

HILLVIEW

MENTAL HEALTH CENTER, INC.

WINTER 2007

MESSAGE FROM

Eva



The Virtues of Hillview

Message from Eva S. McCraven, President and Chief Executive Officer

A new philosophy for community-based mental health treatment is emerging, and those of us who have spent our careers in the field are enormously encouraged. We know it will work because we saw it work 40 years ago. Patience is one of many virtues that help us succeed.

Forty years ago Hillview Mental Health Center was among the first of 700 U.S. community-based mental health centers to get funding from the federal government to provide comprehensive services to all residents of all ages in designated service areas. The purpose was to decrease institutionalization in state hospitals and the resulting separation of people from their families and communities. In addition to funding for professional staff to provide direct services, federal grants paid for education, consultation and community-outreach services to promote early intervention and treatment of emotional disorders and mental illness. Later, when direct federal grants expired, community mental health centers were partnered with local governments and various other agencies. Los Angeles community mental health centers became private contractors with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. We received the majority of our funds

from federal Medicaid. The end of direct federal grants resulted in the gradual demise of indirect services that promoted health and wellness.

Funding for private contract agencies became largely dependent on reimbursement for direct services to people with a diagnosed mental illness. This represented a shift from a "help first" philosophy of treating mental illness to a "fail first" philosophy.

About 12 years ago Los Angeles County began funding contract agencies to develop Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) programs for adults with severe mental illness. Programs included outreach, housing and 24-hour field services. Later on, the California legislature funded AB 2034 programs across the state to provide flexible 24-hour field services and supportive services for homeless people with mental illness. These programs focused on measurable outcomes for treatment services and made it possible to stabilize people's symptoms and their lives in the community.

Three years ago we saw the beginning of what we hope is a shift back to a "help first" philosophy on the part of the federal government. President Bush's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health published a major document that inspired hope throughout the mental health profession. It acknowledged that "recovery from mental illness is now a real possibility" and "a life in the community for everyone can be realized."

That was good news. Those of us on the front lines finally believed the highest levels of government had come to our side. More good news followed. Two years ago Proposition 63 was passed in California creating the Mental Health Services Act with a "whatever it takes" approach that replaced the "fail first" medical model. Mental illness treatment focused on care for the whole person with recovery plans that included the client's physical health, family health, and a

safe and stable place to live.

While we applaud the emergence of "help first," agencies like Hillview remain captive of funding constraints that continue to promote "fail first." The New Freedom Commission disappointed us by its lack of boldness. Rather than recommending increased funding for mental health, it merely called for more efficient use of available money, particularly from state treasuries. Not surprisingly, the president's fiscal 2007 budget cut funds for Medicaid, the Center for Mental Health Services within the U.S., Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, veteran's health, Section 8 supportive housing, and other areas vital to mental health care.

State and county mental health officials are working hard to plan and execute the Mental Health Services Act of Prop 63. While funding is only for services for people with mental illness, it expands coverage beyond the homeless or the most severely disabled. Funding is flexible for supportive services—as in AB 2034 and ACT programs. Outreach may focus only on individuals with a diagnosis of mental illness, but we are funded to work creatively and flexibly to do "whatever it takes" to engage people who need services and support them in maintaining stability and recovery. This is a major improvement. The Mental Health Services Act will include preventive services sometime in the future.

At this time, there is no way government funding will fulfill the vision of the New Freedom Commission. That's why we ask our Friends of Hillview to help us fulfill our "help first" corporate mission.

One client's story encapsulates the current situation of what the Freedom Commission called the "fragmented" U.S. mental health system. A young man struggling with mental illness was enrolled in community college and had a job to pay his tuition and buy books. He was becoming symptomatic. His

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Meet Rosemary Enzer: Hillview Board Member and Community Advocate

When Rosemary Enzer retired four years ago after 13 years as principal of Danube Elementary School in Granada Hills and a total 39 years in education, she had a sneaking suspicion she'd be leaving her alarm clock at its pre-dawn setting. She was right: "Often I wake up before the alarm just thinking about the day ahead."

She has a lot to think about. On a recent autumn day, she was thinking about how she'd find time to complete three complicated grants she was writing with colleagues at the consulting company Educational Growth. Their goal was to get money to help three Los Angeles schools meet goals under the No Child Left Behind Act with better curriculum, improved monitoring systems, upgraded assessment tools, and additional faculty training.

"I enjoy writing. It comes naturally to me," she says. The hard part of the job is scheduling meetings around the complicated timetables of multiple people at each of the schools and driving the long distances to the schools.

