

July 2026
Summer Issue



The Guild Gab



Robin Adams
Sandy Luboviski
Co-Presidents 2026 - 2028

Articles:

Meet Our Members	2
Lights Tour	3
Crafters	5



Eden Garcia-Balis, LMFT
Chief Executive Officer
AMCS

Highlights:

Fashion Show	3
Wine Pairing	3
Annual Meeting	4
Summer Social	4
Save the Dates	5
Calendar	5

The Prez's Say

We are excited about our opportunity to serve as Co-Presidents to this outstanding group of talented, supportive and dedicated members of the Guild.

This is our first chance to acknowledge Janie Guthrie and her past Board for their many years of service to the Guild. We are happy to give them a respite from leading, however, they continue to be integral partners to our future growth and success.

We got off to a busy start in February with many spring activities to further our fundraising goals. We 'Got our Burgers On' at **The Shack**, had our annual **Wine-Pairing Dinner at Cantalini's** with fabulous wines and five delicious chef-created courses. We enjoyed another restaurant

FUNdraiser at **El Rincon Criollo**, enjoying Cuban cuisine. Clearly we like to pair fundraising with food!

June was also a busy month – we started off with a FUNdraising **J.Jill Fashion show** extravaganza with four Guild and AMCS models. We're starting our summer well-dressed! Next up was our **5th Annual GUILD and AMCS Summer Social** bringing together the Boards of both organizations, our faithful supporters and new Guild members. This was strictly for **FUN**, poolside at the lovely home of Nancy and John Edwards. It's our way of thanking everyone for their participation and support.

July events included *Matilda, the Musical* performance by Music West, a restaurant FUNdraiser at

Truxtons and a **Christmas in July craft fair**. Upcoming in the fall are the **'Viva Las Vegas' Casino Night** and **Westchester Arts and Music Festival craft sale**. Please see page five for dates of these, and other, exciting upcoming events.

Raising funds for AMCS is our mission and we are diligent in reaching our goal each year. Our efforts assist AMCS in providing accessible and affordable mental health services to the community. We hope you will join us on this mission, sharing your ideas and offering your support – we can't do this without you! According to one of our members, getting involved comes with 'Friends Benefits' and we welcome the participation of our friends.

Eden's Epistle

Have you ever noticed that when you're under a lot of stress, your body seems to feel it too? Maybe you develop headaches, have trouble sleeping, or just don't have the energy you normally do. That's because mental health and physical health are closely connected. In fact, they're really two parts of the same picture.

When we're anxious, overwhelmed, or struggling with depression, our bodies often respond in ways we don't always recognize. At the same time, taking care of our physical health can have

a powerful impact on our emotional well-being. Going for a walk, getting enough sleep, eating nourishing foods, and staying active aren't just good for your body, they can also help reduce stress, improve your mood, and build resilience.

It's also important to remember that asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. If emotional challenges are making it difficult to enjoy life or manage everyday responsibilities, talking with a mental health professional can make a meaningful

difference.

The goal isn't to have a perfect body or a perfect mind. It's to care for yourself as a whole person. When you invest in both your mental and physical health, you're giving yourself the best chance to live a healthier, happier, and more balanced life; and that's what I hope for all of you. If you or someone you know needs to talk to someone, please call AMCS at 310-670-1410. AMCS is here to help. Thank you to the Guild for all it does for AMCS, and keep on living your best lives!



Meet a Member – Donna Christopher

Donna Christopher says, *"Aloha everyone!"* She was born and raised on the beautiful island of Oahu and has lived in Playa del Rey for the last 20 years. Donna attended the University of Hawaii, then USC graduate school, and worked as a Pediatric Occupational Therapist with Los Angeles County Dept. of Public Health until 2022 when she retired. She

is enjoying her retirement growing veggies at the Emerson Avenue Community Garden, making new friends at the Guild, helping others with the Do Good club at the Westchester Senior Center, helping her mentally ill brother in Hawaii, volunteering at Visitation Parish and her favorite - spending time with her nieces and nephews.

Donna loves being in nature and community. She became a member of the Guild because her good friend, Tina Vanderjagt, invited her to the Spring Teas and Annual Meeting. She spoke so highly of the professionalism of everyone and how well everyone worked together. Donna looks forward to volunteer opportunities and meeting more members with the Guild.



