



A FACILITY IS TRANSFORMED

Thanks to a generous lead gift from S. Mark Taper Foundation, as well as gifts from The Ahmanson Foundation, The California Endowment, W. M. Keck Foundation, and Weingart Foundation, Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center was able to purchase and begin the renovation of its center in South Los Angeles. This project allows us to serve more clients and create a more comfortable environment for clients and staff alike. To recognize the generosity and commitment of S. Mark Taper Foundation to Didi Hirsch, the Manchester facility has been named the S. Mark Taper Foundation Center.

The S. Mark Taper Foundation, founded in 1989, is a private family foundation dedicated to enhancing the quality of people's lives by supporting nonprofit organizations and their work in our communities. "We are thrilled to have the opportunity to help Didi Hirsch with this important and worthwhile project because mental health treatment is underfunded and underinsured throughout California," said Raymond F. Reisler, Executive Director, S. Mark Taper Foundation.

Many in the Didi Hirsch family are excited about the renovation. Board President Cheri Renfroe Yousem related, "It's so wonderful that S. Mark Taper Foundation

took the lead in supporting this project. Because of its generosity, we will be able to help so many more people in need. On behalf of the Board of Directors, we thank all of the organizations that helped make this renovation possible. We can't wait to see how wonderful the site will be when it is finished."

For more than 20 years, the S. Mark Taper Foundation Center, formerly known as the Manchester Center, has served residents of the South Los Angeles area, one of the poorest communities in Los Angeles County. Formerly a part of Family Service of Los Angeles (FSLA), it merged with Didi Hirsch in 1997. It offers services such as parenting classes for teenage parents and therapy and medication for children and adults suffering from bipolar disorder and depression. Last year alone, 648 families received services with many more families waiting. In fact, an average of five new families complete the intake process for the Children's Outpatient Program each week.

The line of families waiting to receive services was just one of the problems that the site faced. Previously, because Didi Hirsch did not own the property, it was unable to repair or renovate the building. The scarcity of space meant the site was limited not only by how many clients could



Ed Waiskopf, Program Director of the S. Mark Taper Foundation Center, greets two young clients in the newly renovated reception area.

be served but also by the kind of services that could be provided. The building had no space for a psychiatrist to regularly meet with clients and those who needed medication were forced to go to Didi Hirsch's Inglewood site, which resulted in divided care. Constrained by tight schedules or transportation limitations, many opted not to seek services or medications.

The lack of space also meant that clinicians were forced to rotate from office to office. The group room was often used as a makeshift office for one of the migrating staff. Ed Waiskopf, LMFT, S. Mark Taper Foundation Center's Program Director, commented that his staff was very challenged with the cramped working conditions. "It just made work more

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Legacy Award recipient and longtime Didi Hirsch Board Member Bea Stern (left) receives hugs and gratitude from Ambassador Nancy Hirsch Rubin (right), daughter of Didi and King Hirsch.

TAKING A STAND TO PREVENT SUICIDE

Hundreds took a stand for suicide prevention at Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center's *Eighth Annual Erasing the Stigma Leadership Awards*, held on May 14th at the Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Beverly Hills. In their own ways, the recipients of this year's awards, actress and activist Mariette Hartley, longtime Didi Hirsch supporter Beatrice Stern, and Iris Alliance Fund founder and president Mary Chung Hayashi, have been trailblazers in bringing others to action.

Event Chair Cheri Renfroe Yousem welcomed guests before introducing Golden-Globe winning actor George Segal, Master of Ceremonies for the second time. Segal very much understood the stigma attached to mental illness.

"F. Scott Fitzgerald said, 'In a real dark night of the soul, it's always three o'clock in the

morning.' Dark nights of the soul must be pretty common, or Fitzgerald's observation wouldn't have made into Bartlett's Book of Quotations. What's not common is our willingness to talk about those dark nights and days," said Segal.

President and CEO of Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center Dr. Kita S. Curry spoke next, sharing how suicide and mental illness have touched her family, as has the stigma that keeps the subjects off limits.

