

Pacific Clinics

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ADVANCES



**For Them,
With Them,
By Them**

*Guiding Consumers
to Better Health
Practices*

Also in this issue:
Interventions for Our
Youngest Clients

A Message from the President and CEO and the Chairwoman of the Board



*Susan Mandel, PhD
President and CEO, Pacific Clinics*



*May Farr
Board Chair, Pacific Clinics*

We at Pacific Clinics want to congratulate May Farr as she assumes the chairmanship of our Board of Directors for the 2011/14 Board year. No one has been more dedicated to community mental health services than Mrs. Farr, and she has shown that dedication in providing leadership to the Pacific Clinics Board. She is committed to learning about our programs and operations and understanding our needs so that she can advocate for the agency. Congratulations, May! I know this is our joint column, but I want to take this opportunity to thank you on behalf of the rest of the Board, the staff and the clients and families we serve.

Everyone who is doing any reading these days knows that the cost of healthcare is skyrocketing and that people are talking about some kind of reform. Whether the current healthcare plan presented by the Obama administration survives or not, there will be some kind of reform to the healthcare system as the costs cannot continue to escalate without bankrupting the US government. In addition to the deficit issues, the system is not set up to value results and cost reductions in delivering client care. We must be increasingly concerned with outcomes rather than the potential for litigation, which can compel expensive and sometimes unnecessary testing and procedures.

In the world of behavioral health, we are talking about healthcare integration to improve the quality of client care. Our goals are both to reduce costs and extend lives by paying attention to our clients' physical health needs, understanding that good health plays a critical role in quality of life. I am sure you have all heard by now the startling statistic that persons with serious mental illness die much earlier than the general population. This is unacceptable.

As you will read in this issue, Pacific Clinics has joined with USC professor and researcher John Brekke, PhD, also our colleague and Board member, to implement his very successful Health Navigator pilot program called "Project Bridge". Our program utilizes peer staff, case managers and nurses to assist clients in obtaining needed medical care. We believe that health navigation is a critical component of health and mental health integration.

We look forward to your feedback and your ideas about ways that Pacific Clinics can get further involved in collaborative efforts to improve quality of care for our clients and families, at the same time reducing costs and producing positive outcomes.

Health Navigator Project Addresses Shortened Lives

"When was the last time you saw a doctor?"

This might seem like a routine question for a health provider of any type to ask of a new patient or client. But for Pacific Clinics clients – people with serious mental health issues – this question that is asked of all clients has become more significant than ever, explained Susan Mandel, PhD, Pacific Clinics President/CEO, as she announced that the agency has been piloting a new process for integrating mental and physical health systems that could improve and extend their lives.

People with mental illness die 25 years earlier on average

Medical care access and usage by clients with mental illness is infrequent. Lack of income, no insurance, cultural beliefs or language issues play a part in keeping them from getting physical care. One of the greatest barriers can be the mental illness itself. Serious depression, fear, paranoia and lack of focus from hearing voices are all reasons why the mentally ill avoid doctors. For those who have been homeless and without safe shelter for a while, physical healthcare almost always means a visit to an emergency room.

Health warning signs are often ignored until a condition escalates out of control. With a long-neglected medical condition, individuals may be embarrassed, ashamed or just apprehensive about what the physician might tell them. The process of making an appointment and tackling the questions and paperwork also seems overwhelming.

Determined to find a way to link clients to medical services, Pacific Clinics has become the catalyst for a collaborative study and pilot project. "Project Bridge" was initiated in 2007 by USC researcher John S. Brekke, PhD, funded in 2008 by the UniHealth Foundation and launched at the Portals Division's clubhouse programs.

Several staff from peer partners to nurse practitioners are now being trained by way of this effort to help clients better address their physical ailments and access medical healthcare. This requires successfully engaging clients on the subject – something that takes a great amount of diplomacy, dedication and time on the part of the staff – health education discussions and groups, making and traveling with clients to appointments, paperwork, lab tests, follow-up and more. During the process, the Health Navigator works to assist clients in gaining the motivation and skills for taking over their own medical stewardship.

Statistically, the average life expectancy of persons with mental illness is on par with people in third world countries.

"Too many persons with mental illness are passing away at an early age from conditions not directly related to their mental health issues," reflects Dr. Mandel, "and we want to do more to prevent it." Now, when they are asked the question, "When was the last time you saw a doctor?"... our clients are being given the help they need to overcome these statistics and lead longer, healthier lives.

You can read more in this issue of Advances about the who and why of this new program, and about other important education and practice efforts designed to improve the lives, and lifespans, of our consumers. ■

WHY INTEGRATE OUR HEALTH SERVICES?

87% of the premature deaths of people with mental illness are due to chronic disease, especially infectious, pulmonary and cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.

In the past two years at Pacific Clinics, we have been aware of the deaths of **61** clients; **49** were from physical ailments.

The average age of the clients at death was **54**.



From left: Pacific Clinics' West Valley Family Divisional Director Dr. Pablo Anabalon, who chairs Health Navigator meetings twice monthly; his Pasadena outpatient program director Joana Garcia, MFT; USC researcher Dr. Louise Tallin; and USC professor/project director Dr. John Brekke, whose "Project Bridge" pilot study at Portals Division resulted in expanding health navigation to Clinics West Valley divisions over the past year

Concern for Clients' General Health is Impetus for Hands-on Study – Significant Health Improvements Shown in Two Six-Month Trials

John Brekke, PhD, is a professional observer – a respected researcher, associate dean and professor of social work research at University of Southern California. One of his focuses over the past few years has been to study how mental health programs – primarily those of Pacific Clinics Portals in central and south Los Angeles – are faring in their efforts to help people with serious mental illnesses and co-occurring substance abuse disorders recover and thrive.

