Making Life’s Transitions

The Avis & Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Program

An innovative program at the Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic that helps youth develop life skills and independence has been renamed for two leaders who understand a great deal about what it takes to build a stronger community.

The nationally accredited Avis & Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Program steps in at a crucial period in a young person’s life, as they leave the safety net of children’s services and move into the adult world. “This can be a difficult time for anyone, and particularly challenging for youth with mental illnesses,” says Tiffany T. Rodriguez, LMFT, Vice President of Programs.

The program is the region’s only one of its kind for teens and young adults ages 15 to 25 that combines mental health services, life skills, employment assistance, and a safe drop-in location.

“I consider myself a lifelong learner,” says Avis Ridley-Thomas. “I’m delighted and honored that our name is now associated with a program that is concerned about helping all of us to learn and grow, and providing support to do our best,” she adds. “That’s the only way we become better as a human family.”

Together, the Ridley-Thomases are highly respected community activists for coalition building, social justice, empowerment, and non-violent solutions. Their relationship with the Clinic stretches back more than two decades, since Mark Ridley-Thomas served on the Los Angeles City Council in 1991 and developed an early interest in mental health services.

“We are honored to have both Avis and Mark Ridley-Thomas’s names grace our program, which empowers positive change in the lives of our consumers -- the kind of change Avis and Mark create through their passion and activism,” says Elizabeth Pfromm, M.S., MPA, Clinic President/CEO.

Avis Ridley-Thomas founded the Los Angeles City Attorney’s Dispute Resolution Program in 1989, and was its Director until March 2011. Under her leadership, the program grew from four staff members to more than 2,000 volunteer conciliators, mediators, trainers, facilitators and peacemakers who handle thousands of disputes annually. She now...
Dear Friends:

Only recently, the Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic celebrated our 90th anniversary of continuous service to this community. This is a significant juncture in our history, but, in a way, it’s another beginning. Health care reform is presenting us with opportunities to extend our evidence-based services to a broader audience.

County-level public health policies increasingly advance systems that integrate physical and behavioral health care. The Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic plays a leading role in both services and advocacy. In recognition of our successful outcomes, the L.A. County Department of Mental Health recently extended our integrated services program at South Central Family Health Center for two more years. The program — one of only a few “co-located” efforts — puts our behavioral health experts at the primary care clinic. And the Empowerment Congress Mental Health Committee’s model for integration of mental health into primary care settings – developed under the leadership of Clinic President/CEO Betsy Pfromm and Committee Co-chair Jack Barbour, M.D. – is framing countywide discussions.

To further contribute to this arena, we recently formed a Council of Policy Advisors (page 4), comprised of strategic thinkers on such issues as mental health, health care access, cultural competency, and coalition building. We thank them for their volunteer service. We also welcome three new members to our Board of Directors, whom you’ll meet on page 5. They join us at a propitious time, willing to take on the challenge of a changing health care landscape and the urgent need for our services.

We invite your engagement with our expanding mission, as together with collaborators and friends like you, we make a lasting difference in the lives of children and adults, and in the health of our communities.

Wayne Moore
Chairperson, Board of Directors

Crafting Policy to Advance Access

Community Outreach

More than 1,000 kids and adults flocked to the Clinic’s 17th Annual Family FunFest in May, which celebrated Mental Health Awareness Month. The event at our Exposition Park facility included pony rides, face painting and mental health and health screenings.

Wayne Moore
Chairperson, Board of Directors
serves as Executive Director of Days of Dialogue and Co-Director of the Institute for Nonviolence in Los Angeles. She also is a member of the Council of Policy Advisors for the Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic (see page 4).

In 1991, Mark Ridley-Thomas founded the Empowerment Congress, now recognized as a national model for civic engagement. Following his City Council service, he represented the 26th District in the California State Senate. In 2008, he was overwhelmingly elected Los Angeles County Supervisor of the 2nd District, which includes the Clinic’s Central and South LA communities, and reelected in June 2012. Among Supervisor Ridley-Thomas’ most notable accomplishments is envisioning and leading the development of a new Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital, assembling designers and medical leaders to create a state of the art facility – in his words, “A first-rate, 21st century medical village.”

The Ridley-Thomases have been married since 1979, and are parents to twin sons, Sebastian and Sinclair. “Their strong sense of family, the rights of children, and social justice are squarely aligned with the values of the Clinic,” says Pfromm.

