

# **CIVIC** 2022 **LEADERSHIP**



Kathryn Barger  
L.A. County Supervisor



# You Don't Need a Title to Be a Leader

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."*

So said American anthropologist Margaret Mead. We can find many examples of that belief in our own communities and our region, where leaders emerge with ideas, guidance and resolve to help us find a better future.

While we frequently seek to elect great leaders to public office and elevate them in civic roles, leadership has less to do with official rank and authority. You don't need a title to be a leader.



Chris Lancaster  
Publisher

Local citizen Betsy Mullen is a great example of that. She took a grave personal health crisis 30 years ago and instead of curling up into a ball and giving up, she innovated a national opportunity to raise money for research. "If one is lucky, a solitary fantasy can totally transform one million realities," said poet and civil rights activist Maya Angelou. Ms. Mullen has done just that. Read her story on page 11.

Sometimes leadership is conveyed upon someone, rather than springing up naturally. Just because one has been selected by management to be the boss doesn't necessarily mean that person is a leader.

I once worked for an organization in which the appointed boss was obnoxious in his language, rude, untrustworthy and essentially he created a hostile workplace environment in the name of leadership. His chief concern was just about performance (the numbers). His style was centered on threats and he took no interest in the well-being of the company's employees. He was a classic example of being a jerk with a title. I eventually left the organization, as did many other good people, and I never regretted it. His title did not automatically convey leadership abilities on him, it simply made him feel entitled to be a workplace bully.

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader," advised John Quincy Adams, a political philosopher and our country's 6th president. I wish my former boss aimed for that.

*"He was a classic example of being a jerk with a title."*

Good leaders are not just interested in performance, but are trustworthy and care for the well-being of those they lead. They see employees as their co-workers.

Great leaders also give credit for the good others do and take the blame for things that don't go so well. "A good leader is a person who takes a little more than his share of the blame, and a little less than his share of the credit," said John Maxwell, a bestselling author with many books on leadership. Great leaders seem to know that intuitively.

I have found that good leaders motivate others with ideas, and then supply the necessary tools – training and skills – to successfully implement those ideas. Good leaders inspire hope, provide vision for the organization and think in terms of tomorrow.

Good leaders coach others to become leaders as well. "I start with the premise that the function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers," said Ralph Nader, a noted political activist involved in consumer protection and environmentalism.

In conclusion, I have found that the greatest leaders mobilize others by coalescing people around a shared vision and that the best leaders unlock people's potential to do and be better! ○



L.A. County Supervisor Kathryn Barger, shown at right, represents the 5th District. She's part of the currently all-woman Board of Supervisors, shown above from left to right: Janice Hahn, 4th District; Hilda L. Solis, 1st District; Holly J. Mitchell, 2nd District; Sheila Kuehl, 3rd District; and Barger.

## Fifth District Supervisor Tackling Difficult Challenges

*Kathryn Barger Highlights Key Issues of Homelessness, Housing and Public Safety*

By Elizabeth Smilor  
Special Sections Writer

Midway through her second term, Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger remains focused on three interlaced issues: homelessness, public safety and housing.

"I look at these three issues as quality-of-life issues and we're at a crisis point in L.A. County, the state and, quite frankly, across the nation," said Barger, who represents the largest supervisorial district. The 5th District spans more than 2,785 square miles, and includes 20 cities and 83 unincorporated communities in the Antelope, San Gabriel, San Fernando, Crescenta, and Santa Clarita valleys.

"The 5th district is probably the most diverse ... on any given day the issues of the Antelope Valley are not going to mirror those in the San Gabriel Valley," said Barger. "What I enjoy about my district is that there are always a variety of needs out there and it keeps you moving."

Supervisor Barger's approach to serving her diverse constituency is to tap into the needs and wants of all the cities and unincorporated areas, and to address the big issues in conjunction with them.

"With homelessness, there is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Each individual has their own story as to why they are on the street," Barger said. "Housing is one of the issues, but it is not the only one. Mental health and addiction still are the real issues and we

*"What I enjoy about my district is that there are always a variety of needs out there and it keeps you moving."*

**Kathryn Barger**  
Los Angeles County  
Supervisor, 5th District

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don't have the capacity in our own system to address them. We need to be doing a better job at building an infrastructure that's going to support those that need mental health services."



Becky Shevlin

Supervisors Barger and Hilda Solis (1st District), co-authored the motion to create the Blue Ribbon Commission on Homelessness (BRCH) that, after a six-month study, delineated seven recommendations to improve the region's current system for people experiencing homelessness, which were adopted by the Board of Supervisors in May.

Monrovia Mayor-Elect Becky Shevlin, who represents San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG) on the BRCH, said she is proud of the recommendations that include "expanded representation, including cities as well as the formation of local solutions to more equitably distribute Measure H funding in addressing and managing the homelessness needs of all cities within the county."

