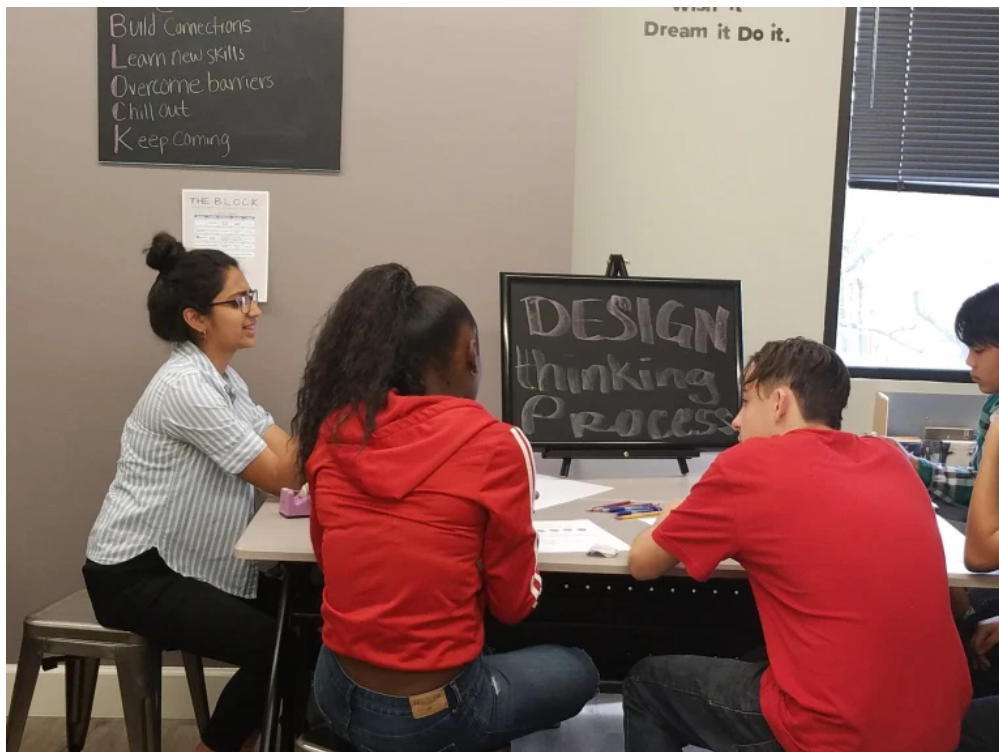


LOCAL NEWS • Analysis

Reach Out focuses on improving health in the Inland Empire



“The Block” is the drop-in center for homeless youth where adult mentors provide after-school enrichment classes. (Courtesy of Reach Out)

By **REBECCA K. O'CONNOR** | The Community Foundation

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Reach Out wants to increase the number of health care professionals in our region and improve the health of our community.



Ontario municipal Judge Richard Garner founded the nonprofit Reach Out West End in a ranch-style house on the outskirts of Ontario to provide a place where probation and court referrals could drop-in to receive support and gather for group rap sessions. During the past 50 years, the organization, now known as Reach Out, has grown into a multi-faceted nonprofit serving Riverside and San Bernardino counties and is focused on issues of prosperity, educational success and safe healthy communities.

“Reach Out is dedicated to embracing communities and strengthening the human bonds that enable all community members to grow, thrive, and lead,” Diana Fox, the organization’s executive director said. “Since 1969, we have provided equal access to networks of support, quality education, career options and opportunities to develop skills to succeed.”

Reach Out still adheres to its original mission of addressing community substance abuse and has expanded programming to address many elements of community health. One of the organization’s initiatives is Health Workforce. At the core of this work is the Inland Health Professions Coalition, which convenes employers, healthcare professionals, community stakeholders, and educators to facilitate an educational pathway from school to career.

“We work to bring people together to address our toughest issues,” Fox said. “We know that we don’t have the ability to solve all the issues on our own and run several successful collaboratives to get work done.”



Reach Out’s staff at the end of the 2019 National Innovative Communities Conference. (Courtesy of Reach Out)

The Coalition is working to address the regional shortage of healthcare workers including physicians, nurses, and mental health professionals.



Reach Out provides healthcare work-based learning opportunities to schools and school districts. It also implements year-long programs aimed at increasing interest in physical health, mental & behavioral health, and public health-related careers.

Evita Rocha grew up in San Bernardino and was an undergrad at UC Riverside in 2010 when she became an intern at Reach Out. Rocha went on to get her M.D. and to complete child and adolescent psychiatry residency at UT Health San Antonio. Today she is practicing at Kaiser Permanente Riverside.

“Part of our messaging to our young people is to plan now, live well, serve here,” Fox said. “Recently we asked her to be on our board and now she’s our newest board member.”

In addition to working to eliminate the shortage of healthcare professionals in the region, Reach Out also works to ensure there is equitable access to health services. The organization’s Latino Health Collaborative focuses on this access as well as creating a cultural understanding and a stronger connection between healthcare professionals and Latinos.

“Research is very clear that if you feel a connection to your physician or dentist and feel like they understand, you are more likely to follow your treatment regimen,” Fox said.

Reach Out recently received a Listos grant through the [Inland Empire Community Foundation](#). The Listos campaign is a new effort to boost disaster preparedness by engaging over one million of the most vulnerable Californians and connecting them with support. Reach Out will be engaging with Riverside-area residents living below the poverty line and with limited English, the Latino population, and those 65 and older, and will teach them how to be alert to impending disasters and how to respond to them.

“Our commitment is here to inland southern California and that is not going to change,” Fox said. “My biggest frustration is that I just want to do more.”

Information: <https://we-reachout.org/> and 909-982-8641

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