

CENTER NOTES

Moving Lives Forward

Stay Connected with us During the COVID-19 Crisis



Notes from the President

Tim Ryder
President/CEO

Operating in the era of COVID-19

As an essential provider of services, our Center remains open and serving thousands of individuals who are the most vulnerable in our community.

It's been challenging moving a 450+ staff and 49 program operation to primarily phone and computer-based services. With so many programs serving so many different populations in our community, delivering services in a pandemic can present innumerable challenges. Never before have there been greater barriers in place to deliver services and at a time that people are feeling more vulnerable and isolated than ever. Yet, despite all of these challenges, the commitment and passion of our staff has never been more apparent. Each and every member of our team has made it possible to help our clients in this serious time of need.

Please take a look at how we are accomplishing this and advancing the mission of our Center.

I hope that you and loved ones are healthy and staying safe at home.

Delivering Services During the Pandemic

Despite the orders to shelter at home, lives are still moving forward at San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center. Clients continue to get the support they need in spite of this pandemic thanks to staff stepping up to do whatever it takes to ensure that those most vulnerable in our community can continue to receive services.

Here are some of the ways our programs continue to "move lives forward" in our community and make a difference.

Macdonald Carey East Valley Mental Health

Center is a large outpatient clinic located in North Hollywood. It serves hundreds of clients and provides a full range of services including mental health counseling, case management, medication support and crisis



John Putman, Program Manager

intervention for adults. This extraordinary team of caring therapists remains committed to bringing therapeutic support to their clients. One of the biggest concerns amidst the pandemic is the effect of forced isolation on clients. Staff are seeing clients with intense depression and anxiety, and the potential for increased domestic violence and suicidal behavior. For those who may be depressed, anxious, and either live alone or in a dysfunctional situation, staff have "become a source of encouragement and hope at a time when many of the clients have lost their source of income ... and perspective to hope that life will resume as before," said Audrey Rotge, Mental



*Audrey Rotge,
Mental Health Clinician 1*



Please sign up for our email list at
www.movinglivesforward.org/newsletter

Continued on Page 2

Another Center outpatient clinic, **Center for Family Living (CFL)** is working hard to relieve the rise in anxiety and depression that their clients are experiencing. CFL offers mental health services for adults with severe and persistent mental illness, dually diagnosed and victims of domestic abuse. Most CFL staff are working remotely now and continue to provide individual therapy, supportive counseling, case management, crisis intervention, medication evaluation, and new assessments by phone. Aside from the increased anxiety and depression, CFL clients are facing additional stress and frustration related to housing and employment. Clients are responding well to interventions and are greatly benefitting from their contact with clinical staff and psychiatrists.

Older Adult Services are going the extra mile. The Center offers several programs that focus on the specific needs of older adults who have anxiety disorders and other mental health and physical health issues. These individuals are in the high risk category for COVID-19. Clinicians are doing whatever it takes to provide extra support now. One clinician, for example, has been making trips to Costco, purchasing groceries and leaving them on the doorsteps of those clients at highest risk.

Valley Employment Services (VES) provides employment preparation, job training and placement services. Teleservices are now tailored to meet clients' needs and serve both those who are computer savvy and those who need to learn computer skills. The program's Job Club has gone virtual and is now seeing a record participation level. This weekly workshop assists clients in learning the skills necessary for identifying, obtaining and maintaining competitive employment in the community. Topics on the call include: job search techniques, resume development, interview preparation and work behavior. They even have guest speakers. Staff have also taken on an expanded role in assessing job risks for clients seeking employment given the pandemic.

Homeless Services are getting clients into housing. The Center offers a full



This Mandala, created as a group project for the CRC/Wellness Centers, depicts unity through individual creativity.

The **Client Run Center (CRC)** is a place that provides peer support, self-help, mental health advocacy, recreation, community integration, and social activities for consumers who are well grounded in their mental health recovery and can benefit from ongoing peer support. The program offers groups each month and is staffed entirely by individuals with mental illness and significant lived experience. It is open to all consumers in the Center's service area regardless of funding, racial background, illness or socio-economic status.

