

# Our Stories

## Environmental Services as Part of the Care Team

This project is inspired by The Custodian Project *(in)Visibility* exhibit developed by Evalynn Fae Taganna Romano to highlight and honor the work of custodians. This is a partnership between Environmental Services (EVS) and the Division of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at UW Medical Center to uplift the important work of our EVS staff in patient care.

UW Medical Center EVS employees are an integral part of the care team. They provide a safe environment for our patients, families, and visitors. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored this statement as members of our EVS team were on the front lines performing the important duties of cleaning and sanitizing, thereby protecting our health.

While patient care and bedside communication and engagement between doctors, nurses, and patients are often more visible, the contributions of our EVS staff are not always seen or acknowledged. Their work goes beyond keeping spaces clean by ensuring that our patients, family and visitors feel safe and secure. They interact, support, and provide a friendly smile to staff and patients.

This photo project is a tribute to elevate the work, presence, value, and stories of our EVS staff. We acknowledge, respect, and are grateful for their contributions to our community.

To learn more about The Custodian Project, visit [thecustodianproject.com](http://thecustodianproject.com).





## Northwest Campus Custodian Lead

# Ana Rivera

Ana is from Ensenada, Baja California, México. She visited Seattle while on vacation and because she liked it so much, she decided to stay. As a survivor of domestic violence, Ana worked hard to raise her children as a single mother. She started working at the Emergency Department at UWMC only one week after the COVID-19 outbreak. "Working here has been a good experience for me," she says. Ana recalls how scary it was to come to work in the early days and feeling saddened to see patients who were intubated. "The protective gear we wore was very hot and uncomfortable," she recalls, but adds, "I'm not scared of COVID now." Ana enjoys using the UV robot to disinfect rooms across the hospital. It has been by her side from the beginning. When she is not working, Ana enjoys baking custom cakes, such as this one of COVID with mini cupcakes. She started baking for family and friends for birthday parties and got so many requests that she hopes her hobby will continue to grow.



# Thank You Ana!



## Montlake Campus Custodian

# Avelina Benavente

Avelina, better known as “Ave” is from Manila, Philippines. She has been a team member at UWMC since 2005. When asked about what keeps her here, she says, “My coworkers are like my family. We help each other out; we carpool if someone needs a ride to work.” She is always willing to help and wants custodians to come work at UWMC. Deeply rooted in her faith, Ave loves and cares for everyone she meets. She recalls getting close to a transplant patient who was here on political asylum. They laughed, shared stories and exchanged gifts. Despite a successful transplant, she passed away shortly after returning home and the memory is still painful for Ave. Now widowed, Ave is grateful to her husband, a former Armed Forces serviceman, who encouraged her to enroll in English classes when she first came to live here. This helped her build confidence and communicate with people which she enjoys very much. Ave is very proud that she was able to support her children through college and that they are now in the healthcare field. In her free time, Ave enjoys watching Netflix and cooking Filipino dishes like *lumpia* for her children who live very close to her.



# Thank You Avelina!



## Northwest Campus Custodian

# Gyan Naicker

Gyan was born in Fiji and her parents are from India. She has worked at UWMC for 15 years and says, "I love my job!" She feels the most important aspect of her work is helping patients feel like they're at home when they are here. Gyan remembers being very scared to come to work when COVID-19 first started, but she soon felt more comfortable and safe being in the hospital than the grocery store. "We were given the right equipment and Employee Health fit tested us to wear N95 masks and I wore the PAPR." Gyan was very grateful to volunteers who helped custodians get in and out of the PAPR/PPE before and after going into COVID+ rooms. She believes that good training is essential for staff to be successful. Gyan recently celebrated her 50th wedding anniversary with her husband. Together they have four children, all of whom they are very proud. She enjoys cooking, shopping and spending time with her five grandchildren, often going to their soccer games and cheering them on.