“When I look at our children, and how much wonderful support they’ve had from adults at every point in their lives, it’s a joy to see,” says Avis Ridley-Thomas. “That’s what I would want for all children. It takes all of us to have these young people do their best.”

The Avis & Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Program gives its consumers a combination of mental health services, hands-on help and skill-building opportunities for independent living. With Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health as a critical partner, the Clinic also teams up with the California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) to offer highly personalized job skills and placement services. “We help them to succeed at every step of the way, before they get a job and once they’re working,” says Rodriguez.

Through DOR resources, Clinic staff lead workshops on such topics as self-esteem, resume writing, job interviewing, money management, and cooking. In addition, philanthropy supports monthly outings, including museum visits, bowling, hiking, movies and the beach, to build social skills and expand their life views.

Staff members see clients grow significantly in the program. One young man was so shy when he began, he would barely talk. He kept attending workshops and counseling sessions, and gradually opened up. After working as a catering assistant at the Clinic, he’s now studying to become a medical professional.

Currently, teens and young adults come to the Clinic’s 2nd floor at 3031 S. Vermont Ave., where they find a comfortable and safe space with couches, computers, a full-service kitchen, and ready staff. Long-term plans focus on developing and opening a dedicated youth center to encourage participants and their peers to “drop-in” and use it as a safe zone and resource.

“It’s part of our commitment to this age group,” says Rodriguez, “and to offering a broader range of services to our community. We want to give our consumers ownership over the space.”

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Special thanks to our generous friends

We offer our sincere gratitude to:
• Richard and Lezlie Atlas and The Atlas Family Foundation
• Kaiser Permanente, West Los Angeles Medical Center
• Adrianne and Robert Zarnegin

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Give at www.lachild.org, (323) 766-2360 x3360, or by mail.
Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic
3031 S. Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90007
Did You Know?

Council of Policy Advisors
Gathers Leaders in Their Fields

- **Michael R. Cousineau, DPH**, Professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Preventive Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, whose expertise includes increasing healthcare access for vulnerable populations.

- **Gail Kennard**, who heads up KDG Architecture & Planning, founded by her father, Robert Kennard, FAIA, in 1957, and the oldest, continuously operated African-American-owned architectural firm in the West.

- **Steven R. López, PhD**, a professor of psychology and social work at the University of Southern California (USC), whose research provides a critical cultural perspective to the study of Latinos and other ethnic minority groups.

- **Elizabeth W. Pfromm, M.S., MPA**, President/CEO of the Child Guidance Clinic and co-chair of the Empowerment Congress Mental Health Committee.

- **Avis Ridley-Thomas**, founder of the L.A. City Attorney’s Dispute Resolution Program in 1989, and its Director until March 2011; now Executive Director of Days of Dialogue and Co-Director of the Institute for Nonviolence.

- **Elizabeth Tabita, MPA**, Grants Administration Program Administrator for the Oakland, Sacramento, Fresno and San Diego regions of The California Endowment, which works to increase health care access.

- **Marleen Wong, PhD**, associate dean and clinical professor, director of field education at the USC School of Social Work; and an internationally recognized expert in school safety and trauma issues.

**Think Tank for Future Public Policy**

“There are so many opportunities in a large county like Los Angeles to do something remarkable in crafting policy that advances innovative services,” says Elizabeth W. Pfromm, M.S., MPA, Clinic President/CEO. “We want to help ensure that behavioral health has a prominent role in the health care system of the future.”

In that spirit, Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic has formed a Council of Policy Advisors to serve as a think tank for future public policy. The Council of Policy Advisors will lend their “expertise, energy and laser focus” to big-picture issues with widespread impact, Pfromm notes. “Los Angeles County has the opportunity to be a national leader in this arena, by bringing high-level knowledge into the policy arena for our region.”

Michael R. Cousineau, DPH, one of the Council members, is Professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Preventive Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. “Integrating mental health services and primary care is one of the ongoing challenges of health care reform. It’s a formidable challenge, and one I think the Child Guidance Clinic is up for,” says Dr. Cousineau, who also directs the USC Center for Community Health Studies.

Increasing access to care for vulnerable populations has been a prime focus of his work, advocacy and research. Paramount to the problems these populations face, Dr. Cousineau says, is mental health. Complicating the effort toward a solution are a growing economic inequity, diminishment of the middle class and homelessness.