During the COVID-19 crisis, staff are calling clients to offer them connection, support, and encouragement. Providing face-to-face groups is not possible; however, the staff have developed a monthly calendar of virtual groups to keep clients connected. The CRC is now running 17 groups via video-conference. The participation has been extraordinary. Clients enjoy the opportunity to stay connected to each other. Some groups have as many as 30 clients participating.

Groups cover a range of topics including: COVID-19 Anxiety Workshops; Depression and Anxiety; Coping Skills; Conflict Resolution; Write About It; Weekly Check-in. Other groups focus on more social topics including: Tea Time; Movie Time; Karaoke at Home; Talk Soup; Women's Group; and, so many more.

The Client Run Center continues to operate its Member Services Food Bank and is providing groceries and meals to approximately 1,200 individuals and families each month.

range of services that work with the homeless and those at-risk of homelessness. The programs work independently and collaboratively so their clients can not only obtain housing, but also maintain housing. Services are tailored to meet the needs of each client based on their level of functioning. In the last couple of weeks, several clients have been able to move into their own apartments. Thanks to the efforts of our many staff across several programs who assisted in this process – staff providing basic needs, therapists, case managers, housing navigators, nurses; and, services including: money management, medication management, food assistance, substance use counseling and more. One such program, Hamlin RRR, had a client whose housing voucher would expire in March. The client's paperwork was completed. She was ready to move in to her own apartment, but then the required inspection was delayed because of the pandemic. Compounding this issue, the government offices were closed. It took a tremendous amount of determination, persistence and dedication on the part of the Hamlin RRR team to make this happen, but they did. The client was able to sign her lease, move in and end her cycle of homelessness!

Our Center also provides transitional housing every night to approximately 100 individuals who have been homeless. We have taken steps to ensure their safety as well through enhanced cleaning, use of PPE (gloves, masks, etc.) and other steps. Clients have remained on the premises unless they have somewhere else to stay, and for safety, no outside visitors are permitted.

If you know anyone experiencing domestic violence, please refer them to the LA County DV Hotline at (800) 978-3600.

Domestic Violence Prevention & Treatment Program is keeping its clients safe. This is a precarious time for all, but especially for those who may be in situations of domestic violence. Research shows that in times of major financial difficulty and major community stressors, there are

Continued on Page 3

increases in rates of domestic violence. Even with news of the City re-opening, there are fewer opportunities to get out of domestic violence situations. That makes the victims even more vulnerable. Currently, all of the program's clients are living in less than ideal situations. Some are staying with extended family, some share apartments with other survivors after being evicted from a batterer's home and others are placed in domestic violence shelters. Through teleservices, staff continue to help clients access clinical services, case management and psycho-social education so they can get through this time safely. The staff are helping clients in need get Emergency Protective Orders through local police stations and orders are being extended until the courts reopen. The program is exploring a Domestic Violence Survivor Support group through video-conferencing and teleconferencing though many clients have technological and living space limitations.

Client Engagement and Navigation Services (CENS) are available when individuals are ready to accept Substance Use Disorder treatment. CENS, under normal circumstances, provides face-to-face services in the field to facilitate access to and completion of substance use disorder treatment. Services are provided throughout the area, including court-houses, Department of Child & Family Services offices, and Permanent Supportive Housing locations in the San Fernando Valley. CENS is now operating remotely in significant numbers. During March and April alone, CENS was able to provide service to 328 people and refer 260 to treatment.

The Transition Age Youth programs, ages 18-25, like all of the Center's programs, were thrown a curve ball when working from home became the new reality. Terry Kjeldgaard, Program Manager, has worked for the Center for nearly 19 years. "I want to highlight how amazing this team is," Kjeldgaard noted. "They not only work together seamlessly, but also provide constant support and assistance to each other, always stepping in whenever needed." They jumped in feet first and began doing what they do

best – taking care of their clients. Their first priority was to ensure that their clients felt safe and supported despite having to deliver services in a different way. Most of the clients are now receiving services via audio or video through cell phones or other devices. Like all of the other populations the Center serves, the change in routine is causing increased depression and anxiety. Many are missing out on the activities that Seniors in high school look forward to (prom, walking the stage at graduation, etc.). That results in feelings of grief and loss. The staff have been there for

them and have done an amazing job of taking care of the many needs that these clients have.