# Thank You Gyan!



## Montlake Campus Custodian

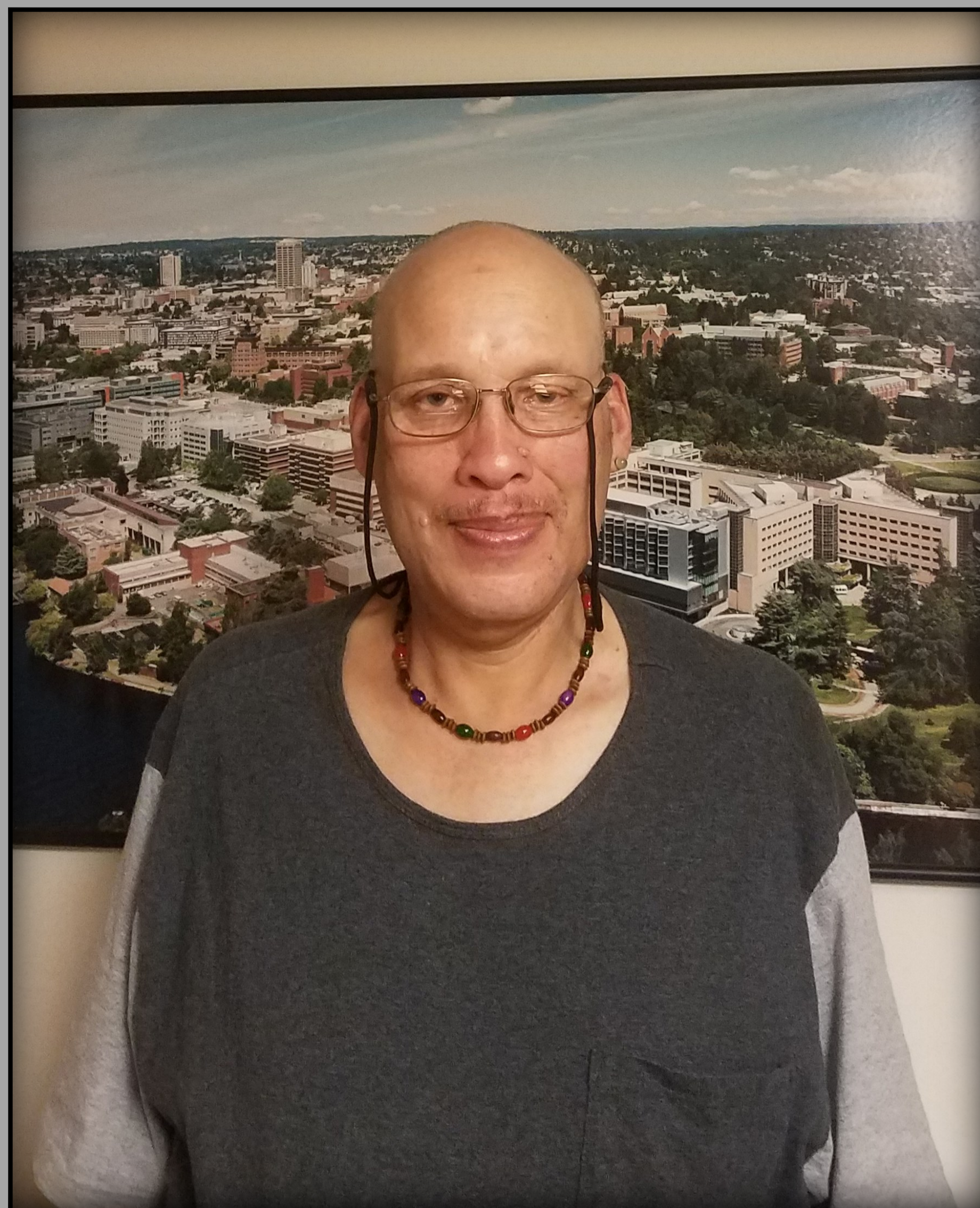
# Jay Rowland

Jay is from Riverside, California. He recently celebrated his 33-year anniversary as a UW employee on August 2022. Jay started as a Custodian in the health sciences building before transitioning to work at UW Medical Center. Jay still remembers coming home and his mother telling him, “Jay you were just hired at the UW!” Jay began in swing shift for 6 years, followed by graveyard shift for 25 years, and recently returned to swing shift in the Emergency Department, Operating Rooms, and checkout areas.

Given the fast-paced, life saving measures that occur in the Operating Rooms, the task of cleaning them is one of Jay’s biggest day-to-day challenges.

“You come into a room, and it is messy; there is blood everywhere. You don’t know where to start sometimes and it can take up to 3 to 4 hours before you get done cleaning a room,” he says. But making sure the ORs are thoroughly cleaned before the next surgery is a top priority for Jay and other EVS staff who clean them.

Now a widower, Jay remembers his wife who was Filipina and the family they created together. Their daughter currently lives in the Philippines and is on her fourth year of college studying to become a nurse. He is excited to attend her graduation since he hasn’t seen her since before the COVID pandemic. Jay also has a son who still lives in California. They speak often, and he visits when he’s able. During his free time, Jay enjoys working out, swimming at the YMCA, and attending baseball, basketball, and football sporting events.



# Thank You Jay!