

## Peer Respite Town Hall Speakers

**Keris Jän Myrick** is a Director Co-Director of The Mental Health Strategic Impact Initiative (S2i) which aims to advance the transformation of mental health by catalyzing cross-sectional reforms, strengthening collaborations, and bridging gaps, she serves on the Board of the National Association of Peer Specialists (N.A.P.S.) is a Certified Personal Medicine Coach and Therapeutic Game Master. Ms. Myrick previously held positions as the Chief, Peer and Allied Health Professions for the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, the Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs for the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) of the United States Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), President and CEO of Project Return Peer Support Network, a Los Angeles-based, peer-run nonprofit and the Board President of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Ms. Myrick is a leading mental health advocate and executive, known for her innovative and inclusive approach to mental health reform and the public disclosure of her personal story. Ms. Myrick has over 15 years of experience in mental health services innovations, transformation, and peer workforce development. In June 2021, Ms. Myrick was the recipient of Mental Health America's highest honor the Clifford W. Beers Award.

Ms. Myrick's personal story was featured in the New York Times series: Lives Restored, which told the personal narratives of several professionals living with mental health issues. Ms. Myrick is an in-demand national trainer and keynote speaker, and authored several peer reviewed journal articles and book chapters. She is known for her collaborative style and innovative "whole person" approach to mental health care and is a podcast host of "Unapologetically Black Unicorns" which centers on lived experience, race equity and mental health change agents.

Ms. Myrick has a Master of Science degree in organizational psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology of Alliant International University. Her Master of Business Administration degree is from Case Western University's Weatherhead School of Management.

**Yana Jacobs** began her career in the mental health field as an art therapy student intern and then staff member working at Soteria House in the mid 1970's. Soteria was an NIMH funded research grant for young people having a "first break". Soteria was a pilot study to support people without the use of psychotropic medications. Yana's professional belief system was informed by her firsthand experiences working at Soteria. She continued to pursue a career in the mental health public sector first as a "crisis worker" and eventually as the Chief of Adult Services for the County of Santa Cruz Mental Health Department. She has spent her career as a fierce advocate and ally in the Peer Movement. Yana has a passion for "being with" people and sitting with whatever comes up. Yana is a proponent of moving through the process of altered/chaotic states by being present and listening. She has always tried to make a difference by setting an example of treating all people with dignity and respect and not using labels to define who we are. Yana wrote a SAMHSA transformation grant for Santa Cruz County which funded the first Peer Respite house in California, Second Story, opened in 2010. After over 30 years working

in the “mainstream” system of care, she retired from public service and went to work for the Foundation for Excellence in Mental Health Care, now “Open Excellence, a not-for-profit group with a mission to transform the mainstream to be more person centered. She is now officially retired in the mountains of Santa Cruz, CA where she plays her cello and enjoys long walks in the woods. She promised the community that she would always support anyone interested in starting a Soteria House.