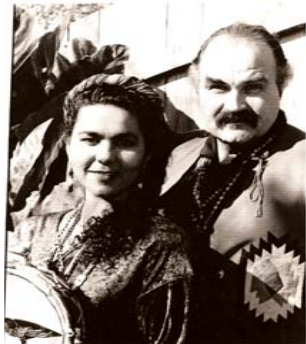


Elba Alicia Pagan & Raymond Two Crows Wallen

Alicia Pagan and Raymond Two Crows Wallen are an exemplary, dynamic team that has striven to nurture and promote successful youth development in the Miami Valley for many years through many venues and resources. They are co-founders of a grassroots organization known as Ga-Li. For more than twelve years, this partnership has worked with a plethora of community-based organizations and educational/cultural institutions to facilitate cultural competency and creativity in youth as well as older persons. They embrace and promote the importance and effectiveness of using the arts as a means of reaching the minds and hearts of people from a vast array of ages, cultures, races and faiths. Alicia and Ray created an array of workshops, concerts and hands-on activities that offer personal development information and help to encourage community connections across generations, neighborhoods and cultures. It is truly a stimulating experience to be a participant in one of their presentations. One of the tools inherent in their community work is the utilization of the Search Institute 40 Asset Development framework. This research-based approach presents eight basic categories of internal and external assets that help to promote positive development in young people. In particular, Ms. Pagan and Mr. Two Crows Wallen have focused on several internal assets such as reading for pleasure, planning and decision-making skills, interpersonal and cultural competence and selected external assets including youth as resources, positive peer influence, adult role models and making available age-appropriate youth programs. All of these areas of intentional emphasis confirm that these two individuals are committed to investing their talents and resources for the positive development of young people.



What an experience to observe Alicia and Ray at work! They are quite resourceful and entertaining as they engage an audience in order to help build positive environments of learning and celebration. They are especially adept at sharing information, real-life scenarios accomplishment and encouraging continuity of the experience (beyond the event) as they present stories, survival lessons and positive messages to young people. As purposeful agents that function to promote a sense of community, both Alicia and Ray are flexible, open and receptive to eclectic opportunities for teamwork. The name of their primary organization, Ga-Li, is translated from the Cherokee language to mean “I am, you are, we are doing”. That is Alicia and Ray’s guiding mission to work cooperatively with others in this community; to explore and help promote common goals of enabling youth and adults while building connectors between adults and youth as valuable resources. Even though this partnership offers unique material from Native American, Hispanic and African cultures, they are very receptive to collaborative opportunities that can espouse common precepts, principles and compatible service objectives.

One of the signature tools that Ms. Pagan and Mr. Two Crows Wallen employ when relating to an audience is storytelling. These individuals have the capacity to blend traditional stories and lessons from many diverse cultures with present-day scenarios about youth who are addressing challenges and working to make a difference. Alicia and Ray are cultural sojourners and bridge-builders as they travel around the region and across the country sharing experiences that would serve to emphasize similarities and opportunities for collaboration/cooperation. They appear to be relentless, and admirably so, as they work to illuminate the essence of community in every instance possible. These nominees understand that the effectiveness of current efforts should be measured in the extent to which relationships are established and experiences are created that will last as young people progress to adulthood.

“Alicia and Ray have mastered the art of storytelling and engaging others to facilitate a sense of community through the attributes of sharing, listening and caring.”