

2022 City Spirit Award Nominee Biographies

Lalit Acharya (Posthumous)

Nominated by Mayor Lock Dawson

Lalit, who was born in Hyderabad, India, made Riverside his home after earning a Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Upon coming to Riverside, he was passionate for his new community and soon began volunteering. Lalit quickly became connected to the Asian/Indian Community and led the charge to have a statue of Gandhi along the mall in Downtown Riverside. During that time, he began more than a decade-long career in the Mayor's Office as the International Relations Officer. He worked with the International Relations Council and the City's Sister Cities program, which included a number of international trips with both Mayor Ron Loveridge and Mayor Rusty Bailey. His work included raising funds for Sendai, Japan after a devastating tsunami, helping establish academic relationships between UCR and Sister City universities, and the establishment of the Long Night of Arts and Innovation. His vision was to create a gathering place for discussions promoting inclusivity and innovation, which led to the inception and creation of the Civil Rights Institute of Inland Southern California with his partner Rose Mayes.

Nancy Melendez

Nominated by Mayor Lock Dawson

Nancy Melendez is a sixth generation Riversider whose family was among the 10 original families who walked the Old Spanish Trail from Abiquiu, New Mexico to the area in 1842 led by Lorenzo Trujillo. She has devoted her career and free time to the betterment and quality of life in Riverside. She has over 40 years of community volunteer service working for organizations and nonprofits that serve Riverside families. Her professional career includes serving as director of the community based Keep Riverside Clean and Beautiful program for seven years. Melendez is the founding president of the Spanish Town Heritage Foundation, which raises awareness of the need to preserve and restore the Trujillo Adobe and supports a vision to build a re-created Spanish Town settlement on the land. The Foundation, which Melendez started with family members Suzanne Armas and Darlene Trujillo Elliot, raises funds for the preservation and restoration effort through a variety of activities, including the Riverside Tamale Festival in White Park."

Damien O'Farrell

Nominated by Councilmember Edwards

"Damien O'Farrell is a lifelong resident of Riverside and lives in the Evergreen Historic District of Downtown with his wife of 21 years, Jennifer, and daughter, Marleigh. He currently serves as the President and CEO of the Parkview Legacy Foundation, a new (July 1, 2019) healthcare conversion advancing equity and serving the Riverside region by addressing social determinants of health affecting our people and our community at large. He previously served as CEO of Path of Life Ministries, a non-profit homeless shelter and housing provider for Western Riverside County, and is a graduate of California Baptist University (00'). He is passionate about fostering the development of people and the economy in ways that eliminate historical divides and provide increasing opportunities for all people to thrive. At the top of his list of concerns for which he both advocates and rolls up his sleeves for are solving our housing crisis, social equity, permanently ending homeless situations, and creating sustainable pathways out of generational poverty.

Damien commits both personal and professional time to the sustainable development of socially focused organizations and empowering individuals to engage the common good within the community. As a certified Facilitator and Strategic Planner with the Institute of Cultural Affairs, Damien conducts planning sessions for these organizations and has served on numerous boards, counsels, and committees. He has served in leadership roles on the Riverside Neighborhood Partnership Board, the Riverside Charter Review Committee, Our Riverside Our Neighborhoods, Give Big Riverside and Give Big Riverside County, The Raincross Group, the Riverside County Non-Profit Roundtable, the Inland Empire Children's Cabinet, Riverside's "Seizing Our Destiny" Economic Development Plan, and the Inland SoCal Housing Collective. He is also the founding Vice-President and Second President of The Pick Group (a Young Professionals organization that creates space for career and community minded individuals between the ages of 21 and 35 to connect, develop professionally, and engage civically for the betterment of the city), and participates in Anti-Racist Riverside and the Mayor's Bi-Partisan Council."

Dr. FeRita Carter

Nominated by Councilmember Edwards

Dr. FeRita Carter is a dedicated educator, community leader, and Ward 1 resident. With 20 years of educational experience, she currently serves as Riverside City College's interim president. Prior to her role as interim president, she served the Vice President of the Student Services division where she constructed infrastructure that supports student success. She has been instrumental in organizing Student programs resulting in inclusiveness and equitable learning environments. Carter is active in several service groups. Currently she is a member of the Riverside Section of the National Council of Negro Women, The Group, and Leadership Riverside - Class of 2022. She is a lifetime member of the Riverside African-American Historical Society and is active in the Allen Chapel A.M.E Church in Riverside.

