



# Jail Mental Health Press

Voice of the Largest Correctional-Community Mental Health System

## Perspectives

### Safer Cities Initiative, A Success Story?

Talking to a number of downtown business owners, police officers and colleagues that transverse to and through Los Angeles from their homes in outlying areas, they often point to the dramatic changes that have taken place in the downtown area. "It looks so much better when I drive down 5<sup>th</sup> Street on my way to work; now I don't have to see so many poor people." They wax enthusiastically on how there appear to be significantly fewer homeless people lying, sitting, sleeping or just hanging out on the sidewalk. They point out the marvelous new architectural show pieces, that until recently were slums of deteriorating buildings inhabited by people whose lives had deteriorated along with the buildings. Even several remaining homeless individuals are reported to have exclaimed to various city and county officials how it is much better now that there has been a decrease in the population.

Although I pass through the downtown area countless times during the week, after listening to a recent report on National Public Radio (NPR) regarding the homeless on Skid Row, I decided to take another look at an area that I also unconsciously transverse without seeing. I remembered the NPR reporter interviewing a man living on the streets on Skid Row who reportedly had been arrested numerous times for warrants for not paying fines for minor infraction citations, such as jaywalking, sleeping on the sidewalk, illegal possession of a shopping cart and other such practices no longer tolerated by society. He spoke of his frequent returns (more than 20) to County Jail and that it is like going home since so many of the people he shares space with in Twin Towers are familiar faces and the same inhabitants of Skid Row that are also there for

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## From this...to THIS



### A Courageous Story from One of Our Own- Denise F.

Before I found a second family here at WRS (Women's Community Reintegration Services & Education Center), I spent a lot of my time being afraid. I was afraid that one day, I would be choked in my sleep like my neighbor was at the New Image Shelter. I was afraid that I would be stabbed for simply reaching for orange juice before someone else, like a woman was while staying at the Mission in downtown LA. I hated feeling afraid, worried, and most of all, I hated being homeless.

About two and a half years ago, my mother became very sick. I was able to get clean and get my life together and I attended to my mother until she died that June. My sisters sold the house against my mom's wishes plus they put me out on the street with my daughter and grand-daughter, I realized that I needed to move on with my life. I sent my daughter and grand-daughter away to live with some other family members that were willing to help out while I took care of myself.

I was now homeless in Los Angeles. I found a bit of refuge at New Image Shelter in Los Angeles. I started to feel the same feelings as when I was a girl and my older sister tried to drown me. She shoved my head in the tub and all I could hear was, "I want to be the only child." I felt so afraid and help-



*Denise F.*

less, I survived the best way I could...by simply moving forward. I remember growing up and sitting in the backseat with my sisters and my dad would ask my sisters, one by one, to jump in the front seat with him and my mom, in order to learn to drive. I waited for him to call my turn but it never came. It made me happy to cook for my parents. I guess I did that in order to show them how much I loved them and ached for them to tell me how much they loved me, but they never did. I remember going to a free clinic and getting tested for HIV and the results came back positive. I did not believe the man reading the results. I went to 8 different places to get the same results. I couldn't believe it! I don't blame them though, I don't blame anyone. It's just life.

During my stay at the Shelter, a staff member from WRS came out and told us all about the services they offered at the Center. I wanted to change my life and I wanted

*Continued on Page 3 (My Story)*



# Safer Cities

*Continued from Page 1*

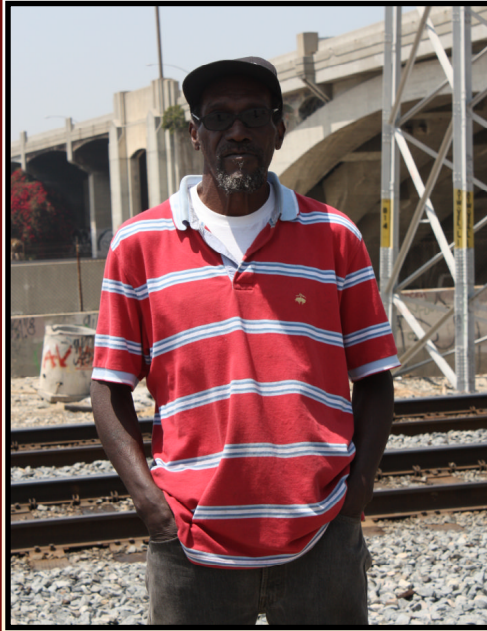
the same type of infractions and with the same frequency.