"We are paying a high price for our silence. 90% of the men and women who take their lives have a diagnosable brain disorder - in particular, depression and manic-depression. There are effective treatments for these illnesses, but fewer than half ever receive help," Curry stated.

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NEW BOARD MEMBERS HAVE HIGH HOPES

Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center welcomes two new board members, [Rudolph I. Estrada](#) and [Howard M. Loeb](#).

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Rudolph I. Estrada

Rudolph I. Estrada is the President and CEO of Estradagy, formerly known as the Summit Group. He founded the Summit Group in 1987, after serving as an executive for many years at one of the world's largest international banks. Prior to banking, he was the District Director for the United States Small Business Administration's largest district, and has held positions as a Commissioner on the White House Commission on Small Business and on The President's Commission on the White House Fellows.

Rudolph serves as a Board Director and Trustee for numerous organizations, including Pacific Crest Bank, the Monarch Fund, the Los Angeles Community Development Bank, Women Incorporated, and most recently, the California State Parks Foundation, which advocates for the preservation of California's 277 State Parks. As a member of the Board of Directors at Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center, he currently serves on the Budget and Finance Committee and chairs the Government Relations Committee.

Whether through one's own personal experience or through the experiences of a friend or loved one, Rudolph's belief that mental illness touches us all inspired him to join the Center's Board of Directors. He has personally experienced the pain that suicide can inflict. A close family member committed suicide, and the Estrada family was faced with the challenge of coping with the loss. He hopes to change lives by supporting the Center in its endeavor to educate people about mental disease and erase the stigma of mental illness.

"If we can change the life of one person, we will change the life of an entire family," says Rudolph.

Howard M. Loeb, trial and litigation partner at Loeb, Kosacz & Sundberg, LLP, has more than 30 years of experience in handling complex commercial litigation. Howard's practice handles a variety of international and domestic business-related legal matters for both individual and corporate clients. He specializes in issues involving financial fraud in the corporate setting and disputes involving Internet commerce.

In addition to his legal work, Howard also helped establish The Executives, a support group for the Jewish Home for the Aging (formerly known as The Valley Jewish Business Leaders Association). A founding board member, he has served as Secretary and as an Executive Committee member, and currently serves as a member of the organization's Development Committee. He has helped to raise funds for the Home, which houses more than 800 elderly residents on two campuses.

Howard first became involved with Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center when one of his daughters suddenly became ill with serious depression. He and his family had no idea how to help her and contacted Didi Hirsch for information on other mental health services in his neighborhood.

"I know first hand how important mental health resources can be to families in crisis," Howard says. He plans to use his experience in fund development projects to help the Center continue to provide support to other families in need of counseling.

The Center is fortunate to have both Rudolph I. Estrada and Howard M. Loeb commit their time, energy, and leadership in support of Didi Hirsch's efforts. With their high hopes and aspirations for helping others in need, we are sure both will be excellent resources for years to come.



Howard M. Loeb

SERVICES

MENTAL HEALTH ■ 24-HOUR CRISIS LINE ■ CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION & TREATMENT

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & EDUCATION ■ PARENTING EDUCATION

TRAINING ■ OLDER ADULT SERVICES ■ PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATION MANAGEMENT

CRISIS RESIDENTIAL CARE ■ FAMILY REUNIFICATION ■ INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION & TREATMENT ■ COUNSELING & PSYCHOTHERAPY



Kita S. Curry, Ph.D., President/CEO

A PROPOSITION FOR US ALL

By Kita S. Curry, Ph.D. and Cheri Renfroe Yousem

In November, you will have a chance of a lifetime. Just by voting YES on Proposition 63, you can change the community mental healthcare system in California. Chances like this do not come around very often.

Right now, most county-funded mental health programs in our state cannot afford to treat uninsured children and adults with a mental illness until they become so ill that they cannot function. Literally thousands of children and adults do not get care until they end up expelled from school, hospitalized, or homeless, unless they qualify for Medi-Cal (a monthly income of \$1,026 or less for a single adult).