The consumers he has studied over the years have gone through a great deal in their struggles with chronic depression, bipolar

disorder, schizophrenia, and other persistent conditions, but many have made significant recovery gains by way of receiving the kind of services that the psychosocial rehabilitation model offers. But one thing that came to his attention and concern a few years ago, he recalls now with some satisfaction, was the need for more attention on the part of behavioral healthcare providers, the mental health system and consumers themselves to clients' general health and medical issues.

"When I first thought about doing the study, the data from the focus group we formed to find out more about these health concerns was enlightening, but even more horrifying than I had imagined," recalls Dr. Brekke. "The mortality rates were really disturbing." Even when behavioral illnesses had been stabilized and clients seemed to be getting their lives in order, they had a lot of health issues that they weren't taking care of along the way. The consumers, many of them coming from severe poverty and homelessness, had serious untreated conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease... "too many of them were having severe symptoms or passing away prematurely because these illnesses had not been addressed."

The "Project Bridge" study, as it is called, began at Pacific Clinics Portals Division with funding from the Unihealth Foundation in 2008, shortly after Pacific Clinics had completed its merger with the previously independent Portals. It got started with the help of forensic anthropologist Louise Tallin, PhD, who worked with Dr. Brekke for three years on the program before she moved to an East Coast teaching position (his team now includes PhD graduate students Rohina Pahwa and Anthony Fulginiti, who more recently joined the effort).

The study was put into action in late 2008 by hiring a single staff person to become the first Health Navigator. The Clinics and the researchers looked for a person who might effectively communicate with consumers to determine their medical needs and act as a guide and mentor in linking them with health services, with the goal of increasing consumers' confidence, trust and self-awareness so they would continue visits and health maintenance on their own. Once that first Health Navigator, Melvin Jones, was in place and working with the client subjects, the study began to observe what the positive results of such an effort might be (read more about Mr. Jones beginning on page 6).

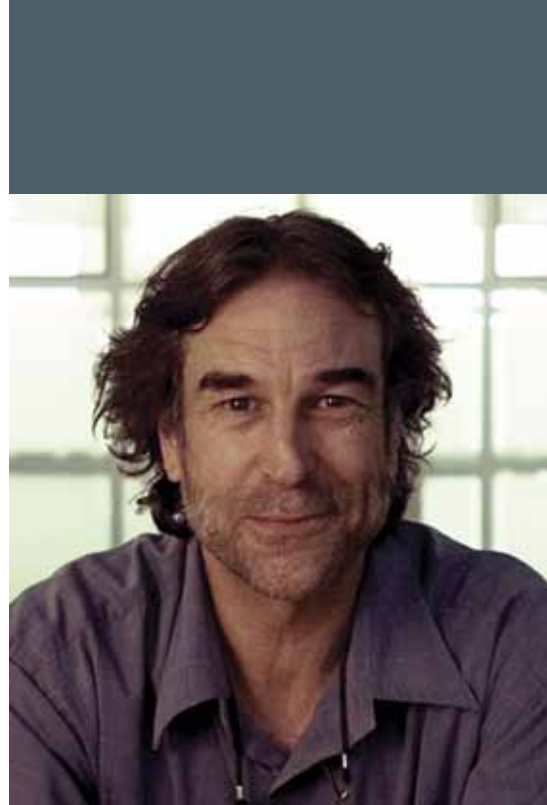
The original group of 24 Portals consumers was chosen completely at random to be targeted for the study. "We couldn't just pick and choose the clients someone told us needed this or that service or medical intervention...that wouldn't have been fair," explains Dr. Brekke. It was decided that the group should be split (also randomly) into two sub-groups, with the first 12 getting the immediate attention of Melvin Jones, and the others six months later. Each group was then divided into four smaller groups. Melvin and Dr. Brekke's team, along with the client's other Portals caregivers, began engaging them in Health Navigator services and observation as quickly as they could. Six months later, the team began working with the second dozen. Most of the consumers were from the Portals Wilshire Boulevard site, some were from the Western Avenue programs.

Dr. Brekke has now released some early statistics from the first year of the study that are eliciting a great deal of hope and excitement for the future of health navigation at the Clinics and elsewhere. Positive trends show overall a nearly 50% reduction in all symptoms for both consumer groups. Drops of 80% in chest pain occurred in both groups. In the second group, headaches were cut in half. There was about 60% less nausea and abdominal pain in both groups, 35-45% decrease in dizziness and easy bruising and about 75% fewer difficulties hearing and with allergies and hay fever across both groups. Other worrying conditions and symptoms reduced during the study periods were muscle/joint pain, fever/sweats and loss of coordination.

One extremely important statistic showed that the entire group, whose members had reported numerous recent trips to local emergency rooms and urgent care facilities for their health concerns at the outset, had reduced those ER trips to zero, an important outcome for those governmental entities struggling to fund and maintain services in critically-stretched, crisis-focused facilities across the county and state.

