WHY I GIVE

Investing in turning lives around

In the 1990’s the homeless population throughout Los Angeles was growing significantly. I got involved in Portals House because it was one of the agencies effectively helping that community. I served as a trustee of Portals Foundation and, following the merger of Portals House and Pacific Clinics, continued to serve as a trustee of Pacific Clinics Foundation.

Mental illness is a major contributor to poverty and homelessness across the world. One of the ways I believe we can help to address both poverty and homelessness is by supporting access to effective treatment for mental illness. For me, that means supporting Pacific Clinics.

Over the years I have seen countless individual success stories of lives turned around. Out of dire circumstances, people have returned to productive and healthy lives because of the support and guidance they’ve received from Pacific Clinics. Pacific Clinics provides an answer for people living with mental illness. I’m grateful that contributing to that work allows me to be a small part of that solution.

For me, that means supporting Pacific Clinics.

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Thank you for saving my life and many others

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By age 15, Shelley was an alcoholic. "I started experimenting with drugs at 13. I was kicked out of junior high school."

Shelley was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder as an adult. "I always knew something was wrong with my brain. Looking back at my life, it’s hard to believe I’m still alive. I’ve had to face so many demons."

She tried attending college and working, but she abruptly quit. When her insurance ran out, a friend told her about Pacific Clinics. Here, Shelley worked with a psychiatrist and a nurse to manage her medications for mental illness. She enrolled in the Medication Program and received assistance with applying for benefits.

"Pacific Clinics is where my mental health recovery began," says Shelley. "They helped me tremendously. They took all my mess that I gave them and they never gave up hope on me. I’ll never forget that. That’s why I have a passion for working here."

Paying it Forward

Today, Shelley shares her personal story with Pacific Clinics’ clients at the F.A.I.T.H. Center. As a Peer Partner, Shelley

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CATCH PEOPLE CARING
The rewards of going above and beyond

It’s a very tough work, but it’s very gratifying,” says Genesis Castellanos, a Pacific Clinics mental health worker who works with older adults. “I go home at the end of the day and it just feels really nice to know that I literally help people for a living.”

Genesis and her colleague were awarded the “Catch People Caring” award for their work with a client who had spent 20 years living on the street. This client suffered from major depression and had seen a great deal of violence over the years. His only family was 10 street cats, which proved a big barrier to securing housing.

“It just feels really nice to know that I literally help people for a living.”
—Genesis

While Genesis’ colleague worked to find a living situation, Genesis provided case management and the therapy he needed for transition. “What’s it going to be like when I have four walls around me?” he asked.

Through patience, compassion and creativity, they found an apartment that allowed the client to have one cat and literally help people for a living.

“The thing I love about my job,” says Genesis Castellanos, a Pacific Clinics therapist, “is that I literally help people for a living.”

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enjoys helping clients reach a point when they too can improve their lives.

“I like showing our clients that there is more to them than just their mental illness and so much more they can do. Seeing them when that light comes on, I can’t explain the feeling,” says Shelley.

Robert is one of Shelley’s clients and he struggles with Schizophrenia. For years Robert wouldn’t leave his bedroom. When a persistent neighbor pushed him to come to Pacific Clinics, he did.

Along with getting help with his medications, Robert went to the F.A.I.T.H. Center. Shelley tried repeatedly to get Robert to join in one of the Center’s workshops. For two years, he refused.

“One day I heard Shelley talking about ways to improve ourselves and it made a lot of sense to me. My mental illness makes it very hard for me to focus. Shelley has been meeting with me one on one to give me tips on how to stay focused. She is terrific,” said Robert.

Becoming a Leader

Now Robert leads the “Talking Stick Round Up” workshop where participants share how they are doing both mentally and spiritually and speak while they hold the talking stick. “Leading the group has helped me come out of my shell. The more involved I got, the more stable I became,” says Robert. “People that I’m surrounded with are in the same spot I’m in. We help each other and motivate each other.”

“He came up with this workshop on his own, and the other clients really enjoy it. He has so much to give. This is what I love about my job,” says Shelley.