This can happen to anyone, even to families earning a decent income.

- Almost 2.5 million working Californians have no health insurance.
- Those fortunate enough to have insurance often have plans that *exclude* treatment for mental illnesses.
- During a bout of depression, mania, or another brain disorder, even the insured may lose their jobs and coverage, making it impossible to pay for the very therapy and medications that would get them back on their feet.

Because many brain disorders emerge in early adulthood, parents of grown children often find themselves making decisions they never imagined. Should they take out a second mortgage to keep their depressed son in the hospital? Should they dip into their retirement savings to pay \$500 a month for their daughter's antidepressants? Should they hire a lawyer to help get their son transferred from jail to a treatment center after a manic shoplifting spree?

All this will change if Proposition 63 passes. The choice will become - *Which community mental health center do I want to go to?* - rather than - *Shall I pay the rent or fill my prescription?* With sliding scales and co-pays, people of all walks of life will be able to get the care they need, and it will be available before their lives are in shambles. In addition, funding will be set aside for prevention and early intervention. If we begin educating the public about the biology, symptoms and treatments for various brain disorders as aggressively as we address other illnesses, the stigma and ignorance that inhibit our loved ones from accepting mental healthcare will diminish.

Proposition 63 also fulfills a commitment made by our state more than 30 years ago. In the late 1960's, California began releasing thousands of individuals from state mental hospitals, while promising to build a community mental healthcare system with the savings. It didn't turn out that way. In 1965, there were more than 30,000

individuals in state mental hospitals. By 2001, there were fewer than 5,000. Yet, the amount the state pays for community mental health services today is only about half what it paid for state mental hospitals in the 1960's.

You may be thinking, *Great plan, but how can our state possibly pay for it?* The answer - by adding a state tax of 1% on any taxable personal income over one million dollars, thus raising about \$600 million per year for mental health services. Is that fair? Maybe, maybe not.

Consider the specifics for a hypothetical individual reporting \$1.5 million in taxable income.

- If Proposition 63 passes, he or she will pay \$5,000 extra a year in state income tax.
- Recent federal changes, however, reduced the amount owed to Uncle Sam by \$32,500.
- The \$5,000 extra paid in California can be deducted from his or her federal tax return.

Consider, also, the consequences if Proposition 63 does not pass. The Los Angeles County Mental Health Department just cut \$30 million from its budget. The only way to achieve such a large reduction was by taking drastic measures, such as eliminating individual therapy for the uninsured and limiting them to six months a year of medication, and by significantly reducing the number of individuals residing in state hospitals and specialized housing - without any increase in funding for outpatient care. Shades of the 1960's and 70's all over again. Worse yet, more draconian limitations are on the horizon. If Proposition 63 fails, the county anticipates cutting another \$30 million from next year's mental health budget.



Cheri Renfroe Yousem, Chair-Board of Directors

So, you see, you really do have a chance of a lifetime to make a difference. Help us put California on the map for something other than earthquakes and Disneyland. **Help make history by voting YES on Prop 63 in November.** We also hope that you will spread the word to your friends and family and urge them to vote for this proposition. This is an election issue you can discuss, regardless of party affiliation. Mental illnesses freely cross party lines; one out of five of us has a diagnosable mental disorder every year.

Visit YESon63.org to learn more about this initiative.

SUPERVISOR BURKE HONORS DIDI HIRSCH VOLUNTEER

At first, Ester Ybarra-Bryant didn't feel right accepting the honor. There had been so many others before her that worked so hard and for so long to educate others about suicide. She felt she didn't deserve it, having only been a volunteer with Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention Center (SPC) since 1998.



Dr. Marvin Southard (center), Director of the L.A. County Department of Mental Health applauds as Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke (right) acknowledges Ester Ybarra-Bryant (left) for her dedicated volunteer work.