More recently, this practice that Mr. Jones and the USC team has refined over the past two years has expanded into the Clinics' San Gabriel Valley programs. There, they are able to work with a group of new health navigators coordinated by West Valley Family Services Divisional Director Pablo Anabalón, PsyD, who has taken the lead in directing the activities there. The West Valley region with its combination of family and adult services programs was a good fit for the expansion of the project, explains Dr. Brekke, as well as expanded opportunities for medical treatment due to Pacific Clinics recent affiliation with URDC Human Services Corp. URDC's Bill Moore Clinics are a primary medical care resource for the health navigator program with their main site in Pasadena and a newly opened facility near downtown Monrovia.

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health has taken note of all these impressive statistics and activities, and has invited Dr. Brekke and his team, assisted by his HN partners from Pacific Clinics, to help the Department train 80 people from their own staff and other mental health contractors in health navigation during the next several months. ■



John S. Brekke, PhD, publishes widely in mental health journals, serves on the editorial boards of Social Service Review, Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal and Research on Social Work Practice and is a consulting editor for Social Work Research.

Dr. Brekke's case study results are being constantly augmented as clients take additional steps to accessing this new opportunity for greater wellness and longevity.



Clinics Peer Partners Yesenia Santana (left), Cynthia Lopez (right), and Case Manager Assistant Peggy Castro seek advice from pioneer Health Navigator Melvin Jones. The three new "HNs" all work at West Valley Intensive Services Division programs that serve adults, older adults and transitional age youth, many who have been homeless and have a wide range of health issues.

Melvin Jones: First Health Navigator Helps Clinics Integrate Health Issues

He Mentors Other Staff in Reaching Out to Ailing Consumers

Melvin Jones is a tall, soft-spoken man in his middle years who first came to Pacific Clinics by way of seeing a poster for the Mental Health Worker Training Course at Pasadena City College.

Mr. Jones became Pacific Clinics' first Health Navigator after taking the agency's Paraprofessional Mental Health Worker course in 2008. He was the class valedictorian — a standout — and as a result of that and his past professional experience as an occupational therapist, he was hired at the Pacific Clinics Portals Wilshire Boulevard site as the staff link for the "Project Bridge" study, as Dr. John Brekke and his team set out to assess how the concept and practice of health navigation would work with clients there (also see page 4-5).

An important part of the process was seeking working relationships with medical care professionals in the Los Angeles and East Hollywood areas to whose facilities Portals clients at the Wilshire and Western sites could be transported. It wasn't always easy, but Mr. Jones helped Portals find a small number of what Dr. Brekke calls "doctors with a heart" — MDs and others willing to work with mental health clients. Not every doctor wants to treat persons with these issues, in small part because of any prior negative experiences, but mainly because of preconceived ideas about the challenges. Many doctors do not take Medi-Cal or have other insurance or fee restrictions.

Nonetheless, Mr. Jones was able to identify one or two caring physicians, as well as public health nurses and other medical professionals, and began bringing the first of the study's consumers to appointments and screenings. "One of these doctors — everyone calls her Dr. Kim —" says Mr. Jones, "has been very successful with our clients. "She is a very kind person who makes them feel at ease," offers Dr. Brekke.

Once the initial group of 24 randomly chosen consumers from the Portals Division's Wilshire Boulevard and Western Avenue sites was set as study participants, the structure of the study dictated that Mr. Jones begin working with 12 of them immediately, then six months later with the second 12. At the six-month point, he had to continue the process with only eight clients, as some of them had dropped out during the wait. A couple from the first group didn't make it all the way through, either. During the process, however, Mr. Jones continually coordinated with the other

Portals staff involved in various aspects of the clients' care in order to keep as many of the study subjects as possible active in the program and seeing to their medical concerns.

During the study period, Melvin observed that the Portals consumers had some really serious physical ailments and conditions that put stress on them, making their struggle with mental illness even more challenging. He cites the issues of one gentleman with diabetes who had already had several of his toes amputated before the health navigation program began. Because of poor follow-up care on the client's part, Melvin recalls, the man was in danger of having his foot amputated. "He wouldn't follow the doctor's instructions and would leave the hospital against medical advice. I started working with him and the manager at his Board and Care home; we helped him follow the doctor's instructions, keeping his infected foot clean and dry and keeping his medical appointments."

The success of these first health navigation efforts, reflected in the earliest data from Project Bridge, was an important factor in the decision by Dr. Susan Mandel by late 2010 to expand the practice into the Clinics' West Valley Family and Intensive Services programs. The knowledge and experience Mr. Jones has gained have made him a key ally of Dr. Brekke and the West Valley divisional leaders in recruiting, training and mentoring a new group of staff health navigators taking on these duties along with their other clinical responsibilities.

Now, some months later, Melvin Jones is an important presence when the 15 or so new West Valley health navigators meet as a group twice a month at the Clinics' Pasadena Family Services (PFS) site to share their experiences and challenges. Dr. Brekke and his team are also there to give updates and insight on the continuing project, and West Valley program directors from PFS, CHAP and Monrovia programs, where many of the new health navigators work, take part in the meeting along with its chair, Dr. Pablo Anabalon.

When the meeting ends, however, several of the HN's can be seen vying for Mr. Jones' attention. They want to ask him questions or request that he attend the new groups they are forming to introduce clients to the idea of achieving better general health and allowing staff to help them get there. He takes time to meet with them, whenever they ask, to assist them in their efforts to seek out and guide likely candidates for medical interventions.

