

805 CASTING

WINTER 2025

OJAI
LIVING
ACTING
& AUTISM

FROM '80S
STARLET TO
MOTHERHOOD
AND
REINVENTION

Helping
Locals All
Ages in
Creative Arts

Helping Veterans
in the Arts

Interviews with Locals

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Letter from the Editor

After living in Ojai for more than twenty years and raising my children there, I realized that there wasn't a place for people like me to truly connect — women, artists, professionals, and parents who share similar creative and personal journeys. Although I'm deeply grateful for all of the friendships I built while raising my two kids, I still found it difficult to network locally, especially while balancing life between Ojai and Los Angeles.

My background is in the entertainment industry, and motherhood has always been my greatest role. Over the years, I've worn many hats — launching several businesses in Ventura and Ojai in 2010 and 2012, producing independent projects for businesses, networks, and more under my media company, **G Plan Media**. Since 2018, I've produced numerous feature films and shorts throughout Ojai and Ventura, many of which have earned awards all over the world. Along the way, I've casted local talent and helped launch careers for emerging actors right here in our community.

Through my work with **Ventura Actors Studio**, I've had the joy of guiding many students who have gone on to work with directors, producers, fashion brands, restaurants, and hotels across Ojai, Ventura, and Los Angeles. My local students have also made appearances on network shows like 911 & Grey's Anatomy. For the past ten years, our casting branch, **805 Casting**, has been a trusted resource for local talent, and we're now expanding those opportunities as networks and studios continue to reach out more now.

Looking ahead, we're also launching a **Veterans Foundation for Actors** through Ventura Actors Studio and plan to produce films that address important topics like mental health. I've had the privilege of working with children and teens on the spectrum and have written about these experiences to encourage understanding and inclusion. Supporting families, veterans, actors, writers, artists and small businesses will always be at the heart of what we do.

This magazine was created to bring people together — to celebrate creativity, community, and the beautiful diversity of life in the 805. Our upcoming **Spring issue** will expand even further, featuring new sections on alternative lifestyles, tiny homes, and other inspiring stories of resilience and reinvention.

Many of the articles in this first issue were written by talented contributors from both Ojai and Ventura, and I couldn't be prouder of what's taking shape. My hope is that this publication becomes a platform for connection, collaboration, and inspiration — a place where we can all come together to share our stories, talents, and dreams.

I'm so excited to begin this journey with all of you — and I truly believe the best is yet to come.

Warmly,

Gina Nemo

Founder & Editor
805 Casting Magazine



Ojai's Own Teres Rochelle Brings Art and Heart to Every Role

Rooted in the natural beauty of a ranch near Lake Casitas in Ojai, California—where she was raised and still lives—Teres Rochelle is a multi-talented artist whose creativity knows no bounds. Her journey has taken her from dance and music to painting and film, weaving together a life rich in expression and passion.

While Teres began her creative path as a dancer and singer-songwriter, she has more recently made her mark in the world of film. She has appeared in several films and a national commercial, including the independent film *Shadow Farm*, where her powerful performance earned her Best Actress honors at a European film festival. Continuing to refine her craft, Teres is currently studying at Ventura Actors Studio, deepening her skills and expanding her presence in the entertainment industry.

Beyond acting, Teres brings her artistry behind the scenes as well—working with Gina Nemo on set as a Production Manager, contributing her eye for detail to set design, audio, wardrobe and production support. Her dedication to every aspect of filmmaking reflects her belief that true creativity comes from understanding all sides of the art form.

Though her acting career is flourishing, Teres remains grounded in her love for visual art. Her paintings are proudly displayed in professional medical offices and local spaces throughout Ojai, Ventura, and Camarillo. Each piece captures the same warmth, depth, and spirit she brings to her performances.

A girly tomboy at heart, Teres once balanced union carpentry and modeling at 19—and still treasures the vintage charm of her 1936 Ford pickup. Beyond her work, she devotes her days to caring for animals, spending time with loved ones, and finding beauty in the everyday.

Above all, Teres Rochelle believes life is a gift—and through her art, film, and creativity, she continues to share that joy with the world, always learning, growing, and inspiring others along the way.

Cosmo



TERES ROCHELLE



Every project, every role, every brushstroke—it's all part of one beautiful adventure.



THE VALLEY OF NATURAL WONDER: OJAI'S LIVING STORY

Story By: Jennifer Wolff-Gillispie HWP, LC

There is a valley in Southern California where the air feels ancient — not because of what has been built, but because of what has endured. Ojai sits cradled between mountain ridges that seem to breathe in unison with the sky, where every morning feels like a new conversation between earth and spirit. The Chumash people once called this place 'Awha'y, meaning "moon" or "nest," depending upon who you ask. The name itself suggests refuge — a sacred dwelling where the rhythms of earth and sky still move in harmony, reminding you that home is not a structure but a place to rest and remember where you came from.

