

## Hope and Healing



Terry Bradshaw



John Head



Larry King

### HONORING COURAGEOUS MEN

Each May during National Mental Health Awareness Month, Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center honors those who have made significant contributions to the field of mental health. The ninth annual *Erasing the Stigma Leadership Awards* will be held at the Beverly Hilton Hotel on May 13, 2005.

This year's *Awards* will focus on men, who are much more reluctant than women to seek treatment for their mental illness. Our honorees, football great **Terry Bradshaw**, esteemed author **John Head** and television icon **Larry King**, have all, by example, taught other men that real strength is in knowing when you need a helping hand.

Through his memoirs and public appearances, Super Bowl legend Terry Bradshaw shares his experience with clinical depression, crediting the treatment he finally sought with changing his life. In *Standing in the Shadows: Understanding and Overcoming Depression in Black Men*, Carter Center Journalism Fellow John Head describes his long battle with depression and the cultural taboos that made him reluctant to seek treatment. Emmy Award-winning talk show host Larry King frequently provides a forum on CNN's "Larry King Live" for the discussion of mental illness and encourages viewers to seek professional help for these common and treatable diseases.

Comedienne **Julianne Grossman**, whose critically-acclaimed one-woman show "From Bonkers to Botox" candidly chronicles depression and suicide, will emcee the *Awards*. For more information about the *Awards*, contact ONE Event Management at (310) 659-5517 or [ErasingtheStigma@EventsbyOne.com](mailto:ErasingtheStigma@EventsbyOne.com).

### DETERMINED TO SUCCEED

It is hard to imagine that only five short years ago, Didi Hirsch client **Marcus Williams** was arrested after fleeing from a police officer following an argument he and Marcus had on a street corner. It is hard to believe that this is the same Marcus Williams who was just



Marcus Williams smiles for the Westside Shelter and Hunger Coalition Determination Award.

honored by the Westside Shelter and Hunger Coalition for his determination to turn his life around.

"I was really scared and confused," said Marcus of that time in his life when he was homeless and out of control. "It was like I was always looking down a long, dark tunnel with no light at the end."

Following his arrest, Marcus was appointed a legal guardian after being diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder. He began treatment at various county mental health

... CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

### GYMBOREE OWNER BRINGS JOY TO VIA AVANTA

"It's Gympo! It's Janice! Gymboree's here!" cry the kids as **Janice Smith**, owner of **Gymboree of Burbank and La Canada**, enters Via Avanta, Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center's residential substance abuse treatment facility for women.

From newborns to six-year-olds, all the children living at Via Avanta with their ... CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



Janice Smith holds Gympo, Gymboree's mascot, at her Burbank location.

# SPRING 2005

Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center is a United Way-supported agency, funded in part by L.A. County Departments of Mental Health, Health Services, Probation, and Children and Family Services; State of California Department of Rehabilitation; and United Hostesses' Charities. Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

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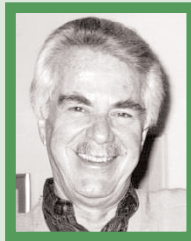
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## A Tribute to Founders and Friends

Recently, **GERALD G. GEISMAR** and **PATRICIA A. HARRER**, two of Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center's devoted emeritus board members, passed away. Both were wonderful advocates for mental health and we are very much saddened by their deaths.



**GERALD G. GEISMAR**, loving father and grandfather, died on September 6, 2004 after a short, courageous battle with Acute Myelogenous Leukemia at 74 years of age. Born in Germany, Gerry immigrated to New York with his parents at the age of 7. After earning his Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from Union College and his M.B.A. from Columbia University, Gerry went on to have a long, illustrious career in the defense industry, eventually retiring in 1992 from TRW Space & Defense as Vice President. In the years that followed, Gerry worked for Governor Pete Wilson as Executive Director of the Employment Training Panel.

Throughout his life, Gerry contributed his time and support to many organizations, including Didi Hirsch. He served on the Center's Board of Directors for more than twenty years and led the agency as Board Chair from 1977 to 1979. During the decades of Gerry's dedicated service, there was rapid progress at the Center: Didi Hirsch's flagship office was established in Culver City, and the agency expanded its array of programs upon merging with the Culver City Family and Child Guidance Clinic and purchasing Excelsior House. Even after he concluded his service at Didi Hirsch, he remained committed to the agency and a true advocate for the cause of mental health.