Enzer was also thinking about Election Day. She was a precinct supervisor at a polling station. Two years ago, as a lark but also in response to an internal call to perform civic duty, Enzer volunteered as a polling clerk for the presidential election. Seeing the neighbors would be fun, she thought. The fun disappeared in the 2006 primary elec-

tion. Enzer, promoted to inspector, dealt with massive confusion among party-unaffiliated voters who were seeing candidates' names for the first time on their ballots. She was short-staffed and her inexperienced clerks were overwhelmed. "This year's general election was so much easier because the voters were more prepared," she notes.

Hillview Mental Health Center was also in her thoughts, occupying a constant and special place as it has for over 30 years. Board members Rosemary and her husband, David, a healthcare marketing professional, had met Eva and Carl McCraven when Carl was chairman of the board of Pacoima Memorial Hospital and preparing to launch a community mental health center that would evolve into Hillview. The founders had formed Valley Housing Foundation to buy the property that Hillview now occupies. Rosemary Enzer was named president, a job she's held ever since, and joined the Hillview board.

Hillview values and relies on its board, says Founder and CFO Carl McCraven. "We're proud of our board's diversity in their skills, perspectives and backgrounds. Every member has demonstrated a significant achievement in business, education or public service, and contributes to the success of Hillview as a corporation. They are bound together by a strong desire to improve the lives of people with mental illness," he says.

Enzer notes that she and her husband are proud of their association with Hillview. "David and I get a great deal of satisfaction working with Hillview and helping provide excellent mental health services to some of the neediest people in our community," she says. "As board members, we try to use our con-

tacts at the County Board of Supervisors and the Department of Mental Health to support Carl and Eva in their efforts and ensure that Hillview gets its fair share of county funding."

The Enzers are familiar with Hillview's challenges. David had worked with an agency that provides care for homeless and indigent people in the county. Rosemary had worked at a downtown Los Angeles school where a segment of the student population came from hotels and homeless shelters, and some children dealt with mental health problems. Today, that same school hopes to receive a grant through Educational Growth.

Enzer, always a networker, enjoys making such connections. Years ago she persuaded her local chapter of the Business and Professional Women to "adopt" Hillview Village and sponsor holiday parties for the residents. "It was a wonderful program that raised awareness about Hillview and its services for people with mental illness," she says.

Enzer's advocacy for raising the quality of life in local communities extends to children. She serves on the Board of Managers of the North Valley YMCA and heads the Child Care Committee, which oversees the Y's Infant Care Center and the 14 child-care centers located on school campuses. And when her schedule allows, she is an adjunct instructor of education at the University of La Verne, where she trains future school administrators.

Elections and college courses and deadline-crunching grants will come and go, but Enzer says she'll always have time for Hillview. One particular reason, she says: "No homework!"

The Virtues of Hillview *Continued from cover page*

precarious health threatened to prevent him from working, and that, in turn would prevent him from paying the bills to stay in school. His carefully constructed world was in danger of falling apart. Because the young man came through our Transitional Age Youth program, not AB 2034, we could only offer symptom-focused mental health services. This frustrated his Hillview counselors who treated his symptoms, but lacked money to do "whatever it takes" for his personal problems. So we went outside the system. We reached into our Friends of Hillview fund to buy books for the young man and pay his tuition.

We're going to continue to need Friends

to cover the gap between the status quo of restrictive federal funding and our desire to offer "help first" services. We're making plans at Hillview to help our stable clients in advanced stages of recovery with a "Wellness Center." In the "whatever it takes" spirit, we will encourage our clients to pursue personal goals as part of their recovery. The center will offer medical screening, life skills training, employment and social services support, and much more in a nontraditional setting. Clearly, these services extend the definition of recovery beyond the medical model.

I am grateful to all our Friends. Many of them work at Hillview, and they and their families remember us this time of the year

with checks. Other Friends are more far-flung and more creative. One dear Friend is the manicurist of a staff member, who is a Friend herself, and in lieu of holiday gifts, she asks her clients to write checks to Hillview.

At this holiday season, when we reflect on how we all might make our communities better places to live, I invite you to become a Friend of Hillview. We've included an envelope inside this newsletter for your donation. On behalf of everyone at Hillview – staff members and clients – I'd like to thank you for your consideration and your support. The act of charity is another virtue that helps us accomplish our mission.

Client-Volunteers Learn Skills, Keep Hillview Functioning

To clients in the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) program, Hillview is a microcosm of the outside community. This rich, 24/7 intensive supportive-services program with its drop-in Clubhouse provides treatment to 180 people with long-term mental illness who are at risk of hospitalization. It also provides them with friends, socialization opportunities and basic living skills. Some clients have jobs, and some go to community colleges. Some are active volunteers and give Hillview the benefit of their generosity. These people were honored for their service at a recent thank-you ceremony.