At dawn, light filters through misty orchards of citrus and avocado, carrying the scent of sage and chaparral. Acorn woodpeckers flash red crowns as they dart between trees, stashing their treasures. The hills bloom with California poppies and lupine — hardy drought-tolerant blossoms renewed by fire. Monarch butterflies drift by on their coastal journey, and every sound — the trill of a hummingbird, the whisper of quail, the sigh of the wind — becomes part of an ecosystem tuned like an instrument in perfect pitch.

For decades, artists, seekers, and mystics have been drawn to Ojai — a kind of Shangri-La, where time slows, wisdom deepens, and the soul finds rest. Ojai embodies this not through artifice, but through its very landscape: the majesty of the mountains, the hush of the meadows, and the pulse of rivers. Visitors come to step back from the world, to reflect, create, and renew — moving and breathing in harmony with the land's enduring spirit.

This is Ojai.

The Hidden Lives of the Land

Ojai's flora tells a story of survival. Along the foothills grow sycamore, and manzanita — their roots gripping the hillsides like old hands. In spring, purple sage perfumes the canyons, while wild mustard turns entire slopes to glimmering gold; veiled beauty until the right season, when rain returns and the hills spring forth again with life.

Beneath the canopy, bobcats and gray foxes move silently, while raccoons and skunks weave through the underbrush. Black bears wander the higher ridges, coyotes patrol the valley floor, and mountain

lions cross the ridgeline at dusk — rarely seen but felt; shadows that keep the wilderness honest and untamed. In creeks, trout flash silver in the current, and frogs call from hidden pools. Above, red-tailed hawks trace the thermals, while dragonflies and hummingbirds drift between wildflowers — each species a note in a symphony tuned to resilience.

Ojai's fauna endures not because the valley resists change, but because it listens to it. Everything adapts. And as the land thrives in quiet balance, the people of the Ojai Valley feel an unspoken calling — a responsibility to preserve this living tapestry, to honor its rhythms, and to ensure the harmony of life continues unbroken.

Twisting Trails to Sentient Spaces

Some paths in Ojai are well-worn — the Shelf Road trail, or the climb up to Gridley Springs where the scent of orange blossoms mingles with dust and sweat. But others are quieter, hidden beneath the shade of sycamores or marked only by the solitude of stone.

Chief's Peak, sentinel of the valley, rises like a prayer. The steep trail threads through yucca and sagebrush to a summit where Los Padres stretches north — woodland and pine so vast it hushes the mind. Resin and earth fill the air; burn scars beside new shoots speak of impermanence and renewal.

Up on the high ridges, the valley opens into a view that feels less like a landscape and more like revelation — the mountains blushing rose and gold during the fabled "Pink Moment." For a few fleeting minutes, light seems to suspend time itself. It's a reminder that the sacred isn't always far away — sometimes it's simply sunlight passing through dust, illuminating what's already there.

To the west, Sulphur Mountain carries its own quiet power. Its switchbacks wind through groves and meadows where wild turkeys strut, the faint, mineral scent of its namesake lingering in the breeze. Few hikers venture there in the blistering heat of summer, but those who do are rewarded with a panorama that feels untouched — the Pacific glimmering faintly beyond the haze and, if you're fortunate, a glimpse of the mystical Channel Islands.

Near the town's heart lies Ojai Meadow Preserve

— a sanctuary of golden grasses and quiet water, where hawks circle overhead and turtles bask at the water's edge. In spring, the meadow hums with bees and blooms; in winter, the land is shrouded in a dreamlike hush. A looping trail invites reflection more than exertion — a reminder that stillness, too, is a pilgrimage.

Nearby, the Ventura River Trailhead begins a longer story — a ribbon of path following the old railroad grade toward the coast. In winter and spring, when the rains return, the Ventura River swells into rapids that roar with a sound half thunder, half applause. The water carves new channels each year, and from its banks you can watch egrets stalk the flooded shallows and tadpoles dart between reeds. By summer it recedes to a trickle, leaving smooth stones that tell of the river's restless moods.

Follow the river south and it gathers in part into Lake Casitas, a vast, shimmering reservoir cradled by foothills. At dawn, vapor rises from its surface while bald eagles nest high in the canopy.

The lake is abundant in fish, drawing anglers and quiet wanderers alike. Trails skirt its edge and campers settle beneath the oaks, their lanterns flickering like fireflies.

And then there are the lesser-known trails, whispered between locals — Matilija Canyon with its secret pools and hot springs, the glowing white Piedra Blanca formations, or the Sespe Wilderness, where

condors trace the sky with wings wider than a man's reach. These are the places where Ojai still feels wild and uncurated — a rarity in an ever-expanding world of concrete and noise.