This summer, Mr. Jones helped Dr. Brekke's team teach the first specialized training module on health navigation ever held during the Mental Health Worker Training course. Young adults from Clinics Transitional Age Youth programs

and other youth mental health/social services entities, as well as six former graduates of the TAY MHW course, were the recipients of the

He takes time to meet with them, whenever they ask, to assist them in their efforts to seek out and guide likely candidates for medical interventions.

four-day training near the end of the 10-week class. Mr. Jones also served as a supervisor for one of the TAY graduates during the 48 hours of required field training following the class work. That young woman now works for a foster care agency and hopes to use her new skills in health navigation there.

Mr. Jones continues to be the only staff member at Pacific Clinics with the full-time personnel designation of Health Navigator. Although the initial guidance process with members of the both Portals client groups has concluded, he still works with them as needed, coordinating with other Wilshire- and Western-based team members to help the consumers stay on the positive paths they have taken to get their general health on track.

He has also begun seeing some additional clients at the Monrovia Family Services program. This serves to keep him in the vicinity of the West Valley programs, ready to help the current San Gabriel Valley staff practitioners and shepherd any new ones. As Mr. Jones says, "We can't stop now...we know this works." ■



HEALTH NAVIGATION

Who Are These Health Navigators and Why Are They Nagging Me to Go to the Doctor?

The Health Navigation concept is based on the philosophy of "for them, with them, by them." Once consumers have agreed to take their steps to seek medical help, the Health Navigator (HN) expects to make the appointments, and even fill out their medical and financial information. The HN sets up transportation, sits with clients in the waiting room to assuage their nervousness and fears, even accompanies them into the examination room if they ask. On the way to and from the medical clinic, the HN talks with the clients and encourages their coping skills and follow-through. The goal is to help them — eventually — do this on their own. And it has been successful, all because a group of mental health professionals wanted to take the extra step to help their clients improve essential aspects of their health and live longer. We've told you Melvin Jones' story (see p. 6). The more recently initiated members of the Clinics HN group have their own stories and some of them are below; one of them makes us realize very quickly that this work can result in a life-saving effort:

Brenda Gordon is a person who has rarely, if ever, turned down taking on a challenging task. As a Peer Partner at Pasadena Family Services' William H. Compton Wellness and Recovery Center, her co-workers know her as someone who can step in and make quick and enthusiastic work of any project. But back in February 2011, as she was just getting into the additional duties of a Health Navigator for her program, she was a bit overwhelmed. "It was hard," she recalls, "A lot of new paperwork, new health education groups and trying to convince reluctant clients that they needed to do more about their health...it wasn't easy, and it was pretty time-consuming."

But by August of this year, Ms. Gordon's outlook was a lot more positive. She had helped at least 30 clients from the 66 Hurlbut site over the past months participate in those challenging first-time doctor's visits to Pasadena's nearby URDC Human Services Corp's Bill Moore Clinic, as well as for follow-up appointments, lab tests and preventive screenings. "They know us now at Bill Moore," Ms. Gordon reports proudly. "9 a.m. Friday mornings is our time to go there, and the medical staff is waiting for us before any of their other patients are scheduled so we get in and out really quick. Once we get everyone who has appointments that morning into the Clinics van, we talk on the way about any concerns they have, helping reinforce their resolve to see the appointment through."

Ms. Gordon has now successfully mastered all the Clinics' paperwork...including the quintessential "Blue Form" and other health questionnaires that every new and existing client must complete to help determine their physical health situation, and she assists each of her clients — before their first visit — with any paperwork required by the Bill Moore Clinic for entry onto its patient rolls. "We do all we can beforehand to iron out any issues that might make the visits more stressful for our clients...we even go into the exam room with them if they want, and they often ask us to do that the first time." But, happily, says Brenda Gordon, "it usually doesn't take long for the physicians and nursing staff to make our clients feel more at ease, and the consumers are so grateful for the services...it's a real blessing to be able to help make that happen."

A contingent of Health Navigators joins Melvin Jones and Monrovia Family Services (MFS) Program Director Erin Dorflinger, LCSW, (2nd rt.), to tour the recently opened URDC Bill Moore Clinic in Monrovia. Included are Laura Quijada (2nd lft.) and Breanna Tupper (ctr.) from the MFS program, and Brenda Gordon from Pasadena's Compton Wellness Center.



Brenda also took responsibility for mentoring a graduate of the 2010 Transitional Age Youth Mental Health Worker course for a three-week HN internship.

Cynthia Lopez, a fresh-faced young woman who works each day at West Covina's Intensive Community Services (ICS) Older Adult Full Service Partnership program, started out as part-time Peer Partner but was recently moved to fulltime. The ICS site that houses her Mental Health Services Act-funded program is one where adult clients have found life-sustaining services and recovery progress for nearly 17 years, and many of them now fall into the category of older adults. The programs are under the direction of the West Valley Intensive Services division, which serves most of the Clinics' San Gabriel area adults with severe mental health and co-occurring substance abuse diagnoses, many who have been homeless or are at risk of homelessness. It is a population of clients whose overall health situation can be in jeopardy as a result of various threats and challenges.

Well before the MHSA programs were added with their "whatever it takes" philosophy, the ICS programs (formerly known as PARTNERS or ACT) had adhered to the philosophy of addressing the needs of the "whole person" when serving their clientele. Staff there has always been "on-call" 24 hours a day to support their clients, not only for their mental health issues but with other wellness needs, such as filling a request to take someone to a medical or dental appointment.

