Introducing Faculty and Staff of Juntos Podemos

Norma Martinez Rogers, PhD, RN, FAAN
Dr. Norma Martinez Rogers has served the needs of the San Antonio population as a nurse, a nurse educator, and an advocate for the underserved population. Upon graduation she entered what was then known as Incarnate Word College where she earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing, and a Masters’ Degree in Counseling from St. Mary’s University. In her pursuit for excellence she earned a second Masters’ Degree in Nursing from the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. She received her PhD from the University of Texas at Austin and is known to be a dedicated Longhorn. She is the founder of “Juntos Podemos”, a mentorship program for nursing students. This program began with a $5,000 stipend and is now in existence for over 10 years. It has grown by over 460% and 98% of the students in this project are academically successful. The concept of the program is based on “In order to receive one has to give”; it is based on sharing hence the name “Together We Can”. Ten years ago, Dr. Martinez Rogers partnered with the US Western District Court Probation Office to provide a female specific program for women convicted of a federal felon and under community supervision. She began this program to prevent relapse/recidivism. It is the only female group in the Western District Court and over 150 women have successfully participated in this program. In November, 2006 she was selected to be a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing (FAAN). Her office is located at 2.516, office number is 567-2547, and her email address is rogersn@uthscsa.edu.

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Hilda Mejia Abreu, BA, MS
With a big smile and humble attitude, Ms. Hilda Mejia-Abreu states, it is an honor to have been selected to University of Texas Health Science Center School of Nursing as Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Services. Her appointment began on July 20th, 2009. As of her arrival, thanks to the strategic vision of Dean Breslin and our exceptional faculty, a new structure has been created to deliver services to students, faculty and constituents, which is the Office of Admissions and Student Services. The Office of Admissions and Student Services primary mission is to attract, admit, retain and graduate the best and brightest professional nurses. New recruitment strategies will be developed as well as a mechanism for retaining and graduating students who will exceed local and national benchmarks. Development and implementation of an interactive website that helps the SON with targeted recruitment for undergraduate and graduate program is a priority and should be completed by year’s end. A project to brand the SON Office of Admissions and Student Service to communicate with prospective applicants is an imperative as well as active recruitment activities engaging K – 12 students and post BSN graduates. The team in the Office of Admissions and Student Services will work with faculty members to create an early warning system in collaboration with Juntos Podemos. The early warning system would allow us to detect students facing academic challenge early in the semester. Collaboratively with Juntos Podemos we will identify and secure services to support students through tutorial and/or counseling services.

Throughout her academic and professional career, Ms. Mejia Abreu had many mentors and
she is delighted to be at this great school of nursing during a very critical and important time in its growth to serve students, faculty, and graduates. Her model is “to whom much is given, much is expected of” and she is ready to make a difference as others have contributed during her journey.

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Herlinda Zamora, MSN, RN

Ms. Herlinda Zamora is Faculty Adviser for Juntos Podemos (JP). During her MSN program here at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio School of Nursing, she was introduced to Dr. Rogers. She began an excellent mentorship with Dr. Rogers, which continues today. Since graduating in 2007, Ms. Zamora has continued her work in JP. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Nursing at The University of Texas at Austin. Her research interest is health literacy and informed consent for older Mexican American adults. She is active in the community as a present member of the San Antonio Chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses. She is a Clinical Instructor for 3rd and 4th semester nursing students in NURS 4614/4410. Ms. Zamora is passionate about mentoring and teaching students. “I am here for the students; their health, safety, and success are of the highest priority.” Her office is 2.218; Cell Phone: 210 216-4778; Office Phone: 210 567-2127; and email address: zamorah2@uthscsa.edu.

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Richard Allen Diaz, Bachelor Business Administration

Richard is the Grants and Contracts Specialist for Juntos Podemos. He is the newest member of the team, joining us just before the spring 2011 semester. He comes to us having worked with several non-profit organizations, including Young Life and the YMCA (in San Antonio and Mexico), in the capacity of mentoring at-risk teenagers, teaching English, event planning, grant writing, and fundraising. He is excited to be working in an academic environment with a successful organization like Juntos Podemos. Born and raised on the Southside of San Antonio, he was the first in his family to attend a university and understands the many hurdles that students face as they pursue higher education. This explains his passion about helping students reach their goals and potential. He is an avid traveler, a novice chef and musician. Richard will be working with the 1st and 2nd semester nursing students. His office is in the School of Nursing, Room 2.148 (across from the Juntos Podemos room). Phone number is (210) 567-5792 and email address is diazr2@uthscsa.edu.

