

 **ACNL** PRESENTS...

# TURN UP THE VOLUME *ON NURSING LEADERSHIP*

48<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**FEBRUARY 8 - 11**

**THE WESTIN RANCHO MIRAGE GOLF RESORT & SPA**

**FEATURING**

**MARY DEE HACKER**

**CHRISTINA KELLEY · ADAM BROTMAN · HANNAH J. KIM · JAC GORMAN  
MELINDA PASCUAL · GREGORY EICHELZER · RIA SANGALANG · CARMEN WARD-SULLIVAN  
ANN TARDY · SUSAN ENGLE · ANNA MARIA VALDEZ · AUSTIN FROST · VERONICA S. TIMPLE  
GINA ALVAREZ · LINA NAJIB KAWAR · REGINA M. VALDEZ · MARIA W. O'ROURKE**

# 2025 RECOGNITION AWARDS

The Association of California Nurse Leaders is at the forefront of nurse leadership in California, shaping the future of healthcare. Comprising diverse and highly-educated members, ACNL promotes active participation to drive healthcare innovation. These passionate professionals are dedicated to nursing excellence and improving the health of our communities.

Each year, ACNL recognizes the outstanding contributions of nurse leaders in various areas. This year's award winners are remarkable leaders who are serving our profession with distinction. ACNL recognizes them as a subset of California's exceptional nurse leaders, applauding their efforts to enhance healthcare statewide. Through sharing these achievements, ACNL aims to inspire further creativity, innovation, and excellence in all healthcare settings.

# 2025 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

In pursuit of our mission to cultivate nurse leaders and encourage lifelong learning, ACNL sponsors several scholarships. These include academic scholarships for nurse leaders engaged in research or pursuing graduate degrees; leadership scholarships for concentrated healthcare studies; research scholarships for nursing practice advancements; and the Nurses Float Scholarship for outstanding RNs pursuing nursing degrees.

This year's scholarship program is offered through generous contributions from ACNL's members through the Circles of Giving program.

If you would like to learn more about becoming an ACNL scholarship sponsor, contact us at [info@acnl.org](mailto:info@acnl.org) or by phone at 916-779-6949.

# LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

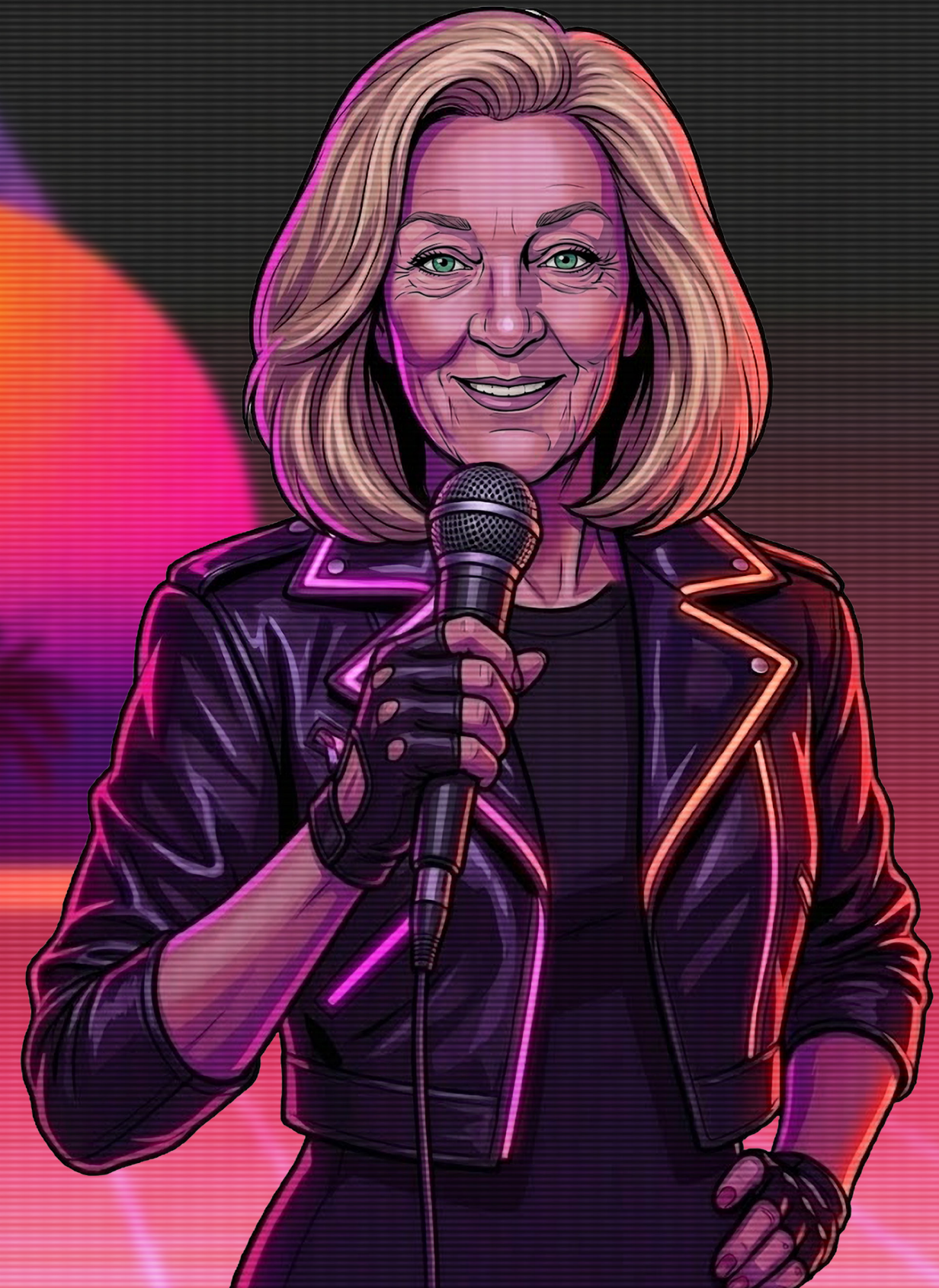
*Mary Dee Hacker*

MBA, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN

*AWARDED TO A NURSE LEADER WHO HAS MADE SIGNIFICANT LIFETIME CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NURSING PROFESSION.*

A visionary leader and steadfast advocate for family-centered care, Mary dedicated more than four decades to advancing pediatric nursing at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, where she served as Chief Nursing Officer and Vice President of Patient Care Services. From 1975 to 2018, she shaped the profession through a sustained commitment to clinical excellence, workforce development, and innovation, most notably through the nationally recognized Versant RN Residency Program. That program transformed the transition-to-practice experience for new graduate nurses, improved retention and competency, and became a national model cited by the National Academy of Medicine.

Under Mary's leadership, CHLA achieved Magnet designation, reflecting a culture of nursing excellence, shared governance, and patient-centered outcomes, and she established a Nursing Research Institute that elevated inquiry, evidence-based practice, and scholarly contribution across the organization. A lifelong servant leader, Mary Dee also played a key role in expanding the DAISY Award program across ACNL and AONL, strengthening national recognition of nurses' compassion, professionalism, and impact. Her influence extended beyond CHLA through service on the HealthImpact Board, the Academy of Nursing, and numerous community organizations. Through these efforts, she earned multiple national honors and left a lasting imprint on pediatric nursing, leadership development, and the advancement of the profession.



AWARDED TO A NURSE LEADER WHO HAS MADE  
A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO NURSING LEADERSHIP

AWARDED TO A NURSE LEADER WITH UNDER TWO YEARS IN A  
LEADERSHIP ROLE WHO HAS MADE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

# EXCELLENCE

*In Leadership*

*Christina Kelley!*  
DNP, APRN, AGCNS-BC, NE-BC, CNE, NPD-BC, CCRN-K

Christina exemplifies transformational leadership at Sharp Chula Vista Medical Center, where her vision and collaboration have strengthened nursing practice, patient care, and organizational culture. A passionate advocate for shared governance, she developed new professional councils that empowered nurses and interprofessional teams to shape clinical practice and improve outcomes. Christina also led SCVMC's pursuit of national accreditation for its nurse residency programs and launched a Transition to Practice initiative during the pandemic that was so effective it expanded systemwide across Sharp HealthCare. Her leadership in enhancing nurse-physician collaboration and advancing person-centered care through the Patient and Family Advisory Council helped improve patient satisfaction and engagement hospital-wide. Through her commitment to professional growth, teamwork, and innovation, Christina continues to elevate nursing excellence and inspire those around her.

