

# HOPE AND HEALING

DIDI HIRSCH COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER | FALL/WINTER 2007

## 2007 ALIVE & RUNNING FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION 5K/10K

Ninth Annual Walk/Run Continues to Hit Its Stride



Instead of spending a quiet Sunday morning relaxing or sleeping in, more than 4,000 people chose to come out at the crack of dawn on Sunday, September 30, 2007 to walk, run,

volunteer and, most importantly, raise awareness for suicide prevention.

Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center's *Alive & Running for Suicide Prevention 5K/10K* brought together people from all walks of life: from young children and expert runners, to entire families and volunteers from across Los Angeles. Participants also included runners from Students Run Los Angeles (SRLA), an after-school intervention program, which joined our race for the third year. SRLA provides training and mentoring to prepare thousands of middle and high schoolers to complete the Los Angeles Marathon.

This year's event called attention to the devastating impact of suicide in our community.

"Each year, more people die by suicide than by AIDS in the U.S.," said Didi Hirsch President/CEO Kita Curry, Ph.D. "Yet few people are aware of this and even fewer know that free crisis services are available." Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention Center operates Los Angeles County's only 24-hour suicide prevention crisis line for people of all ages at risk of suicide.

For many on hand during race morning, it was a day to honor and remember loved ones lost to suicide. Survivors memorialized their loved ones through banners, unique shirts and bibs while also sharing personal stories so that others who might be hurting can get the help they need.

In addition to raising awareness, the annual walk/run also raised crucial funds needed to support Didi Hirsch's suicide prevention programs.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

## SOUTH KOREAN ARMY VISIT

Hoping to Save Lives, Chaplains Continue to Reach Out to Didi Hirsch

As the first 24-hour suicide crisis line in the country, Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention Center has long benefited from an international reputation for excellence. In the past several years, we have trained professionals from Russia and South Korea, as well as numerous law enforcement, health and mental health organizations across the state. Our ongoing collaboration with the South Korean Army has, thus far, been the most rewarding and fascinating for our staff and volunteers. A little more than two years ago, we were contacted by a representative of the South Korean Army Chaplains, indicating that they wanted to develop a suicide preven-

tion program for personnel within the South Korean military. Given our fifty years of experience in suicide prevention, and the 21,000 calls to which we respond each year, the chaplains identified our Suicide Prevention Center as the most qualified to help them meet this goal.

During the course of our contact with the chaplains, we learned that all South Korean men are required to complete a two-year tour of military duty. Adjustment from civilian to military life is difficult and isolating under any circumstances, but a non-voluntary army poses additional barriers and hardships for drafted men and those charged with sup-

porting them. While all nations and cultures attach some degree of stigma and shame to mental illness and suicide, in South Korea much of this stigma is amplified, particularly among military ranks. As recently as five years ago, South Korean military men who died by suicide were not permitted to be buried in common cemeteries. Today, family members are still unable to receive military financial benefits following the suicide of a soldier. This is despite the fact the suicide rate within the South Korean Army is one of the highest in the world, representing more than 50% of all deaths within the military. Given

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

## 2008 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### CHAIR

Andrew E Rubin

### EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIR

Stanley D. Lelewer

### VICE CHAIRS

Sharon M. Kopman

Beatrice S. Stern

Michael C. Wierwille

### TREASURER

Martin J. Frank

### SECRETARY

Howard M. Loeb

### IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR

Cheri Renfroe Yousem

### BOARD MEMBERS

Jonathan Cowan

Rudolph I. Estrada

Charlotte W. Fletcher, Ph.D.

Frances Franco-Valdez

Nathaniel Jackson, Ph.D.

Vera Jashni, Ed.D.

Jeffrey Khteian, C.I.D.

Lee Leibman

Janine B. Lichstein

Laura Ornest

Todd M. Rubin

### EMERITUS BOARD

Kent Burton

Katherine Kolodziejcki, Ph.D.

Jan Mennig, Ph.D.

## DIDI HIRSCH'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS, CLASS OF 2007

By Andrew E Rubin, Board Chair

In July, Didi Hirsch welcomed three new Directors to its Board: Jonathan Cowan, Executive Director of Government Affairs at Sony Pictures Entertainment; Frances Franco-Valdez, litigation and forensic CPA at Hemming Morse, Inc.; and Todd Rubin, a social justice advocate.

Each has a long track record of community service. Frances said of her experience, "I have always been an advocate for people that are less fortunate. I believe strongly in giving back and helping those who are less privileged." Jonathan has volunteered with L.A.'s BEST, an award-winning after-school program for at-risk youth in Los Angeles, as well as with a Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters camp in Glendale. When Todd was in college, he co-founded Sanctuary for Children, a non-profit dedicated to serving homeless teens.

