

‘On the Verge’ of Greater Mental Health Access

What does the world need from me?

That’s a question Javier Rivera-Rosales asks himself constantly—and it’s a key reason why the LGBTQI nonprofit director is participating in Sonoma County’s first On the Verge cohort.

On the Verge is an intensive year-long leadership program that focuses on emerging leaders’ personal, interpersonal, and professional skills. Participants receive group and individual coaching, attend monthly meetings that put developing skills into practice, and culminate the program with a community-based project.

On the Verge is an offspring of On the Move, an organization that partners with communities and mobilizes emerging leaders to act in pursuit of social equity.

“Our founders were looking out, looking forward, and asking, ‘What is going to happen when all the Baby Boomers leave their leadership positions?’” explains etsuko kubo, On the Verge program director. “Will we have people who are trained and who have personal and professional networks built that will help to serve the social good? “

Last fall, with 18 cohorts already established in California, On the Move brought On the Verge to Sonoma County. The local cohort includes 15 emerging leaders, primarily from the mental health field, who are experienced in public and nonprofit sectors. The dynamic group sparked the idea of combating stigma, access, culture, and language issues by creating a Latino community center that’s focused on increasing awareness about, and access to, mental health services.

“Our mental health focus relates to shifting paradigms, because in the Latino culture, there are layers upon layers of stigma,” Javier says. “Mental health practices are not one size fits all; we need to be able to change with the times and the needs of the community – breaking down walls and stigmas.”

Javier and his On the Verge teammates are brimming with energy and enthusiasm for their vision of opening a vibrant and welcoming community center that combines Western and traditional Latino healing practices. A second cohort, which begins this fall, will carry out the inaugural vision, with support from the founding participants.

In Sonoma County, On the Verge is supported by Community Foundation Sonoma County in collaboration with the John Jordan Foundation, Kaiser Permanente, St. Joseph Health, and Sutter Health.