



Essence Hand

Essence was born in Gulfport, Mississippi to a dedicated mother, and active-duty military father. After a few years of traveling nationwide she settled in Belen where she immediately became a New Mexico native. During her secondary education she realized the importance of giving back to the community as she volunteered for the domestic violence and food bank shelters, completed annual food drives at the local high school, and provided Thanksgiving dinners (turkey included) to families in need all before becoming a Belen High graduate.

Her desire to help people didn't stop there as she completed a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry, and Bachelor of Science in Biology at the University of New Mexico. During her time as a student and after graduation, she conducted colon cancer research experiments utilizing various tumor cell lines from colon cancer cells to determine motility and point mutation. With the aid of her Research Assistant Professor, she became proficient in the cell culture and growth cycle of these cells and was able to publish a couple of abstracts in the Cancer Research Journal. This was all in the hopes of someday finding a cure for colon cancer.

Upon leaving Oncology Research, she became a specialist in Transportation Safety monitoring and regulating the calibration of Ignition Interlock devices for all ignition interlock service centers statewide. During this time, she was recognized as a Phase II candidate in development of the "Approcity" device app for ignition interlock programs nationwide.

Her true career began at the United States Air Force Research Laboratory, where after completing her Executive Master's in Business Administration at the University of New Mexico, she was able to draft purchasing contracts for satellites, spaceships, missiles, lasers, and nuclear support components. During this time, she was also able to revisit her philanthropic side by volunteering for United Way of Central New Mexico and Casa Esperanza. She currently sits on the board of both organizations as a Community Investment Council Board Member for United Way, and the Vice President of the Board for Casa Esperanza.

Essence is passionate about equal representation, diversity, and inclusion. Through her many life experiences as a minority, she has been able to perceive the impact of a single individual through words and actions. This helped her recognize the importance of having DE&I reflected in community involvement. A single individual can not only build relationships, but also help bridge the gap between organizational and cultural differences. Essence strives to be that individual to empower the community and elicit change one bridge at a time.