But, on December 9, 2003, the tears in her mother's eyes finally convinced Ester that she deserved the honor. Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke presented Ester Ybarra-Bryant with a County of Los Angeles Proclamation Scroll honoring her for her dedicated volunteer work at Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center. Accompanied by Dr. Marvin Southard, Director of the Department of Mental Health; Dr. Kita S. Curry, who nominated Ester for the award; several Didi Hirsch staff; and 14 friends and loved ones, Ester received the award at a Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors meeting. Ester, a volunteer for the Survivors After Suicide program, began educating the Latino community about suicide and suicide prevention after the suicide of her 13-year-old son Nathan in 1997.

Ester is a woman with a mission: to save lives. Just as the Center saved her life, she wants to do everything she can to prevent the loss of other lives. After her son's suicide, Ester began to heal with the help of Didi Hirsch's Survivors After Suicide (SAS) support group.

"I felt so lost, so devastated from my son's death. At first, I couldn't even bear to be a part of the support group. The third time I tried, I almost couldn't do it. But, Mariette [Hartley], who was co-facilitating the group, said to me, 'Ester, I won't let you go' and she just hugged me for a long time while we cried. She pushed me to keep attending and finish the course. I did finish it, thanks to her, and Dr. Nagdimon, Dr. Farberow, Susan Celentano, and Carole Chasin, and I feel stronger now."

Ester uses this newfound strength in her vow to help others. She began to speak to the Latino community about the warning signs of suicide through Didi Hirsch's Minorities Outreach Program, which was established with a three-year grant from The California Endowment. She has spoken out in many areas, including Spanish language television channels and in *La Opinión*, the largest Spanish language newspaper in Los Angeles. She also joined the advisory board for the SPC, and volunteers as a co-facilitator for the SAS support group. Recently, she was chosen to be a part of Los Angeles's Crisis Response Team, which will aid Los Angeles law enforcement with suicide related emergency calls.

Looking back at the honor given to her, Ester felt it was somewhat like a graduation. She had come so far, learning much along the way. She learned that sharing her story with others not only gave her peace, but also educated others about a subject that is often uncomfortable and difficult to discuss. Most of all, the journey taught her about her own strength and courage.

"It was when my mother told me how proud she was of me, of the strength I've gained, and of what I was doing to help others that I finally felt I deserved the honor," said Ester.

Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center certainly appreciates all that Ester has done to help others, and congratulates her on this award.

Most of all, the
journey taught
her about her
own strength
and courage.

NOURISHMENT FOR THE BODY AND SOUL

GIVE & TAKE

With the winter months approaching and the holiday season just around the corner, wouldn't it be nice to know that you have helped others enjoy a season filled with cheer and warmth?

You can nourish your spirit by helping us provide food to our many needy clients. They simply cannot afford the luxury of preparing special holiday celebrations. Help make their holiday as joyous as yours by donating gift certificates for turkeys and other food items to Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center.

During the holidays, supermarkets and grocery stores often run promotions that give away free turkeys after making a minimum purchase. Some stores also offer certificates for other food items, or certificates for future purchases at their store. You can help our clients by donating your certificates to the Center.

We welcome certificates from all grocery stores. Please mail your certificates to the Development Department at Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center. If you have any questions about how to donate your holiday food certificates, please call (310) 751-5426.

DR. JAY NAGDIMON RECEIVES AWARD

By Deborah Pikul, SAS Volunteer



Dr. Jay Nagdimon (right) receives the Ringel Award from Dr. Lakshmi Vijayakumar (left).

The International Association of Suicide Prevention, based in Stockholm, Sweden, presented its 2003 Ringel Service Award to Dr. Jay Nagdimon, Director of the Suicide Prevention Center (SPC) and Emergency Services at Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center. The Ringel Service Award is granted to those whose distinguished service in the field of suicidology is evidenced by their national leadership, among other criteria.

"It was a great honor to be selected for this award by an international organization, considering the many outstanding professionals who work in the field of suicide prevention," said Dr. Nagdimon.

