



THE  
DE LA VEGA  
FOUNDATION  
Rising Together with Neurodiversity.

# TOGETHER RISING

AN ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON AUTISM AWARENESS &  
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN COLORADO SPRINGS

2025  
programme



# FROM THE OFFICE OF THE CEO & FOUNDER



In the complex and often overwhelming landscape of Autism, The De La Vega Foundation stands not merely as a nonprofit—but as a beacon of clarity, a pillar of calm, and a conduit of compassion. These are our three C's—our operational philosophy—and they are more than words. They are promises.

## **Clarity in the Tumultuous Environment of Autism.**

For families navigating the world with children on the Autism Spectrum, uncertainty is often the only constant. Our Foundation exists to disrupt that narrative. We bring clarity—not just in knowledge, but in pathways forward. Through strategic initiatives, advocacy, and education, we simplify complexity and unlock potential.

**Calmness to the Family Who Needs It Most.** To the mother crying in a parked car after an IEP meeting, to the father silently researching therapies after a 10-hour shift, to the sibling who feels unseen—we see you. We are here to offer more than resources; we offer peace of mind. Through events like Together Rising, A Day in the Springs, and future digital hubs, we create sanctuaries of inclusion, knowledge, and grace.



**Compassion to Help, Advocate, and Educate.** This is the heartbeat of our mission. Compassion doesn't sit on the sidelines. It moves. It acts. It mobilizes communities, influences policy, educates the public, and supports the underserved. Through every grant we write, every partnership we form, and every story we uplift—we are living our compassion out loud.

But let me be clear: our vision is impossible without you—a coalition of the willing and community to welcome The De La Vega Foundation.

Let me extend my gratitude to the heroes behind the scenes – The Board of Directors. The work we do is not fueled by funding alone. It is made possible by your time, your heart, and your relentless belief in a better future. The Gonzales family carries this mission as a personal calling—but your decision to stand alongside us transforms that calling into a movement. You are the reason this Foundation breathes and evolves. You are the strategic architects of a legacy that is reshaping the very landscape of neurodiversity in Colorado—and beyond.

And for that, “thank you” is not enough. You have our deepest gratitude.

Let us not merely support families—we will empower them. Let us not simply raise awareness—we will reshape the narrative. Let us not just hope for a better tomorrow—we will build it.

This is the opportunity before us. This is the charge we carry. Together, we rise—not just as a Foundation, but as a force. Because when we rise together, we change the world.

With steadfast conviction and boundless appreciation,

*Jonas R. Gonzales*

Chief Executive Officer & Founder  
The De La Vega Foundation  
Rising Together With Neurodiversity



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# WE ARE DELAVEGA.

The Gonzales Family  
Founders of DELAVEGA

TOGETHER RISING is more than just an event—it is a movement. With clarity and compassion, The De La Vega Foundation is committed to shape the landscape to provide calmness and comfort to families with children on the Autistic Spectrum by empowering families, creating strategic partnerships with public officials, entrepreneurs, businesses, medical healthcare providers, insurance companies and other non-profit organizations to provide a solid network for advocating for policy changes, and building an inclusive community with rich and bountiful resources allowing the families to create resilience and focusing on their kiddo.

In the heart of Colorado Springs, The De La Vega Foundation stands as a beacon of hope, education, and support for the Autistic community. Founded by the Gonzales Family, this Colorado-based public charity, non-profit organization is dedicated to promoting Autism Awareness and supporting individuals and families in the community on the Autism Spectrum.





## EDUCATE

01

Equip families with knowledge, practical tools, and proven strategies to navigate the unique journey of autism with confidence and clarity.

## CONNECT

02

Serve as a bridge—linking families to vital therapy resources, employment pathways, and essential support services that foster growth and independence.

## ADVOCATE

03

Champion meaningful policy reforms, promote inclusive practices across schools, workplaces, and communities, and amplify the voices of those on the spectrum.

The De La Vega Foundation is our promise—a promise to create a world where every autistic individual and their family is embraced, empowered, and equipped to succeed. Our mission is to cultivate an ecosystem of support, advocacy, and innovation so that every neurodivergent person can thrive—not just survive.

Colorado Springs has grown into a vibrant hub of cultural diversity, welcoming families from all backgrounds, including our military and multicultural communities. The De La Vega Foundation is proud to stand as a pillar of support in this dynamic city, offering vital services where they're needed most. Our mission is simple—community first, always. Together, we rise by lifting others.



