

## Santa Clarita Valley Mental Health Center Celebrates Mental Health Day

By Ramona Casupang, LCSW



Another fabulously inspiring May as Mental Health Month (MMHM) celebration was held at Santa Clarita Valley Mental Health Center (SCVMHC) on Wednesday, May 25, 2016, from 1-3:30pm. This year's theme was "Mental Health Begins with ME!!" Approximately 75 clients, families, staff and agency speakers attended.

SCVMHC hosts a lovely and lively event for the community year after year, and this year was no exception. Guests entered the lobby of Santa Clarita Valley Mental Health Center and were warmly greeted by staff handing out swag bags containing useful mental health information and a few treats. Plenty of food and drink were offered as a big screen TV played a slideshow of previous MMHM events at this clinic. Returning guests enjoyed seeing themselves from past years.

The celebration opened with welcoming remarks from Michelle Majors, Psy.D., Program Director at SCVMHC. Staff members provided information about their groups and invited clients to participate. The program included several clients speaking on what brought them into the clinic for services, how their lives have changed, and what they would say to someone experiencing mental illness. The participants ranged from a person who came in for services after experiencing an injury which led to depression, to

a person experiencing Schizophrenia for nearly 20 years. Each of the talks had something in common. They were eternally grateful for the help they received, which raised their level of functioning. They encouraged others to reach out to anyone suffering from mental illness to seek help. It was touching to listen to their journey of recovery and how they hold positive thoughts about themselves now.



Another part of the day's program were mini-presentations from community partners such as WorkSource Center, Northeast Valley Medical Center, Santa Clarita Public Library, Department of Rehabilitation, NAMI, and others who provided information about free classes, healthcare, job preparation services and other services available in Santa Clarita.

This event's program was brilliantly speckled with a raffle of beautiful gift baskets, a trademark of Alondra James, LCSW, who seems to have a magic genie that makes these gift baskets. I don't think there was a guest who left without a gift. Amazing!!

One of my favorite parts of the MMHM celebration was a singer/songwriter who played his guitar and sang songs he had written about his experience with mental illness and journey of recovery. It was truly astonishing and entertaining! The full to capacity room was rocking out and cheering by the end of his performance. If you have not yet been to one of Santa Clarita Valley Mental Health Center's May 15 Mental Health Day programs, check it out next year!