Devoted mother and grandmother **PATRICIA A. HARRER** died December 8, 2004 at the age of 78. A native Angeleno and fourth generation Californian, Pat was involved with many local and national organizations, including the National Charity League and Catholic Charities. A devout Catholic, she was a founding parishioner of St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church. She was also a descendant of George Washington's family and was a long-time member of the Daughters of the American Revolution.



Pat served for several decades on Didi Hirsch's Board of Directors. Already active on the Board during the groundbreaking of Didi Hirsch's headquarters in Culver City, she went on to serve as Board Chair from 1990 to 1993. During her years of service, the Center underwent several important changes, ranging from becoming one of the first state-funded agencies to provide child abuse prevention and treatment services, to merging with the Centinela Family and Child Guidance Clinic, which expanded Didi Hirsch's services into the city of Inglewood.

Gerry and Pat were extraordinary leaders and advocates. They supported the expansion of mental health services during an era when stigma and ignorance were the norm. Their vision helped Didi Hirsch develop from a small clinic serving only adults to a broad-based community mental health center.

## NOW ON BOARD



Almost thirty years ago, **Charlotte W. Fletcher, Ph.D.**, volunteered as a crisis line counselor for our Suicide Prevention Center. She credits her meaningful experience as a crisis line volunteer with her decision to pursue a career in mental health. Now, as a member of our Board of Directors, Charlotte continues to uphold her commitment.

"I have been and continue to be deeply involved because I feel passionately that individuals who are suffering unbearable emotional pain deserve to have their 'cry for help' both heard and responded to," said Charlotte of her commitment to suicide prevention.

Charlotte has always been dedicated to helping those in need and to improving our community through openness and discourse. Before pursuing her Master's degree in Social Work and Doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology, Charlotte counseled individuals from all walks of life, ranging from pre-trial substance abusers in Washington, DC to at-risk youth in Gardena, California. She was enthusiastic about helping in whatever way she could, becoming involved in community outreach, organizing and directing a tutorial program, and even helping to prepare meals for clients.

## Charlotte Fletcher: Former Crisis Line Volunteer

While employed at the University of Southern California, Charlotte gave presentations to fellow university staff about the assessment and management of suicide risk. After establishing her private psychology practice, she continued to give pro-bono presentations to volunteers and mental health professionals across Los Angeles. Through these lectures, she became re-connected with Didi Hirsch. In fact, of the more than three hundred suicide prevention presentations that Charlotte made, many have been integral to the training of our Suicide Prevention Center's volunteers and staff.

Though she has learned from the insight of those who have shared their stories with her, Charlotte finds that the most valuable experience is one's own. Her family, like many others, has been touched by suicide. "It seems to me," said Charlotte, "that if we use [our own experience with suicide] to help others, we are choosing to make a life-affirming statement out of a death we could not control."

Didi Hirsch Community Mental Center is thrilled to have Charlotte on board. With her strength, positive outlook, and personal commitment to suicide prevention, Charlotte is sure to be a valuable asset to the Center and to the mental health community for many years to come.

# PUTTING THE MEN BACK IN MENTAL

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

Despite the stigma associated with mental illness, we know that each year more than 20 percent of Americans have a diagnosable mental disorder. That means that in an office of fifty, roughly ten workers are affected, as are six children in a classroom of thirty.

If you follow that thread and start making a list of friends and public figures that have suffered from a mental disorder, you will probably come up with a lot more women than men. Is it because women are more vulnerable to these illnesses? That is certainly possible. With some other conditions, men definitely get the short end of the stick; few women are bald or color blind.

It turns out, however, that brain disorders are a problem for both men and women overall.

*It is just that stigma is especially strong among men. It inhibits them from talking about their problems. It stops them from seeking help. Most go it alone, silent but certainly not strong.*

The taboo is truly crippling. Four of the leading causes of disability in the U.S. and other developed countries are major depression, bipolar disorder (also known as manic depression), schizophrenia and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Men and women are equally likely to suffer from all these illnesses, except depression. On the other hand, there are other mental disorders where men predominate, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

*Most sobering, men's silence can be lethal.  
Four times as many men as women commit suicide.*

That is why Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center will be focusing on men at its annual ***Erasing the Stigma Leadership Awards*** on May 13. We are determined to break this taboo and to change habits. We want it to become a truism that boys *do* cry and real men ask for help.