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Norma Garcia, Administrative Assistant Senior – has been employed by UTHSCSA for 15 years and has been with Juntos Podemos for four years. She enjoys working with this project because she really likes interacting with the students. Though she is not a nurse, she likes to provide words of encouragement and likes to make them laugh when they express how stressed out they are over assignments or tests. One of the best things she enjoys is hearing some of the students speak of how much they have endured to get to where they are at now and what they plan on accomplishing when they graduate. She says “this in itself makes my job so worthwhile”. Her office number is 2.502. She can be reached at 567-5733 or garcian@uthscsa.edu.

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OUR ALUMNI

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SPRING 2010

My name is Brenna Smith I am originally from Corpus Christi and attended school in San Antonio. I enjoy reading, running, and spending
time with my family. I am currently living in McAllen, TX working in the NICU 3 at The Doctor's Hospital at Renaissance in Edinburg, TX. I joined Juntos Podemos to meet other people and have someone I could turn to if I had questions about the material or nursing school in general. Everyone was very friendly and helpful. I enjoyed having someone I could talk to about school who had already gone through the semester. I am thinking about getting my MSN or NNP focusing on neonatal care in possibly a few years,

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FALL 2009

I'm Allison Brady and I'm originally from Dallas and moved back after graduating in December. I'm working in the NICU at Baylor Medical Center at Dallas. When I'm not working I love hanging out with my fiancé and our dog, running and biking, shopping, and spending time with my family. I joined Juntos Podemos while I was in school because I had heard how helpful the reviews were for exams and wanted any extra help I could get. I liked the reviews that the upperclassmen gave and I also enjoyed giving the reviews for 2 semesters. It was always a good way to spend more time going over the information. I'm planning on applying to grad school next Spring or Fall to be an FNP or PNP, and I'm planning on going to University of Texas at Austin or Texas Women’s University.

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My name is Laura Serratos. Since graduation, I have been spending a lot of time with my family, especially my son, Xavier. We have taken a few short trips to the beach and fishing. I joined Juntos Podemos to meet fellow classmates, as well as to help me organize my notes and studying. What I enjoyed the most was the extra time spent going back over the notes taken in class. It was a good way to review, especially when the information was difficult to grasp the first time. In the short time since I graduated, I have been able to work in psychiatric and geriatric nursing roles. I have a Master's degree in Educational Administration, so I do not have any current plans of pursuing another advanced degree.

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My name is Jandee Stidom, class of December 2009. I am from Arlington, TX but now call San Antonio home since my fiancé is from here. Since graduating I have enjoyed having a normal life where I can watch movies, TV, and read books for fun! I have been busy planning my wedding and working. I joined Juntos Podemos my first semester of nursing school due to the ability to have a mentor and content reviews. Without JP I would have been lost, especially in my first semester of nursing school. They provided so much support and really helped me know how to study and what to expect from nursing exams and clinical. I just completed the Versant RN orientation program at Christus Santa Rosa Children’s Hospital. I work on a Special Medicine and Rehab floor. We have many long-term, chronically ill children. Our specialty is cystic fibrosis patients and the halo traction program for children with severe scoliosis and kyphoscoliosis. We also service patients that have been in accidents and need inpatient PT, OT, ST, and specialized nursing care. After getting a firm foundation as a nurse I plan to return to UTHSCSA to get my masters to be either a Family or Pediatric Nurse Practitioner. I am so glad I chose nursing as my career path. Every day is so rewarding and I absolutely love my job!

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SPRING 2009

My name is Ashley Finsley. I graduated from UTHSCSA School of Nursing May 2009. I'm 25 years old and married for 4 1/2 years. My
husband is a pilot in the Air Force and we are currently stationed at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. After graduation, I took a much needed vacation to Israel for 3 months while my husband was deployed to the Middle East for the summer. I traveled around the country. It was an amazing experience. I definitely recommend taking a little vacation after graduation to rejuvenate and get some much needed rest and relaxation. :-) My hobbies include: spending time with my husband, reading, exercising, and teaching aerobics classes. My first semester at UTHSCSA, I heard about this great organization called Juntos Podemos that offered mentoring and tutoring free of charge to students in the nursing program. I wanted to take advantage of every opportunity to increase my understanding of the material so that I could succeed to the best of my ability. I found the review classes to be very helpful in preparing for the exams and in my 2nd semester I began to teach review classes for the 1st semester students. I really enjoyed that opportunity to reach out and help other students succeed. It was very rewarding. It is an organization that is built on helping others to succeed...an organization built on the principle of giving. I am now working at Kent General Hospital in Dover, DE in the Intermediate Care Unit where I care for critically ill patients. It is a challenging and busy job, but is very rewarding as well. I plan on pursuing a graduate degree in the future, but for now my husband and I are looking to start a family soon.

