

# THE CONNECTIONS STAR

Connections at Project Harmony Newsletter



## Connect to Wellness: New Resource for Connections Kids

BY LAURA PRIMUS & JAKE REINER

Connect to Wellness has been a collaborative effort by our program's Mental Health Coordinators, students from UNO's School of Psychology, and Project Harmony's Training Department to provide additional resources to families while waiting to be matched with a therapist. Families can access the free library of online courses covering topics like *What is Therapy?*, Coping Skills, Handling Conflict, Understanding Confidentiality, and Addressing Anxiety. Each module includes characters that help illustrate and teach the lessons. See character examples here:



The online, asynchronous trainings also provide families with additional community resources that promote children's mental health and social-emotional learning. Trainings are optional, self-paced, and offered to children and their families free of charge. This resource is not intended to replace therapy, but to be used as a tool to jump-start knowledge and skills that will set kids up for success in therapy.

## Therapist Spotlights

BY HALLE STICHLER

Connections is honored to be able to contract with talented and well-qualified therapists. This newsletter highlights the work of two Connections providers: Guillermo Luna and Angela Hayden.

### GUILLERMO LUNA

Guillermo Luna, with AM Counseling, has partnered with Connections since summer 2023. As a bilingual provider, he is able to communicate and connect with Spanish-speaking children & caregivers. He is experienced in working with children & adolescents to treat a variety of mental health disorders - these include anxiety, behavioral issues, ADHD, grief, trauma, and more. Guillermo is currently trained in EAT, CBT, DBT, and TF-CBT. When asked about what he enjoys most about working with the Connections program, Guillermo said that he appreciates how welcoming and caring staff is.



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### ANGELA HAYDEN



Angela Hayden has been a Connections provider since September 2022. She specializes in the treatment of anxiety, depression, trauma, grief, self-esteem, parenting concerns, relationship issues, and social skills development. Her clients include children, teens, adults, couples, and families. Angela has been trained in numerous different therapies, including – but not limited to – EAT, CBT, DBT, and Motivational Interviewing. She is a Certified Grief Counselor/Educator and has also received a certification in TF-CBT. Angela appreciates the support the Connections program provides to both her clients and herself. Per Angela, the staff is responsive to issues and always willing to advocate for clients.

## Connections Staff in New Roles

BY HALLE STICHLER

Here are some familiar faces that are now in a new position at Connections.

### KODJOVI DOGBEVI - DIRECTOR OF CONNECTIONS

Kodjovi Dogbevi has been with the Connections program since 2017, having first started as an MHC before being promoted to a Program Manager in 2018. Throughout his time at Connections, Kodjovi has remained committed to clients and is motivated by the desire to make a difference in the lives of children and families. In transitioning to the role of Director, Kodjovi hopes to maintain and strengthen the Connections program through continual collaboration with children, families, schools, and providers. Kodjovi is glad to be a part of a program that prioritizes prevention and provides services that are vital to one's mental well-being.



### SCOTT BUTLER - SENIOR DIRECTOR OF PREVENTION & EARLY INTERVENTION



Dr. Scott Butler spent 33 years working in the field of K-12 education as a classroom teacher, school counselor, and administrator. In addition to his educational licensure, he is a Licensed Mental Health Practitioner. Scott previously worked as Director of Training at Project Harmony. Along with his team, he delivered trainings for those in juvenile welfare programming, as well as for the general public to increase community awareness of issues impacting youth and families.

He is currently the Senior Director of Prevention and Early Intervention. Scott took on this new role in November 2023; he now oversees the functioning of Project Harmony's prevention programs: Connections and Training.

## NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Happy 2024! 2023 was a successful year for Connections and we couldn't have made it without your continued partnership. It was also a year with a change in leadership. I accepted the role as the program director for Connections in October, and am excited for all the opportunities to come this year. With any change like this comes uncertainty at times, but rest assured that I pledge to uphold the mission of the program. Connections will continue to strengthen new and existing collaborative relationships by providing quality service to all children and families. Being a part of Connections for the past 7 years has given me the opportunity to learn so much about our community, school partners, mental health therapists, and our staff. I am confident that we will have an amazing year and many more to come.

Thank you for all that you do and for being such an important part of the Connections program!

-Kodjovi Dogbevi

## JESSICA TRINIDAD - PROGRAM MANAGER

Jessica Trinidad was recently promoted to the role of Connections Program Manager. Previously, Jess was an Individual MHC. At the start of the 2022 school year, she transitioned to the role of School Liaison. Jess decided to take on the role of Program Manager to strengthen her leadership skills and further engage and collaborate with Connections' partners. In taking on the role of Program Manager, Jess was also looking to grow both professionally and personally. In her new role, she hopes to promote mental health wellness to Omaha's Latino community.



