

**Hearing Voices Conference Inspires Healing
Harbor-UCLA Wellness Center
By Jeffrey Adams, Coordinator, Harbor-UCLA Wellness Center**

The first *Hearing Voices Conference* was held Saturday October 12, 2013, at Harbor-UCLA, 2-South conference room. It was a tremendous success with 40 attendees, plenty of food and an outpouring of information and support. The conference objective was to assist individuals in embracing their voices, to realize that they are not alone, and to realize others hear voices; the experience normalized their experience and allowed them to continue on the road to recovery and independent functioning.

The conference was planned by the Harbor-UCLA Wellness Center Client Council, with assistance from the Wellness Center's Hearing Voices group leader, Brad Stevens, and Client Counsel Assistant, Jeff Witte.

After introductions and opening remarks, two guest speakers, participants of the Wellness Center and Adult Out-Patient clinic, spoke of their experience with voices. They shared how they have managed their voices and have moved forward in their lives. After they spoke, it was as if a dam broke, and other attendees began speaking out. Attendees spoke about their own voices and the burden of keeping their experience to themselves. They spoke of the joy of finally being able to share their experience with others who understood and could validate that experience. It was a moving and healing point in time.

The outcomes from the *Hearing Voices Conference* have inspired plans for the Spanish-speaking Hearing Voices Group at the Wellness Center and hope of starting groups at other LACDMH clinics and in the community. One of the conference guest speakers was asked to speak at an upcoming South Bay NAMI meeting and at a Church in Wilmington that runs a mental health advocacy group. All in all it was an inspirational and healing day.

**Photography Courtesy By:
M.C. Harris, LACDMH Community Worker**