For more than ten years, Dr. Nagdimon has been involved in suicide prevention and crisis intervention program development and service at the Center. Under Dr. Nagdimon's direction, the number of volunteers on SPC's crisis lines has grown from 35 to 125, and an additional 47 volunteers work in the Survivors After Suicide program. Prevention materials for SPC now include television, radio, and print publication service announcements and brochures. Additionally, Dr. Nagdimon helped create the Minorities Outreach Program, a suicide prevention program that provides outreach and education about suicide and its prevention to minority communities across Los Angeles County.

Dr. Nagdimon is a founding member of several organizations including the Adolescent Suicide Review Committee in Los Angeles, the Trevor Project (a national suicide prevention program targeting gay and lesbian adolescents), the Suicide

Prevention Advocacy Network - California (SPAN - California), and the Kristin Brooks Hope Center (the nation's only crisis line network). He currently serves as treasurer for SPAN-California and is an active board member of the American Association of Suicidology (AAS).

At the state level, Dr. Nagdimon has testified before the Senate Subcommittee on Mental Health regarding the problem of suicide and the importance of emergency services such as crisis lines, and has assisted in the development of several pieces of legislation involving suicide.

Outside of California, Dr. Nagdimon has helped the State of New Jersey train volunteers with a manual he wrote for the Cop-2-Cop crisis line. Cop-2-Cop, the nation's first help line for police and correctional officers, is staffed exclusively by retired law enforcement personnel.

Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center congratulates Dr. Nagdimon on this prestigious award, and thanks him for all the hard work and talent he has put forth in the struggle to prevent suicide.

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A music video by Good Charlotte, "Hold On," launched the Awards. The powerful video by the popular punk band was made in response to the many letters the band receives from despondent youth. Weaving the words of individuals who have lost a loved one to suicide into the musical refrain, the video demonstrated that suicide does not discriminate on any lines, least of all age. The stories shared in the video brought tears to many eyes and set the tone for the afternoon: honest, candid, but most of all, determined to save lives.

At the close of the video, Dr. Curry asked the guests to join the individuals in the video who had so courageously taken a stand. She asked anyone who had lost a friend or family member to suicide to rise. The sound of chairs was audible as hundreds of guests rose, sharing a bond that few knew united them.

Ambassador Nancy Hirsch Rubin, daughter of Didi Hirsch, presented the Legacy Award to Bea Stern, a dear friend of her mother. Stern, a supporter of the Center for 35 years, has been instrumental in raising awareness, in fundraising to sustain programs, and in advocating for the agency. An officer of the Board of Directors, she previously chaired the Leadership Awards Committee for four years.

Stern accepted her award by breaking her own silence about the suicide of her father and her sister-in-law. She credited her work with Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center for giving her the courage to be open about the sorrows of her past. "Today I am sharing this with most of you for the first time. I figured, if not now, when?" said Stern solemnly.

Mike Farrell, actor and spokesperson for Human Rights Watch, presented Mariette

Hartley with a Leadership Award for her inspirational work in the field of mental health. She is the national spokesperson for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, opening doors to erase the shame people feel when talking about suicide. In accepting her award, Hartley gave a very emotional address, likening the experience of her father's suicide to that of a veteran of the Vietnam War.

"Many came back, tried to talk about it, but no one wanted to hear about it," Hartley said in her analogy, "and that's because of the stigma of suicide, because of the sense of shame, the sense of blame."

Mary Chung Hayashi was also honored for her openness and activism in helping to break the silence about suicide. At 12, Hayashi's 17-year-old sister took her life. Since then, Hayashi has been active in helping to change Asian Americans' attitudes about health, establishing both the National Asian Women's Health Organization (NAWHO), the nation's leading advocate for Asian American health issues, and the Iris Alliance Fund, a mental health foundation that focuses on changing the public discourse to make youth suicide prevention a greater priority.



Entertainers and advocates: Mike Farrell (left), Leadership Award recipient Mariette Hartley (center) and George Segal (right) join forces to speak out for suicide prevention.



Erasing the Stigma together (L to R): Event Chair Cheri Renfroe Yousem, George Segal, Kita S. Curry, Ph.D., Mary Chung Hayashi, Board Member Bea Stern, and Board Chair Mike Wierwille.