Hamlin Recovery, Resilience & Re-integration Program Staff Practice Self-Care



At the Center, we are naturally concerned about our staff, ensuring that they too are doing alright during this time while they help our clients. Staff are encouraged to take the steps necessary to ensure their self-care. It is the oxygen mask analogy - you have to put your mask on first before you can help someone else with their mask.

In these stressful times, here's a way one of our programs has helped de-stress staff. In the process, they have bonded even more.

When the stay-at-home orders were implemented in California, many people began to worry about maintaining social connections and face-to-face contact with family and friends. Seeing co-workers weekly through video conferencing inspired an informal social gathering at the Hamlin Recovery, Resilience & Re-integration (Hamlin RRR) program. They started a video roundtable. Under pre-COVID-19 conditions, staff would see their co-workers every day, sometimes for more time than friends and family. This Roundtable has become a means to connect regularly with the staff they are no longer seeing daily. Each roundtable has a theme, something not work-related. The theme revolves around areas of outside interest.

These roundtables have provided an opportunity to laugh, share stories, play games, and talk about a different topic each week. Topics have included movies, TV shows and songs that everyone likes. They have also played a variety of games, such as "Name that Tune" and trivia games. Hamlin RRR's Roundtable has become a resounding success.

Adapting to this crisis has not only brought the ability to offer teleservices and video calls, but also these co-workers have become far more than just co-workers. They are providing a lifeline to each other with laughter, camaraderie and some sense of normalcy.

Hamlin RRR provides outreach and engagement to assist consumers requiring an intensive level of care to remain in the community and work toward goals of wellness and recovery.

You Can Help Our Programs While Shopping on Amazon!

Designate our Center as the beneficiary of your purchases through Amazon Smile. Go to: smile.amazon.com/ch/95-6194487

Re-integration and Re-entry Programs

Stories of Success

I'm 27 years old and writing this hoping it will help someone else. I've been involved in a lot of different things in life - gangs, Juvenile Hall, prison, drug abuse and mental health problems. At the age of 11, I started getting angry and had depression because my Dad was in jail. I even cut my arm sometimes because I didn't want to listen to my mother and wanted attention. As I got older, I was in and out of mental hospitals, never taking a medication they wanted to give me. I continued to use drugs. For some reason, I had this belief that medication was bad. I know this is insane for me to think because really the drugs I took were way worse.

I just got out of jail and I am finally open to change and trying new things. I'm in a really good program. I love it here. I love the people and now I'm open to taking medication. If I wasn't afraid to put methamphetamine in my arm, why am I going to be afraid to take medication which is professionally made? Now, I feel good! I feel better. My depression is getting better. My anxiety is getting better. My stress is getting better and I feel happy. I feel that if I would have tried medication before and stayed on it, I wouldn't have wasted so many years and struggled with mental health issues and crazy thinking.

On May 18th, I celebrated nine months of being sober. I was able to achieve this milestone because of honesty, effort and wanting to be a good father for my daughter.

Thank you for taking your time to hear a piece of my story. Try new things that you wouldn't do before. Thank you so much. I hope this touches somebody's heart.

The Diversion 50 program offers services to individuals who have a mental illness, are chronically homeless and have been diverted from the justice system. The program staff have been working hard to find new and innovative ways to stay connected with their clients during the COVID-19 crisis. The successes staff are seeing with their clients are life changing.



I have been struggling with mental illness for the last 9 years or so. It led me to self-medicate with illegal substances. I was homeless and eventually incarcerated. I was unwilling to reach out for help. The stigma associated with mental illness, substance abuse, homelessness, and incarceration made it almost impossible for me to get the help that I needed.

I was enrolled in the Diversion program back in November 2018. I agreed to the court conditions that I would comply with all of the program rules, follow mental health treatment and refrain from drug and alcohol use while residing in the "SRO" (Single Room Occupancy) transitional housing provided through San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center.