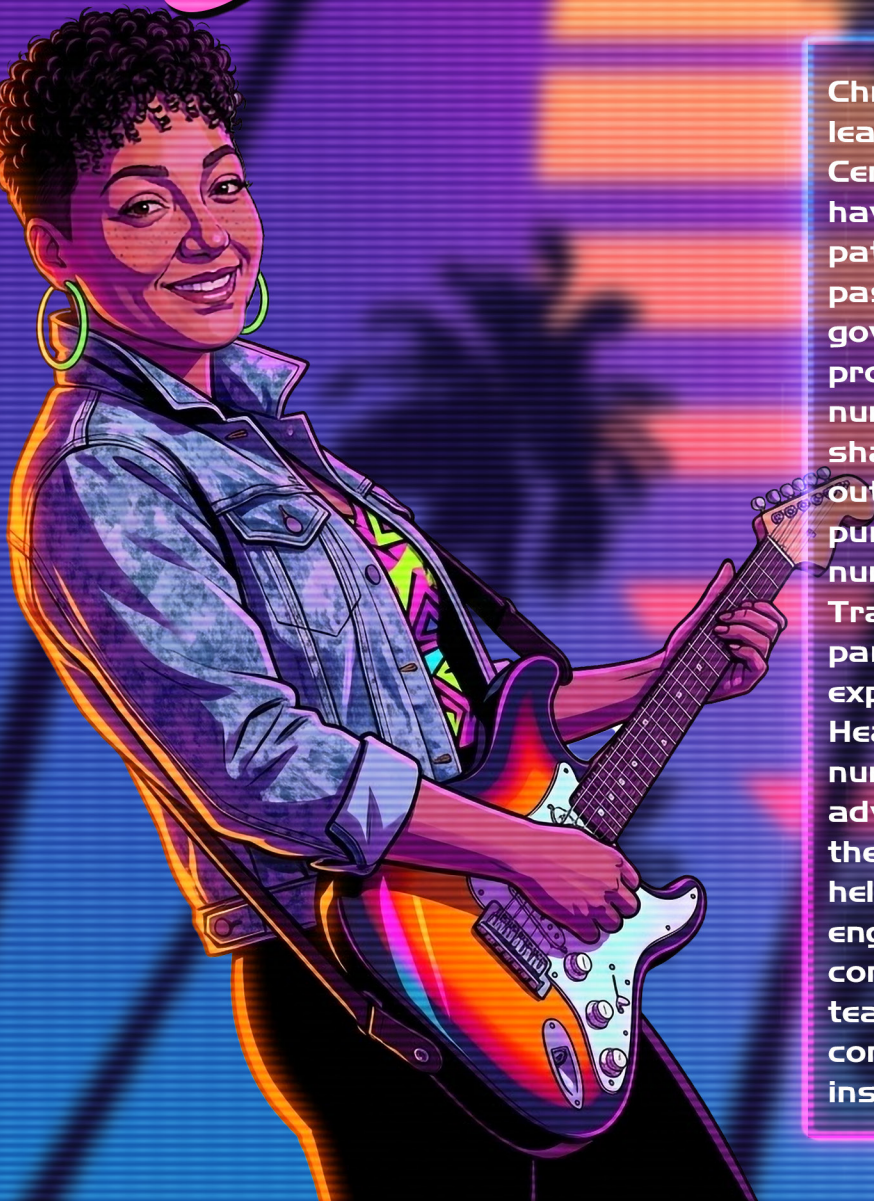
# OUTSTANDING

*Emerging Nurse  
Leader*

*Adam Brotman!*  
BSN, RN

A dynamic and community-driven leader, Adam brings vision and compassion to every aspect of his work. As Founder and President of the San Diego Association for Men in Nursing, he transformed a simple idea into an all-gender organization of more than 60 members that mentors students, supports professional growth, and promotes community health.

Adam spearheaded initiatives including a monthly free health screening clinic at the Jackie Robinson YMCA, Men's Health Awareness events, and CPR/AED education programs across eight high schools. When new graduate programs were cut in 2025, he organized the "Back to the Bedside" seminar, connecting graduates with hiring managers and restoring confidence in their career paths. A frequent guest speaker at local nursing schools, Adam inspires others through his belief that "nursing doesn't end when you clock out." His innovation and service embody the spirit of emerging leadership in nursing.



*Excellence...*

## IN NURSING RESEARCH

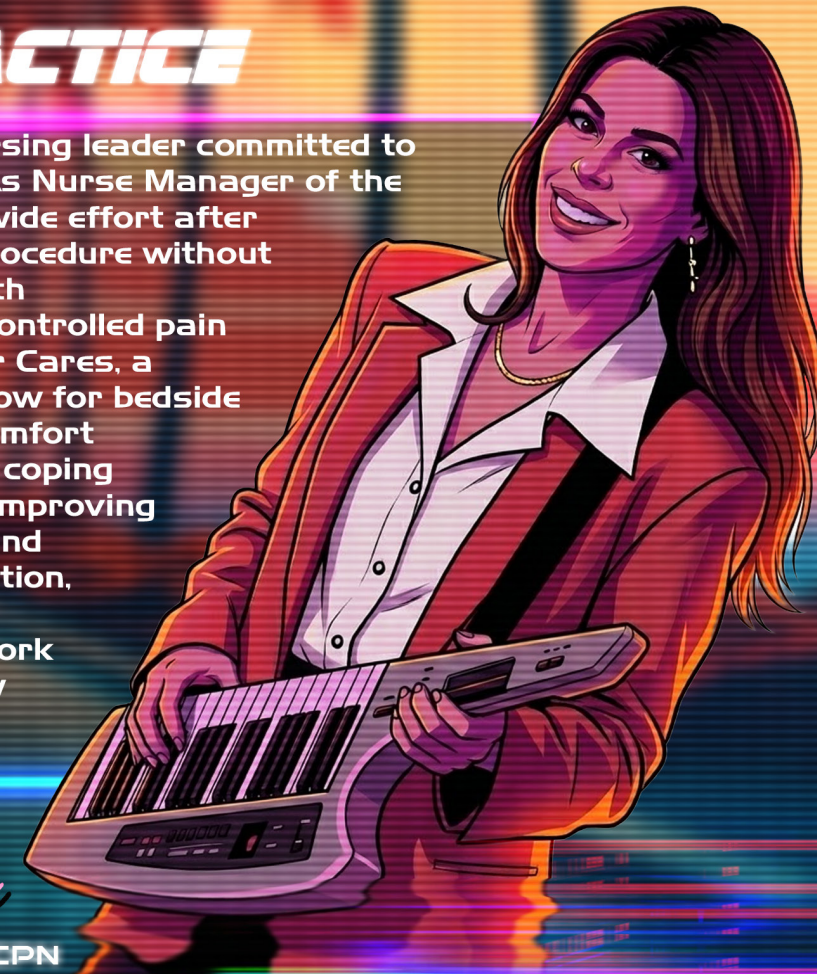


Hannah is a nationally recognized nurse scientist and transformational leader advancing nursing research and evidence-based practice across Kaiser Permanente's eight regions. As Nurse Research Scientist and Senior Operations Leader, she leads studies that improve patient outcomes, workforce wellbeing, and healthcare delivery. Her research on delirium prevention, falls, nurse burnout, and predictive modeling has influenced national practice standards and hospital policy. A co-investigator in NIH-funded trials, including the Adaptive COVID-19 Treatment Trial, Dr. Kim has published in major journals such as The New England Journal of Medicine. She has mentored more than 60 Evidence-Based Practice fellows in the U.S. and abroad and, through her role on ACNL's Research and EBP Committee, continues to support and motivate emerging nurse researchers.

