

Wellness Matters

Your Wellness ♦ Your Way ♦ Your Community

An E-Journal of San Mateo County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services

September 2016

Recovery Happens with Faith, Opportunity and Support

By Ray Mills, Executive Director, Voices of Recovery San Mateo County

I got a call recently from an old friend who I was in prison with and was released around the same time as I, in 2006. While incarcerated, we talked a lot about what we wanted to do after our release once we covered all the good stuff like reconnecting with family, getting a job, and being in recovery. He was released a few weeks before me and paroled to a neighboring county. He began sharing the struggles he encountered since the day he was released. I could empathize with him as he explained that there were few opportunities and no real support.

As I listened to him I wasn't sure if I wanted to tell him how my life has changed as a re-

sult of being released to San Mateo County, but then he asked "Ray how's it going for you"? Then my mouth just took over "When I first got out I was so hungry for something different and I knew if I didn't find it fast I was on my way back to prison. I needed a drug program for support and a foundation and when that door opened at Free at Last Men's Recovery Program, I jumped on the opportunity!" When I met David Lewis, (see page 10 for more on David Lewis) my faith began to grow. He introduced me to Bread of Life Church pastored by Reverend Mary Frazier, who helped increase my faith that I was on the right track. Pastor Frazier and Pastor Baines

hired me as the house manager at the We Hope Men's Transition House. That was a great opportunity and I felt like I was contributing for the first time. Dr. Faye McNair-Knox hired me to do the outreach for all One EPA events. I began to volunteer at other community based organizations and it seemed that they all wanted to support me.

Then my old friend proceeded to ask, "Ray, what you do now?" I explained how I met members of San Mateo County's leadership team - Linford Gayle and Carlos Morales in 2008 and they offered me a job working for this county. Unfortunately, the county

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September 5-11 Suicide Prevention Week



Check out the suicide prevention related trainings, resources and article throughout this issue.

Celebrating National Recovery Month

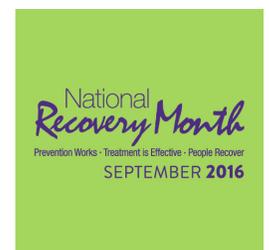
September is Recovery Month and San Mateo County celebrates in a big way to increase awareness of behavioral health conditions and promote that behavioral health is essential to overall health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people can and do recover from mental and/or substance use disorders. Mental and/or substance use disorders affect millions of Americans and

directly touch the lives of individuals, family members, neighbors, and colleagues. Families often deal with the complex dynamics of supporting a loved one in recovery while at the same time learning how to take care of their own well-being. Given the widespread impact and societal cost of these behavioral health conditions, it's important for communities to make prevention, treatment,

and recovery support services available and accessible for all who need them.

Recovery Month celebrates people in long-term recovery and recognizes the dedicated workers who provide the prevention, treatment, and recovery support services. See the list of Recovery Month events in on page 2. ☺

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From the Director's Desk - Stephen Kaplan, Director, BHRS

**JOIN THE VOICES
FOR RECOVERY:
OUR FAMILIES,
OUR STORIES,
OUR RECOVERY!**

Recovery Month Events:

- **September 1-30
Recovery Art Show**
Caldwell Memorial Art
Gallery (1st Floor)
400 County Center
Redwood City
- **September 20
Annual BBQ
& Resource Fair**
10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Central Park
50 E. 5th St.
San Mateo
- **September 24
Film Screening and
Recovery Dance**
5:00 pm - midnight
Free At Last
1796 Bay Road
East Palo Alto

More info, visit
[www.smchealth.org/
recoverymonth](http://www.smchealth.org/recoverymonth).

National
Recovery Month
Prevention Works - Treatment is Effective - People Recover
SEPTEMBER 2016

Recovery, Stigma, and Work To Do

September is once again upon us which means our Recovery Month kickoff begins. As described in this Wellness Matters issue there are numerous activities around the county for people to partake in. I want to thank the members of our Recovery Happens Planning Committee for doing such a great job in putting everything together.

Certainly Recovery Month is a time to recognize the journey of those recovering from substance use and/or mental health challenges, appreciate the support that family and friends provide, and express gratitude to the community based organizations and staff that share their knowledge and experiences to those in recovery. We are most fortunate in San Mateo County to have so many extraordinary people that contribute in one way or another.

Recovery Month is also a time to take stock of where we are as a country, state, county, city, and community related to stigma and discrimination against those with substance use and/or mental health challenges. And the results are mixed.

In a recent publication, *Ending Discrimination Against People with Mental and Substance Use Disorders: The Evidence for Stigma Change* (Washington, DC: The National Academies 2016—linked below), after “a review of studies of public stigma of mental illness and substance use showed that over time Americans who endorse neuroscien-

tific views of schizophrenia and alcohol dependence has grown (Pescosolido, 2013). Americans also report being more willing to discuss behavioral health difficulties with family and friends. However, the persistence of core prejudice factors help explain why increased public knowledge has not decreased public stigma. Core indicators of stigma remain higher for people with schizophrenia and substance disorders than other conditions.”

The core indicators of stigma include: structural stigma—the societal and institutional attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that create and perpetuate prejudice and discrimination; public stigma—the attitudes and norms of the general public and also attitudes of subgroups; and self-stigma whereby an individual internalizes the perceived stigma and applies it to themselves. The effects of self-stigma include lowered self-esteem, decreased self-efficacy, and psychologically harmful feelings of embarrassment and shame. Among people with mental and substance use disorders, low self-efficacy is associated with failure to pursue work or independent living; a greater degree of self-esteem is associated with goal attainment (e.g., symptom reduction, financial and academic problems), quality of life (e.g., satisfaction with work, housing, health, and finance), and help-seeking behavior (Corrigan et al., 2009b).

The findings from this report reinforce the complexities of



Stephen Kaplan

stigma and discrimination and the deleterious impact it has on those with mental health and substance use challenges and their families. Despite the formidable challenges we are making progress as evidenced by hearing of people’s successful recovery experiences, of how institutional and societal attitudes and behaviors are transforming; and how individuals in recovery are speaking loud and clear breaking through the web of self-stigma.

In closing I want to thank all in our County who work every day to make sure that each person is valued for who they are and not defined by whatever challenges they may face.

Let the celebration begin and “Be The One” to help end stigma and discrimination! ☺

Our Families, Our Stories, Our Recovery

The 2016 National Recovery Month theme, "Join the Voices for Recovery: Our Families, Our Stories, Our Recovery!" highlights the importance of families, communities, and individuals sharing stories of recovery to encourage others to seek treatment, share their stories, and make a personal connection with the recovery movement. Below we share the recovery stories from courageous individuals in the San Mateo County community.

