



CENTER NOTES

Moving Lives Forward

Spring 2008

Vol. 25, No. 2



Notes from the Executive Director

Ian Hunter, Ph.D.

Center Housing

As we have discussed in past issues of Center Notes, at San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center, Inc., we offer support in three important areas of the lives of the consumers we serve – vocational services, housing, and a place to build a social network. In a previous issue, I described in detail the vocational component of our services. In this issue, I would like to focus on the vast housing network the Center has developed.

The Center has operated an intensive case management supportive housing program since 1984. It has grown considerably over the years and offers nearly 400 beds to consumers at any given time. The housing options are a visual reflection of the Center's highest priority – respect for the dignity and well-being of the people it serves. The Center strives to provide a safe, comfortable and dignified setting for its clients.

The housing options include: crisis/emergency housing, group homes, apartment living and master leased transitional housing. The Center's programs also effectively partner with housing providers, landlords and others who help meet clients' longer term housing needs.

Future residents at the Center's various transitional housing options may have been

continued on Page 2

Center Celebrates National Mental Health Month

May has been officially recognized as "Mental Health Month" by Congress since 1949. It is the perfect time to raise awareness about the importance of mental wellness for all.

Good mental health is fundamental to overall health and is essential for leading a healthy, balanced, and productive life. According to the U.S. Surgeon General's report on mental health, more than half of all Americans with a severe mental illness fail to seek treatment. Many people do not receive treatment for mental health problems due to a lack of awareness of the problem, fear of stigma, or lack of access to appropriate services. Yet, overall quality of life is greatly improved when a person with a mental health problem gets an early diagnosis and

receives appropriate treatment.

To help celebrate Mental Health Month, many of the Center's programs offered special activities throughout the month of May. The **Victory Wellness Center** conducted a consumer art show, and walk-a-thon. The **Adult Field Capable Clinical Services** Program hosted a fundraiser/Bar-B-Q with local Firefighters grilling up the burgers and hotdogs. The new **Youth & Family Center** which houses many key child and family programs hosted an open house for parents of their young consumers. Many programs also hosted screenings of films with mental health themes, followed by discussion groups.

For a complete recap of May events, log on to www.sfvcmhc.org/pr. ■

Save The Date For The Third Annual Moving Lives Forward Awards Gala, October 12, 2008

Circle October 12th on your calendar.

The Third Annual "Moving Lives Forward" Awards Gala will be held Sunday evening on October 12th at the Sheraton Universal Hotel. Continuing tradition, this year's gala will acknowledge those in the community who have shown an extraordinary commitment to mental health issues and who have thus contributed to moving lives forward. This year's event will feature an elegant dinner, live entertainment,



stories and insights from inspiring honorees, a silent auction and a raffle filled with a myriad of must haves.

To learn more about how you can support this event, please call Marci Kass at 818-901-4830.

Don't forget to mark your calendar and save the date for what is shaping up to be a rousing event.

For complete details and to purchase tickets online, visit:

www.MovingLivesForward.org. ■

Notes from the Executive Director (cont.)

living on the streets, parks, and encampments (such as their cars). Some will come from emergency shelters, jails, hospitals and short-term transitional shelters. The ultimate goal for the Center's transitional housing complexes is to move clients from homelessness to stable housing and increase self-sufficiency within a 12-18 month period.

Aside from the mental health services and on-going program support, consumers living in many of the Center operated apartments/houses have access to staff 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For other residential options, there is an After Hours Line as needed for after business hours support. In addition, the Center's Independent Living Program provides intensive case management and supportive housing services. Consumers are taught how to cook, shop for groceries, clean their living spaces, maintain good hygiene and other critical skills needed to function independently on a daily basis.

All Center housing facilities are centrally located to the Van Nuys Administrative District, and within walking distance to Center mental health programs. Local bus lines, municipal buildings (court, police department, post office), libraries, food markets, and numerous stores and shopping centers make the residence an ideal location for transportation, safety, and convenience.

Center housing is divided into three general categories: consumers served at homeless programs; consumers served at the Center's "community support services;" and transitional age youth group homes.

Homeless Services Housing

In addition to having access to beds at homeless shelters, care facilities and other community-based organizations, the Center directly offers multiple transitional housing options to approximately 175 individuals who have been homeless. This includes three apartment complexes and five group homes. The Center also collaborates with A Community

of Friends, on two apartment style transitional complexes, where supportive mental health services are offered on the premises.