As I walked down several of the streets I normally drive with unseeing detachment, an area that each morning is visited by large water tank trucks hosing down the sidewalks. I too saw a remarkable change. Oh, I had noticed before that there were fewer homeless, tents and cardboard boxes. But to take it in, on a walk is very much unlike driving through insulated and isolated by the glass windows of my vehicle. As I passed several SROs (Single Residency Occupant Hotels), it was striking that so many of the people around me were in need of so much more than just a shelter for the night. It was sobering that many remain in Skid Row because of their mental illnesses, substance abuse and a familiar environment that in spite of police sweeps may still be more welcoming than other parts of the city. Where were all the hundreds of others that formerly inhabited the Row, many if not most with mental illness and substance addiction? I am aware that an increased number present nightly for a bed in shelters throughout the County, allegedly due to the displacement that began with the "sweeps". I have been presented with statistics that indicate other Los Angeles area shelters, such as New Image Shelter on Broadway Place, are overrun nightly by those in need of a bed and have to turn people away.

Have there been similar changes in your community? I certainly have not noticed it in mine, but then, have I just been driving home each night unaware of the humanity in need of shelter and perhaps care for their illness, as I am insulated and isolated by my vehicle windows?

*Kathleen A. Daly, M.D., M.P.H.*

## MY STORY-LEROY



When I was released from the penitentiary in Huntsville, Texas, I was at once elated and scared. Where was I to go? How was I going to get there with only the money the prison gave me to pay for a bus ticket and the belongings that had been taken from me thirteen years before? I was in for armed robbery, but a fight inside landed me on death row for eighteen months and legal costs to beat the rap had taken all the savings I and my family had. Everything you have heard about Texas prisons is true in spades. The only good thing was that I had plenty of time to think about my life and how I ended up there. A life not too unusual for a poor black guy born in the south in 1940 who had no job, no money, and no chance. When sentenced I thought that was the bottom. Now looking back on the heroin problem that really landed me there which I kicked cold turkey in desperation, my wife and the ten children that we had over the years, my life in the military,

and then of course my "mental attitude problem", that I do not want to talk about. Come to think of it, between the military and Texas penitentiary, I have spent most of my life in one sort of prison or another.

I met and married my high school sweetheart before I was drafted into the military in 1958. My buddy and I were sent to fight with very little training, and I watched him get killed and that was one of the darkest hour in my life. At discharge, I had my papers, an injury, twenty years of military service and an addiction to heroin.

My wife was there for me even after the stint in prison. That kind of loyalty and love is the most important thing going. She visits me often here under the freeway at Mission Road and brings food. You know I can go home any time I want, but choose not to until I decide I want to quit drinking and have a better mental attitude. I am very good to the women who come to stay here looking for a break from the demands of life on skid row – they see me as their protector. My attitude would be better if someone would give me a chance with a job so I would not have to work for miles every day picking up bottles of cans. I cannot go home until I have something to do. I am trained as a chef and a custodian and used to own my own business.

I will tell you that my "mental attitude problem" has been the cause of my not being with my wife, my family and having the life I used to think that I would have when I was young. The trail that began in Oakland where I was born, to Louisiana, military service in Korea and Viet Nam, Texas, Montana, even Des Moines, Iowa, and Skid Row until the hassles with the police drove me to my home under the freeway at Mission Street. Look around you right now, I have everything I need, a place to sleep and eat and drink without being hassled. Oh, I would jump at the chance to work, but you know I still have this problem. It has taken so much from me, but not my dignity and self respect that I will never lose.



As told to Vanessa Corona and printed with Leroy's permission.