Ojai as a Living Prayer

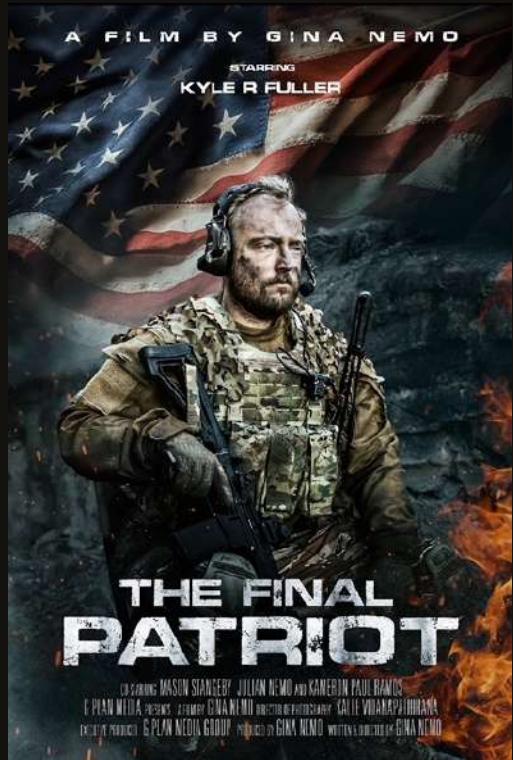
To explore the nature of Ojai is to remember that you belong to the earth, not the other way around. The valley teaches in whispers and exclamations — that fire cleanses yet renews, that drought deepens gratitude, that even in stillness there is movement. From the mourning doves calling in the canyon to the wild fennel that scents the roadside, everything here speaks the same quiet truth: presence is the path.

To walk these lands is to enter a sacred dialogue — not through doctrine or ritual, but through attention. Each step is an act of return, a remembering of the harmony set in motion long before us. The Divine is not distant here; it breathes through sunlight on the hillsides, the hush before rain, the rhythm of your own soul in response.

In a world rushing toward noise, this valley remains a sanctuary of root and breath. The mountains do not demand; they invite. And if you stay long enough — long enough to watch pink fade into indigo, long enough to feel the air cool around the sweltering earth — you begin to hear it: a calling for you to join in the beauty, the tranquility, and the natural legacy that is only Ojai.



Photo by Carlos D' Ceja



KYLE R FULLER

ACTOR & VETERAN



Kyle R. Fuller is a Ventura County native whose life experience brings real depth to the screen. A U.S. Marine Corps veteran, Kyle served four years in the military before stepping into the world of film and television. He now shares his expertise by teaching the VAS Military Workshop, helping actors portray military roles with authenticity and respect. Off-screen, he's spent the past three years as a dedicated volunteer Search and Rescue diver. Kyle stars in the award-winning film *The Final Patriot* and is also part of the lead ensemble in the comedy series *My Boomerang: The Series*, showcasing his versatility across genres with both grit and humor.



Southern California's Senior Living Scene: Boutique Charm vs. Residential Comfort

Written by: Paul Tavakoli



Ventura California's golden coast isn't just a haven for surfers and celebrities—it's also a thriving hub for senior living. With its year-round sunshine, vibrant cultural scene, and proximity to world-class healthcare, the region offers retirees a lifestyle that blends relaxation with enrichment. But for those exploring housing options, the choice often comes down to two distinct paths: intimate residential homes or expansive boutique senior living communities.

Residential care homes, often nestled in quiet neighborhoods, provide a cozy, family-style environment. These homes typically host six to twelve residents, offering personalized care in a setting that feels more like a private residence than a facility. Seniors enjoy home-cooked meals, one-on-one attention, and a slower pace that suits those seeking peace and familiarity. Many families choose this option for loved ones who value routine and close-knit companionship.

On the other end of the spectrum, boutique senior living communities in Ventura county offer a resort-like experience. These larger campuses—some with ocean views or nestled near the foothills—feature upscale

amenities like fitness centers, art studios, and gourmet dining. Residents can participate in yoga classes, wine tastings, gardening clubs, and even tech workshops. The social calendar is often packed, making it ideal for active seniors who thrive on engagement and variety.

Activities play a central role in both models. Residential homes may focus on intimate gatherings: morning walks, baking sessions, or movie nights. Boutique communities, meanwhile, host larger events such as concerts, cultural lectures, and intergenerational programs with local schools. Whether it's painting in a sunlit studio or dancing at a themed party, seniors in Ventura and Ojai have no shortage of ways to stay active and connected.

Choosing between these two paths depends on personality, care needs, and lifestyle preferences. Some seniors flourish in the quiet rhythm of a residential home, while others crave the stimulation and independence of a boutique setting. Fortunately, Southern California, specifically Ventura county offers a rich tapestry of options, allowing families to find the perfect fit for their loved ones.

“

From '80s Starlet to Motherhood and Reinvention

By Gina Nemo



EDITOR'S NOTE:

»»» Some lives read like a screenplay — full of glamour, detours, loss, and unexpected renewal.

I was once an '80s Hollywood actress, married into the DeLuise family, appearing alongside Johnny Depp on *21 Jump Street*. But when motherhood — and intuition — called, I traded the spotlight for small-town serenity. What followed wasn't a retreat, but a way to reinvent myself that proves success can always be rewritten.