Community Support Services

The Center's many community support programs link to various transitional and permanent living facilities. Combined, these options provide housing for nearly 200 individuals and in some cases, families. Options also include longer-term transitional housing group homes and apartments, which offer a safe environment where consumers can live, receive mental health care, and plan for the future under the guidance of counselors and licensed therapists. The Center also houses consumers at permanent living facilities developed through other organizations such as Homes for Life and A Community of Friends.

Transitional Age Youth

The Center has two six-bed residences that serve as transitional living facilities for transitional age youth (18-22) whose improved mental health enables them to move toward independent living in the community.

Section 8 Vouchers

Of course, living in transitional housing is not permanent. So, once a consumer has reached a level of stability in his/her treatment and has been living in housing with no incidents for a period of time, the Center then assists the consumer in reaching the next level of independent living – private (Section 8) housing. In 2007, the Center was granted 80 Section 8 Vouchers -- the most distributed to any single agency in Los Angeles County.

The program, offered through The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is designed to assist low income families, the elderly, and the disabled so that they can afford safe and sanitary private and permanent housing. The program offers a subsidy so that the renter will pay no more than 30 percent of their income towards housing and utilities. There is an extensive process that Center consumers must go



Going Green: An Update

In recent issues of the Center Notes, we have laid out plans for becoming a "greener" company. Not only are those plans being implemented as you read this article, but the Center also has had policies and procedures in place for some time that help to make our impact on the environment a positive one.

The Purchasing Department of the Center has taken the lead in going green with their ongoing efforts to purchase recycled paper and office products. Not only are these items good for the environment, but they can also often times be less expensive than non-recycled materials.

Many of our programs that use large paper shredders have been recycling the waste paper on a regular basis for quite some time. Since many documents must be completely shredded to comply with privacy regulations, the amount of recycled shredded paper can be quite extensive.

Laser printer toner is harmful to the environment, yet essential for any office. Therefore, the Center allows multiple computers to share a single printer where possible. This allows for less toner usage and used cartridges are recycled to be used again and again. ■

through in order to qualify for a Section 8 voucher. Included with this is a mandatory independent living training and certification that each individual must complete. This process ensures the greatest success in helping these consumers to remain in permanent homes.

There seems to be an endless need to provide housing to the population we serve at the Center, and we continue to explore options that allow us to collaborate with other organizations in our community. We are also always seeking funding on our own to expand our network of housing options. At the Center, we believe our housing options embody the mission of our organization. We are truly helping to move lives forward and help our consumers grow to become self sufficient, productive and competent individuals. ■

Start Thinking about your Taxes for Next Year and Support the Center

Now the taxes are fresh in everyone's mind, this article will help you plan better for next year. Donating to a charitable organization is an excellent way to help lower your taxes and in doing so you can support the important work of the Center. Consider this, if you were in a 33 percent tax bracket and you itemize your deductions, a \$1,000 gift to the Center would have saved you \$330 in taxes!

The Center is often in need of in-kind as well as cash donations. For a specific list of in-kind needs, visit our web site at www.sfvcmhc.org and click on the **Donations** button. Please note, however, that the documentation requirements for donations changed beginning August 17, 2006. Below is a brief description of what the IRS requires in the way of documentation for those who itemize on their taxes.

Rules for Clothing and Household Items

To be deductible, clothing and household items donated to charity must be in good used condition or better. A taxpayer, however, may claim a deduction of more than \$500 for any single item, regardless of its condition, if the taxpayer includes a qualified appraisal of the item with the tax return. Household items include furniture, furnishings, electronics, appliances, and linens.

Guidelines for Monetary Donations

To deduct any charitable donation of money, a taxpayer must have a bank record or a written communication from the charity showing the name of the charity and the date and amount of the contribution. A bank record includes canceled checks, bank or credit union statements and credit card statements. Bank or credit union statements should show the name of the charity and the date and amount paid. Credit card statements should show the name of

the charity and the transaction posting date.

Please note, prior law allowed taxpayers to back up their donations of money with personal bank registers, diaries or notes made around the time of the donation. Those types of records are no longer sufficient.

