

Amber Tovar
Director of Culture, Outreach & Campaigns

As the Director of Catalyst Cares, Amber Tovar is committed to carrying forward the vision and mission set forth by founders Damian Martin and Elliot Lewis. Prior to being named Director, Amber Tovar established her tenure during the pandemic and on the front lines of the Catalyst retail stores.

Just as the majority of the hotel industry, Amber found herself laid off from a successful sales career and no understanding of when the industry would be invited back. With 2020 being Amber's second time being laid off due to the economic downturn as well as experiencing company profits over employees/partnerships, Amber needed to find something that was more in line with her personal mission.

"While I was negotiating cancellation clauses as a result of the pandemic, Elliot was fighting to keep employees essential. Elliot was fighting to bring medication to patients; Elliot was promoting a culture of inclusion, activism and volunteerism."

After seeing a Open Front Desk position at the Catalyst - Cherry location, Amber applied and was hired for Catalyst - Eastside which was the first store to open under the Catalyst name since rebranding from Connected. In November with the election, Amber attended her first canvassing event and then a clean-up. With Eastside being the new store, Amber had the opportunity to meet quite a few people from HQ and cannabis industry vendors.

"It was a front row seat into understanding - was it all hype or is what is on IG really being implemented."

Catalyst is not only about uplifting the community but upward mobility. Amber didn't know what role she could fill but knew the role she wanted to fill was with Catalyst. Amber enrolled in Introduction to the Cannabis Industry at LBCC; completed a Certificate in Human Resource Management as well as received her SHRM-CP with an intent of becoming versatile and nimble to opportunity.

After ten months and completing Catalyst inaugural career development program, Amber was invited to interview for the Catalyst - Eastside General Manager position.

"Catalyst - Eastside is not the highest grossing store but it is the epitome of what Elliot was talking about on IG - located in an intercity residential neighborhood, literally has two residential neighbors; 10 small businesses within a 150 foot radius as well as a social equity delivery partnership. I made it my mission to ensure Catalyst - Eastside was the most compliant shop with regards to DCC, city and state regulations as well as that we were an active partner in the Long Beach community. It was as the GM at Eastside that I was able to not only prove my business acumen and employee management skills but begin taking a leadership role with the Catalyst Cares Program."

With Catalyst's exponential growth, Amber focused on developing her team for upward mobility while also ensuring that the Eastside community knew that Catalyst was a "good neighbor; we just happened to sell weed". Eastside's Catalyst Cares Ambassadors hosted clean-ups, essential drives and led the team to build a float for the Long Beach Pride Parade and they continue to actively work with Districts 2 and 6 to have a crosswalk added to the busy street that neighbors, customers and employees cross everyday.

After a year and upon a reorganization of the Catalyst Cares Leadership Team, Amber was invited to join as a Catalyst Cares Manager to project manage and reorganize the community outreach team. With the promotion starting month's before the National Election, Amber was quickly invited to help on the active policy initiatives. Amber received a quick tutorial of what the mission was and less than a month later the various policy teams won 8 of the 12 initiatives on the ballot. It was shortly after that Damian and Elliot promoted Amber to Director of Culture, Outreach and Campaigns.

"It is truly an honor to lead the #WeedForThePeople Movement for Catalyst Cares Team."

Amber focuses on strategic partnerships with city leadership, ensuring communities' love and want Catalyst in their city. In her first quarter as Director, Amber and the team were able to meet all retail stores community benefits agreements, host the first in-house holiday giveaway of 300 trees and over 700 toys to children and families in Normandie and the Long Beach - Eastside communities and Miller Children's Hospital in Long Beach. With a solid and diverse team, Catalyst Cares now hosts monthly cleanups, necessities drives, blood drives SB34 Veterans events. Live scan/expungement clinics and even had an Eastside Cherry Kickball Game. But with all of this, Amber's top priority remains New Hire Orientation as well as participates in retail store visits to ensure the culture of inclusion, activism and volunteerism remains as infectious as it has been for her over the last three years.