

# NEWSLETTER



**Destigmatize \* Educate \***  
**Empower**  
Spring 2025  
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## MEET AND GREET

### Say Hello to new faces...

#### Meet Bonnilee Kaufman, Learning Specialist:

I am honored to be part of the DSPS GCC Campus, as a Special Educator and Learning Disabilities Specialist. I am a firm believer in learning as a lifelong process; interacting with students and colleagues provides the perfect avenue for continued learning. As an ex-New Yorker, I advocate for public transportation and often take the bus. It gives me the opportunity to read or contemplate a poem I am working on.



#### Meet Alex Sahakian, interim Program and Service Specialist

After graduating high school, I started my education at a community college. I then transferred to CSULA and received my Bachelor's in Computer Science. I realized the need to expand my knowledge in Computer Science and went back to CSULA and obtained my Master's. During my Master's, I decided to try and tackle a new project that would challenge me to a new field involving robotics. I built and programmed an unmanned drone that would be able to fly with a certain pattern in flight for testing. This was both challenging and fun to troubleshoot and solve occurring problems as they happen during testing. I am a computer geek. I love everything and anything related to computers. I build computers, I write programs for fun, play video games, and try to fix things around the house.



#### Meet Talin Shahoomian, interim Instructional Support Technician and a mom, lifelong learner, and basketball enthusiast

I hold a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science from CSUN and a Master's degree in Instructional Technology in Education from Grand Canyon University, Arizona. I have more than 15 years of experience in education as a computer science teacher, Instructional Technologist, and STEAM teacher. As a former stay-at-home mom, I truly cherished the moments I spent nurturing my daughter while instilling in her the values of perseverance and teamwork that I learned on the basketball court. Whether I am shooting hoops or supporting my daughter in her endeavors, I strive to lead by example and inspire those around me. I started my college endeavors at GCC and now I am extremely happy to be able to serve this wonderful institution and community.

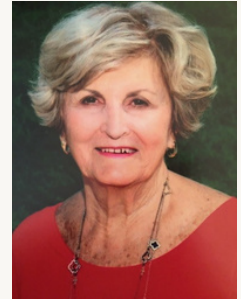


# FAREWELLS

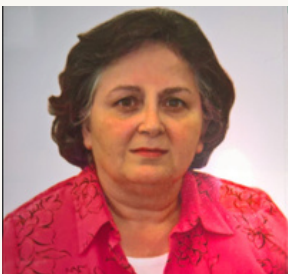
...and *Goodbye* to some of our December 2024 retirees.



**Diana Markari** was a Senior Instructional Computer Lab Technician and the friendly face you first encountered in ARC! She started at GCC in 1999 at the Assessment Center, and worked at DSPS from 2006-2024! She dedicated 25 years to GCC and is now spending time with close family members and friends, learning new things, and exercising.



**Stela Fetjek** was an Adjunct Learning Disability Specialist. For 31 years, Stela served our student population. She offered a lip reading class via the Campbell Center in Glendale and was very active in raising funds for DSPS. Congratulations on your retirement!



**Flora Armen** was one of our first contact folks in DSPS. Front and center in our office, she was our Programs and Services Specialist and formerly a Student Services Technician. Flora had been at GCC for 27 years! She is enjoying retirement by spending time with her family.

DSPS THANKS YOU FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK AND  
WISHES YOU ALL THE BEST!

# RESOURCES

Do you know there's a lengthy **list of disability related resources** on the DSPS webpage? We have resources on advocacy, education, employment and internships, scholarships, state and federal programs, transportation, and more!

Go to [www.glendale.edu/dsps](http://www.glendale.edu/dsps) and click on

**[RESOURCES from DSPS](#)**

# TIMELY CARE

Enrolled GCC students enjoy FREE, 24/7 access to virtual care through **TimelyCare** —a health and well-being platform tailored for college students. No insurance is required to use TimelyCare. Students can access a range of services, including mental health and medical care and basic needs support. For more info, go to <https://www.glendale.edu/students/student-services/timelycare>

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## Meet Caroline Lee!



I'm pursuing AS Addiction Studies Counseling and plan to transfer to either CSULA for a Masters of Science in Counseling: Option in Rehabilitation Counseling or UCLA for a Masters of Public Health for Health Professionals or Master of Social Welfare.

I love helping others, the community, and volunteering. I am a film buff and love great tv shows. I love my ESA (Emotional Support Animal), Sunny. I love art, as well.

What I enjoyed most about GCC are the resources, location, and very helpful GCC staff that assisted me a lot. I will always be grateful for them. The piece of advice I would give to incoming or current students is to use all the resources available to you. Research your school more to maximize your time there and utilize all the resources you can. And always check your school email.

What I am looking forward to the most after GCC is grad school and furthering my career path. I want to gain a lot of experience and knowledge, so that I can be a well-rounded community worker to help clients/patients/members the best I possibly can.

I have gained work and educational experience in the SUD (Substance Use Disorder) field to further my understanding in my chosen career journey. I have acquired on-the-job experience in an SUD outpatient treatment center, SUD residential, unhoused individuals in the field, and I have credentials as a RADT (Registered Alcohol and Drug Technician).

