



SWACUHO

Southwest Association of College & University Housing Officers

MAY 2020 NEWSLETTER

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Looking for a summer read?

Join Sam Houston State University students, faculty and staff as we read our 2020-2021 common reader:

***American Like Me: Reflection on Life Between Cultures
by American Ferrera.***

The SHSU Common Reader Program seeks to unite the SHSU campus through "a shared intellectual experience". More information about the book and the common reader program can be found here:

<https://www.shsu.edu/dept/fye/common-reading-program/index.html>



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Howdy, SWACUHO!

A Letter from the President

What. a. month. I can't believe that the last newsletter is already about a month old, because time is going so fast. I guess time doesn't just fly when you're having fun - it also flies when you're busy, too. And as someone pointed out to me this week, it's been odd and unsettling to not have the normal transition time that we typically experience this time of year with closing, graduation, and end of year celebrations. I hadn't realized how much I missed all that until I heard it spoken aloud.

That said, as unceremonious as it was, I hope everyone made it through the end of the semester and was able to take a little bit of a breath before continuing full-speed ahead for summer operations and fall planning. I don't know about you all, but I've been more than overwhelmed with all of the rapidly-changing guidance from so many sources - the CDC, state guidelines, System and University guidelines.... I'm having a hard time keeping up. It's been helpful though, to read how many of you are implementing some of these recommendations, so keep sharing your new "best practices!"

By now you've likely seen the CDC's Guidance for Shared or Congregate Housing. Talk about some challenges! But, I know that we'll all figure out how to make it work, because that's what housing professionals do, right? I know that the upcoming Mid-Level virtual roundtable will be full of talk about this new information, and I'm sure that the next CHO virtual meeting will be, too.

I sincerely hope that each of you is finding time to take a break when you can. Whether it's a quick walk between Zoom calls, taking an actual lunch break to unplug from work, reading something not related to work, or spending time with loved ones (safely, of course!), make sure you're taking time for yourself. As we all know, you can't pour from an empty cup, so figure out how to replenish yourself, and do it as often as you can.

As our institutions begin to allow more and more people to be on campus, take care of yourself and those around you. I keep reminding myself that I can't control what the people around me are doing and deciding, but I can control my own actions and attitudes. And while I'm not normally a glass-half-full kind of gal, it's helped me to remind myself to keep the hard times in perspective. As my mom used to tell me, "no matter how hard you think you have it, someone, somewhere, would give anything to be in your shoes."

Thank you, SWACUHO, for the work you've done and continue to do to serve our students and safely meet their needs. We all work in an essential industry that at times feels overlooked, but know that your students appreciate you and your efforts!

Until next month, stay safe and well!

Maggie



Hello SWACUHO:

As the semester comes to a close, many of us are looking to wind down the Spring semester on a positive note. I have been personally encouraged with the ability of our housing teams to turn on a dime and reimagine processes and procedures as we work through tough times. I have been a witness to staff selection, hall closing, changes to on call structures, and much more - all handled with grace by our housing professionals. You have all done an amazing job! I want to encourage everyone to continue to demonstrate creative thinking about your processes, procedures, working environments, and staff expectations as we look towards planning for the fall semester. Our SWACUHO committees are working diligently to redesign conference opportunities where necessary and monitoring upcoming events to ensure safe planning. Please reach out to your SWACUHO Executive Board if we can be of any assistance to you or your team.

KP

Katy Pelton, President Elect



Greetings from Texas!

I hope this email finds you doing well and getting adjusted to some sense of a routine as most of us are working from home. The month of April brought many challenges to our campuses and this is likely to continue throughout the summer. Many of our students and partners in the academic arena have to adjust to online learning/teaching to finish out the semester. Our students and families are going through a lot of emotions as most institutions have chosen to delay or forgo graduation ceremonies. The leadership at our colleges and universities are having to make very difficult decisions currently and in the months ahead. It is easy to second guess or even publicly question those decisions and I would caution against this approach for several reasons but most of all even the leadership needs support and encouragement during this time. Remember your staff and students are always watching and learning from you.