Given the many non-profits providing vital services in Los Angeles, we asked our new Board members how they discovered Didi Hirsch and what motivated them to join us. Todd, Didi Hirsch's grandson, said that his family's enduring connection to the agency inspired him to help carry on his grandmother's legacy. Frances was inspired by our annual *Erasing the Stigma Leadership Awards*, to which she was invited by board member Sharon Kopman. Three people recommended Didi Hirsch to Jonathan—an executive at Sony, a friend who volunteers on our suicide prevention crisis line, and a former Board member, Marcene Landres.

Personal links also influenced our new directors' affinity for our mission—to transform lives by providing quality mental health and substance abuse treatment where stigma or poverty limits access. Through friends, family or both, each has seen the suffering caused by untreated mental illness. Each also knows that such experiences are the norm rather than the exception, despite the stigma that keeps so many in the shadows.

Todd put it this way: "Not only do most of us know someone who has suffered, but I think all of us can recognize our own vulnerability to mental illness and how central good mental health is to our ability to enjoy and find satisfaction in our lives."

Having seen how effective treatment can be, Jonathan Cowan does not want poverty to prevent others from finding help: "I've seen a number of my family members struggle with the challenges of anxiety and depression. Mental

illness is devastating enough when one has insurance and the financial resources with which to pay for proper care. Didi Hirsch plays a crucial role by bringing quality mental health treatment to those who can't afford it."

Frances added that many people are not receiving treatment for their mental illnesses because of stigma and fear of rejection by society. Fortunately, her new role offers her many opportunities to break down those barriers. Didi Hirsch has opened up communication about mental illness. "When I mention to colleagues and friends that I am on Didi Hirsch's board, people become more open to discussing mental illness and how it has had an impact on them or their loved ones."

The Board of Directors, staff and volunteers at Didi Hirsch are fortunate to welcome such bright and compassionate advocates to our team. With their support, we will be able to help even more children and adults manage their illnesses and achieve their full potential—successes that enrich us all. Todd captured their shared vision quite eloquently. As Didi Hirsch delivers services to those in need, its help not only provides great benefit to clients, but also to the society at large by making our communities more just and caring.

# AN INVESTMENT IN OUR FUTURE

Board Member Beatrice Stern Endows Media Award and Scholarship Award



Martha Gomez (left), Bea Stern (center) and Rosalind Lee (right)

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of board member Beatrice Stern, Didi Hirsch is proud to announce the *Beatrice Stern Erasing the Stigma Media Award* and the *Beatrice Stern Intern Scholarship Award*. A key member of the Didi Hirsch Board of Director's for more than 30 years, Bea has been a driving force behind our annual *Erasing the Stigma Leadership Awards*, serving as Chair for the last eight years. Her vision, boundless energy and enthusiasm have been instrumental in the success of the *Awards* and her leadership as a board member has helped guide our agency through the years.

Recognizing that the power of the media can change hearts and minds and influence policy making, the *Beatrice Stern Erasing the Stigma Media Award* honors the outstanding, groundbreaking work of a leading journalist who uses the power of the media to raise awareness and erase the stigma of mental illness. Last year, at our eleventh annual *Erasing the Stigma Leadership Awards*, we were honored to recognize journalist Chris Rose, a columnist with the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, with the inaugural *Media Award*. Through a series of articles after Hurricane Katrina, he educated millions of readers by providing a very intimate view of his personal struggle with depression and addressing his

own prejudices about mental illness. As a result of his courage, he showed that mental illness is as common and treatable as heart disease or diabetes.

In keeping with her passion and her belief that quality training and hands-on experience for mental health professionals is the foundation for future care, Bea also endowed the *Beatrice Stern Intern Scholarship Awards*. A scholarship will be awarded annually to outstanding bilingual Master-level students who intern with Didi Hirsch. This past September, Didi Hirsch presented the first *Beatrice Stern Intern Scholarship Awards* to two very deserving students – Martha Gomez and Rosalind Lee.

Rosalind, an MFT intern from Pepperdine University, is no stranger to Didi Hirsch. For the past five years, she has been a dedicated volunteer on Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention Center Crisis Line. She also has been a crucial part of our on-going partnership with the South Korean Army, and most recently, agreed to be part of a documentary about suicide prevention programs produced by the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS). In addition to her work with Didi Hirsch, Rosalind has been an emergency room volunteer at UCLA Medical Center and an art instructor for court-ordered adolescent girls with emotional and behavioral problems.

