



The Candle

Email News from the Contra Costa Crisis Center ■ January 2010

[211 Marketing Campaign](#)
[T.J. Long Foundation Grant](#)
[Crisis Line Training](#)
[800-SUICIDE Disposition](#)

[Success Story: Suicidal Caller](#)
[Diversity Film Series](#)
[Cultural Competency: Stereotype Threat](#)
[People in the News](#)

211 Marketing Campaign

Six of the largest health care providers in Contra Costa County are collaborating for the first time in history on a pilot project with the Contra Costa Crisis Center. The project's goal is to inform residents in eastern Contra Costa who recently lost health care coverage that options exist. All they have to do is call 211 for information... The broad-based marketing campaign kicks off this month. Special signs are now appearing in BART stations, on local buses, on shopping carts, on movie screens, and elsewhere promoting 211. All calls are routed to our agency, which provides 211 phone service in Contra Costa... The six health care providers are Contra Costa Health Services, Kaiser Permanente, John Muir Health, Sutter-Delta Medical Center, Planned Parenthood, and La Clinica. Kaiser Permanente is funding the campaign, and the materials were created by a marketing firm in Walnut Creek.

T.J. Long Foundation Grant

The Thomas J. Long Foundation recently granted \$25,000 to support our youth services program. This program consists of classroom presentations and community workshops on youth violence prevention, including youth suicide, bullying, cyber-bullying, and cutting. It also includes a special 24-hour youth crisis line that students and parents can call confidentially to report dangerous behavior. We then work with school administrators and, if necessary, the police to prevent it. For more information on the program, contact **LaShonda Taylor**, our youth services coordinator, at lashonda@crisis-center.org.

Crisis Line Training

Our latest crisis line training class starts January 11th. The class runs nine weeks and is in two separate parts. The first part consists of three weeks of classroom instruction on a variety of topics, including mental illness, child abuse, elder abuse, grief and loss, youth crisis, and cultural competency, as well as a full two-day suicide intervention skills training. Crisis Center staff are joined by guest speakers from the community to provide a rich, varied experience for new volunteers. The second part consists of six weeks of one-on-one training in our crisis line room with an experienced counselor. Initially, new volunteers learn about resources in the room and observe the counselor as he or she handles calls. Then the volunteer answers calls with the trainer right there to provide guidance and support... In addition to the training, every volunteer has a

free, one-hour mental health screening by an outside psychologist or therapist. The purpose of the screening is to make sure that prospective volunteers have the emotional stability to answer crisis calls and also that they can be as non-judgmental as possible. Twenty-two mental health professionals donate their time to provide this service.

800-SUICIDE Disposition

Until 10 years ago there was no national suicide hotline. Then, within a relatively short period of time, there were two: 800.273.TALK administered by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and 800.SUICIDE administered by a private agency. In 2006 the latter was on the verge of shutting down due to funding problems when SAMHSA stepped in and requested permission from the Federal Communications Commission to operate it as well. Temporary approval was granted, and recently this arrangement was made permanent. In the next few years SAMHSA will work with researchers to profile callers to each line to determine whether to retain both numbers or combine them. Preliminary indications are that suicidal seniors tend to be more comfortable calling the TALK number while suicidal youths call 800.SUICIDE. Our agency answers all local calls to both national hotlines, and has since they began.

Success Story: Suicidal Caller

A distraught woman called our crisis lines one evening recently. She had a spending addiction that ruined her and her first husband financially and led to their divorce. Now she had squandered \$2,000 that her second husband had given her to pay their rent and other bills. She felt embarrassed and disgraced, and feared how her second husband would react. When our counselor asked her if she was feeling suicidal, the woman said she was. She had a plan and the means to see it through; moreover, her young children were safe at a family member's house and she was thinking of killing herself that very night... Building rapport and connection, our counselor explored the caller's feelings and learned that she had a history of suicide attempts as well as an untreated mental illness. The counselor began working with the woman to create a safety plan. First, the counselor helped the woman understand that she had a compulsive spending addiction, and provided resources to address it. Next, our counselor discussed mental health treatment with the caller and gave her the number to county health services. Third, the counselor coached the caller on how to talk with her husband and family to garner their support and allow time for support services to kick in. The woman agreed with the plan and gave us permission to make follow-up calls to her during the next week... In our first follow-up call, the woman said that her husband had been supportive and relieved that she had resources for them to get help. She felt that some of her burden was lifted, and said that suicide no longer was her only option. In subsequent calls, she said that she had contacted a debtor's support group and consulted with a doctor. She was grateful for the time, support, and determination the Crisis Center gave her in keeping her safe. She said that she felt there was hope for her for the first time in a long time.

