

## Suicide Prevention Center Expands Services

Tormented by suicidal thoughts, a woman driving through Century City contemplated abandoning her car and stepping into oncoming traffic. She would end it all, she thought, unless she “got some kind of sign from God.” When she passed 10277 Olympic Blvd., she spotted the sign outside the new home of Didi Hirsch’s Suicide Prevention Center. She went inside where staff assessed her and arranged for care.

Since its grand opening in February 2019, the Suicide Prevention Center has helped more than 30 people who have walked in seeking treatment or advice. Inside, these clients have found caring professionals and volunteers eager to guide those in need toward healing and hope.

Full of light, the Center serves as a vital community resource for people young and old throughout Southern California and beyond. Walk-in clients receive a risk assessment, help developing a safety plan and an appointment with a Didi Hirsch therapist or an outside referral. Others—such as the firefighters and two fire captains who sought us out—receive advice on how to help troubled colleagues or loved ones.

The Center’s services also reach across the nation and globe. Our crisis counselors answered 130,000 calls and chats nationwide in 2019—a 30% increase over the previous year. One in five were from out of state. And mental health professionals from Australia to South Dakota have been trained in our innovative Survivors of Suicide Attempts support group model.

Founded in 1958, Didi Hirsch’s suicide prevention program was the nation’s first and most comprehen-



L-R: Didi Hirsch President/CEO Kita S. Curry, PhD; L.A. Councilman Paul Koretz; Richard McKeon, PhD, MPH, of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; L.A. County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl; Everychild Foundation President Jacqueline Caster; Didi Hirsch Board Chair Christopher J. Harrer.

sive and has served as a model for other organizations worldwide. It offers a continuum of care for people contemplating suicide, for their family and friends, and for those who are coping with the aftermath of an attempt or grieving the loss of a family member or friend.

Thanks to the generosity of individuals and foundations who have supported our capital campaign, we have raised \$16 million toward a \$20 million goal to cover the costs of acquiring, remodeling and furnishing the 14,000-square-foot building—a big improvement over the small leased space we previously shared with another program.

We have been able to expand our lifesaving services. We added 35 staff and 70 volunteers to our Crisis Line; daytime meetings for our bereavement support groups; and, as part of the Everychild Suicide Prevention

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## Dear Friends: To Everything There Is a Season



Didi Hirsch President/CEO Kita S. Curry, PhD

After a quarter of a century of the most fulfilling years of my life, I have decided it’s time for my next chapter. My goal is to retire by the fall, and the Board of Directors has hired a search firm, Koya Partners, to help find my replacement.

Change is inevitable and revitalizing. It’s something Didi Hirsch does well and why we have

tripled our services during the last 25 years. With forward-thinking and passionate Board members, staff, volunteers and supporters, I am confident we will continue our trajectory with the new CEO.

How dramatically mental illness, substance use and suicide have come out of the shadows during my tenure. Didi Hirsch took a leading role by establishing the Erasing the Stigma Awards in 1997 and adding erasing stigma to our mission. Those decisions altered Didi Hirsch’s culture and helped move the public forward.

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# Grateful for Our Grants

Didi Hirsch is grateful for the trust of many local, regional and national organizations that support our work in integrated care, child and family services, substance use and suicide prevention:

## The Everychild Foundation



Everychild Founder/President Jacqueline Caster with Lisa Cleri-Reale and Nancy Stark.

The Everychild Foundation chose Didi Hirsch for its prestigious \$1 million grant to support the expansion of our suicide prevention program, with a focus on youth under 24 and their families, including support groups for teens bereaved by suicide. “Until recently, the topic of suicide was only discussed in hushed tones and out of the public eye, as it was considered a shameful act,” said Everychild Founder and President **Jacqueline Caster**. “Today, views have changed, and it is widely known that when a young person has suicidal thoughts, they are mostly a result of untreated mental health issues.”

