



The Candle

Email News from the Contra Costa Crisis Center ■ February 2010

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San Francisco Foundation Grant

The San Francisco Foundation recently granted us \$47,000. The new funding is from a special initiative the foundation started to assist agencies like ours that provide safety-net services and have experienced an increased demand. The grant is in addition to \$30,000 the foundation is providing currently for our youth services program, as well as \$25,000 that the foundation has set aside for us to defray future expenses that we incur providing disaster-related services.

Walnut Creek Chamber Award

The Crisis Center was one of three nonprofit agencies honored this year by the Walnut Creek Chamber of Commerce. Each of the three agencies received a \$2,000 donation from the chamber plus a year's free membership. The awards were announced and checks were presented at the chamber's annual meeting in January at Boundary Oak. The other two recipients were Community Violence Solutions and STAND! Against Domestic Violence.

New Leftovers Web Site

Leftovers Thrift Shop, an auxiliary of the Crisis Center, now has a web site. Visit it at <http://leftoversthiftstore.wordpress.com/> to learn about the history of the shop, how it supports our life-affirming work, and the wide variety of merchandise available. Users also can sign up to receive notices about upcoming sales and events, find out about volunteer opportunities, and see how to donate items to the shop. **Mike Brungardt**, our volunteer coordinator, and **Sally Giberson**, current president of Leftovers, partnered to create this new resource... The shop is located at 2333 Boulevard Circle in Walnut Creek.

15 Graduate From Class

Fifteen people recently completed the classroom portion of our crisis line training program (38 hours of instruction). The first night they described their feelings starting the training: nervous, anxious, overwhelmed, fortunate, intimidated, grateful, curious, hopeful, excited, conflicted, fearful, happy, and blessed. The last night some of these feelings had changed, while others remained the same: anxious, eager, grateful, hopeful, accomplished, excited, sad (to see the class end), ready, proud, and more confident. Each of the 15 has now started six weeks of one-on-one

training in our crisis line room with an experienced counselor. They'll also have a free, one-hour mental health screening from a licensed psychologist or therapist outside our agency (about 25 mental health professionals in the community donate their time to provide this service).

Success Story: Suicidal Caller

A woman in her late 30s called us on the Spanish-language Lifeline number. Her life was falling apart. A few days earlier, her husband told her he didn't love her anymore and wanted a divorce. Then her doctor told her that he suspected a recurrence of cancer and needed to do further testing. She felt that she didn't have the will to deal with the disintegration of her marriage or the energy to endure another round of cancer treatment. She decided to kill herself by overdosing on prescription medication after she got home from work. Initially she felt a sense of relief with her decision, but as the day progressed she started having second thoughts. She felt physically ill and left work early. As she drove home, she worried about what she might do. She pulled to the side of the road and called us... A crisis counselor talked with her for well over an hour, talking the caller down and contracting with her on a safety plan. During the following two weeks, seven follow-up calls were made to the woman. Each time our counselors provided emotional support and guidance. As a result, the woman reconnected with family members who previously she was estranged from because of her marriage, as well as with friends. She also re-engaged with her church, made an appointment to see the oncologist, and followed up on referrals to local counseling services... About six months later, the woman called back to report that she was doing well. She was divorcing her husband, who she decided had a negative, controlling impact on her, and was living with other family members. Her cancer was in remission, and she felt hopeful about her future. She expressed gratitude for our support during this difficult period in her life.

Diversity Film Series

Beginning this month our diversity film programs will take place on the fourth Monday. On February 22nd we'll be showing *The Color of Fear*, a classic and influential documentary made in 1994 about a racially diverse group of nine men, most of whom had not met each other before. They spent a weekend retreat in the country talking openly about the meaning of race and their personal experiences. **Roberto Almanzán**, our cultural competency coordinator, was one of the men, and he'll share his experiences with the audience. Refreshments and light snacks will be available at 6:15 p.m. with the movie starting at 6:45 p.m. (starting 15 minutes early). Bring food to share if you can. After the movie, Roberto will facilitate a conversation. For more information, contact Roberto at robertoa@crisis-center.org.