THE LEAP OF FAITH

»»» It was early 2004, and the rain in Ojai was relentless. Mudslides, road closures — and yet, something inside me said go. We drove through the storm to see a mid-century home perched on a hill, surrounded by an avocado orchard and retro charm straight out of Palm Springs. The next morning, I made an offer.

“To most, it was a fixer-upper. To me, it was freedom.”

That house became our haven — the place where city noise faded and family life finally took center stage.

FINDING HOME IN OJAI

»»» Leaving Pacific Palisades felt crazy to my friends. Who gives up an ocean view for a quiet valley town? But I wanted connection, simplicity, and safety for our young children. My British husband liked that Ojai Valley School even had a British headmaster. It felt like a sign.

Our first dinner out told us everything we needed to know: dressed in black, the “L.A. look,” we walked into a local restaurant and heard a waiter whisper, “310.”

“That was the moment I realized: this was a small town — and I was ready for it.”

LESSONS FROM A HOLLYWOOD CHILDHOOD

►► I grew up in West Hollywood and Pacific Palisades surrounded by legends — Telly Savalas, Henny Youngman, Milton Berle, Barry White, Frank Sinatra and many others — thanks to my father, jazz composer Henry Nemo. It was a magical, chaotic childhood, but losing my mother young left an ache that shaped me.

“When I became a mom, I promised myself my kids would have the stability I’d missed.”

I didn’t want them growing up under studio lights; I wanted them chasing sunsets and the smell of orange blossoms.

REDEFINING SUCCESS

►► Even in Ojai, Hollywood tugged at us. My husband and I still ran a production company, juggling deadlines and studio calls. I learned to work remotely so I could pick my kids up from school.

And then one afternoon, a girl on horseback trotted past our driveway. My children froze, wide-eyed — city kids witnessing freedom.

That image became my anchor: **success wasn’t about red carpets anymore; it was about stillness, laughter, and being present.**

STARTING OVER

►► After a year in England (we rented our home for the year), we returned in 2009 to a different world — the economy struggling, the business changing. Eventually, my marriage ended, and I found myself rebuilding from the ground up.

By then, few in Ojai or Ventura knew my Hollywood past — my marriage to Dom DeLuise’s eldest son or my time on *21 Jump Street*. I stayed quiet about it. I wanted to live as *me* — not the actress, not the ex, just a mom finding her footing.

FINDING PURPOSE

►► In 2012, I launched **G Plan Media**, a production company that let me stay creative while raising my kids. With no family left to lean on, I built from



scratch — one project, one client, one late night at a time.

Then, unexpectedly, my daughter reignited my spark. After she appeared in a school play, she wanted to take acting lessons. When I couldn’t find a local class that fit, I started one myself — a small Monday-night group in Ventura.

It grew organically. Summer camps followed, and soon **Ventura Actors Studio (VAS)** was born.

“It started with one class... and turned into a community.”

Ten years later, VAS has trained actors who now appear on *Grey’s Anatomy*, *9-1-1*, many feature films and national commercials. Watching them succeed reminds me why I stayed in this business — to create, to mentor, to lift others.

CREATING COMMUNITY

►► Today, through **805 Casting**, my mission is to bring artists, small-business owners, and veterans together — to celebrate creativity and collaboration across generations.

This magazine is more than pages and profiles. It’s proof that reinvention is always possible.

“Your story doesn’t end when the credits roll — sometimes, that’s when it truly begins.”

Inspiration Box: Gina Nemo’s Advice on Reinvention

- **Trust your instincts, even when they don’t make sense on paper.**
- **Redefine success often — it changes as you do.**
- **When doors close, build a stage of your own.**

Eugenia Morales Bates

Eugenia Bates was born in Havana, Cuba, and after living all over the U.S., she made Ventura County her home. Raised by a Spanish teacher, she is fluent in reading, writing, and speaking Spanish—a skill she's used in many aspects of her life. After raising three boys and retiring from corporate America, Eugenia followed her creative instincts and discovered her true passion for performing.

Since training at Ventura Actor's Studio, she's landed principal roles in an episode of Gamma True Crime Series, a role in My Boomerang, and several locally aired commercials. Outside of acting, Eugenia is an avid adventurer who loves theater, music, sports, hiking, biking, water and snow skiing, and ziplining—recently enjoying a weekend ziplining through the redwoods in Sonoma. She's also hiked Patagonia and Machu Picchu and once served as a translator on Cuban airlift flights at 18. With a zest for life and a fearless spirit, Eugenia embraces every challenge that comes her way.



MARY KERRIGAN

Mary moved to Ventura County in 2013 with her husband, seeking a more natural setting and creative lifestyle. After twenty years being a psychotherapist and raising two children in the Washington, DC area, she finds living by the ocean refreshing and energizing. She enjoys music and directing a choir for a spiritual center, dancing, writing, yoga, meditation and teaching Tai chi as well as coaching people to develop more peaceful lives. She became interested in acting as a way to explore and express the full range of the universal human experience in a personal way.