"I am deeply honored to be one of the first recipients of the Beatrice Stern Scholarship, especially because Mrs. Stern has been such a wonderful role model for the mental health community," said Rosalind. "The scholarship has been invaluable in helping me pursue my goal of becoming a Marriage and Family Therapist. After graduating, I intend to continue my work in a community mental health setting."

Martha Gomez, an MSW intern from the University of Southern California, has a wealth of experience serving her community. A native Angeleno, Martha grew up in a community of diverse cultures but also one of great need. Recognizing that change comes from within, Martha chose to make a difference. She has served as a member of the Pico-Union Neighborhood Council, became an Executive Member of the Fulfillment Fund, a non-profit organization that helps inner city youth finish high school and go to college, and most recently, was an intern for El Nido Family Centers at Will Rogers Elementary.

"It has been such an honor to have received this award," said Martha. "Everyday I am reminded of how lucky I am to be part of such a great agency as Didi Hirsch and to fulfill my calling to be an advocate and to reduce the stigma of mental illness through the various projects I am working on."

Martha and Rosalind are remarkable students who are truly making a difference in the lives of those they help every day. Didi Hirsch congratulates them both on receiving their awards.

Didi Hirsch once again thanks Bea Stern for being a leader and blazing a trail for more than 30 years, and, most especially, for sharing her passion and dedication in such a lasting and meaningful way.



# VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH

By Kita S. Curry, Ph.D., President/CEO and  
Andrew E Rubin, Chair, Board of Directors

In 1932 at the peak of the Great Depression, more than 20,000 unemployed World War I veterans and their families converged on the Capitol to demand the benefits that the federal government had promised them. Several months later, their hopes and their makeshift tent city were destroyed when the U.S. Army attacked them with tanks, cavalry and drawn bayonets.

Since then, our vets haven't fared much better. One out of three homeless men in the U.S. is a veteran—mainly from the Vietnam War. About 75% of them suffer from mental disorders and/or alcoholism and addiction. Most tragically, after surviving war, veterans are about twice as likely to take their lives as non-veterans. Angelenos certainly know their plight. More homeless veterans live in Los Angeles County than anywhere in the nation.

Until recently, it seemed that we would repeat history in our treatment of veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. Luckily, the momentum created by the public outcry over the condition of VA hospitals and the long waits for mental health treatment prompted a commitment to change. This year the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) updated its 2004 Comprehensive Mental Health Strategic Plan with an expectation that certain recommendations be implemented by August 1, 2007. For example:

- Veterans requesting help must receive an initial mental health or substance abuse evaluation within 24 hours
- Services must be available within a maximum of 14 days
- Staff must follow up with mental health and substance abuse patients who miss appointments
- Services must be available at least one evening per week

- Emergency rooms must have mental health coverage 24 hours a day

Better yet, change truly is occurring. The VA has begun contracting with community mental health centers where it lacks capacity; veterans and their families can access anonymous online mental health screenings and referrals; the VA is linked with the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; and a 24-hour suicide crisis line for veterans was launched in August.

But the question remains whether a system that is so understaffed can possibly change quickly enough. There are only 1,400 VA clinics in the U.S. In contrast, to date more than one and half million men and women have served in Iraq alone. More than 30,000 have been wounded, and this number excludes thousands more with "invisible" psychological wounds.

It also appears that certain aspects of this war may cause even greater psychological harm. Two factors that tend to increase vulnerability to traumas involving extreme danger and harm are whether other humans are the cause (versus natural disasters) and the intensity, frequency and length of one's exposure to the traumatic event. This is largely a ground war fought among civilians, and a study done by *The New England Journal of Medicine* (2004) found that 71% to 86% of the soldiers and Marines they surveyed had been in at least one firefight in Iraq, with the median number totaling five. In addition: 1) Compared to previous wars, far more soldiers are surviving major injuries that leave them with extreme physical, personal and psychological challenges. 2) About 150,000 people serving in Iraq have suffered head injuries. 3) Historically, suicide rates among troops on active duty have been lower than the national average, but the unanticipated assignment to war zones and unexpected extensions of their tours seem to be causing unusually high suicide rates among National Guard members while serving and a higher incidence of mental health disorders

after discharge than enlisted personnel.

The true magnitude of mental health disorders among those who serve in the Iraq War is sure to be underestimated given the stigma associated with seeking treatment in general and the particularly negative impact it can have upon a soldiers' military career. But the data we have so far is disturbing enough:

- Nearly one third of U.S. military personnel stationed in Iraq seek mental health services after their return.
- About 20% of troops returning from Iraq have post-traumatic stress disorder, (PTSD), which also increases the risk of alcoholism and substance abuse.
- Major depression and generalized anxiety disorders are common among returning veterans.
- Because of the impact of rocket blasts and explosions, at least 20,000 veterans who were not classified as wounded manifest symptoms associated with traumatic brain injury such as memory problems, trouble concentrating, anxiety, emotional lability and depression.