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



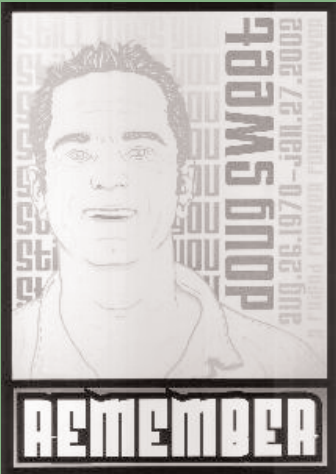
Cheri Renfroe Yousem  
Chair, Board of Directors

## Facts About Mental Illness

- ◆ More than one million men and boys struggle with eating disorders.
- ◆ Nearly 6.6 percent of men are affected by depressive disorders.
- ◆ The suicide rate among African-American males between the ages of 15 and 19 has doubled since 1980.
- ◆ About 30 percent of Vietnam veterans developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- ◆ Mental illnesses are more common than cancer, diabetes, or heart disease.
- ◆ Half as many African-Americans receive mental health services as Anglos.
- ◆ Fewer than 10 percent of Latinos with a diagnosable mental health disorder contact a mental health professional.



MENTAL HEALTH ■ 24-HOUR CRISIS LINE ■ SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION & TREATMENT  
 INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT ■ CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION & TREATMENT  
 COUNSELING & PSYCHOTHERAPY ■ FAMILY REUNIFICATION  
 PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATION MANAGEMENT ■ TRAINING ■ CRISIS RESIDENTIAL CARE  
 PARENTING EDUCATION ■ OLDER ADULT SERVICES ■ COMMUNITY OUTREACH & EDUCATION



Doug is memorialized on the event flyer. Artwork by Trevor Sweet.



The Watkins Family gears up to raise money in memory of Dougie.



A delight for children and parents alike, the moon bouncer provides hours of entertainment.



Hungry attendees line up for an In-N-Out Burger lunch, included in the price of admission.

## REMEMBERING DOUGIE: Team Sweetwater Raises Money For Suicide Prevention

It was that time of year again, time for **Team Sweetwater** to band together in Doug Sweet's memory. **Erica Watkins**, Doug's sister, began receiving telephone calls and e-mails from family and friends asking whether the team would come together to support Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center's annual suicide prevention 5K/10K walk/run.

Since Doug took his life more than three years ago, Erica and her husband Brad have become steadfast supporters of our Suicide Prevention Center. The Sweet family found reprieve from their grief with the help of our Survivors After Suicide (SAS) program. Later, Erica continued to participate in the SAS program, attending Survivors' meetings on her own, slowly healing from the pain of Doug's death.

Because of this experience, Brad and Erica remain committed to serving as the nucleus for the Sweetwater Team, enlisting all those who were touched by Doug's easygoing spirit to participate in the race to raise money and awareness about suicide. When the team first participated in the race, it was 75 strong. It has since grown to 125 and names are still being added to the roster.

When Erica and Brad discovered that the Center would be postponing its 2004

walk/run until October 2005, they felt compelled to organize an event that would serve to commemorate Doug's life while raising money for a cause that had become so dear to them. In lieu of the race, Erica and Brad hosted a day of remembrance at Andres Pico Adobe Park in Mission Hills on November 14, 2004, raising \$6,500 and bringing together 165 of Doug's friends and family.

Children excitedly jumped in a moon bouncer rented for the event. Friends who had not seen each other since the last race laughed while sharing their favorite memories of Doug. A few teared up as they looked at the names on last year's memorial banner for Doug. Guests held their breath when the raffle was finally drawn and the silent auction winners were announced. Erica and

Brad worked diligently to obtain various prizes with the hope of raising even more money.

The day at the park was filled with memories, laughter and excitement. Most of all, it gave Doug's loved ones an opportunity to share memories of him while raising money for a good cause. Said Erica of the fundraiser, "It's been so nice to be able to help out [the Center] like this. Best of all, this, and the race, have all been a part of my healing."



Tessa Watkins helps announce raffle winners

## DIDI HIRSCH C.I.O. RECEIVES TEACHING AWARD



John Ahearn

On September 21, 2004, Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center's Chief Information Officer **John Ahearn** was awarded the UCI Extension Distinguished Instructor Award for his work in the Computer and Engineering Programs for the University of California Irvine Extension Program.

With a B.A. in Scientific Computer Science and Statistical Mathematics from the University of Southeastern Louisiana, John's area of specialization is Computer Communications and Network Engineering. He is certified as a Firewall Engineer, Information Systems Security Professional, and Network Analyst.

John has developed and taught numerous high-level computer courses for the University of California Irvine Extension Program for more than 10 years.