I recommend others to learn and gain as much varied experiences as they can. Rack up all the additional trainings, certifications, schooling, etc. because it will exponentially help in your career and life.

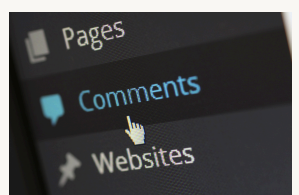
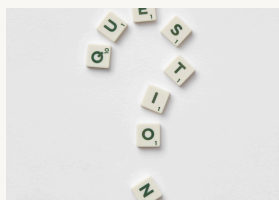


**DSPS is thrilled to announce that Caroline** was awarded the Alyssa McCroskey Memorial Scholarship from California Association for Post Secondary Education and Disability (CA PED).

The scholarship is for continuing or transferring students who demonstrate a love of reading and/or education. Caroline competed against students throughout California for this prestigious award. **Congratulations to Caroline!**

## NEWSLETTER IDEAS, QUESTIONS, COMMENTS?

Email Rita at [rzobayan@glendale.edu](mailto:rzobayan@glendale.edu)



# SURVIVOR HIGHLIGHTS PLAYERS WITH DISABILITIES

**Season 48 of Survivor** featured important disability awareness episodes.

Episode 5 *Master Class in Deception* showed competitor Eva Erickson “being overstimulated and having what she called an ‘autism episode’ during an immunity challenge.” [Eva had shared her Autism diagnosis with fellow castaway, fire captain Joe Hunter, earlier in the season,](#) explaining that she didn’t want the rest of the tribe to know in case they “took advantage” of her. However, she felt safe with Joe and stated that “there are times when I get super overstimulated. I call them episodes. I’ll be like stuck in a loop in my head, but the thing that I need is to get grounded.” She then went on to explain what Joe could look for and that “getting squeezed from is a big thing that helps.” Eva showed Joe how to proceed with that process.



Later in the season, Eva had an episode during an immunity challenge. “I kept failing over and over again,” Eva said after a challenge where she had to land the final ball into a hole to save her tribe from going to council. “My brain just got put in this big cycle, and I’m stuck in a loop of ‘I can’t do it. Why can’t I do it? What’s going on?’ The second that I finished all of this stress and pressure that was overstimulating me just took hold of me, and I became ungrounded, and everybody around me didn’t know what was happening.”

Joe walked over to Eva, wrapping his arms around her in a tight embrace and told her, “You’re good. Deep breath, remember?” After Eva asked him to hold hands, Joe clasped his hands around hers, just as she had instructed him to do in the season premiere, and placed his forehead on hers, as he provided comfort. Joe asked, “Coming out of it? You want another round? Big hug around,” before squeezing her as she tearfully replied, “Yeah, you’re amazing.”

Article and photo source: <https://people.com/survivor-48-star-eva-erickson-unpacks-jeff-probst-crying-autism-episode-exclusive-11703856>



well.”

Mitch went on to describe that “I remember watching *Survivor: The Amazon*, and there was a contestant named Christy out there who was hard of hearing. And it was like, ‘Wow, I can see someone who also struggles with something, and is not like everyone else.’ And watching her have to overcome that, she wasn’t able to read people’s lips in the evening, and was still able to do really well in that season. [That] just encouraged me of like, ‘Hey, like, maybe one day too, I could go out there and play *Survivor*.’ So it’s been a crazy journey just to get out here.”

Article and photo source: <https://parade.com/tv/mitch-guerra-survivor-48-interview>

**Survivor castaway, Mitch Guerra, discussed his speech** disability. The elementary PE coach spoke openly about his stutter, stating that he wasn’t sure if “anyone would actually hire me. I’m a person who stutters, so I just wasn’t ever sure if anyone would take a chance on me... And obviously, as a person who stutters, I got picked on a lot just because I didn’t speak like everyone else. So you stick out. So it forced me to be really resilient. And it also taught me to be super empathetic to other people. So definitely had some hard moments. But also really taught me so many other things as

# THINK DIFFERENTLY DATABASE ACT

In January 2025, then-President Biden signed the Think Differently Database Act. This bipartisan legislation establishes an online database to publicize resources available to individuals with disabilities, and their families or caregivers, under Medicaid. The Act will require the Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary, currently Robert F. Kennedy Jr., to establish a publicly-available website with information on Medicaid-covered services for people with disabilities, including details on eligibility, how to get in contact with state Medicaid offices, and covered long-term care services. Additionally, the bill instructs HHS to create a promotion plan to raise awareness of the resource.

As of this writing, no website has been established. To learn more about this Act, go to

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/670/text>



## SUMMER 2024 PARALYMPICS



### Summer 2024 Paralympics

Paris, France hosted the 17th Paralympic Games last August and September. The first Games was held in Rome in 1960 with 400 athletes from 23 countries. Since then, it has grown to include over 4,400 world athletes competing in 22 sports. 2.5 million tickets were sold and 65,000 spectators attended the Opening Ceremonies, making this the most attended Paralympics ever.