"I thank Supervisor Barger for her enthusiastic support of the BRCH recommendations and know that she is a champion for the needs and representation of all cities on the issue of homelessness not only within her district, but within Los Angeles County," Shevlin said.

The Board of Supervisors approved \$532,613,000 in homelessness funding for fiscal year 2022-23, much of which comes from Measure H, a voter-approved quarter-cent sales tax.

"We have this tax that was approved by voters. Money is not our problem. Our problem is addressing this issue in a compassionate but also firm way," Barger said. "Creating this commission gives us a roadmap moving forward and holds the Board of Supervisors accountable. It means we are going to create an entity to oversee all the moving parts from housing to social



Rev. Andy Bales

services. The buck is going to stop with the county and we're going to make sure the funds get out to the cities to provide those services in real time."

Supervisor Barger's dedication to solving homelessness, does not surprise the Rev. Andy Bales, President and CEO of Union Rescue Mission. He worked with Barger starting in 2005 when she was Chief Deputy to

*"I thank Supervisor Barger for her enthusiastic support of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Homelessness [BRCH] recommendations and know that she is a champion for the needs and representation of all cities on the issue of homelessness not only within her district, but within Los Angeles County."*

**Becky Shevlin  
Mayor-Elect, Monrovia**

Barger played the mediator and encouraged us," said Bales, who was appointed by Supervisor Barger to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Commission (LAHSA). "Kathryn believed it could be a miraculous place from the start and continues to support us."

On housing and housing affordability, Supervisor Barger said the county and state need to look at ways to streamline the development process and lower costs to build affordable housing.

"We are really good at mandating what companies should and shouldn't do. By doing that we put up more red tape and with that red tape comes

Supervisor Michael Antonovich to develop Hope Gardens Family Center near Sylmar, permanent supportive housing for single mothers and their children and senior women. It now houses up to 300 women with children and 25 senior women who might otherwise be on L.A.'s Skid Row. Bales recounted how Barger, despite doubts from Antonovich, encouraged the Mission to work with neighbors to see the project become a reality.

"She is a hero of Hope Gardens. Skid Row is no place for women and children and senior ladies. Kathryn



*"City of Industry's central location and mild weather make it a good place to do business."*

**Christine Gonzales, Vice President  
Snak King Human Resources**



# Careers Available in City of Industry *Business Council Helps Companies Recruit and Hire*

**By Elizabeth Smilor**  
*Special Sections Writer*



*"We are proud to be the economic engine of the San Gabriel Valley and we strive every day to meet the needs of our businesses to ensure their prosperity. We know that everything we do has rippling effects on the greater region."*

**Cory C. Moss**  
**Mayor, City of Industry**

**C**ity of Industry and Industry Business Council leaders measure their success by that of the 3,000 diverse businesses employing more than 68,000 people in the City.

"We are proud to be the economic engine of the San Gabriel Valley and we strive every day to meet the needs of our businesses to ensure their prosperity," said Mayor Cory Moss. "We know that everything we do has rippling effects on the greater region."

From food processors to aerospace companies to e-commerce, the businesses in the City of Industry generate more than \$27 billion in economic activity annually.



Tracy Hernandez

"The key sectors of manufacturing, e-commerce, technology, and logistics are drivers of great middle-class jobs, as well as providing products and services that SoCal needs," said Tracy Hernandez, founding CEO of BizFed. "Vibrant cities, like the City of Industry, who are open and welcoming to growing businesses make the California dream achievable for all. Without them our region deteriorates, poverty and crime rise, and basic public services lose the vital tax base a thriving economy provides."

*"Vibrant cities, like the City of Industry, who are open and welcoming to growing businesses, make the California dream achievable for all."*

**Tracy Hernandez**  
**Founding CEO, BizFed**

BizFed, the Business Federation of Los Angeles, is an alliance of 221 business organizations representing 410,000 companies and more than 5 million employees





Joanne McClaskey

in the greater L.A. area. The Industry Business Council (IBC) is a member and Executive Director Joanne McClaskey is an active board member. Hernandez points to the unique relationship between the City of Industry and the IBC as a key to their success in supporting businesses.

"Other cities could really learn from how the City of Industry and the Industry Business Council work together to make businesses in the City productive. They've really diversified their portfolio by being forward thinking. As a

*"There are 230 manufacturers in the City of Industry that employ more than 19,000 people. This is a significant number for a single city. The number of employees per manufacturer is significantly higher than the rest of the businesses. So, in terms of the economy and jobs, that is the most fruitful place to focus."*

**Joanne McClaskey, Executive Director Industry Business Council**

"The city provides us with new business license information and we reach out right away to connect with businesses and keep our data current and accurate. We are a non-profit organization and

the City supports us with vital input, feedback and resources to design programs that make a difference," explained McClaskey. "We have the tools and the path to give our companies an advantage."



