



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Beauty *in* Diversity

Nina Thomas, Associate Chief of Education at CDCR and ACSS Board Member, urges members to get involved in ACSS Leadership.



ACSS represents over 12,000 members in all state departments and agencies throughout California.

By far, the largest group of ACSS members comes from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). Within CDCR, ACSS represents a wide range of managerial and supervisory classifications of excluded employees, from Supervising Correctional Cooks to Chief Physicians and Surgeons. Membership with ACSS makes a difference in the well-being and environment of excluded employees. By taking an in-depth look at an individual active ACSS member within these classifications it is evident that her involvement with ACSS has had a positive impact on her, which in turn helped her support and enrich her entire department.

In 2004, the California Department of Corrections added "Rehabilitation" to their title. The CDC officially became "CDCR". ACSS member Nina Thomas is an Associate Chief of Education at CDCR, who truly puts the "R" in CDCR. Based in Tehachapi, she works with principals and wardens

at Correctional Facilities in the southern region of the state to ensure that the WASC-accredited adult schools in correctional facilities run successfully. In addition to providing education programs for incarcerated persons that range from

Adult Basic Education (basic literacy and numeracy) to high school and college degrees (AA, BA, and MA degrees), CDCR also offers employment Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Transitions (pre-parole) programs, which helps incarcerated individuals rehabilitate back into society. "We teach them how to talk about their incarceration time, what they did while they were incarcerated, and how they learned from it so that they can apply the skills they learned

in the real world. We make transformations happen and it works!" says Nina.

Nina became a member in 2018 and learned about ACSS by receiving a postcard flyer in the mail. "When I became a supervisor I was trained on the seriousness and high-level responsibilities of the job. I kept thinking 'Where's the protection for me?' 'What if I fall apart?' 'Who is thinking about my family?' It was a lot. I discovered that ACSS is all about



taking care of its people and is advocating for them. I just wanted to be part of it.” And then Covid-19 hit in 2020. “I was doing my best to help take care of my staff but we were not always getting consistent information from our department. I’m seeing my staff members and my colleagues dropping like flies and I see everyone’s mental health crumbling. So, I nominated myself as a Delegate to attend Delegate Assembly in 2021 because I wanted to learn more about ACSS and get more involved. The more members I talked to, the more I realized that there weren’t many members involved in my local Chapter leadership and Chapter 509 is massive with over 1,000 members spread out over 5 counties. I felt that somebody needed to get involved so that we would have a voice.”

At Delegate Assembly, Nina participated in the duties of being a Delegate and learned more about Chapter Leadership. During Delegate Assembly, ACSS Board Members are elected by the Delegates to serve a three-year term. “At the time, the other leaders in my Chapter either didn’t show up for the event or were about to retire. I was chomping at the bit to get more Chapter Meetings and events happening for our members. So, I just threw my name in the hat for the Board Member position because no one else was stepping up. I was thinking to myself

The beauty is that there are so many different classifications that are represented by ACSS and the more people that step up for leadership, the more it enriches the organization.

that even though I don’t know what to do, I can offer some insight. I have a doctorate degree in Organizational Change and Leadership and so I thought to myself, ‘I can do this!’ I felt like there was a lot of need for organization within our Chapter and I can offer that. I was shocked to find out I actually got elected for the Board position. After the election, I had a lot of people coming up to me saying, ‘We’re really excited about your involvement. Your energy is great and we are hoping you will do a lot for the Chapter!’ So then I was like, ‘Lets do this!’ I truly believe everything happens for a reason.”

For Nina, the role of becoming a Board Member was overwhelming at first. “The first thing I did was scan the website, take in information, and



Nina Thomas
Associate Chief of Education, CDCR

ask questions. The first six months I didn’t know what to do. When I went to the first Board Meeting, the Board started talking about a Strategic Planning project, which my department was already in the process of doing. I was excited to be involved with the ACSS Strategic Planning project because I knew how to do this and I was

eager to have a voice in the process. As someone who was brand new, I didn’t know anything but I wasn’t too embarrassed to speak up and ask questions. Since the launch of the Strategic Plan, ACSS is leaps and bounds ahead of where we were three years ago when I first got involved. I feel like I had a hand in that process. Now I have other members coming up to me and asking, ‘Hey what is ACSS about?’ and, ‘Let us know when there are policy updates.’ I feel like my involvement has helped positively impact a ton of people that do what I do.”