*Hannah J. Kim*

PhD, RN, CNL, PHN

## IN CLINICAL PRACTICE



Jac is a transformational pediatric nursing leader committed to compassionate, evidence-based care. As Nurse Manager of the Surgical Unit, she initiated a hospital-wide effort after witnessing a child undergo a painful procedure without preparation or relief. She partnered with interdisciplinary teams to address uncontrolled pain events and led the creation of The Bear Cares, a standardized, trauma-informed workflow for bedside procedures. The initiative integrates comfort positioning, pain-management options, coping strategies, and the One Voice method, improving communication, psychological safety, and family-centered care. Since implementation, escalated safety events have dropped significantly, alongside gains in teamwork and patient satisfaction. Her work now serves as a replicable model for pediatric settings.

*Jac Gorman*

BSN, RN, CPN

## IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION



Melinda's strategic, data-driven approach has reshaped professional development at CHOC Children's Hospital. As the architect of CHOC's education infrastructure, she unified fragmented efforts under the ANPD Nursing Professional Development Model, formalizing educator roles, centralizing operations, and introducing performance metrics. She redesigned the RN Residency with structured, multi-modal evaluations and created streamlined onboarding tools that improved transparency and accelerated competency. Through strong budget oversight and metrics-based decisions, she enabled the education team to expand and increase impact. Melinda also oversees more than 150 academic affiliations, building pipelines aligned with clinical needs. Her mentorship culture has driven engagement to top-tier national benchmarks, redefining clinical education at CHOC.

*Melinda Pasqual*

MSN, RN, CPN

## IN INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY IN PROFESSIONAL NURSING

Gregory is a nurse leader whose approach to patient education has strengthened infection prevention at his medical center. As Nursing Innovation Administrator at the Geri and Richard Brawerman Nursing Institute, he identified gaps in chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG) bathing compliance and recognized that improvement required better patient understanding. He led a multidisciplinary team effort to create brief, culturally relevant micro-learning videos in English and Spanish, integrated into care through mobile technology. This empowered patients and freed nurses to focus on other priorities. The initiative raised CHG compliance to 87%, contributed to a 25% reduction in CLABSI rates, and earned praise from patients and staff.

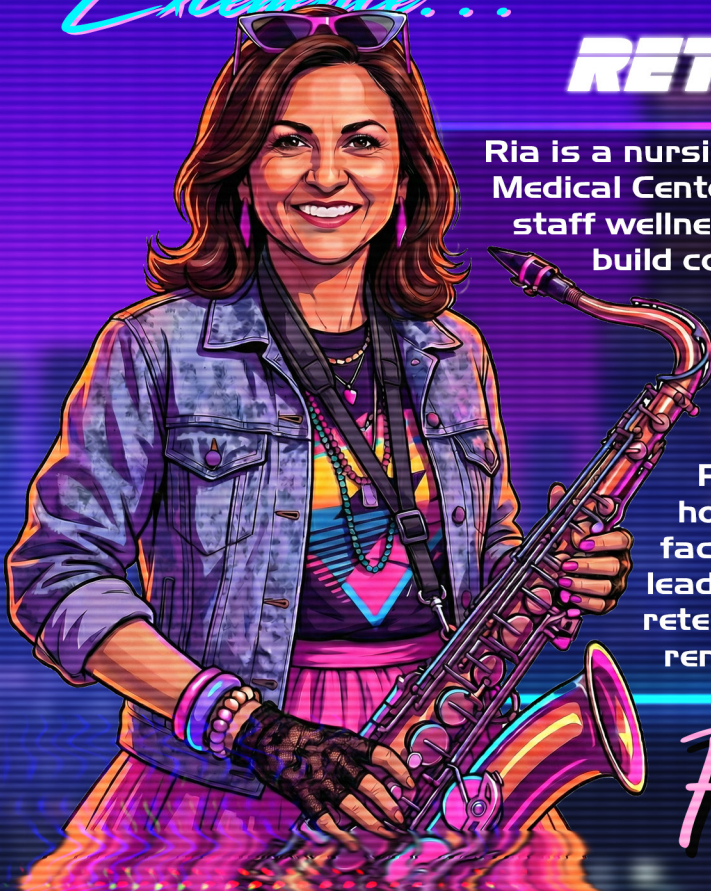


*Gregory Eichelzer*

DNP, RN, NEA-BC, CEN

*Excellence...*

# IN RECRUITMENT. RETENTION. OUTREACH.



Ria is a nursing leader whose work at Los Angeles General Medical Center has strengthened recruitment, retention, and staff wellness. She launched initiatives to reduce burnout, build community, and raise the hospital's profile through partnerships with nursing schools.