Celebrating Breakthrough Milestones

Last Christmas Robert came out of his room for the family celebration for the first time and the whole family clapped for him. This month, Shelley celebrates 10 years of sobriety and seven years working at Pacific Clinics.

“I’m hopeful that Pacific Clinics will exist in the future to help others that have even worse struggles.”
—Robert

Helping others fulfills a life-long dream

Frank Gallardo has always wanted to help others. “When I was a kid there were times when my parents were unemployed and we had no money. During these stressful times people helped me and I’ve never forgotten that,” says Frank, who has been with Pacific Clinics for 13 years.

Helping children is a passion

Frank is a Mental Health Worker (MHW) at Pacific Clinics Centro Familiar Latino program that provides comprehensive outpatient services. Frank works with children and adolescents whose emotional problems cause serious difficulties in their school performance and peer and family relationships.

Frank likes teaching his clients techniques to make their lives easier or how to reach their goals. He works with clients in their homes or at their schools, reaching into his own pocket to buy them a meal when they’re hungry.

One of the schools where Frank works is a behavioral center that offers a second chance for students who have been suspended. Frank facilitates a weekly Anger Replacement Training group for these students.

Knowing you’re making a difference

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Thanks to your support, our Peer Partner Program pairs clients with trained staff who have struggled with similar life issues. Talking with someone who is successfully managing their mental illness paves the way for other breakthroughs as well.

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Knowing you’re making a difference

Last year, Frank saved one of his clients in the classroom who was having a panic attack.

The boy hadn’t taken his medication. “I sat on the floor and slowly spoke to him to calm him down so he could swallow his medication. Since this episode, the boy has not had another attack,” Frank explains.

“I think about my clients’ needs after work. It’s hard to turn it off. Fortunately, I have a good circle of family and friends and a fiancé who support me,” said Frank.

Frank also relaxes through his love of sports.

“I entered this field because I wanted to help people. Periodically, I hear back from my former clients. It’s gratifying to hear how they are doing and that in some way I was able to help them achieve their goals,” says Frank.

Frank earned a degree in social work in order to help others and is a Mental Health Worker (MHW) at Pacific Clinics Centro Familiar Latino program.

Did you know

Every client has an individual pathway

Once referred, a client meets with an Intake Specialist who identifies their needs and connects them to a local Pacific Clinics location.

After a full assessment a mental health team is put together for each client. This may include a psychiatric nurse, therapist, mental health worker (MHW) and peer partner.

To meet our clients’ financial or other supportive needs, they may be assigned to a housing specialist, health navigator or licensed clinical social worker.

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While Genesis’ colleague worked to find a living situation, Genesis provided case management and the therapy he needed for transition. “What’s it going to be like when I have four walls around me?” he would ask Genesis. Through patience, compassion and creativity, they found an apartment that allowed the client to have one cat and helped him successfully settle in. “Getting him housed was one of the highlights of my career,” says Genesis.

“One of the things I like most about my job is the team that works with me,” says Genesis. “We’re just really invested in the clients. From the nurse, the psychiatrist, therapist, case-workers, the intern, our supervisor—it’s like a dream team!”

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Your support helps overcome obstacles to mental health

When people struggling with mental illness don’t receive the care they need, it’s easy to become defined by the illness. The stories in this newsletter share just a few of the life-changing journeys our staff have taken with clients this year. It’s their mission to help our clients become so much more than their illness.

They are the breakthroughs that bring one man out of the isolation of his room and help another man find the courage to live within the walls of a home. They happen in a classroom visit with a student and over years of refusing to give up hope on a woman struggling with mental illness and substance abuse.

Tough, gratifying work
We’re proud of Pacific Clinics’ psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, mental health workers, case managers, peer partners and other staff who show up every day for the men, women, children and families who come to us for help. As Genesis says, “it’s tough work, but it’s gratifying.” These breakthroughs happen because clients come to us ready to begin a journey toward mental health. Because our staff offer compassionate, professional, persistent care...and because friends like you invest in this work.

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