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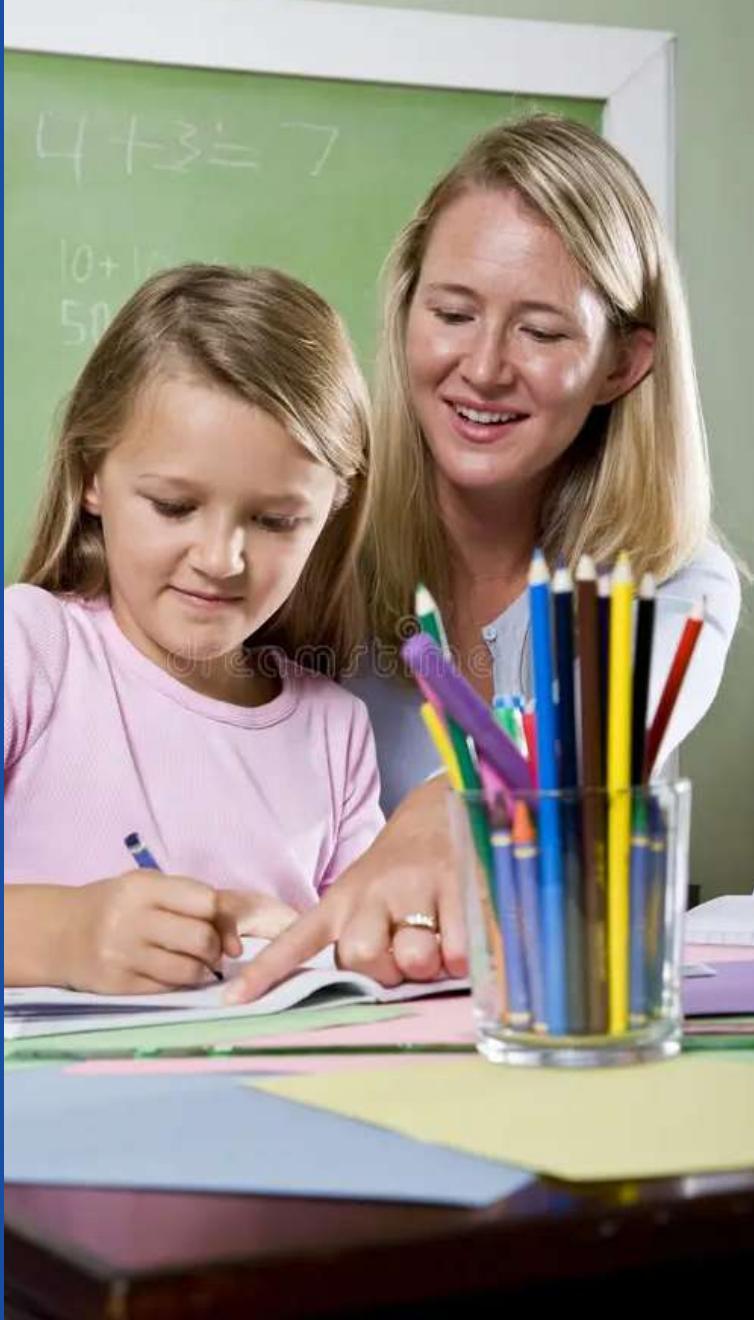
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ACTING & AUTISM

By Gina
Nemo

Working with students on the autism spectrum has been one of the most life-changing parts of my career. Each student teaches me something new — about patience, perception, creativity, and the power of connection. Every person who walks through my studio door brings a different story and a different rhythm, and together we find a way to make the work meaningful.

Every Student, a New Journey

When a new student comes in, I never quite know what to expect. *How will they process what I say? Will they enjoy the acting games and exercises I've created?* Most of the time, the answer is yes — though not always right away.

One of my students, a bright and funny thirteen-year-old who speaks his mind freely, once said as soon as he arrived, "No commercials today." I smiled and said, "What about scenes?" He thought for a moment and replied, "Okay."

Even though this young man struggles to be in groups, something changes when he starts reading his lines. Suddenly, he's focused and expressive — connecting through character and story. After months of one-on-one lessons, he brought his father to class. Watching them perform together was remarkable. His confidence had blossomed, and you could hardly tell he faced any challenges at all.

That kind of progress doesn't happen overnight. It comes from **trust**, **repetition**, and **patience**. Many of my students have spent years being

misunderstood or given up on when things get tough. I've had moments when I almost gave up too — but continuing forward has always been worth it.

“Once trust is built, real progress begins.”

Building Confidence Through Creativity

Recently, I worked with another teen whose lessons were sponsored by the county. For months, his focus and participation improved dramatically through acting training. Eventually, he decided to stop coming, which can happen, but I still consider it a success — for those months, he connected, expressed, and grew.

Another student started with me at thirteen and stayed for years. Today, he's thriving in television and film and attending college. When I see him perform, it's hard to believe he once struggled to make eye contact. Acting gave him confidence, purpose, and joy — and that's the magic I see again and again.

Why Acting Works

I've found that the best time to begin acting training for students on the spectrum is around age twelve or thirteen — especially in **private one-on-one sessions**. I'm not a doctor, but I've witnessed the changes firsthand. Acting exercises help develop focus, memory, emotional awareness, and communication skills.