Developing Cultural Competency

Says **Roberto Almanzán**, our cultural competency coordinator, "Cultural competency is a combination of self-awareness, cultural knowledge, and behaviors and attitudes that facilitate effective communication with people from diverse communities. It starts with understanding your own culture. By its very nature a person's culture provides him or her with maps, directions, and meanings to the world. These become the person's reality... Next, one learns that there are multiple views of reality because there are multiple cultures. Each view is as valid and real for others as our own view—filtered through our cultural lens—is for us... After that, one needs to

have some awareness of a group's history. Knowing how people of color have been discriminated against and marginalized, for example, is essential to developing cultural competency. African-American parents talk to their children early on about racism. They need to create a safe environment at home to protect their children from the negative affects. Parents also teach their children how to deal with the emotional impact of racism, which they are likely to experience in the broader society. This is something that white parents don't need to do with their children; hence, they may not be aware of it in black families... Since about 1900, Mexicans have immigrated to the U.S. seeking a better life economically. Mexicans and other Latinos have retained elements of their culture, though, even after families have been here for several generations. At the same time, they have faced racism in this country, victimized by anti-immigrant feelings while their own contributions to the U.S. economy are minimized... Asian immigration dates back to before the Gold Rush in California. Chinese laborers were instrumental in building the railroads. Yet Asians were not were not allowed to own land or become citizens until 1949, and Asian immigration was not permitted until 1965. Since they first arrived, Asians have been targets of racism in the U.S... Learning about the history of people of color in this country, after understanding your own culture and knowing the role culture plays in one's perception of the world, is how people develop cultural competency. It is not an end; rather, it is a journey, with continual lessons to be learned."

People in the News

Congratulations to 211 call specialist **Nayla McCarty**, who completed a master's degree in public administration with an emphasis on nonprofit management. Nayla also recently passed the test to become a nationally certified information and referral specialist, as did **Anthony Thomas**, our 211 supervisor... **Carol Haig**, a crisis line volunteer, is co-author of a book that was published last year and recently won the 2010 Outstanding Human Performance Communication Award presented by the International Society for Performance Improvement. The book, *Performance Architecture: The Art and Science of Improving Organizations*, is available from Amazon... We're pleased to welcome **Ruwani Jayasingha** to our staff. She's been hired as a part-time development specialist and will be working in our Leftovers Thrift Shop on Friday afternoons... Our thoughts are with grief counseling volunteer **Marina Becerra**, whose brother died recently. We extend condolences to the family... Our thoughts are also with **Rico Millan**, one of our 211 call specialists. He's recovering from recent surgery following a serious hand injury suffered while assisting family members in an outside business venture. We look forward to his return in early May.

Giving Opportunities

Donations to the Contra Costa Crisis Center support our life-affirming services. You can donate online (www.crisis-center.org) or by mail (P.O. Box 3364, Walnut Creek, CA 94598). Gifts to our endowment generate long-lasting support. Patronizing Leftovers Thrift Shop, an agency auxiliary located at 2333 Boulevard Circle in Walnut Creek, helps too. The Crisis Center is a nonprofit agency, and all donations are tax deductible. To learn more, contact **Kristen Gauché**, our development director, at kristeng@crisis-center.org.

24-Hour Numbers

Crisis: 800.833.2900	Grief: 800.837.1818	Homeless: 800.808.6444
Suicide: 800.273.TALK	Youth: 800.863.7600	Info & Referral: 211
Suicide: 800.SUICIDE	Child Abuse: 877.881.1116	Info & Referral: 800.830.5380
Suicidio: 888.SUICIDA	Elder Abuse: 877.839.4347	TTD/TTY: 925.938.0725

About This Newsletter

This newsletter is emailed monthly to Crisis Center donors, volunteers, former staff, and friends. To unsubscribe, send an email to admin@crisis-center.org.



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