## Kate Spade New York Foundation

On the one-year anniversary of the death of its founder and namesake, Kate Spade New York announced that its foundation completed a \$1 million mental health initiative by donating to four organizations that help improve the lives of people living with serious mental illness. Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services was honored to be one of the organizations chosen by

the Kate Spade New York Foundation, receiving funds to train and coach 300 facilitators around the nation to lead our innovative support groups for people who have survived suicide attempts.

## Saint John’s Health Care Foundation



L-R: Saint John’s Foundation member Carl W. McKinzie, Didi Hirsch President/CEO Kita S. Curry, PhD., Board of Trustees Chair Mary Flaherty, President/CEO Robert O. Klein.

Saint John’s Health Center Foundation’s Community Impact Fund provided \$100,000 for the fourth year to improve integrated client care by enhancing our partnership with the Westside Family Health Center and starting a new partnership with the Venice Family Clinic. The grant also supports a program that helps clients gain the knowledge and skills for healthier eating and physical activity.

## Other generous foundations that have supported Didi Hirsch with recent grants:

- Annenberg Foundation
- Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
- Center for Care Innovations, a project of Tides Center
- Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
- Dalio Foundation, Inc.
- Henry L. Guenther Foundation
- Jay & Rose Phillips Family Foundation of Minnesota
- Joan Leidy Foundation, Inc.
- Las Candelas
- Ralph L. Smith Foundation - Smith Share, UMB Bank, n.a., Trustee
- The Stanley and Joyce Black Family Foundation
- Wells Fargo Foundation

## Thanks to the many supporters who created Facebook fundraisers for the benefit of Didi Hirsch:

- Andrea Allan
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- Grace Zazzara Arneal

## Erasing the Stigma Awards

Didi Hirsch's 23rd annual Erasing the Stigma Awards at the Beverly Hilton Hotel was hosted by television producer **Melissa Rivers**, a member of Didi Hirsch's Board. The event featured business mogul **Kathy Ireland** introducing offensive tackle **Donald Penn**, who accepted the Leadership Award on behalf of the **NFL Players Association**.

Actor **Bill Duke** presented entrepreneur and filmmaker **William Michael Barbee** with the Leadership Award for producing, writing and directing *Beyond the Silence*. Bestselling authors **David and Nic Sheff**, whose memoirs were adapted into the film *Beautiful Boy*, received the **Beatrice Stern Media Award** from **Jack Dylan Grazer**, who portrayed a teenage Nic in the movie. Musical artist **Alex Boyé** was honored with the Mental Health Ambassador Award.

Please join us for our 24th annual *Erasing the Stigma Awards* on Thursday, April 23rd. This year's honorees include **PEOPLE** magazine, suicide prevention advocate **Talinda Bennington** and veteran news anchor **Christine Devine**. Visit [erasingthestigma.org](http://erasingthestigma.org).



Clockwise from top left: NFL player Donald Penn and presenter Kathy Ireland; (L-R): Presenter Bill Duke, Didi Hirsch President/CEO Kita S. Curry, PhD, honoree William Michael Barbee; Erasing the Stigma Awards committee: Will Lippincott, Andrew Berman, Sara Rutenberg, Christopher J. Harrer (Chair), Janine B. Lichstein, Matthew Allnatt; Leadership Award Honoree Alex Boyé.

Underwritten by the **Fletcher Family Foundation**, Didi Hirsch's 21st annual Alive & Running 5K for Suicide Prevention drew a record 2,700 registrants and volunteers and over 200 teams that raised more than \$500,000 for its Suicide Prevention Center. The Sept. 29 event featured guest speaker **Talinda Bennington**, wife of Chester Bennington, lead singer of Linkin Park, who died by suicide in 2017, and a performance by **Alex Boyé**, Didi Hirsch's Mental Health Ambassador.