If nearly one third of 1.5 million veterans of the Iraq War are seeking mental health services, it means that almost 500,000 have asked for help so far.

How many more did not ask? How many more will ask for help in the future? We need to make sure we don't end up using police sweeps to manage a new generation of homeless veterans. If you or someone you know needs help, some resources for veterans and their families are listed below. If the VA doesn't live up to its promises, contact your local Congressional representative or *Los Angeles Times* columnist and social conscience Steve Lopez (steve.lopez@latimes.com) and let them know our nation has let you down.

## RESOURCES

- ☐ 24-hour Suicide Prevention Line for Veterans and their Families  
800-273-TALK (800-273-8255)
- ☐ National Center for PTSD  
802-296-6300 or  
[www.ncptsd.va.gov](http://www.ncptsd.va.gov)
- ☐ Anonymous Mental Health Screening and Referrals for Vets and Families  
877-877-3647 or  
[www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org](http://www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org)
- ☐ Free Sesame Street DVD  
Talk, Listen, Connect: Helping Families During Military Deployment  
800-342-9647 or  
[www.sesameworkshop.org/tlc](http://www.sesameworkshop.org/tlc)

## SAVE THE DATE

2008 *Erasing the Stigma Leadership Awards*



### Honoring

Dana Priest, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, and Anne Hull, four-time Pulitzer Prize finalist, *The Washington Post*; and Jilliene F. Schenkel, philanthropist and mental health advocate

### Friday, May 2, 2008 - 12 Noon

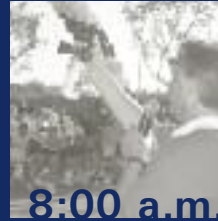
The Beverly Hilton Hotel, Beverly Hills, California

For information, call (310) 659-5517 or visit [www.didihirsch.org](http://www.didihirsch.org)



# RACE MORNING RUNDOWN

A Photo Essay of the *Alive & Running for Suicide Prevention 5K/10K* | Photos by Tom Neerken



**4:00 a.m.** Before the sun is up, Didi Hirsch staff arrive at the race site to begin setup. **5:15 a.m.** Volunteers soon follow, checking in before getting to work. Volunteers are critical to the race, providing the much-needed manpower to set up booths, tables, and provide food and water for runners. By **6:45 a.m.**, runners arrive, filling out their race cards, collecting their race t-shirts, and milling around the health expo, which is open to the public. Coffee, sports beverages, energy bars and other samples are abundant. There is also information about the impact of suicide on individuals and families, and by **7:15 a.m.**, the memorial quilts have already caught the attention of many. While some visit the expo, others are gearing up for their walk or run. Many survivors walk or run wearing bibs imprinted with the name of their loved one. Speakers address the crowd, sharing sentiments of community, activism and awareness. Philip Chen, Mental Health Deputy to Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich, welcomes the crowd with Dr. Kita Curry. **7:45 a.m.** Rodney Bassett, a certified strength and conditioning specialist, leads runners through a pre-race stretch. Race logistics experts pace the start line to ensure an accurate start and at exactly **8:00 a.m.**, Board Chair Andrew E Rubin sounds the horn to begin the 5K race. Thousands are on the course, with views of nearby Los Angeles International Airport behind them. The first finishers round the final curve with the Star 98.7 van serving as the pace car. Most complete the race by **8:45 a.m.** and soon hit the expo, now in full swing. Dr. Norman Farberow, co-founder of the Suicide Prevention Center, imbues the crowd with words of hope. Participants are eager to find out if they have won, so comedienne Julianne Grossman, race emcee, begins awarding medals at **9:15 a.m.** With more than 60 members participating, the Largest Team Award is given to Aiko's Team, with team captain Marilyn Nobori accepting the trophy. As the medal ceremony concludes at about **9:45 a.m.**, so does the event. Volunteers begin diligently packing up and cleaning the area. Between tasks, the Helenes, a sorority from USC, climb onto the stage for a photograph commemorating their volunteerism. By **11:00 a.m.**, the site is as it was in the wee hours of the morning, and parking enforcement rolls across the area to open up the streets.

## HELPING TROUBLED FAMILIES

Generous Grants Help Keep Families Together



More than 30 at-risk families will receive critical services to keep their children safe and in the home thanks to grants of \$80,000 from the California Community Foundation (CCF) and \$10,000 from Chapman & Associates Charitable Foundation to Didi Hirsch's Family Preservation Program. The grants will provide protective and preventative services to uninsured, economically disadvantaged families at our center in Inglewood.