Putting students on camera can be especially powerful. Over time, you can see the difference — in posture, tone, expression, and comfort.

Every student is unique. Some make quick progress; others move at their own pace. I've noticed that older teens, around fifteen or sixteen, sometimes find it harder to open up,



possibly because they've learned to navigate the world by closing themselves off. But even then, progress is possible with the right support and patience.

“Acting gives kids on the spectrum a safe space to express themselves — sometimes for the very first time.”

The Power of Consistency

For parents considering acting lessons for their child with autism, my best advice is simple: **commit to the journey**. Don't just "try" a few classes — give it time. Growth happens slowly, but it does happen.

Private lessons offer a safe space free from social pressure, allowing kids to express themselves in new ways and discover joy in performance. Consistency builds familiarity, and familiarity builds confidence.

When it clicks — when a student suddenly shines in a scene or laughs with pride after nailing a line — it's extraordinary. I've seen it many times over the years, and it never stops being inspiring.

“Consistency is key. Progress takes time, but when it happens, it's pure magic.”

Closing Thoughts

Acting is so much more than performing. For many students on the spectrum, it's therapy without feeling like therapy — a creative path to connection, confidence, and self-expression.

Every time a student with autism finds their voice in my studio, I'm reminded why I do this work. They teach me patience, perspective, and the beauty of small victories. And that, to me, is the greatest performance of all.

About the Author

Gina Nemo is the founder of **Ventura Actors Studio (VAS)** and **G Plan Media**, where she has spent decades coaching actors of all ages and experience levels. A former television actress known for her role on *21 Jump Street in the late 80's*, she now dedicates her work to mentoring performers and empowering youth through creative expression. Gina Nemo lives in Ventura County and continues to champion opportunities for local artists through 805 Casting and community programs.

LORRAINE KAISER

The Journey West

What first brought you to California, and how did your path shift from working in mental health to pursuing acting full-time?

I have always thought California was an amazing state, rich with culture and nature. I accepted an executive position with a healthcare organization in San Jose when I finally made the move. As much as I loved it up there, it was cold! I moved down to the LA area to partner with a different organization to create new, niche programs. I even organized a virtual rock concert to promote the center during the pandemic.

Working in mental health was taking a toll, so I started my own company to provide business services to healthcare organizations.

There was still something that lingered in my mind... something in my soul that needed satiety, and I realized it was performing. I made the jump in early spring 2024.

Following a Calling

You've said, "I'm an actor who has waited my whole life for this moment — so let's do this!" What does that moment mean to you now that you're living your dream?

I have always loved performing, writing plays in elementary school, memorizing lines from SNL and movies, and performing in plays in school. I was taught that acting isn't a money maker and I should focus on something that I can make a living doing. Plus, I lived in Texas and acting schools were hard to come by.

I made sure I had support from my husband and then made the move! I downloaded a well-known app and started submitting. I didn't even have a proper headshot; it was me in a white t-shirt against a white wall background. Wow! My first break came 2 weeks later in an AFI thesis film as a healthcare worker

at a mental health facility! Talk about serendipity- I knew I made the right choice, and I haven't looked back. I rarely say no to a job, because it's the best way to get experience. The few times I have, though, a better opportunity was waiting in the wings.

Purpose and Passion

How has your background in mental health influenced your approach to acting and the roles you take on?

I love this question because it has played a huge part. I have played a doctor, therapist or nurse over a dozen times in the last year. There's a sense of responsibility that comes with the stethoscope and I incorporate that into my character. I feel closest to these characters because I've worked around them for so many years- I owe it to them to get it right!

Overcoming Doubt

Making such a big career change takes courage. What helped you stay motivated and believe in yourself along the way?

I have tremendous support from my family and that keeps me motivated. I've put in hundreds of hours which means time away from them- so I need to make it count! To level up, I needed proper training in Method acting, more on set experience, and to figure out how to analyze a script for character development.

When I started, I felt like an imposter. But, as I built my toolbox, my confidence grew, and I was offered better and better roles. Suddenly, a few months ago, while working on set of a Dhollywood movie, I realized was at home and no longer felt like an imposter.

On Set Experience

You've worked in films, commercials, and more — is there a particular project that stands out as especially meaningful or memorable for you?



Before I answer that, I'm going to shout out to all the PAs out there- they're always so patient, knowledgeable and level-headed despite the chaos of filmmaking.

The projects that leave me feeling warm and fuzzy are the ones that I had the most fun on set. I've done a few international films and their crews are always professional and on schedule. One time, our location had to be changed and without skipping a beat, we were in a new spot filming a few hours later. That was right before the Palisades fire earlier this year. It was strange

because traffic was so bad, WAZE re-routed me through Malibu to get to DTLA. It was the last day Malibu looked that way- it was on fire the next morning.

That was the same movie that my scene partner was swapped out without my knowledge, so when we finished filming after the fires, I had to re-film my scenes from early January with a new actor. Our complementary chemistry made the scene more natural.