The Made in Industry initiative, launched by IBC in 2021, is focused on assisting and growing manufacturing in the City. There are 230 manufacturers in the City of Industry that employ more than 19,000 people.

"This is a significant number for a single city," McClaskey said. "The number of employees per manufacturer is significantly higher than the rest of the businesses. So, in terms of the economy and jobs, that is the most fruitful place to focus."

To gather the necessary data, IBC hired Beacon Economics to study manufacturing statistics and needs in the City as compared to the nation. The top concern locally and nationally was the same: availability of skilled labor.

"This was before the pandemic," McClaskey emphasized. "The jobs in manufacturing are not limited to assembly lines, career tracks have become more technical, and many pay grades are higher than you'd think. There are some particularly good

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## City Council



Cory Moss  
Mayor



Catherine Marcucci  
Mayor Pro Tem



Mark Radecki  
Council Member



Newell W. Ruggles  
Council Member



Michael Greubel  
Council Member



[www.cityofindustry.org](http://www.cityofindustry.org)





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career opportunities at these companies with or without a higher education. Our mission is to build a reputation that makes the City of Industry manufacturers really stand out."

McClaskey confirmed with local manufacturers the average salaries from Beacon's study. In food manufacturing the average wage is \$44,900, in aerospace manufacturing it's \$100,295 and in machinery manufacturing it's \$74,600, she said.



Walter Hafner

"The City of Industry is the hub of Southern California manufacturing with its central location. The IBC is really helping us to find employees," said Walter Hafner, Acorn Engineering Vice President, Manufacturing, who also sits on the IBC Board of Directors. "They are working hard on how to make the City more attractive to high-quality workers."

Snak King, one of the largest snack manufacturers in the United States, first opened a 50,000-square-foot facility in the City of Industry in 1982. The company headquarters and several distribution warehouses, including a LEED-certified 150,000-square-foot building opened in 2019 on Turnbull Road, are in the City today. Christine Gonzales, Snak King Vice President of Human Resources, said "City of Industry's central location and mild weather make it a good place to do business."



Christine Gonzales

"We can usually find a diversified labor pool, however since COVID it has been hard to recruit," said Gonzales about the company whose brands include: El Sabroso, Granny Goose, The Whole Earth, Jensen's Orchard, Nutibles and, of course, Snak King, as well as numerous private labels available across the country.

"This is where the IBC came in to play. While we have been members for many years, I was not personally involved until recently," Gonzales said. "Joanne McClaskey is amazing! During a



recent manufacturing meeting the IBC introduced a recruiting tool that is amazing and was put together by the IBC for manufacturing companies. It is cutting edge and will increase awareness in the community of all of the opportunities."

The IBC is meeting regularly with the City's manufacturers and has published a Manufacturers Guide and is rolling out online ads to educate job seekers about the companies.

"These large manufacturers bring opportunity to the surrounding community and their impact on the economy and their role as we come out of the pandemic is significant and should be looked at as a real asset," McClaskey said. "It also ties into the supply chain issues we have. The more we can produce locally and supply ourselves with essential necessities, the more secure we are as a country."

For their part, City officials work to address infrastructure and efficiency needs. Improvements as basic as repaving roads make a difference to companies that transport goods.

"The City is working hard on improving power issues, expanding and improving roads," said Hafner of Acorn, which manufactures plumbing fixtures and products for institutional and commercial markets. "We have five trailers from Mexico every day, so road improvements really help."



Josh Nelson

City Manager Josh Nelson points to progress and funding for the 57/60 Confluence Project as well as both the Turnbull Road and Fullerton Road grade separation projects as key road improvements the City supports. Industry Public Utilities is also working to keep energy reliable and efficient for all the businesses. The City is also adding EV chargers for the public.

"We want to grow the City in a sustainable manner that benefits every company and resident," Nelson said. "We recognize the important role the City of Industry plays in the region and we will continue to foster job creation and economic growth." ○





Supervisor Barger makes connections throughout her district, which encompasses 20 cities and 83 unincorporated communities. Above, she visits with Los Angeles County Sheriff's Deputies in Santa Clarita. Top right, she attends the groundbreaking for a house in Altadena to be built by San Gabriel Valley Habitat for Humanity. On Fire Service Day, bottom right, she shows her support at Los Angeles County Fire Department Station 64 in San Dimas.



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increased costs," said Barger, giving the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as one example. "While we say we want people to build affordable housing, we make it nearly impossible for them to do so."

Recently, Supervisor Barger attended the groundbreaking for a San Gabriel Valley Habitat for Humanity project in Altadena to build a home for low-income, first-time homeowners on what was county-owned vacant land. Supervisor Barger helped initiate the land transfer for the project.

"Without the original effort by Supervisor Barger's staff to get this ball rolling, we would not have this project," said SGV Habitat for Humanity's Director of Real Estate Development Grant Power, adding they hope to work with the Supervisor on more projects. "Supervisor Barger strikes me as someone with a great deal of authenticity as a person and she is very committed to the well-being of her constituents. She is looking for opportunities to expand the benefits the county has available for people who are vulnerable economically."