## Points of Interest

### May is Mental Health Month

## My Story

Continued from Page 1 (Peer Contribution)

to change the direction that I was headed. I can honestly tell you that a force came in me and helped me. I began going to WRS for group and therapy. I liked it so much that I started coming everyday. Little by little, I began helping out with the groups and some of the women looked to me as a veteran of the Center. I always just tell the women, "this is our Center, you can be yourself." I love to help people in any way that I can and the things that I have learned from WRS has helped me out a lot. I have self-respect, I have a good self-image and the self-worth and self-esteem that I have is irreplaceable. I was well enough to seek out my kids and I promised them a better relationship. Through my God's and my children's forgiveness I found...find my strength.

One day I woke up in the middle of the night at the New Image Shelter and witnessed my sleeping neighbor being choked to death by this woman. The lady ended up waking up and fought off the lady attacking her. The next day I was so afraid that I'd be next that I left the shelter. I found an old buddy of mine on the street and he invited me to share a van with him in Los Angeles. I appreciated his help because I had nowhere else to go. I lived out of a van for a couple of months.

After going to WRS for some time, I was invited to participate in a Peer banquet. I was so excited to participate and the evening was great. When we left the banquet staff from WRS dropped off all those that attended, home but my "home" was a van parked on the corner of Manchester and Harvard in Los Angeles. I was so embarrassed and ashamed of where I lived that I had the driver circle the area and asked them to drop me off at the corner but they refused, insisting to drop me off at my "house." I had to come clean and tell them that I lived in the van at the corner.

WRS did not pass any judgment and didn't treat me any different from before. WRS was nice enough to assist me in getting temporary housing at Fresh Start in Los Angeles. Then through Section 8 Housing, I now live in an apartment. I am so happy that I have an actual home, a place where my children and grand-children can come and visit me. I am so proud and determined to walk the right path and I will help anyone that will let me.



Roy Griffin, Adrienne Gee, Patricia Nwaekeke, and Mark Parra from Adult Justice, Housing, Employment & Education Services

The history of May being designated as Mental Health Month and society's awareness of mental illness as a disease rather than a demonic manifestation has been forged by many important milestones, organizations and individuals. In 1909, a young American businessman named Clifford W. Beers published an autobiography, "A Mind that Found Itself" that described his incarceration in public and private mental institutions. Beers set into motion a reform movement that became known as the National Mental Health Association. In April 1949 mental health week was established to remind the public about the goals and activities of the nation's mental health programs. To increase understanding in the late 60's, the week was expanded to National Mental Health Month.

Presentations are being held throughout the County, such as the one recently at the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration that included staff from Adult Justice, Housing, Employment & Education Services. A Calendar of remaining May is Mental Health month activities are listed on page 4.

## Famous Dump Cake

There are many avenues, approaches and meanings to the word success. Depending on one's goals, aspirations and dreams having a productive and meaningful life chief among them. For some it would be achievements in their work or making their communities a better place to live. It all just depends upon what is important to the individual. One measure of success could be cobbling together and sharing the most delicious and succulent confection that one could possibly make and have it come out just right. Such a successful combination of baking mastery is a recipe shared by Priscilla Knott of the Women's Jail Mental health Program at Century Regional Detention facility and Lomita Martin at Twin Tower Correctional Facility.

Ingredients for a 9' Pan:

- 1- 6-9 oz. can of crushed pineapples
- 1- 24 oz. can of sliced peaches
- 1 box of cake Mix (Yellow, Lemon, etc.)
- 2 sticks of vegetable spread, margarine, butter
- 1/2 of small bag of Nuts (Almonds, Walnuts, or Pecans)

#### Directions

1. Pour the pineapple at the bottom of the pan
2. Drain the juice from the peaches and layer them on top of the pineapples
3. Gently distribute the dry mix evenly on top of the fruit-**DO NOT STIR**
4. Cut the Sticks of butter into small chunks and place evenly on top of the cake mix
5. Sprinkle the nuts on the entire cake
6. Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 40 minutes or until Golden Brown

Upon tasting, it is arguably one of the most successful blending of ingredients toward achieving culinary nirvana that one can imagine.



