Movie director Andrew J. Cohen raised over $7,800 for Didi Hirsch’s Suicide Prevention Center by raffling off a walk-on role in an upcoming film he is directing that stars Will Ferrell and Amy Poehler.

More than 250 people participated in the raffle, donating between $10 and $400, hoping for their lucky break. The winner was Tom Spath, 54, of Los Angeles, who recently graduated from an improv program. Featured as a dog walker maneuvering five adorable dogs down a tricky set of stairs, Tom got the star treatment on set, including his own trailer, wardrobe, hair and makeup.

Tom loved chatting with all the actors and lunching with Andrew. But, he says, making Amy Poehler laugh was the highlight of his day! Andrew and his wife, Crystal Li, who lost her father to suicide, have been generous supporters of Didi Hirsch’s Suicide Prevention Center since 2012. The raffle was the latest in a variety of creative strategies they’ve used to raise more than $44,000 for suicide prevention services. They have been among the top fundraisers for Didi Hirsch’s Alive & Running 5K Walk/Run for suicide prevention for several years. In 2015, their team, “The Farteurs,” (yes, everything does sound better in French!), raised over $16,000, the fourth highest for the annual event.

Didi Hirsch’s Suicide Prevention Center won a highly competitive $137,500 federal grant, making it one of three in the U.S., along with centers in Florida and New York, that take calls on the national Disaster Distress Helpline.

Callers anywhere in the U.S. who are experiencing distress because of a natural or manmade disaster can call the Helpline any time of day for support. Didi Hirsch’s 24/7 English- and Spanish-speaking crisis counselors provide immediate support, information on how to recognize signs of distress, tips for healthy coping and referrals to local resources for additional care and support.

“After tragedies like the mass shooting in San Bernardino, drinking more than usual,” said Didi Hirsch’s President/CEO Kita S. Curry, Ph.D. “By calling the Helpline, they can get help dealing with their feelings and learn how to use healthy coping skills to avoid developing long-term problems.”
**Remembering a Legend in a Record Year**

Didi Hirsch’s Suicide Prevention Center remembered its founding father while raising a record-breaking $334,940 at its 17th Annual Alive & Running 5K Walk/Run for Suicide Prevention last year.

Didi Hirsch dedicated the race to Dr. Norman L. Farberow, who co-founded the Suicide Prevention Center in 1958 when suicide was a taboo subject and research was almost non-existent. Dr. Farberow was 97 when he died shortly before the race on World Suicide Prevention Day (Sept. 10), an awareness day he helped inspire.

Dr. Farberow and fellow co-founder Dr. Edwin Shneidman are widely credited with establishing the study of suicide. The two psychologists developed the “psychological autopsy,” which they used to assess the cause of Marilyn Monroe’s death in 1962, and which brought worldwide attention to suicide.

They also launched the first 24/7 suicide prevention crisis line in the U.S. that trained volunteers to serve as counselors and established the nation’s first suicide bereavement support groups, which are used around the world to help people coping with suicidal loss.

“Dr. Farberow changed people’s attitudes toward suicide,” Didi Hirsch President/CEO Dr. Kita S. Curry told the crowd while standing beside a portrait of Farberow. “He understood that people considering suicide were in terrible pain and how much compassionate listening can help people in distress.”

Actor and comedian Tom Kenny, the voice of SpongeBob SquarePants, emceed the program with the help of actress and voice artist Julianne Grossman Deme, who donated her talents to produce a Public Service Announcement to publicize the race.

**Donors Brighten Children’s Holidays**

All of Didi Hirsch’s child clients and siblings had a brighter holiday in 2015 thanks to several corporate sponsors and donors who gave over 3,500 gifts to our annual Toy Drive.

Mattel provided 1,000 sets of Uno and hundreds of Hot Wheels and Barbie Dolls for children receiving treatment at Didi Hirsch, while local sport teams including the Dodgers and the Lakers, contributed swag like t-shirts, cups and notebooks.

The Culver City Kiwanis Club and the National Planning Organization donated three large boxes of toys each.

When it became clear there weren’t enough gifts for Didi Hirsch’s teen clients, staffers and board members who had already given generously to the Toy Drive stepped up again to cover the cost of movie tickets and gift cards for the teens.
In a country where we don’t let our 9-year-old children go to the corner store by themselves, it’s hard to imagine the desperation of parents who send their young children thousands of miles away—alone—for their safety.

That’s the situation many parents in Mexico and Central America face and the reason nearly 70,000 kids from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras crossed the border in 2014 without a parent or guardian. Traveling alone, some of the children suffered horrendous abuse during their journeys, including sexual assault, starvation and slavery.

By the time they arrived in Los Angeles, many of them had suffered multiple traumas in their home countries and on their journeys that jeopardize the very future their parents dreamed of when they said goodbye. Research shows that children exposed to three or more traumas are a higher risk of major depression for the rest of their lives.

Because we work in diverse communities in Los Angeles and our bilingual staff is highly skilled at providing trauma-focused treatments for children and families, we looked for ways to help when a coalition of foundations brought their plight to our attention. We submitted a proposal to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center Foundation and received $50,000 to treat children who came into the United States alone or with minor siblings.

Shortly afterwards, we applied for funding from the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health to reach even more youth and received $125,000. Carlos, who is fluent in Spanish, helped with outreach by giving interviews to several media outlets that serve Latino communities.

With a steady influx of referrals from the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN), a nonprofit that offers immigrants legal services, and local schools, we now provide mental health services to unaccompanied minors at our Metro, Inglewood and S. Mark Taper Centers. The youth we’ve seen range in age from 10 to 18, including a girl who witnessed gang members killing her father.

On an emotional October morning, Didi Hirsch client Sang Hyeon was surrounded by Didi Hirsch staffers and Board members as he was honored for overcoming the challenges of homelessness to become self-sufficient.

Sang was one of 24 formerly homeless men and women who were recognized at the Westside Shelter & Hunger Coalition’s 20th Annual Celebrating Success Breakfast at the Loews Beach Hotel in Santa Monica. The annual event highlights the stories of people who have overcome homelessness and pays tribute to the local organizations and businesses that support the Coalition’s programs.

A native of South Korea, Sang became homeless at age 18, after his mother died of uterine cancer. No longer in touch with his father, Sang returned to South Korea, hoping relatives might help him. Forced to leave when his visa expired, Sang eventually moved into a homeless shelter in Los Angeles, where he began hearing voices.

On the advice of a caseworker, he began receiving treatment at Didi Hirsch. As the voices became quieter and less frightening, he secured permanent housing and enrolled at Santa Monica City College where he is completing his general education requirements. “It’s important to never give up, no matter what happens!” Sang said.
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Mission Statement
Didi Hirsch transforms lives by providing quality mental health and substance abuse services in communities where stigma or poverty limits access.

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Grammy-nominated singer/songwriter

EMCEE
EVA LARUE
Emmy-nominated actress

20th Anniversary
ERASING the STIGMA
LEADERSHIP AWARDS

SAVE THE DATE
APRIL 28, 2016

Didi Hirsch Newsletter

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