



## Director's Desk

Christina R. Ghaly, MD  
Director

Happy holidays! This is absolutely my favorite time of the year. I love every bit of the joy and celebration that is a hallmark of the season. Cookie-making, hot chocolate, children's concerts, crazy sweaters, crafts...you name it, I love it (except the shopping part). This time of the year seems to always bring out the best in people; we smile more easily and share our burdens and struggles more readily, ready to believe that people are fundamentally good.

Since I've joined DHS, one of the things that marks the season for me is the County's unclaimed dead service, led by the good work of decedent affairs, administrative, and chaplaincy staff and volunteers at LAC+USC Medical

Center. The service is highlighted on page 2. It is a beautiful and solemn event that honors the lives of individuals, typically around 1,500, whose bodies are still unclaimed in the three years since their deaths in 2015. Very, very few are unidentified. Most are known; known to the world and to their families and friends. They are unclaimed for a variety of reasons: some are estranged from their loved ones; sometimes their families are in a foreign country and are unable to afford travel or obtain a visa to claim the remains. There were 1,457 individual stories this year, each unique.

We are a Department whose mission is focused on preserving and enhancing life. While this service is called the service of the "Unclaimed Dead", it is truly a service about life. It is a great privilege every December to be able to honor each of these individuals and the people they were. And it is a service that I think makes people appreciate the joy and love in their own lives. I wish that for each of you this holiday and look forward to sharing 2019 with you.

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## 5th Annual DHS Diabetes Day

By Theodore C. Friedman, MD, PhD

The 5th Annual DHS Diabetes Day was held on Monday, December 3, 2018 at the California Endowment. The annual event, organized by Theodore C. Friedman, MD, PhD, chair of the Endocrinology-Primary Care Workgroup and Lead Physician at MLK Outpatient Center, drew over 200 providers who take care of patients with diabetes. The attendees came from a diverse array of clinics including hospitals, outpatient clinics and community partners within Los Angeles. The event was co-sponsored by the UCLA Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI) Catalyst award as well as LA Care Health Plan that provided continuing medical education (CME).

The keynote speaker was Athena Philis-Tsimikas, M.D., from the Scripps Institute, who talked about Project Dulce: How to Involve All Key Members for Optimal Diabetes Care. Dr. Philis-Tsimikas stressed a team approach to diabetes including using patient advocates to help other patients with diabetes get motivated to take care of their health. Hal Yee, MD, the Chief Medical Officer for DHS, gave a very nice introduction about how diabetes care needs to be a partnership between primary care providers and specialists. He especially thanked everybody in the room for their excellent care of patients with diabetes. Alecia Sanchez from the California Medical Association talked about the importance of public advocacy for diabetes and encouraged everybody to contact their representatives in the Legislature to advocate for policies that reduce the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and support other efforts related to diabetes prevention.

There was a rousing Zumba break led by Laura Gonzalez

and the attendees watched a video recording of a poetry project entitled *The Bigger Picture Project: Big Boy*, about a young man whose mother has diabetes, and how he takes care of her and helps her with her insulin.

Anne Peters, MD, from USC, talked about state-of-the art diabetes treatment for county patients in 2018 and 2023 and predicted the future of diabetes care within DHS. Amisha Wallia, MD, from Northwestern University, explained the Endocrine Society's initiative on preventing hypoglycemia and encouraged providers to be very thoughtful about proper medication use to help prevent hypoglycemia.

There were breakout sessions in the afternoon for four different tracks including motivational interviewing, preventing diabetes, expected practices related to diabetes and obesity with case-based learning and diabetes management in and out of the medical home. All of these were well attended and inspired providers to do a better job of taking care of their patients with diabetes.

The feedback from the audience was highly positive including one provider who said the motivational interviewing not only changed the way she treats patients with diabetes, but the way she manages her household and deals with her family.

Slides and talks (in .mp4) are available at the DHS SharePoint at <http://myladhs.lacounty.gov/mlkopc/DiabetesEndo/Diabetes2018/Forms/AllItems.aspx> and in the

Dropbox (for outside DHS) at [https://www.dropbox.com/sh/z053f772jk3u1nz/AADiOgUHntbg1ePTH\\_3hcxbsa?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/z053f772jk3u1nz/AADiOgUHntbg1ePTH_3hcxbsa?dl=0)

Diabetes Day was covered by Telemundo evening news on December 3<sup>rd</sup> and can be seen at <https://www.telemundo52.com/noticias/local/Existen-30-millones-de-diabeticos-la-mayoria-latinos-501834892.html>

The 6th Annual DHS Diabetes Day will be December 2, 2019. We look forward to seeing you then.





