



ACSSQUARTERLY

Q3 2017



Becoming an ACSS Chapter Officer: AGENTS OF CHANGE

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

*How ACSS member **Manijeh Fatollahi** stepped up to lead her chapter for over a decade.*

After twenty five years of employment at the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and also a dedicated member of ACSS for over ten years, newly retired Manijeh Fatollahi plans to relax, spend time with friends and family, and give back to her community. She is truly an agent of change and has been a positive role model for both ACSS members and state employees throughout her career.

Manijeh was born in Tehran, Iran. When she was 15 years old, her family escaped the imminent danger of the Iranian Revolution and moved to Los Angeles. Many of her friends died in Iran during the revolution. Manijeh is certain her family would also have perished had it not been for her activist father's brave decision to flee their native country. She is thankful for her parents and grateful to them for their family's survival and migration to the United States of America.

Manijeh learned English when she came to America and ultimately graduated from Glendale High School in Los Angeles. She then went to Los Angeles City College, where she studied psychology and aspired to become a family counselor. In an attempt to achieve her goals, she attended graduate school at California Lutheran University to obtain a degree in family counseling. However, after she had two young sons, she made the decision to put her education on hold and provide for her family by doing the most important job – being a full-time mother.

After her college years and caring for her family, in 1995 she landed an entry-level job with the DMV as a Motor Vehicle Field Representative. One of her greatest challenges was becoming a supervisor. In 2006, after working at the DMV for 13 years, she decided to interview at the DMV for a supervisory position. The written test and interviews to be a supervisor/manager were rigorous, yet she passed the tests and was offered the job after her first interview. As a newly promoted excluded employee, she started working as a Supervisor I at the Van Nuys Drivers Safety Office. Within the next few years she was promoted to Manager I, where she remained until the end of her DMV career in January 2017.

As soon as she became an excluded employee, she joined ACSS. She joined because she listened to her co-workers' stories of how ACSS helped them and learned how ACSS protected excluded employees through their strong representation program. Manijeh says that joining ACSS was one of the best decisions she ever made. Throughout her career she found herself in many situations where ACSS supported her, provided advice and saved her job. In her first year as a supervisor she went through her probationary period, and without stating a reason, her manager did not allow her to pass probation. ACSS helped

her fight the rejection on probation and won the case because the department failed to follow proper protocol. In addition to this during her years at DMV, ACSS also helped Manijeh file many grievances, fight unfair negative performance evaluations and refute EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) complaints against her. ACSS provided advice and assistance through all of these difficult times in her career. "If it wasn't for ACSS," says Manijeh, "I would not have a job."



Manijeh shares her concerns at an ACSS Board Meeting in 2015.

Another test of Manijeh's strong will and determination is that she survived a fight with cancer – twice! In 2010, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Then in 2012, she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. Both of these illnesses required her to have extensive chemo and

radiation therapy. These were difficult times for Manijeh during her career at the DMV. There were incidents where she requested leaves due to health reasons that were denied by her department. Since she was undergoing treatments to aid in her recovery, she also requested her schedule be more flexible. On both of these occasions her department either denied or fought her claims. ACSS was there to support her, provide advice and represent her in her time of need. Because of these efforts by ACSS, Manijeh was able to continue working while getting the leave she needed and also keep her insurance benefits. Fortunately the cancers went into remission and she was able to overcome both illnesses. Her sheer determination throughout this experience is what makes her a fighter and a positive person.

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"Manijeh was a successful Chapter officer because she was committed to helping her fellow state supervisors and was willing to take the time to find out what their needs were." – Nellie Lynn

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As soon as Manijeh joined ACSS, she knew she wanted to become more involved in ACSS and make a difference for herself and her fellow state employees. Nellie Lynn, ACSS Assistant Director of Representation, has known Manijeh throughout her membership with ACSS and said, "To get more involved, Manijeh would take the initiative to go visit the office of her local legislator during her lunch breaks just to get to know them and start building relationships with them. When there were specific issues that she needed to discuss, they already knew her and it was a lot easier

to have those conversations. It all started by her being her usually friendly self."

As a member of ACSS for over 10 years, Manijeh says one of her fondest memories was attending ACSS Lobby Day. She attended Lobby Day 10 times and never missed a year. "I have learned a lot and will cherish the memories. Meeting one-on-one with my local Assembly, Senate and other California State Representatives was quite an honor for me."

Manijeh always strove to do more for her Chapter and continuously involved herself in Chapter events. When she first became an ACSS member, she started attending Chapter meetings. A few years later, she stepped up to volunteer for the position of Membership Coordinator of her Chapter. As she grew more comfortable with the ACSS organization and its processes, she started to enjoy being involved with the Chapter, building relationships with other members, and helping fellow excluded employees. Rather suddenly in 2010, the existing president of Chapter 512 retired. Board Member of Chapter 512, John Fixler, asked Manijeh if she would take the place of President for Chapter 512. She accepted the position and held on to the title of Chapter President for seven years until her retirement.