Speaking shortly after the June primary, Barger said support for law enforcement in the communities is evident. Barger, who is married to a retired sheriff's deputy, is proud of her efforts to improve recruitment, training and retention of sheriff's deputies.

"I think people realize that you need to have public safety front and center. There is support for the LAPD and L.A. County Sheriff's Department to have more public safety officers and deputies out in the communities. That doesn't mean you don't focus on diversion and compassionate ways to address those in crisis," she said. "It's not an 'either/or' it's an 'and.' We

need to have the best law enforcement agency and we need to have social services in the community to address those who shouldn't come in contact with law enforcement."

*"I think people realize that you need to have public safety front and center."*

**Kathryn Barger**  
**Los Angeles County**  
**Supervisor, 5th District**

Supervisor Barger points to one common thread in all three challenges: "Mental health trauma underlies most if not all the social problems that society is grappling with now."

Building upon her time as a policy advisor on health, mental health, social services and children's issues, Barger continues to advocate for services and programs for those with mental illness. She points to the Restorative Care Village (RCV) at Olive View-UCLA Medical Center as a prime example of Los Angeles County's investment in creating care solutions that support patients who may lack a place to live or need additional support after being discharged. That facility is divided into buildings with 16 beds each because of a Medicaid reimbursement exclusion for mental health care to psychiatric facilities with more than 16 beds. She is working with Gov. Gavin Newsom and other officials to request a waiver from this federal rule. She is also advocating for more mental health support in schools.

"Just look at COVID and the impact on our youth," she concludes. "We need to build more services in our community so individuals don't get to the point where they decompensate and end up on the street." ○





# IT TAKES A VILLAGE

## San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority *Thanks Cities, Water Districts and Federal Lawmakers for their Support*



*"The cities, water districts and others came through with many letters of support for the WQA, sent to our elected representatives in Congress. We are greatly appreciative. We want to get this job done. Their support and leadership will help us continue our mission."*

**Valerie Muñoz, WQA Board Chairwoman**

**By Amy Bentley**  
*Special Sections Writer*

**T**he best leaders recognize that sometimes their organization needs support from community partners and stakeholders to accomplish a long-range goal. To use a familiar cliché, "It takes a village."

In the case of the San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority (WQA), that "village" is comprised of many cities and water agencies in the San Gabriel Valley plus a group of dedicated federal lawmakers. They are helping to assure that the WQA's cleanup of contaminated groundwater in the San Gabriel Valley will likely continue for several more years as new areas of contamination are found

For the WQA to succeed, community support and adequate funding are vital.

"The successful, long-term cleanup of contamination in the Main San Gabriel Basin continues, and we will need more time and funds to remove the contamination and restore the groundwater Basin," said WQA Executive Director Randy Schoellerman.





who  
we are

what  
we do

Since 1993, the purpose of the San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority (WQA) has been to develop, finance, and implement groundwater treatment programs for the San Gabriel Basin. The WQA coordinates the groundwater cleanup with local, state, and federal agencies.

**COORDINATE** Groundwater Cleanup  
**INFORM** the Public

**CHARACTERIZE** Groundwater Contamination

**ASSIST** Cooperating Respondents

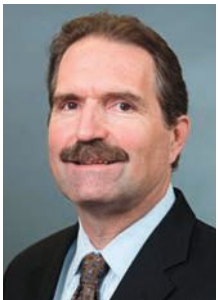
**PREVENT** or Minimize Migration of Contamination

**REMOVE** Contamination Quickly and Efficiently

**PROTECT** Groundwater Resources

**FUND WQA** Projects and Programs with Outside Funding Sources

The WQA was recently awarded \$10 million in federal funds to further the groundwater remediation efforts in the Basin. The funding was included in an omnibus bill signed this spring. This is a major win for the WQA because it's been difficult to obtain federal funding over the past decade due to changes in federal rules relating to earmarks.



Randy Schoellerman

WQA Board President Valerie Muñoz and the Board of Directors would like to acknowledge the leadership from California's federal lawmakers who advocated on behalf of the WQA for the new funding:

Senators Dianne Feinstein and Alex Padilla, and Representatives Grace Napolitano and Judy Chu. In addition, officials from many water districts and cities throughout the Valley wrote letters of support to their lawmakers on behalf of the WQA. The funds will eventually go to various water agencies and cities that operate water treatment facilities in the Basin.