Hayashi was tremendously honored to receive the Leadership Award, humbly stating that she had only begun to chip away at the wall of silence surrounding the Asian American community. "I accept (this award) on behalf of the Asian American community, as both a challenge and a sign of your confidence that we can and will dissolve the wall of silence and the stigma of mental illness that cripple us today."

Stern, Hartley, and Hayashi's candor and honesty encouraged others to take a stand for mental health services and suicide prevention. It was an afternoon filled with inspiration, honesty, and hope, showing what an individual can achieve by simply breaking the silence and opening a dialogue about suicide and mental illness.

A special thank you to the many wonderful volunteers who helped make this event a success, particularly the Event Committee, who worked tirelessly to ensure that the day was memorable. We also extend our gratitude to Event Chair Cheri Renfroe Yousem for her extraordinary leadership, energy and enthusiasm.

A CURE FOR THE WINTER BLUES

By Duane McWaine, M.D.

Most humans (and probably many of our animal friends as well) greet the arrival of spring with joy and hope, as we have since the beginning of time. In much of the country, the relief from bitter cold and snowy weather, the ability to doff heavy over clothing in favor of lighter garb, the greening of barren landscapes, and the longer warmer days are welcome changes from the bleakness of winter. Even here in Southern California, land of eternal spring, we nonetheless enjoy and celebrate the return to longer, warmer days, night blooming jasmine's scent in the air, and the opening of the Hollywood Bowl in its latest incarnation.

For some of us, though, the arrival of spring brings a more tangible kind of relief. Those who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (or SAD) look forward to spring's approach with as much anticipation as an asthmatic patient awaits her next breath. Its arrival brings a similar level of relief.

There have been descriptions of winter sadness or doldrums and summer madness in both popular literature and the scientific record extending back millennia. However, it was not until the 1980's that a widely agreed-upon terminology and diagnostic strategy emerged to receive widespread acceptance. Despite this, clinicians must still help worried patients differentiate common holiday or winter blues from SAD.

In its most pronounced form, SAD is a recurrent depressive illness, arising every fall or winter, and remitting in spring — people with pure SAD feel "normal" during the rest of the year. According to experts, most of the symptoms of SAD are shared in common with Major Depressive Disorder. But, experts including former U.S. Surgeon

General C. Everett Koop, M.D. affirm that lethargy is a more prominent complaint from many SAD patients. Often, oversleeping, carbohydrate craving, and weight gain are part of the picture as well.

The Role of Light

Theories about what causes the illness all seem to center around the role of light - specifically, natural sunlight. As we know, natural sunlight dwindles ever earlier as summer moves into fall and winter, and begins to lengthen and strengthen noticeably as spring approaches. Research has shown that people who live in the more northern latitudes in the Northern Hemisphere are more likely to manifest seasonal symptoms. (The same is true, reversed respectively, in the Southern Hemisphere). The fact that the symptoms worsen as days shorten and improve to remission as days lengthen provides further support.

Treatment

Fortunately, the treatment of SAD is fairly straightforward. All of the modern biological interventions we've used successfully in treating Major Depression have been shown to benefit those patients with SAD. Thus, Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs), Prozac and Prozac Weekly (fluoxetine) — Zoloft (sertraline), Paxil and Paxil CR (paroxetine), Luvox (fluvoxamine), Celexa (citalopram), Lexapro (escitalopram), Effexor (venlafaxine), Remeron (mirtazapine), Serzone (nefazodone), and Wellbutrin RR, SR and XL (bupropion) — some of which are used as anti-depressants, are all potential arms in the battle against this disorder.

In addition, in a number of studies, phototherapy (the use of therapeutic light),

has been shown to be beneficial. According to Raymond W. Lam, M.D., an expert on SAD at the University of British Columbia, phototherapy is singularly helpful for the majority of patients with SAD. Research has shown that up to two-thirds of "patients with SAD improve with...as little as 30 minutes per day of sitting under a special fluorescent light box." Artificial light therapy or augmentation of exposure to natural light can be employed as an adjunct to medication treatment, or as stand-alone intervention. It is important to note that exposure to light appears to mediate its response through the eye. In other words, tanning booths are not helpful in this regard (sorry to you George Hamilton devotees).

