BOARD OF DIRECTORS
EAST KERN LOW-INCOME SECTOR ELECTION

ELECTION DAY
Tuesday July 22, 2025
9:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.

Meet your Candidates!

Candidate for East Kern Low-Income Sector

Kandi

Smith

Age: 60 Years Old

Residence: Ridgecrest, CA

Occupation: Program Supervisor at Clinica Sierra Vista

Experience:

Kandi was born in a small migrant working community where her father worked as a cotton ginner, which was seasonal. Kandi's family of 7 lived in poverty in a very small two-bedroom home until she was 16 years old, at which time she got married and became pregnant with her first of four children. Although the marriage was short, by the time she was 18 she met her current husband and they have been together for a little over 40 years. They also struggled with poverty for many years and were evicted from homes for not being able to afford the rent, utilities were shut off for non-payment and often times they had no transportation to get to work or the children to school. Poverty struggles continued well into their thirties and it was only through hard work and perseverance that they were able to overcome that struggle.

Kandi began attending college as a Special Services student which was a program for low-income students (now known as Access Program) and was hired within a year as a student worker and then as a classified staff to worker in that department helping other low-income students navigate college. After graduation Kandi enrolled in CSUB's Chemical Dependency Counseling Program and while in that program she was a Substance Abuse Counselor. After graduation, she went on to become an Internationally Certified Chemical Dependency Counselor through one of the certifying bodies and maintained that certification for 10+ years until budget constraints no longer allowed her to continue to be re-certified. Kandi also worked as a chemical dependency counselor for six years until budget cuts eliminated her position but was quickly hired at Clinica Sierra Vista as a Differential Response Case Manager in the Ridgecrest office covering the most Eastern portion or Kern County. After one year, Kandi was promoted to Program Supervisor and has been in that position for nearly 15 years. There are two programs now, Differential Response and Parents as Teachers which provide comprehensive case management to families experiencing crises in all areas of Eastern Kern County. Kandi's current position covers offices in Ridgecrest, California City and Wofford Heights.

Kandi has worked alongside CAPK programs for many years and feels the programs that CAPK provides are invaluable to the community. Kandi's lived experience and 20+ years of working knowledge of the low-income population, brings a deep understanding and insight into how to serve the low-income population of East Kern.

Candidate for East Kern Low-Income Sector

Sylvia

Burleson-Brown

Age: 64 Years Old

Residence: California City, CA

Occupation: Self Employed, Former Eligibility Worker for Public Social Services for Los Angeles

Experience:

Sylvia is a strong advocate who works with underserved families and provides coaching and peer support in rural areas. Her professional background includes roles in library services, computer technology, entrepreneurship, and public human services. Sylvia's community activism began in the late 1980s through student involvement and deepened after facing workplace discrimination, which led to her role as the lead plaintiff in a landmark legal case that set national precedent. She has since continued to advocate for workers and low-income families at the local, state, national, and international levels. In 2022, she launched a small business in the healing arts, a culmination of years as a professional student, volunteer and advocate. Sylvia is an expert in emotional and spiritual wellness and is continuously growing her understanding of financial healing. In 2023, Sylvia enrolled in the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist course at Loyola Marymount University, which consisted of a rigorous 80-hour training course and received a Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certificate of Completion and a Loyola Marymount University Peer Support Specialist certificate. Sylvia also holds a master's degree in organizational management and is currently being trained as a substance abuse Registered Alcohol Drug Technician (RADT).

Sylvia's insights into youth development, social inequality, and institutional systems, paired with her lived experience, positions her well to support and advocate for others. Her focus on civic leadership and direct service work demonstrates a practical application civic participation, empowerment of marginalized groups, and community-based change.

Sylvia is deeply committed to serving the East Kern Community with integrity, compassion and a vision for long-term wellness. As someone who has lived the realities many is the region face, she brings both personal insight and professional experience to the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Candidate for East Kern Low-Income Sector

Ochoa

Age: 66 Years Old

Residence: Weldon, CA

Occupation: Retired / Former Outreach Coordinator at Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance (GBLA)

Experience:

Yolanda has served on the CAPK Board of Directors as the East Kern Low-Income Representative for the last 25 years and has seen a lot of change and growth over the years. It is Yolanda's wish to continue serving in this capacity for the upcoming 5-year term because she enjoys interacting with people from the various communities that encompass the East Kern District, and advocates on their behalf during the meetings. Yolanda not only visits the CAPK sites in East Kern, but she attends other events and gatherings for the purpose of talking to people to gather information about their needs and brings it back to the Board. Yolanda can also be counted on to attend CAPK events all across Kern County and proudly wears her CAPK shirt, which often draws people to her as they inquire about the many CAPK programs and services.

In addition to serving on the CAPK Board, Yolanda serves as the Salvation Army Food Coordinator in Lake Isabella and, is a member of the following organizations: Kern River Valley Bridge, Kern River Valley Collaborative, and Kernville Community. Most recently, Yolanda and her daughter Destinee, were elected co-Mayors of the Kernville Whiskey Flat Days.

Yolanda's dedication to service reflects her deep commitment to the well-being of East Kern's low-income residents. She looks forward to the opportunity to remain engaged with the communities in East Kern, participate in CAPK activities throughout the county, and represent community input during Board discussions over the next term.

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Polling Locations

CAPK Oasis Family Resource Center
814 N. Norma Street Ridgecrest, CA 93555

CAPK East Kern Family Resource Center
15662 K St. Mojave, CA 93501

Kern River Valley Bridge Connection
6069 Lake Isabella Blvd. Lake Isabella, CA 93240

CAPK Rosamond Head Start
2584 Felsite Ave. Rosamond, CA 93560

California City Arts and Community Center
10400 Heather Ave. California City, CA 93505

Salvation Army Tehachapi Community Center
538 E. Tehachapi Blvd. Tehachapi, CA 93561

CAPK Administrative Office
1300 18th Street, Suite 200, Bakersfield, CA 93301

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