Dianne Feinstein

*"The successful, long-term cleanup of contamination in the Main San Gabriel Basin continues, and we will need more time and funds to remove the contamination and restore the groundwater Basin."*

**Randy Schoellerman**  
**WQA Executive Director**

The WQA is a special district created by the state in 1992 to plan, facilitate and provide funding to clean up the Main San Gabriel Basin, with a surface area of 169-square-mile overlying an aquifer with an estimated storage capacity of 8.6 million acre-feet that is the primary source of drinking water for about 1.4 million people in the San Gabriel Valley. The Basin was contaminated



Alex Padilla

in the 1940s and 1950s when defense industry companies in the Valley disposed of rocket fuel, industrial solvents and other chemicals by pouring them on the ground. Over time, the chemicals seeped into the groundwater. Once the responsible parties were identified by the EPA and others, the WQA secured funding from them and the government for the cleanup, so ratepayers don't bear the costs.

Part of the funding for the ongoing cleanup comes from San Gabriel Basin Restoration Fund, established in 2000. The WQA continually seeks Congressional appropriations for this fund. This fund helps to incentivize responsible parties to come on board

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[VILLAGE, Page 9]

and help pay for the cleanup. The Restoration Fund also is tapped for matching funds to leverage more state funding opportunities where matching funds are needed.

“It’s important to keep up a constant stream of funding from different sources. We never know what’s coming and we need funding to address it. We don’t want to pass the cost of the cleanup to the taxpayers,” Schoellerman said.

The WQA is already working on its funding request for the 2023 fiscal year for the Restoration Fund. ○




Learn more about your water and the WQA’s efforts to keep it safe and clean.  
Visit [www.wqa.com](http://www.wqa.com).



Grace Napolitano



Judy Chu



# CLEANUP BY THE NUMBERS

**1,845,916**  
Acre-feet of groundwater treated in San Gabriel Basin as of Sept. 30, 2021.

**325,851**  
The amount of water in gallons in just one acre-foot.

**6,780**  
The number of times you could fill the Rose Bowl with the 1.8 million acre-feet of treated water.

**199,123**  
The amount in pounds of contaminants removed as of June 30, 2021.

**21**  
The number of elephants equal to the weight of the contaminants removed.

**29**  
Years WQA has been coordinating the cleanup effort.

**33**  
Active groundwater treatment facilities in the San Gabriel Basin.

**2**  
New treatment plants are under construction.

## Board Members



Valerie Muñoz  
Chairwoman



Mark Paulson  
Vice Chairman



Bob Kuhn  
Secretary



Lynda Noriega  
Treasurer



Michael Whitehead  
Board Member



Ed Chavez  
Board Member

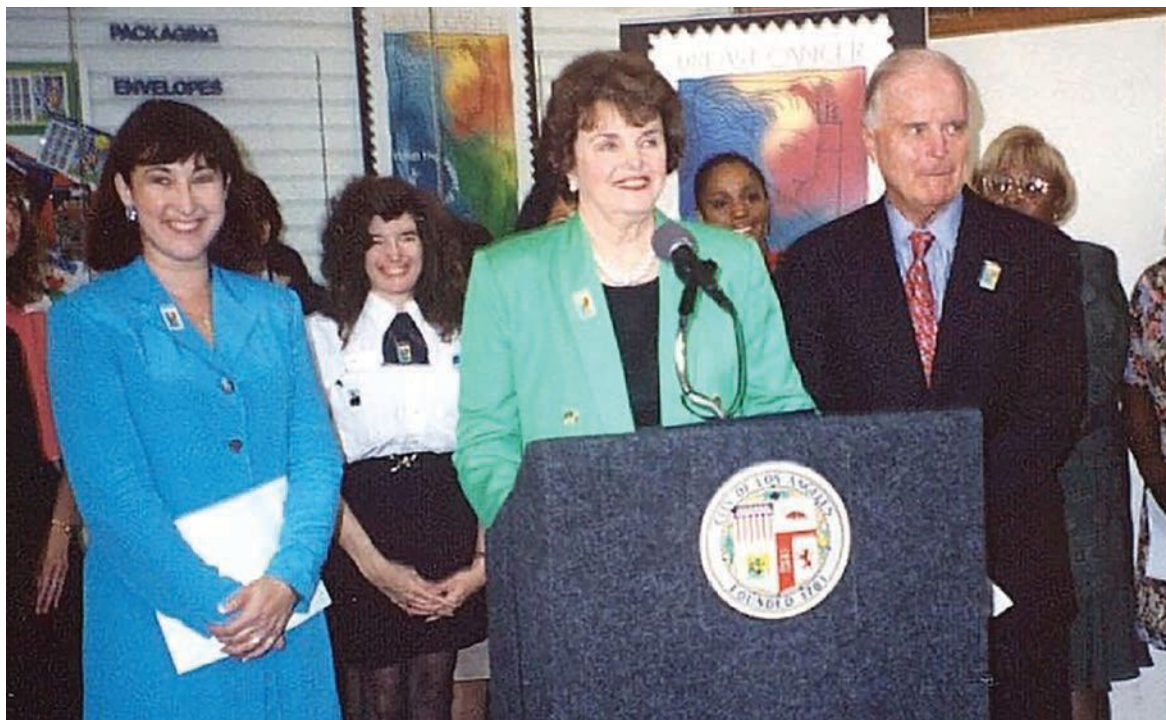


Robert Gonzales  
Board Member



Randy Schoellerman  
Executive Director





# Tragedy to Triumph

*Homegrown Breast Cancer Survivor Turned Activist Recounts Her Journey*

**By Elizabeth Smilor**  
Special Sections Writer



Elizabeth "Betsy" Mullen could have gotten angry when her aggressive breast cancer was diagnosed after years of misdiagnoses.

