

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY
May 2021



Message from the Director

Dear LACDMH family,

As Mental Health Awareness Month winds down, I hope you have had the opportunity to participate in this year's WE RISE campaign. This year's campaign theme, "None of Us Are Well Until All of Us Are Well," embodies our departmental mission and helps to guide us going forward as we continue our collective efforts to heal and strengthen as individuals and as a society from the COVID-19 pandemic and racial injustice, as well as address the need for mental health support broadly.

Indeed, understanding and acting on the fact that each of us has a personal stake in our collective wellbeing will help us forge a united front as we serve our diverse communities. Of note in this regard, [recent studies](#) have shown that the simple act of making someone else feel better—even just being kind to another person—actually makes us feel more connected to them and in turn increases our own personal happiness; in other words, we take care of ourselves when we take care of others.

To nurture our connectedness as a County further, we are using this month's newsletter to showcase "Cultural Traditions and Connections,"

a collection of wonderful information and articles that were inspired by the LACDMH Cultural Competency Committee with contributions from the Underserved Cultural Communities. In short, by sharing more about our County's unique cultural traditions, histories, and perspectives, we promote cross-cultural learning, understanding, sensitivity, and (you guessed it) **connectedness**.

I hope you enjoy this issue. Please distribute it widely to your communities, neighborhoods, friends, and family. In so doing, you will be helping us all become more and more connected in our journey together toward collective hope, recovery, and wellbeing.

Heart forward,

Jon

Jonathan E. Sherin, M.D., Ph.D.
Director



Less Than a Week Left to Experience WE RISE 2021

WE RISE 2021 is almost over, so don't miss your chance to celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month – join LACDMH's 4th annual month-long initiative that encourages wellbeing and healing through art, connection, engagement, and creative expression. A collaboration between dozens of local organizations, community artists, and County departments, WE RISE's theme, "None of Us Are Well Until All of Us Are Well," in tandem with the community-forward anthem, "Nothing About Us, Without Us," has been amplified across local and national press, social media, and newsletters to reach more County residents

than ever before.

There's still time to see the COVID-safe [Art Rise](#) outdoor installations and [Community Pop-Ups](#) taking place across L.A. neighborhoods. And don't miss the [Digital Experience](#) for a collection of virtual programs to enjoy at home. Watch some early [highlights](#) of WE RISE 2021 and check the [calendar](#) of activities to plan your WE RISE experience before the end of May! Also be sure to visit [werise.la](#) and follow on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#) as we continue to showcase upcoming opportunities.



LACDMH's Work Towards Racial Justice and Equity Continues One Year After George Floyd's Murder

Yesterday was the one year anniversary of George Floyd's murder, a historic occurrence that catalyzed a nationwide reckoning with systemic racism and accountability for law enforcement's use of lethal force. While George Floyd's murderer has since been convicted, our society's collective efforts continue to ensure that justice prevails when all systems of racism are dismantled. At LACDMH, we steadfastly move forward in our ongoing efforts to elevate racial equity and provide appropriate interventions for mental health crises. This includes our partnership with the County's [Alternatives to Incarceration \(ATI\) initiative](#) that aims to prioritize "care first, jails last," as well as our anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion (DMH ARDI) efforts that seek to identify and address inequities in our department's structure, policies,

procedures, and culture in alignment with the [County's ARDI agenda](#). As we work to build a more just and equitable County, we encourage you to explore and share the collection of racial equity resources on [our website](#) as well as the [George Floyd anniversary message](#) from the County's ATI and ARDI executive directors.

We understand that the anniversary of this tragedy may trigger or revive strong emotions. Please do not hesitate to ask for help if you are feeling overwhelmed by these reactions; our Help Line is available 24/7 at (800) 854-7771 to provide support and resources.



LACDMH Receives State Grant Award for Youth Mental Health Services

LACDMH recently received a \$2.95 million grant award by the California Health Facilities Financing Authority (CHFFA) to build two Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) programs at Los Angeles County's Olive View-UCLA and Martin Luther King, Jr., health care campuses. The CSU programs will provide 24/7 services for children ages 3 to 12 who are experiencing mental health crises. Both CSUs are expected to be operational in 2022.

The CSUs will provide urgent mental health services in a community-based setting, reducing the need for inpatient hospitalizations and emergency room visits while providing children and youth with the appropriate level of care in a comforting, therapeutic environment.

Each CSU will have six beds (12 total) and will focus on providing services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate and trauma-informed, to ensure that the child's diverse and specialized needs are

met. Services will include mental health assessment and crisis stabilization, therapeutic and mental health services, case management, family/caregiver support and education, and referrals to community-based settings for ongoing needs.



Cultural Traditions and Connections: “Life’s Lessons”

The following article is excerpted from the “Cultural Traditions and Connections” magazine. To read more stories like this from LACDMH’s diverse communities, check out the rest of the [online magazine](#).

My name is Helen. I am an 80-year-old retired librarian. I am also a mother of three beautiful daughters and four amazing grandchildren. I grew up in a rural area in San Bernardino with every possible type of fruit trees that you can imagine.