There are specific recommendations regarding light therapy, including the amount, timing and intensity of exposure, so patients who suspect that they may have seasonal pattern mood disorders are well advised to consult an experienced clinician.

If you or anyone you know have questions about SAD, below are some of the well-researched, informative websites with information on SAD:

Dr. Lam's site
<http://www.psychiatry.ubc.ca/mood/sad/>

Dr. Koop's site
<http://www.drkoop.com/template.asp?page=ency&ap=93&encyid=228>

The National Mental Health Association's page
<http://www.nmha.org/infoctr/factsheets/27.cfm>

LOCATIONS

■ **Headquarters**
4760 S. Sepulveda Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90230
(310) 390-6612

■ **Inglewood Center**
111 N. La Brea Ave.
Suite 201 & 700
Inglewood, CA 90301
(310) 677-7808

■ **Mar Vista Center**
12420 Venice Blvd.
Suite 200
Los Angeles, CA 90066
(310) 751-1200

■ **Culver-Palms Center**
11133 Washington Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90232
(310) 895-2300

■ **Excelsior House**
1007 Myrtle Ave.
Inglewood, CA 90301
(310) 412-4191

■ **Jump Street**
1233 S. La Cienega Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90035
(310) 855-0031

■ **Via Avanta**
Pacoima, CA
(818) 897-2609

■ **Metro Center**
672 S. La Fayette Park Pl.
Suite 6
Los Angeles, CA 90057
(213) 381-3626

■ **P.R.I.D.E. Children's Program**
Alan B. Shepard, Jr. School
12495 Isis Ave.
Hawthorne, CA 90250
(310) 536-9112

■ **S. Mark Taper Foundation Center**
1328 W. Manchester Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90044
(323) 778-9593

CLUBHOUSE MEMBERS SPEAK AT ANTIOCH UNIVERSITY

Not many of us know what it takes to be an effective counselor. For Phil and Rosie, members of the Peer Counseling Training Group at the Culver-Palms Clubhouse, learning these qualities is something that they have acquired gradually via weekly sessions led by Mary Guillermin, Clubhouse Counselor. The group works on learning and practicing different aspects of counseling, ranging from listening skills to empathy, genuineness, respect, and self-disclosure.

Mary teaches the group the techniques she studied on her road to self-realization after she herself was diagnosed with manic-depression. After undergoing counseling, she realized that her illness had changed her life in more ways than one, giving her insight about counseling techniques that had helped her. She began the training group because she wanted to offer others the same opportunity to learn and grow.

On November 4, 2003, Rosie, Phil and Mary shared the knowledge they gained through the Peer Counseling Training Group with a classroom of psychology graduate students at Antioch University. They talked about their personal experiences battling mental illness and about the factors that helped them in the healing process. They also spoke about the mental health system, and gave advice to prospective Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) about how to best help clients with persistent mental health problems. The students were so moved by the presentation that the originally-scheduled 45 minute talk lasted more than two hours due to the extensive question and answer segment.

Rosie related how previous therapists were often aloof with her. She felt that the way they responded added to her embarrassment about her illness. Only when she found the Clubhouse did Rosie finally feel accepted and at ease talking about her problems. She advised the future MFTs to really make the effort to empathize, listen, and most of all, to examine how stigma about mental illness affects themselves as well as their clients.

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difficult for everyone," said Waiskopf. "People carried their files from room to room, knocking on doors to make sure that room was unoccupied."

Formerly a bank, what little space the building did have was ill-configured to suit the needs of the Center. Privacy was limited for clients and staff alike, and the air conditioning system was old and inadequate, making uncomfortable, extreme temperatures the norm at the site.

After receiving funds to purchase the building, the project began in February with the demolition of the interior space and an overhaul of the electrical and plumbing infrastructure. Work was done in the evenings and weekends when the site was closed to avoid disrupting the site's services and programs.