Even so, the more proactive practice of health navigation is still unfamiliar to many staff as well as the consumers. Although Ms. Lopez has had some success in encouraging concern about their medical care among a few of her older adult clients, she continually works to engage others — setting out invitational flyers around the site about a new health education group she organized — with the purpose of attracting the attention of not only the clients, but her fellow staff as well.

"We need the support of the entire staff to get consumers into this", she says. "Some clients are very reluctant to even talk about it. Although I had a good turnout for my first group in August...about seven or eight people attended — most of the discussion that day focused on concerns some clients had about a Medi-Cal issue. Only a couple even sounded open to the idea of exploring their health situations."

"I was just a little disappointed," Ms. Lopez admits, "but for the meeting in September, I decided to ask Melvin Jones to help me...he has been such a great mentor to our group and so helpful in answering questions for those of us just starting out." Although, as luck would have it, only four clients were able to attend because a previous group ran long and some had to leave. "I thought I was in for another disappointment," admits Ms. Lopez. "It started out with all four saying they didn't need this kind of help, but after Melvin helped me take them through the new questionnaire, they realized they did have medical issues that needed attention. It was kind of a breakthrough!"

Part-time Peer Partner **Lou Mallory** works out of the West Valley Intensive Services Division's Full Service Partnership program at the Hope Center for Transitional Age Youth in Irwindale. For a few years prior to becoming a 2010 graduate of the Clinics' Mental Health Worker training program, and being hired by Pacific Clinics earlier this year, her life had been on hold due to a diagnosis of major depression.

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Excited 2011 TAY graduates await the Mental Health Worker graduation ceremonies held at Pasadena City College in August.

13th Year of Unique Training Program Exceeds Even Dr. Mandel's Dreams

2011 Adult, TAY Students Learn New Skills

"It's amazing how far we have come with this...I never envisioned what a program like this could mean for so many people, and to our agency. It's already more than fulfilled what I imagined it would do."

Those sitting near Clinics CEO Susan Mandel, PhD, at recent Pacific Clinics Mental Health Worker (MHW) graduation events over the past year have probably heard her murmur these words to a guest, or even speak them from the podium. She has touched on them during some recent MHW graduation events, including several in Orange County, although not so much at the August 18 celebration at the Pasadena City College's (PCC) Community Education Center, when the Clinics proudly marked the successful paraprofessional certification of its 22nd Adult class and third Transitional Age Youth (TAY) class. But you knew that this 2011 achievement was yet another important phase in the culmination of that dream.

The 2011 PCC program's Adult class included 34 students who had completed the 10-week, 160 hour course, then took 48 hours of field training -- all but one at Pacific Clinics sites. For the TAY class that included 31 young adults, some went further afield after their class work to complete the required internship at one of five other LA County agencies.

There were, however, some new and unique aspects of the curricula for each of the 2011 classes that reflected Dr. Mandel's ongoing aspirations for the trainings and were acknowledged by her and by MHW Training Program Director Gina Perez, PsyD, during the program:

- The Adult class included a module on benefits counseling conducted by the Clinics Director of Benefits Establishment, Michael Van Essen. Members of the class say they were really excited to learn more about how to facilitate benefits in order to better help the clients with whom they might be working. Mr. Van Essen also became a field trainer for two of the graduates.
- The TAY class included a four-day orientation and training in the theory and practice of Health Navigation (HN), provided by USC's Dr. John Brekke, his research assistants and Clinics Health Navigator Melvin Jones. As mentioned throughout this issue, the benefits of integrating clients' access to needed medical care through their mental health case management has been the

subject of a recently-concluded study conducted by Dr. Brekke at Portals, and the health navigation practice was expanded last year into the Clinics' West Valley programs. Two of the TAY class members chose to take part in field training related to health navigation, shadowing HN staff as they helped clients connect with much-needed medical care. Five former MHW course grads also participated in the new class module and one also took subsequent field training with a current HN staff practitioner.

Other 2011 adult and TAY graduates found field placements under the watchful eye of 37 different Pacific Clinics staff supervisors. Besides observing clinical practices, students served internships at Clinics administrative sites such as the corporate offices in Arcadia, Training Institute, Housing Program and the Mental Health Worker Training Program's offices in Irwindale.

For those field trainers from outside agencies that provided internships for their own sponsored students, one amazing story that surfaced was that of Ken Brown, a case manager with the Antelope Valley-based Murrell's Farm & Boys Home. Mr. Brown drove two of his Murrell's youth clients who wanted to take the course, but had no transportation, all the way from Palmdale to Pasadena and back each Monday through Thursday for 10 weeks to attend the class, then supervised them as interns.

Dr. Mandel's dream in 1998 was to help increase the mental health workforce by developing additional training and work opportunities for consumers. She and the Clinics Board and administration had witnessed the success of a few consumer pioneers, employed mainly in support positions at the agency, and became increasingly convinced of the efficacy of hiring persons with "lived experience" to work in behavioral healthcare clinical settings. They envisioned offering new opportunities for consumers and family members to work as paraprofessionals and draw on their own experiences in serving others. "The ongoing collaboration with PCC Community Education Center leadership – currently Dean Rick Hodge – in giving us the educational vehicle for our LA County training programs has also been invaluable...we couldn't have done it with them," Dr. Mandel adds.