As Chapter President, Manijeh always tried to keep Chapter meetings fun and informative for attendees. She kept up with ACSS news by subscribing to the ACSS website blog where she received weekly emails about news and events that affects excluded employees. She then relayed the information to her Chapter members. She built relationships with attendees, collected their contact information, and contacted them to say hello and stay in touch. Members felt welcomed, informed and honored to come to the Chapter meetings. Soon, they started bringing their co-workers and eventually, more and more excluded employees started to show up at the meetings. When a new member came to a meeting, she formally introduced the member, and presented the member with an ACSS pin. "Members loved receiving the pin and the gifts at the meeting. They felt like they earned it. I made it very official, so they honored it."

Manijeh recalls a powerful story about the ACSS pins: "Anytime I was having an issue at work and I thought something wasn't right, I would wear my ACSS shirt or my ACSS pin. Once other people saw the pin, they would back away. They respected the pin. They would back off and take me seriously and say, 'She's active!' The pin has that affect. Also, some of my co workers would come to me and say 'Oh, you belong to ACSS? I hear they are a good association. If Manijeh is part of it, then I want to be part of it, too!'"

ACSS President Frank Ruffino recalls, "Manijeh



Manijeh proudly wears her ACSS pin on her shirt as a powerful symbol of her involvement and dedication to ACSS.

is extremely dedicated. She was always there for her Chapter and fellow Officers. She always wanted to take action and make a difference. She didn't just show up. She was a great example of a Chapter Leader. It takes a lot of tenacity and perseverance to break through difficult barriers and she rose up to the challenges. Hers is a great story and she is a phenomenal person."

What Manijeh has accomplished and gone through in her career and in her time spent with ACSS is nothing short of admirable. She became involved, saw a need to help others, and was motivated to step up and make a difference. She was, and remains, a true agent of change. You, too, can be

an agent of change and a leader in your Chapter. You have the power! Chapter nominations are taking place in the fall and winter of 2017, with ACSS Chapter Elections happening in the summer of 2018. Step up to the challenge and make a difference. Attend your local Chapter meeting this fall for more information. Visit www.ACSS.org/Events to find a Chapter meeting in YOUR area. 🌱

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Becoming an ACSS Chapter Officer: Agents of Change

By Frank Ruffino, ACSS President

***Don't just show up, make a difference. Take action.
There is room for you! ACSS Elections are coming soon.***

Have you ever wanted to make a difference and change the world around you? You CAN be an "agent of change" by becoming an ACSS Chapter Officer.

Are you interested in:

- Getting to know your peers and other managers and supervisors in your area?
- Showcasing and growing your own professional abilities?
- Serving on a committee with other like-minded people who are seeking change?
- Building long-lasting relationships?

By getting involved you can make a difference. Don't just show up to Chapter meetings. Just showing up is never enough if you want to make a change. Change cannot happen if you do not get involved.

Becoming a Chapter Officer benefits you in so many ways:

- **Strengthen your abilities for both career advancement and career knowledge.** – Enhance your own personal and professional development. Being a Chapter Officer allows you to gain more knowledge about the latest things happening in your environment that affect you. A Chapter Officer position puts you ahead of your peers. Not only are you educating yourself, but you are becoming a resource for your peers. It gives you the opportunity to become intimately involved and invested in the ongoing advocacy issues, legislative bills and lobbying efforts going on around you. ...

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- **Develop lasting personal and professional relationships.** – As a Chapter officer, you will meet people from all walks of life. Meeting and talking to the janitors and secretaries is just as valuable and enriching as talking to assemblymen and senators. Your exposure to meet a wide variety of people allows you to see the big picture and gain an extensive amount of knowledge. You start to see other people's stories and struggles that can have an impact on you and change your mind set. I have met so many people in my journey that have become life-long friends both professionally and personally.



- **Develop your skills as a leader:** – If you don't think of yourself as a leader, you will find that you will start to grow into your leadership role. Start with something small and gain confidence in that position. Then, as you get to be more familiar with the Chapter and the Officer duties, it becomes easier. Eventually more doors will open and bring more opportunities within Chapter leadership.

If you don't want things to change, or if you only just show up, then you can't be an agent of change. My hope is that you don't accept the status quo. You don't accept the way your environment is. You have the power to make changes. And the way to make those changes is to get involved. Become an agent of change by nominating yourself at your local chapter meeting in the fall/winter of 2017.

Visit www.ACSS.org/events to find out when your local Chapter's Nominations meeting is happening. ACSS Elections for Chapter Officers will occur in the spring/summer of 2018.

At the January 2017 Board Meeting, ACSS President Frank Ruffino shakes the hand of Manijeh Fatollahi, Chapter 512 President.

GET INVOLVED!

Come to your local ACSS Chapter's next meeting:

509 - July 11 (Porterville)

508 - July 13 (Stockton)

507 - Aug. 15 (TBD)

511 - Aug. 17 (Los Angeles)

514 - Aug. 17 (Ontario)

504 - Sept. 5 (TBD)

505 - Sept. 7 (San Francisco)

513 - Sept. 8 (Orange County)

512 - Sept. 21 (TBD)

502/503 - Sept. 26 (Sacramento)

For more info, visit www.ACSS.org/Events

Contact ACSS Headquarters:
(800) 624-2137 | acss@ACSS.org