Residente of Eastside Active in Leadership

Nominated by Councilmember Cervantes

The residents of Eastside Active in Leadership are made up of dedicated and passionate people who are committed to improving the quality of life for their neighbors and neighborhood, specifically focusing on messages that elevate healthy eating and active living. The group leaders are a core five women who have gone above and beyond to volunteer for 9+ years in this program to activate residents. Because of the trust they've fostered throughout the Eastside, hundreds of residents and youth have come out to help transform local alleyways with art and mural installations. They have partnered with our local schools to create safe walking paths, install little libraries, little free pantries and programming that promotes walkability and healthy eating. The group recently drafted and championed a local municipal ordinance known as the "Smoke Free Multi-Unit Housing Ordinance" which was passed by the City Council in May 2022. Each of these residents have given countless hours and years to advocate for their community with their goal being to make a difference that will foster positive change. They have served as an inspiration for their families, residents and are role models to many across the Eastside and Riverside. They embody what it means to be "City Spirit" and show up every day giving and cultivating love in Riverside.

Jalani Bakari

Nominated by Councilmember Cervantes

Jalani Bakari (Darryl Martin) has lived and worked in Riverside for more than 30 years, always balancing work, family, and civic duties. For over 30 years Jalani has advocated, and advanced opportunities for African American youth, students and the City of Riverside. He has served as a lecturer, coach and Grant Facilitator. I've personally engaged with youth and residents who have shared with me their testimonies of how Jalani has helped them connect with our community in Riverside, guiding them to pathways of success, and how he continually re-instills hope in other people's lives. He has been a beacon, and light for many people facing challenges in hard time.

Currently, Jalani sits on the board of the City of Riverside International Relations Council (IRC). He is past president of the IRC from 2012 to 2014, during which time he implemented a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant of \$115,000 for Sister City activities. Jalani helped raise over \$70,000, allowing students from John W. North High School to travel to Asia including Hong Kong, Beijing and Riverside's sister city Jiangmen, China. Presently, he is the Chair of Riverside/Ghana Sister City, Obuasi. His role and leadership has been transformative for our entire community, and I believe he deserves to be recognized with the "City Spirit" Award.

Gurumantra Khalsa

Nominated by Councilmember Cervantes

Gurumantra is a passionate advocate for health and is the publisher of the award-winning Nutrition News newsletter, a monthly publication covering food, nutrition and health. Gurumantra is also the founding member of the Friends of Riverside's Hills, a non-profit environmental group dedicated to preserving Riverside's hillsides, arroyos and the agriculture Greenbelt. Gurumantra's tremendous efforts in health and wellness gained him a spotlight at the Invest Health Talk at the National Convening held in Phoenix where he represented our City. Gurumantra's passion led him to create the non-profit organization World Be Well where they assisted Councilmember Cervantes and UCR in creating the Farm To Fork community education series and has helped low income seniors and people with disabilities get access to free fresh produce.

Mike Anderson

Nominated by Councilmember Fierro

Mike Anderson has been in Riverside, California since 1990. He got a job at California School for the Deaf, Riverside as a residential staff. He attended Pierce College and transferred to Riverside City College. He got his teaching credential at California State University, San Bernardino. He became an Activities Director for ten years before he retired after 31 years. His wife, Tina also worked at California School for the Deaf, Riverside as a Behavioral Specialist. He has two daughters, Sam who graduated from J. W. North HS, and Makayla, who is now a senior at Riverside Poly.