She could have given into frustration when she and her husband muddled through her treatment options feeling helplessly uninformed.

She could have wallowed in despair when at age 33 chemotherapy rendered her sterile and she was told she might only live a few years anyhow.

Instead, Mullen became a survivor and a tireless advocate for change.

"I could have called a lawyer and said how badly my case had been mishandled," says Mullen reflecting on her 30-year journey. "Or I could take a seat in the boardroom with the chairman of my health plan and work with him to improve the standard of care for breast cancer patients. I chose plan B and I'm very glad that I did."

Mullen, who graduated from Royal Oak High School in Covina in 1977, improved breast cancer patient care standards for all, headed a national breast cancer nonprofit for 11 years and successfully advocated for the first semipostal stamp that has raised more than \$94 million for breast cancer research. It all began when she was still recovering from her own mastectomy and breast reconstruction in 1992.

"The day I was diagnosed by the same doctor who had said nothing was wrong with me, my husband Kenny and I vowed that what was happening to us, would not happen to other people," she recalls. "That was the seed for the WIN (Women's Information Network) Against Breast Cancer nonprofit organization that I created."

Years later, after she stood beside First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton at the White House for the unveiling of the Breast Cancer Research Stamp, Sen. Dianne Feinstein wrote to her: "Your hard work and dedication truly go unrivaled. I have never met anyone as driven and indefatigable as you, Betsy. You have taken personal tragedy and turned it into a national triumph."

[See **TRAGEDY**, Page 12]



Top left, Betsy Mullen stands beside Sen. Dianne Feinstein and then-L.A. Mayor Richard Riordan at a Breast Cancer Research Stamp (shown at left) event in downtown L.A. in 1998. Top right, WIN Against Breast Cancer Founder Mullen seated at an event in 1996, and a few days after her mastectomy and breast reconstruction in November of 1992, above.





At left, Mullen stands between her mother Jane Fisher and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton with her niece Paige Fisher in front in the White House Blue Room on July 29, 1998. Above, Betsy and Ken Mullen on their wedding day in West Covina on May 2, 1982. At right, Mullen with U.S. Postmaster General William J. Henderson at the Breast Cancer Research Stamp unveiling in Washington D.C.

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### HER JOURNEY AS A PATIENT

Mullen's "personal tragedy" started in 1983 when she was severely injured in a car accident on Interstate 5 near Camp Pendleton. Just a year after marrying her high school sweetheart Kenny, Mullen began physical therapy to overcome short-term memory loss that affected her ability to even walk. "It ended my academic and running career," she said. Mullen believes her cancer developed while her immune system was weak.

"I knew for years that something was wrong, but I didn't fit the profile of a woman with breast cancer. I didn't look ill," she says. "I was not great about doing breast self-exams, but in June 1992, I felt a pea-sized lump in my left breast. My primary care physician said there was nothing wrong."

*"I have never met anyone as driven and indefatigable as you, Betsy. You have taken personal tragedy and turned it into a national triumph."*

**Sen. Dianne Feinstein**

"She actually said: "Have a nice day," at the end of the call," Mullen recalls. "The doctors think the malignancy was there for seven to 10 years."

With the help of a friend who is a doctor, Mullen found an oncologist and plastic surgeon within her Kaiser Permanente network in Los Angeles. She was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer referred to as triple-negative because the cells lack estrogen and progesterone receptors and the HER2 protein, all of which aid in treatment. She underwent a mastectomy, reconstructive surgery and six months of chemotherapy.

In the last month of chemotherapy, she entered permanent menopause. Today, women are given the option to harvest their eggs before cancer treatment. She was not. She and Kenny also were advised to not adopt because she was unlikely to live more than a few years.

"One of my mantras for people is respect the diagnosis, question the prognosis. None of us are numbers," says Mullen, now 63. "There's always someone who beats the odds, like I did."

Thanks to the diligence of her plastic surgeon Dr. Brad Edgerton, she underwent Kaiser Permanente's first skin-sparing mastectomy for a more attractive outcome. Edgerton became one of her biggest collaborators just days after the surgery when he asked her to counsel another patient about to also undergo a mastectomy and the same type of breast reconstruction.

"I wheeled my two IV poles into the next room and met with her. Brad immediately saw the power of one-on-one peer support," says Mullen, who continued to counsel his patients for the next year.