Nina encourages others to get involved with ACSS and Chapter Leadership. “If I could jump in knowing nothing, there are probably a lot of other members out there that can jump in too. With more diverse leadership, ACSS members could be better represented if more people were willing to step up and get involved and make their voices heard. The beauty is that there are so many different classifications that are represented by ACSS and the more people that step up for leadership, the more it enriches the organization. Even though I didn’t know anything about being a Delegate or a Board Member, I knew I had skills that I could offer. I know that there are other members out there that have insight and skills that they can offer to this organization too. There is an inherent beauty in diversity.”


As a driving force for change and positivity, Nina has embraced her leadership role with the ACSS Board and she is proud to help shape the future of ACSS. “We are the ones representing the State of California and

sometimes we forget we have rights. We may not have the same negotiation rights that Rank-and-File employees have, but we still have rights. Which is why we have ACSS. The great thing is that ACSS and CalHR have a proactive and positive relationship. It's not us against them. We are working together to make sure that both of our needs are

“ **Let's face it – good supervisors and managers make good organizations.** ”

met and try to find the win-win. At the very least, we have to take care of the Excluded Employees because they are the reason our state runs well. If ACSS and CalHR take care of us, then we are all better residents of California. Let's face it – good supervisors and managers make good organizations. Being a leader of this organization, I really enjoy having a hand in developing an association that supports the members, which in many ways are the linchpin that keeps our state running. At some point, I am going to

retire and so we want more members to get involved and get their feet wet, dipping a toe in. It would be great if all members could get the chance to look under the hood of ACSS and see first-hand that this is a solid organization. With the Strategic Plan, we are setting the pieces in place to be successful and responsive to the changes and challenges ahead. I really appreciate how thoughtfully ACSS works and as an association, I have been really impressed.”

Not only does ACSS represent over 12,000 members, we represent over 12,000 unique individuals with high-level organizational skills, keen managerial insights, and proven leadership experience within state service. **ACSS needs more of these kinds of members to take a step forward and get more involved in ACSS leadership.** Now is your opportunity! Open Nominations are taking place between December 1st 2023 and January 31st 2024. Nominate yourself as a Delegate or Chapter Officer and see what opportunities await. The Open Nominations period only occurs once every three years. Get involved to help enrich yourself, educate your fellow colleagues, and help make ACSS a better association. 

Visit the www.ACSS.org to learn more!

MEMBER BENEFITS

As an ACSS Member, you are eligible to take advantage of exclusive benefits just for you!

Need a top-notch life, health, or accident insurance plan? These insurance plans are offered through the top insurance companies in the nation - at a group rate or with an association discount.

- Accidental Death & Dismemberment Plan
- Group TermPLUS Life Plan
- Group 10-Year Level Term Life Plan
- Cancer Care Plan
- Emergency Assistance Plus
- Disability Insurance Plan
- Group Travel Accident Protection
- Long Term Care
- Pet Insurance
- Discount Prescription Card
- Epic Hearing Plan



To learn more about Member Benefits, visit www.calcsea.org/Member-Benefits

CHAPTER MAP



In This Issue

- **Member Spotlight:**
Beauty in Diversity:
Nina Thomas
- **Member Benefits:**
Group Insurance
- **Open Nominations:**
Calling all Managers
& Supervisors to step
up and lead!
- **Chapter Map**



ASSOCIATION OF
CALIFORNIA
STATE SUPERVISORS

3000 Advantage Way, Suite 210
Sacramento, CA 95834

FIRST CLASS
PERMIT

First Name Last Name

Address 1

Address 2

City, State ZIP

Q1.24



CALLING ALL MANAGERS & SUPERVISORS!

Make your voice heard and get involved!

Open Nominations are happening NOW!
Nominate yourself or someone else for a
leadership position before

January 31, 2024!

Visit www.ACSS.org to learn more about
Open Nominations, Chapter Elections,
and Delegate Assembly.

Leadership Positions:

- Delegate
- Chapter President
- Chapter Vice President
- Secretary/Treasurer

CONTACT US

3000 Advantage Way
Suite 210
Sacramento, CA 95834

(800) 624-2137 | (916) 326-4257

www.ACSS.org

acss@ACSS.org

HELPFUL LINKS

Events Calendar

www.ACSS.org/Events

Subscribe to our e-News

www.ACSS.org/Subscribe

Join ACSS

www.ACSS.org/Join

ACSS Chapter Info

www.ACSS.org/Chapters