As we move into May, decisions about summer operations will be made, if they have not been made already. Those decisions will impact the bottom line of our budgets, which will lead to additional decisions having to be made. Some institutions have completely gone online for summer school and conference programs have been limited or cancelled all together resulting in less income. Construction projects are being postponed in order to save money. ACUHO-I internships being modified or cancelled. National Housing Training Institute (NHTI) has been cancelled. Earlier last week, ACUHO-I has cancelled the annual conference scheduled in Portland Oregon. Hiring has either become more challenging or completely frozen at most of our member institutions.

While all these items seem to be depressing, they do not have to be. With all these challenges will come many opportunities.

It offers the chance to re-evaluate your overall operation and where you can improve efficiencies by making changes to the day-to-day operation of your departments; how you approach customer service both internally and externally; the methods and manner with which you communicate internally, with campus partners, with families, etc.

The SWACUHO executive board is working hard to ensure that we are providing our membership with information and quality professional development opportunities. While it would be easy to just cancel all our programs, we are trying very hard to ensure that is only done as a last option. Most of our summer and fall programs/events will likely be hosted virtually. As a result, you and your staff will have many opportunities to engage with SWACUHO. This could open the door for many institutions to take advantage of the content that may not have otherwise due to the cost of traveling, lodging, etc.

In life there is not a lot that you can control; however, you can control your attitude towards it. Choose to have a positive attitude and continue remembering what got you into this field to begin with and focus on that when the difficult decisions must be made.

Be well, stay safe, keep in touch and call on me if I can be of any assistance.



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It's a Different World: From the Trailer Park to the Ivory Tower

By: Amanda Morales

Director of Housing

Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi

My earliest memory regarding the concept of college was watching a show called It's A Different World. Sprawled out on the floor in the living room of my family's single-wide trailer in rural South Carolina, I learned about college for the first time through the eyes of Dwayne Wayne, Ron, Denise, Jalessa, Mr. Gaines, Whitley, and everyone else who attended or worked at Hillman College.

I think what first intrigued me about the show was the theme song, belted out by Aretha Franklin. In one version of the opening credits, the action starts by panning over students partaking in all kinds of activities: laughing, marching, studying, playing sports, stepping and more. It showed a place where people were learning and happy. "It's a different world (ooh ooh), than where you come from, yes, it is now, yeah!"

My world, produced by dirt roads, generational poverty, lack of healthcare, limited educational access, and childhood memories that could have been taken out of Southern Gothic novels, was drastically unlike the one portrayed on the show. Their

world fascinated me. My world, well... was different.

The biggest thing that drew me to the show—and the idea of college—was that everyone there seemed to care about school and thought that getting a good education was important. Serving as my respite, school was a place where teachers were kind, meals were good, books were everywhere, friends were made, and roaches were limited. My teachers taught me that there was a vast world outside of my one-stoplight town. I also learned that, if I did well, I could go to a college like Hillman and get out of said one-stoplight town

Move-in day at college was a momentous and terrifying experience. Stacked with the high expectations of my family as the first person to go to college was also the fear of failure. Before I ever entered a classroom, I was convinced that, because of who I was and where I was from, I stood no chance. How could trailer park trash compete with classmates whose parents (and grandparents and everyone else in their family) had attended college and landed jobs with insurance and

retirement plans? Classmates who bought their books without having to wait on refund checks. Classmates with more than a week's worth of clothes. Classmates who didn't bring their extended family (aka the many roaches that found their way into the few bags and boxes I'd packed) on move-in day. Classmates who walked around campus with confidence in where they were, what they were doing, and how they were doing it.

The Ivory Tower, as it turned out, was a beast to be reckoned with. It was vastly different from the TV show that initially inspired my journey there. Every other semester I changed my major. I actually had to study to get good grades (who knew?). Everything was expensive. An eating disorder and dealing with past hurts impacted my work. There was a period during college when, looking back, I struggled long and hard with binge drinking. I waited too long to check out the counseling center and did not find out I could get food stamps until my senior year. Fear-based procrastination and imposter syndrome kicked my entire ass. I ended up quitting at one point. Not because of grades or

anything. I just did not believe in myself. I was also physically exhausted from four jobs and a full load of classes.

Somehow, at the same time, I thrived in college. When I returned to college after a hiatus of waitressing and cleaning toilets to save money to go back, I limited myself to two or three jobs. I became a RA and student leader in various campus organizations. Though barely, sometimes, I always kept my GPA above a 3.0. I traveled and learned and partied and made some of the best friends I've ever known. I finally walked across the stage and celebrated with my family over a KFC meal deal, my Momma crying a little every so often.