Beth

I am a woman enjoying long-term recovery. What this means to me is I haven't used drugs or alcohol since 2010. I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety in 1996 after giving birth to my son. I began taking anti-depressants and my symptoms improved greatly. After a while my depression came back, I started self-medicating with drugs and alcohol.

Due to my illness, I lost my car, job, home and everything that was important to me. I isolated myself from family and friends because of the shame and guilt I felt about my addiction.

I started my recovery in 2010 at a residential treatment program followed by transitional housing where I began to rebuild my relationship with my children, family and friends. I was introduced to Voices of Recovery San Mateo County (VORSMC) by my case manager, where I became a volunteer and completed my personal Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP).

I learned tools to help me cope with stressful situations and today because of my recovery I am a mother to my children. I have a great job at VORSMC helping others seeking long-term recovery. I am a

productive member of society today. I am responsible and pay my own bills. I love my life today and it's all because of my recovery.

Brian

I am a man in long term recovery. I was born and raised in South San Francisco. As a child I was a sports athlete and loved sports. I experimented with drugs and alcohol at the age of fifteen and from there on my life was filled with troubles that included jails, prisons and short stints in different jobs. I was arrested (saved) by the Brisbane police and booked in the San Mateo County jail in January 2015 and was released later that month into the Choices Program. It was there I started my recovery and began to take a closer look at myself. I had been in Choices before, but I wasn't ready at that time. Now that I am a father, I do not want to repeat the same cycle as my father, who wasn't consistently there for me when I was young.

At Choices I started to learn how to take care of myself on a daily basis; mentally, emotionally and physically. It was there I was initially introduced to WRAP. I was released January 2016 and in Project 90 (P90) by the end of that month. At P90 I continued to grow and build a life in recovery. I was introduced to VORSMC through Jan, a Recovery Coach at Service Connect. Jan is now my co-worker and a part of my support system at VORSMC, where I began volunteering and worked my way into a staff position.

I continue to use WRAP to stay well on a daily basis. By being a part of the VOR team, I am consistently learning different wellness tools and different achievable goals that

assist me in staying well. If I am not in the process of staying well and bettering my life, I could be in the pain and troubles of the past, which is not a place I want to be, or a place I can be a good father to my two-year-old daughter. To me wellness is a balance of life between physical, spiritual and mental, and adjusting to life when issues come up because life shows up all the time. Today I stay well by participating in WRAP and staying positive.

Doug

I am a person in Long Term Recovery which began July 2014, after leaving San Mateo County Jail. Upon my release I knew I had to change my life and rebuild it from all the negative consequences brought to my life by active addiction. I needed to take my life back and knew I needed help.

I contacted The Latino Commission (TLC) and entered a residential treatment program for 90 days. As part of their programs I attended a Peer to Peer Recovery group through VORSMC called WRAP, which was a great tool for my recovery. Upon leaving the residential treatment program I continued with Intensive Outpatient and WRAP groups another nine months.

Later I began volunteering with VORSMC. Due to practicing all I learned in TLC, WRAP and Narcotics Anonymous, I am putting my life back together. I was offered a position with VORSMC and today work as a Recovery Coach, working with others who are where I once was in active addiction. Being a recovery coach allows me to give back to others battling addictions. WRAP has given me more tools in rebuilding my life on

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African American Parent Family Program



September 2016
to May 2017
3rd Wednesday's Monthly
5:30pm - 7:00pm

North County Mental
Health, 375-89th St.
Daly City

Open to all parents, and caregivers of African American and multi-racial children already receiving services within BHRS.

- Understand how culture and tradition can positively impact the family system
- Improve family relationships and learn new parenting strategies
- Find community referrals and resources

For more info or to refer parents from your program, call Kelly Lambert, at (650) 301-8662.

Recovery Stories

(Continued from page 3)

my journey to long term recovery.

Eduardo

I am a young man in long term recovery. What that means to me is that my life is phenomenal today due to my recovery. This amazing journey started July 2013. Before I found out that there is a better way to live, I was lost and destroyed. I became something my family would hide and try to sweep under the carpet. I became a character of a fairy tale that I wrote myself. I was living life under fake beliefs.

As life went by, my life would fade away. I remember how my addiction started off as a vacation and shortly after became a kidnapping. I was kidnapped by addiction and in a matter of time I became a willing participant to stay in the shame, guilt, low self-esteem, low self-worth, and no self-respect. I remember how the first house I ever burglarized was my parent's house. The first people I ever harmed was my family.

I had many, many bumps in life however, today I realize that stars can't shine without darkness. Eventually, I was saved and was enrolled in a treatment program. In that program I started to recover. Shortly after, I was introduced to VORSMC. I became a volunteer and was hired as a staff member. At the age of 19, I became a Certified Wellness Recovery Action Plan facilitator, at 20, I became a Certified Advanced Level Wellness Recovery Action Plan Facilitator, at 21, I facilitated my first Seminar II - 5 Day Facilitator Training. The training gave me the opportunity to certify others to become WRAP facilitators.

I have been blessed with a gift of being able to help others and the opportunity to carry a message of hope and the promise of freedom to others through the work I do. My life has been enhanced to a point that I could never imagine.

Today I am a role model to my younger brother and to others in the community. I am becoming the authentic person I was intended to be and most importantly I am the son to my wonderful parents that they knew I could be.

Jan

I am a man in long-term recovery. For me this means that I haven't had to take a drink of alcohol or use illegal drugs since April, 2013. I am a son, a father, a committed boyfriend, a dedicated employee with VORSMC, an active member of Staying Connected Men's Support Group, and a productive, law abiding, tax paying citizen.

For 35 years I struggled with processing my feelings appropriately. I felt that I didn't belong, that I wasn't enough, and no one wanted me or wanted me around. I began to act out in school; I was the class clown. As I got older, I began to commit crimes and abuse drugs and alcohol. My life spiraled out of control, the feelings never changed and I never learned how to properly process them. For 28 years I suffered from substance use disorder and chronic incarceration.

In May of 2013, I found my way to Free At Last residential treatment program. While there I was introduced to VORSMC who came every Friday to do a WRAP workshop. I learned how to work through my uncomfortable and distressing feelings and behaviors. I found hope and began to take personal re-

sponsibility for my wellness. I developed Wellness Tools to help me get through one situation at a time. While still in the treatment program, I began to volunteer with VORSMC and in August 2013, I obtained employment with them as a Recovery Coach. I continued to utilize my WRAP and in June 2014 I became a certified WRAP facilitator. I progressed in my recovery and in June 2015 I became an Advanced Level WRAP facilitator.

