

## 2023 City Spirit Award Nominee Biographies

### **Sophia Mendoza & Tracy Barlogio**

*Nominated by Mayor Lock Dawson*

Sophia and Tracy, retired US Army veterans, arrived in Riverside in May 2021 with a shared purpose: to cultivate beauty and community spirit in their new home. As integral contributors to the Mayor's Beautify Riverside initiative from its inception, they have ceaselessly labored to elevate the city's aesthetic allure. Sophia's commitment to community service shines through her role serving as a judge at the state and national level for the Family Career and Community Leaders of America competition, which recognizes young students leadership abilities and development in Family and Consumer Sciences education. She also serves as the Recording Secretary on the Board of Directors of Soroptimist International of Riverside, while also chairing the Gold Key Award committee, which recognizes women that have excelled in providing 15 years or more of volunteer service. Additionally, she helped to organize the Live Your Dream conference, helping young girls to recognize their true potential. Tracy brings fresh insights into the city's recreational landscape through his recent appointment to the Park and Recreation Commission. Armed with decades of military expertise, their vision for Riverside is one of serenity and vibrancy, where innovation, arts, and a strong sense of community converge to create an unparalleled quality of life in the heart of Inland Southern California.

### **Sue Mitchell**

*Nominated by Councilmember Edwards*

Sue Mitchell is truly the spirit behind the spirit in the Spirit of Riverside. Since co-founding Riverside Personnel Services 46 years ago, Sue has long been Riverside's biggest promoter and champion. In addition to matching local talent with local jobs, she has volunteered her time to countless community organizations such as the Riverside Community Hospital, the YWCA, the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce, and Inland SoCal United Way. Most recently, she served on the Riverside Art Museum board to help bring The Cheech to life, and she is a regular speaker at the Pick Group where she motivates Riverside's next generation of leaders to serve their city.

In 2012, Sue embarked on a sabbatical to document the 52 Montezuma Bald Cypress trees that encircle Lake Evans at Fairmount Park. Her sabbatical became an art exhibit at the Riverside Art Museum and grew into an annual series of workshops called the 52 Project. Since that time, this project has emboldened many new and emerging Riverside artists to take risks and tell their own stories. Today, Sue can be found out-and-about in Riverside, handing out "I heart Cheech" buttons, beautifying Fairmount park on her daily walks, and reminding everyone of the power of art and beauty to spark economic development (and our responsibility to make it happen!)

## **Juan Navarro**

*Nominated by Councilmember Cervantes*

Founder of the Eastside Arthouse, Juan Navarro is an artist working primarily in acrylics and spray paints to create large-scale murals and fine art paintings while balancing his entrepreneurial work and growing family. The Eastside neighborhood of Riverside holds over a dozen revitalizing art installations and murals led by Juan with input and guidance from the community. Through the Eastside Arthouse, Juan endeavors to create sustainable practices for full-time artists to thrive in Southern California. He has worked on projects funded by both non-profit and commercial businesses such as the National Endowment of the Arts, California Arts Council, Riverside Community Health Foundation, U.S. Bank, Verizon, Macy's, Altura, and the City of Riverside. Navarro is currently featured as Artist-in-Residence at the Riverside Art Museum and was a highlighted muralist. On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, Juan and the **Riverside Art Museum** received the 2023 National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the nation's highest honor given to museums and libraries that make significant and exceptional contributions to their communities.

Juan shares his inspiring tale of art, passion, and community engagement as he changes Riverside, California, one brush stroke at a time. A true visionary and artist who combines his talents with a deep-rooted desire to uplift his community, Juan discovered his love for art and its power to create change at an early age. Taking his first art class in high school, Juan then became president of the art club at his high school. His journey as a muralist began with a simple idea: to use his artistic skills to beautify his neighborhood and bring people together. Through his unwavering commitment to his craft, Juan has successfully partnered with local government and businesses to create remarkable beautification projects. These projects breathe new life into once-dull walls and tell stories of Riverside's rich history and diverse culture. Through his work, he aims to inspire, educate, and instill a sense of pride in his community. "It's not just about painting pretty pictures; it's about creating a lasting legacy for future generations to see the values and history from their communities."

## **Carmen Roberts**

*Nominated by Councilmember Cervantes*

Carmen Roberts was born in New Orleans, LA to James and Louise Hardy. The family moved to Los Angeles, California in pursuit of a better life. Carmen attended school in Los Angeles and graduated from Manual Arts High School. She attended Riverside City College and transferred to UC Riverside where she graduated in 1976 with a BA in Sociology and Black Studies. Carmen Coles-Roberts started state service with the California Youth Authority in October 1987 where she was employed as a Youth Counselor. She married Adrian Dell Roberts in 1990 and transferred to the Community Care Licensing Division of CA Department of Social Services where she performed licensing and evaluation of community care facilities. After six and a half years of licensing, Carmen turned her interest to Civil Rights where she was hired with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing in 1997.