Mindset Matters

The entertainment industry can be unpredictable. How do you maintain balance and a healthy mindset while chasing your dreams?

Sometimes, waiting for the next role can be nerve wracking. I don't let it go to my head; I use the time to hone my skills. I take time researching characters via documentaries, taking an extra class like Military Weapon Skills for Actors by Exile Acting, or even reciting monologues as the protagonist and antagonist to get a different feel.

I'm also a nature lover and a bit of a gym rat. Making sure my body is healthy makes way for my mind to follow.

Inspiration

Who or what inspires you most — either in your work as an actor or in life in general?

My husband inspires me everyday. Years ago when we were dating, he set some important goals. Despite some major hurdles, he accomplished them. There's a lot to be said for perseverance and resilience.

There's always an honorable mention for my mom, too. Her candle blew out over 20-years ago, so I make sure my flame burns bright enough for us both..

Defining Success

What does success look like to you now, compared to how you might have defined it earlier in your life or career?

That definition has indeed changed over the years. I used to think success was a healthcare executive at the top of the ladder. As the years go by, relationships change, the world changes. My definition of success today is Happiness. I find happiness in the things I can do with my family and friends, not a title.

Advice for Dreamers

What would you say to someone who's thinking about taking a leap of faith to follow their passion, no matter how unexpected the path?

3 words: GAMBLE ON YOURSELF

Looking Ahead

What's next for you — any upcoming projects, goals, or dream roles you're excited to share with our readers?

I wrapped two feature films earlier this year, both in post-production. A Western Commercial was just released for an audio company, and I'm filming a movie in Ventura soon, another independent film in Los Angeles soon, and a commercial next week. I co-host a monthly show called Splattervision where we review gory splatter movies- it's a lot of fun!

My goal is to be cast as a quirky doctor on a network show and a powerful woman in a feature film, a la Halle Berry in John Wick 3.

SANDY LIPKIN
PATENT
AND
TRADEMARK
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- ✓ Creative Direction & Content Planning
- ✓ Launch Prep & Digital Systems
- ✓ Ongoing Brand Consulting

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**RUSSEL
DONAHUE**

Starting Out

What inspired you to start your digital marketing company, and what motivated you to focus on helping entrepreneurs grow through social media and storytelling?

Ko-Create began as a passion project. I've always been fascinated by stories—how they shape connection, trust, and meaning. Before marketing, I was immersed in creative and healing work, and I saw so many talented entrepreneurs struggling to be seen because they didn't know how to tell their story in a way that truly resonated. I started Ko-Create to bridge that gap—to help small business owners translate their purpose into stories that attract aligned clients. Storytelling isn't just a marketing tool—it's the heartbeat of connection. Whether it's through social media, video, or conversation, story is what moves people.

Building a Brand

How did you develop your company's unique approach to combining marketing strategy, creativity, and personal storytelling?

For me, story is the strategy. Every piece of content, every visual, every system we build begins with a narrative—the why behind the brand. When that foundation is clear, creativity flows naturally and strategy becomes simple. We mix data-informed marketing with intuition and empathy so that brands don't just look good online—they feel good to the people they serve.

The Digital Space

Social media changes so quickly—how do you stay ahead and keep clients' content fresh?

We build algorithm-proof roadmaps. Instead of chasing every new feature or trend, we focus on timeless principles—connection, clarity, and consistency. When you know your message, who you're

speaking to, and how you help them, you can stay steady even as the platforms evolve. We stick to what works, refine it often, and measure success by relationships built, not just reach.

Supporting Entrepreneurs

What common challenges do small business owners face online?

Small business owners wear every hat—CEO, accountant, HR, social media manager. It's a lot. Many short-circuit because they're trying to do it all while navigating a sea of online noise. The challenge isn't just showing up—it's getting people to stop the scroll long enough to hear your story. That's why a strong, clear message matters so much—it's what cuts through the noise and builds connection.

Storytelling with Purpose

What does authentic storytelling mean to you, and why is it so powerful?

We all love to hear other people's stories. They make us feel seen and understood. A true story builds trust faster than any sales tactic—it turns strangers into loyal supporters. When you lead with honesty, vulnerability, and service, storytelling becomes the bridge between who you are and who you're here to help.

Community Impact

How has being part of this community shaped your work with local clients?

I'm a natural connector—I love meeting people, hearing their stories, and finding ways we can lift each other up. Ventura County has such a collaborative energy; everyone has their own gifts. When we come together—creatives, healers, entrepreneurs—we create sustainable growth for the whole community. I believe business can be beautiful when we all rise together.

Lessons Learned

What do you wish you'd known when you started?



That this would turn into a full-time passion and that I'd love it as much as I do. I've learned the importance of balance—getting a lot done in a small amount of time so I can still be present for my family and enjoy life outside of work. If I can take something off another business owner's plate and help them reclaim that same balance, that's a win-win.

Inspiration & Motivation

What keeps you inspired day to day?