Mike has been very involved with the Deaf community in Riverside. He was a part of Deaf Awareness month with RUSD and CSDR back in 1990's. He had participated with CO-ED softball for years. He maintained a good relationship with the annual Riverside Police and Deaf Community Softball game. He attended Riverside Police Interactive Training Program; brought

over 50 different deaf students to the training over a 2-year span. Mike was always very involved with over 15 different Deaf organizations in Riverside. He became a chair for Model Deaf Community, an advisory group to the City of Riverside Mayor's office for two terms. He has been avid about sharing the City officials with Deaf Awareness, Communication, Public Safety, Aging, Youth, Riverside Art Museum, Riverside Public Library, Parks, Recreation and Communities, Fire/CERT departments, Police Departments and many more. Mike and his colleagues valued the fast-growing deaf population in Riverside. Mike was proud to see the accomplishments for the Riverside communities; launched ASL classes at Riverside Poly and Martin Luther King high schools. Riverside City College proposed and passed a new curriculum- Bachelor of Arts in American Sign Language Interpreting Program. The Model Deaf Community committee had worked hard planning and made a motion: Commission of the Deaf. The Council members recognized the needs for the Deaf community and passed.

Mike is looking forward to another event- partnered with the City of Riverside- Deaf Awareness Week, known as DeaFestival in the fall with more or less than 5,000 visitors going to this event.

Duane and Kelly Roberts

Nominated by Councilmember Conder

Few individuals have made a greater impact on the City of Riverside than Duane and Kelly Roberts. Thirty years ago, the Mission Inn Hotel was mired in bankruptcy, shuttered and surrounded by a chain link fence. The Roberts rescued it and completed the restoration of the Mission Inn, ensuring that the beautiful historic hotel once again served as the cornerstone of the City, transforming it into a world- class destination with an award-winning spa and restaurants. The renaissance of the Mission Inn by the Roberts was the catalyst for the economic revitalization of Downtown Riverside, which has blossomed into an economic engine for Riverside. The Roberts also created the annual Historic Mission Inn Hotel & Spa Festival of Lights, the City's premier event, which annually draws thousands of visitors and international attention to Riverside and contributes over \$120 million in economic benefit to the local economy. Riverside is where Duane Roberts invented the frozen burrito at his family's meat company, Butcher Boy Food Products, Inc., which became one of the City's major employers in the 1960s and 70s, and the Roberts have continued to give back to the community through their support of local schools and non-profits, including the Mary S. Roberts Pet Adoption Center, named in honor of Mr. Roberts' mother. Through their vision, commitment and support of our Community, Duane and Kelly Roberts have embodied the Spirit of Riverside.

Ali Mazarei (Posthumous)

Nominated by Councilmember Conder

Ali Mazarei was a Dedicated Father, Husband, a Businessman with a strong focus on his employees, dedicated to the success of our students...providing these students with free Laptop computers, clothing etc. He donated free computers to a class at Taft Elementary School. Each year he donated 2000 high quality warm jackets to our most needy school students during cold weather to keep them safe. He volunteered throughout the year to make our neighborhoods (cleanups) a cleaner place. During Covid challenges, over the past 2+ years, Ali facilitated the donation and distribution of more than 3.4 million pounds of food for the needy. Ali donated medical ballistic backpacks to EVERY teacher at King High School - in case

the UNTHINKABLE were to happen at the school. Ali's philanthropic support to groups across the city is unmatched. He was a man of faith who believed in paying it forward and always looking after others to ensure that they are valued and respected.

Art Alcaraz

Nominated by Councilwoman Plascencia

Art Alcaraz has served on countless non-profit boards through his lifetime. He is the immediate past President of the Riverside Latino Network though he has lead as their president for several terms in the past twenty years. Art has volunteered countless hours helping raise funds for the Cesar Chávez Monument as well as for The Cheech Museum. Art has been teaching at UCR since 2014 in the School of Business Administration and also teaches in RCCD's Economic Development Department's Customized Training Program. He has been active and successful in local community sports at various levels.

Gabe Maldando

Nominated by Councilwoman Plascencia

Gabe Maldonado is the CEO of TruEvolution and a true champion for the LGBTQIA+ community. Gabe sat on the President Of The United States Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS under former President Barack Obama. He has brought millions into the region through his new efforts Project Legacy. Gabe's dedication and plight for the LGBTQIA+ Is unmatched.