**RIISING TOGETHER  
WITH NEURODIVERSITY.**



# COL MATTHEW MAPES



Commander, Evans Army Community Hospital  
Director, Colorado Military Health System

COL Matthew Mapes is a career U.S. Army officer with over 25 years of service. An Illinois native, he was commissioned in 1999 after graduating from Northern Illinois University and now holds two master's degrees in education and national security.

He currently serves as the Commander of Evans Army Community Hospital at Fort Carson, CO, and Director of the Colorado Military Health System. His distinguished career includes leadership roles across the U.S. and abroad, multiple command assignments, and operational deployments. A decorated officer, COL Mapes holds numerous badges and awards, including two Bronze Stars. He and his wife, Jennifer, have two children, Kara and Matthew Jr.



# FRANK SINCLAIR

CEO, Dream Again LLC  
CEO & Co-Host, Be Encouraged with Frank & Lisa

Born and Raised in a rural, racially and socially segregated North Carolina town, Frank was the second of fifteen children. Being "less than" was ingrained in his spirit, from a very young age. His parents finished 6th and 8th grade respectively, so education was not emphasized in the household. In an attempt to distract himself from the dysfunction of my home, he buried himself in his studies, and eventually joined the Air Force at 18 years old. He rose through this tough start that was his childhood to become the 2nd youngest person of his rank. However, his story does not stop at the height of my military career.

After a long journey battling hopelessness, homelessness, and alcoholism, it was by the encouragement of others and the grace of God that got him to the point he is at today. He knows how to help those who feel discouraged and lost, because he was once that person himself. Now, it is his mission to instill the same feelings of love and encouragement in others.

He went on to receive a business education through the University of Maryland and a theology degree from Nazarene Bible College, which has created the educational foundation of Dream Again, LLC. Certified in diversity, leadership development, and interpersonal communication, he has worked with individuals, entrepreneurs, business owners, and organizations to help them become the best version of themselves and carry out their dreams.







## CECILIA MADIEDO

Clinical Director  
Autism Achievers Services

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Cecilia Madiedo, M.A., BCBA, is a dedicated professional with a passion for helping children on the autism spectrum and those with other disabilities. Working at Achievers Autism Services, Cecilia provides invaluable support and learning opportunities through Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy. Her expertise is rooted in early intervention, trauma-informed care, and trauma-assumed care practices. Cecilia is particularly skilled in implementing the principles of skill-based training to create a foundation for lasting growth. Believing that compassion, commitment, and support are the essential keys to fostering success, Cecilia is dedicated to creating an environment where together, individuals can thrive and achieve their full potential.



## JAMI SOUTH

Performance Improvement Specialist  
Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Expert

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Jami South is an experienced education specialist with a diverse background spanning six years in the education sector, five years in performance improvement, and three years focused on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).

Having studied and completed her university education in Germany, Jami holds bachelor's degrees in Modern Languages and Education. After returning to the United States, she further honed her expertise by earning a Master's degree in Training and Performance Improvement.

Jami is deeply passionate about empowering employees to reach their full potential through professional development, coaching, and guidance. She thrives on helping individuals grow, fostering an environment where everyone can succeed, and championing positive change in organizations.





# CHRISTIE CASIMIRO

CEO & Owner, Whole Kids Co.  
Licensed Professional Counselor & Behavior Analyst



Christie Casimiro is the Owner and CEO of Whole Kids Co. She is not only a Licensed Professional Counselor, Behavior Analyst, and TBRI Practitioner, but also a mom to a child with specialized needs. She has always had a passion for teens and young children, but it wasn't until she had a premature child that her specialty became clear.

Upon experiencing numerous developmental delays with her son and learning of his Sensory Processing Disorder and ADHD diagnosis, Christie began a journey of numerous therapy techniques to assist her son. After years of OT, PT, Speech, counseling, and dietary changes; he began significantly thriving. It was all of the driving around town, and endless hours in waiting rooms that inspired the vision of Whole Kids Co. Christie has learned, that as she takes care of herself through her own spirituality, wellness, and education, she has inched her way towards wholeness and in turn has been able to gift that to her son.