Said Rogelio C. Rodriguez, Director of the Engineering and Science Program at UC Irvine Extension, "John has been instrumental not only as an instructor, but also in providing guidance for the certificate program, assuring that our courses are in line with industry standards."

John's aptitude in making sophisticated, cutting-edge subject matter understandable and enjoyable exemplifies his talent as not only a highly-skilled information technology specialist, but also as an exceptional teacher. We congratulate John on his award and on a job well done. We are fortunate to have him on our team.

## LOCATIONS

### HEADQUARTERS

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

### CULVER-PALMS CENTER

11133 Washington Blvd.  
Culver City, CA 90232  
(310) 895-2300

### EXCELSIOR HOUSE

1007 Myrtle Ave.  
Inglewood, CA 90301  
(310) 412-4191

### INGLEWOOD CENTER

111 N. La Brea Ave.  
Suite 500 and 700  
Inglewood, CA 90301  
(310) 677-7808

### JUMP STREET

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

### MAR VISTA CENTER

12420 Venice Blvd., Suite 200  
Los Angeles, CA 90066  
(310) 751-1200

### METRO CENTER

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

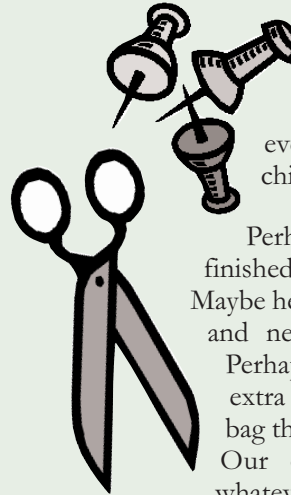
### S. MARK TAPER FOUNDATION CENTER

1328 W. Manchester Ave.  
Los Angeles, CA 90044  
(323) 778-9593

### VIA AVANTA

Pacoima, CA  
(818) 897-2609

## Give & Take School, Art, and Craft Supplies



Many of our clients have school-age children that are in constant need of school supplies or art materials. Oftentimes, they do not have the resources to buy even the most basic items for their children.

Perhaps your son or daughter just finished school and has unused supplies. Maybe he or she received an art kit as a gift and never had the chance to use it. Perhaps you would be willing to buy an extra pack of markers or even a book-bag the next time you are out shopping. Our clients will greatly appreciate whatever you supplies you can provide.

We welcome various school supplies, craft items, and art materials such as:

- ◆ Pens and Pencils
- ◆ Erasers
- ◆ Glue
- ◆ Tape/Adhesive
- ◆ Scissors
- ◆ Craft Paper
- ◆ Construction Paper
- ◆ Notebooks, Binders and Folders
- ◆ Backpacks and Pencil Pouches
- ◆ Highlighters
- ◆ Markers
- ◆ Sketchbooks
- ◆ Watercolors or Craft Paint
- ◆ Crayons
- ◆ Paintbrushes
- ◆ Arts and Crafts Kits



Please contact the Development Department at Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center at (310) 751-5455 for more information about how you can help disadvantaged children excel in the classroom.

**DIDI HIRSCH COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER** would like to thank the corporations and philanthropic organizations that have awarded us grants since the Fall 2004 Newsletter.

A grant from **THE RALPH M. PARSONS FOUNDATION** supports the completion of our Manchester Renovation Project. It funds final improvements on the exterior as well as the purchase of furnishings for the newly renamed S. Mark Taper Foundation Center (formerly the Manchester Center).

**PACIFICARE FOUNDATION** and **CHAPMAN & ASSOCIATES CHARITABLE FOUNDATION** have awarded lead grants for the Via Avanta Playground Project. At Via Avanta, a residential substance abuse treatment facility for women, children up to age six can live with their mothers. Renovation of the playground will provide the children with a developmentally appropriate and safe play area.

The rate of suicide is far higher among older adults than any other age group. Our Suicide Outreach Project received a generous grant from the **DANIEL FREEMAN COMMUNITY TRUST** to teach older adults, their caregivers, and health care providers how to identify and respond to the warning signs of suicide.

Support from the **EMERGENCY FOOD & SHELTER PROGRAM** helps Jump Street and Excelsior House, our crisis residential facilities, provide critical services to adults who are suffering from serious problems due to mental illness.

With a grant from the **PICO-UNION/WESTLAKE CLUSTER NETWORK**, our Metro Center was able to purchase a projector and laptop computer to use in community presentations about substance abuse.

The **WAL-MART FOUNDATION** supported program activities at Via Avanta during the holidays.

We greatly appreciate the generosity shown by these foundations and charitable organizations. It is through their commitment that we are able to provide the very best care to people throughout Los Angeles County.