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My name is Monica Herrera. I graduated from UTHSCSA, May 2009. I currently enjoy spending my free time outdoors and running marathons each year. I've had the opportunity to travel more these days, and have scheduled my first trip overseas to Austria, Czech Republic, and Hungary this month. I joined Juntos Podemos while in nursing school to gain studying skills. The program helped a great deal in condensing the amount of material I had to learn and develop ways in focusing on the main topics for the exams. What I liked most about the program was the study groups formed and the way we all helped each other study. I am currently working in the Pediatrics IMC/ICU at Christus Santa Rosa Children's Hospital in downtown San Antonio. I plan on attending graduate school in the near future to obtain my PNP degree.

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My name is Samantha Holder. Since graduating from nursing school in May 2009 I have been very busy! I gave birth to a healthy baby boy, Carter, in August of 2009, and was fortunate enough to stay home with him until January of 2010 when I started my nursing career. Besides work, I spend all of my time with family and friends and recently moved so I have been very busy settling our family into our new home. I joined Juntos Podemos during nursing school for support and guidance. I gained a lot from both attending and guiding content reviews. Leading content reviews helped me stay on top of previously learned material and definitely better prepared me for the NCLEX. I currently work in Women’s Services as a Post Partum nurse at North Central Baptist and have loved every minute of it. I work with amazing and compassionate nurses and have learned a lot. I hope to one day pursue a labor and delivery position but am happy building my foundations now. In a few years I would like to attend graduate school to become a Certified Nurse midwife but have not yet decided where I will go. San Antonio does not offer a program and so I will be researching my options in the coming years.

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FALL 2008

My name is Beckie Bell. I am living in San Antonio, Texas and working at Audie Murphy V.A. Hospital. I enjoy swimming

Updated: January 7, 2011
and try to go four times a week. I have two dogs, Crackers and Muffin. I have been working at the VA since graduation and coming back to the school to conduct the content reviews for fourth semester. I have also been tutoring students needing help, mostly in third and fourth semester. I am glad I can give back because plenty of people helped me during school. I love nursing and am realizing how much I have learned and how much I still need to learn! I joined Juntos Podemos because I heard it was an excellent way to learn about what the instructors expected on tests because it was supposed to be very different from what was expected in the pre-requisite classes. It also helped me to prioritize information. The amount of information you are required to read and learn is overwhelming. I got the most out of having a great mentor. I had one the first semester that helped get off to a good and organized start. I had a different one the last three semesters who was awesome and also was the one who conducted the content reviews. I also got a lot out of conducting content reviews and helping a determined group of students from the semester in back of me the night before each test. Juntos Podemos will not work if everyone who has received help does not return the help. If someone from a semester you have already completed needs help, offer to do it. The one advantage of this other than helping others is that each time you review material from a class you have already taken; it will help you on NCLEX. Presently at the VA, I am on a medicine floor and am pursuing geriatrics. I really like ICU and hospice and palliative care and how the two can be combined. I enjoy the acuity of patients in ICU but also enjoy helping the patients as well as their families when medicine provides no more options and the patient move into palliative care. I presently work at the Audie Murphy V. A. Hospital. I will be going to graduate school as soon as I feel I have enough experience. I want to get the most out of graduate school as possible.

James Lukose was born in Kerala, India on December 21st, 1985, came to Texas on October 6, 1996, and lived in Texas for most of his life. He has many interests. He likes to jog, read, travel, volunteer, and watch movies. After graduating from Naaman Forest High School on 2004, he took his prerequisites at the University of Texas in Austin and Richland College. He received an Associate in Science from Richland College on July 2006. He came to the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio School of Nursing on August 2006 and graduated on December 2008 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. The reason he joined Juntos Podemos was to find guidance because beginning nursing school was very frightening for him. He thought talking to students that had already experienced the things he was going to experience would help him some hope and support. He enjoyed the guidance he received from others but most of all enjoyed helping his fellow students. He loved being the support for the students and being a role model for many. He enjoyed the friends and networking but most of all likes the free food that is offered at meetings, stipend, and the free printing. Along with Juntos Podemos, he was also active in Sigma Theta Tau International, UTHSCSA Nursing Class of December 2008, UTHSCSA Parking and Traffic Safety Committee, UTHSCSA Research Scholars, and UTHSCSA Student Computing Issues Committee. He passed NCLEX on the first time, began work at First Choice Children Home Health Care in Plano, Texas on March 2009 as a PRN Pediatric Registered Nurse. Currently, he is a Doctor of Pharmacy student in an accelerated program at Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences in Worcester and looking forward to graduate on May 2012.