Christie enjoys travel, being outdoors with her family, serving in her local church, girl trips, "pinning" house decor on Pinterest, Mexican food, and playing Tetris & Scrabble!



# TULIP ARAUJO

Executive Administrative Assistant &  
Bilingual Advocate, Centro De La Familia



Tulip is a passionate mental health professional with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and is currently pursuing a degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. With a strong foundation in behavioral health, she previously worked closely with Board-Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) to develop specialized programming for children on the autism spectrum, aiming to create meaningful and effective interventions.

Now serving as the Administrative Assistant at Centro de la Familia, Tulip plays a crucial role in overseeing the center's operations, working directly alongside the CEO to ensure the smooth flow of services and support. Her background in mental health, coupled with her hands-on experience in program development, allows her to bring a compassionate and organized approach to her administrative role, ultimately helping the center thrive in its mission to serve the community.







## MICHELLE MRAS, PHD

Global Award-winning Keynote & TEDx Speaker  
19x Best Selling Author & Executive Speaker Coach

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Michelle is a survivor of multiple life challenges to include a Traumatic Brain Injury and Breast Cancer. She guides others to recognize the innate gifts within them, stop apologizing for what they are not and step into who they truly are... Unapologetically. She accomplishes this through one-on-one and group coaching, Training events, Keynote talks, her books, talk shows and through song.

Michelle earned her PhD in Entrepreneurship and has graced the TEDx stage. She was awarded the first Survivor's Award from NOW, the Inspirational Women of Excellence Award from the Women Economic Forum, New Delhi, India; the John Maxwell Team Culture Award for Positive Attitude; Winner of the Ultimate Speaker Competition and

has speaking parts in a few SyFy movies; has been featured on hundreds of Podcasts, radio programs, magazines, quoted in books and has a habit of breaking out into song. She released her music album November 2023. She was nominated and recognized within the top two Most Influential Filipina Women in the World by the Filipina Women Network, 2024.



## LUCY GUIBERSON

Significant Special Needs Educator  
Discovery Canyon Campus Middle School, D20

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Lucy Guiberson is a Special Education teacher in Academy District 20. She earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology before beginning her career in special education as a paraprofessional at Air Academy High School.

Shortly after, she enrolled in an alternative teaching program through Pikes Peak BOCES. Lucy began her teaching career leading a Significant Support Needs program at Discovery Canyon High School and has spent the past two years teaching the same program at Discovery Canyon Middle School.







## RESLY ANDRES

Teacher & Building Team Leader  
Fox Meadow Middle School, District 49



Resly Andres is a dedicated educator and Science Teacher at Harrison School District, currently serving as the Building Team Lead at Fox Meadow Middle School. With a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education majoring in Physical Science and a master's degree in Education majoring in General Science, Resly brings both passion and expertise to the classroom. Committed to academic excellence and student growth, he plays a vital role in fostering a strong learning environment and collaborative school culture.



## ETHAN JONAS GONZALES

Executive Officer & Co-Founder  
of The De La Vega Foundation

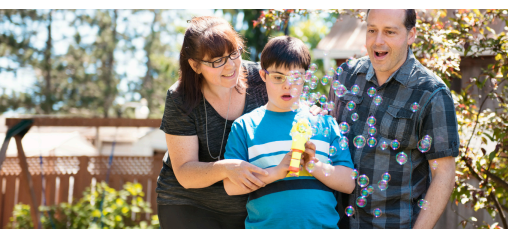


Ethan Jonas Gonzales is the Executive Officer and Co-Founder of The De La Vega Foundation and one of the original creators behind the A Day In The Springs Summer Festival. He is currently an undergraduate student at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS), pursuing a degree in Health Care Sciences with a concentration in Health and Wellness Promotion. Ethan is also the CEO of his social media marketing company, OASIS STUD!OS, and serves as Vice President of the Young Adults Committee for the Filipino American Community of Southern Colorado.

A certified nursing assistant, content creator on YouTube and Instagram, and podcast host of Visualize with Ethan Gonzales, he brings a vibrant mix of creativity, leadership, and compassion to every endeavor. As the eldest of four siblings—with three younger brothers, Andrew, Isaiah, and Oliver, all on the autism spectrum—Ethan's work is deeply rooted in faith, family, and love.