She and her husband realized the information they could have used upon her diagnosis was not readily available. So, their first action was to put together a packet of informational books and question lists and send them to newly diagnosed breast cancer patients and their families. Her path to activism and advocacy was set.

*"One of my mantras for people is respect the diagnosis, question the prognosis. None of us are numbers."*

**Betsy Mullen**

"Kenny didn't lose me physically to breast cancer, but he lost me to the cause," she says, adding that her "soulmate" died in 2014.

"I considered (my nonprofit) WIN Against Breast Cancer as the child Kenny and I couldn't have together. What drives me is I want to relegate cancer to the history books."

### THE ACTIVIST ARISES

Her early connection with Dr. Edgerton and others at Kaiser Permanente sparked the activism "in her DNA." She recalls how her mother led a team of 500 volunteers for then Senator John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign with three kids under age 4 in tow. At age 5, Betsy Mullen dressed up as a UNICEF box for Halloween and raised \$250.

So, while her penchant for activism was no surprise, she was impressed by people's willingness to listen and enact change. Dr. Edgerton, who at the time was the vice president of a major charitable organization, gave her the seed grant for the Women's Information Network Against Breast Cancer (WIN ABC). Dr. Oliver Goldsmith, chairman of Kaiser Permanente's Southern California Permanente Medical Group (SCPMG) gave a grant to WIN ABC and gave Mullen an office at the Fontana hospital to develop a peer-support program. She worked with many medical professionals at Kaiser Permanente to start and grow the Breast Buddy Breast Care Program, where breast cancer survivors are trained to counsel patients for at least one year after diagnosis.

"I felt like I was living in a documentary. The surgeons, administrators, RN breast care coordinator, and other clinicians helped shape the whole program," said Mullen, describing how she met with patients and even sat in on surgeries. "We absolutely changed the way in which Kaiser Permanente's Southern California Permanente Medical Group treated breast cancer."

Ann Geiger, Ph.D., who collaborated with Mullen at Kaiser Permanente Southern California in the late 1990s, said she believes the experience altered





both her scientific priorities and approaches. In particular, she realized that her skills as an epidemiologist could be applied to health care delivery challenges, which became her professional passion.

"To the best of my knowledge, Betsy was one of the first patient advocates to push for changes to how care is delivered, particularly how treatment decisions are made. I recognized the invaluable contribution patients and other stakeholders could make to the research endeavor," Geiger said. "Today, I draw regularly on these experiences as the leader of a National Cancer Institute-sponsored program that promotes research to improve cancer care delivered in the community rather than academic medical centers."

The Breast Buddies program is still used by Kaiser Permanente and was picked up by the public health system of Los Angeles and recognized as a new best practice by the American Association of Health Plans that represents 168 million health plan members.

*"I recognized the invaluable contribution patients and other stakeholders could make to the research endeavor."*

**Ann Geiger, Ph.D.**

"We changed the culture. I set out to make sure that what happened to us wouldn't happen to other patients," she said, adding that she credits Kaiser Permanente with both the willingness to develop the program and share it with other medical plans.

Her nonprofit WIN ABC raised money for research, sent information to patients nationwide, and advocated for improved patient care. Mullen also helped start the California Breast Cancer Treatment Fund for low-income patients, which is now the Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Program, created by California law in 2002.

In late 1995, WIN ABC was the only nonprofit to respond to a letter from a Kaiser Permanente doctor in Sacramento advocating for a semipostal stamp. For two years, Mullen, Dr. Ernie Bodai, and fellow Californian David Goodman who lost his wife to breast cancer lobbied legislators in Washington D.C. On July 29, 1998, the Breast Cancer Research Stamp was issued as the first stamp to raise money for a cause thanks to a Congressional mandate.

"I considered the awareness that the stamp would raise to be priceless. Through the years, women would call our organization to say the stamp reminded them to get a mammogram," Mullen says. "We estimated we could raise \$100 million just by people donating pennies at a time. My hope and vision was that it would be a template for other semipostal stamps."

Today, despite ongoing health challenges, Mullen remains a passionate activist for breast cancer and many other causes including helping those in need in Ukraine.

"I am still deeply committed to the cause. It's how my mama raised me," she said. "The skills and knowledge I've acquired, and contacts I've made, help me a great deal in my other advocacy efforts."

She believes everyone she met, including her physical therapist after the car accident who became her sister-in-law, everywhere she ended up, and all that happened was not mere coincidence.

