
PEOPLE TO WATCH

MONICA MERRYMAN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

CANCER SUPPORT COMMUNITY

VALLEY/VENTURA/SANTA BARBARA

Who would have predicted that seven months after finishing her last radiation treatment for breast cancer, Monica Merryman would, once again, enter the world of cancer, this time as the executive director of Cancer Support Community Valley/Ventura/Santa Barbara (CSCVSB).

Monica has over 15 years of nonprofit experience in the Central Coast, including 10 years at American Cancer Society and three years as executive director at American Heart Association.

Monica started her work in fundraising in 1990 while at the SoCal regional office of McDonald's Corporation in Woodland Hills. She led the planning of their first-ever fundraiser to benefit Ronald McDonald House, raising over \$100,000. It was the first of many fundraising events in her career.

This year, CSCVSB will celebrate 30 years of being an invaluable resource for cancer patients, their caregivers, and family members. CSCVSB's mission is to help cancer patients and their loved ones strengthen their physical, emotional, and social health through participation in professionally facilitated programs offering emotional support and education. CSCVSB has helped more than 30,000 members of the community and serves over 2,000 people annually, including residents of Ventura and Santa Barbara counties and West San Fernando Valley. Its programs have built strong partnerships with facilities such as Dignity Health St. John's Regional Medical Center, Dignity Health St. John's Pleasant Valley Hospital, and Ventura County Medical Center. Like other organizations, CSCVSB had to redesign and implement a new program-delivery format with the onset of COVID-19 restrictions. The CSCVSB team has navigated the COVID pandemic, keeping the participants a priority. They currently offer 21 support groups, 30 individual counseling sessions a month on average, four health-lifestyle classes, three ed-



ucational workshops a month, and two social events online. This is only possible because of the support and donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

CSCVSB's 30th anniversary celebration officially kicks off in the spring with four special events lined up for the year. Visit cancersupportvvsb.org for more information about the events. "We have so much work to do," says Monica, "balancing the pandemic restrictions while continuing to deliver the increasing need for patient support in our community. With the staff, board, and support of our donors, we can accomplish anything!"

Ms. Merryman has lived in Ventura for 20 years. She and her husband, Blake, have three children and personally enjoy serving the community through a variety of organizations.

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