

March 2022 Newsletter



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Our Mission

OCLA leverages technology to empower youth, adults, and families experiencing homelessness or resource-insecurity to find essential services. Our mobile and online tools break information barriers to offer our most vulnerable community members access to the help they need to make positive changes in their lives.

Founder's Corner

Dear Friends and Supporters,

On the homepage of our **new website**, **TECH**, the acronym for our tagline, **Technology Empowerment Connection Hope** is prominently displayed. TECH is integral to who we are and what we offer to homeless and unstably housed users. The WIN app is built on mobile technology and WIN's database is secured by cloud-based technology.

Using *technology for good* is also at the center of OCLA's vision of system's change. We believe that easy access to program safety nets and service connections reduces isolation and positively contributes to both individual and community well-being. Empowering people to easily find help will reduce both individual and family stress and "street time" and result in healthier populations and safer cities. Our new website celebrates OCLA's TECH-based programs and the power of *technology for good*! I hope you enjoy reading it!

Dr. Denise McCain-Tharnstrom
Founder/President Our Community LA

[View Our New Website](#)

OCLA/WIN is a LA Works Signature Project!



Since April of 2021, OCLA's WIN app has been honored to be one of **LA Work's Featured Signature Projects!** **LA Works** is the largest volunteer match organization in the county and they paired us with four incredible

communication coordinator, Lisa Nguyen, interviewed LA Works staff and 2 of our team leads and asked them to tell us about the WIN app database project.



Denise Flatan



Refat Ahsan



***Alexandra "Sasha"
Rudoy***

Denise Flatan, an experienced Programs Manager at L.A. Works, oversees the Signature Projects program. Only a handful of projects are chosen to be featured as Signature projects- Volunteer opportunities are evaluated for their creativity, timing, and project goals along with their ability to offer meaningful opportunities to provide the volunteers' growth and understanding of the broader social issues. Denise also wants to offer projects that will *"make the volunteer's experience so awesome that they're HOOKED!"* **She told us that L.A. Works invited OCLA/WIN to join the Signature Project Program because they believe that the WIN app is revolutionary!"**

Refat Ahsan, is a project lead for the OCLA/WIN app Signature Project. He and his partner, Sasha, host weekly training sessions to introduce new volunteers to the processes used to update the WIN database. Refat also gives a brief presentation on homelessness/ resource insecurity to remind the volunteers of the importance of the work. Refat likes that *the app offers people the autonomy to seek assistance themselves without tracking and judgment.* Refat shared with Lisa that he was drawn to this work because of the inequities of care within the homeless population he saw firsthand as a scribe at an ER and his favorite part each night is the opportunity to educate others about the

Alexandra "Sasha" Rudoy is also a project lead for the OCLA/WIN Signature Project. She is a recent UCSD grad with a degree in English Literature and is studying for the LSAT with the goal of becoming a human rights lawyer. She leads weekly volunteers team along with her LA Work's partner Refat, Sasha's favorite experience as a project lead is "getting to meet the incredible people who sign up to volunteer while learning about what inspired them to action." Sasha also said that " *getting to talk to people that come from a wide range of ages, jobs, and socioeconomic backgrounds, who are deeply passionate about improving the lives of those around them has really helped me connect to a greater sense of hope for the state of our world, despite however dark the tone of the news can get.*"

Black History Month

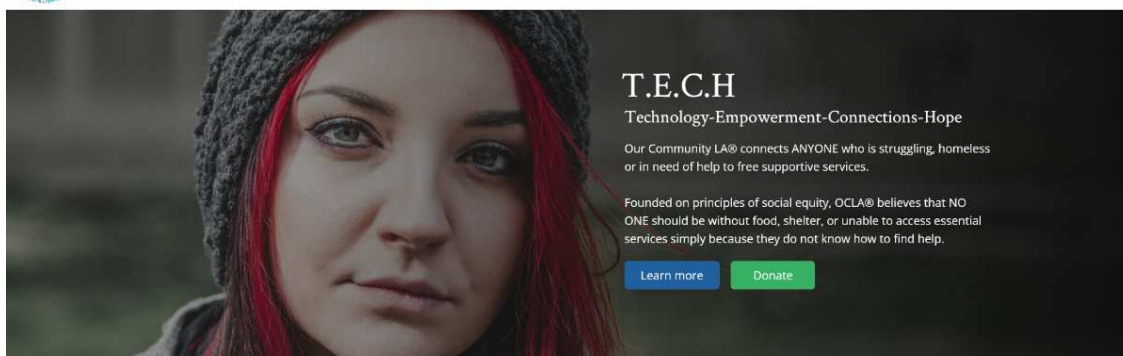
Last month we celebrated the many contributions of Black communities to the social and economic fabric of the Southern California landscape. At same time, we are sobered by the knowledge that in LA County, Black people represent 9% of the general population yet comprise 40% of the homeless population; a circumstance caused to a significant degree by pre-existing racial disparities associated with institutional and systemic racism. In 2019, the LA County Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness released **their report** calling for both the conscious elimination of rental housing discrimination and improved access to jobs and health care. COVID forestalled many action items; may 2022 be the year of sea change!

OCLA's New Website!

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OUR COMMUNITY LA®
Technology • Empowerment • Connections • Hope

[About OCLA ▼](#) [Our Programs ▼](#) [Find Help ▼](#) [Be Informed ▼](#) [Get Involved](#)



Visit oclawin.org to read our exciting new webpages! Available in English and Spanish, the new site features *who we are*, *what we do* and *who we serve*.

New to the website is the **Find Help Section** which connects those who are homeless or struggling to many helpful **community resources** offering helpful guides and tips for foster youth, seniors, re-entering and other special populations. It also links users to the **web version of WIN**, the pdf of OCLA's **Directory of Services for Homeless Youth and Adult's in LA County** and Team WIN's **Survive videos**! Thanks to Joli at Johnny Flash who guided us through the redesign process!!