During these past 18 months, I have learned about my own mental illness and that recovery is a lifetime process. I also addressed other underlying symptoms that contributed to my dismay. As I continue with my recovery, my wellness has improved as I strive to achieve my fullest potential.

I also have learned there are four major dimensions that support my life in recovery. First, make informed, healthy choices that support my physical and emotional well-being. Second, continue to embrace the SRO for giving me the opportunity to have housing stability. Third, engage in meaningful daily activities, such as daily group activities, and having the opportunity to join the Center's Consumer Advisory Council (CAC). [The CAC is a governing body at the Center made up entirely of consumers (clients) with Center programs and provides strategic guidance for the Center and also carries out its own initiatives focused on improving the client experience at the Center.] Finally, fourth, maintain and sustain healthy relationships with my family and friends.

As of the end of May, I will complete my 18 month Diversion program. My charges will be dismissed then and I will have the opportunity to become a productive member of society.

I could not have done this on my own, without the help of everyone at Milestones (AB109), Diversion 50 Programs and the SRO.

Respectfully, J.

The Center's Milestones (AB109) program also offers services to those who have been involved in the justice system. Milestones provides a full array of mental health, intensive case management, dual diagnosis services, and medication support for adults with a serious mental health diagnosis along with a County post supervision requirement. Services offer assistance with housing, benefits, vocational services and other needs. The program strives to help the clients develop stability, self-sufficiency and a support system.

Thank You to our Incredible Supporters. Your Support is Saving Lives!



Trader Joe's Sherman Oaks

Trader Joe's Sherman Oaks not only donated ongoing food to the Center's Food Bank, but also donated flowers to brighten the day of our clients!

Odyssey Restaurant's Director of Catering Melissa Saldibar and Senior Sales Manager Estella Segura donated food to help sustain the Center's Food Bank, which provides food to hundreds of clients each month!



Odyssey Restaurant



Flair Cleaners, Studio City



Get Together Foundation

The **Get Together Foundation**, for many weeks since March, has provided hundreds of meals for the Center's food bank. They have also provided hundreds of hygiene kits for our clients, many of whom are homeless.

Gary Futterman, Owner, **Flair Cleaners Studio City**, and his tailors made and donated 100 face masks so our staff can continue to safely provide services!