**DETERMINED TO SUCCEED . . . CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

facilities before being referred to Villa Stanley East, a residential facility for adults with chronic mental illness. After Didi Hirsch care coordinator Neil Elliot became involved with Marcus in 2000, Marcus made quick progress and moved to The Graduate House, a board and care facility run by Alcott Center, where Marcus flourished.

Throughout his healing, Neil has been a mainstay in Marcus's life, showing him healthy coping strategies for stressful situations, helping him understand the importance of his mental health, and teaching him the skills crucial to independent living. "When I met Marcus," said Neil, "I knew he had a lot of abilities he wasn't using. All I have done is to show him a better way to use tools he already had."

Part of his quest for independence involved finding a job. With the help of Didi Hirsch's Employment Services program, Marcus secured a position as a parking attendant at a First Federal Bank on the Westside, where he can be found greeting customers with his warm smile and helping them maneuver their cars in the often crowded parking lot. From the start, Marcus's work ethic impressed fellow bank employees. Every day, he got up at 5:00 a.m. to take the bus to work.

Marcus no longer has to take the bus to work, having scrimped and saved to purchase a car. Other goals are falling into place. He currently takes night classes to learn more about computers and computer applications. He has also visited Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, where he plans to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree in Religion and Theology. He has moved from The Graduate House to Alcott Center's independent living program, where he shares an apartment. Most importantly, in 2001, he reclaimed his independence by no longer needing a court-appointed guardian to make major decisions. Through his determination and diligence, Marcus has changed his life for the better.





## VIA AVANTA . . . CONTINUED FROM P.1

mothers know that Janice's arrival means a morning filled with laughter, music, and play. Mothers learn to interact positively with their children, participating in activities that also stimulate their child's emotional and physical development.

Janice opened her first Gymboree franchise more than ten years ago after attending Gymboree classes with her own children. The company, founded by a California mother in search of a safe, fun, and nurturing place for new parents and children to play together, has been offering parent/child programs for more than 25 years and has 530 locations worldwide.

For the past three years, Janice has been leading mothers through nurturing group play activities that are designed to maximize learning for children and mothers alike. For instance, mothers learn that blowing bubbles is not only a fun way to play with their infants, but it also helps develop their visual skills. Toddlers begin testing their mobility using a three-foot long, brightly-colored foam hexagon-shaped "log" that Janice totes along to her weekly visit. Also a trust-building exercise, moms help their toddlers take their first steps by guiding the hexagon as the toddlers attempt to stand up while using the "log" for support.

Music is also an integral part of the morning. The children and their moms sing along with their favorite tunes, all the while building camaraderie with other participants. Every few weeks, they learn about a new musical genre. From polka to Latin rhythms, the moms and children experiment with the various beats and sounds using instruments brought by Janice and her Gymboree staff.

Janice's generosity goes beyond the care and energy she brings to Via Avanta. She has also arranged for her husband to visit the children in his vintage fire truck, orchestrated a live concert by Parachute Express, whose tunes are used in Gymboree's soundtrack, and organized a holiday gift drive with her clients from the Burbank-Glendale area for the children of Via Avanta. Most importantly, she gives each mother graduating from the program a scholarship to continue participating in her Gymboree play classes.





















"It's the most rewarding part of my job," says Janice of her weekly visits to Via Avanta. "It gives me the chance to reach mothers I wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to help. I find it rewarding to know that I've helped them connect with their children."

Because of Janice's kindness, the children and mothers of Via Avanta create memories and form bonds that will last throughout their lives. Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center appreciates the generosity of Janice Smith and Gymboree.

For more information about Gymboree, please visit [www.gymboree.com](http://www.gymboree.com).



Photos: (clockwise from top) Janice teaches Via Avanta kids to blow bubbles, enhancing their reflexes; kids enjoy floating bubbles under a colorful parachute guided by their moms; an infant learns to use his body with the help of mom and a Gymboree log; mom and toddler enjoy music therapy together; during Polka week, two children and a mom use drums creatively.

HOW MENTAL ILLNESS AFFECTS US	Men	Women
Autism		
Suicide		
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder		
Bipolar Disorder		
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder		
Schizophrenia		
Social Phobia		
Anxiety Disorders		
Major Depression		
Eating Disorders		

## Contributors

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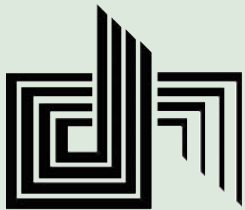
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