## KATIE GILROY - PROVIDER MATCH LIAISON



Katie has been with the Connections team for close to two years. She transitioned from her role as an Individual MHC into the Provider Match Liaison (PML) role in May of 2023. Katie was motivated to take on the new role due to the huge impact our PMLs have on the services we provide to the community & facilitate access to quality mental health services. When Katie onboarded as a PML, she aimed to streamline the process of gathering, sorting, and analyzing the match process in hopes of getting Connections clients matched as fast as possible. Katie is passionate about helping others in our community access mental health services, especially for children and marginalized groups of the community. If she's not at her desk, you can find Katie at our office's communal puzzle!

## COFFEE WITH CONNECTIONS

Upcoming dates & topics planned for the next 2 months

### ► ONLINE SAFETY (VIRTUAL)

February 9th  
9-10:30am

### ► SPECIAL EDUCATION & MENTAL HEALTH (VIRTUAL)

with Melissa Stolley  
*Director of Student Services for Ralston Public Schools*

March 8th  
9-10:30am

## Connections New Employee Spotlights

BY HALLE STICHLER

Here are some new faces at Connections.

### CHANDLER MISSELT - INDIVIDUAL MHC

Chandler Misselt joined the Connections team at the start of summer 2023. Prior to this, Chandler worked for Iowa Family Works and the Stephen Center in their residential substance abuse treatment programs. Since joining Connections, Chandler has come to appreciate the program's commitment to providing services to families. It has been rewarding for her to hear parents talk about their own therapeutic progress alongside their children. In her free time, Chandler loves to watch reality TV. She also fills her free time with dancing as she teaches dance, frequently takes classes, and participates in a local dance company.





### **CASSIE HUYE - GROUP MHC**

Cassie Huye has been with Connections since May 2023. She previously worked at Heartland Family Service in the Rapid Rehousing Department, as well as at DHHS & St. Francis Ministries doing ongoing CPS work. Prior to moving to Omaha, she was doing gender-based violence work at The Purple Door in South Texas. Cassie enjoys being an MHC, and doing prevention-focused work that promotes the community's health. Past experience showed her how important crisis intervention is, and that it cannot be a long-term solution to the traumas in our community. In her free time, she enjoys being a CASA volunteer, member of the Junior League of Omaha, completing home renovation projects, and experiencing Omaha's culinary world.

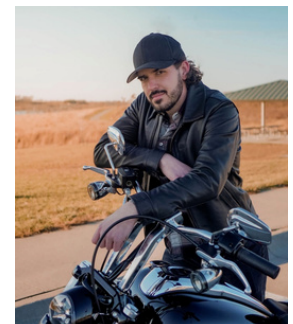


### **GISSELLE REYNA - BILINGUAL INDIVIDUAL MHC**

Giselle Reyna is an Individual MHC who started with Connections in August 2023. Previously, she worked for the WCA, DHHS, and UNO's Housing and Residence Life Department. Since starting at Connections, Giselle has enjoyed being able to work with families who are actively seeking mental health services for their children. She appreciates the genuine relationships she's been able to foster with these families. In her free time, Giselle enjoys working out and binge-watching TV shows.

### **BRANDON ANDERSEN - INDIVIDUAL MHC**

Brandon Andersen has been with Connections since August 2023. Previously, he was a high school teacher, having taught both AP Psychology and Sociology. Transitioning to the role of an MHC has been rewarding for Brandon, who enjoys being able to help families access much-needed mental health services for their children. He also feels that his work as an MHC allows him the opportunity to progress toward his ultimate goal of becoming a mental health counselor. In his free time, Brandon enjoys riding his motorcycle and working out. He also enjoys reading and staying up-to-date about various topics related to psychology.

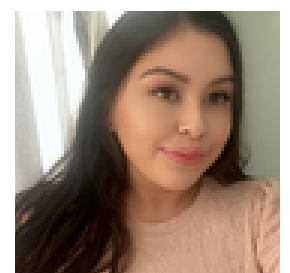


### **JAKE REINER - INDIVIDUAL MHC**

Jake Reiner has been with Connections since September 2023. He came to Connections after leaving his work as a nurse recruiter. Prior to that, he worked at Boys Town as a Behavioral Health Technician & was promoted to Shift Manager while there. During his time as an MHC, Jake has enjoyed being able to connect families to therapeutic services they may not otherwise be able to easily afford or access. He appreciates getting to work with families and problem-solve any barriers. In his free time, Jake enjoys walking his dog, listening to music, and spending time with his girlfriend.