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS



## Advanced Microsoft Excel 2003

May 20, 2009  
8:30 AM-3:30 PM  
DMH HEADQUARTERS ANNEX  
695 S. Vermont Avenue  
7th Floor Conference Room  
Los Angeles, 90005  
Shatto Parking Structure or  
682 S. Vermont Ave. Flat Rate \$3.50  
Contact: Lisa Mangiagli  
lmangiagli@dmh.lacounty.gov

## Homeless & Forgotten:

### Increasing Knowledge & Empathic Awareness for Black & Latino Homeless Families

May 26, 2009  
8:30 AM-12:00 PM  
The California Endowment  
1000 North Alameda Street  
Los Angeles, 90010  
Free Parking available on premises  
3 hours for BBS, BRN, CAADAC,  
CEs for Psychologists  
Contact: Sam Keo  
skeo@dmh.lacounty.gov

## Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Non-Management-Refresher

May 28, 2009  
2:30 PM-4:30 PM  
LAC-DMH Wilshire Towers (South)  
695 S. Vermont Avenue  
7th Floor Conference Room  
Los Angeles, 90005  
Shatto Parking Structure or  
682 S. Vermont Ave. Flat Rate \$3.50  
Contact: Luis Escalante  
(213) 251-6854  
lescalante@dmh.lacounty.gov

## Conference

### Mental Health & Spirituality:

#### The Journey of Wholeness

June 4th & 5th, 2009  
8:00 AM-5:00 PM  
The California Endowment  
1000 North Alameda Street  
Los Angeles, 90010  
Free Parking available on premises  
Contact: Sam Keo  
skeo@dmh.lacounty.gov

# May is Mental Health 2009 Activity Calendar

## May is Mental Health Month Activity

May 21, 2009  
11:30 am-2:00 pm  
"DMH Make-Over"  
DMH Headquarters  
550 S. Vermont Ave.  
9th Floor Conference Room  
Los Angeles, 90020  
Contact: Ingrid Marchus  
213-351-6633 or  
Cecilia Hoof 213-381-8360

## Families Dealing with Emotional Difficulties-How to help?

May 26, 2009  
Milken Center  
22622 Vanowen St.  
West Hills, 91307  
Contact: James Randall 818-610-6732

## DMH Headquarters' Annual May is Mental Health Month Celebration "DMH Carnival"

May 27, 2009  
10:00 am-1:30 pm  
Location in the Parking Lot between the  
DMH Headquarters and the Community  
and Senior Services buildings  
Contact: Vicki Pierce  
213-381-8135

## Children of the Night

May 27, 2009  
Closed to the public  
A consumer panel to talk about recovery  
Contact: James Randall  
818-610-6732

## 11th Annual Family Funfest

May 30, 2009  
11:00 am-3:00 pm  
Clinic's Exposition Park  
3787 S. Vermont Ave.  
Free Pony Rides & Face Painting  
Contact: Lisa Lennick  
323-373-2400 ext. 3360

**Do you know someone that  
deserves to be recognized for  
their special contribution to  
our system or community?  
If so, please email  
vcorona@lasd.org**

# Employee Recognition

Adult Justice, Housing, Employment &  
Education Services Employees Nominated:

Mina Eide  
Tracye Turner  
Carolina Villa  
Olivia Waddell  
Inmate Reception Center, Administration  
Team that includes:  
Amanda Howell  
Elisa Ildefonso  
Josefa Lozada  
Paula Naito  
Josette Scott  
Carolina Villa  
Janice Williams

All of the Nominees will be honored at the  
Annual Employee Recognition event at  
Descanso Gardens on June 9th from  
1:30 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

# Jail Mental Health OPPORTUNITY

## Mental Health Psychiatrist

This position will be assigned to the Inmate  
Reception Center located at Twin Towers  
Correctional Facility and will be responsible  
for conducting clinical assessments of in-  
coming inmates to determine level of treat-  
ment. The program is recruiting a candi-  
date to work the afternoon to late evening  
shift including one weekend shift. This  
**transfer opportunity** is for any psychiatrist  
working in one of the JMHS programs.  
IRC is a 24/7 program and works with  
staff to provide a flexible schedule that  
meets the needs of the individual as well as  
the program.

If you are interested or know of anyone  
qualified who would like to apply, please  
contact Francesca Anello (213) 893-5418

*County of Los Angeles  
Department of Mental Health*

*Marvin J. Southard, DSW,  
Director of Mental Health*

*Kathleen A. Daly, MD, MPH  
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