Actress **Catherine Hicks** emceed while *Bachelor* contestant **Eric Bigger** led the pre-race warm-up. Media sponsors included **Los Angeles** magazine and **Power 106** radio, featuring on-air personalities **Bryhana** and **Paulina**. The *Why We Rise* art installation, sponsored by the L.A. County Department of Mental Health, encouraged participants to write messages to loved ones lost to suicide.

Awards went to L.A. County DMH Director **Jonathan Sherin, MD, PhD**; **Johnny Lynch**, who started a team in 2007 in memory of his brother; and **Miguel Serricchio**, who has raised money and awareness about suicide prevention since his 20-year-old son, Alex, died in 2015.

## Alive & Running 5K for Suicide Prevention



Clockwise from top left: Talinda and Lily Bennington; Dr. Kita S. Curry and L.A. County DMH Director Dr. Jonathan Sherin; DIDI HIRSCH BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Christopher J. Harrer, Carlos E. Garcia, Andrew E. Rubin, Janine B. Lichstein, Martin J. Frank, Pamela Kluft, Sara Rutenberg, Dr. Kita S. Curry, Laura Ornest, Dr. Charlotte W. Fletcher, Michael C. Wierwille.

# Didi Hirsch in the Community

## Clippers' Nonprofit of the Night

Didi Hirsch was honored as the *Nonprofit of the Night* at the Clippers vs. Trail Blazers game on Nov. 7, 2019. The Staples Center Jumbotron showed a short video that helped raise awareness about Didi Hirsch's services. Board Chair **Christopher J. Harrer**, member **Andrew E. Rubin**, Didi Hirsch President/CEO **Dr. Kita S. Curry**, member **Libby Gill**, Senior Vice President of Clinical Operations **Lyn Morris** and Executive Vice Chair/Treasurer **Michael C. Wierwille** were introduced on court during halftime.



Didi Hirsch raises awareness about mental health services during a Los Angeles Clippers home game.

## Metrolink Safety Summit

On Sept. 12, 2019, Didi Hirsch President/CEO **Kita S. Curry, PhD** was on a panel moderated by **L.A. County Supervisor Kathryn Barger** about mental health and rail safety at Metrolink's Rail Safety Summit. Transportation leaders, government officials and others came to share best practices on transportation safety.

## 10th Glendale Health Festival

Didi Hirsch therapists joined nearly 300 medical professionals and volunteers to provide free health services to Glendale residents on Nov. 2 and 3, 2019. Free therapist consultations were available to identify mental health issues and to make the appropriate community referrals. As a result of our efforts to reduce the stigma of mental disorders and educate the community about mental health, members of Glendale's large Armenian population have been more willing to seek treatment.

## Teen Summit Celebrates Creativity

More than 65 teens ages 14 to 18 participated in the fourth annual Teen Summit at Glendale Community College on Aug. 9, 2019. With the support of **Las Candelas** and the **Joan Leidy Foundation**, Didi Hirsch clients from our Glendale and Metro centers put together a day of activities and presentations focused on suicide prevention, healthy relationships and creative coping skills. The summit gives teens the chance to share with each other, exercise leadership skills, erase stigma and learn how to become peer ambassadors in the community.



Teens participate in activities to build community, exercise leadership skills and help erase the stigma of mental illness.

## Hope Concert

To raise awareness about suicide in the Korean and Latino communities, Didi Hirsch hosted a trilingual HOPE concert at the **Korean Presbyterian Hosanna Church** in Los Angeles on July 29, 2019. The event included musical performances in English, Spanish and Korean and taught participants how to recognize and respond to the warning signs of suicide. The event was organized by **Christopher Min Jun**, Suicide Prevention Training & Outreach Coordinator, and Board Member **Thomas Han, DDS, FACD** and President/CEO **Kita S. Curry, PhD** spoke.



L-R: Development/Communications Director Kim Kowsky, Suicide Prevention Center Director Patricia Speelman, Dr. Kita S. Curry and Dr. Thomas Han sing at the HOPE concert.