AAA T.L.C. Health Care, Inc., Albertsons Northridge, Albertsons Reseda, Albertsons Tujunga, All Action Security & Consulting Group Inc., Amazon Smile, Jeanne Anderson, Rhonda Anglin, Anonymous, Art's Delicatessen, Otilia Baker, Lucy Ball, Deb Barbanel, James Barton, Karen Barton, David Bateshansky, Bay Alarm Company, Jason Beck, Bell Canyon Association, Benevity Fund, Nancy Berry, Julie Berzon, Julian Berzon-Castrillon, Susan Booth, Robert Borovay, Joseph Boxerman, Brent's Deli Corporate Office, Deborah Brown, C.P. Associates, Ltd., Calabasas Saddlery, Cal-Best Building Maintenance, Jennifer Calderon, California Highway Patrol - West Valley, California Retired Teachers Association, Camacho's Building Maintenance, Stevens Carey, CARING Housing Ministries, Inc., Castlebay Lane Elementary School, CENS - Client Engagement & Navigation Services, Robert Chapman, Emily Chen, Deborah Cherry, Gerald Chizever, Jeannine Coatsworth, Coco's Mission Hills, Coldwell Banker, Kat Connolly, Kimberly Corrales, Cecilia Del Villar, Rosa Delvalle, Dignity Health California Hospital Medical Center, Leslie DiMascio, Paul Dohi, Doris Dosser, Kathleen Doyle, Duclos Lenses, Irene Duncan, Earthly Body, El Pollo Loco Van Nuys, Enterprise Fleet Management, Entertainment Earth, Inc., Douglas Erenberg, Anthony Estrada, Marilyn Fabre, Jeffery Fey, Fidelity Charitable, James Fitzgerald, Flair Cleaners, Food 4 Less Panorama City, Food 4 Less Reseda, Food Forward, Cathie Forstmann, Jason Fourier, Gary Futterman, Danielle Galitz, Reginald Gallardo, Galpin Motors, Robert Garbrecht, Michael Gesas, Get Together Foundation, Martin Gilmore, Kostas Gioulis, Nancy Gohata, Golf N' Stuff, Leticia Gonzalez, Paula Grace-Watkins, Lucy Gram, Anne Greaney, Greater San Fernando Valley Chamber of Commerce, Nancy Greco, Richard Grimaldo, Arthur Harris, Susan Harris, Healthline Medical Group, Lynn Hilberg, Judith Hirshberg, Hoffman, Short, Rubin, DeWinter, Sanderson, An Accountancy, HUB International Insurance, Dorotea Humberstone, Ian Hunter, Rieko Irisa, Kaiser Permanente Regional Reference Laboratories, Phyllis Kaplan, Mari Kapple, Marci Kass, Zita Kass, Theresa Kjeldgaard, Paul Klinger, Paul Krekorian, Lynnda Kroy, Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, Edith Landis, Mary Larsen, Kathrine Larson, LDI Color Toolbox, Carol Lebow, Los Angeles Dodgers, Los Angeles Dodgers, Los Angeles Trial Lawyers Charities, Market Pharmacy, Inc., Marsh & McClellan Insurance Agency LLC, Walter Marucci, Jan Maurizi, Cass McCune, Margueritte McDonald, Mental Health America of Los Angeles, MGA Entertainment, Milan Capital Management, Inc., Franklin Miramontes, Modera Apartments, Sheryl Morehouse-Smith, Morongo Casino Resort & Spa, Motor4Toys, Mulholland Middle School, Frank Muniz, Muscles by Russell, Adrin Nazarian, Adam Nettles, Network for Good, Newcastle Elementary School, Robert Newstadt, Phillip Nichols, Northridge Woman's Club, Laura Obler, Odyssey Restaurant, Beverly Sue Oyama, Iva-Marie Palmer, Jason Park, John Paton, Pavilions Burbank, Barbara Jean Penny, June Perelson-Postar, Sherryl Pinsker, Pioneer Fire Protection, Leo Pircher, Bernard Pollack, Tracey Pomerance-Poirier, Alan Priven, Grant Propper, Pukuu Cultural Community Services, Eddie Raygoza, William Reich, Marie Reilly, Teresita Renomeron, Reseda Charter High School, Robert Fulton College Preparatory School, Roscoe Elementary School, John Roth, Royal Staffing Services, Charlie Rubin, James Russell, Camila Ryder, Tim Ryder, Sharon Ryer, City Councilmember David Ryu, Liz Salapong, Ruth Schoenmeyer, Ira Schulman, Leatrice Seltzer, Joan Skeeter, Smart & Final Encino, Shirley Smith, Sprouts Burbank, Sprouts Granada Hills, Sprouts West Hills, Stone Tapert, StoneTapert Financial, Evan Strauss, Ronald Sundmark, Sutton Associates, Target Woodland Hills, The Local Salon, This is Refuge, Maxine Tobey, Toys for Tots, Tracy Trinh, United Way, Inc., Valerio Street Elementary School, Valley Community Legal Foundation, Valley Presbyterian Hospital, Vista Middle School, Vons Chatsworth, Vons Glendale, Vons Mission Hills, Vons Reseda, Charles Warren, Peter Weinberger, Sandra Weiss, Michelle Wells, Whole Foods Sherman Oaks, Anne Williams, Winston Family Charitable Fund, Steve Wold, Karmen Yerumyan-Abulyan, Mark Yura, Dennis Zine, Fred Zullo

Thank you to the following for providing the Center with funds to help provide services during the COVID-19 crisis:

Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Councilman David Ryu
United Way Relief Fund



Thank you to the following for providing grant funding:

Dignity Health
for providing the Center with a grant to offer Mental Health First Aid Training in the community

Los Angeles Trial Lawyers' Charities
in support of the Client Run Center and consumers housed at the Center

Tim Ryder, President/CEO

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Frank Muniz, MPA, Chairperson
Nancy Berry, Vice Chairperson
Seymour J. DeMatoff, CPA, Treasurer
Nereida Garcia, M.S., Secretary

Kat Connolly
James E. Fitzgerald
Gary Futterman
John Hisserich, MPH, Dr.PH
Tracey Pomerance-Poirier
Deputy Chief Jorge Rodriguez
Peter Weinberger
Dennis Zine

Emeritus Board
Elizabeth Kaufman, J.D.

