. Your ongoing involvement is crucial to our success. Whether through becoming a member/supporter, volunteering, donating, sponsoring and attending

provides emotional support and helps individuals process the trauma of losing homes and loved ones. People often experience intense emotions like grief, fear, and helplessness, and therapy offers a safe space to express and work through these feelings.

Therapy also aids in long-term recovery by helping people rebuild their sense of safety, resilience, and hope. It also addresses grief, trauma, and PTSD. Overall, therapy promotes emotional healing, long-term well-

FUNdraising events, or advocating for mental health awareness, every action you take helps us build a stronger, more supportive community.

We are excited to announce **Derby Day** as the theme for our **spring tea** in May. Please view our calendar on page 5 to find other events planned for the first part of the year. Further FUNdraiser information is available on our webpage westchestermhg.org.

I look forward to seeing you at our **Annual Membership/Supporter Meeting** or one of our amazing FUNdraising events. Together, we can continue to break down barriers to mental health care and help provide affordable care, especially during these devastating times that will have a lasting effect on so many.

being, and the rebuilding of lives after a crisis.

So, please let those impacted by the fires know that AMCS is here to help. AMCS is offering free therapy to those impacted by the fires.

In addition, for those looking for places to stay or other resources, the LAX Coastal Chamber of Commerce has created the following site that is extraordinarily helpful: <https://laxcoastal.com/about/los-angeles-wildfire-resources/>



Janie Guthrie
President 2024-2026

Special Interest Articles:

- Meet Members 2
- Lights Tour 3
- Casino Nights 4
- Annual Meeting 5



Eden Garcia-Balis, LMFT
Chief Executive Officer
AMCS

Highlights:

- Membership 4
- Crafters 5
- Calendar 5



Meet a Member – Eden Garcia-Balis

Eden Garcia-Balis is proud to be a Guild member and the CEO of Airport Marina Counseling Services (AMCS). Her parents were immigrants and believed the path to the American dream was education. She received a BA in psychology with a minor in criminal justice from Cal Poly Pomona. Her first job was as a case manager for youth on probation. As she worked more with these families, it became evident that most were disadvantaged and of low socio-economic status. Eden wanted to do more, so she went back to school to earn her Master’s in Counseling and then her license as a Marriage and Family Therapist. Throughout her time as a therapist, she has worked in

low-income communities, providing direct services to families and youth. She believes strongly that everyone should have access to services and that the stigma associated with therapy needs to be removed. Eden never planned on being in management, but realized that taking a management position would mean ensuring that an entire clinic could provide quality mental health services to people regardless of socioeconomic status.

She believes that sometimes things are just meant to be. In 2013, Eden decided she needed a change in her professional life, but wanted to ensure that the next step in her career evolution was a good fit. She

created a list of the elements of her ‘dream job.’ For example, it had to be a position where she was surrounded by supportive and committed professionals. It had to be a position where she felt she was really making a difference in the community she served, specifically with low-income families. And it had to be engaged with supporters who believed in the mission of mental health as passionately as she did. When Eden came across the job posting for AMCS she was thrilled. The clinic’s mission aligned with her core values and beliefs. The job description literally read like the description of her dream job! Eden has been with AMCS for 11 years and has never been happier!



Meet a Member – Bobbie Casalino Lewis

Bobbie Casalino Lewis is a New Yorker living in L.A. She will always joke that she will never be a true Angelino because the ocean is on the wrong side. This pretty much sums up her attitude of humor, kindness and integrity towards life. She has lived in Westchester since 1994 and she

participated with her home in the last WMHG Holiday Home Tour. It was during the decoration of her home that she met and bonded with Janie Guthrie. Bobbie is a Visual Expression Expert and Motivator.

She is also the Director of Community Service at Playa Venice Sunrise Rotary Club

and she co-chairs the lifestyle committee at the LAX Chamber. Her newest passion is the Los Angeles Rowing Club with 8 other people in the early morning. Her interests include skiing, aerialist, yoga, gardening, astrology, fashionista, and she loves to cook.



Meet a Member – Daniel Dews

Daniel Dews was born in Hawthorne, CA and attended Hawthorne High School, “home of the Beach Boys.” He graduated from El Camino College in 1977 with a degree in Construction Technology. While there, he learned a 2nd language

(Spanish) which helped him communicate with his subcontracted workers in his Yacht Refinishing Business for 46 years. In 1980, Daniel found his life partner, Judy, and together they both have enjoyed their association with AMCS (Jet to-Jetty and

Spring into Well-Being committees) and the Guild. Daniel received the Beau of the Guild in 2024 for his outstanding service. Daniel and Judy love to travel to Hawaii and go on European wine cruises. He also enjoys his Woodie car world as well.



5th Holiday Lights Tour & Contest

It's hard for us to believe, but we've hosted the **Holiday Lights Tour & Contest** for five years! Last month 21 brightly decorated homes competed in our event and the houses were better than ever.