I ended up going to grad school and pursuing a career in higher ed. Like so many in the field, I became inspired by the people that worked on campus who helped and supported me along my way. My work study supervisors who taught me to play ping pong, create mail merges, make copies for professors and other work studyish tasks. The ladies in the caf who always let me in after I had used up all my meals for the week. My bosses in housing—an amazing set of folks that I learned so much from. Everyone in the English

and History departments (they were my people, lol). My advisors who put up with my inability to make up my mind. The janitors who looked out when I needed toilet paper or a cigarette or a friendly person to talk/cry to. Campus Police for holding me accountable that one time. The counseling center. My Dean of Students... without whom the trajectory of my life might not have spun this way. She saw in me a light I never knew I had and created opportunities I didn't know I needed to be successful in a field I knew little about. These people—and so many more—were key in helping me succeed and graduate. These people are us!

I say all that to say this: college is hard. Not just for poor folks, either. It is rough for a variety of reasons. For some, it is a completely different world from the one they lived in prior to move-in day. The work we do as student affairs practitioners is important. Yes, it can sometimes be daunting and thankless and low key doesn't pay super well (in my experience). But, it's damned important. It's also fun, rewarding and meaningful most days. In each interaction we have with students there is an opportunity to be kind, supportive, and helpful. There's a moment during which you can

positively influence their growth and development. We never fully know what students are going through or what they have overcome in the past. What we do know is that we are in the position to enhance their future and challenge them to become a better version of themselves every day.

Looking back on my time as a student and working in housing, I think that there are some key ways in which we can assist students who grew up in poverty (or any student, really). While none of the following is groundbreaking, I do have a few takeaways that I'd like to share with you:

Be nice. Nothing turns a student off quicker than a bad attitude. You may have been asked the same question or dealt with the same issue a hundred times, but for the student you are helping may be facing the issue for the first time and in need of your help. Be nice, folks. It really makes a difference!

But don't be too nice. You can't do everything for students, but you can challenge and support them (shout out to Sanford). Set firm expectations and push students to meet them.

Advocate for your students. A-D-V-O-C-A-T-E, for those of you in the back. Stand up for them and work hard to create the best environment and experiences for them that you can.

Celebrate their success. This is so important. Positive reinforcement and recognition go a long way in cultivating strong student success outcomes. One of my students had a really hard class this past semester. She finally got an A on an assignment—that A is posted on my office door. Doesn't matter if it's large or small, meaningful, individualized recognition can go a long way!

Learn to see students from working class and/or first-generation backgrounds through an asset lens as opposed to a deficit lens. While they face challenges, they learn grit and gain talents that are so valuable and should not be overlooked. Empower your students to believe in their assets!

Create opportunities for student growth. Figure out the types of experiences your students need and how your office/department/division can provide that experience. Is your desk worker a marketing major? Do you need a revitalized marketing campaign for your office? Two birds, one stone. If you can, provide money, room and/or board in exchange for their work.

Work on really knowing how growing up in poverty affects students. Everything hits differently when you grow up poor. Everything. Too much to go into here but check out Restricted Opportunity Theory or other theories on poverty. Those focused on poverty as a systemic issue are insightful as there are often many intersecting issues that create and promote poverty.

Push yourself. Stay up to date on higher ed and student trends. Take advantage of conferences, journals and whatever developmental opportunities to become a better professional. Not only will you enhance your own knowledge and skills, but you'll also be setting a good example for your students.



Be nice to yourself. You can't be 100% for everyone all the time. Some days you have it and some days you don't. Physiologically we tend to dwell on the bad more than we celebrate the good as a survival technique to avoid negative experiences in the future. That can set you up for negative thought patterns which are no fun for anyone. Celebrate yourself and give yourself a break when needed. USE your vacation days!



Be vulnerable with your students. Connect with them outside of the standard office-oriented interactions. You may be able to inspire them by being candid about your journey through college. Remember that boundaries are important though. They don't need to know about... well, you know what they don't need to hear. Use good judgement on this one, folks.

Long story short—be a good support system for your students. *They* need you. *We* need you.

