

35th Biennial Women's Hall of Fame



**Presented by
The Commission on the Status of Women**



**Friday, March 8, 2024
Farallon Room, Skyline College
San Bruno, CA**



Welcome,

On behalf of the San Mateo County Commission on the Status of Women, it is an honor and privilege for me to welcome you to the 35th Women’s Hall of Fame. It is a true pleasure to witness the recognition of women in this community who are creating positive and uplifting change with their leadership. I want to provide all our fantastic sponsors and vendors our sincerest thanks. Without their commitment to recognizing outstanding leadership in the community, this event would simply

not be possible. Your presence at this Women’s Hall of Fame is an indication that you are committed to making a positive difference, not only in your city, but throughout the County.

Best Regards,

**Susan Kokores, President
Commission on the Status of Women**

Women’s Hall of Fame Program

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Networking Reception

5:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Women’s Hall of Fame and Young Woman of Excellence Award Ceremony

Emcee

Dani Gasparini

Honorees

Jenny Walter, CoastPride Founding Member
Maya Thompson, El Camino High School
Christine Padilla, Build Up
Catalina Gonzalez Johnston, Half Moon Bay High School
Maria Lorente-Foresti, County Office of Diversity & Equity, BHRS
Rosanne Foust, San Mateo County Economic Development Association

Ceremony Emcee



Dani Gasparini

Dani Gasparini was born and raised in Redwood City and created a career of philanthropy with intersections in non-profit, corporate and public service. Dani, former city council member and mayor of Redwood City, was inducted into the Women’s Hall of Fame in 2004. She is most proud of her volunteer work and, of course, her family and Mom and Dad for their courage to come to the U.S. in 1948.

Commission on The Status Of Women

Since 1984, the Commission on the Status of Women, an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors, has worked to improve the quality of life for women of all ages in San Mateo County. Through strategic partnerships and collaboration, the commission identifies women's needs, advises the Board of Supervisors and educates the community on matters concerning women. The Commission consists of 17 adults and up to 2 youth who are residents of San Mateo County.

Women's Hall of Fame

The San Mateo County Women's Hall of Fame (WHOF), established in 1984, was created by the Board of Supervisors and the Commission on the Status of Women (formerly the Advisory Council on Women). The first of its kind in California, the WHOF is open to all women* who live or work in San Mateo County, regardless of race, color, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, religious or political affiliation. In 1993, the "Young Women of Excellence Award" was added to the Hall of Fame providing visibility and empowerment to young women for their accomplishments in community service, academic achievement, and acts of courage and perseverance in their daily lives.

Women's Hall of Fame Judges

Supervisor Cindy Chavez sits on the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors representing District 2, the most densely populated of the five supervisorial districts.

Carla Hernandez is the Dean of Students for East Side Union High School District and a School Board Trustee for the Oak Grove School District. **Melissa Luke** is the Chief Program Officer of Healing & Justice for the YWCA Golden Gate Silicon Valley.

Naomi Nakano-Matsumoto is the Director of Student Services for CASSY – Counseling and Support Services for Youth. She is a member the Fremont Union High School District Board of Trustees.

Gracia-Sonia Melanio is a communications and public affairs professional who works for Fahr LLC.

Maya Murthy is the Vice President of Programs and Services for Second Harvest Food Bank. She values cultural relevancy and humility along with an inclusive view of what "healthy" means to the individual.

**"women/girls" refers to gender expansive adults & youth (cis,trans, non-binary, gender non-conforming and gender queer).*

Women's Hall of Fame Honorees



Rosanne Foust

Rosanne Foust, President and CEO of San Mateo County Economic Development Association (SAMCEDA), has built SAMCEDA into an influential and highly regarded inclusive association with membership of Fortune 500 corporations including technology, life sciences, financial services, energy, construction, as well as healthcare, education and non-profits. She facilitates, directs, and encourages conversations important to maintaining a strong

local and regional economy, attracting, and retaining major employers, and creating partnerships between business, government, education, labor and non-profits to address the critical issues of an economy that lifts everyone. Ms. Foust had a twenty-year career with Alsace Development International USA, Inc. She also served for twelve years on the City Council in Redwood City, including as Mayor and Vice Mayor. Ms. Foust served for 10 years on the San Mateo County Transportation Authority (five years as Chair) and as an inaugural board member for 7 years on the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority.