Ria also led a seven-year effort to achieve Magnet designation, guiding a multicultural professional practice model and advancing Professional Shared Governance. In 2024, the hospital became one of fewer than ten county facilities nationwide to earn Magnet status. Her leadership has driven strong new-graduate retention, multiple Leapfrog A ratings, and a renewed nursing culture.

*Ria Sangalang*  
MSN, RN

# CONTRIBUTIONS AS A HUMANITARIAN

AWARDED TO AN ACNL MEMBER FOR ADVANCING HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS THROUGH RESEARCH, SERVICE, OR EDUCATION.

Inspired by the need for safe maternity care in rural Ghana, Carmen partnered with leaders in the Kingdom of New Sawereso-Seinnuah to support the creation of a modern maternity clinic serving 11 communities. Over 18 months, she guided the project from concept to completion, establishing a clean, safe environment for childbirth where none had existed. Commissioned on May 8, 2025, the clinic now provides critical care for women and infants, with its ultrasound room named in her honor. Recognized as Queen Mother of Development, Carmen continues to support sustainable, culturally grounded health initiatives that reflect ACNL's values of diversity, integrity, innovation, and inclusivity, offering a strong example of nurse-led global health leadership and compassionate service.

*Carmen Ward-Sullivan*  
Carmen Ward-Sullivan PhD, RN



# FRIEND

*Of Nursing*

AWARDED TO AN INDIVIDUAL OR ORGANIZATION FOR SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NURSING PROFESSION.

*Ann Tardy*



Ann Tardy is a longtime champion of nursing leadership and a trusted partner of ACNL. In 2003, she founded LifeMoxie, and in 2012 partnered with ACNL to launch a mentorship program that has paired hundreds of nurses across California, supporting leadership growth, professional development, and career confidence. Beyond program design, Ann provides coaching, guidance, and encouragement to nurse leaders at all career stages. A dynamic and engaging speaker, she is a frequent presenter at ACNL Annual Conferences, sharing practical strategies that help nurses lead with clarity and purpose. Her sustained commitment has had a lasting impact on nurse leadership statewide through advocacy, partnership, and service.

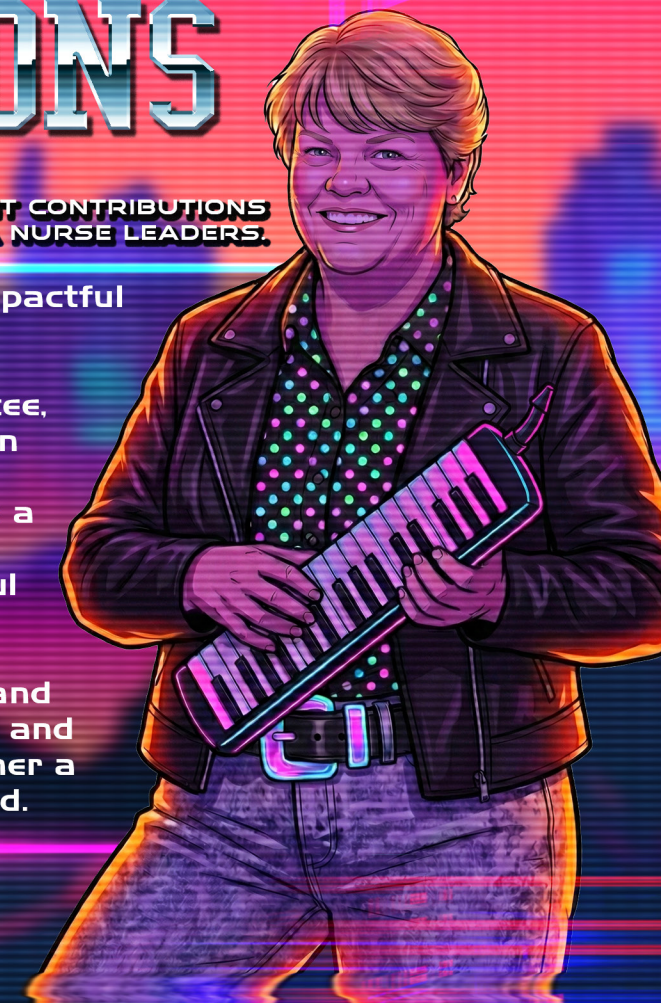
CPA, JD, CSP

# CONTRIBUTIONS TO ACNL

AWARDED TO AN INDIVIDUAL FOR SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA NURSE LEADERS.

During her time with ACNL, Susan has made impactful behind-the-scenes contributions that have strengthened the organization's mission. As a dedicated member of the Health Policy Committee, she shapes policy work through her expertise in regulation, legislation, and evidence-based decision-making, informed by her experience as a consultant to the Board of Registered Nursing. Her contributions include helping defeat harmful legislation, conducting literature reviews for policy statements, and supporting ACNL's first asynchronous education program. Thoughtful and collaborative, Susan exemplifies the leadership and integrity that advance ACNL's work and make her a deserving nominee for this Contributions Award.