Meet the Author: Amanda Morales



Amanda Morales grew up in rural South Carolina. In her free time, she enjoys hanging out with family, traveling, fishing and reading. Amanda's current research interests are in educational access/equity, poverty theory, and student leadership development. Morales obtained a BS in History from Francis Marion University and a MS in College Student Personnel Services from Arkansas State University. Sunsets, long hikes, deep conversations and anything fun are a few of her favorite things. She is a proud member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., and currently serves as the Director of Housing at Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi.

ARKANSAS SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT:



**University of
Central Arkansas**



**GO
PURPLE
LIVE
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Founded in 1907, The University of Central Arkansas is a premier learner-focused public comprehensive university, that is nationally recognized leader for its continuous record of excellence in undergraduate and graduate education, scholarly and creative endeavors, and engagement with local, national, and global communities. Just a bit of history for you: from 1907 – 1924, UCA was known as Arkansas State Normal School, then from 1925 – 1966, it was renamed the Arkansas State Teachers College, then from 1967 – 1975, it was named State College of Arkansas and finally from 1975 to present, we have the name University of Central Arkansas.

This long standing university is located in Conway, Arkansas, which is known as the City of Roundabouts. It has around 26 roundabouts, and the city is looking to get about 6 more. Along with roundabouts, Conway is famous for their mom and pop shops and different nature trails, which is no surprise considering Arkansas is known as the Natural State.

Within this university lies a vibrant Housing & Residence Life Department. Having an on-campus living population of about 3,000 students, UCA's HRL Department provides ample opportunities for live-on students to grow professionally and personally throughout their academic career. This can be seen by the 5 Residential Colleges that are available for students to enroll into – STEM at Arkansas Hall, EDGE at Hughes Hall, Biz at Bear, STARS at Short/Denny and HPaw at Baridon. Additionally, the department prepares their graduate assistants, known as Residence Coordinators, effectively to take on the student affairs world ahead. Residence Coordinators run the day-to-day operations of their residence halls and apartment complexes and have full authority about what programming activities they can carry out. They truly work hard to ensure their residents and student staff members are DOING IT LIKE A BIG BEAR! One of the big events hosted by the department is its annual Exam Jam & Late-Night Breakfast each semester which really creates that welcoming environment for students who choose to live on campus. Always remember, at UCA, you can go here, go anywhere and **ALWAYS DO IT LIKE A BIG BEAR.** #GoBears

Oklahoma School Spotlight:

Oklahoma State University



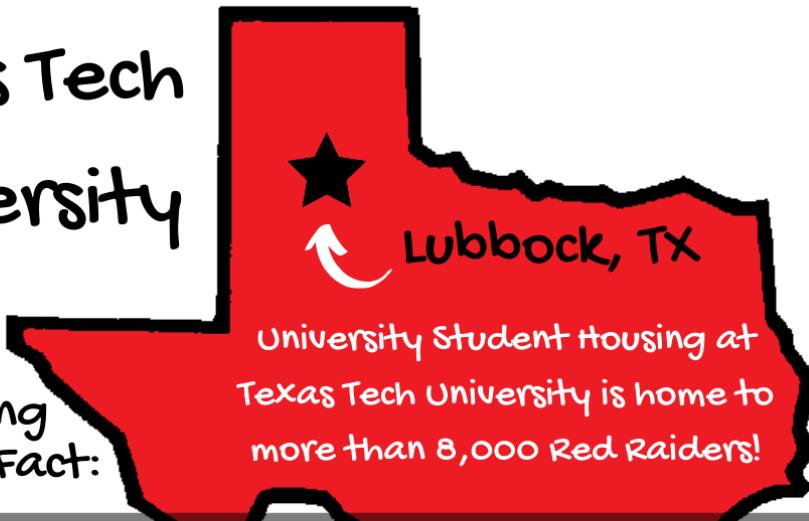
In addition to the over 5,000 students living in traditional single housing, OSU also offers neighborhoods for families and graduate students (FGSH) and opportunities through its Family Resource Center. Connecting with students interested in education, FRC provides afterschool care for school age children as well as daytime adult learning for family members in topics like cooking, computer science, parenting and language. There are also monthly events to connect residents to both community and OSU resources in addition to neighborhood family dinners and a complimentary shopping shuttle. FRC has continued to provide for its residents during this time of social distancing.

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Texas School Spotlight:

Texas Tech University

Interesting
Housing Fact:



University Student Housing at Texas Tech University is home to more than 8,000 Red Raiders!