Didi Hirsch's work is supported in part by the grant from CCF. Founded in 1915, the California Community Foundation is one of the leading philanthropic organizations in Los Angeles County, managing more than \$1 billion in assets. Each year, it grants over \$100 million as investments in the future of our local communities. The foundation partners with individual donors and actively supports non-profit organizations to address diverse and dynamic needs of our communities. California Community Foundation makes grants in the areas of health, education, affordable housing, the arts and

human development. To learn more, visit [www.calfund.org](http://www.calfund.org).

Chapman & Associates, the largest insurance brokerage in the U.S. exclusively servicing the non-profit community, founded its Charitable Foundation in 2001. Since its inception, the Foundation has awarded more than \$4.75 million to a diverse cross-section of social service agencies, always with a focus on programs dedicated to serving children. To learn more, visit [www.chapmanins.com](http://www.chapmanins.com).

"We are very fortunate that the California Community Foundation and Chapman & Associates Charitable Foundation recognize the critical role our Family Preservation Program plays in protecting children. Their grants will provide vital services to uninsured troubled families, enabling them to heal," said Dr. Kita Curry, Didi Hirsch President/CEO.

The Family Preservation Program assists families in crisis, where a child is at imminent risk of being placed in out-of-home care because of abuse or neglect. The program treats the emotional and behavioral problems of traumatized children and tries to keep them in the home by helping parents deal with underlying problems, e.g., community stressors such as divorce, chronic illness, and unemployment, or by treating parents' mental illness and/or addiction.

Our culturally-sensitive services man-

age the crisis and keep the child and family safe by defusing the potential for neglect or physical, sexual, emotional/verbal abuse. The goal is to stabilize families by removing the risk of harm to the children, rather than taking them into protective custody. Family preservation is contrary to the philosophy prevailing a decade ago, which held that the safest choice was to separate children from their troubled families. Studies have shown that the vast majority of children participating in family preservation programs does not require out-of-home-placement; other research supports the principle that placement should be avoided if at all possible – that preserving the relationship with parents, continuity, a permanent home, and connection to siblings and extended family are vital to the long-term health and development of the child.

Families receiving services under the grant will be referred by local Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services offices or schools. The program will provide intensive, individualized, clinic and home-based services; help create an outside support system; and focus on strengthening the family's coping skills and capacity to function after treatment is completed. Services will include assessment, counseling, case management, parenting classes, 24-hour telephone support, advocacy, and linkage to other community resources.

## ALIVE & RUNNING

Continued from page 1

Participants asked friends and family to sponsor them and several local corporate partners graciously contributed as event sponsors. As a result of their generosity, we will be able to continue providing critical care on our 24-hour Crisis Line, support for those who have a lost a loved one to suicide, and suicide prevention outreach in our community.

Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center thanks the following sponsors for their support: Beacon Capital Partners, Macquarie Foundation, Leslie and Steven Carlson, Vera Jashni, Ed.D., Janine and Henry Lichstein, Means-Knaus Partners, Northern Trust, Wyeth Pharmaceuticals, Cheri Renfroe Yousem and Martin W. Greenwald,

and several generous anonymous donors.

Thank you also to our wonderful volunteers and runners, especially race committee chair Howard Loeb and the race committee, who helped make this year's race such a success.

## CLIPS & BYTES

Just some of the places that have asked us to weigh in on issues important to our community

### The Actors' Fund Newsletter

June 2007

[www.actorsfund.org](http://www.actorsfund.org)

*Nancy Wileman, Program Director, comments on the ramifications of cyber bullying among youth*

### The Sacramento Bee

September 26, 2007

[www.sacbee.com](http://www.sacbee.com)

*Dr. Kita Curry speaks about the State of California's new Office of Suicide Prevention*

### Nurses World Magazine

December 2007

[www.nursesworldmag.com](http://www.nursesworldmag.com)

*Dr. Kita Curry and two Didi Hirsch nurses, Melissa Paras-Monaghan and Sarah Hernandez, comment on the importance of psychiatric nurses in a community mental health setting*

## DIDI HIRSCH IN THE NEWS

Highlights of our recent media coverage

**KRTH 101.1 FM and KTWV 94.7 FM | September 30, 2007**

Dr. Kita Curry is interviewed on Community Lights

"One thing that many people don't know is that, unlike some diseases that don't appear until you are an adult or older adult, fifty percent of mental disorders emerge by the time you are a teenager, and seventy five percent by the time you are twenty-five. So, we really are concerned about catching people early in their illness so we can make sure that they are as successful as possible."