# From the Streets to His Own Apartment

**Christopher Tiner** lost more than his health after his second heart attack in 2011; he also lost his ability to work, his savings and his home. He lived on the streets for several months before he heard about Didi Hirsch's Excelsior House, which provides short-term crisis residential treatment for people like Christopher. With therapy and housing support, he moved into a new apartment and now has a part-time job. In October 2019, Christopher was honored at the **Westside Coalition's 24th annual Celebrating Success Breakfast**, which recognizes individuals who have overcome great hardship. "I couldn't have gotten to where I am without Didi Hirsch," Christopher said.



Christopher Tiner, center, is joined by members of his treatment team while being honored at the Westside Coalition's Celebrating Success Breakfast.

## Beatrice Stern Scholarship Award Winner

Born in a small agricultural town in Northern Italy where everyone knows everybody's business, **Nadia Levinsohn** eventually settled in the United States. After her father suffered several heart attacks and was eventually forced to sell his business, Nadia could tell from their weekly phone calls that he was spiraling



downward. She was dismayed to learn that Italy's strong stigma of mental illness outweighed the urgency of his need for a psychiatrist's diagnosis and treatment for depression. Her mother believed that "if no one knows, no one will judge us." Her father never received the help

he needed and ultimately took his life. As far as anyone knew, he died from a heart attack.

After two years of therapy, Nadia understood that even if she had flown home, she might not have prevented her father's suicide. "Although I could not help my father, I could help others by giving them information that could potentially save their loved ones."

Nadia began volunteering at Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention Crisis Line. After several years on the lines, she decided to pursue her master's degree in marriage and family therapy (MFT). Upon learning she had won the **Beatrice Stern Student Scholarship**, Nadia broke down in tears. "In my entire life, I've never won anything. Getting recognition from Didi Hirsch means my story has meaning and resonates with others."

Given to one student a year, the Beatrice Stern Scholarship is funded by a gift from **Beatrice Stern**, a philanthropic Board member who died in 2011, and her family.

## Suicide Prevention Center *(Continued from page 1)*

Program, support groups for teens bereaved by suicide.

Our **Daniel Nickoll Training Academy** held several events this year, including a committee meeting of the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission to revise the state's strategic suicide prevention plan. We also hosted a national group of rabbis, South Korean chaplains, members of the Australian consulate

and veterans and active military personnel from the West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs campus.

Our staff presented suicide-related papers at 15 national conferences in 2019, including one in Minneapolis for farmers, who have among the highest suicide rates in the nation.

We're off to a great start in our new building.

And that's a good sign.



**At Didi Hirsch art exhibits** in Inglewood and Glendale, clients have a chance to express their emotions through painting, watercolor, collage, clay works, sewing and writing. Art therapy provides an outlet for painful feelings, reveals hidden talents and builds self-esteem.

# Thanks to Supporters Who Organize Special Events



## Comedians Stand Up for Mental Health

Movie producer/director/comedy writer **Judd Apatow** teamed up with comedians **Gary Gulman**, **Maria Bamford** and **Patton Oswalt** to raise awareness and funds for Didi Hirsch on September 25, 2019. The show at West Hollywood's Largo at the Coronet included a preview of Gary's HBO stand-up special, *The Great Depresh*, which Judd produced. Afterwards, Judd led an insightful panel discussion about the stigma of mental illness and the impact it has had on their lives and work. This is the third time he has dedicated proceeds of his show, "Judd Apatow & Friends," to Didi Hirsch.

Gary Gulman with Didi Hirsch Board member Nancy Rubin at Apatow's fundraiser.

## Nightmare on Elm Street

Organized by actor **Ira Heiden**, members of the original cast of *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors* staged a live reading of the 1987 cult classic to raise awareness about teen and youth suicide and funds for the Suicide Prevention Center.

Dr. Kita S. Curry (third from right) joins the cast backstage.



