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Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic's 90th Anniversary Honors Avis & Mark Ridley-Thomas, Senator Holly Mitchell, and USC's Steven Lopez



LOS ANGELES, Oct. 24, 2014 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic's 90th Anniversary festivities culminated Thursday evening, Oct. 23, with a celebration honoring Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, California State Senator Holly Mitchell, and USC Professor Steven R. López, Ph.D. for their contributions to community well-being and mental health.

The Clinic also announced the naming of the "Avis & Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Program" for transition-aged youth.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas received the Clinic's 90th Anniversary Special Award in recognition of his long-term, extraordinary leadership, according to Clinic President and CEO Elizabeth W. Pfromm, M.S., MPA. In the wake of 1992's civil unrest, Ridley-Thomas worked closely with Clinic leadership to attract "real investment that transformed the neighborhood," said Ms. Pfromm. "At a transformative moment for community engagement, Mark seized the day and launched the Empowerment Congress, which has become a nationally recognized model for effective neighborhood-based civic action." The Clinic raised \$16 million to build two state-of-the-art facilities in its South L.A. neighborhood, while advancing via the Empowerment Congress policy initiatives to increase local access to high quality mental health services.

Since then, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas has taken leadership roles at the state and local level to advance mental health access, most recently spearheading a County diversion initiative for incarcerated inmates with mental illness and championing primary care clinics with integrated mental health care onsite at public schools. "We feel blessed to share this partnership with the Supervisor, and we could not celebrate the Clinic's accomplishments without honoring his contribution," said Ms. Pfromm.

The Clinic also announced the renaming of its transition-aged youth program in honor of Supervisor Ridley-Thomas and his wife. "**Avis Ridley-Thomas** has a special place in our hearts here at the Clinic," said Ms. Pfromm. "She is devoted to giving community members the tools to take a stand against violence and to be empowered to demand non-violent resolutions to weighty issues." Avis Ridley-Thomas founded Los Angeles City Attorney's Dispute Resolution Program in 1989 and, among other leadership roles, has chaired the California Advisory Committee on Sexual Assault Victim Services and the South Central L.A. Domestic Violence Task Force.

For her work advancing the social and emotional well-being of children and youth in foster care, **State Senator Holly Mitchell** was honored with the *Quinton James*

Award for Making a Difference. She has taken a leadership role on their behalf in the State Capitol, successfully authoring legislation and advancing budget measures designed to improve their access to mental health services and safeguard their special health needs. "Through her vision and tenacious leadership Senator Mitchell has made a positive difference in the lives of many of our communities' most marginalized members," said Ms. Pfromm.

USC's Dr. Steven R. López received the *Evis Coda Award for Building Hope for Families* for his longtime leadership in advancing cultural competency in mental health service provision, especially as it pertains to Latinos. US Surgeon General David Satcher's seminal *Report on Mental Health: Culture, Race and Ethnicity* — which Dr. López served as a science editor and authored its section on the Latino community — deeply influenced how the Clinic and other innovators in service design culturally competent programs. "Dr. López continues to advance the cause of culturally competent and innovative models through his work at USC's Culture and Mental Health Lab," said Ms. Pfromm. "As longtime neighbors of USC, we are delighted to honor a local hero who is transforming care delivery at a national level."

The *Quinton James Award for Making a Difference* honors an entity, organization or elected/public official who has had a broad impact on improving the lives of children and families. Child and adolescent psychiatrist Dr. Quinton James has been dedicated to helping children and their families in South and Central Los Angeles for over 45 years.

The *Evis Coda Award for Building Hope for Families* honoring an individual for his or her outstanding work in the field of children's mental health. As a pioneer on the topic of child psychiatry, Dr. Evis Coda has spent over 50 years in the field of mental health, where he is widely recognized for his leadership, vision and commitment to quality mental health care.

The event was held at The California African American Museum in Exposition Park.

About Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic: Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic's mission is to provide quality mental health services by ensuring easy access and promoting early intervention. We empower South and Central L.A.'s children and young adults to get on track to success – to reach goals in school, build healthy relationships, and enjoy emotional well-being. Our team of compassionate professionals offers behavioral counseling and support to individuals and families.

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