Ninfa Delgado

Nominated by Councilwoman Plascencia

Ninfa Delgado is the Vice President of Operations and Chief Operating Officer at Riverside Community Health Foundation. Ninfa's leadership ranges from her work with the UCR Chicano Latino Alumni Association, Eastside Riverside HEAL Zone, Unidos, Latino Network and many more. Ninfa has volunteered countless hours helping raise funds for The Cheech Museum. She has dedicated her adult life to giving back to the Riverside community. Ninfa continues to work toward equity and inclusion for all residents.

Carrie Madrid

Nominated by Councilmember Perry

Carrie Madrid is the founder of The CARE Project, Inc (TCP) and prides herself in living a life that inspires, encourages, and advocates for people-- especially those who have been diagnosed with a life-threatening disease. In 2014, she and her best friend founded The CARE Project, Inc -a non-profit organization which emotionally and financially supports male and female breast cancer patients. As a breast cancer survivor herself, Carrie is dedicated to being a positive and uplifting force. Through her efforts and the support of donors, TCP is able to provide much needed resources such as: financial assistance, transportation for individuals undergoing cancer treatments, compression sleeves, and emotional support. Carrie is a certified CareDoula who also provides services for patients who are at the end of life or have received a terminal diagnosis. Through it all, Carrie remains a beacon of light via her podcast that gives women and men a place to keep it real about their cancer experience. Carrie is a true selfless hero who uplifts many during times of adversities. It is my pleasure to nominate Carrie Madrid for the City Spirit Award.

Francisca Beltran

Nominated by Councilmember Hemenway

Francisca Beltran has been with the Riverside Community Health Foundation (RCHF) for about 15 years. Her position consists of spreading Health and Wellness awareness throughout the Riverside Community. She is a lifestyle Coach for The National Diabetes Prevention Program and holds a certificate as a Group Instructor with the American Fitness of Athletics Association. She enjoys teaching Health Education Classes and leading Physical Activity programs such as ZUMBA, TAI-CHI, and ZUMA Kids. Aside being active in the physical aspect in her community she also leads health workshops and has presented in Health seminars. She is currently in association with Mujeres Activas en la Salud (M.A.S). This group consists of Women becoming active in their community and educating them on the importance of health and staying physically active in the Arlanza and La Sierra areas in Riverside. She devotes a lot of her time to the community with her career and on her spare time, she and her family volunteer with The American Heart Association and lead a dance group of youth to help keep them active and out of the streets.

Francisca has been living in Riverside for 26 years. She first came to the United States in 1989, she married two years later and has been married to her husband Clemente Beltran for 28 years. She and her husband have three children, two college graduates, Erika (La Sierra University), Daniel (Cal State Sacramento), and the youngest Aileen, who is currently in 5th grade.

Francisca has always dedicated her time to her kids and community. She would volunteer with the ELAC and DELAC committee, supported the PTA and volunteered in the classroom to help teachers. She would manage her time to volunteer around her two part-time jobs, to help her husband support their children. Aside school, she would volunteer in her children's recreational sports teams, she was a team mom, assistant coach, and scorekeeper. Today, she is involved in supporting her daughter Aileen, for the Student Council Committee and extracurricular activities.

On her spare time, Francisca enjoys doing outdoor activities from hiking on the weekends with her family and dogs, playing volleyball with friends on weekend evenings, to cooking and singing Karaoke at family gatherings. She is a very family-oriented woman who has always had a passion for learning and influencing others to be more than they can be. In reality, Francisca has been promoting health and wellness since she was 17, in her hometown, in the rural zones of San Luis Potosi, Mexico. She would walk kilometers to take information to the less fortunate. She was a runner in her school's sports team and would take any given opportunity to influence others and try to impact their life with educational information she would learn.

Today, Francisca has received various awards throughout the years for her outstanding performances in impacting the community, but her most recent, was being recognized as a SHEro on December 14th at the 9th Annual Multicultural Council Day of Inclusion in her outstanding efforts for the health and well-being of underserved residents and risk-youth community.

Francisca has grown and learned a lot thanks to her passion and love for Health. Her passion and positive influence on her community have only grown throughout the years. She plans to continue being a health promoter in combination with other well-being activities for the rest of her life. In all, Francisca Does What She Loves, and Loves What She Does.