Dr. Maria Lorente-Foresti

Dr. Maria Lorente-Foresti is a bilingual, bicultural woman who immigrated to the United States from Argentina and has called the San Francisco Bay Area home since 1978. With a rich professional history spanning three decades, Dr. Lorente-Foresti has stepped into many roles, including psychologist, Behavioral Mental Health Program Director, parent education program coordinator, and behavioral health equity director. In her current role as the

BHRS Office of Diversity and Equity Director, Dr. Lorente-Foresti spearheads efforts to enhance the County's public behavioral health system to be more culturally responsive and inclusive for San Mateo County workforce and community members. Driven by a passion for equity, advocacy, collaboration, compassion, and cultural humility, Dr. Lorente-Foresti feels honored and privileged to contribute to advancing behavioral health equity for marginalized communities in San Mateo County. Beyond her professional achievements, Dr. Lorente Foresti enjoys getting to know local cities and takes pride in being a single mother and living in a multigenerational home.



Christine Padilla

Christine Padilla, born and raised in San Mateo County, has spent her career at the intersection of service and government working to improve women and children's lives. She is currently the Director of Build Up San Mateo County, a countywide collective impact initiative that preserves, expands, and improves the supply of childcare facilities. She's also been a nonprofit executive director, a senior congressional staff member (for 10+ years),

and a corporate government relations director. She served 3 terms on the San Mateo County Commission on the Status of Women and is currently serving on the County's Child Care Partnership Council. She is co-chair of KQED's Community Advisory Panel working to ensure diverse community voices are represented throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Christine is committed to making high-quality early care and learning accessible and affordable for working families while supporting and advocating for those who teach and care for their children.



Jenny Walker

Jenny Walker is a founding member and former board president of CoastPride, serving Pescadero through Pacifica. She was the first co-chair of the San Mateo County LGBTQ Commission. During her service, she helped the Commission conduct a county-wide needs assessment of LGBTQ+ residents and promoted the establishment of the San Mateo County Pride Center. In previous work, she was directing attorney of Legal Advocates for

Children and Youth in San Jose and staff attorney at Legal Services for Children in San Francisco. She presently serves as a tribal appellate judge for the Northern California Tribal Court Coalition and law partner at Hedger & Walter, LLP, which is committed to helping tribal courts and nonprofits achieve their vision to serve their communities. Jenny graduated with a degree in linguistics from UC Berkeley in 1982 and a J.D. from the University of San Francisco School of Law. She lives with her wife, Deb, and daughter Jessie, along with two dogs, one chicken, one canary, and one mini-pig in Half Moon Bay, California.

Young Women of Excellence



Catalina Gonzalez Johnston

Catalina Gonzalez Johnston is a senior at Half Moon Bay High School and she lives in Pescadero, California. She has been member of the leadership team since her sophomore year and has served two years on the Cabrillo Unified School District Board. She loves to learn policy and was able to go to Girls State last year. She also participated in city hall educational seminars focused on local politics. Catalina comes from a

bilingual bicultural home with her dad, who is from Guatemala, and her mother, who is from California and her 16-year-old younger sister. She has three dogs, three cats and a cow. She would like to learn more about policy and immigration so that she can become an advocate for immigrant rights.



Maya Thompson

Maya Thompson is a senior at El Camino High School. She recently received the National African American Recognition Award for her strong academic performance on the PSAT and AP Exams. Currently, she volunteers for the organization Cancer Kids First, which aids child cancer patients globally. She is a part of their arts program where she creates and decorates cards for child/teen cancer patients.

Over the past eight years, Maya has studied piano technique and performs for the community annually at Golden Gate Park's Flower Piano event. She also works as a gymnastics instructor for preschool students where she teaches them gymnastics skills and helps improve their motor development.

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