- "Country Cupboard Lady" sells snacks in the Clubhouse. "People look forward to having her come around and even seek her out when they're hit by snack attacks. She's very discreet about people's sweet-tooth preferences," says Julie Jones ACT director. "She also handles the money and helps me with purchasing."
- "Lunch Monitor Person" takes orders for participants in Hillview's pre-paid meal pro-

gram, stamps their meal cards and relays order information to the Hillview kitchen.

- "Coffee Lady" is particularly crucial to Hillview's smooth operations by making sure the urn at the Clubhouse always has fresh brew. "This is a job that no one wants in most offices. We love our Coffee Lady," Jones observes.

"For staff members, these services are a nice convenience. We're all very busy here and being able to buy lunches and snacks on site is very helpful," she says.

Two other clients have responsibility for the never-ending job of paperwork filing for ACT. One young man with a fulltime job comes to Hillview to clean the Clubhouse patio once a week—and the patio always needs his attention.

Jones notes that all ACT volunteers hope to find jobs or return to work. Their volunteer responsibilities help them develop employment or vocational skills and contribute to their resumes. "They can use these

skills in the working world," she says.

The ACT staff was especially proud to recognize the achievement of a client who was honored by California State University, Northridge. She is a student with disabilities enrolled in the bachelor's degree program and majoring in psychology.

Another ACT client completed a 13-week program, sponsored by the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, that can lead to a paying job. At Hillview, the ACT client runs a weekly group for seven to ten clients to talk about their activities and their personal recovery processes. "Clients relate to her because they know that she knows their situations and their struggles," Jones explains. "She reaches them and motivates them on a different level from mental health professionals. Her groups are very empowering. We are proud of her achievement and grateful for her contribution to ACT."

Cooking up support for a stronger, healthier community.

Hillview Mental Health Center and Independent Community Treatment Center celebrated National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month and client successes with a picnic at Veterans Park in Sylmar. Taking their turns at the grill for nearly 70 clients and staff members were (left to right) Clarence Williams, Clubhouse manager for Assertive Community Treatment (ACT); Jose Maldonado of the Hillview Maintenance Department; and Jose Tovar, ACT community mental health counselor. The nationwide observance, now in its 17th year, inspires government, business, and society to use the month of September to work toward enhancing Americans' access to treatment programs for alcohol and drug problems while celebrating people and families in recovery. It conveys the message that treatment is effective and recovery is possible. In conjunction with Re-

covery Month, the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration announced that illicit drug use among youth ages 12 through 17 declined to 9.9 percent in 2005 from 11.6 percent in 2002. This represents a fundamental shift toward healthier decisions, says Dr. Robin May-Davis, staff psychiatrist and chair of Hillview's Co-Occurring Task Force, a program for clients dealing with mental illness and substance abuse. Alcohol use has also declined in that age group. But challenges remain. Among young adults ages 18 through 25, cocaine use increased to 2.6 percent in 2005 from 2.0 in 2002, and non-medical use of narcotic pain relievers increased to 4.7 percent from 4.1 percent. Among adults ages 50 through 59, the rate of illicit drug use increased to 4.4 percent in 2005 from 2.7 percent in 2002.



Garden of Reflection.

At the Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford, Illinois, visitors are inspired to cast aside the stresses of every life and contemplate the tranquil beauty of nature. In this photo, Dr. Robin May-Davis, Hillview staff psychiatrist, captured the three essential elements of a Japanese garden: water, with its soothing and reflective qualities; rocks, which convey a sense of permanence; and plants, with their varying textures and shades of green.



Big Sur in Mist.

With its imposing geography of rocky embankments and rugged canyons, its granite shorelines and wave-splashed coves, California's Big Sur is recognized worldwide as a place of natural wonder and spectacular beauty. Dr. Robin May-Davis photographed this dramatic meeting of land and sea.

May-Davis, an avid hiker and backpacker, says she developed her photography skills so she can connect with nature and the outdoors when she's indoors at home

or at work. Visitors to her office enjoy her many nature photos. "I find that the photos help instill some peace into people's hectic lives," she says.

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Hillview Mental Health Center, Inc., is a non-profit corporation that serves as a Gateway to Recovery, Independence and Health for nearly 2,000 East San Fernando Valley residents each year.

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The mission of Hillview Mental Health Center, Inc. is to assist in empowering individuals and families affected by mental illness to assess their needs, strengths and goals, and work collaboratively with mental health professionals and other staff to plan services that are person-centered, culturally competent and effective in promoting recovery and the ability to live as fully participating members of the community.



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Mental Health Center, INC.

A nonprofit corporation serving the East San Fernando Valley since 1966

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