

A portrait of Cina Thompson, a woman with short, dark, curly hair, smiling. She is wearing a red blazer and a gold chain necklace. The background is a blue wall with some equipment.

A NOURISHING PRESENCE

Cina Thompson

by Rachel Fenton

Nothing grows without nourishment. A garden needs water and healthy soil, a child needs care from those around them, and even a city needs people who come together to support its infrastructure and community. Careers are no different – they flourish best through mentorship. Cina Thompson has a successful career that over its course spanned two different industries, but to her, the mentorship she's both given and received is the most impactful part of her job. "Those have been my proudest moments...being able to pour into others. I'm so grateful to be able to have the opportunity to do that," she said. She also humbly credits many of her accomplishments to the support of her managers and mentors. "I had so many people who took time to help me grow," she said. "Mentorship has been huge in my success."

A life-long Stocktonian, Cina began her career as a call representative for Blue Shield of California, and from there began growing into leadership roles at the encouragement of colleagues and supervisors. She ended up being a manager for their Medicare clients, keeping her department running and developing strong relationships with their clients and staff alike. "[What] I loved the most was the engagement and the relationship and the community aspect of things," she said. When she began looking for a career change to continue expanding and growing her professional skills, a position opened up at Republic Services that had everything she was looking for in a new job, and she accepted immediately.

Although the transition from health care to waste management might seem strange to some, the two are connected more closely than one might think. "I'm passionate about leaving people and spaces better than when you found them," she said, something that both healthcare and waste management services have in common. Her current position as a municipal manager encompasses many different skillsets, most of them communally focused. "I work closely with government officials, leaders, businesses, and the community just to meet the increasing and evolving needs, and strengthen those relationships so we can together make a meaningful impact," she said as she explained her various duties. "Trash is a whole lot more than garbage," she added with a laugh. She also loves Republic Services' sustainability initiatives with their electric vehicle fleet and recently expanded organics facility. "We're really here to support the communities that we service...to leave a positive impact," she said.

Cina dedicates her personal time to bettering the community as well, working as an ambassador for the Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce, and on the board of directors for the San Joaquin Builders Exchange. "It always comes back to community," she said simply. "It takes a joint effort. We can't do it all on our own. Having that network and those relationships is so important." Recently, Cina spoke at the Leadership Training Institute on a women's leadership forum, and one of the most important pieces of advice she gave to young professionals hoping to grow into leadership roles was simple yet profound: "Don't confuse being uncomfortable with being unqualified," she said. She encouraged young professionals to learn to advocate for themselves – something she wishes she had learned at an earlier date in her own career. And she emphasized the importance of finding good mentorship wherever your career takes you, using her own experiences as examples. "It's not about finding someone that's perfect, but someone who can share their successes and their lessons...and who will ask the tough questions," Cina said. "Feedback is a gift."

Whether she's championing city-wide clean-ups or planning elementary school visits for career day with their new electric vehicles or teaching high schoolers the various stages of compost, Cina loves that her job with Republic Services allows her to give back to the city at every opportunity. "I'm thankful to be in a space that can make an impact," she said. "We're more than just a service provider – [we're] a contributing member of the community. We give back and volunteer...we're happy to help and want to be able to serve however we can." Cina's presence nourishes everything around her. From counseling and mentoring young professionals to working to meet the needs of the city through her job, she pours herself into the community that has poured so much into her. "At the end of the day, I'm grateful for every opportunity," she said. "Every open door, every new connection, I'm grateful to be able to give back and be a blessing to somebody else." •



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