Meet a Member – Karen Coony

Karen Coony is a 70-year resident of Westchester, born and raised here. She attended Westchester Elementary, Visitation School and St. Bernard's High School. She worked for the FBI, Continental Airlines and the State of California. Karen has two

children and two grandsons. She retired from the State in 2021. She is enjoying a busy retirement volunteering with the Guild, baking cakes and cupcakes for foster children with For Goodness Cakes, crocheting blankets for underprivileged families with Blankets of

Love, and volunteering at her grandson's school, her favorite activity. She also loves traveling. Karen is presently serving on the Guild Board and looks forward to more volunteer opportunities with the Guild.



Meet a Member – Lisa Johnson

Lisa Johnson was born and raised in Los Angeles. A clinical psychologist by training, she earned her doctoral degree from Pepperdine University. Lisa currently works as a therapist and as a qualified medical evaluator for the State Division of Workers' Compensation. Lisa also

volunteers her time as a psychologist on a committee with the State Bar. Lisa worked as the managing owner of a small business in the local area for several years, where she regularly attended events as a member of the LAX Coastal Chamber of Commerce. It was her

membership in the Chamber that introduced her to both the Guild and AMCS, where she has served as a Board member since 2020. Lisa will serve as AMCS Board president for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, traveling abroad, and building on her wine knowledge.



7th Holiday Lights Tour & Contest

Once again, we are beginning to plan our next **Holiday Lights Tour & Contest**, which we tentatively expect to occur Dec. 12-27. This year we hope to feature approximately 20 homes in this popular outdoor decorating contest.



Last year most tour-goers made a \$12 donation which provided **maps to the homes and an online ballot** to vote for their favorite home. Last year's tour-goers selected the home of the Condran family on Ramsgate Road as the **Fan Favorite**.

Our popular added attraction, the **VIP Experience**, featured tour buses on two different evenings taking 20 guests to see the homes, with a guide and pre-tour festivities, including Christmas carols, games, hot chocolate and other refreshments.

Ticket sales and sponsors raised more than \$15,000 to support AMCS. We will again be seeking sponsors for the event, in the hopes of raising at least as much as we did last year.



If you have any suggestions or comments for the **Holiday Lights Tour & Contest**, or would like to help plan this year's event, or if you know of any homeowners or sponsors who would like to participate, please let us know at info@westchestermh.org.

Back-to-Back FUNdraising



Guild members and friends enjoyed our **J.JILL Fashion Show** and shopping spree, then regained their stamina thanks to the **California Pizza Kitchen dining FUNdraiser**, both in the Manhattan Village Mall, Manhattan Beach.



Wine and Dine

Cantalini's Salerno Beach owner, Lisa Schwab, once again hosted a tantalizing five-course Italian feast and wine pairing evening to benefit Airport Marina Counseling Service.

Wine education was provided by sommeliers, Joshua Sternlicht and Mark Sadr from **Breakthru Beverage Company**.





●Heart of Gold●
Gail Ruhlen



●Guild Dedication●
Jordi Daley

Annual Member/Supporter Meeting 2026

The Annual Member/Supporter Meeting was held on January 29, 2026, featuring a panel discussion on **The Caregiver's Compass-Navigating the Journey**, and including speakers Carol Hahn, Valeria Velasco, and Brianna Ziegler. Lunch by **Cantalini's Salerno Beach** was followed by raffles, awards, and a **\$15,000** donation to AMCS from the Guild.

●Certificates of Merit●



Candy Blankenship



Pam Finkel



Jon Vanderjagt
accepted by Tina



●Community Appreciation●
Erin Cueto and Stephanie Davis
awardees not present

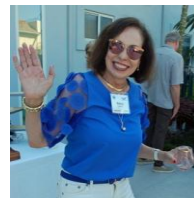
Matilda the Musical

WMHG partnered with **Music West, Inc.** for the fifth time, selling tickets to their outstanding summer production of **Matilda the Musical** at El Segundo Performing Arts Center.



We are grateful to Music West's President, **Carmen Fitch**, and the **Board of Directors**, who generously donated back 50% of every ticket sold by the Guild.

Established in 2004 by Jeff and Laura Remington, **Music West** continues to provide a quality local theater experience for both performers and audiences. The company welcomes actors ages 8 and up, a unique opportunity for family members to participate together. Visit www.musicwest.org and keep an eye out for their fall production of **Cinderella**.



♥ MILDRED HANSON ♥

was honored with the inaugural
**MARY ELLEN CASSMAN
FOUNDER'S AWARD**

The posthumous award was presented to Mildred's daughter Leslie, a Guild member.