## Mo's Show Art Sales Benefit Didi Hirsch

Artist **Maury Ornest** struggled with mental illness before he died of heart disease at age 58. After his death in 2018, Maury's sister, Didi Hirsch Board member **Laura Ornest**, discovered a storage unit containing about 1,000 of his paintings. She and her family members created, *Mo's Show*, an exhibition of his work, and generously dedicated proceeds from the sale of many paintings to Didi Hirsch.

Board member Laura Ornest with one of her brother's paintings.

## Dear Friends: Leadership Transition (Continued from page 1)

Doing my part by sharing the traumas of my childhood, the loss of family members to suicide and my own history of suicidal depression changed my life. To my surprise, speaking out opened a door for others to share struggles and successes, and the weight of my silence and secrets diminished.

As the public has learned more about the illnesses we treat, funding has grown, allowing us to serve many more children and adults. In 2004, Californians approved a "millionaires' tax" earmarked for mental health. In 2012, the Affordable Care Act extended free or low-fee health care to children and adults who could not afford private

insurance. We also were able to bring financially distressed agencies under our wing, preserving services in areas of great need – MacArthur Park, South Los Angeles, Inglewood and Glendale, which is home to the largest Armenian American population in the United States.

In 2015, the Board of Directors boldly voted to launch a \$20 million Capital Campaign for a new home for our Suicide Prevention Center. We needed more space to meet growing needs. Fate brought us a building that exceeded our dreams. Only 12-years-old, it didn't need

seismic retrofitting, fire sprinklers or other costly construction, which also meant we were able to move in more quickly.

What a perfect time to pass the baton. There will be new dreams for the next CEO. As for me, I will be spending more time with my family, playing tennis, gardening and reading all the novels that have piled up. I also will discover what the writing muse has in store for me.

With gratitude for your support over the years,

*Kita*

# Didi Hirsch Board of Directors



L-R: Charlotte W. Fletcher, PhD, Janine B. Lichstein, Will Lippincott, Pamela Klufft, Carlos E. Garcia, Christopher J. Harrer, Martin J. Frank, Kita S. Curry, PhD, Sara Rutenberg, Melissa Rivers, Andrew E. Rubin, Laura Ornest, Michael C. Wierwille, Nancy Hirsch Rubin, Thomas J. Han, DDS, FACD, Gail Kamer Lieberfarb.

## New Didi Hirsch Board Members



**Libby Gill** is an executive coach and award-winning author who helps emerging and established leaders reframe change as a growth opportunity. Her stepmother suffered from chronic depression and died by suicide; her brother, a retired college professor, lives with schizophrenia.



**Will Lippincott** is a literary agent at Aevitas Creative Management who specializes in politics, narrative nonfiction, current events, history and memoir. In 2015, Lippincott wrote a widely shared article in *The New York Times* about his struggle with depression, suicidal thoughts and the suicide of his father.



**Melissa Rivers** is an entertainment journalist, bestselling author, social activist and suicide prevention advocate whose father died by suicide when she was in college. She starred opposite her mother, comedian Joan Rivers, for four seasons on WE tv's hit series *Joan & Melissa: Joan Knows Best?*.



**Nancy Rubin** is a global champion for human rights, mental health and social justice. She served as U.S. Ambassador to the UN Commission on Human Rights during the Clinton Administration and received an Erasing the Stigma Leadership Award in 2000. The agency is named for her philanthropist mother, **Didi Hirsch**.



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**Reception** 6:00 pm  
**Dinner** 7:00 pm - 9:30 pm

The Beverly Hilton  
9876 Wilshire Boulevard  
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Purchase tickets at  
**ErasingtheStigma.org**

To become a sponsor, call  
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**Mission Statement**

Didi Hirsch transforms lives by providing quality mental health, substance use and suicide prevention services in communities where stigma or poverty limits access.

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**For information about how you can support Didi Hirsch, call  
Kim Kowsky at 310-751-5426 or [kkowsky@didihirsch.org](mailto:kkowsky@didihirsch.org).**

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

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