VORSMC is very instrumental and supportive of my ongoing recovery and my advancement in life. In October 2016 I became the WRAP Coordinator for San Mateo County and I am currently enrolled at College of San Mateo. I continue to grow and learn in my recovery, in my life and at VORSMC.

Louise

I am a woman in long term recovery. My journey began in February 2014 when I found myself deep in my addiction to drugs and alcohol and facing several felony charges. I was on the verge of losing my husband, my children, my home and my life.

I knew at this point in time that I no longer could live a double life. I entered into a residential recovery house where I stayed for four months. When I returned home to home to my family, my husband and kids supported me 100%.

I found the rooms of 12 step recovery, I followed the suggestions; got a sponsor, went to lots of meetings, completed my 12 steps, and continued to do everything that the courts and my family asked me to do. Recovery opened my mind to the process of continued personal

(Continued on page 5)



Saturday, September 17

Check in - 9 am
Walk - 11 am

Guadalupe River Park
Arena, Green West,
San Jose

For more information,
visit www.namiwalks.org/siliconvalley

Recovery Stories

(Continued from page 4)

growth. With my sponsor's guidance I was introduced to the WRAP and I was instantly in love.

WRAP showed me how to manage my difficult feelings, my self-esteem and how to carry myself so other people would respect me. After going through the 8 to 10-week WRAP workshop I got a job at VORSMC in Dec 2015. I became a Recovery Coach then after a few months I was promoted to Office Team Lead. In April of 2016, I became a Certified WRAP Facilitator.

I now facilitate WRAP groups in various treatment programs within San Mateo County. I am thankful to my family and friends for their support. I am thankful that I found recovery, WRAP and VORSMC. I am thankful that I am given the opportunity to give back to others and most of all, I thank God for giving me a second chance.

Melissa

I grew up in Pacifica, the youngest of four kids. From the outside looking in, I had a pretty normal life. My family attended church, my siblings and I were involved with Girl Scouts and after school sports, and we went on many family vacations that I still have fond memories of.

Behind closed doors however, I was mentally and emotionally abandoned. Even though my parents were physically there they were too tired from working all day to interact with me. As a result, the TV raised me and even though they were aware of me sneaking out to smoke cigarettes or stealing candy from the store, I never got in trouble like my older siblings did. I felt alone, rejected, not loved and had low self esteem.

To fit in and win approval and acceptance from my friends I started experimenting with drugs at the age of thirteen. Drug use continued through my adult life until I reached my bottom and entered into a program.

While I was in the program I was introduced to VORSMC and the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) group they facilitated. I learned what I am like when I am well, what my triggers are and things to have ready to use in my Wellness Toolbox to keep me in my wellness.

Today, I work at VORSMC as a WRAP Facilitator and recently celebrated two years of sobriety. I am grateful that I am able to go back to Hope House, the program I went through and now facilitate the WRAP groups for women who are going through what I went through.

Scott

I'm 54 years old. I started using when I was 13 - I was addicted to meth and an alcoholic. I've also been in custody more times than I care to admit.

Enough was enough. In 2007, I asked God for help and thankfully it worked. During my last court case in 2007 for being under the influence of meth, the court wanted me to Prop. 36 out to a 12 step AA and NA program. I said "No, I need a residential 90 day 12 step program." I needed recovery and a new way to live my life. I did my 90 days, but I wasn't ready to leave.

Fortunately, they allowed me to stay on for an additional 15 months to build my foundation. The only way the 12 step AA and NA program works is to go to AA or NA meetings on a regular basis.

I was homeless from 2005 to 2014 due to my drug use and drinking. On occasion, I

did have a roof over my head - the 12 step program, auto shops, a bike shop. My last home was a sink in a dumpster area until I had a psychotic break and wound up at Mills Psychiatric Emergency.

I now have 9 years clean and 3 years sober. Being clean and sober has changed my thinking. Now I no longer have to hide from the police, or anyone trying to take me out. I now have my family back and I had to put serious work into proving that I have changed for the better. I see my 25 year old daughter once a week, even my ex-wife is good with me. The most important thing in my life is my recovery. Previously, I hated my life, but now I love my life.

I'm dual diagnosed and I owe my life to the 12 step program and to the many providers, including Spring Street Shelter who helped pull me out of the gutter and helped me get housing, and SSI, as well as my best friend who was always there for me.

My life is great - I have a beautiful apartment, I love my life and I am finally a regular guy in the community. ☺

Free Family Event: 4th Annual Latino Health Forum & Annual Parade for Peace and Justice

"Community Health
Equity" ¡Sana, Sana!
Colita de Rana!

**Saturday,
October 8**

10:30 am - 3:30 pm

Martin Luther King Jr.
Community Center
725 Monte Diablo Ave.,
San Mateo

Improve your families' physical and emotional health and well-being by learning about community resources. Join us for fun activities, food and entertainment.

For more info, visit
www.smchealth.org/sanasana



Seeing the Benefits of Somatosensory Interventions: NMT in action

For the past four-plus years, San Mateo County BHRIS has been building a network of collaborative relationships with service agencies for the NMT (Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics) Program. These groups partner with us, providing an array of different somatosensory interventions in our Child and Youth System of Care (see list of partners below). These services and activities are funded by Measure A, the half-cent sales tax approved by 65 percent of San Mateo County voters in November 2012.

This support has made the expansion of our NMT program a big success!

It is through these services like- yoga, drumming, art, animal assisted therapy, exercise programs/memberships, speech and language occupational therapy, sensory occupational therapy, rock climbing, swimming, martial arts, and horticultural therapy; and materials/equipment like- rocking chairs, weighted lap blankets, yoga balls, fidget tools, and art supplies; that clinicians connect the recommended somatosensory interventions identified by the NMT assessments. By linking system of care services with these additional interventions, we see therapeutic and developmental progress happen quickly.

