

2016 NWAIRS Conference Scholarship Recipients



Nicole Graff -

Nicole Graff graduated from Drexel University in Philadelphia, PA in 2012 with a Bachelor's of Science in Psychology. During her undergraduate tenure, she worked as a Research Assistant for the Applied Neurotechnologies Lab to validate a driving simulator for rehabilitative use for individuals diagnosed with a brain injury. Following graduation, Nicole worked as a Neurorehabilitation Specialist for a community re-entry program in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, serving survivors of Brain Injury in their own communities. After relocating to Seattle in early 2015, Nicole now works as the Resource Center Operations Manager for the Brain Injury Alliance of Washington, where she oversees the teams that supports individuals seeking resources throughout Washington State both over the phone and in-person. This was Nicole's first, but hopefully not last, NWAIRS Conference!

Cassandra Hutchinson - Cassandra has worked as a Program and Technical Specialist for the ADRC of Oregon for nearly two years. She is very knowledgeable of I&R and Resource Management practices and has a passion for the work that is immediately evident. Cassandra works for a busy ADRC covering five urban/rural counties. She maintains all of the resource listings and is also responsible for taking Information and Referral calls. She is often called on to perform other duties like training and presenting to community partners. Cassandra actively participates in discussions, brainstorming and collaborating enthusiastically with her colleagues. This was also Cassandra's first time attending the NWAIRS Conference!



Randy Ip - Randy has worked as a case manager for Pierce County Aging and Disability Resources for 18 years. For the last 13 years he has been staffing their I&R/A phone line providing not only information and referral but also triage and phone case management. Prior to that he worked as a case manager in the Family Caregiver Support Program and the COPES long term care program. He also has experience as a medical social worker for home health and hospice, disability adjudicator for Social Security and financial worker for Washington's Department of Social and Health Services.

Randy has an MSW from Eastern Washington State University and a B.A. from The Evergreen State College. He is a licensed clinical social worker in the State of Washington. Currently Randy lives with his husband of 29 years in Tacoma.

Pearl Kaomelaiui-Butacan – Another first time Conference attendee, Pearl very recently began her career in the Information and Referral field. She is currently employed as an Information & Assistance Specialist/Activities Coordinator in Portland with the Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization. Pearl came to the Conference looking to gain knowledge and technical skills to help her provide excellent services and resources to her community of senior citizens and those with disabilities. Her goal over the next 2 years is to become a Case Manager to help people and make them feel

comfortable. Pearl was born and raised on the island of Kauai, Hawaii and enjoys hula, hiking, cooking and spending time with her family.



Mary Leininger - From 2008 to 2014, Mary Leininger was the Resource Manager and Web Administrator for 2-1-1 Northeast Michigan, an agency serving 20 counties. Before joining 2-1-1, she worked nine years as Information and Assistance Coordinator, Web Administrator, and Medicare Medicaid Assistance Program Coordinator with the Region VII Area Agency on Aging in Bay City. Certifications include CRS and CIRS-A/D. She participated in a statewide grant to combine and integrate eight separate Michigan resource hubs into one statewide unit. Mary also served on the Michigan-AIRS board for ten years and was on the Program Committee, the Nominating Committee, and was Secretary and Vice President. As the MI-AIRS Affiliate representative, she attended the 2014 AIRS Conference in Atlanta. In addition, Mary chaired the Michigan Resource Managers Workgroup and was a member of the Michigan 2-1-1 Operating Council. A major move to Portland finds her volunteering and working for 211info. Mary's BA degree in Political Science and Spanish is from Kent State University.

Hazel Kaliloa – This was Hazel's first opportunity to attend a NWAIRS after working for more than 6 years in the I&R field. She has been working for IRCO, Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization, Senior Services for over four years as an Information and Assistance Specialist/Transportation & Activities Coordinator. She enjoys interacting with people of all ages and diverse backgrounds, hearing their stories, and helping them access programs and services which will benefit them. In her spare time she loves to travel, spend quality time with my family, and eat good food.

Lesley Rigg – Lesley was born in Scotland, and moved to Bellingham, WA in 1993 with her US-born husband. She worked in geriatric mental health for several years, then joined the Senior Information & Assistance (now ADR) Team at Northwest Regional Council. She loves the variety and new challenges presented every week, working with seniors and people living with disabilities. In her spare time Lesley sings, hikes and gets her hands dirty working in the community garden.



Lauren Link - Lauren Link has been working in social services for over 5 years. Lauren grew up in Iowa and attended Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology, Spanish, and international relations. While in college, Lauren completed an internship with the Iowa Department of Corrections 5th Judicial District where she facilitated a writer's workshop for substance abuse/ Operating while Intoxicated (OWI) offenders. Through this work, Lauren realized she had an innate desire to help others and it was important to find work that was meaningful to her and that gave back to the

community. After graduating, Lauren worked at a homeless youth shelter as a youth advocate and at the Homestead as an autism associate. In 2011, Lauren moved down to Kansas and completed the Kansas law enforcement academy, becoming a commissioned law enforcement officer. As an officer, Lauren saw firsthand the challenges that faced citizens in her community. In fall 2015, Lauren moved to Seattle and applied to AmeriCorps VISTA, a federal service program. Lauren accepted a position in February 2016 as an AmeriCorps VISTA member at Hopelink, a non-profit in east King County, Washington. Lauren is currently the mobility projects coordinator at Hopelink working on Veterans transportation issues, concentrating her efforts for those who are low to no income and/or homeless. Lauren believes that transportation should be affordable, convenient, efficient, and safe for all members of the community

Norma Mendoza – Norma was raised and still resides in the city of Yakima, WA. After a long break from school, in 2012 she decided to enter college and opted for Business Technology at the Yakima Valley Community College. She is the first of her family to go to college and made that choice because, as a single mother, she wanted to set a great example for her daughter and be able to give her a better future. Norma is currently working fulltime as the Database Resource/I&R Specialist for the Greater Columbia 2-1-1 and is preparing to take the CIRS certification test. She loves helping the community by providing information, referral, and advocacy on some cases. Although not every caller is sweet and friendly, she has embraced the I&R Specialist position and looks forward to new adventures every day. She also looks forward to growing and expanding her skills and abilities as a Data Manager and as an I&R Specialist, and is excited for what awaits for her in this special organization. Aside from the above, she enjoys singing, cosmetology, reading, volunteering at her church, and spending time with her family and friends.



Chelsey Loeffers - Chelsey Loeffers lives in Ellensburg, Washington, and has worked in social services for over seven years. She currently splits her time as the Outreach Coordinator for Greater Columbia Region 2-1-1 Information and Referral Services, helping connect community members to local services and resources, and as the lead staff member for WorkSource Kittitas County, helping people find employment and achieve self-sufficiency. She also serves as the Secretary for the Ellensburg Downtown Rotary club, and is active in several other non-profit boards and coalitions.