BUSINESS

Voices for Children appoints Muñoz president and CEO

Jessica Muñoz has been named President & CEO of Voices for Children, She lives in Fallbrook. Village News/Courtesy photo

SAN DIEGO – Jessica Muñoz, Esq., MFS has been named President & Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Voices for Children, the regional nonprofit organization designated by the San Diego and Riverside County Superior Courts to recruit, train, and support Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers. CASAs serve as consistent, caring adults for children who are in foster care after experiencing abuse, neglect, or abandonment.

In addition, CASAs advocate on behalf of children in foster care by providing critical information to judges making decisions about the children's futures. Muñoz has been with the organization since January 2016 as the Executive Director for the Riverside County program and more recently as the Executive Vice President for the entire organization. She succeeds Kelly Capen Douglas, Esq. who has served as President & CEO since October 2019 and has been named the next General Counsel at Santa Clara University.

During her term as President & CEO, Douglas guided Voices for Children through the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, created financial strength and stability for the organization, and led the implementation of a new Strategic Plan which provides a holistic framework for Voices for Children's strength and success in the years to come.

Chair of the Voices for Children Board of Directors, Annette Bradbury, said, "The board is delighted to promote Jessica to the role of President & CEO of Voices for Children. Her appointment is a natural progression in a career she has devoted to vulnerable children, youth, and families affected by legal systems."

"During her seven years leading the Riverside County program Jessica has developed authentic, long-lasting relationships with community leaders, child welfare partners, and supporters leading to year-on-year growth in the number of children served and revenue. She has demonstrated her extraordinary ability to inspire others to embrace our mission by becoming CASA volunteers, investing in Voices for Children, and providing platforms to tell our story," continued Bradbury.

"We would also like to express our profound gratitude to Kelly Capen Douglas for her leadership, dedication, and strategic vision over the last three and a half years. Kelly has successfully guided Voices for Children through the ever-changing landscape during the pandemic, building on our financial health, community support, and advocacy for vulnerable children in San Diego and Riverside Counties."

Muñoz is an attorney and practiced for more than seven years, including four years as a trial attorney in juvenile dependency courts in both Los Angeles and San Diego Counties. Prior to joining Voices for Children, she developed and coordinated a program at UC San Diego to provide support services to students who are undocumented.

In addition to her law degree, she holds a Master of Forensic Science degree and a professional certificate in nonprofit management. Muñoz is a past chair of the County of San Diego Juvenile Justice Commission and served on the board of the San Diego Civic Youth Ballet. Her professional affiliations include the State Bar of California, the Riverside County Bar Association, Leadership Riverside, and the Fieldstone Leadership Network. Muñoz was named the 2022 Juvenile Law Attorney of the Year by the Riverside County Bar Association. She is a resident of Fallbrook.

"I am grateful for and humbled by this opportunity to be of greater service to our CASA volunteers, Board of Directors, staff, community stakeholders, and - most importantly - the children who count on us every day," Muñoz said. "I'm excited to continue working alongside my colleagues at Voices for Children to make the advocacy CASA volunteers possible for children across San Diego and Riverside Counties."

Douglas and Muñoz will work closely during the transition. Muñoz will be responsible for leading the entire organization beginning March 1.

Worker of the Week waits on the public

Rob Arboneaux is a waiter for La Cucina Trattoria located at 1415 S. Mission Road. The family Italian restaurant opened Jan. 12. Arboneaux loves working with and for the public. Village News/David Landry photo

Townsend-Smith joins Rainbow water board

Joe Naiman
Village News Reporter

Patti Townsend-Smith is the newest member of the Rainbow Municipal Water District board.

Townsend-Smith, who was elected to the Division 4 seat in November, was sworn into office Jan. 3 and attended her first board meeting as a director Jan. 24.

"The work will begin now. I have a lot to learn, but I'm ready, willing, and able to do so," Townsend-Smith said.

She and her husband moved from Lake Elsinore to the Horse Creek Ridge community in September 2019. "We love it here," she said.

She is originally from suburban Buffalo, living in Williamsville and then Tonawanda. She attended State University of New York at Buffalo before becoming a registered nurse.

Her husband at the time had family in California, so they moved to Anaheim Hills. "It's probably the best thing that he did for me," she said.

They bought a home in Dana Point in 1980 and lived there until their divorce in 2008. Townsend-Smith remarried in 2015. She had moved to Lake Elsinore after her divorce.

"I love my community there, but I love Fallbrook so much more," Townsend-Smith said.

The property Townsend-Smith and her husband own includes citrus and wine grapes.

Townsend-Smith had four children from her first marriage and added two children after marrying her current husband. Her children range in age from 44 to 29.

She was a nurse for 40 years before retiring in 2014. During her first marriage, she and her husband owned a home interior store in Dana Point.

"I feel like I have some managerial skills," Townsend-Smith said.

Even prior to her retirement she was involved in Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). "I've always volunteered throughout my life," Townsend-Smith said.

The managerial skills and the volunteer work gave Townsend-Smith experience for a water district board seat. Concerns about Rainbow's water quality gave her the desire.

"I've always been interested in water quality," Townsend-Smith said. "That's probably going to be one of my main objectives."

Townsend-Smith notes that many Rainbow district residents are purchasing bottled water rather than using tap water provided by the district. "They're feeling the need to buy clean water," she said.

She hasn't personally visited a water store but knows residents who have, and she plans to determine district resident feelings about Rainbow's water. "I would personally like to talk with ratepayers," Townsend-Smith said.

The San Diego Aqueduct began delivering water from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California in November 1947. The Rainbow Municipal Water District was formed in 1953 to serve the Bonsall Heights Water District (which remained a separate retail agency until it was dissolved in 1975) and the Canonita, Morro, San Luis Rey Heights, Vallecitos, and Yucca mutual water companies.

"Some of the infrastructure that we have here in Fallbrook was given to us by Camp Pendleton in the 1940s," Townsend-Smith said. "Maybe we need to do some infrastructure changes."

During January, Townsend-Smith was able to look out her window at the rainfall, and she desires storage so that Rainbow can take advantage of the free water.

Townsend-Smith defeated incumbent Bill Stewart in the November 2022 election. Stewart had been on Rainbow's Budget and Finance Committee, and Townsend-Smith was appointed to that committee Jan. 24. She had desired to serve on the Budget and Finance Committee.

"So far I've met some very nice people at the district, so I look forward to working with some very nice folks," Townsend-Smith said.

Chamber plans events into March

FALLBROOK – The Fallbrook Chamber of Commerce has several upcoming events planned. They are:

- Friday, Feb. 17 – After Hours Networking at Village Roots Deli & Taproom, 4-6 p.m.
- Thursday, Feb. 23 – Dinner Mob at Harry's Sports Bar & Grill, 5 p.m.
- Monday, March 6 – First Monday Coffee at Chamber, 9 a.m.
- Thursday, March 9 – SunUpper at Care-Rite Vocational Services, 9 a.m.
- Monday, March 13 – Educational Seminar presented by Rosenstein & Associates – Employment Law Workshop at Chamber, 10 a.m.
- Wednesday, March 15 – SunDowner hosted by Fallbrook Historical Society, 5:30 p.m.
- Friday, March 17 – Business Breakfast Club at Bakin it Up, 9 a.m.
- Friday, March 24 – Lunch Mob at Coal Bunker, Noon
- Wednesday, March 29 – Wine Down Wednesday at Fallbrook Winery, 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Call the chamber for more details on any of these events, 760-728-5845.

Submitted by Fallbrook Chamber of Commerce.

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