2021 WIN App Highlights

2021 Usage Stats

3,992 New Users (mobile)
23,468 Searches for Resources
(English)

Top 5 Keyword Searches

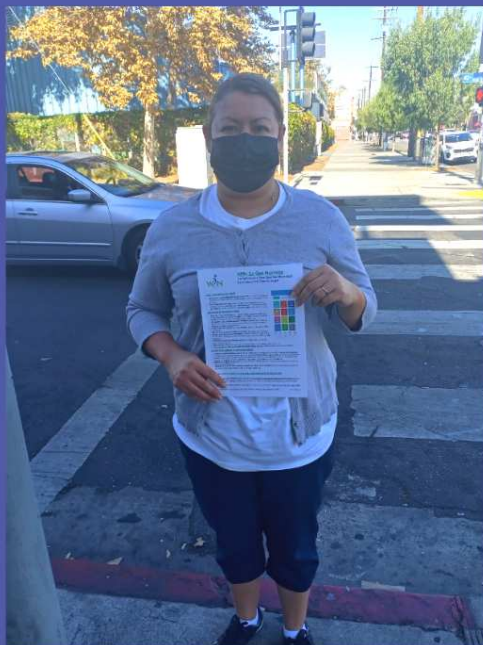
- *Housing
- *Diapers
- *Homeless
- *COVID
- *Domestic Violence

Users Like WIN!

Finding help for homelessness in the LA county has been challenging, but this app makes it so much easier to search for local resources! Thank you **OCLA** for looking out for the homeless community. **kkdoan** General Member of the

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WIN is such a great tool to find help. I especially love the comprehensive list of food resources and places to get a shower. Jane1999 Client Served 10/27/2021
Great Nonprofits 5 Stars



MEET ADRIANA OCHOA!



Adriana Ochoa, a South LA resident who has been using the app for years, spoke to Eduardo Bracamontes, OCLA's Fall 2021 South LA Outreach member and told him that thanks to the assistance of the WIN app she was able to help a female community member who was fearfully sleeping her in car find a place to sleep while she was going through a difficult part of her life. Adriana used the WIN app to search for shelters around Los Angeles and helped the women find a safe sleep program that allowed her to park her car in a secure place. Adriana says that she is thankful the WIN app exists and says she does not think another app has ever offered the community this kind of help before.

Community Partners

Thank you to our Holiday Partners!

We want to offer a special shout out to the team from the office of Assembly Member Adrin Nazarian, Harbor Interfaith Services, New Challenge Ministries and Union Station Homeless Services who distributed OCLA's WIN: What I

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need communities.

We are always looking to grow our partners and welcome your suggestions! *If you would like to propose a potential partner (churches, food pantries, mobile clinics, cities, and elected official district offices, among others make great partners!!)* please contact Lisa Nguyen at outreach@oclwin.org





Team WIN IN ACTION

Many food banks and churches opened their doors for food distribution over the Thanksgiving holidays and Team WIN was there to help! Team WIN members, Perla Espinoza and Andria Dunbar joined OCLA Founder, Dr. McCain-Tharnstrom and Team WIN Consultant, Antonio Rodriguez to raise awareness about the WIN app by ‘stuffing’ Thanksgiving food baskets on-site at New Challenge Ministries. Over 400 WIN: What I Need postcards and flyers, in English and Spanish, were distributed by the food campaign into the Torrance community. And our Team WIN members really enjoyed the experience!

Perla: I was impressed with the great food options that the church offered in the Thanksgiving basket. It was great to be partnering with such a caring community

Andria: The national guard and junior ROTC members who were helping the church with the food distribution were amazing and they even pitched in to help us to stuff the food boxes with the WIN postcards and flyers!

Meet Our New Team Member!

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Meet Kevin Mendas!

South LA Direct Outreach Lead

Born and raised in the streets of South Central LA, Kevin believes in his community and enjoys helping others learn about available community resources. He is spearheading OCLA's direct outreach program based in South LA and has assumed responsibility for spreading the word about WIN to area residents, churches, businesses, schools and encampments

If your South LA business or nonprofit is interested in receiving WIN flyers to give out to your clients or if you are interested in inviting OCLA to present on WIN at a South LA event, please contact Kevin Mendes at WINinSLA@oclawin.org

"Information is so valuable these days. Let's share that"

OCLA Social Media

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This month we will be highlighting female trailblazers on our Instagram/social media!

Follow us @ [ourcommunityla](#)

Follow OCLA on Social Media!

Check out our Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook!

Find us on Twitter [@oclawin](#), Instagram [@ourcommunityla](#), TikTok [@winwhatineed](#), and Facebook [@ourcommunityla](#).

Our goal is to raise awareness about the impacts of homelessness while sharing resources. *Below are some of our February Fact Friday posts.*

OCLA'S
FACT
FRIDAY

LA Libraries are offering laptop/ hotspot loan programs

The LA County Library and Los Angeles Public Library have amazing resources for those in need of technology services like public computers, wifi, printing, charging stations, and more.

LA County Library offers Laptop & Hotspot Loan Kits for 3 weeks with an option to renew for anyone with an adult library card. Similarly, Los Angeles Public Library offers Tech2go Computer Bundles for long-term loaners.

Visit your local library's website to find out how you can apply!

OCLA

OCLA'S
FACT
FRIDAY

The impacts of institutional and structural racism have to led to the overrepresentation of black people experiencing homelessness

Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority (LAHSA) report shows how racism and discrimination against black individuals through bias in housing, employment, criminal justice, and child welfare has led to the disproportionate number of black individuals experiencing homelessness.

OCLA



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