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**CHALLENGE DAY NAMES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LAURA CHAVEZ TAKES THE HELM OF THE GROWING NONPROFIT**

Rich and Yvonne Dutra-St John the founders of **Challenge Day** had a dream, 30 years ago, to bring people together, not just in tolerance, but in love; to unite people of all different backgrounds; to create connections where there once was conflict; to promote peace in the face of pain and to create a world where everyone feels safe, loved and celebrated. After a 2-month intensive search, Challenge Day is pleased to announce the selection of Laura Chavez as its new Executive Director.

“We are excited to have Laura lead the Challenge Day organization. She has an extensive background in social justice work and has been a friend of Challenge Day for many years, including bringing it to her former employers LPS Richmond and Columbia University in the City of New York. We look forward to her continuing to serve our important mission and increase the impact of Challenge Day,” says Rachel Sheinbein, Board Co-President.

Laura Chavez brings twenty years of nonprofit management experience to Challenge Day. An educator and counselor, Laura has worked in at-risk, low-income communities her entire career.

As a high school counselor, Chavez counseled 400 students at LPS Richmond resulting in a 100% acceptance rate into college. At LPS Richmond, Laura experienced Challenge Day curriculum as a coordinator and felt deeply impacted. She went on to lead the Upward Bound program at Columbia University in the City of New York, directing college access and career exploration for high school students in Harlem and Washington Heights.

Most recently, she led operational programming at the Mission YMCA including after school, pre-school and senior programming. In her role as the Associate Executive Director at the Mission YMCA, she grew the operational budget by \$2.5 million through grant writing, donor solicitation and special events.

A graduate from San Francisco State University, she holds a dual master’s degree in School Counseling and Marriage and Family Therapy. Laura lives in San Francisco with her wife Cheryl and daughters Ava and Alina.



She is excited to join the staff at Challenge Day and looks forward to leading the organization and its mission to strengthen the emotional safety of youth while celebrating diversity, truth and full expression.

About Challenge Day:

Challenge Day is a memorable experiential program that has reached more than 1.5 million youth and adults since 1987. The day-long experience strengthens emotional safety and social relationships, positively influences educational achievement, builds cross cultural connections, and reduces conflict and bullying.

Challenge Day has taken place in more than 2,200 schools throughout 48 U.S. states, in 10 countries including much of Canada, The Netherlands, Belgium, and several others. The program has reached more than 1.5 million kids and adults on the ground in schools and communities, and millions more through legendary televised programs. Challenge Day has been featured twice on Oprah, in the 2010 Tom Brokaw documentary called Bridging the Divide, and in the 12-episode MTV series If You Really Knew Me in 2010. The Dutch documentary, Over de Streep (Cross the Line) aired for five seasons.