*Susan Engle*  
Susan Engle RN, PHN



# DIVERSITY. EQUITY. INCLUSION. ACCESSIBILITY. ANTI-RACISM

AWARDED TO AN INDIVIDUAL DEMONSTRATING SIGNIFICANT DEDICATION TO THE FIGHT FOR EQUALITY IN HEALTHCARE.

## ANNA MARIA VALDEZ

PHD, RN, FAEN, FAADN

Anna is a nationally recognized nurse scholar, educator, and consultant whose leadership has advanced diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and antiracism in nursing at the institutional and national levels. As founder and CEO of AVA Consulting Group, she has guided major healthcare systems, academic institutions, and national accrediting bodies, including Stanford and UCSF, through sustained DEIAA change grounded in evidence and accountability. She is the creator of the influential 4As Model, a practical framework widely used to embed antiracism and health equity into education, practice, leadership, and policy, shaping systems-level change across nursing and healthcare.



At Sonoma State University, Anna leads equity-centered curricular reform and teaches health promotion for diverse populations, preparing nurses to deliver culturally responsive care. Nationally, she has reshaped inclusive scholarship as Editor-in-Chief of two peer-reviewed journals by implementing equity-focused editorial standards that expand representation and strengthen academic rigor. As a commissioner for the National Commission to Address Racism in Nursing, she co-authored its foundational report and contributes to national tools, training initiatives, and policy efforts. Through her teaching, consulting, and scholarship, Anna continues to influence a more inclusive and just future for the nursing profession.

Austin Frost  
MS, RN, CCRN

Gregory Eichelzer  
DNP, RN, NEA-BC, CEN

# MENTEE MENTOR

**AWARDED TO A PAIR OF INDIVIDUALS WHO  
EXEMPLIFY THE MENTOR/MENTEE BOND**

Austin is an emerging nurse leader whose development through the ACNL Mentoring Program reflects a deep commitment to compassionate, skillful, and accountable leadership. Guided by his mentor, Gregory, he built a strong foundation in applying Just Culture principles early in his leadership role. Together, they worked through one of Austin's first performance challenges, focusing on clear communication, empathy, and fairness. This experience strengthened his confidence in addressing difficult situations while supporting staff growth, resulting in a constructive outcome that reinforced trust and team cohesion.

Austin also demonstrated strong operational leadership in preparing his unit for a TJC survey, thoughtfully integrating shared best practices and proactively addressing high-risk areas. His diligence and curiosity contributed to an outstanding survey outcome, including zero findings on his unit. With continued coaching from Gregory, Austin designed a sustainable process improvement initiative focused on early mobilization, sharpening his interest in evidence-based leadership and motivating him to pursue a DNP. His work reflects a leader who values learning, collaboration, and results that meaningfully improve care and team performance.



# EXCELLENCE AS A GROUP

AWARDED TO A GROUP DEMONSTRATING EXCEPTIONAL LEADERSHIP, TEAMWORK, AND COMMITMENT TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT.

