

CLIENTS SHINE AT COMPTON FAMILY MENTAL HEALTH

By Kathleen Piché, L.C.S.W., Public Affairs Director



On Monday, September 23, 2013, Compton Family Mental Health Center staff and clients gathered to discuss how LACDMH is preparing for implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). *Daily News* reporter Susan Abram was on hand to interview staff, clients and LACDMH Director, Marvin Southard, D.S.W. Ms. Abram is writing a series of articles on the ACA for nine local newspapers.

Mental Health Clinical Supervisor, Satoko Luce, L.C.S.W., organized interviews and a tour of the refurbished facility for the event. Maria Gonzalez, MFTI, noted the change in community demographics and noted that all types of diagnoses are treated at Compton, trauma related problems being high on the list. Inspirational success stories were told from the perspective of five adult clients:

Antoinette was initially referred by an inpatient facility and has been diagnosed with major depression and bipolar disorder. "They're trying to transform the face of mental illness," she said. "Our face is just like yours." Antoinette added, "Everyone was here to meet my need. I learned about resources available to me and was able to focus on mind, body and soul." In addition to seeing a psychiatrist, RN and case worker, her treatment includes groups and a Zumba class, a big hit with all the clients. Antoinette said, "Stigma is (still) in the air, but the winds are changing. People are looking at it differently."



After working as a school bus driver for 30 years, Jacqueline was paralyzed from a stroke on her right side. She was unable to walk or think clearly—she could not spell the word mother. Jacqueline became depressed and suicidal. She sought help at LA County Department of Social Services and was referred to Compton Mental Health where she got the help she needed. She can now walk, spell the words mother and father, is going to school and is an advocate for mental health. “I’m a success story—I can now help someone else,” she said.

Michelle was a crime victim in 2010. She gained 100 pounds and was too afraid to go anywhere alone. She arrived at Compton Mental Health in 2013 with nightmares and suicidal thoughts; if it weren’t for her dog, she said she would have taken her life. At Compton, she was told everything would be okay and received the services she needed to talk about things—she is now able to go places alone. “I thought my life was over but I’ve started a new book,” she said.

Anjelina was referred by an outside M.D. because she had twins and lost one; her grief was overwhelming. Depression and anxiety derailed her life. She sighted the doctors and case managers as the reason for her recovery, in addition to groups on stress management, self-esteem and exercise.



Rabai was a crime victim and sought help at Compton. She participated in the PTSD program and Zumba and was able to help herself and her two sons, who have also been diagnosed with a mental illness.

Dr. Marvin Southard, D.S.W., LACDMH Mental Health Director, mentioned that trauma is better understood now than in previous years; trauma always makes existing problems worse. He reflected that all the ladies that spoke represented LACDMH's intention of treating clients holistically. "The only way we help people is to help the whole human being—that's what humans are made for—giving back."

On the importance of creating a clinical site that becomes a tool for the community, Dr. Southard said, "This is what we want—a place where everyone's part of a family ... where people feel like they're part of the community. This place is for you."