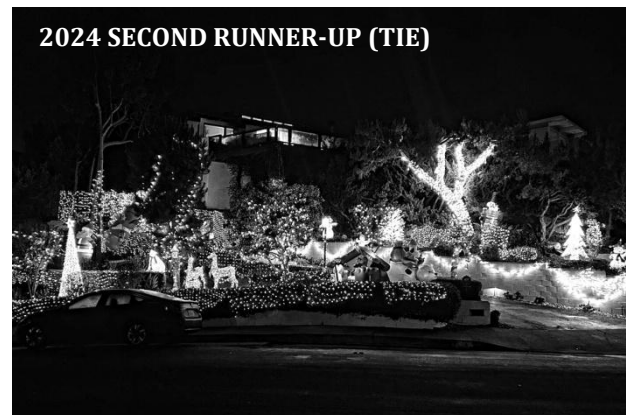
The **fan favorite** home, chosen by tour-goers, was the home on Dunbarton Avenue, Westchester, which featured numerous lights, all in blue. The **first runner-up** was West 78th Street, Westchester, the home of Board member **Tina Vanderjagt**, who was the fan favorite in 2021. There was a tie for **second runner-up** between Fowling Street, Playa del Rey, and Truxton Avenue, Westchester.

Our added attraction in the Tour was again successful. The **VIP Experience** had tour buses on two separate evenings that took 24 guests to see the homes, with a guide, refreshments and a stop at Tina's home, where tour-goers enjoyed Christmas carolers, hot chocolate and a description of the effort taken to decorate the home.

This year, prior winners were included in the Tour & Contest, with the exception of the immediately prior year's winner. 361 tickets were sold for the event, including 46 VIP tickets at \$50 each.

The **Holiday Lights Tour & Contest** was sponsored by the Drollinger Family Foundation, the John and Nancy Edwards Family Foundation, Jane St. John of Re/Max Estate Properties, Playa Venice Sunrise Rotary, Westside Neighborhood School, Carousel School, the Plotkin Family, the Woman's Club of Playa del Rey, the Law Offices of Edgar Saenz, Westchester Pharmacy, Hollywood Park Casino and the *Home Town News*.

Now we are looking forward to the 6th Annual Tour & Contest, set for next December. Please let us know (at info@westchestermhg.org) if you know of homeowners who would like to participate this year.



VIP EXPERIENCE ... joy, food, libations and song



Holiday Lights Tour voted ***FAVORITE*** Charity Nonprofit Event HomeTown News 2024 Readers' Poll





Membership Mission

Your Guild membership is a **fundamental** way to support AMCS. Our members/supporters believe in our cause, that of supporting good mental health in our community.



They recognize the need to supply counseling services to people who would not otherwise be able to afford them without AMCS. If that describes you, please join us!

Your involvement, no matter how big or small, is invaluable to us. To become a **Member/Supporter** or to renew your membership, simply return your check in the enclosed envelope, or scan the QR code to pay online if you want to use PayPal, Venmo or Zelle, or bring your payment to our **Annual Membership/Supporter Meeting** on **Thursday, January 30** (please remember to RSVP on our website). We have various supporter levels. Our **Jewel Supporter** is only \$35, while a **Diamond Supporter** is \$60, and a **Double Diamond** is \$120.

Your support at this time gives us a wonderful head start in our efforts to create successful FUNdraisers throughout the year.

We're looking forward to seeing everyone at our **Annual Meeting** and welcoming our new supporters. Please help us make 2025 another successful year!

Join our Board - Make a Difference

We are excited to share an incredible opportunity with you. We are looking to expand our **Board of Directors**. We believe that fresh perspectives and diverse experiences are essential to driving our mission forward and making a greater impact in our community.

Becoming a board member offers a unique chance to contribute your expertise, insights, time, and skills to an organization that is making a tangible difference in people's lives.

Whether you have previous board experience or are new to this type of service, your unique perspective and dedication are invaluable to us.

If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity or know someone who would be a great fit, please email our President, Janie Guthrie Skjervem at janie.guthrie@gmail.com.

Thank you for your ongoing support and for considering this meaningful opportunity to serve.



Our first-ever **Havana Casino Nights** fundraiser was held on September 28, 2024. On behalf of co-chairs Judy Delavigne and Judy Dews, we want to thank all our hard-working committee members and all our supporters.

We had a large turnout and everyone had a great time, which added to the success of the event. From the Cuban food, the Latin Jazz trio, along with the fabulous gift baskets for attendees to choose for their raffle tickets earned from playing the casino-like games, to the photo booth, the casino night was a big hit.