### **ANGELICA SUSANO - BILINGUAL INDIVIDUAL MHC**

Angelica Susano joined Connections as a Bilingual Individual MHC in December 2023. Prior to this, she worked with missing youth at the Child Savings Institute. As an MHC, Angelica enjoys reaching out to families and helping individuals get connected to mental health services. She enjoys spending her free time playing with her daughter Valentina.



JESSICA LEE - INDIVIDUAL MHC



Jessica Lee has been a part of the Connections team since summer 2023. Prior to starting at Connections, she worked for Boys Town as a Crisis Counselor. She primarily worked with teenagers through *Your Life Your Voice*. She also helped collect anonymous tips from Safe2Help NE, which were used to ensure the safety of children and schools. Through her role as an MHC, Jessica has enjoyed being able to connect with families and hear about how much therapy has helped their children improve. In her free time, Jessica likes to work out and stay active; she especially enjoys yoga.

Favorite Snow Day Activities

BY JESSICA PLOEN

Here are Connections staff's favorite ways to spend a snow day.



CIERRA SVAGERA

likes to go outside and play in the snow with her 5-year-old daughter. If it's too cold, they stay in, watch movies, and drink hot chocolate.

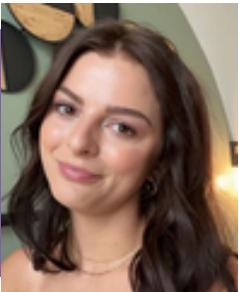
JACKIE LORENSON

likes snuggling up on the couch with a soft blanket and wearing comfy sweats. She also likes watching movies while eating snacks or hanging out with her family and friends.



MORGAN BERG

likes to watch movies cozied up on the couch and decorate for Christmas.



ERIKA RODRIGUEZ

enjoys sledding down her backyard slope with her son and watching Elf with some hot chocolate.



KATIE GILROY

likes to bake festive sweets with her mom and sister while listening to Christmas classics. Her family does this every year for the first snowfall.



JAKE REINER

likes to get cozy with some hot chocolate and watch Christmas movies.



JESSICA PLOEN

likes making snow angels and snow people with her nephew.



JESSICA LEE

likes sitting by the fireplace watching Christmas movies... with hot chocolate, of course!







**HALLE  
STICHLER**

enjoys reading  
and relaxing with  
her pup.

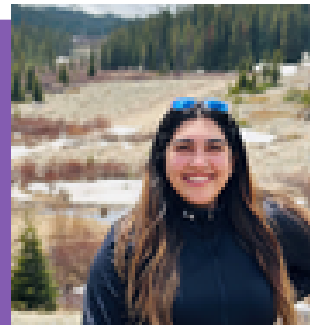


**SHAWN SULLIVAN**

likes staying warm  
and watching movies.

**ANGELICA  
MONAY**

likes to take  
her dog  
outside and  
play with him  
in the snow.



**BRANDON  
ANDERSEN**

likes to  
make hot  
chocolate  
and nap the  
day away.



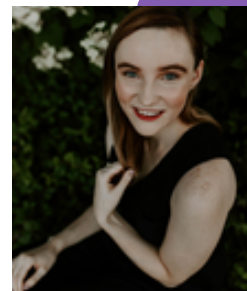
**GISELLE REYNA**

likes to  
make hot  
cocoa and  
watch  
holiday  
movies with her  
son.



**CHANDLER  
MISSELT**

likes to sleep  
in, then drink  
hot  
chocolate.



**PATRICE  
GARRETT**

likes eating  
fatty foods and  
watching  
movies at the  
same time.



**CASSIE HUYE**

likes watching  
movies with her cats  
by the fireplace.



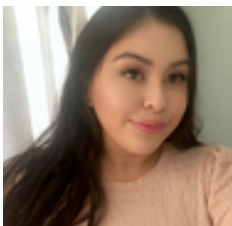
**KATHERINE  
SITLER-  
ELBEL**

likes to  
drink hot  
cocoa and  
watch  
movies.



**ANGELICA SUSANO**

likes to watch holiday  
movies with her family.



**Connections**  
at Project Harmony



**Additional Project Harmony Trainings that may  
interest you can be found here:**

<https://projectharmony.com/training/calendar/>