Save the Dates ★★

Viva Las Vegas Casino Night

Get ready to get your '60's vibe' glam on!! For the third year in a row, the Guild will be hosting a Casino Night on **September 12, 2026** at the **Knights of Columbus Hall** from 6-10 pm. This year's theme is 'VIVA LAS VEGAS'!



We can't wait to have you join us to play casino-type games, enjoy a light fare buffet and try for a raffle prize or bid on Silent Auction items. **Tickets will be available** starting August 14, 2026 on our website www.westchestermhg.org for \$100/person until August 28; (after that, and at the door, tickets will be \$125/person). Ticket price includes \$100 in gaming chips and one house beer/wine or soft drink.

Remember, what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas!

WOW Challenge

7th Annual Holiday Lights Tour & Contest December 12-27, 2026

Each year, Westchester/PDR neighbors delight us all by festooning their lawns, trees, roofs, porches, and windows with assorted spectacular lights, holiday-themed characters, fun blow-ups, and assorted surprises. *Will you accept the challenge?*



SPONSORS are our foundation.

We will be looking for **sponsors** for each of the above events and have created some limited opportunities with promotion for sponsoring *both* events from \$500 to \$4000. For more information, please contact us at info@westchestermhg.org. We value your support of our vital fundraisers.



Who are the Guild Crafters? ✂

A small group of creative people participate in our **Guild Crafters**. They volunteer their time and materials, making wonderful items to sell to benefit the Guild and AMCS. In the fiscal year that recently ended, the Crafters sold more than \$5000 in handcrafted items. ★



The Crafters got their start shortly after the **close of the Guided Cage boutique**, as an effort for volunteers there to get together again. Not only did they maintain their friendships, they found they also enjoyed mental health benefits from working together on projects.

The Crafters make a variety of functional and lovely gift items. These include **quilts** and **table runners**, **knitted** and **crocheted scarves**, **afghans** and **hats**, **greeting cards**, **insulated casserole caddies** to carry food to potluck meals, **microwave bowl caddies** to protect your hands from heat, and **crocheted hanging kitchen towels**. In addition, they also create some unique decorative items. ★

You will have two opportunities to purchase Crafters' creations this fall. First is the **Westchester Arts & Music (WAM) Block Party**, on **Sept. 19, from 12-5 p.m.** on Emerson Avenue in Westchester. They will also sell again at **St. Jerome's Catholic Church Holiday Craft Faire** on **November 21-22**, located at 5550 Thornburn Street, Los Angeles.

In the meantime, if you are in need of any of the Crafters' unique handmade items, or would like to **contribute fabric, yarn, buttons or other craft supplies**, please contact Annika Backman at dabackman@yahoo.com. Volunteers also are needed to assist with the upcoming sales. ★

	August TBD	Hacienda Del Rey Dining FUNdraiser
Sat	September 12	Viva Las Vegas Casino Night – Knights of Columbus Hall, PDR
Sat	September 19	Guild Crafters @ Westchester Arts & Music Block Party 12-5 pm - Emerson Ave.
Sat - Sun	November 21-22	Guild Crafters @ St. Jerome's Church Holiday Craft Faire – 5550 Thornburn St.
Sat - Sun	December 12-27	7th Annual Holiday Lights Tour & Contest

CALENDAR

Please visit our website www.westchestermhg.org periodically for updates, ticket purchases and additional events.

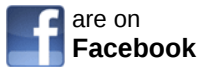
Please note events are subject to change.



Westchester
Mental Health Guild

c/o Airport Marina
Counseling Service
7891 La Tijera Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90045

Westchester
Mental Health Guild
and Airport Marina
Counseling Service



Visit our website
www.westchestermhg.org

Contact Us
info@westchestermhg.org



Community Partners

We acknowledge and thank these
generous friends and businesses for their
relentless support.

CALIFORNIA PIZZA KITCHEN

Manhattan Village ★
Teresa Wise, Manager

CANTALINI'S SALERNO BEACH

Lisa Schwab, Owner



EL RINCON CRIOLLO

Jason Graff, Owner

J.JILL - Manhattan Village

Susie Ragland, Manager

JOHN & NANCY EDWARDS

For the beautiful summer social



MUSIC WEST, INC.

Carmen Fitch, President,
and the Board of Directors

THE SHACK

Joey Angrile, Owner ★

TRUXTON'S AMERICAN BISTRO

Nichole Van Court, Manager



WMHG Executive Committee at work.



Westchester Mental Health Guild
c/o AMCS
7891 La Tijera Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90045