Thanks especially to our generous sponsors: **Blue Diamond**-The Drollinger Family Charitable Foundation; **Ruby**-Jane St. John/ReMax Estate Properties and Playa Venice Sunrise Rotary; **Fiesta**-CCR Properties, Pamela Finkel, The Good Pizza, Traci Park/L.A. Councilwoman 11th District, Rotarians Fighting Human Trafficking, Rotary Club of Westchester, Stephanie Younger Group/Compass, Robin Zacha/Zacha Homes and Susan Zolla; **Emerald**-Law office of Edgar Saenz and Westchester Pharmacy; **Fedora**-Daniel and Judy Dews, Home Town News, Peter and Darla Kohly, Rick and Myra Kriwanek, LAX Coastal Chamber of Commerce and Valeria C. Velasco.





Our Crafters Are Creative

Our **Guild Crafters** group has continued to be productive, selling record amounts of their homemade products lately. The Crafters were very successful in selling their creations recently at the **Westchester Arts & Music Festival** in September and **St. Jerome's Craft Faire** in November. In just the past six months, the Crafters sold more than **\$3000** in merchandise, all made from donated materials.

The Crafters pride themselves on making products that are both useful and environmentally friendly, including insulated microwave cozies, rope bowls, casserole caddies, microwave popcorn bags, and reusable snack bags, crocheted hanging kitchen towels, knit hats and blankets, quilted table runners and placemats, and greeting cards. The prices customers pay include California sales tax, which the Guild then forwards to the State.

The Crafters are happy their work contributes to the success of the Guild, but they also are motivated by the social connection of the group and the mental health benefits of their creativity.

The next opportunity to purchaser Crafters' items will be at the **Annual Membership Meeting January 30**, where they expect to offer your traditional favorites and some new items. In the meantime, if you are in need of any of the Crafters' handmade items, or wish to donate fabric, yarn, large buttons or other crafting supplies, please contact Annika Backman at dabackman@yahoo.com.



WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US...

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING AND LUNCHEON
Thursday, January 30, 2025

11:00am

Covenant Presbyterian Church
 6323 West 80th Street, Westchester

Guest Speaker: Traci Park, Los Angeles City Councilmember from our District 11

All members are welcome and *highly encouraged* to invite friends to familiarize them with the Guild's mission and inspire them to become members.

- Free luncheon courtesy of Cantalini's Salerno Beach
- Raffle drawings
- Handmade Crafts Boutique

PLEASE RSVP info@westchestermhg.org



Traci Park has served as our District 11 Councilmember since 2022. She also serves as chair on the Tour, Travel and Tourism and 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games committees.

A strong supporter of our neighborhood, she plans to run for re-election in 2026.



4445 Admiralty Way • Marina del Rey
 (310) 823-4534 Fax: (310) 822-4901

Dockside Dollars
Fundraiser

0125

WESTCHESTER MENTAL HEALTH GUILD
FEBRUARY 2-6, 2025

Present this coupon to your server and Tony P's will donate 20% to your organization!

Not valid with any other promotions

Thursday	Jan 30	Annual Membership/Supporter Meeting and Luncheon
Sunday - Thursday	Feb 2 - 6	Tony P's Dining FUNdraiser – Coupon above
Tuesday	April 22	Wine Pairing Dinner – Cantalini's Salerno Beach, PDR
Saturday	May 3	Derby Day Spring Tea – Covenant Presbyterian Church
Thursday	May 22	AMCS 'Spring into Well-Being' Celebration

CALENDAR

Check westchestermhg.org for updates * 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



Visit our website
www.westchestermhg.org

Contact Us
info@westchestermhg.org

Thank you Community Partners

TOWER PIZZA

Tony and Joanne Seruto, owners ★

HACIENDA DEL REY and HACIENDA PLAYA

Al Hernandez and Cristina Reyes, owners
Pat Green, manager

CANTALINI'S SALERNO BEACH ★

Lisa Schwab, owner

5th ANNUAL HOLIDAY LIGHTS TOUR & CONTEST

Thank you Tina and Jon Vanderjagt for a
delightful evening at your home for the
supporters of the VIP Experience.

AMCS Accolades in 2024



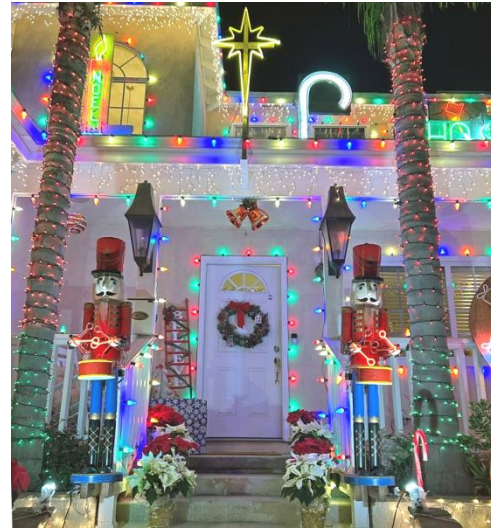
**FAVORITE
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