AWARENESS MATTERS

October is also ADHD Awareness Month

October 7-13

October 11

October 10

October is an important month for mental health awareness.

A Suicide Prevention Hotline is also available.

The Suicide Prevention Hotline is 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Your support lets people living with mental illness know they’re not alone in this fight.

Your gifts bring help and hope to people living with mental illness

An estimated 9.5 million adult Americans will have suicidal thoughts this year. Approximately 2 million adolescents attempt suicide each year. It will be for all kinds of reasons, including depression, anxiety, substance use or other mental health issues. Each of these individuals is someone’s parent, sister, brother, friend or grandparent.

At Pacific Clinics, it’s our mission to provide treatment, education and support so that everyone has access to expert care when they’re struggling with mental health issues they cannot resolve. Your gifts make that possible.

Will you take a moment today to give to Pacific Clinics? Whether you do it in honor of National Recovery Month or Suicide Prevention Month, because you know the struggle of mental illness in your own family, or because you care about helping others in need in your community—everything you give will help us help others get the mental health treatment and support they need. Thank you.

Your support is helping me stay on track with my recovery

Jarrett’s experience with drug use began with marijuana in his freshman year at USC and continued until it became a daily habit, along with other drugs such as LSD and mushrooms. It ended with a disturbing psychotic break. “I lost my freedom because of drugs,” he says.

Jarrett graduated from USC’s film school with his senior script already optioned. Although he spent his days getting high, he achieved some success as a writer and director. “Marijuana takes a long time before you have any consequences,” says Jarrett. “I was succeeding in the world, so no one was going to say you have a problem. It wasn’t until that all went away that people started calling me on it.”

Although he had been hospitalized for psychotic episodes, Jarrett didn’t want to face his addiction. Instead, he moved to Mexico. There he experienced the most frightening psychotic break of his life.

Jarrett returned to Los Angeles and sought help. He has been sober ever since. But it was a painful, yearlong transition that included seven days in an emergency mental health ward and 10 months in a psychiatric rehabilitation facility where he was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder with psychotic features.

Pacific Clinics helped Jarrett navigate the move to the board and care facility where he lives. His mental health and support team continue to provide treatment and supportive services. Every day Jarrett is taking small steps to get his life back. “I got a bank account and California I.D. I went to the dentist, and that made my mom so happy,” says Jarrett.

Jarrett has now gone back to college to study psychology and Spanish. His therapist even helped him to get financial aid. With his employment specialist, he found a volunteer job teaching reading and writing at the library.

“Connection is so important in recovery. Addiction is a secretive and solitary activity,” says Jarrett, who also attends and leads 12-step meetings. And to the supporters of Pacific Clinics he says, “It’s nice not to be alone in this. Gracias, amigos.”

WHY I GIVE

An opportunity to live my purpose

Six months ago I joined the board of Pacific Clinics because I wanted an opportunity to serve an organization whose mission was to help those outside of my area of influence. Seeing family members living with mental illness has shown me how important care is. I’ve also been impressed with the model of care at Pacific Clinics that not only provides mental health treatment, but also invests downstream by helping at-risk families so their children can have a better chance at success.

I spent 25 years in the sales and use tax industry before starting my own company. Coming from a corporate, bottom-line focused work environment to the service-oriented mission of Pacific Clinics has been inspiring. And I’ve been able to better define my own passion and purpose, and the legacy I want to leave.

One of the things that has surprised me is how little known Pacific Clinics is among those who have the means to support this work and how well known it is for those who need this help. So watch out, because I’m ready to help inspire others to support this vital work in our community!

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You were there for me when I needed help

“I’ve been coming to Pacific Clinics since I was ten because my mom said I needed help,” says Caroline who is now 18 years old. “I would get in trouble at school. I was acting out. I used to cut myself.”

Caroline’s grandparents adopted her and her two brothers when she was young, and she considers them her parents. When her biological mother would come to the house, it caused a disruption. She would try and take the kids, making accusations against Caroline’s grandparents. Each event left Caroline feeling depressed and sad.

When Caroline first realized her grandparents weren’t her biological parents, she grew rebellious toward the family and struggled with depression. “I considered taking my own life,” remembers Caroline. “My case manager has helped me a lot with that.”