This Pandemic has been very difficult. I miss getting together with my friends. Being retired, I was used to having a fully-booked calendar with many appointments for lunches with friends and birthday celebration dinners. Some call it being a “social butterfly,” but to me it’s all about loving and sharing with the people who are dear to me. As Barbra Streisand’s song says: “People who need people are the luckiest people in the world.” Until this pandemic gets under control, there are many things that we can do to take care of ourselves. Here are my top choices:

- Go walking with one of my neighbors (I walk with a cane, but little by little I have built up my endurance to walk up to three miles daily)
- Sit in the sun to relax and contemplate the beauty around me

- Keep up with old friends by chatting on the phone, including my cousins color in my inspirational coloring book with my crayons
- Read novels
- I give thanks to God that I woke up today, I'm healthy, I'm alive and I'm so blessed
- Spend time with my dog

Out of all these, the most important thing is love. Do not deprive yourself of it at any cost, like insecurities and your own fabricated excuses. If you love someone, show it. Do not keep it to yourself. You never know how long you or that person will be around. Do not risk living with such a regret. Embrace life and embrace love.

By Helen Salcido, Community Member



LACDMH Communications Efforts Recognized for Excellence

Recently, LACDMH was recognized for our COVID-19 Response, Help Line Toolkit and WE RISE Initiative by both the Communicator Awards and the Graphic Design USA Health + Wellness Awards. Although supporting the mental health and wellbeing of County residents is our mission, it is rewarding to be recognized for our communications impact.

- LACDMH [COVID-19 Mental Health Public Education Campaign](#) received an Award of Distinction from the Communicator Awards
- [LACDMH Help Line Toolkit](#) received an award from Graphic Design USA Health + Wellness Awards

- [WE RISE 2020: Virtual May](#) received an award from Graphic Design USA Health + Wellness Awards, as well as an Award of Excellence from the Communicator Awards

[The Communicator Awards](#), judged by members from the Academy of Interactive and Visual Arts, is a leading international awards program that has been recognizing big ideas in marketing and communications for the past 27 years. For more than five decades, [Graphic Design USA](#) has sponsored competitions that spotlight areas of excellence and opportunity for creative professionals. The awards showcase projects and campaigns that demonstrate the power of effective design in advancing a brand and promoting individual and societal wellbeing.



Honoring Memorial Day and Supporting Our Veterans

Originally named Decoration Day until after World War II, Memorial Day carries the same meaning today—to honor those who served in our military and have made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of our country.

While we honor the fallen, LACDMH also supports the military and veteran communities through an initiative called the [Veteran Peer Access Network \(VPAN\)](#), in which veteran and family member peers work to connect veterans and their loved ones to needed resources. Several peers cite losing a loved one to suicide during or after service as their reason for serving in VPAN as well as their motivation to be such strong advocates on behalf of our veterans and their loved ones.

The deep meaning of the work that drives our peers is often connected to Memorial Day and the reason for VPAN's success. In alignment with LACDMH's "heart forward" culture, VPAN embraces a "no wrong

door” approach in their interactions with the veteran and military communities. We encourage you to spread the word about VPAN to veterans and their families.

We also invite you to view [“Soldiers’ Stories from Iraq and Afghanistan: The Artist’s Process,”](#) a short documentary by Jennifer Karady, and to join us on Monday, May 31st at noon for the WE RISE Memorial Day/VPAN Panel Discussion at this [link](#).



Congratulations to 2021 Directing Change Winners

Congratulations to the creative youth and young adult filmmakers who are this year’s winners of California’s [Directing Change](#) Program. This statewide film contest enables youth to use the platform to raise awareness for mental health issues and suicide prevention. Nearly 1,000 films were submitted this year, and we are proud that many winning entries came from our very own L.A. County students. When you have a moment, take a look and share:

- First Place for Suicide Prevention: [“Dandelion”](#) from Hilda Solis Learning Academy
- First Place for Walk in Our Shoes – The Superhero in Each Of Us: [“Help Equals Hope”](#) from Palms Middle School Modern Media and Communications Magnet
- First Place for Walk in Our Shoes – What is Mental Health: [“I’m Here for You”](#) from Bret Harte Preparatory Middle School
- First Place for Walk in Our Shoes – Words Matter: [“Online Dangers: The Power of Our Words”](#) from Palms Middle School Modern Media and Communications Magnet
- Second Place for Suicide Prevention: [“I Am Not Alone”](#) from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

- Third Place for Walk in Our Shoes – Words Matter: [“Words Matter Till the End of Time . . .”](#) from Sierra Vista Middle School
- Third Place for Through the Lens of Culture: [“Arab Hearts – Mental Health PSA”](#) from Granada Hills Charter High School
- Third Place for Animated Short: [“True Colors”](#) from Hilda Solis Learning Academy
- Fourth Place for Animated Short: [“Seeing Signs”](#) from iLEAD Online

A recording of this year’s virtual award ceremony and a complete list of winning films are available [here](#). Congratulations to the winners and thank you to everyone who participated in this contest, which creatively advances the mental health dialogue, reduces the stigma of mental illness, and shares invaluable resources for support.

*Thank you for taking the time to read and engage with this issue of “**Connecting Our Community**,” a monthly newsletter focused on the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health’s updates and priorities.*

We welcome your comments, story ideas, and recommendations at pio@dmh.lacounty.gov and you may adjust your subscriptions settings at this [link](#).

dmh.lacounty.gov

Let's get social!