My name is Genavie Quirino Hess, as I was married last April. I grew up in San Antonio, TX, but have been in the northeast for the last two years since graduating. I can't say I love it all that much because I'm not big on snow, but it's been a good experience living in a different area/learning the tempo of living in a city like Baltimore, MD. Hopefully though, I'll convince my husband to move back
to San Antonio...sooner rather than later! LOL! I've been working at Sinai Hospital in Baltimore since February 2009, in their generalized adult ICU; racking up my critical care experience of which I am proud of (I'm able to take MICU, SICU, Neuro ICU and/or Trauma patients with relative ease). My plan was to use this experience to go to CRNA school but now I'm thinking I may go back to get my MSN in education. I am not sure where just yet but whatever I decide, am definitely on the road to further my education regardless of what degree I pursue. Like I've said before, I joined Juntos Podemos in nursing school because they seemed to be an organization that supported students and any help, be it the study sessions or just talking to Mrs. Garcia to decompress after a hectic week, was greatly appreciated.

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SPRING 2008

My name is Sara Gordon. I graduated from the Health Science Center School of Nursing in May of 2008. Since then, I have gotten married, moved to Richmond, Virginia, worked there full time for two years (med-surg), had a baby, and moved to Dallas, Texas this summer. Well, I've been keeping busy, as you can tell in the above answer. I spend the most time I can with my baby, Aviel, and the rest of my family. Aviel loves for me to take him jogging. We like to stay active. I joined Juntos Podemos because I realized I was new to nursing school and needed all the help I could get... and it was free of charge! I got to meet a lot of new friends, one of them being Norma. She's wonderful to know! The area of nursing I have pursued is Medical-Surgical, but I'm interested in Post-Partum. I work at the Medical Center of Plano - Surgical Oncology. I intend to retire as soon as my husband finishes his doctorate, which would be in hopefully 3-4 years.

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My name is Monica Marie Mirelez, and I am from Ontario, California. I graduated in May 2008, and am currently studying to go to the University of Texas at Houston to complete my master’s degree in Nurse Anesthetist. In my spare time I like working out, running, swimming, hanging out with my significant other and reading critical care nursing books. I joined JP because I wanted to get all the assistance I could get to help me through nursing school, plus I wanted to meet different students and help people to succeed. Being part of Juntos Podemos was like being a part of a little family at school. We all helped each other and shared our knowledge. It made me feel more comfortable and confident going through nursing school. I pursued Trauma and Critical Care. Presently, I work at the Methodist Hospital in the Medical Surgical ICU.

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My name is Katherine Pavo Padilla. I graduated with my BSN at UTHSCSA in May 2008. I have been working at University Hospital as an RN. After a year of working I got married. We bought a house. We also have a teacup chihuahua named "Pikachu". I joined Juntos Podemos to network with other students and share nursing school experiences with them. I liked having the companionship of other fellow nursing students in study groups and at the time everyone in our group was multicultural so it made it very interesting. My specialty is Emergency Room. I worked there for 2 years. I currently work in the Cardiac Cath Lab but will soon move to a 20 hour night position in the PACU sometime in
January 2011. I am starting a Family Nurse Practitioner Program on January 10, 2011. I will be studying at Angelo State University Graduate School.

**FALL 2007**

My name is Kimberly Yong Jones, I graduated December 2007 from UTHSCSA School of Nursing. I currently live and work on the Navajo Reservation in Arizona, near the Four Corners area. I work as a Public Health Nurse and thoroughly enjoy my job, my patients, and my communities. I started graduate school at the University of New Mexico right after graduation in January 2008. I am working towards my MSN in Community Health Nursing and will then continue my pursuit of my PhD. I enjoy hiking, camping, photography, and spending time with my family seeing the wonderful world around us. I joined Juntos Podemos for the mentorship opportunity and to network with other students and faculty. Being in Juntos Podemos opened a world of opportunity and made my experience in nursing school more enjoyable, more positive, and more rewarding. It was always nice to be able to talk to other Juntos students as well as Dr. Rogers and Dr. Cantu. I am a Public Health Nurse. I work on the Navajo Reservation for the Indian Health Service.