Diversity Film Series

Our diversity film series resumes this month. On Monday, January 18th Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, we will be showing *Meeting David Wilson*, an uplifting movie about two families, one black and one white, who discover that they share many of the same ancestors and stage a large

get-together of everyone. Refreshments and light snacks will be available at 6:30 p.m. with the movie starting at 7 p.m. Bring food to share if you can. After the movie there will be a facilitated conversation. For more information, contact **Roberto Almanzán**, our cultural competency coordinator, at robertoa@crisis-center.org.

Cultural Competency: Stereotype Threat

Says **Roberto Almanzán**, our cultural competency coordinator, “A social psychologist at Stanford University, **Claude Steele**, conducted a series of social experiments with groups composed of black and white students with similar SAT scores. Questions were taken from the Graduate Record Exam and presented to students as a test that measured intelligence. Consistently, the average test scores of black students were significantly lower than those of white students. When the same test was given to other students, however, who were told that this was a problem solving task that did not measure intellect, black students performed as well as whites. In another experiment, students were not told that the exam measured intelligence but were simply asked to indicate their race on the test. Again, the performance of black students was lower than whites. Steele called this phenomenon stereotype threat. He concluded that anything bringing up negative stereotypes—in this case that blacks aren’t as intelligent as whites—raises doubts and anxieties in individuals who identify with the group that is negatively stereotyped. The anxiety generated in black students could even be measured through increased body temperature, blood pressure, and heart rate during the test... Steele and other researchers have conducted similar studies with women. In one test, half the women were told that a math test they were taking had shown gender differences in the past. Subsequently, the women averaged lower scores than men. The other half of the women were told that the math test had shown no gender differences. These women’s scores were equal to those of their male counterparts. The instance of lower outcomes for the women reflected the negative stereotype that women are not as good at math or science as men. Steele speculated that a stereotype threat affects a general level of discomfort in racially mixed settings. Some whites can experience anxiety and stress if they fear that something they say or do will confirm the negative stereotype that whites are racist... Fortunately, there is evidence that some stereotype threats are diminishing. Over the past 20 years, more and more women are majoring and graduating in mathematics and science. More white people of all ages are working to diminish racism in our culture. The negative stereotype that blacks are intellectually inferior is negated every time President Obama speaks on television. A recent study, reported in *The New York Times*, showed that in a small sampling of students (under 500), blacks scored significantly lower than whites on tests administered during the presidential primaries but equal to whites on the same tests when they were given after Obama’s election. Other, larger studies are needed to track whether this positive outcome has continued; however, it gives one hope that the power of negative stereotypes can be diminished to the benefit of our diverse organizations and communities.”

People in the News

Carol Haig accepted our offer to be our second volunteer ombudsmen. She joins **Jane Emanuel** in representing volunteers on our program and ethics committee. Carol is a crisis line counselor, and Jane is both a crisis line and grief counselor... **Alice Breakstone, Ph.D.**, one of our mental health screeners, accepted an invitation to serve on our program and ethics committee. We welcome her perspective and insights... **Kevin W.** started as a crisis line volunteer in 2009.

During the year he worked 317.5 hours on our hotlines, which is close to a record. He also trained to become a grief counselor and donated additional time to this program... Our thoughts are with crisis line specialist **Joanna S.** Her husband was hospitalized recently and is recovering from a serious illness... Joanna replaced **Barbara W.**, who retired last August and moved up north. Barbara's house was jolted by the recent 6.5 earthquake off the coast, but fortunately there was no serious damage, unlike some other residences nearby... A number of people worked extra shifts in December, as well as answered crisis lines and 211 on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day. We're grateful to **Noah A., Audrey B., Chris B., Fred C., Kathleen C., Brooks E., Jane E., Carol H., Kevin H., Carol I., Laurie K., Anne M., Lorena S., Deborah S., Sharon S., Joanna S., Marina S., Inna T., Jesse W., and Kevin W.** for their service.

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.



CONTRA COSTA
CRISIS CENTER