

Danielle M. Lopez
Senior Community Outreach Manager

As the Catalyst Cares Senior Community Outreach Manager, Danielle Lopez innately has the drive and the passion to play an intricate role in the #WeedforthePeople Movement. Prior to being named Senior Community Outreach Manager, Danielle established her tenure on the front lines of the Catalyst retail stores and was one of the first activists participating in Catalyst Saturdays.

"I was born in Honolulu, Hawaii with my formative years in Bremerton, Washington until growing up in my parents' hometown Montebello, CA. Growing up in a family of five; my Mother is a passionate and compassionate woman who has made a successful career in social work and student counseling, and my Father is a second generation US Navy Seabee Veteran who has continued his devotion to all of his fellow comrades by making sure their health and well-being are taken care of through his career with the US Department of Veteran Affairs. It is easy to say that I was raised in a household that taught me to be of service. As a true local to Montebello, I attended St. Benedict School, Montebello Intermediate, and graduated as an Oiler from Montebello High School while being raised on Tony's Deli, Broguiere's Dairy, and the Oroweat Bakery. Both my maternal and paternal grandparents loved their city, and since they were my caregivers until my parents returned home from work I was always tagging along with them to all their church and city community events. I had seen where my parents got their passion from and little did I know where that would lead me."

Danielle attended both Pasadena City College and East Los Angeles College and earned her certificate in Shakespearean Acting. Eager to pursue her acting career, Danielle began working in fine dining and hospitality as it offered flexibility most fields didn't, her income suffered. To stay afloat and afford books, Danielle began working a Front Desk Receptionist position at a *traditional* cannabis dispensary.

"I consumed cannabis medicinally to treat my sciatica--this is what sparked my interest to learn more about the plant so I was super excited to be at Front Desk and learn more! Like most shops during the Prop 215 days, my first shop was plagued by opening, raids and closing. But, the spark had turned to a flame, this did not stop me from working at my next shop and learning even more about cannabis, cannabinoids and how to best provide wellness for myself and the patients. After Prop 64, traditional shops and ownership lacked product knowledge and analysis, raids became more prevalent, consistency of hours decreased which meant stores had to go even farther down a rabbit hole."

In 2019, Danielle moved to Long Beach and formally entered the legal cannabis market prior to Catalyst Cannabis Co's rebrand from Connected.

"After attending my first recreational cannabis event, I learned that the Connected Cherry store was hiring a Front Desk Receptionist. With hope and hesitation to apply to my first legal recreational shop, I submitted my resume. I got the job and was so taken aback by how forward and progressive thinking this company was! They're unionized, offered benefits, social equity applicants are made a priority, Budtender Educations are expected, and appropriate uniforms! I felt safe for once."

As the Pandemic hit, Danielle was scared, unsure, but determined to see a light in this darkness.

"Our CEO, Elliot, was speaking more and more openly on Instagram talking about how important it was to have cannabis workers be made as essential workers and stressing the importance of community during this time. That was new and reassuring to hear. There was also the shock of, "Wow! This is my boss?"

And Catalyst Cares Saturdays began! Danielle would participate every Saturday. Catalyst Cares Saturdays were about every 4 to 6 weeks. Employees from all levels of the company would all participate in food drives and community cleanups all around LA County.

"I volunteered every time I had the chance--it was the most natural thing to do. It was just something I gravitated to and couldn't help but feel like I was really making a difference, like I was really helping, and that was priceless."

Danielle quickly progressed through the ranks of the retail stores from Front Desk Receptionist to Lead Budtender to Dispensary Manager with a docs on Brand Education and Partnerships. Danielle had a passion for both the plant as well as the role education played in the success of the retail store but also the success of aiding her patients and customers.

"I began to bleed Catalyst blue. I began to create a Training Guide of both company trivia/milestones as well as basic product knowledge for the budtenders."

When Catalyst Cares became a formal program in 2021, the Director at the time asked Danielle to interview. It was there that Danielle pitched the Catalyst Cares Ambassador Program. While that was not the opportunity to move to Headquarters in a leadership role, Danielle had definitely placed a seed within the department and was asked to join as one of the first five ambassadors. As the program was then implemented across all five stores, Danielle was avid about making sure her impact on the cannabis brand education events, military community as well as the policy initiatives that were coming to the forefront. In March of 2022, Danielle was promoted to Catalyst Cares Community & Campaign Organizer.

In less than a year, Danille has developed a strategic partnership with Weed For Warriors as well as worked with our purchasing and compliance department to not only write the SOP for an SB34 Event but implement a process that allowed us to help Veterans across our 17 store footprint. Today, this event is hosted monthly and provides drops for up to 75 Veterans a month with the largest event helping 200 Veterans at our Downtown Long Beach location. Danielle is not only the MC at most policy rallies but aids in organizing retail employees to *tell their story* in an effort to bring lower taxes; higher access. Danielle implements the Vision and Mission statements due to her passion for inclusion, activism and volunteerism. Danielle encourages that culture continues to grow across the company by co-hosting New Hire Orientation, in person visits at the store as well as managing our digital Newsletter and social media platforms. With all of this, the #WeedforthePeople movement will grow but will also remain true to Elliot Lewis and Damian Martin's Vision and Mission.