The Texas Tech University Recycling Center, operated by University Student Housing, recycled over 855 tons of material in fiscal year 2019. Both the campus and the community contribute to the materials gathered, and all proceeds from the recycling center go to student scholarship funds.

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MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE



Zachary Love, LMFT, M.A., M.S.
Residential Community Educator
Oklahoma State University

A little about me: I grew up in Fort Worth, TX. I went to Pepperdine University in California as a pre-med major and am proud to say I graduated with my B.S. in Sports Medicine - one of the hardest things I've done (not B.S. at all). I have my M.S. in Ministry and my M.A. in Clinical Psychology with an emphasis in Marriage/Family Therapy. I am thankful for the mentors and professionals of Student Affairs that helped guide me toward Housing and Residential Life. I'm glad to be back in the SWACUHO region now and that student affairs welcomes people from many different backgrounds. I was a Resident Director for 5 years at Pepperdine University and have been a Residential Community Educator (Area Coordinator) at Oklahoma State University for the past 2 years.

Lately I've been processing this time that is COVID-19. We as student affairs professionals are very good at encouraging and teaching students about self-care. **However, do we practice what we preach?**

I don't have to give you examples because we could come up with thousands of ideas. It's taking the time for self-care and encouraging leadership to create practices that promote this as well. Since many of us have been working from home, we have been given the time to practice self-care in an anxiety-provoking time. I love this current generation because they are more open and vulnerable about mental health. The Associated Press did a study which showed that since 2014, the number of students receiving mental health at universities in the US has grown by 35% and in 2018, 1 in 10 students were seeking help. This is not because of higher enrollment, which has only grown by 5%.

It was also in college when I saw a therapist for the first time and realized I struggle with anxiety, and later this year was diagnosed with adult Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): predominantly Inattentive type which I probably unknowingly struggled with most of my life. I share this not only to be vulnerable with you, my student affairs colleagues, but also to highlight anxiety in our own lives,

especially at this time. The great news about working for an institution of higher education is that most likely you have access to counseling as well through your benefits. By next month I will try to find a statistic of how many employees are actually taking advantage of this benefit. We have an amazing Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at OSU and an even more amazing psychologist on campus who serves university employees, Dr. Tamara Richardson. OSU uses ComPsych as their EAP, and each employee can receive 6 "free" sessions (not actually free since it comes out of our paycheck) per situation per year. Now I'm not saying that everyone needs to see a therapist/counselor all the time, but my dream would be that everyone would see it as we see a doctor which is suggested to visit at least once a year. Why not use the 6 sessions every year in my case? Most counseling services offer telehealth, and Dr. Richardson doesn't even have a waitlist at this time. I encourage you to find out what your benefits are and practice what you preach. If possible, I'd love to hear what your university offers employees as counseling resources. Let us know!

5 Tips for Coping & Managing your Stress During COVID-19

By: Elizabeth R. Webb, MS. Ed
University of North Texas
Professional Development
Committee Co-Chair



By now, we are all used to our new virtual reality. Zoom and Microsoft Teams meetings, wearing masks everywhere we go, and staying indoors. Our way of life has changed. For some, they can't see their loved ones, some have to adjust to working from home and blurring the lines of work life balance, and some are trying to find a balance of just being okay. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have some tips for taking care of not only yourself, but your community.

Maintain a routine.

As we get further into stay-at-home orders that could possibly stretch into the summer months, it is important to stick to a schedule, keep active, and have a routine that keeps your mind busy.



Recognize your feelings.

Understand that feeling this way is okay. If you are tired, take a nap. If you need to have a cry, then cry. Your feelings are valid during this uncertain time.



Connect with others.

In this new digital world of Zoom, check in on each other. Host watch parties, start a virtual book club, exercise together or host food parties. We don't have to remain cut off from everyone just because we are stuck in doors.



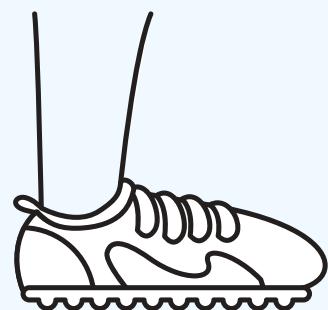
Stop and take a break.

Take a break from watching, reading, or listening to the news whether on social media or the television. It is so easy to get wrapped up in the news. Don't. Instead, pick up that book you've been meaning to read. You might find your stress level drop with the turn of the first page.