"One youth requested to start counseling to reduce his



Partners include: YMCA, Edgewood Children's Center, StarVista, Caminar, Firefly Center: Therapy Services for Children, Niroga, AUM (Art, Utility, Movement), TALK (Teaching and Assessing Language for Kids), The Art of Yoga Project, The Child Trauma Academy.



marijuana use from three bowls a day to one. After doing Motivational Interviewing and setting up a short term gym membership to do repetitive exercise and focus on healthy alternatives to smoking, by the end of the school year, he reported that he was able to go for more than a week without smoking. He went from the plan to try to get a job delivering and cleaning porta-potties upon high school graduation to actually registering for college and having an image of himself as a college student, something he could not see himself doing a short six months before that. He learned about how his trauma history impacts him and gained insight into his relational history and the adverse events he faced, and looked at how these have changed in some ways and stayed the same in others. He graduated from high school with some scholarships and with a lot of hope."

"Art of Yoga classes customized to the NMT approach are offered to girls in numerous programs. Comments from girls have included: "Yoga class makes me feel de-

stressed," "I'm not gonna lie - I feel better, because I actually participated in the yoga class," "I always feel calmer." At our Therapeutic Day School, a student who was graduating specifically asked if she could take her yoga mat and eye pillow with her, so she could continue to practice after leaving.

By pairing behavioral health services with the appropriate repetitive, regulating and relational interventions, we are able to maximize the impact of services, while helping families and youth understand what works for them in their ongoing wellness and recovery.

We are excited to expand this approach into the Adult System of Care later this fall through MHSA funding and hope to see similar outcomes.

☺

- Toni DeMarco



MEASURE A 2013-2023
LOCAL FUNDS
LOCAL NEEDS
WWW.SMCGOV.ORG

Suicide Prevention is Everyone's Business

National Suicide Prevention Week is September 5 – 11, 2016 and World Suicide Prevention Day is September 11. During this week individuals and organizations around the country and the world join their voices to broadcast the message that suicide can be prevented, and to reach as many people as possible with the tools and resources to support themselves and those around them. During this week you may hear or see the words "suicide prevention" more often than usual. Here are a few basic things you should know and that you can share with those around you:

Suicide Can Be Prevented

Most of us have been touched by the tragedy of suicide. We may have lost someone close to us or been moved by the loss of someone we may have never met. However, many people who find themselves in a suicide crisis can and do recover. Suicide can be prevented. Visit the Know the Signs website (www.suicideispreventable.org) to learn more about the key actions you can take to prevent suicide: **(1) recognize warning signs, (2) find the words to start a conversation and (3) reach out and offer resources to a loved one**

Prevention Works

Many people who feel suicidal don't want to die. If they can get through the crisis, treatment works. There are programs and practices that have been specifically developed to support those who are in a suicide crisis. An evaluation of the Know the Signs campaign in California found that more people now feel prepared to recognize the warning signs of suicide and confident to intervene with someone they are concerned

about. The evaluation also found that suicide prevention training programs funded in California will have a long-term impact in the state, potentially preventing at least 140 deaths and 3,600 suicide attempts over the next three decades. The analysis also estimates that for every \$1 the state invests in the suicide prevention program, the people of California will receive an estimated \$1,100 in economic benefits such as reduced spending on emergency care and increased earnings. Prevention not only works to reduce suffering and distress, it also makes financial sense.

Help is Available in San Mateo County

The Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255- TALK) offers 24/7 free and confidential assistance from trained counselors. Callers are connected to the nearest available crisis center. The Lifeline is also available in Spanish, and for veterans or for those concerned about a veteran, by selecting a prompt to be connected to counselors specifically trained to support veterans.

For San Mateo County residents, the above number links to our local crisis center StarVista which also has 24/7 free and confidential assistance from trained counselors. To access this crisis line, you can call the above phone number or 650-579-0350.

Here's one story about how a StarVista Crisis Hotline Staff helped save the life of a caller (read more on the Crisis Hotline on page 8):

"Caller identified as T stated that she wants to kill herself because she believes somebody is trying to kill her. She stated that she has felt this way for 8 months or longer,

and is fed up with enduring the "torture and psychological warfare." Caller seemed to have paranoid thoughts and shared that she feels she is under 24 hour video and sound surveillance by "them." Phone counselor listened non-judgmentally and validated callers' fears and also inquired gently about her suicidal thoughts.

Later in the call, T shared her previous suicide attempts and also said that she was hospitalized a while ago after she had been assaulted and added that she felt safe inside the hospital. Considering the previous attempts and the current suicidal thinking, the phone counselor assessed the caller and learned that the caller had multiple plans and also means for carrying out those plans. The caller was also considered high risk due to being under the influence at the time of the call. Phone counselor spoke to caller about possibility of getting help and got her to agree to being evaluated. Caller willingly shared her location and stayed on the phone until the police arrived at her location.

Crisis center staff and phone counselors work hard to get callers to a place where they agree to receiving help. Individuals who agree to treatment and hospitalization are less likely to be traumatized by the assessment and transport by law enforcement and are often more likely to follow up with treatment. It is this client-centered approach that also encourages callers to call us back in the future if they are feeling suicidal again." ❧

- Narges Dillon (StarVista) and
Sylvia Leung.

Suicide Prevention Among Older Adults Training



Tuesday, September 13
12:15 -1:30 pm
Room 100, 225 37th
Avenue, San Mateo

Introductory presentation on suicide prevention among older adults and a panel of speakers, including Dr. Patrick Arbore (Institute of Aging), Carmen Lee (Stamp Out Stigma) and Dr. Barbara Yates (San Mateo County BHRS).

Free and open to the public.

MHSA Program Highlight: StarVista Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Center

There is one suicidal death every 12.3 minutes. It takes the lives of over 30,000 people in a given year. It is the 10th leading cause of death for all ages and the 2nd leading cause for 15-24 year olds. These are the facts about suicide that provides a small glimpse into a rising public health crisis in the United States. If you look beyond the statistics there are real people, just like you and or someone you may know that is struggling with grief, depression, anxiety, trauma, and everyday life challenges. They are trying to escape feelings of rejection, hurt or loss. They are angry, ashamed and guilty. They are feeling worried, unwanted, unloved. They feel alone.

In San Mateo County, the StarVista Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Center is certified by the American Association of Suicidology and available to San Mateo County residents. The Crisis Center provides an array of crisis services that include assessment, education, support, and outreach. With the support of MHSA funds, in 2015, the Crisis Center provided youth intervention services by conducting 76 school presenta-

tions about crisis services that reached 2,214 students. This resulted in making contact with 138 of those students who were in crisis.

Within the center is the Crisis Hotline. The Crisis Hotline is a call center where residents who are in distress can call to speak to a trained counselor 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Volunteers must go through a rigorous 32-hour training class where they learn the fundamentals of assessment, de-escalation, and support. In 2015 alone, 13,593 calls were placed to the Crisis Hotline, and 99 high risk callers were provided with follow up services by an MHSA-funded therapist.