Initially, the Clinics provided all funding for the administration and operation of the free Mental Health Worker training programs. They are now funded in part by the Mental Health Services Act in both Los Angeles and Orange counties. In 2008, The Los Angeles County-based program received an additional grant through a private foundation to offer the PCC course to current or former foster youth.

What was just a few years ago unheard of – that uniquely qualified and trained consumers and family members would become colleagues of clinical personnel at their program sites – has now become a much more common occurrence to be embraced and welcomed. And as more and more graduates of these Clinics training programs each year are hired and begin serving clients across the mental health industry, Dr. Mandel's dream becomes even more of a reality and a boon for all involved. ■



Dr. John Brekke introduced the concept of becoming health navigators to Transitional Age Youth students of the Mental Health Worker training course in 2011.

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Before her illness, she had been employed for 20 years at the USC Keck School of Medicine, 15 of them as a clinic coordinator. Serving primarily with Parkinson's patients, Ms. Mallory linked them to care and resources. "I loved helping the patients," she says, "and have always had a strong interest in mental and physical health. Working as a health navigator at the Hope Center has been a great opportunity for a new career."

Ms. Mallory reports that she already has had many rewarding experiences linking her young adult clients with crucial services. One aspect of healthcare that has been especially difficult to arrange at low cost for the uninsured is eye care, but Ms. Mallory and other Clinics HN's are now able to do that more easily through a wonderful LensCrafters program called "Gift of Sight". She learned about this program from (lead Health Navigator) Melvin Jones through their bi-monthly meetings. The "Gift of Sight" program enables clients who have low income and no insurance to receive an eye examination and glasses the same day of their visit, completely free of charge.

"One of my clients had not had an eye exam in two years and broke her glasses during a fall at her home," Ms. Mallory explains. "She couldn't see without them and was wearing them taped up in several places. I arranged to take her to the LensCrafters appointment, where she was examined and picked out some frames. Within an hour, her new glasses were ready! She was so happy and grateful to Pacific Clinics and LensCrafters for this true 'gift of sight'." This 21-year-old now plans to return to school.

Sometimes, though, even new eyeglasses are not enough. Recently, Ms. Mallory took a 20-year-old client who has recently been diagnosed as legally blind (after his eyesight had seriously declined over the past year) for an appointment at the Braille Institute in Los Angeles, typical of the many helpful resources Health Navigators seek out for their clients. The young man signed up for the lending library and left with a cassette player and two books on tape. "He was so overwhelmed with the positive, welcoming energy and the array of services available to him that he began to cry with joy...the visit really gave him new hope for what he could do in his life."

And, finally, there is **Yesenia Santana**, who works 18.75 hours as a Peer Partner at the Passageways Homeless Multiservice Center's Field Capable Clinical Services in Pasadena, also a West Valley Intensive Services Division program. She is fairly new to the agency and another graduate of the PCC Mental Health Worker program, as are all the health navigators mentioned in this article. Ms. Santana has really taken to her health navigator duties and has been so successful that, even though she is kind of a newbie herself, she was allowed to have one of the 2011 TAY Mental Health Worker graduates shadow her for three weeks of health navigation field training during this past summer.

A client we'll call Angela was also taken on this summer by Health Navigator Yesenia Santana. Angela, in her late 40s and bipolar, had been homeless off and on for quite a while and understandably hadn't accessed much medical care. Once Ms. Santana convinced Angela to let her make the long-delayed appointment and accompanied her to the doctor, Angela agreed with the doctor's recommendation that she get some screenings done...particularly a mammogram, since she hadn't had one for five years.

When the diagnosis and follow-up results came back a short time later, both Ms. Santana and her client were shocked to learn that Angela had cancer in both breasts and needed to have a double mastectomy. The good news, though, according to Angela's doctor, was that these cancers — of two different types and both of a fast-moving and dangerous nature — were caught very early, and no other treatment protocol would be needed. Both Angela and her Health Navigator realized...if Angela they had waited much longer to go for her check-up, the cancers would have progressed and the prognosis almost certainly would have been less positive.

Yesenia Santana is telling Angela's story everywhere she can. She is hopeful of getting more hours on the job to do her health navigation. "So many homeless people coming into the Passageways program have serious health issues," she says, "and I know as well as anyone in this program that getting them to the doctor works,"... and saves lives. ■



BIRTH-TO-THREE SERVICES NOW ADDRESS OUR YOUNGEST CLIENTS

Children's Specialty Services Divisional Director Dr. Joe Ho, and Birth-to-Three Services consultant Dr. Barbara Stroud.

Many believe that you have to be "older" to suffer from mental illness, but a study reported in a recent issue of *American Psychologist* says there's actually no lowest-age limit. Young children are not inherently resilient to adversity and do not "grow out" of behavioral problems and emotional difficulties without help. Even infants can be affected, according to the researchers, and they often go without treatment that could prevent them from suffering long-term effects.

"Infants immediately make meaning about themselves and their relation to the world of people and things," said the article, but that process can go wrong. "Some infants come to make their own meaning as helpless and hopeless, and may become apathetic, depressed and withdrawn. Others may feel threatened

by the world and become hyper-vigilant and anxious."

The researchers advocate more early screening and assessment as well as better training for people who deal with young children. This is a conclusion that Pacific Clinics had drawn some years ago. Our long experience with school-based services in several local Head Start programs has continually revealed that pre-school children often have mental health problems that might be more effectively addressed even before they can walk.

