

**SPRING 2026
NEWSLETTER**



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Finding Strength Through Peer Support in Mental Health Recovery



For Robert, recovery has not been a straight path. It has been shaped by years of navigating diagnoses, learning to accept support, and discovering the power of community through peer connection.

He recently shared parts of his journey as a panelist at “Tools for Promoting Positive Behavioral Health Engagement within the Legal System,” hosted by Monterey College of Law and facilitated by Monterey County Behavioral Health. The discussion focused on how systems and providers can better support people experiencing mental health challenges, especially those navigating multiple systems of care.

Robert’s story begins years earlier. In 2007, he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and recalls long periods without sleep, alongside heavy alcohol and marijuana use. A DUI became a turning point, prompting him to step away from work and confront his mental health more directly.

He graduated from Monterey Peninsula College in 2013, but ongoing challenges followed. Managing medications was difficult, and symptoms of OCD and anxiety persisted. By 2015, he began receiving services through Monterey County Behavioral Health, though recovery remained inconsistent.

In 2023, severe panic attacks marked another difficult period. At the time, Robert was hesitant to engage with care—until he connected with an Interim staff member at a support group. That moment shifted his willingness to accept help and begin rebuilding trust in the process.

Through the Creating New Choices program and peer support at the Omni Resource Center, Robert began to build a support network. He later engaged with Bridge House, Assertive Community Treatment, and housing at Shelter Cove, alongside ongoing support through Keep It Real.

During the panel, Robert spoke candidly about the challenge of overcoming isolation and accepting a diagnosis. For him, peer groups made a critical difference—offering understanding, connection, and improved communication.

Today, Robert describes himself as “in recovery progress.” He continues attending peer groups, creating art, and spending time with family, while focusing on maintaining stability and continued growth.

His story is a reminder that recovery is not a solo journey—it begins with connection.

Staff Feature

Growing into the Work: Oscar Venini



When Oscar joined Interim, Inc. as a relief counselor at Bridge House nearly 15 years ago, he was just beginning his career in mental health. Today, he serves as acting Assistant Program Director with the MCHOME program after holding several roles across the agency.

His journey reflects both professional growth and a strong alignment with Interim's values.

Oscar says his motivation for entering the field was personal. "I grew up in an environment where there were a lot of mental health challenges and substance use," he says. "I was exposed to that pretty early." That experience shaped his desire to better understand mental health

and eventually help others. "I wanted to understand it," he says. "And eventually be in a position where I could help in the same way I saw professionals help the people in my life."

After earning his bachelor's degree in psychology from Sonoma State University, Oscar moved back to Monterey County and found his way to Interim. Over time, he moved from Bridge House to a full-time counselor role with MCHOME, then into program leadership. Though he left the agency for several years to gain experience elsewhere, he eventually returned.

"One thing I really value is the culture that Interim creates," he says.

"It's important to feel supported, and I think Interim does a really good job supporting its employees, and clients."

Oscar describes Interim as collaborative, humanistic, and intentional in its approach to care. He says the organization's

person-centered and non-stigmatizing model aligns closely with his own values. "It's about meeting the person where they're at," he says. "It really is non-stigmatizing."

Some of the most meaningful moments in his career have come from seeing clients move from outreach to stability over time. After returning to Interim and working in Community Housing as Assistant Program

Director, he saw some of the same individuals he had once known through MCHOME outreach now living in housing. Seeing that progress reinforced why the work matters.

Now back with MCHOME in a leadership role, Oscar helps oversee a complex program serving both housed and unhoused clients. He says one of the most rewarding parts of the work is watching staff grow in confidence and strength.

Looking back, Oscar says Interim helped form the foundation of his professional identity. "This was the first thing I ever did," he says. "So it really created my foundation." That foundation, and the values behind it, are what brought him back to the agency.

THE HOEDOWN: Island Style

A Fundraiser for Marina Kai Apartments

October 24, 2026 Tickets Available Now



music, traditional hula dancers, inspiring stories, and an exciting auction program, all while helping advance housing, healing, and hope in our community.

Join Interim, Inc. for The Hoedown: Island Style, a lively community fundraiser supporting the Marina Kai Apartments, our newest affordable housing development serving adults living with mental illness in Monterey County.

Inspired by the spirit of the paniolo — Hawaii's proud ranching tradition — the evening will blend Western hospitality with island flair for a memorable night of community, connection, and purpose.

Guests will enjoy dinner,

Moose Lodge
555 Canyon Del Rey Blvd
Del Rey Oaks, CA

For event details, early-bird tickets, and table discounts, scan the event QR code or visit:

www.interiminc.org/hoedown-island-style



Businesses and community members interested in sponsorships or auction donations are also invited to explore opportunities on the event webpage.

Interim Establishes New Legacy Award to Highlight Lifetime Contributions

This new annual award honors individuals whose lasting contributions have advanced Interim's mission of Housing, Healing, and Hope.

Open to staff, partners, and community members.

To learn more and nominate, scan the Legacy Awards page QR code or visit:

www.interiminc.org/legacy-awards



Awards will be presented at The Hoedown: Island Style in October.

THANK YOU

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