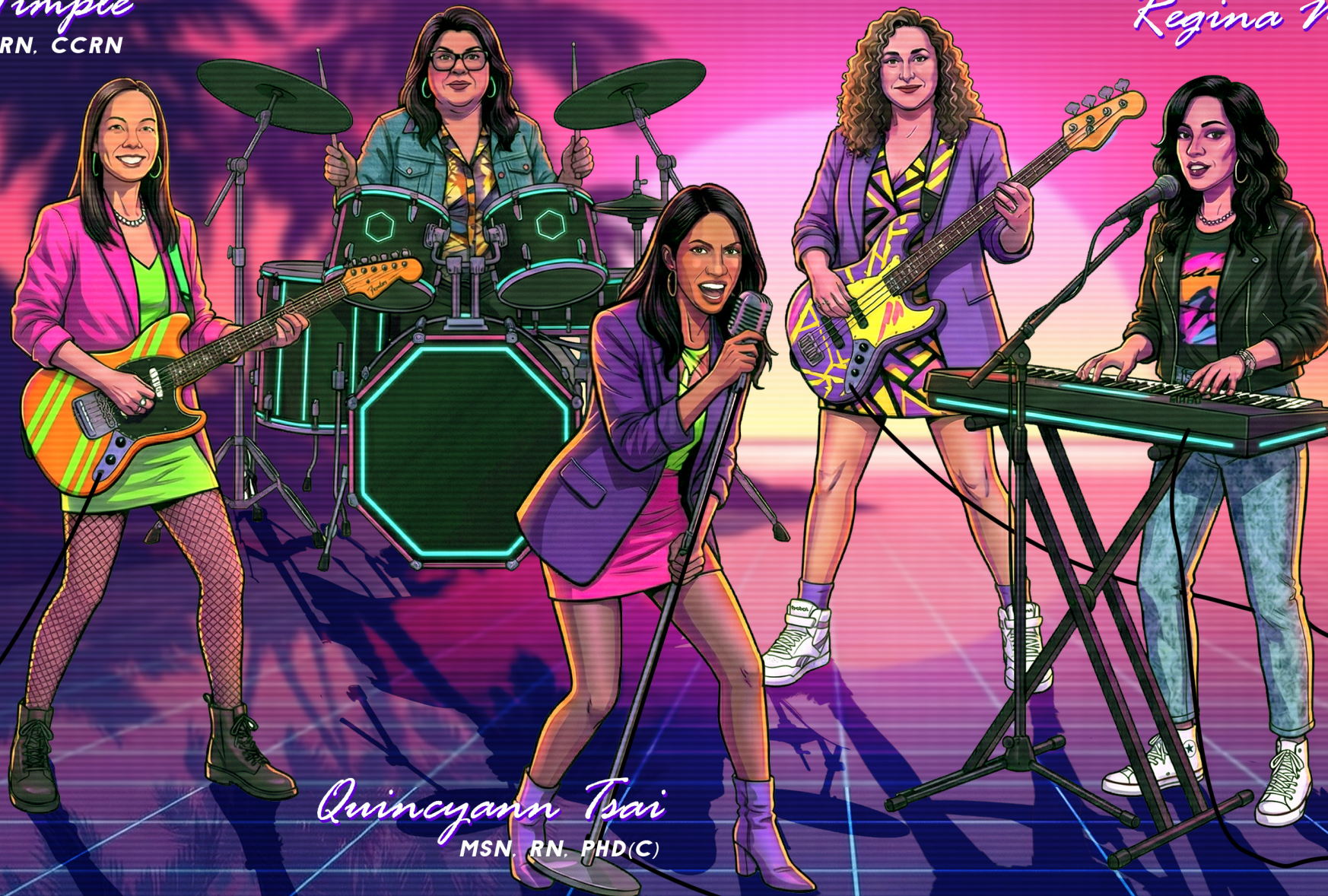
*Veronica S. Timple*  
PHD, RN, CCRN

*Gina Alvarez*

*Lina Najib Kavar*  
PHD, RNRM, RN, CNS, FAAN

*Regina M. Valdez*  
MA

*Quincyann Tsai*  
MSN, RN, PHD(C)



The Kaiser Permanente Southern California/Hawaii Region Nursing Research and Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) Program team exemplifies excellence in advancing nursing science and improving patient care. Since 2004, the team—comprised of a Director, Nurse Scientists, an EBP consultant, a professional practice consultant, a research analyst, and a project manager—has collaborated with research liaisons across medical centers to drive innovative studies, evidence reviews, and quality improvement initiatives. In 2024 alone, they operationalized over 80 research projects addressing nurse burnout, resilience, shared governance, and patient outcomes.

Their impact extends beyond Kaiser Permanente through partnerships with academic institutions, co-investigator training workshops, mentorship, and cross-institutional studies. Within ACNL, they lead initiatives that advance leadership, well-being, and EBP excellence statewide. Through educational offerings, presentations, and an accessible online resource hub, the team fosters a culture of inquiry and collaboration, elevating the profession and transforming care delivery for nurses and patients alike.

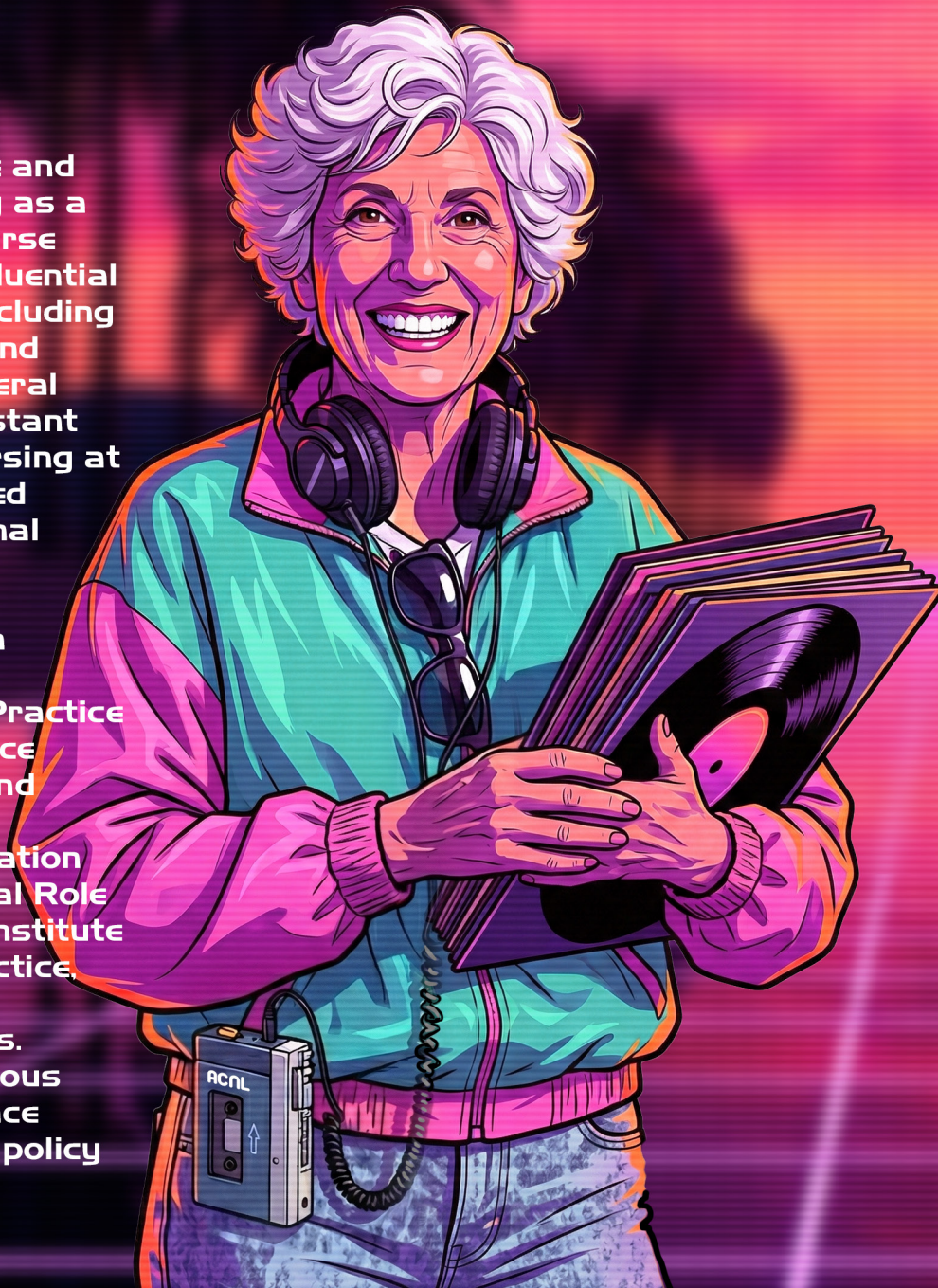
**KAISER PERMANENTE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND HAWAII  
NURSING RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE PROGRAM**