**Korea Daily | October 13, 2007**

**The Korea Times | October 10, 2007**

**Los Angeles Times, Religion | October 13, 2007**

News coverage of the South Korean Army Chaplain Visit

From the *Los Angeles Times*:

"In an unusual partnership that seems to transcend cultural and language barriers, South Korean military chaplains are learning about suicide-prevention techniques from Los Angeles County's world-famous Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center."

"On Wednesday, an eight-member delegation headed by Col. Jong In Lee, chaplain commander of the South Korean army, spent an afternoon at the center's Culver City offices to get acquainted with various programs, including the 24-hour suicide crisis line. The session was preceded and followed by the exchange of gifts, accolades and much picture-taking."

## GIVE & TAKE

A Fresh Start for the New Year



As we enter 2008 and leave the holidays behind us, many of us forge ahead with the new things that were given to us as gifts. These items may help us feel warm, cared for, comfortable, or attractive. They may help us successfully

navigate different challenges throughout the year.

Whatever the item, its use as well as the giver's intent gives us confidence and lets us know that we are appreciated.

Please consider giving one of your new, unused gifts to one of our needy clients. Many of our clients do not have the resources to exchange gifts with their families during the holidays. Your unexpected gifts will give them a bit of joy while helping them have a fresh start to the new year.

Our adult clients would appreciate:

- new clothing, socks and underwear
- new shoes, wallets, purses, duffel bags and belts
- household goods such as dishes, utensils, kitchen towels or food containers
- small electronics such as coffee makers or toasters

Our child clients would appreciate:

- new toys (all ages)
- new clothing, shoes, socks and underwear
- backpacks
- books

If you would like to help our clients, please contact the Development Department at (310) 751-5426 or [juy@didihirsch.org](mailto:juy@didihirsch.org).



## AWARDS & ACCOLADES

Didi Hirsch's Programs and Staff Receive Recognition

Though all of our outstanding staff work passionately and diligently throughout the year, we are particularly proud of the following members of the Didi Hirsch family for their recent recognition:

- ❑ Our Suicide Prevention Center received the inaugural lifetime achievement award given by the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, for its "pioneering suicide hotline services in the United States." Originally founded in 1958, the Suicide Prevention Center was the first in the country to provide a 24-hour suicide prevention crisis line. Each year, our hotline receives more than 21,000 calls from people in crisis.
- ❑ Will Baum, therapist at Excelsior House, and Cheron Zekavat, program director for AB2034, were honored by the California Association of Rehabilitative Agencies (CASRA) at CASRA's annual HOPE Awards. CASRA gives two awards - one that honors clinical managers and one that honors clinical line staff. Cheron was a finalist in the clinical manager category and Will was the award recipient in the clinical line staff category.
- ❑ Training Director Brenda Ingram was appointed health commissioner for the 47th Assembly District (Assemblymember Karen Bass). She will attend regular commission meetings, as well as be a part of the annual Sacramento legislative delegation.
- ❑ Michelle McBurnie, a NAMI Peer Advocate in Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center's Full Service Partnership Program, was recognized by the Association of Community Health Service Agencies (ACHSA) as their 2007 Consumer Honoree. Overcoming the challenges of her bipolar disorder, Michelle now uses her experience and strength to help establish the new psychosocial Clubhouse at our Inglewood Center and will oversee NAMI contracted staff at both sites. A dedicated leader and mental health advocate, Michelle is a wonderful example of how courage produces great change and is an inspiration to others at the beginning of their own journey to recovery.
- ❑ Westside Shelter & Hunger Coalition honored Veronica Sanchez, a Didi Hirsch client in the adult mental health outpatient program. Intermittently homeless since birth to age 23, Veronica, now 25 years old, has secured housing for herself and her children. She attends classes at Santa Monica City College and is beginning work as a peer advocate at Daniel's Place. Veronica's goal is to develop and run a transitional housing program for young families. Veronica's story exemplifies how personal strength can lead to success despite adversity.

Congratulations to all of our dedicated staff and extraordinary clients for their strength, talent and wisdom. Their awards and accolades help us understand how providing quality mental health care transforms the lives of individuals and our community.