"I was a layperson. I don't have a bunch of letters after my name, and Kaiser Permanente trusted me. I was a patient saying you need to do things better and they agreed and put their money where their mouth is," Mullen concludes. "There are horror stories – I started off as one of them – but it ended up as a beautiful story of partnership and collaboration." ○

## Breast Cancer Research Stamp

The Breast Cancer Research semipostal stamp was issued July 29, 1998. As of the end of April 2022, more than 1.09 billion Breast Cancer Research stamps had been sold, bringing the total revenue raised to more than \$94.4 million. By law, 70 percent of the net amount raised is transferred to the National Institutes of Health and 30 percent is transferred to the Medical Research Program at the Department of Defense. Stamp artist Whitney Sherman of Baltimore, MD, worked under the direction of art director Ethel Kessler of Bethesda, MD, to create this stamp design. Other semipostal stamps currently available are: Alzheimer's, Healing PTSD and Save Vanishing Species stamps. These stamps are available for purchase at U.S. Post Offices, online at USPS.com and by toll-free phone order at (800) 782-6724.

## A Tireless Advocate

Betsy Mullen says advocacy is "in her DNA" and over the years, she has championed not only breast cancer research and care but many other causes. Here are a few that are on her radar now:

Mullen has been working with several groups to raise awareness about the war in Ukraine. She is advocating for a semipostal stamp for Ukraine. She follows and aids the Walter Report, which is produced by Walter Lekh, a Ukrainian doctor living in the United States. He organized a Twitter Space, an audio livestream for Twitter users, featuring news and expert commentary about the war. The Walter Report has been streaming without interruption since the Russian invasion. He and Mullen also work with Mriya Aid, a Canadian organization sending medical supplies, non-lethal military equipment and humanitarian aid to Ukraine. To learn more about their efforts in Ukraine, go to [www.walterreport.com](http://www.walterreport.com) and [www.mriyaaid.org](http://www.mriyaaid.org).

Mullen also would love to see one of her heroes honored. She's working with film producer Roger C. Memos to petition for a Presidential Medal of Freedom for 104-year-old actress and San Fernando Valley resident Marsha Hunt, who was blacklisted in the McCarthy era but went on to become an activist and inspiration to many. Memos produced a documentary called "Marsha Hunt's Sweet Adversity" and they've started a petition on [change.org](http://change.org).

**For more information, contact  
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# Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District

## *Responds to Drought Emergency with New Conservation Effort, Long-Range Plans*



*"We have been encouraging conservation for 30 years as a district and we've had great successes. Over the last 15 years, water use per person has declined 40 percent."*

**Ed Chavez**  
**Board President**

**By Amy Bentley**  
*Special Sections Writer*

**T**he Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District is widely recognized as a community leader in water stewardship, conservation and water policy. As California's drought emergency continues following the driest January, February and March in recorded history, the Upper District is leading new conservation efforts while simultaneously planning for the region's future water needs.

Upper District leaders remain mindful that California will never fully be out of a drought. Sound water management and planning for the future has always been a part of the Upper District's winning leadership approach.

"We have been encouraging conservation for 30 years as a district and we've had great successes. Over the last 15 years, water use per person has declined 40 percent," said District Board Chair Ed Chavez.

On May 11, the Upper District Board adopted an Emergency Water Conservation Program to preserve limited stored water supplies. San Gabriel Valley residents are being asked to conserve 20 percent of their household water use and limit outdoor watering to two days a week. This action follows Metropolitan Water District's declaration of a Water





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In order to conserve water use by 20 percent, Upper District has asked residents to limit outdoor watering to two days a week. The district also offers rebates for water-efficient landscape systems and for replacing grass with drought-tolerant landscaping, as shown at left. They've launched an advertising campaign, above, to inform residents. For more information, go to [www.upperdistrict.org](http://www.upperdistrict.org).

Shortage Emergency for the State Water Project (SWP) dependent areas which requires SWP dependent areas to immediately cut water use by June 1, 2022.

The Upper District is expanding its public outreach and education efforts to promote water conservation awareness and educate people on the need to preserve water stored in our local groundwater basin.



Tom Love

"We have taken action by delivering more imported water, when available, for storage in the basin. Now our shorter-term actions are calling on the community to conserve to maximize our reserves," said District General Manager Tom Love.

Upper District is seeking regulatory approvals to increase the use of treated water imported from the Colorado River. This is something the district has done previously but was limited due to infrastructure restrictions. Water providers with functional connections to the Metropolitan Water District who can access treated CRA water, will have access to this alternative water source.

Future solutions include improving local infrastructure so Upper District can use and store more Colorado River water supplies.

*"We have taken action by delivering more imported water, when available, for storage in the basin. Now our shorter-term actions are calling on the community to conserve to maximize our reserves,."*

**Tom Love**  
District General Manager

Also on the horizon is the Regional Recycled Water Project, currently under construction in Carson, which will be the largest water recycling plant in the nation when it's done in about a decade (or hopefully sooner). When this facility is built and operating, it will eliminate the Upper District's reliance on imported water from Northern California, providing residents with a more drought-proof and reliable water supply.

Visit [www.upperdistrict.org](http://www.upperdistrict.org) to learn about the Upper District's many water-saving programs and stay tuned for the Upper District's virtual "Drought 101" town halls which will offer conservation tips and resources. ○

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Director, Division 1



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