The level of coordination that goes into making the Crisis Center the backbone of San Mateo County's response to suicide prevention for our residents is truly impressive. It is hard to believe that the hotline is a single desk tucked into the office corner. Each shift, a single volunteer staffs the call center often juggling multiple calls with incredible poise and grace. "It's a privilege to work every day with volunteers and staff that are so passionate and caring" said Narges Dillon program director for the Crisis Hotline. "When you call the crisis line, you will be heard by someone who cares and that is often what people need to get them through a rough day or a suicidal crisis."

There are thousands of callers each year, and many stories have remained with the volunteers.

A caller contacted the crisis line and reported that she has experienced suicidal thoughts off and on since she was 12 years old. She began crying.

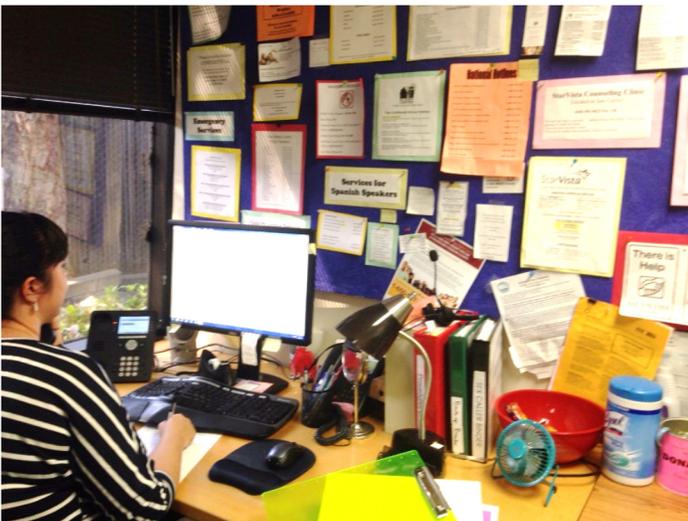
She had never spoken to anyone about these thoughts before. Whenever she was alone around trains or BART, she had suicidal thoughts and urges to jump in front of the train. The counselor helped deescalate the caller and then helped her identify that her kids and her work is what makes her feel good, what helps her keep moving forward. The caller and the counselor created a safety plan which included contacting the crisis line. In under an hour the caller was comforted knowing a supportive and caring counselor was available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by simply picking up the phone and making a call.

If you or someone you know needs support by a trained volunteer, contact the **Crisis Hotline at (650) 579-0350** or the **Spanish Crisis Hotline at (800) 303-7432**.

For any other questions including volunteer opportunities, contact Narges Dillon at: narges.dillon@star-vista.org.



- Colin T. Hart



Proposition 63, now known as the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), was approved by voters in 2004 to reform California's mental health treatment system by providing comprehensive behavioral health services. San Mateo County BHRS promotes a vision of collaboration and integration by embedding MHSA programs and services within existing programmatic and administrative structures.



WELLNESS • RECOVERY • RESILIENCE

Assisted Outpatient Treatment Services Launched July 1st

Together Towards Recovery

The BHRS Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) services are already making a difference for many seriously mentally ill consumers, their families and our community. The new program has been open for referrals since July 1st and has already enrolled six people into the Caminar AOT Full Service Partnership (FSP). These are people who have fallen through the cracks because we did not previously have this program. We are also able to assist people who are not sure what to do for the person they are concerned about who do not meet our criteria. The following are a couple of examples of the calls and emails we receive on a daily basis and the kind assistance we are able to provide to the community:

A family member who was concerned about his cousin's well being contacted our temporary conservatorship office asking for guidance. They told the caller about the new AOT service and also contacted the AOT team to expect the call.

The outcome was that AOT staff worked collaboratively with the family member to get his cousin the help he needed which included psychiatric and medical stabilization. The client's condition was so deteriorated that he needed to be hospitalized for two weeks. During that time, AOT worked with the family member and guided him through the process of gaining probate conservatorship and In Home Supportive Services (for medical) as his cousin stabilized. On a hospital visit with the client, he thanked the AOT staff for having him hospitalized, as he was able to gain insight through his experience. He accepted the AOT FSP services and has returned home with support needed in order to remain home and not in a facility.

A mother who lives in our county was concerned about her daughter who lives in another county. It sounded like her daughter met the criteria except for not being a San Mateo County resident. Fortunately, her daughter is living in

a county with an active AOT program. We were able to link her to the services in that county.

Eligibility

A person is eligible for AOT if they are 18 years or older and a resident of San Mateo County with a serious mental illness that causes them to be unlikely to survive safely in the community without supervision. Additionally, the person's mental health must have either resulted in:

- Psychiatric hospitalization or incarceration two or more times in the past 36 months.
- Threats or acts of violent behavior towards themselves or others in the past 48 months.

How to make a referral

If you know of someone who might be in need of AOT services, contact the AOT Team at (650) 372-6125 or AOT@smcgov.org to make a referral. Learn more about the AOT www.smchealth.org/AOT.

- Terry Wilcox-Rittgers

David Lewis Award Honors Individual Who Make a Difference

David Lewis was a remarkable man who transformed the recovery community, and East Palo Alto in particular, through his inspiring work with addiction and criminal justice. The San Mateo County Mental Health and Substance Abuse Recovery Commission presents the David Lewis award to individuals who have made an extraordinary difference in the lives of people with substance abuse disorders and the San Mateo County community. This year we are pleased to honor Randy Chambers, the Men's Residential Director at Free at Last.

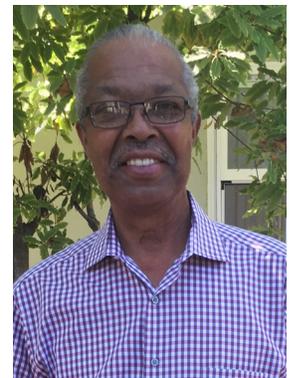
Randy exemplifies being an outstanding alcohol and other drug counselor. He is an excellent role model, supportive, compassionate, provides leadership, education, guidance and never ending support to his clients, alumni, staff and the East Palo Alto community he serves.

Countless stories have been shared at graduations by maybe not the easiest clients to start with and how he has helped them change their life. Without his leadership and guidance they wouldn't have made it through the program.