# ACNL-DAISY

## Lifetime Achievement Award

PRESENTED IN COLLABORATION WITH THE DAISY FOUNDATION  
HONORING NURSES IN MEMORY OF J. PATRICK BARNES

*Maria W. O'Rourke*  
PHD, RN, FAAN



Maria's five-decade career has profoundly shaped the discipline and profession of nursing. Beginning as a psychiatric nurse and clinical nurse specialist, she advanced into influential academic and executive roles, including Director of Staff Development and Research at San Francisco General Hospital and the inaugural Assistant Dean of the UCSF School of Nursing at SFGH, where she institutionalized nursing research and professional practice.

A nationally recognized expert in professional role clarity, Maria rewrote the California Nursing Practice Act in 1974, led efforts to advance Professional Practice Models, and developed the widely adopted Professional Role Identity Formation Theory. Through her Professional Role Development Program and the Institute for Advancing Professional Practice, she has educated and mentored thousands of nurses and leaders. Honored with numerous prestigious awards, she continues to influence nursing practice, education, and policy with enduring impact.

# 2025 Scholarship Recipients

## Nurses Float Scholarship

CREATED BY BARE ROOT, INC., WITH SURPLUS DONATIONS FOR  
THE NURSES FLOAT AT THE 2013 ROSE PARADE IN PASADENA, CA.

*Reona Hannah*

BSN, PALS, BLS, PEARS  
Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital  
at Vanderbilt  
Pursuing MSN degree

*Erika Morales*

El Camino Hospital  
Pursuing ADN degree

## ACNL Pre-Licensure Scholarship

ACNL AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS TO SUPPORT GRADUATING NURSING STUDENTS  
COMPLETING PRE-LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS AND PREPARING FOR THE NCLEX

*Estrelita Cardenas*

BSN

*Eun A. Kim*

BSN, RN, PHN

*Austin Clark*

BSN, RN

*Dustin Criner*

BSN

*Silvia Adriana*

*Reyes*

MSN

*Kenneth Frito*

*Pauyon*

*Ava Makishima*

BSN

## ACNL Leadership Scholarship

*Sandy Phan*

DNP, RN, NPDA-BC, EBP-C

Nursing Professional Development Specialist  
UC Davis Health  
School: UC Davis Health  
Degree: PhD

*Polly King*

DNP, RN, NEA-BC

Director, Clinical Service Line  
Scripps Health  
School: Rush University  
Degree: Transformative Leadership: Systems

*Nessie George*

Assistant Patient Care Manager  
Stanford Health Care  
School: Walden University  
Degree: MSN

*Elisa Romero*

RN, MSN, MBA

Director, Ambulatory Surgical Services  
Sharp Rees Stealy Medical Centers  
School: University San Diego  
Degree: PhD

*Support the Vital Work of Nurse Leaders*

DONATE TO



When you join Circles of Giving, you become an important partner in designing ACNL's future while helping us garner the critical dollars to expand core programs

**YOUR DONATION IN ANY AMOUNT WILL FURTHER ACNL'S WORK AND VISION**

*Together We Make a Difference*

Help ACNL shape nurse leadership in California through:

**EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
MENTORSHIP ■ RESEARCH ■ INNOVATION  
HEALTH POLICY ■ SCHOLARSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS**

Whether you're a new or returning contributor to the Circles of Giving, ACNL thanks you for your support and generosity

*Donate Now*

[WWW.ACNL.ORG/DONATIONS](http://WWW.ACNL.ORG/DONATIONS)