ADVISORY BOARD

State Assemblyman Bob Blumenfeld
Patrick I. Butler, M.A.
Congressman Tony Cardenas
Fritz Coleman
Marsha Hunt
LA City Councilman Paul Koretz
LA City Councilman Paul Krekorian
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Congressman Brad Sherman
State Senator Henry Stern

PROGRAMS

ACCESS CENTER/HOUSING NAVIGATION
ADULT FULL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP
ASSISTED OUTPATIENT TREATMENT PROGRAM
B.J. NIDORF JUVENILE HALL
CALWORKS CES FOR FAMILIES
CALWORKS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
CALWORKS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
CAPIT
CAPPS
CARING FOR KIDS (CHAT AND BULLYING &
SCHOOL VIOLENCE ADVOCACY)
CENS
CENTER FOR FAMILY LIVING OUTPATIENT & RRR
CHILDREN'S IFCCS
CHILDREN'S RRR
CHILDREN'S FULL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP
CLIENT RUN CENTER
CORNERSTONE RRR
DHS INTERIM HOUSING
DIVERSION 50
EARLY INTERVENTION & DIVERSION PROGRAM (EIDP)
FAMILY PRESERVATION
HAMLIN RRR
HOMEBOUND OLDER ADULT RRR
HOMELESS FSP
INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES
JUVENILE PROBATION CAMPS
MACDONALD CAREY EAST VALLEY OUTPATIENT & RRR
MILESTONES (AB109)
MULTI-DISCIPLINARY ASSESSMENT TEAM
MULTI-SYSTEMIC THERAPY PROGRAM
OLDER ADULT FSP & HOUSING FSP
PIER
PITCHESS/START
SEIPS
STEPPING STONES DMC
THERAPEUTIC BEHAVIORAL SERVICES
TRANSITION AGE YOUTH FSP
TRANSITION AGE YOUTH OUTPATIENT
TRANSITION AGE YOUTH RRR
TURNING POINT (WRAPAROUND)
VALLEY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
VICTORY WELLNESS CENTER
YOUTH AND FAMILY CENTERS - CENTRAL,
EAST & FAMILY LINKS/NORTH VALLEY
YOUTH CONTACT SCHOOL BASED SERVICES RRR

Marci Kass, Editor and Layout Design

CENTER NOTES is published by the San Fernando
Valley Community Mental Health Center, Inc.,
16360 Roscoe Blvd., 2nd Floor, Van Nuys, CA 91406
www.MovingLivesForward.org

Telephone: (818) 901-4830



San Fernando Valley
Community Mental Health Center, Inc.
16360 Roscoe Blvd., 2nd Floor
Van Nuys, CA 91406
Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Van Nuys, CA
Permit No. 1328

TIME DATED MATERIAL



Your donation now, more than ever, can help us continue to offer essential services to those most vulnerable in our community. Here's what your donation can do **NOW!**

Supplies:

Provide computer equipment for staff so that they can provide tele-services. The Center has been spending a considerable amount of money to adjust operations to working remotely. Staff need laptops and other equipment and supplies.

PPE:

For the programs that remain open now – our nearly 100 transitional housing beds, our

Cornerstone Homeless Access Center, and outpatient clinics serving individuals in crisis with a skeleton crew – all need personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep both staff and our clients safe. We will need even more supplies when we are ready to reopen all of our programs.

Food:

The Center offers a food bank for the clients we serve. The demand for food has increased from serving about 700 individuals and families with groceries each month to nearly 1,200. Donations can help us purchase meals and food so we can get food into the hands of those most in need.