Win-win moments—seeing clients stay consistent, feel less stressed, and finally see their business grow in ways that feel aligned. That ripple effect of calm confidence keeps me inspired.

Looking Ahead

What's next for Ko-Create?

We're continuing to grow in thoughtful, intentional ways—expanding our community,

refining our systems, and staying true to what we do best: helping entrepreneurs share their stories with clarity and confidence. A big focus for us right now is finding the gaps—whether in marketing systems, client workflows, or even the balance between personal and professional life—and creating solutions that make everything run smoothly again. When those pieces click into place, business starts to feel lighter, more aligned, and a lot more sustainable.

IG @kocreatemarketing and website

www.kocreatemarketing.com

KoCreate Founder Kristen O'Briant Fickeisen

ko-create
MARKETING + DESIGN

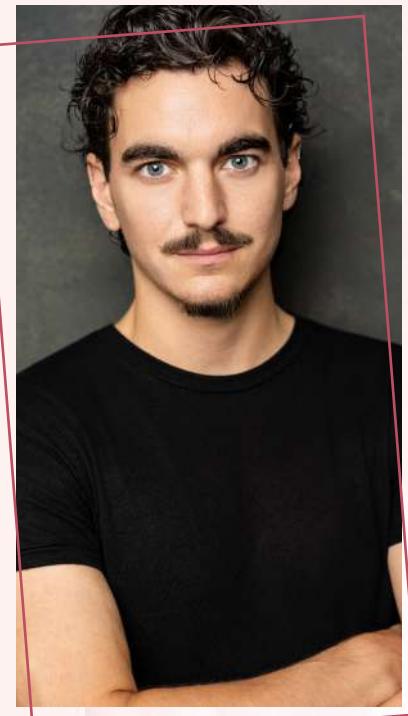
Isabella D'Burke Tyler Hudson



Isabella and Tyler met as Division II collegiate athletes and quickly discovered a shared passion for acting and storytelling. They married in 2022 and spent time living in Scotland, where immersing themselves in new cultures fueled their creative pursuits. In 2024, they made Ventura, California, their home. Both are drawn to dramatic work in fantasy, sci-fi, action, and period pieces, and they thrive on collaborating as partners both on and off screen.

Isabella D'Burke is a dynamic actress who began her screen journey after moving to Ventura County in 2024. She trains at Ventura Actor's Studio under Gina Nemo and has already appeared in several short films. With over five years of professional experience in musical theater and stage productions, her passion for storytelling and deep character work has been lifelong.

In addition to her acting work, Isabella brings 20 years of piano and vocal training, 10 years of flute, and more than 15 years of competitive dance across eight styles. She also has a diverse athletic background, including collegiate track and cross country, boxing, and martial weapons training with swords, axes, and firearms. Whether on stage or screen, Isabella approaches every role with intensity, discipline, and a commitment to constant growth.



Tyler Hudson is Minnesota-born and Ventura County-based since 2024, where he trains at Ventura Actor's Studio under Gina Nemo. After college, he began acting and quickly discovered a passion for storytelling on screen. Tyler started his career appearing in a Netflix series in Minnesota and has since taken on several short films in Southern California, including a lead role in a drama.

A former collegiate athlete and lifelong musician, Tyler brings both discipline and creativity to his craft. With hand-to-hand combat training and a commanding physical presence, he's drawn to roles that showcase his dramatic range and athleticism.

MANDY LUCILLE COLEMAN

Mandy is a true character — on stage, on screen, and in life. After moving from Flint, Michigan to Ventura in 2013, she has worn many hats: neurophysiology technician, autism support worker, designer, editor, content creator, and now actress.

Her acting career kicked off with voiceover work as a live radio personality, performing six different characters. These days, she can be found with Ventura's theater community, acting for film and television, and cracking people up with her natural comedic timing.

When she's not on stage or on set, Mandy is either recording in her sound booth, weight training, or creating funny skits with friends. She's also a proud pet parent to two senior dogs and grateful for the constant support of her partner, a military veteran.



Vanessa Angelique

Based in Los Angeles, **Vanessa Angelique** is an actor whose creativity and curiosity continue to shape her journey in film and theatre. She began her training in the **Meisner Method** at **Ventura College**, where she earned her **Associate's Degree in Theatre Arts** with an emphasis in performance. She has also completed specialized workshops with casting director **Skyler Zurn**. Always eager to grow, she continues her professional development through the **Master Class program at Ventura Actors Studio**.

Vanessa's recent work includes a recurring role as **Scarlet Steele** in *My Boomerang: The Series* (G Plan Media). She was also recently cast in *A Grand Guignol: Theatre of the Macabre*, a production of three original one-act plays inspired by the famed French theatre style that blends **horror and dark comedy**.

Outside of acting, Vanessa finds inspiration in **travel, black-and-white photography, dancing, exploring bookstores**, and watching anything directed by **Tim Burton**. With each new role and creative pursuit, she continues to bring imagination, dedication, and a touch of the unexpected to her art.

Cosmo



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