



## Population Health Trust November Newsletter

November 2024

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November is here and with it, the rain. Though many of us yearn for those long summer days, others welcome in the cozy. Fall is a time to slow down, to rest, and reflect. On a recent rainy afternoon, we had the opportunity to talk with **Genaro Sanchez**, the *2024 PHT Community Champion*.

This award was created to recognize individuals working hard in their community to promote health and create an environment where all can thrive. Of Genaro, his nominator wrote:

*“Working collaboratively with community partners, schools, and systems, he has been pivotal in providing advocacy, student intervention, support services, peer-to-peer mentoring and family empowerment.”*

As Genaro joins the meeting, he shares that it was a challenging day. There was a fight at a local high school where he works. He says that two of the students may even be expelled given that they have been in several fights this year. While he understands the school policy, he worries about what it will mean for the youth and their sense of connection in the community. He notes that we all seek connection and belonging and that for some of our youth, that feeling comes from joining a gang.

A former gang member himself, Genaro understands the pull of gangs for youth. The son of migrant farm workers, his struggle began in his younger years with

trauma and anger. He found a sense of belonging through gang life. Years later, through education and healing, he found God. Genaro now dedicates himself to helping the most at-risk youth heal from their trauma and find a sense of belonging within their family and community, not gangs. He notes that “trauma is huge in the gang community.”

Genaro and a small team make up [O.U.R \(Our Unique Resurrection\) Journey](#). Their vision is to engage with youth and to build rapport, trust, and relationships with some of the most hurting and alienated youth in our community. They do this through weekly youth groups, peer to peer mentoring, student interventions, and education and empowerment workshops for families.

Genaro and his team are working hard to build relationships with local organizations and to raise awareness about gangs in our community. While he has made some progress, he says a challenge is that a lot of organizations do not know how to work with gang-involved youth and their families. He also notes that when parents hear youth gang members are attending community events, they are often fearful, pulling their kids out of the activity or event. While he understands the fear, he notes that this hurts at-risk youth, further alienating them from their peers and other community supports. To bridge this divide, Genaro and his team are seeking collaboration, an opportunity to come together and create something so that groups can understand each other.

***“Any model will work so long as we build it together.” – Genaro Sanchez***

If you are interested in partnering with Genaro or learning more about O.U.R Journey’s work in the community, visit their [website](#).

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Thank you for your partnership in keeping Skagit County healthy!



The Population Health Trust was founded in 2015 and is the Community Advisory Board to the Skagit County Board of Health. For more information, check out our [website](#).

**[Population Health Trust](#)**

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