Pacific Clinics, mental health worker, Efren Duran (see story left) was a big influence. Efren would come to the house when Caroline was feeling suicidal and needed to be seen by the Psychiatric Emergency Team. He also helped Caroline learn to navigate her emotional responses and worked with her family. “Without the support of Pacific Clinics, I’d probably be dead,” says Caroline. “I’ve been through a lot. If I didn’t have someone to open up to, that would have been too much for me. Efren is like a trusted friend.”

Never give up on yourself

During her senior year in high school, Caroline realized that her grandparents really were mom and dad, a family for her. “It just switched,” says Caroline. “I don’t know how to explain it, but it was a feeling of realization. I was happy, but it took me so long to learn it.”

Caroline was the first in her family to graduate from high school. This summer she has a job and will be starting community college in the fall. She loves animals and hopes to work in veterinary medicine one day.

“Never give up on yourself. This experience has taught me that you can go through so much, but it’s okay,” says Caroline. “Pacific Clinics helped me by being there for me—and I’m thankful!”

A safety net to help prevent teen suicide

For Luis Garcia, Pacific Clinics’ Vice President of Quality Care, Cultural Diversity & Outcomes, preventing suicide is more than a job, it’s a mission. Suicide is the third leading cause of death for children aged 10 to 14 and the second leading cause of death for age 15 to 34. “I am deeply concerned about the problem of suicide. These are our leaders for the future,” says Luis. “When I hear cases of children 12 or 16 years old writing a letter to a friend to say goodbye, I know we need to do something. These kids need hope and help to live life like you and I do.”

Seventeen years ago Pacific Clinics was concerned about the statistic that Latino Youth are more likely to consider suicide than any other race or ethnicity. Coupled with that was a lack of access to mental health treatment for this population. Luis worked with Congresswoman Grace Napolitano to secure a grant for a suicide prevention program targeting Latino youth. What started in four schools is now a program reaching all cultures and ethnicities in 27 schools around Los Angeles County.

Working with the whole family for early intervention

As part of the program, therapists go to school sites to treat children and youth who need mental health services and offer training to teachers and families. “All of these children have early symptoms of depression, trauma or anxiety. The first line of defense is prevention,” says Luis.

As part of prevention, the program also focuses on early treatment, working with the family as a support system and drawing on community resources such as involvement in a church, sports or music. It also helps a child develop a safety network of trusted adults—a grandparent, teacher or coach—whom they can turn to and say, “I have a problem.”

“Sometimes it’s difficult work trying to help children and families deal with problems they don’t know how to resolve,” says Luis. “But for me it’s not a job, it’s a mission. I know suicide is hard to prevent, but I really believe it’s preventable if we work together with the families, teachers, community and with anyone who wants to offer support.”

Did you know

RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR HELP

Although no one can predict when someone may lose their life to suicide, recognizing signs of hopelessness can help families and friends know when to seek help. Below are some potential signs that someone may be at risk of taking their life by suicide.

A person at risk might:

► Talk about feeling hopeless, trapped or that there is no reason to live
► Withdraw from family and friends
► Engage in risky behavior including substance use
► Experience a drastic change in behavior or extreme mood swings
► Start giving away valuable belongings

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CATCH PEOPLE CARING

The Long-Term Impact of a Caring Mental Health Worker

For the last eight years Efren Duran has been working with the Full Service Program helping youth like Caroline (see story right) and their families. “I love working with kids and making sure they succeed,” says Efren. Many of his former clients still call him. Efren recalls one young man in foster care. “He didn’t see a way out, and he tried to end his life a couple of times. I worked with him and he got into the Naval Academy.”

“Now he calls me every year to say ‘thank you.’ That’s a great feeling.”

Every culture has its own stigmas around mental illness, and Efren has been a valuable asset helping parents in the Latino community, including Caroline’s, accept mental health services for their children.

“A lot of parents have a hard time understanding that just because your child needs therapy doesn’t mean they are ‘crazy,’” says Efren. “If a school makes a referral, some of them ask ‘why is my child being targeted?’ I have to let them know ‘why is my child being targeted?’ I have to let them know it’s okay.”

After Caroline transitions to college, she will no longer be part of the program. But like the other youth she has helped, Efren says, “I still see her calling me just to check in! Efren is also grateful for your support of these programs. “Thank you for your contribution,” he says. “It may seem like just a check, but it makes a huge impact to a child who needs help.”

Efren and Caroline

Pacific Clinics’ mental health workers, like Efren, continue to work with children and youth who feel unable to meet the challenges of life. Your support helps make that possible. Along with Caroline and Efren, we want to say thank you for choosing to make a life-changing difference in the lives of these families.
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