He believes in each of his clients and is able to guide

them through the recovery process to help them succeed. He is an amazing advocate and champion of our clients and he always is willing to give 110%. He makes sure we are able to help client's succeed in a wide variety of areas i.e. 100% abstinence from drugs and alcohol, rebuilding relationships with family members, securing a job, becoming productive and self-sufficient members of the community. We are lucky to have Randy Chambers at Free At Last and part of the East Palo Alto community. ☺

- Susan Cortopassi, Free At Last



2016 David Lewis Award honoree: Randy Chambers, Men's Residential Director, Free At Last.

Mental Health Collaboratives Support Safe and Supportive Schools

The San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) convenes numerous School Based Mental Health Collaboratives throughout San Mateo County. These collaboratives meet monthly and serve as convening bodies for school personnel, local service providers, human service staff, probation, BHRS personnel and other community partners to support schools in their efforts to meet the behavioral and social/emotional needs of students. As a planning framework, the collaboratives use the Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) to shape their collective work and collaboration. The goal of this group is to map resources and services and to employ systemic approaches that addresses the three tiers: prevention, early intervention and treatment will be adopted and implemented.

The School Based Mental Health Collaboratives are facilitated by the Director of Safe and Supportive Schools, Jeneé Littrell, and are a key component of the Safe and Supportive Schools Initiative

that emerged out of the “Beyond Newtown Summit” in the spring of 2014, funded by Measure A, a half-cent sales tax approved by 65 percent of San Mateo County voters in November 2012.

The School/Mental Health Collaboratives’ geographic boundaries are similar to those of the Community Service Areas (CSAs) developed by BHRS and support building a community of educators and providers with a regional focus. The Collaboratives in Central, Coastside and the Northwest are established, and those in South and East Palo Alto have had some preliminary meetings, with the expectation that they will begin in full this academic year. There are plans to begin talks about the Northeast Collaborative within the next month.

Jeneé Littrell will focus the September meeting on bringing together the educators involved Countywide on issues such as documentation in school records, clarification of HIPAA and FERPA, and con-



fidentiality agreements. She will be joined by Natasha King of the SELPA, who works on services for Special Education students, to clarify their roles as resources to the district staff. In October the regular Collaborative meetings will get started with education staff, mental health providers, and other community partners.

In addition to the monthly meetings with the Collaboratives, Jeneé is also planning to host regular trainings at the SMCOE related on mental health issues of youth in schools throughout this academic year by partnering with the provider community.

- Linda Simonsen and Jeneé Littrell (SMCOE)

National Day Of Prayer for Behavioral Health and Understanding



Tuesday, October 4

11:30 - 1:30 pm
Resource Tables

12:00 - 1:00 pm
Program

400 County Center,
Courtyard, Redwood
City

Community members,
consumers, family
members, faith com-
munity and providers
all welcome!

National Day of Prayer for Behavioral Health Recovery & Understanding

Each year during the first week of October, the nation celebrates the *National Day of Prayer for Behavioral Health Recovery and Understanding*.

This day is designated to bring together mental health and substance abuse networks and faith leaders to work together so that they may recognize the importance of behavioral health issues in our community.

Prayers and actions of both faith communities and secular organizations, such as the National Alliance of Mental

Illness (NAMI), are needed to restore mental wellness in America. By seeking guidance with each of our faiths, we can recommit ourselves to replacing misinformation, blame, fear and prejudice with truth and love in order to offer hope to all who are touched by mental illness.

On Tuesday, October 4, NAMI of San Mateo County, the Spirituality Initiative, Behavioral Health and Recovery Services and numerous faith leaders, will host our county’s **First Interfaith National Day of Prayer** in the courtyard at 400

County Center in Redwood City from noon to 1 PM. Resource tables will also be available from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm.

We invite all, consumers, faith communities, providers, and community members to attend this event.

If your organization would like to table this event, contact Melinda Ricossa MRicossa@smcgov.org or Bill Kruse bkruse@churchfortoday.net.

- Melinda Ricossa

Community Service Area Partnerships Support Clients

BHRS recently learned about a CSA partnership that underscores the value of working with community neighbors and turning them into partners. Last month, Caminar approached Union Bank of San Mateo to discuss the possibility of creating an opportunity for Caminar consumers to cash their checks without having to open a full account, or having the accompaniment of staff.

Many consumers who are case managed by BHRS or contract providers have their money managed through the County's Rep. Payee system. Case Managers assure that the consumer's rent and expenses are paid each month, and that a portion goes to the consumer for personal spending. Caminar case managers were providing this support to approximately 80 plus consumers, and finding the process complicated and cumbersome. Because the Rep Payee office mailed checks directly to Caminar, staff was having

to cash each consumer's check weekly or monthly, keep the cash on hand for distribution and utilize a manual tracking system.

Caminar reviewed this long-standing procedure and concluded that aside from the administrative complexity, it was time to embrace the Wellness and Recovery model and provide consumers with the opportunity to build independent living skills by having them cash their own checks.

With this in mind, Deborah Barrow, Caminar's Director of Case Management Services, collaborated with Brent Oya, VP Branch manager of Union Bank, who not only welcomed the idea, but generously agreed to forgo charging any banking fees. For anyone who knows what it is like to live on fixed low income, not having to pay a service charge is not a minor issue, as any expense reduces the small amount that is left for personal use. Because this would be the first time many of the consum-

ers had used a bank, it was anticipated that there might initially be some glitches or need for support but it as it turned out, everything went exceptionally well. According to Deborah, consumers are expressing pride in being able to take responsibility for themselves, and as one consumer put it, are "feeling normal...just like everybody else!"

When the creation of a Community Service Area was just an idea by BHRS Director Steve Kaplan, it was this type of collaboration that he envisioned and described—one in which stigma is reduced and businesses and services in the CSA, partner with BHRS and contractors to further enhance the consumer's life, wellness and recovery. BHRS extends a heartfelt acknowledgement to Caminar and Union Bank for creating this valuable partnership and opportunity for consumers.☺

- Selma Mangrum



Karen Francone Celebrates Her 30th Sobriety Birthday

On August 26th Hope House hosted a 30th Sobriety Birthday party for Karen Francone, the Executive Director of Service League. As a woman in recovery she has continuously given back to the community, tirelessly working to help others find their way in a new life filled with all the possibilities and joy that recovery can bring. Hope House clients (past and present), staff, friends and family were all on hand to recognize this incredible woman and the miracle of 30 years of sobriety. Everyone shared stories about what she's meant to them, how her recovery has inspired them, and the women who are just starting their journey in recovery were able to see that there is hope and that a productive and healthy life is possible – one day at a time.