## LA FOUND Now Implemented

On February 28, 2017, the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors established the Bringing our Loved Ones Home Task Force, led by the Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS). The intent was to examine the problem of vulnerable persons with cognitive impairments like Alzheimer's, Dementia and Autism who may go missing or wander. One of the products of this endeavor was the creation of a website called [www.lafound.com](http://www.lafound.com) and <https://es.lafound.com/> (Spanish website). The timing of the initiative is critical as our population ages and the prevalence of cognitive impairment increases.

This also resulted in the establishment of a protocol to share information among County departments when a person is reported missing to law enforcement. The information is

shared Countywide so that different service providers can check their respective databases to see if a missing person has accessed County services since their disappearance. The information can be used to determine the locations where a missing person has been to narrow the search area.

A key component of LA Found is the Project Lifesaver Pilot, through which bracelets equipped with tracking technology are being issued to certain individuals with cognitive impairment who have a tendency to wander. The bracelet is not under constant monitoring and it can be activated by the Sheriff's Department in the event that someone goes missing. Liaisons from the Department of Health Services and throughout the County work in partnership with WDACS to share information and collectively work toward lessening the time that a person is missing.

The liaison for DHS is Connie Salgado-Sanchez. Please check the website to learn more about the initiative and notify her if you have any questions.



## Rancho Los Amigos & Bank of America Host Annual Adopt A Family Christmas Event

By Rochessa Washington

Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center (Rancho Los Amigos) and Bank of America hosted their Annual Adopt A Family Christmas Event on December 11, 2018.

Bank of America has been volunteering at Rancho Los Amigos for 46 years. It started out as a large group of Bank of America employees coming to the Rehabilitation Center during the holidays visiting inpatient rooms and singing Christmas Carols. Then in 1998, the Annual Adopt A Family Event began with Bank of America adopting five families who were receiving services. Twenty years later, they have adopted over 550 families, consisting of 1,348 adults and 1,068 children. This year Bank of America adopted 39 families.

Every year the Social Work Department at Rancho Los Amigos identifies families in need. Additionally, they identify families with specific needs such as beds, refrigerators, TVs and clothing. Christmas wish lists are reviewed, and each Bank of America branch participating in the program then assembles the requests and presents them to the families at the Annual Christmas Adoption Program. Families are also presented with two food boxes donated by Rancho Los Amigos staff.

"Rancho has been proud to partner with Bank of America each year for this event. Serving those in need has been our mission since 1888. This partnership allows us to serve those who are often overlooked during the holiday season," said Aries Limbaga, Chief Ex-



ecutive Officer at Rancho Los Amigos.

"It has become part of our holiday tradition to support the families of the Rancho Los Amigos Rehabilitation Center and ease some of the financial challenges that come with the season. Knowing that we are helping families meet their needs with everything from essential goods like clothing to toys and games is one of the most rewarding ways we can contribute to the vitality of our greater Los Angeles community," said Raul Anaya, Bank of America Market President for Los Angeles.

## LA County Honors Unclaimed Dead in Annual Ceremony

By Ana Gaona



In remembrance of the indigent/unclaimed dead, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors conducts an annual non-denominational, interfaith burial ceremony. This year the event took place on Wednesday, December 5th at Evergreen Cemetery. The ceremony began with a beautiful musical piece by Street Symphony (Vijay Gupta): Aaron Hill, Oboe *Sarande* Bach. LAC+USC Medical Center Director of Spiritual Care, Father Chris Ponnet welcomed everyone and recited the opening prayer.

This year's public event honored 1,457 individuals who passed away in 2015. A few days prior to the ceremony, ashes were placed in a single mass grave with a marker indicating the year of cremation - this year it read 2015. L.A. County has been conducting burials for the unclaimed dead since 1896. There were over 100 individuals in attendance, including community and media members.

The interfaith ceremony included the Lord's prayer in various languages, including English, Korean, Spanish and Fijian and multiple religions were represented. A Native American sage blessing, a Buddhist chant, Muslim and Hindu text readings, incense and closing songs performed by the Director of Symphony Chamber Singers were also part of the ceremony.

Mourners were invited to sprinkle incense over the burial site at the closing of the ceremony. In attendance were County Supervisor Janice Hahn, 4th District and Dr. Christina Ghaly, Health Services Director who both shared a few words at the ceremony. "So thankful that we can all be here to have a chance to pay our respects to each of these individuals' lives who had so much meaning and purpose," said Dr. Ghaly. "Even if not in ways the world may have recognized."