

Nora Mendoza—Leading from the Heart

When it comes to leadership, Nora Mendoza shines. Nora, Lundquist WIC project manager, was already playing a leadership role when the Rockwood Leadership Institute selected her approximately a year ago to participate as one of 24 fellows from the State of California in its prestigious fellowship program.

At Lundquist WIC, Nora manages the agency's vendor liaisons. She oversees the Child Development Services Program and collaborates with Lundquist WIC child development specialists and local Regional Center staff. "It was the perfect time; the fellowship program changed me," Nora said. "This fellowship has grounded me as a person with a greater understanding of what I stand for and how I can engage with others professionally and in my everyday life," Nora said. "I was touched and surprised by how much the fellowship resonated with me. I found my home, my language of leadership, and a path of support and encouragement I had not known before."

The fellowship program was rigorous. Nora took part in 13 training days spread over seven months—three virtual trainings, a fourth training in Stockton,



and the fifth in San Jose. Nora and the other Rockwood fellows may have been surprised when they learned some of the topics to be covered: self-compassion, self-love and self-care, grounding, co-powering, empowerment, courageous conversations, inner wisdom, resilience, inner healing, living with purpose, and mental health.

Every time the fellows met, they committed to their accountability partner to care for themselves. In Nora's case, it was ensuring that she didn't ignore her needs when at work: to take breaks, eat when hungry, or go for walks. In the past, she hadn't done these. But now she does. She also committed to journaling and participated in discussions about "co-powering."

Learning about "Courageous Conversations" was necessary, Nora said. "Having a difficult conversation with someone you manage can be challenging." She gained new and valuable methods. Even though Nora has been leading effectively

for many years, she now integrates the Institute's Practices of Leadership into her management. "Because of the Rockwood Leadership Fellowship, I feel more capable of stepping into my leadership role," Nora said.

Nancy Avila, Deputy Chief of WIC Services at Lundquist WIC and Nora's supervisor, has seen her evolution as a leader firsthand. "We profit greatly from having Nora onboard."