"I love this new space," said Waiskopf. "The construction company and the architect were able to do so much with it given how confining the design of the space was before."

So far, the results of the renovation have been dramatic. The interior renovation ended the constant shuffling of therapists from office to office and created space for an in-house case manager and a psychiatrist. As a result, more clients can now be treated at the Center and no longer have to go to another site for psychiatric care. Privacy and air temperature have also considerably improved.

The renovations also brought the entire site into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Equally important, the space is

In a similar vein, Phil advised the students to keep an open mind when it came to interacting with their mentally ill clients. "Good counselors don't always just follow the 'labels.' They need to treat a person, not just a collection of symptoms," said Phil.

The opportunity to speak at Antioch also helped Rosie and Phil gain self-confidence. "I felt I benefited quite a bit by expressing myself to the students. I found I was just as excited relating my story as they were hearing it, and it made me feel special to know I was speaking to a room full of students who were so eager to listen," said Phil.

"It really helped my self-esteem," said Rosie. "I'm able to discuss things openly now and I feel good knowing that I contributed in erasing the stigma. It was nice to get to see that we were bridging the gap between staff and clients."

To that, Phil added, "I hope our presence will make a difference in their careers and in their lives."



Mary Guillermin, Clubhouse Counselor (center), embraces Rosie (left) and Phil (right) for a job well done at Antioch University.

now vibrant and cheerful, with bright hues of pink, lilac, sky blue and yellow adorning the hallways and office spaces. What is most remarkable about the renovation is the renewed sense of satisfaction it brought to staff. "Our staff are very proud of where they work," Waiskopf noted. "The space now reflects the level of care that we show. The improved space shows our clients how much we care about their comfort and their needs. I think it really tells them that they're important."

The next phase of the project involves improving the exterior with new outdoor lighting for added visibility and safety, and landscaping to lower energy consumption costs as well as to increase the overall attractiveness of the facility. Exterior renovation will also include repairing the concrete, re-stripping the parking lot, and installing new fences around the property. When all the exterior work has been completed, the final phase of the project, installation of new furnishings, will complete the renovation of the S. Mark Taper Foundation Center.

We are grateful to S. Mark Taper Foundation, The Ahmanson Foundation, The California Endowment, W. M. Keck Foundation, and Weingart Foundation for so generously supporting our project. We also wish to recognize Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, Senator Kevin Murray, Assemblyman Mark Ridley-Thomas, and the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health for their support. Finally, we thank Houston Tyner for their brilliant architectural design, and Jensen-Zigman Construction for their flexibility and round-the-clock work to make our dream a reality.

RECENT

GRANT AWARDS

DIDI HIRSCH COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER would like to thank the corporations and philanthropic organizations that have awarded us grants since the Fall 2003 Newsletter.

- A NORTHROP GRUMMAN CORPORATION grant supports our SUICIDE PREVENTION OUTREACH PROGRAM, which will help educate children at middle and high schools throughout Los Angeles County on suicide prevention and available supportive services.
- Support from the STONE FAMILY FUND enhances our private counseling program at the S. MARK TAPER FOUNDATION CENTER, which provides mental health services to troubled children and adolescents who have little or no health insurance.
- A generous grant from the UNIHEALTH FOUNDATION supports our OLDER ADULT SERVICES.

THE CENTER would also like to extend its appreciation to S. MARK TAPER FOUNDATION, THE AHMANSON FOUNDATION, THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT, W. M. KECK FOUNDATION, and WEINGART FOUNDATION for their generous support for the MANCHESTER CENTER RENOVATION PROJECT. The Manchester site, which serves the South Los Angeles community, needed renewal and repair. With this renovation, DIDI HIRSCH COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER will be able to provide treatment for many more families in a community that is traditionally underserved, and will be able to provide it in a comfortable and safe environment.

We are incredibly grateful to all the organizations that help us provide the very best of care to people throughout Los Angeles County. We also appreciate all the effort, talent, and dedication that JENNIFER BALL, our grant writer, has put forth in writing and preparing grant proposals.



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