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**SPRING 2007**

My name is Rebecca Pollok. I have been working at Methodist Children's Hospital in San Antonio for the past two years on the medical floor. I thoroughly enjoy working with the kids and families, and gaining new skills and nursing knowledge. I have been enjoying traveling since I graduated and will make it to Europe this summer. I joined Juntos Podemos because I gained support and help for the courses I was taking. Being a mentor, allowed me to give back my knowledge and skills I learned for that year from my mentor.

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**FALL 2006**

Sara Mora - I’m a native Texan. Born in Dallas and raised in San Antonio with my older brother by my single mother. I was in choir from middle school until after my first year of college. I began college at the University of North Texas with a general music major and a vocal concentration. After my first year of college I found my calling in nursing and switched majors. I have since graduated from The University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio School of Nursing Fall 2006 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. I joined Juntos Podemos in my freshman year and was a member until I graduated. I joined for the exam reviews and through attendance was able to join study groups with other Juntos Podemos members. I graduated and passed my NCLEX the first time, began work, and became a member of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses and Cambridge Who’s Who among Executives, Professionals, and Entrepreneurs. I am currently a Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation nurse at the Veterans Hospital in San Antonio, TX and have been for two years. I received my Master’s degree from the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and I now live in Los Angeles where I work for Mt.Sinai.

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My name is Xiomara Shaw I'm from Panama City, Panama. My hobby is drawing and singing. I work at the VA hospital at a Critical Care unit. I will be pursuing a career in OB-GYN nursing. I joined Juntos Podemos because of the opportunities and benefit that it offers for all students, especially students like me (English as a second language). There are also study groups, tutorial, protégés and mentoring. Juntos Podemos provided me opportunities to meet different people from different backgrounds. Being a member of Juntos Podemos I had the opportunity to assist Dr Rogers with her

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Summer Spanish classes as a teaching scholar. There are scholarships and stipends for those who qualify. For a beginning student nurse, sometimes nursing school can be a bit stressful, Juntos Podemos helps lower that stress level by providing you with the necessary tools to focus on your first and ultimate goal. Graduating and becoming a BSN RN.

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My name is Jonathan Stevens and I am a BSN, RN, who graduated from UTHSCSA School of Nursing in December of 2006. I am a ten-year active-duty Air Force military veteran and I am originally from Maine. My main interests include watching live music, going to the movies, and continuing my education. My principal passion, or hobby, is photography. I received my RN license in April of 2007. I worked at San Antonio Urgent Care and waited for a clinical nurse position in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Wilford Hall Medical Center to open up in October of 2007. I have been working there ever since. In addition, I recently graduated with my Masters in May 2009 from the UTHSCSA School of Nursing. Juntos Podemos played a crucial part in helping to guide my studies and prepare for examinations in the baccalaureate program.

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SPRING 2006

My name is Julie M. Hudson, RN. I am a BSN graduate of the UTHSCSA SON Class of May, 2006. I went straight from graduation into an internship program in the NICU at North Central Baptist Hospital in San Antonio, Texas. I have been serving in the role of charge nurse for several years and I LOVE my job. I have taken an active role in several NICU committees and many projects; including a “Welcome to the NICU” video that is presented to NICU families. I have a beautiful son (age 8) who keeps me laughing. We enjoy traveling, seeing movies, and working on DIY projects together. I joined JP for the mentorship and the opportunity to get involved on campus. It was a great experience and I enjoyed working with the students, as well as the faculty. While at UTHSCSA, I served as Student Body President (2005-2006), SGA Representative (2005-2006), UT System Student Advisory Council member (2005-2006), JP mentor, and was the recipient of the UTHSCSA Women’s Faculty Association 2006 Leadership Award (thanks, Dr. Rogers). I also developed and published an orientation program entitled: “Navigating Through Nursing School: Tips for the First Semester” which I presented on campus for several semesters. I just completed my MSN in the Nurse Clinician Educator program at UT-El Paso in December, 2010. I am now applying for part-time adjunct faculty positions with online nursing programs. I intend to teach part-time to gain academic experience for the future while still maintaining my FT status in the NICU.

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My name is Stephanie Sanders. I currently am married to a wonderful man named Kevin and have three beautiful children ages 7, 4 and 3. I love to read, workout and play with my children. I currently am a stay at home mother, but worked in Pedi and PACU for 2 years before making the decision to be at home. I joined Juntos Podemos as a way to get to know more students and also to allow myself to be used as a source of information and encouragement. I know I will pursue my graduate degree soon, but have not started the process. Right now I am focusing on my family and enjoying spending time with them.