



Maria Carmela Revola Guevara

September 18, 1974 - May 7, 2020

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Maria Guevara's purpose in life was love, and her joy came from service and friendship. She had faith in the power of community, the power of love, and the power of God to work daily miracles. With her broad smile and irrepressible enthusiasm, she reminded us that all things are possible when we work together. Her grass-roots activism and tireless advocacy for the lovingly termed "friends in need" won her the respect and affection of her community. When asked how she did it all, she said, "Love explodes. That's how it works."

Maria Guevara was born Apple Lee V Alfonso in Manila, Philippines and adopted and raised from the age of two by Lourdes and Edgardo Guevara, arriving in the United States at age nine. Maria attended St. Vincent's Ferrer Elementary, and St. Patrick-St. Vincent High School. She then graduated from Vallejo High and attended St. Mary's College. Maria is survived by her adoptive mother Lourdes, her biological mother and stepfather Virginia and Albert Escarilla, stepmother Raquel Alfonso, sister April, brother Roger, three half-brothers, three half-sisters, five nieces, three nephews, and innumerable friends.

Maria loved connecting and serving people. Hers was a life of joyful service,

faith and community. In a city with a shortage of programs, Maria was the angel to whom people turned for resources and hope. In 2010, she founded Vallejo Together and invited all to build their community through positive action. With the rallying cry of “Together, We Can!” she created partnerships and friendships with city leaders and community members, churches, youth, cultural, educational, and health organizations.

She taught CCD classes at St. Basil and attended services at many churches, temples and synagogues in town. She celebrated God in all forms and loved nature and animals, especially her dogs, Kateri and Sophia.

Among her gifts to Vallejo, she relaunched Unity Day as an annual celebration of Vallejo’s diversity. She organized food collection as well as cooking and distribution squads to feed friends in need at their encampments. She identified a slew of helpful programs to meet additional needs, and enlisted supporters to help implement them.

She established “Aaliyah’s Closets” in partnership with the school district to provide essential clothes, food, and hygiene products to students and families in need, in honor of a 9-year old girl who died while living in a car. She partnered with investors to provide sober living homes for men, women, and children, named for those who lost their lives while homeless: Steve and Kevin’s Home, Johanna’s Home, and Aaliyah’s Home.

She established a Support Services Center, envisioned as a navigation center, in partnership with the Mira Community Cultural Center and Vallejo’s First Baptist Church, which provided meals, computer and printer access, a mailing address, as well as shower and laundry facilities. She organized job-preparedness workshops that provided free business attire, haircuts and makeup, immigration assistance, resume building, and interview skills practice.

She was instrumental in creating a Mobile Health Unit in partnership with Touro University and Kaiser. She organized various holiday events for friends in need, like Thanksgiving Lunch for Seniors and a Christmas Ferry cruise for kids. Partnering with churches and food banks, she established the monthly 2nd Saturday Care To Share Mobile event which serves up hot cooked breakfast, free haircuts and access to medical services, and supported other programs too numerous to mention.

In 2016 she received the Solano County Woman of the Year award from Congressman Mike Thompson. Other civic awards included the Soroptimist International of Vallejo Ruby award in 2016, the Omega Psi Phi Vallejo Citizen of the Year Award in 2016, and an ABC7 Stars feature in December of 2017 which lauded her work. Under her leadership, Vallejo Together received recognition awards for their Care to Share Mobile Unit, Unity Day, Youth Expo & Parent Summit. She appreciated the recognition but always deferred credit to the collaborative efforts of Vallejo's community of volunteers and helpers.

We miss her light in our lives, but her living legacy of love remains. Vallejo Together continues the daily work of serving the less fortunate, and Vallejo's recently-approved 125 bed "Navigation Center" can be largely credited to her tireless quest to provide shelter and on-site services to those in need.

On Tuesday, July 21st she will be honored posthumously with a Proclamation from the City of Vallejo during the Council Meeting, accessible from the City website.

Plans for a community celebration of life are on hold until pandemic restrictions have eased.

In the meantime, a “Thread of Love” virtual memorial, messages of love strung together on colorful paper, is in the works and will be installed at a place and time to be determined. Share your message via this simple public link, <https://www.facebook.com/loveexplodes/>.

Contributions for Celebration of Life and burial expenses:

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/Maria-Guevara-Celebration-of-Life>

Contributions to support Maria’s work at Vallejo Together:

[PayPal.me/vallejotogether](https://www.paypal.com/paytogether/vallejotogether)

Tribute Wall



“ *Maria had a way of shining lights into the corners which made us all lose the fear that prevented forward movement. Her leadership inspired work that will carry on with peace, love, and understanding.* ”

Paula P Marckesano-Jones - July 20, 2020 at 11:28 AM