In response, our agency recently began a focused training program for many of its child and family services clinicians to better educate them on assessing and serving this very young population. It is overseen by Joseph Ho, PhD, Divisional Director of the Clinics' Child Specialty Services Division, his Associate Director, Lisa Lansing, LCSW and consultant Barbara Stroud, PhD, one of the region and nation's most knowledgeable authorities on mental health services for children from birth to three years old.

Dr. Stroud has worked with several Los Angeles County-area mental health and social services agencies to educate and promote services for the youngest consumers, and her credentials more recently include providing numerous presentations and trainings; she has been asked to speak on the subject of birth-to-three mental health in locations as far as Capetown, South Africa. "One difference between working with this age group as opposed to older children is that the therapies are done with both child and parent/caregiver present at all times. Whatever the reason a baby has not felt a connection with the parent or has suffered emotional distress because of trauma of some kind, our goal is to help them improve or regain that bond with the caregiver so that healing can take place." Dr. Stroud is also working to prepare Clinics staff to earn a new state endorsement for competency as Infant-Family and Early Childhood Professionals.

Continued on next page

"Seeing a seven-month-old was a completely new challenge for me."

Lisa Lansing

Working with this age group is eye-opening for even longtime clinicians. Lisa Lansing recalls: "It was quite a revelation the first time I was asked to accompany a couple of my staff on an assessment for a seven-month-old. After 20 years in children's mental health, I had had experience with, maybe, four year olds."

Dr. Stroud holds both weekly group and supervision sessions and monthly trainings for the clinicians. Currently, she has supervision with eight Clinics therapists who have actual clients in the birth-to-three age range and have had some training and experience treating infants and toddlers; several work in local Head Start-type programs. Other staff from Children's Specialty Services units, such as Family Preservation, Systems of Care and Armenian/Latino children's programs, attend the trainings to learn how to better identify problems and when to refer these very young clients and their caregivers for this very specialized type of services.

Ms. Lansing continues: "Seeing a seven-month-old was a completely new challenge for me, and some of our therapists are seeing babies even younger than that now." ■

& News & Notes

Consumer's Inspirational Story Gains ACHSA Recognition



Unsworth is ACHSA winner.

Pacific Clinics Portals consumer Joyce Unsworth has been named recipient of the 2011 Inspiration Award by the Los Angeles-based Association of Community Human Services Agencies. The 63-year old was among the honorees at the organization's annual luncheon October 20 at the Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel, which featured Congresswoman Grace Napolitano as keynote speaker.

Ms. Unsworth's compelling life story began in her native England with frequent domestic violence that resulted in her witnessing the death of her mother at the hands of her father when she was only 10 years old. This resulted in foster care, repeated institutionalization in her teens for depression and PTSD, and several suicide attempts. She was given shock therapy, a common treatment at the time.

At age 18, she fled to America and tried to live her life, working successfully for about 20 years, but her demons followed her. After escaping an abusive marriage, she became a spokesperson for six years with the Los Angeles Commission on the Status of Women to advocate for laws against domestic violence, but her life began again to spiral out of control, leading to homelessness and sleeping on the streets of Skid Row to feed a drug habit.

She wanted peace in her life but did not know how to find it, and could not see a future for herself. Years of isolation, homelessness and drug abuse caused her to withdraw further and lock away her emotions. The only bright spot in her life was art. She has always expressed her true feelings through poetry and painting. "If it hadn't been for my art to help me say how I feel, I don't know how I would have kept going." She even had some of her poems published.

In 2008, Ms. Unsworth learned about Portals, a division of Pacific Clinics that has been serving the South Los Angeles area since 1955. Remembering the shock treatments she endured in England, she was hesitant to trust anyone at a mental health clinic. Once she met with Portals clinicians, however, their non-confrontational style immediately put her at ease. She realized that she had to let go of the past, which meant forgiving her father. "It was the hardest thing for me to do because, although I loved him as my father, I hated him for what he had done. Once I forgave him, I started to feel alive again."

Through skillful and compassionate care from the therapists, Ms. Unsworth learned how to let her emotions out of the protective box she had created. With the program's help, she has moved into a studio apartment with her toy poodle Snowflake, and continues to write inspiring poetry. She hopes to write a book about her life to show others that they, too, can survive.

Ms. Unsworth attempted a few years ago to renew the relationship with her father, but even then he continued to threaten her. "It is still difficult for me to trust people, she says, "but I have my little Snowflake and my friends at Portals who give me unconditional love. My feelings that I kept safe in a 'box' of my making are now free and I couldn't be happier."

Dr. Garcia's "Heroism" Recognized by National Foundation

Clinics Corporate Director of Latino Program Development Luis Garcia, PsyD, has been honored by The Campaign for Public Health Foundation with one of its annual "Unsung Hero" Awards Dr. Garcia received the foundation's "Rock in the Pond" award at the Foundation's second annual awards event in Washington DC on October 26.

The CPH's announcement cited Dr. Garcia's establishment of the comprehensive youth suicide prevention program that has expanded from three to 14 schools over ten years, his work to establish a Spanish-speaking NAMI family support group and his creation of educational materials on Latino mental health. "The majority of his career has been spent working with community leaders to promote mental health awareness and to overcome the stigmas that accompany mental health or substance abuse cases. Dr. Garcia is honored for his decades of leadership and advocacy that have engaged and inspired others to support the issue of mental health throughout his community and the nation," the award reads.