The mascots of Paris 2024, The Phryges, were a pair of Phrygian caps. The caps are historical symbols of liberty and freedom in France. One Phryge wears a running blade on one of its legs. This was the first time since 1994 that a Paralympic mascot had been depicted with a visible disability.

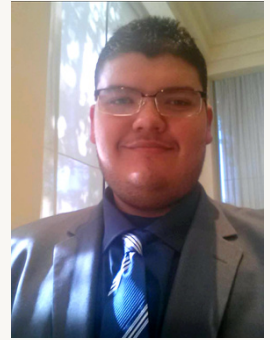
Sports included archery, wheelchair rugby, boccia, paratriathlon, and football 5-a-side. The USA came in third after China and Great Britain with 105 medals.

The next Summer Paralympics will be held in Los Angeles in 2028. For more information on past and future Paralympics, go to <https://www.paralympic.org/>



# ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY INSIGHTS

## From Rogelio Ramirez, Assistive Tech Specialist



Every year, the Center on Disabilities at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) hosts the CSUN Assistive Technology Conference. As an event mainly focused on the promotion of accessibility and the field of assistive technology, the 2025 CSUN Assistive Technology Conference was on its 40th-anniversary celebration, representing four decades of cutting-edge innovations and inclusion of people with disabilities. A wide variety of sessions, workshops, and exhibitions highlight new technologies aimed at increasing independence and inclusion. From software and hardware to earth-shattering research results, the conference stands as a productive ground for collaboration and inspiration. Companies like Microsoft, Google, Apple, Vispero, and many others go to this conference and show the newest device accessibility features.

Among the presented exciting technologies is Google's NotebookLM, an AI note-taking assistant designed to revolutionize the study habits of students. NotebookLM has features such as AI-generated summaries, personalized study guides, and answering specific questions from the uploaded content. One of the most remarkable features that they have is the Podcast. It will generate two AI voices and discuss the uploaded material. It smoothly integrates with Google Drive to keep notes, textbooks, and research materials in one central place. This tool streamlines college students' learning, improves productivity, and ensures more significant academic success. Students can use this for free, but some premium paid features will be available for people who want more.

Microsoft Copilot Plus comes with tools that are beneficial to students with disabilities. These include Live Captions, which generate audio and video content captions so that students who are hard of hearing will find it easier to follow along. MS Paint's Cocreator tool allows you to produce artwork according to text prompts, providing a creative outlet for students with limited mobility. Furthermore, Windows Studio Effects offers a variety of enhancements during video conferencing, such as background blur or noise reduction, thus promoting clear communication for virtual learning.

Most of these advanced tools are free; an additional paid version increases functionality and access to even more advanced features.

This annual conference does more than celebrate technology; it emphasizes a more critical cause: a more inclusive world. This year's conference was focused on AI and all of the wonderful things it can do to help individuals. With the rise of tools like NotebookLM and Copilot Plus- both with free and premium services- the future of accessibility in education has never looked so bright.



Photo credit: Microsoft

# DISABILITY ADVOCACY INITIATIVE

## Join our student organization, the Disability Advocacy Initiative!

**Mission Statement:** To provide a safe environment to facilitate self advocacy while empowering students with disabilities and allies.

For more info, contact Club Advisors, Diana Carrillo at [dcarrillo@glendale.edu](mailto:dcarrillo@glendale.edu) or Janelle Delgado at [jdelgado@glendale.edu](mailto:jdelgado@glendale.edu).



# CONTACT INFORMATION

## Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) located in SG 128

Dafna, Dani, Diana, Janelle, Karmen, Rita, Shauna, and Tracey  
csd@glendale.edu, 818-240-1000 ext. 5905

Spring hours: MON to THURS, 8:00AM to 4:30PM and FRI, 8:00AM to 3:00PM\*  
Counselors' days and hours vary.

## Accommodations Resource Center (ARC) located in SG 108/112

David, Laura, Maryam, Mauricio, Rogelio, and Rozik  
ARC@glendale.edu, 818-240-1000 ext. 5530 and 5402

Spring hours: MON to FRI, 8:00AM to 4:30PM\*  
Specialists' and tutors' days and hours vary.

\*except the first Friday of the month closing at 2:30pm.



## Alternate Media

Scott, sziegler@glendale.edu, 818-240-1000 ext. 3366  
MON to FRI 8:00AM to 4:30PM

## Lead Interpreter and Coordinator for ASL and CC/RTC Services

Kim, kweissman@glendale.edu  
MON to FRI 9:00AM to 3:00PM



## Adapted Physical Education

Coach Laura Matsumoto: lauram@glendale.edu  
Dr. Lee Parks: lparks@glendale.edu

## Garfield DSPS

Dani and Jesse  
818-240-1000 ext 5035 or 5099  
Counselors' days and hours vary.



## Join the DSPS Canvas Shell

Receive official announcements, reminders, and more! Students registered with DSPS can contact Rogelio Ramirez at rramirez@glendale.edu to check if they are on the list or if they wish to join.

## Follow our IG

Check it out to learn about workshops, scholarships, employment opportunities, fundraisers, conferences, webinars, deadlines, and more.

Follow us at [dspgs\\_gcc](https://www.instagram.com/dspgs_gcc).