This provision applies to contributions made in taxable years beginning after Aug. 17, 2006. For taxpayers who file returns on a calendar-year basis, including most individuals, the new provision applies to contributions made beginning in 2007.

The new law does not change the prior law requirement that a taxpayer get an acknowledgement from a charity for each deductible donation (either money or property) of \$250 or more. However, one statement containing all of the required information may meet the requirements of both provisions.

Check Out Your Charity

San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center, Inc. is an IRS qualified organization. Therefore, donations to the Center are tax-deductible. Before you donate to any charity, be sure to check the IRS searchable online database to ensure that the charity is in fact legitimate. You can find this information if you go to www.irs.gov and type in the search box "Search for charities."

As always, be sure to check with your accountant or financial advisor for further information. ■



Spotlight on Center Programs:

Valley Employment Services Program Holds Vocational Awareness & Recruitment Day



from left: Sahin Akhtar, Recruiter, Sears; Vivian Akomah, Program Coordinator, Valley Employment Services; Israel Perez, Recruiter, Sears; and Claudia Avalos-Garcia, Employment Specialist.

The Center's Valley Employment Services held its semi-annual Vocational Awareness & Recruitment Day on February 28. Companies including Albertson's, Hollywood Video, Kimko Staffing, Living Spaces, Securitas, Sears, U-Haul and Vons participated. Consumers had the opportunity to meet with these prospective employers and learn more about job opportunities.

Valley Employment Services helps consumers obtain and retain employment. Employment Specialists work with the consumers and assess strengths and abilities and readiness for full and part-time employment. Consumers also learn resume writing, how to dress for an interview, apply for a job and skills for interviewing. ■

Albertson's Community Partners Program

Use your Albertson's Preferred Savings Card and up to four percent of your total purchases at all Albertson's and Sav-On Drugs will go to the Center. To enroll for free, go to www.sfvcmhc.org and click the **Donations** button to download a Community Partners

application. Be sure to include your Preferred Savings Card number on the application and mail it in. If you do not have a Preferred Savings Card from Albertson's, the next time you checkout at one of the stores, ask for a free application.

Ian Hunter, Ph.D., Executive Director

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TRANSITIONAL AGE YOUTH FSP
TRANSITIONAL YOUTH OUTPATIENT
TURNING POINT (WRAPAROUND)
VALLEY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
VICTORY CLUBHOUSE
YOUTH & FAMILY CENTER
YOUTH CONTACT SCHOOL BASED SERVICES

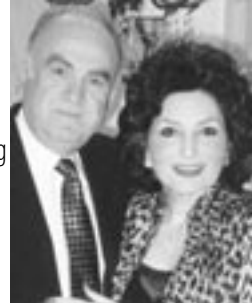
Center Notes is published quarterly by the San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center, Inc., 6931 Van Nuys Blvd., 3rd Floor, Van Nuys, CA, 91405

Marci Kass, Editor • Mark Riddle, Layout/Design

www.sfvcmhc.org

In Memoriam: Arlene Titizian (1948-2008)

It's with much sadness that we announce that the Center has lost a very good friend in March 2008 – Arlene Titizian. Arlene was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, businesswoman and friend. She was selfless, energetic, classy, smart and a lover of life. Giving back to the community was very important to Arlene. Over the years, she involved herself in many non profit organizations. Our Center is proud to be a beneficiary of Arlene's generosity. Most recently, in December 2007, Arlene, her husband George and three generations of her family cooked an incredible holiday meal for the 38 residents of the Center's



George and Arlene Titizian

Sylvan Place Coop. Sylvan Place is a transitional living facility for people who have been homeless. The meal was a feast for the eyes and the soul, and the residents were visibly and audibly grateful to the Titizians.

Arlene and her husband George have been long time supporters of the Center. In fact, George received the Center's highest honor in 2006 – the Moving Lives Forward Award for all he has done to help those less fortunate in our community. Arlene was loved and admired by so many people. She will always hold a special place in our hearts. Arlene will be very missed. ■

The Center Welcomes New Board Member Patricia Emerson



Patricia Emerson, Ph.D. joined the Board of Directors January 2008. She works as a Family Court Specialist for Los Angeles Superior Court, Family Court Services. Patricia has a Ph.D. in Sociology and is also a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. ■



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COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER, INC.
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