# AGENDA



9:30

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

10:00

NATIONAL ANTHEM  
Sung by Dr. Michelle Mras

COL MATTHEW MAPES  
Honorary Guest Speaker

10:00

FRANK SINCLAIR  
on Creating Resilient  
Families: Practical  
Strategies for Daily Life

CHRISTIE CASIMIRO  
on Communication Across  
Differences: Bridging Gaps in  
Neurodiverse Families

12:00

CECILIA MADIEDO  
on Communication  
Strategies for  
Neurodiverse Families

TULIP ARAUJO  
on Building Neurodiverse  
Communities

JAMI SOUTH  
on Employment &  
Inclusion: Unlocking  
Potential in the Workplace

DR. MICHELLE MRAS  
on Embracing Your Story:  
Overcoming Challenges and  
Living Unapologetic

LUCY GUIBERSON  
on Diversity of Intelligence &  
Inclusion in Schools

12:00 — 1:00

PANEL DISCUSSION  
+ AUDIENCE Q&A

1:00

COMMUNITY OPEN RESOURCE FAIR

1:00

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

3:00

FOOD + SHOPPING

ONE-ON-ONE CONSULTATIONS

CONCLUDING REMARKS



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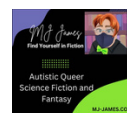
# FEATURED VENDORS



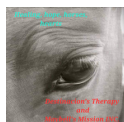
## FOOD LINEUP:



## NON-FOOD LINEUP:

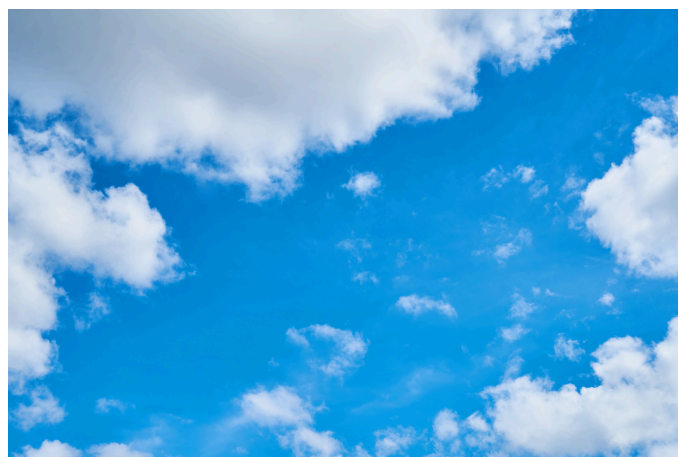


## NON-PROFIT LINEUP:



[Left to Right, Top to Bottom]

Hopia Love, Sarap! A Taste of Home, Alti Ravissant, Ar Vivace Eclat, CECE Creations, Forester Family Medical Supply, Inc, Hands of Healing with Savannah, Homestead Remedies, Janneth's Jewelry Collection, Kitty's Kreations, La Filipiniana Collections, MJ James Books, LLC, National Medical Supply, Open Heart Behavior Services, Palai Lifestyle, Smile With Care Dental of Colorado, Taekwondo World & Fitness, Unify Health Medical Supply, Whole Kids Co., Woohoo Pinas, Achievers Autism Services, Centro de la Familia, Destinacion's Therapy & Maybell's Mission, Inc, Diversus Health, Goodwill Colorado, One Fil-Am Market (OFAM)



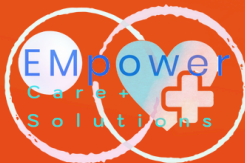
Thank you to all our incredible vendors for being part of TOGETHER RISING 2025. Together, we're building a stronger, more inclusive community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.





# EVENT PARTNERS

Thank you to all our incredible partners for being part of TOGETHER RISING 2025.  
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Veteran Medical  
Supply Group

[Left to Right, Top to Bottom]

Andrew's Originals, Boujee Dreams Powered by Pink Realty, OASIS STUDIOS, Kusinerang Caviteña, Sarap! A Taste of Home, Moments & Memories Photography and Film LLC, AV Entertainment, TheEthanGonzales, Filipino American Community of Southern Colorado, Colorado Phoenix Project, NaFFAA Region V, NaFFAA Colorado, Prime Impact Consulting, Tindahang Filipino Sa Colorado, EMpower Care+ Solutions, Brain Builders Tutoring, Alti Ravissant, Veteran Medical Supply Group



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