- Morigan Bruce, Hope House

Coastside Community Service Area Free Community Event



Tuesday, September 13
5:30 - 8:00 pm

Ted Adcock Community Center, 535 Kelly Ave., Half Moon Bay

- Empower: Hear recovery stories
- Educate: Share ideas on how to improve access to behavioral health services
- Heal: Learn about resources and how to get help

RSVP Justin Francis:
jfrancis@smcgov.org

Mental Health Services Act Update - Doris Estremera, BHRS Manager of Strategic Operations

MHSA Innovation (INN) Projects

On July 28th, we presented three MHSA INN project plans to the State of California, Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC), the Health Ambassador Program for Youth (HAP-Y), the LGBTQ Behavioral Health Coordinated Services Center (The Center), and the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT) within an Adult Service System. All three projects were approved and will now move forward to implementation!

Thank you to those that provided testimony at the MHSOAC meeting including Yolanda Ramirez, current Health Ambassador and Family Partner with BHRS who shared her personal and heart-felt testimony in support

of at-risk youth and to Narges Zohoury Dillon, Program Director at StarVista who shared her professional experience with youth advocates and youth in crisis, in support of HAP-Y. Anthony Ross, Outlet Director for Adolescent Counseling Services also shared a personal and professional testimony in support of The Center and the much needed services for transgender and gender non-conforming and high risk individuals.

MHSA INN Evaluation

Congratulations to Resource Development and Associates (RDA) for being selected and awarded the evaluation of the MHSA INN projects. RDA will 1) develop evaluation plans for each INN program, 2) provide technical assistance in evaluation implementation, and 3) conduct annual out-

come analysis, which includes recommendations for changes/adjustments to the program plan and a final evaluation report to present to our stakeholders and the MHSOAC.

MHSA Steering Committee

The MHSA Steering Committee makes recommendations about the planning and services development process of MHSA. We are updating the membership process and recruiting new members. If you are interested in joining please contact, Doris Estremera at mhsa@smcgov.org or (650) 573-2889. ☺

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Recovery Commission Meeting

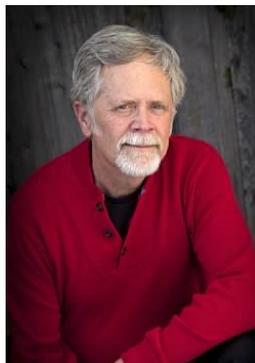
**Wednesday,
October 5th**

3:00 – 5:00 pm
San Mateo County Health System
225 W. 37th Avenue,
Room 100, San Mateo

Commission meetings are open to the public and are generally held the first Wednesday of the month. For location or more information, call 650.573.2544 or visit: www.smchealth.org/MHSARC



Employee Spotlight



Terry Wilcox-Rittgers

Clinical Services Manager, Cordilleras Redesign Project and Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) Program

Hometown: Army Brat

Years at BHRS/SMC: 21 years

What do you do?

My current responsibilities are

providing clinical oversight of the multi-year Cordilleras Campus Redesign Project and developing and running our new Assistance Outpatient Treatment Program.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Working with others to develop new resources to assist the people we serve.

Most rewarding/memorable experience:

Growing things...Like Adult Resource Management, Pathways, the future Cordilleras Campus and the AOT Program. I have also greatly valued developing collaborative relationships with other organizations. All of this has been part of a team effort including the past couple of years I have spent out on the Coast developing

our Coastal CSA with our wonderful Coastal Clinic staff and community members.

Favorite hobbies/activities:

Playing golf, working out, playing the Native American flute and connecting with friends and family. Oh, and I seem to like lots of driving and relocating my office every couple of years.

"If I weren't in my current role, I'd be a...":

Full time therapist and group facilitator. ☺

Teen Suicide

The word suicide is a frightening word. But the term **teen suicide** is even more horrific, with the mental picture of a young person ending his/her own life. There had been a rash of teen suicides in the Bay Area, which has prompted a federal investigation, conducting interviews with school personnel, faculty, family members and, of course, students and peers. Their sole goal is to gain knowledge to eliminate these tragedies from reoccurring and trying to find long-term solutions.

When a young person dies by suicide, both the immediate survivors and many others are deeply affected. In fact, exposure to suicide can itself be a suicide risk to other young people. "Cluster" suicides may actually have been the main factor in these recent youth suicides. If someone is contemplating ending their life and hear of another young person taking his/her life, it can exacerbate an already despairing mood.

"Pact" suicide is another ominous, but secretive deliberation, whereas several teens (usually girls) carefully plan and execute their own suicides. Somehow, they view it as glamorous and prepare, carefully, in writing and in sharing their suicide notes. Recently, in the New York City area, four girls jumped off a building to their deaths holding hands while someone in the background was taking pictures. How tragic is this?

It is critical, therefore, to find answers and ways to reach this populace and prevent these catastrophic occurrences.

Caminar for Mental Health takes an holistic approach, recognizing the role of the environment, relationships and what peer pressure plays,

as well as limited life experience, when helping a younger person grapple with the powerful emotions behind thoughts of suicide. They are totally committed to doing whatever it takes to save someone's life. When one of their clients at Caminar cannot hold onto hope for themselves, the staff's job is to hold on to hope for the client for as long as necessary and to never give up.

The causes of teen suicides are complex and determined by multiple factors: bullying, poor self-image, individual coping skills, family and school social support, use and/or experimentation with substances, academic stress, undisclosed mental health conditions and excessive expectations from parents and self.

Teens, too, are going through puberty and are in the process of pulling away from the parental structure in learning to be independent and finding out who they really are. Unfortunately, teens, also, are vulnerable to depression. That's because hormones and sleep cycles, which both change dramatically during adolescence, can affect mood. The good news is that depression is treatable and most teens get better with the right help.

It's a balancing act for the clinician who works with young clients to empathize with the person's pain, acknowledging and normalizing this human emotion and to then start working on a safety plan with that youth in identifying their own personal strengths and their own reasons to want to live. It is crucial that this plan is created **by** and for that individual client.

Sexual issues can also be a difficult time of uncertainty, confusion and fear, with their primary confidential conversa-

tions being only with their peers, who, for the most part, probably also have little knowledge. At home, their main conversation from a parent is most likely: "How was school today?" "Oh fine," says the teen, and off they go to their room to text or e-mail.

Although technology has given us tremendous tools to learn, to connect, to inquire, it also has created obstacles in the way we socialize, especially with the younger generation. Seldom do we have face-to-face conversations anymore. Most young people are looking down at their phone or tablet – never having an eye-to-eye contact and not verbally sharing, or even laughing. Are we missing something valuable and healthy for our own well-being?