Take care of your body.

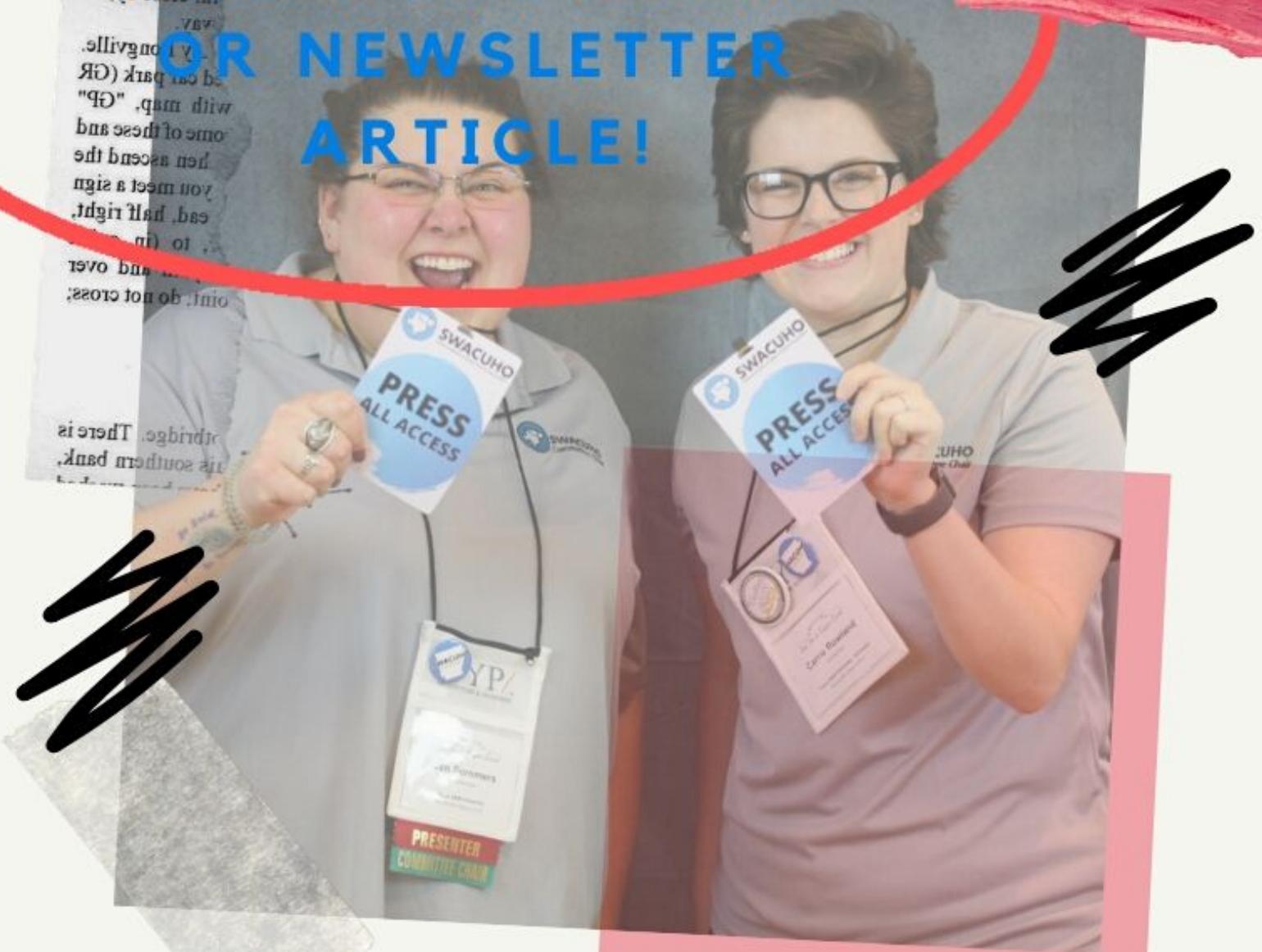
If you are a gym fanatic, keep up your exercise routine, eat healthy and find a balance of being active so you can get a good night's rest. If you're not a gym fanatic, that's okay too. This could be the perfect opportunity to start by just walking around your block.



Learn more at www.cdc.gov.

Submit your information by 6/15/20 to make the June Issue!

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