## LOCATIONS

### Headquarters

4760 South Sepulveda Boulevard  
Culver City, CA 90230  
(310) 390-6612

### Culver-Palms Center

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

### Excelsior House

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

### Inglewood Center

111 North La Brea Avenue  
5th and 7th Floors  
Inglewood, CA 90301  
(310) 846-2100 5th Floor  
(310) 677-7808 7th Floor

### Jump Street

1233 South La Cienega Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90035  
(310) 855-0031

### Mar Vista Center

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

### Metro Center

672 South La Fayette Park Place  
Suite 6  
Los Angeles, CA 90057  
(213) 381-3626

### S. Mark Taper Foundation Center

1328 West Manchester Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90044  
(323) 778-9593

### Via Avanta

Pacoima, CA  
(818) 897-2609

## ARMY VISIT

Continued from page 1

these cultural and organizational barriers to addressing suicide, it is inspiring that the chaplains are able to acknowledge that they are facing a problem and that they are so clearly committed to developing a solution.

Despite sometimes amusing language and cultural barriers, as well as time changes, a warm and collaborative relationship has developed between South Korean Army representatives and Didi Hirsch. We have hosted three delegations of senior South Korean Army Chaplains, including Colonel Jong In Lee, Chaplain Commander, the highest ranking chaplain in the army. Two chaplains have remained in Culver City to engage in our crisis line counselor training and to participate in crisis calls. Most recently on October 8, 2007, an eight-member delegation of chaplains visited Didi Hirsch and was trained on suicide and suicide prevention services. At this visit, we also discussed issues related to the survivors of suicide, their risks and needs as well as effective ways of providing support and counsel. Future plans include the participation of more chaplains in our training programs, as well as potential visits of our staff to South Korea.

This collaboration has been extremely rewarding for Didi Hirsch, as it provides the opportunity to share our expertise beyond the existing scope of our crisis line and to know that we will have some influence in saving the lives of people nations away. It has been inspiring to work with high-ranking military officials willing to acknowledge the problem of suicide, work to address the stigma associated with it and to develop an effective prevention program for their troops. Lastly, it has been delightful to develop friendships with men from a culture and lifestyle very different from ours, and to develop bonds around a shared commitment to preventing the loss of more lives to suicide.

## SERVICES

**Mental Health**

**Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment**

**24-Hour Suicide Prevention Crisis Line**

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment

Crisis Residential Care

Community Outreach and Education

Counseling and Psychotherapy

Intensive Case Management

Family Reunification

Psychosocial Clubhouse

Older Adult Services

Parenting Education

Psychiatric Medication Management

Residential Substance Abuse Treatment

School-based Services

Training

## 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 Spring 2007 Newsletter.

- United Way of Greater Los Angeles continues to support Didi Hirsch's programs and services with a grant of \$300,000. United Way improves the quality of life for all in greater Los Angeles by creating pathways out of poverty, focusing on three interconnected pathways: meeting basic needs like food, shelter, and health care; increasing educational achievement of our youth; and providing adults with the financial opportunities to move out of poverty and rebuild their lives
- A grant from the Irving and Barbara C. Gutin Charitable Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation supports bereavement and outreach services by the Survivors After Suicide program. The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation has been working to improve the quality of life in our communities since 1962. It builds and manages a collection of funds, currently totaling more than \$400 million, created by individuals, families, and corporations for charitable purposes.
- \$80,000 and \$10,000 awarded by the California Community Foundation and Chapman & Associates Charitable Foundation, respectively, to provide Family Preservation Program services to uninsured families at-risk of losing a child to out-of-home placement.

We are grateful for the support that these foundations and organizations have shown us. Because of their generosity, we are able to provide the very best care to the people of Los Angeles County.

# CONTRIBUTIONS

May 1, 2007 to November 30, 2007

## In memory of...

Andrew Bravman, from Lonnie and Michael Bravman  
Jack Albe, from Virginia Albe  
Chuck Anderson, from Linda Anderson  
Mary Kay Bergman, from Carolyn Eddy Anders and Richard Schroder  
Terry M. Freeman (brother), from Mary J. Winic  
Larry Goldberg, from Ruth and Norman Goldberg  
Josephine Gradillas, from Eleanor and Harry Jones  
Steven K. Hansen, from Ethel Hansen  
Carolyn Kanno, from Sue and John Kanno  
Warren Kolodny, from Cynthia Kolodny  
Stephen Lelewer, from Brenda Ringwald, and Suzanne and William Schwartz  
Robert Wesley Littlejohn (son), from Donna and Robert Littlejohn  
Johnny Lynch, from Michele Biagioni, Ricardo Lopez, Jr., Michael Lynch, Rich Thibault, Alice Tsuha, Alicia and Agosto Tsuha, Naomi Tsuha, and Laurie Woodrow  
Kay Lyou, from Fern and Bob Seizer  
Aiko Nobori, from Colleen and Frank