The media, especially in the daily news, seems only to cover violent, scary and murderous stories, creating a "gloom and doom" atmosphere that can greatly intensify despairing feelings for a youth, or anyone, who is feeling on the edge.

We must create opportunities to **really** talk, to share, to confide, to **trust**. This is very needed and maybe it's the basic root of these serious problems.

Let's continue, then, to explore, converse, and search for ways to reach our teens and prevent these senseless and devastating suicides. There are answers out there, let's find them! ☺

- Carmen Lee,
Stamp Out Stigma

Men's Health Symposium & Concert



Saturday, September 17
7:00 am - 1:00 pm

- Free Health Screenings begin at 7:30 am
- Program: 9:00 am
- Lunch and Concert: 1:15-2:30

Mills Health Center
Hendrickson Auditorium
100 S. San Mateo Drive
San Mateo

Keynote Speaker:
Carl V. Hill, Ph.D., M.P.H
Director of the Office of
Special Populations

Breakfast and lunch
provided.

Register for this free
event at www.aachac.org
or call 650-652-3884

Q-Tip for Quality - Holly Severson, RN MSN

Next QIC Meeting:

Wednesday

September 14, 2016

10:00 am–Noon

2000 Alameda de las
Pulgas, Suite 200, Room
201, San Mateo

BHRS Quality Management (QM) has worked with BHRS managers to create and revise several policies. Two, discussed below, are about the BHRS Quality Improvement Committee (QIC) and the management of BHRS policies. In addition, there are several revised and new compliance policies that along with a new compliance training and website lay out BHRS's Compliance Program. (See the compliance URL below.)

The **Quality Improvement Committee policy (#16-11)** provides a succinct description of BHRS's QIC, a core committee required by the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). This policy identifies the groups represented on the QIC and their roles. The members include BHRS staff/on-site contractors, agency providers, Lived Experience Academy Advocates, client/family representatives, and employees of other county departments.

QIC has voting and non-voting members. Voting members review and approve amended and new policies. Additional members do not vote on policies but they give input and represent diverse

stakeholders. As explained more below, at least 51% or more of the 35 voting members is needed to approve policies. QIC members also have other duties that are explained at the main URL below. Most members serve for three years and are expected to attend and participate in all activities of the QIC.

The **Management, Development and Approval policy (#08-02)** describes how BHRS policies are devised and revised. Executive team sponsors and content area experts use their expertise in the policy process. They are directly responsible for initiating, reviewing and managing policies. These individuals, along with the QM Manager and QM staff, help decide which existing policies require changes to be made and also identify and shepherd new policies.

As mentioned above, QIC reviews and approves most BHRS policies, with the exception of compliance related policies which are managed by the Compliance and Delegation Oversight Committee under the guidance of the BHRS Compliance Officer.

The Policy Process Flowchart, in the "policy on policies" (#08-02) shows how policies are created and man-

aged. BHRS managers and key members of other groups are directly involved and responsible to keep existing policies relevant and up-to-date and also to identify the need for and creation of new policies. QM assists by giving guidance, helping to make policies available to the BHRS community, and other related duties as assigned by the Executive Team or mandated by DHCS.

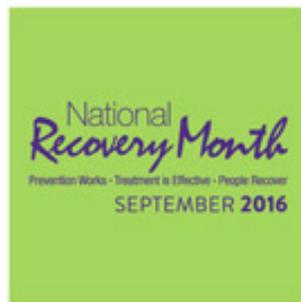
For more information on these policies and on the BHRS Compliance Program see the links below.

QM always appreciates any feedback or ideas you'd like to share with us. ☺

Think Quality

BHRS Policies: <http://smchealth.org/bhrs-documents>

BHRS Compliance Program: <http://www.smchealth.org/bhrscomplianceprogram>



Recovery Happens with Faith, Opportunity and Support

(Continued from page 1)

couldn't hire me as I was on parole. That took all the wind out my sails and shot my self-esteem to the floor once again. However, they and many others came along side me to lift me up with encouragement through the next six months. David Lewis let me cut the grass at all his transitional houses which kept me busy and put money in my pocket. Pastor Frazier introduced me to the East Palo Alto Mental Health Advisory Group which consists of county leadership, other CBOs, the faith community and consumers and family members from the East Palo Alto Community. It was at this meeting I began to see how this County had been supporting me and many others. I met Luisa Buada, the CEO of Ravenswood Family Health Center and she invited me to be a member of their Board of Directors. I continue to be the Recovery Liaison on their board and am very proud of that step in my life and re-

covery. I then met Steve Kaplan and Louise Rogers from BHRS, and that's where Voices of Recovery San Mateo County (VORSMC) was born.

Today I am the Executive Director of VORSMC (www.vorsmc.org) with a staff of ten part-time employees and most of them are in recovery. Voices of Recovery is a Peer to Peer drug and alcohol support organization who supports anyone who wants to be in long term recovery. We provide WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) workshops throughout the county. WRAP gives an individual the opportunity to create their own recovery plan, to be able to identify troubling thoughts, feelings and situations that could cause them problems and action steps to correct what might be causing them difficulty. WRAP helped change my recovery and my life, and those of many others (see recovery stories page 3).

VORSMC also participates in the planning committee and hosts the annual events celebrating National Recovery Month every September (see page 1-2), along with many

other community partners. I invited my old friend and I invite you to join us for some fun (family and friends are welcome) at our Recovery Picnic on September 20 - one of our most exciting events, as we celebrate in Central Park with plenty of food, fellowship, and fun. I am thoroughly excited to celebrate the recovery journey of individuals, San Mateo County staff, the community based providers, and the faith community for the opportunity and support I and many others have received in our recovery and to share them with others. See the link below below for more info on Recovery Month.

As I wrapped up the conversation with my old friend, I was again reminded of how fortunate I am for the many resources and support available in this county and for the individuals who believed in me. Truth is, I don't know where I would be if I hadn't landed in San Mateo County. I am full of gratitude. ☺

For more info on Recovery Month: www.smchealth.org/RecoveryMonth

To subscribe to *Wellness Matters* or to view previous issues, visit: www.smchealth.org/wm (To subscribe, click the red envelope at the top of the page.)

Forward comments, suggestions or contributions for *Wellness Matters* to Diane Tom, Editor: DiTom@smcgov.org

Pain Isn't Always Obvious

**KNOW
THE SIGNS**

Suicide Is Preventable

**COUNTY OF
SAN MATEO
HEALTH SYSTEM
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
& RECOVERY SERVICES**

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