Cousineau was attracted to working closely with the Clinic because of its ability to form partnerships with other organizations around relevant issues, such as housing, health care, and substance abuse treatment programs. “Nobody can solve these problems on their own,” he says. “They’re too complicated and too big. The Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic is in a good position to form those partnerships.”
GIVING FORWARD

New Members Join the Clinic Board of Directors

Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic’s Board of Directors has welcomed three new members, each with highly sought expertise in fields critical to Clinic growth under health care reform.

Joining the Board are Felix E. Leatherwood, a retired Supervising Deputy Attorney General for the State of California; Armando Pacheco, MD, an Attending Physician and Hospitalist at White Memorial Hospital; and William R. Vasquez, CPA, Senior Partner at Vasquez & Company LLP and Director of Expense Reduction Analysts.

“We are so pleased to have this stellar group of professionals join the Board as we seek to extend the depth and breadth of the skills and community connections we bring to the Clinic,” says Robert J. Neary, Board Chairperson-elect and Chair of the Board’s Governance & Nominating Committee.

“We identified areas of expertise that were of high priority going forward,” says Elizabeth W. Pfromm, M.S., MPA, President/CEO of the Clinic. These areas include primary care, top-level legal expertise, and accounting, as health care reforms bring new partnerships, policies, and financial models.

One focus: recruiting board members who have a “civic reach” that can further an organization’s mission. Discussions at a recent board strategic planning retreat “helped to crystallize our thinking and hone in on our role in addressing the Clinic’s future needs,” says Neary.

A Los Angeles native, Dr. Pacheco is board certified in Family Medicine. He earned his Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of California, San Diego and has been in practice for 23 years. His goal: to make a real difference in patients’ lives and help them obtain a healthier lifestyle for themselves and their family members.

William Vasquez, who holds a Juris Doctorate from the UCLA School of Law, has more than two decades’ experience in business consulting to privately held companies, government agencies, and non-profits. He is the Managing Member of the Huntington Group LLP, a real estate investment group. In addition to overhead expense reduction, his specialties include risk management and strategic planning.

Felix Leatherwood earned a Bachelor’s Degree at the University of California, Berkeley, his law degree at Columbia University School of Law in New York, and an MBA from Stanford University. An attorney in Los Angeles with 33 years of experience in litigation and taxation, he is a former Supervising Deputy Attorney General for the State of California.

A Personal Commitment

Felix Leatherwood’s inspiration for joining the Clinic’s Board of Directors is, first and foremost, a personal one -- his mother, his three sisters, and his wife. “For 60 years, I witnessed my mother and my sisters struggle with the social and economic system that black women have inherited,” he says. “Their collective toil and sweat made it possible for me to do something that I really enjoyed doing. Following their lead, I’ve always tried to be more purposeful.”

His wife, Tumani Moore-Leatherwood, MD, physician-in-charge at Kaiser Permanente South Los Angeles, made a pledge when they met “to do something tangible in terms of health care delivery to our various communities,” he recalls. “Contributing my thoughts and time is the least I can do. I know about many of the conditions the Clinic is dealing with, and I may provide some real skills to give forward.”
Healthy Families America

Program Supports New Parents from Day One

Newborns and their families in Compton/East Compton and Broadway-Manchester communities have a new partner for early success: the Clinic’s Healthy Families America home visitation program.

With funding provided by First 5 LA, the Clinic’s HFA program is based on a nationally recognized model, and just completed its second year of helping overburdened families with children who may be at-risk for child abuse, neglect, and other adverse childhood experiences.

One goal is helping parents to form healthy attachments to their babies, which research shows is essential to healthy development. “Poor attachment sets kids up for problems in the future, including mental health issues,” says Tiffany T. Rodriguez, LMFT, Clinic Vice President of Programs.

Home Visitors work one-on-one with parents, offering support, community resources, and skill-building. “The HFA curriculum stresses, ‘You are your child’s first teacher,’” says Jessica Garcia, MS, CLE, Clinic Home Visitation Coordinator. The program promotes breastfeeding, as a healthy start and a means of bonding. Five members of the Clinic’s HFA staff are Certified Lactation Educators.

Families reach the Clinic via First 5 LA Welcome Baby programs at Saint Francis Medical Center, California Hospital Medical Center, and Centinela Hospital Medical Center.