The foundation will also present its Wavemaker and Excellence in Media awards during the event, as well as a "Rock in the Pond" Honorable Mention this year. The Selection Committee for the awards included executives from GlaxoSmithKline, Trust for America's Health, Association of Schools of Public Health and Northrop Grumman Health IT Programs.

Congressional Award for Clinics' Asian Pacific Program

Pacific Clinics Asian Pacific Family Center in Rosemead was chosen this August by Congresswoman Judy Chu (HR, 32nd District - CA) for one of two "Non-Profit of the Year" prizes in her second annual DiverCities Award presentation. Ms. Chu honored APFC after seeing a nomination of Pacific Clinics for the award from Picasso's Cafe and Bakery owner Maria DeRosa (also see pg. 16), because the Congresswoman was familiar with the multi-cultural Center's impressive work with Asian/Pacific individuals and families in her district. Her award cited recognition of the outstanding services and professionalism of the Center, its commitment to the community and its dedication to improving residents' quality of life.



"Unsung Hero" Luis Garcia, PsyD

2011 M.I.L.E.S. Conference Marks Two Decades



Pacific Clinics celebrated its 20-year collaboration with local police and sheriff's departments to improve awareness and knowledge of a wide range of mental health issues at its annual Mental Illness Law Enforcement Systems (M.I.L.E.S.) Conference at the Hilton Hotel in San Gabriel October 27.

As a result of shootings of mentally ill persons by police in the early 1990's, Pacific Clinics President/CEO Dr. Susan Mandel co-founded M.I.L.E.S. with Monterey Park Police captain (and later Monrovia police chief) Joseph Santoro. Its Steering Committee is a coalition of representatives from Pacific Clinics, the San Gabriel Police Chiefs Association and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, as well as governmental mental health providers and independent advocacy groups.

More than 325 persons attended the free, morning-long event funded by the Clinics to hear this year's topic, "When Sex is a Crime: Predators and Their Victims". The presenter was Robin Sax, a former prosecutor of sex crimes and legal analyst for several network news outlets. The conference's annual Extra M.I.L.E.S. award went to Los Angeles County Sheriff's Dept. 95 Superior Court personnel and a special award was given to Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Michael Tynan for his leadership of successful diversionary court programs.

National Psychology Group Honors APFC Clinician; Highlights Site

A unique honor was bestowed upon a member of the Asian Pacific Family Services Division staff at the recent American Psychological Association (APA) annual convention in Washington DC, and the division's primary site has been featured on the cover of the nationally-distributed APA publication.



The Society for the Psychological Study of Ethnic Minority Issues, also known as Division 45 of the APA, presented the Emerging Professional Award to the Clinics Asian/Pacific Islander Collaborative Program Director Michi Fu, PhD, noting "her outstanding contributions in service to the field of ethnic minority psychology and ethnic minority communities." The Mental Health Services Act-funded program that Dr. Fu heads represents a unique partnership providing resources from several agencies and organizations to children and youth within four separate geographic service areas in Los Angeles County.

Michi Fu, PhD, received the Emerging Professional Award

Dr. Fu also serves as one of the associate editors for the respected APA journal *Psychological Services*. A photo of the Asian Pacific Family Center site in Rosemead was selected for the cover of the publication's August 2011 issue, and a detailed description of APFC and its work was provided inside the journal. "It's wonderful that this was made possible during the Center's 25th anniversary year," comments Terry Gock, PhD, APFS Divisional Director.

Have you considered putting Pacific Clinics in your will?

- It's easy. A sentence or two in your will is all you need.
- It can be amended. The gift isn't made until after your lifetime.
- Tax deduction. Your estate is entitled to an estate tax charitable deduction for the gift's full value.
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For more information, contact: Jolynn Reid, Chief Development Officer, (626) 254-5024 or jreid@pacificclinics.org

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News & Notes continued

Tasty Opportunity for Giving

Friends and supporters of Pacific Clinics who are also Costco members can get a start on their holiday catering or gift shopping and help our agency in the bargain by purchasing gift cards for Irwindale's Picasso's Café, Bakery & Catering Co. that will benefit the Clinics. Costco warehouse locations in the San Gabriel Valley, Inland Empire and Orange County are offering the cards, redeemable for in-café, to-go, online purchases or catering services. They are available in \$50 denominations, sold in a pack of two for a discounted price of \$79.99. Picasso's is even offering a free lunch just for bringing in a Costco receipt showing the gift card purchase and will also be using social media promotions to reward card buyers.

Through Picasso's community philanthropic program, Operation PAINT, half of the gift card sales proceeds will be donated to Pacific Clinics. "We have launched the Costco Gift Card Program to allow people to give a gift of good taste with added value, which is important in today's tough economic climate," said Picasso's Executive Vice President Marissa DeRosa. "We are encouraging purchase of these cards to help support our non-profit partners." Picasso's and the DeRosa family have been devoted supporters of the Clinics Transitional Age Youth Hope Center in Irwindale. The continually well-reviewed eatery and catering establishment is located at 6070 N. Irwindale Avenue, #A-D, website at www.picassoscafe.com; and phone is (626) 969-6100.



Gift cards to benefit Clinics

Pacific Clinics

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Stories in Advances about clients or family members are true, although the names may have been changed.

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