

Julia Ashley “Jhigs” Legaspi – AAPI Trans Pioneer, Community Leader, and Builder of Lasting Change

Julia Ashley Legaspi—known to all simply as “Jhigs”—was a force of nature whose life’s work continues to inspire. Born in 1953 in Cavite City, Philippines, she carried with her from an early age a deep sense of service, resilience, and joy. In 1980, she immigrated to San Diego with just a few dollars and an unwavering vision for a better future. Within two years, she had established *Jhigs Hair Studio* in Mira Mesa—a business that became a cornerstone of the community and thrived for over four decades.

But Jhigs’ impact went far beyond entrepreneurship. A proud AAPI Trans pioneer, she dedicated her life to advocacy, representation, and building bridges. She served as president of the Los Chabacanos of San Diego and the Cavite City Philippines Association of San Diego. She brought her voice and vision to the City of San Diego Human Relations Commission, The San Diego County HRC as well as to advisory boards for the San Diego Mayor and Police Chief.

Known for her generosity and her action-oriented leadership, Jhigs championed causes close to her heart. She organized and participated in community programs for those experiencing homelessness, ensuring no Thanksgiving went by without sharing a meal. During the AIDS crisis, she stood on the front lines, ensuring members of the LGBTQ community were treated with dignity and compassion.

Her legacy is one of faith, perseverance, and the belief that kindness is a transformative force. Jhigs’ leadership was not about titles—it was about uplifting others, creating opportunities, and leaving behind projects and partnerships that will continue to shape the community for years to come.

Those who knew her remember her as warm, witty, generous, and unstoppable—a true builder of dreams and a lover of life whose influence will continue to ripple through San Diego and beyond.