In June 2000, Carmen Roberts was hired by the Department of Transportation, Los Angeles, District 7 in the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity. She then transferred to the Office of Business Management in 2004 and was promoted to Staff Services Manager in 2007. Carmen received her 25-year Certificate as a state employee in November 2012. Carmen retired from State Service in September 2017 after 30 years of incredible service.

Today, Carmen gives back to the Riverside community by heading the Adrian Dell and Carmen Roberts Foundation which provides cultural programs for the residents of Riverside County. One of the programs that she is most passionate about is the Empowering Young Women's Conference held at Riverside City College each year. This conference was established in 2001 by Dell Roberts. On June 7, 2023, The Adrian Dell and Carmen Roberts Foundation was named Nonprofit of the Year for the 58<sup>th</sup> Assembly District for contributing to the success and well-being of the community by enhancing the quality of life for residents and instilling a strong sense of pride in the individuals with whom we associate with. Other events presented by the ADCR Foundation include the Annual Backpack Giveaway to students K-12, Jazz on the Rooftop, and the annual Golf Tournament.

### **Ruben Guitron**

*Nominated by Councilmember Cervantes*

Pastor Ruben Guitron has been the Director and Pastor of the nonprofit organization Riverside Peacemakers since its establishment in 1993 under the leadership of Apostle Joseph L. Sims and Apostle Beatrice Sims of Riverside Faith Temple Ministries. Pastor Ruben has also been employed by Riverside Unified School District for over 30 years where he has received Employee of the Year.

In the early 1990's, during a time when crime was on the rise, the city was looking for a way to suppress violence before it affected the lives of our youth today. Apostle Joseph L. Sims had a vision of working with officials in the City of Riverside including the Mayor, City Council, Riverside Police Department, Parole, Probation, Riverside City College, UC Riverside and Riverside Unified School District. After numerous attempts of collaborating with the community and not receiving the response he needed, Apostle Joseph turned to Pastor Ruben to create and establish a street ministry to make a genuine difference that continued for 14 years. The street ministry Pastor Ruben led changed the lives of thousands of youths in Riverside.

Under Pastor Ruben's leadership, Riverside Peacemakers has been recognized and received numerous awards for their work including proclamations from Mayor Ron Loveridge, Riverside City Council, NAACP, Senator Barbara Boxer, the California Senate, the California State Assembly alongside Assemblymember Jose Medina, the House of Representatives, and Congressman Rod Pacheco to name a few.

As the Pastor of Riverside Peacemakers Ministries, Ruben hopes to make a difference wherever he goes. He has a passion to inspire people and youth to positively impact their communities and the world around them. He has been married to his beautiful wife Diana for 45 years. They have 10 children, 45 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren.

### **Duane and Kelly Roberts**

*Nominated by Councilmember Conder*

The Roberts have contributed significantly to the preservation, restoration, recognition, and celebration of The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa. Their dedication of time and resources continues to enhance this historic hotel which was previously designated a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. The Roberts created and funded the acclaimed Festival of Lights annual holiday event where visitors can enjoy more than five million dazzling holiday lights and animated characters.

They are active leaders and role models in Southern California. Each year, they have generously donated money and their time to various charities and organizations. A partial list includes Loma Linda University Children's Hospital Foundation, Fox Riverside Theater Foundation, Fox Performing Arts Center, Mission Inn Foundation, and the Mary S. Roberts Foundation that supports many charitable causes ranging from helping children with special needs, the homeless and hungry, and animal assistance.

### **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.

### **Beth Schwandt**

*Nominated by Councilmember Perry and Councilmember Hemenway*

Beth Schwandt is a career teacher with over 30 years of experience who specializes in the education of music with the Alvord Unified School District. She has held multiple positions and is currently an instructional coach over their expanded learning program. In this capacity, she also works and serves as a board member for the Riverside Arts Academy.

She describes her music as "an all-encompassing curriculum that embraces literacy, multi-cultural diversity, ethnic studies, social justice, English language development, social/emotional therapy and behavioral intervention."

She is respected by her students, peers and community. In 2023, she was recognized and named as 1 of 4 Riverside County of Education Teachers of the Year.

She has a proven history of providing her students with field trip opportunities to expand their knowledge and experience. Most recently, she worked with city staff to facilitate a program entitled "Make A Ripple." This program provided an opportunity for AUSD students to perform the arts (music and dance) at The Fox Performing Arts Center to a near capacity crowd.