Mattoon, Jr.  
Shari Potter, from Nancy and Dutch Ludt  
Tommy Prenatt, from David Prenatt  
Andrew Rosen, from Matilda and Morris Rosen  
Bruce Smith, from Ann N. Smith  
Paul Woodrow, from Robin Katz

## In honor of...

Dr. Kita Curry, from Mary and Stanley D. Lelewer, and Fern and Bob Seizer  
The Didi Hirsch staff, from Fern and Bob Seizer  
Ed Feldman, from Charlotte W. Fletcher, Ph.D.  
Charlotte Fletcher, from Paul F. Rosenbaum and Rocio Villasenor  
Rebecca and David Hirsch and family, from Joanne Gerson Blum  
Barbara Hornichter, from Rabbi Karen L. Fox  
Spike Jones, Jr.'s birthday, from Jennifer and Lee Leibman  
Stan Lelewer, from Richard Abeles, David E. Birney, Marilyn and Joe Cahn, Penny Gimbel, Barbara and David Gralnek, Lorraine and Joe Lyou, Donald Mellman, M.D.,

Dana Reinhardt, Justin Reinhardt, Brenda Ringwald, Madeline and Robert Sharples, Georgia Tredennick, and Joanne Uy  
Janine Lichstein, from Charlotte W. Fletcher, Ph.D.  
Jim Perabo's 39th birthday, from Lee Leibman and Trichordia Entertainment  
Ron Rieder's 75th birthday, from Rick Mogil  
Jilliene Schenkel, from Judith C. Angel, and Fran Shagan Schenkel  
Linda Schwartz's birthday, from Elaine Dannenberg Weinstock, and Lee Smalley  
Beatrice Stern, from Karen Engelhardt, and Howard Stern  
Laurie Woodrow, from Jamie Becker  
Cheri Yousem, from Debra Estes, and Sheryl Weissberg  
Chuck and Rissa Potter's 50th anniversary, from Nancy and Dutch Ludt

\*This listing excludes contributions specifically made in support of our suicide prevention programs. Those gifts are acknowledged in our Survivors After Suicide newsletter.

## COOKING FOR SUCCESS

Via Avanta's New Culinary Program



This past summer, three clients of Didi Hirsch's residential substance abuse program for women (Via Avanta), completed a three-month culinary arts program. The training is a new component of the substance abuse program at the site. While the women continue their recovery, they have the opportunity to learn a vocation in the culinary arts field. Training includes not only food preparation but a complete immersion into the world of gourmet cuisine. They learn terms used in the field as well as common practices, culture, and more. As a part of their training, the women also visited U.S. Foodservice, a nationwide leader in the food preparation industry, where they learned different career options, from food sales to food preparation in Los Angeles's thousands of restaurants.

The clients' graduation from the program culminated in Via Avanta's first Epicurean Culinary Experience. The dinner featured a seven-course meal prepared by the program's graduates. The dishes served include chilled vichyssois, tournedos of tenderloin with baby vegetables, lobster salad with truffle oil, and a flourless chocolate cake with creme anglaise. A number of Via Avanta's women also pitched in to serve the meal to other clients attending the dinner, as well as to special guests.

## HOLIDAY CHEER, CLIENT TO CLIENT

Clubhouse and Via Avanta Clients Exchange Gifts for the Holidays



This year, members of Didi Hirsch's psychosocial clubhouse for adults with chronic mental illness and our long-term residential substance abuse treatment program for women (Via Avanta) reached out and celebrated the holidays together with an exchange of gifts and good cheer. Clubhouse members purchased gifts for children living with their mothers at Via Avanta to make the season festive for them while they are away from home. In turn, the women at Via Avanta used the money from their fundraisers to buy gifts for the members of the Clubhouse, many of whom live alone. In addition to the gift exchange, the Via Avanta women provided the Clubhouse clients with a heartwarming performance of holiday music.

### Contributors

Editing and Design: Joanne Uy

Contributors: Jennifer Ball,  
Lorraine Lyou

Photos: Thomas Neerken, Joanne Uy

### Reprinting

You are welcome to reprint material from our newsletter if you are a non-profit organization that produces periodicals. We do require that the reprinted article includes the following:

"Reprinted with permission from Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center, 4760 South Sepulveda Boulevard, Culver City, CA 90230"

### Our Mailings

If you would like to be added or removed from our mailing list, please contact the Development Department at (310) 751-5455.

## DIDI HIRSCH

Community Mental Health Center

4760 South Sepulveda Boulevard | Culver City CA 90230

Tel (310) 390-6612 | Fax (310) 398-5690 | [www.didihirsch.org](http://www.didihirsch.org)

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 509  
Los Angeles, CA