

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Board Member, Karina Smith, Promotes Equity at VIM

As a bilingual, bicultural educator working to promote equity, Karina is a valuable addition on to our board. When she speaks about her work, her concern for the people around her makes an impression. She's enthusiastic about the impact VIM has on the underserved in our community and how she can help. When asked what her goals are Karina says, "I realize I'm here to serve. I help students see education as a tool to navigate the world and give back to create systems of change. The more I can talk and engage with the community, the more I can heal and help others."

20 years ago, with one year left of law school, Karina moved from Argentina to the United States. Arriving in the states she encountered obstacles formed by racism, perceptions of her accent, and being educated in a different country. She wanted to go into medical interpretation but was rejected because of her accent. Despite nearly obtaining a law degree in Argentina, she was asked to get her GED and start from square one. Karina felt worn by the push-back, it made her doubt herself. She was struggling with something she sees her children mediating today: *nebalda*, or trying to navigate two worlds.

Although painful, these setbacks became learning moments. When she was studying to become a lawyer the thought of what her life would be like in that career felt abstract, but as she took her options into consideration, she decided she didn't want to embark on a path where the people in her life were anything less than individual, unique, meaningful, and most of all, human. In the end she felt she couldn't serve the community in the capacity she wanted to as a lawyer.

Karina began to develop a sense of personal responsibility for educating her community in cultural competence and equity. She wants to make sure the next generation doesn't have to face the same challenges she faced, so she started a career in social services. When Karina

moved to Central Oregon 13 years ago she used her skills to teach language and culture, worked for DHS, and was drawn more and more to education. When she worked at DHS she was engaged in each individuals' environment and saw the impact of her work taking effect. The question she always asks herself is, "how can we engage with human beings in a way that allows us to connect on a deeper level? How can we listen and learn what their life is like and what their needs really are?"

Karina has noticed that white communities are engaging more with communities of color, they are beginning to listen. "It has been empowering to give the people a voice and to validate that voice and bring it to action." There's a need to redesign the barriers currently in place, there's a growing intention to do so, and Karina means to be on the forefront of this transformation.

Karina joined the VIM board in January and is currently working as the Director of Regional Migrant Education Services at The High Desert Education Service District and obtaining her doctorate in education.

About Volunteers in Medicine Clinic of the Cascades

Volunteers in Medicine Clinic of the Cascades (VIM) is a nonprofit clinic in Bend that provides free medical care to low-income, uninsured adults from working families in Central Oregon. Our mission is "to improve the health and wellness of the medically uninsured or critically underserved through the engagement of professionals, community partners, and dedicated volunteers." VIM is the only clinic in Central Oregon that cares for the uninsured without charge. Patients receive primary and specialty medical care, medications, mental health care, surgery, physical therapy, lab work, medical tests, and education programs. All care is provided through medical and support volunteers. www.vim-cascades.org