

Summer 2019

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Seminar on Establishing Special Needs Trusts is Coming

By Liza Horvath



"I'm here to talk to you about my experience as the single mother of a mentally disabled adult child," her statement begins. The journey of any parent with a disabled adult child is usually a story about fear, frustration with "the system" that seems to stymie a loving parent at every turn and, finally, emergence of either hope or resignation.

Parents of children with mental illness want what all parents want for their children: to live in safety, work, learn and participate fully in their respective communities. It can be a very long and challenging journey for families. Since 1975, Interim, Inc., has worked tirelessly to help make that journey successful for many.

Interim has historically sought to engage leaders of our community to help support their mission and, as such, has assembled a panel of legal professionals who will present an in depth discussion into the private and governmental legal systems that can provide help to families in their effort to integrate and support their mentally ill child.

On **September 20, 2019, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.**, a Special Needs Trusts Seminar will take place at the Community Justice Center/Monterey College of Law. The panel discussion will be moderated by Frank Hespe, attorney and past Dean of Monterey College of Law. Presenters will include Christi McDonald, County Counsel / Public Guardian's Office; Steven Mudd, attorney; Liza Horvath, Licensed Professional Fiduciary and columnist; Honorable Vanessa Vallarta, Monterey County Superior Court judge; and Honorable Kay Kingsley (Ret.), Family Advocate and retired judge.

"I think in my son's journey over the past 19 years, we could have been helped by having the information such as this panel discussion will provide. Even with all I have been through on that journey, there is much I need to know. I am looking forward to hearing from our experts in the various fields that we have here today," the statement ends. "My Journey with a Mentally Disabled Adult Child" was written by the Honorable Kay Kingsley and will be presented in full at the September 20 panel presentation. We hope you will join us.

Liza Horvath has over 30 years' experience in the estate planning and trust fields and is a Licensed Professional Fiduciary. Liza currently serves as president of Monterey Trust Management. (831)646-5262 • liza@montereytrust.com

Attendance is free but registration is required.

Call (831) 649-4522, ext. 205

Or visit us online: www.interiminc.org/specialneedstrust

Patience and Persistence = Success in Housing Homeless

Carol, a woman in her 50s, was homeless in Seaside for almost 17 years.

Today she is finally housed in Interim's permanent housing, thanks to the work of Interim's MCHOME program. MCHOME, a program operated by Interim since 2002, provides homeless outreach and intensive integrated services and housing designed to get homeless persons with mental illness housed and to keep them housed.

MCHOME had done outreach to Carol for years. The MCHOME Community Support Worker, a peer who had once been homeless herself, and other outreach staff, had worked to engage Carol over the years. Although Carol had both visual and auditory hallucinations, she didn't see them as troubling and felt that they were a gift that allowed her to see into other dimensions. She didn't perceive that she had a mental illness and didn't want any treatment.

Carol usually lived in a park. She wouldn't part from an overloaded shopping cart that held all her belongings and so no motel would admit her. Eventually, through persistent and patient engagement, a MCHOME staff person got her to part with the shopping cart and helped her to decrease her belongings down to one rolling suitcase, provided by MCHOME.

With the suitcase instead of the shopping cart, MCHOME was able to place her temporarily into a motel. After a few months she was able to move into transitional housing operated by MCHOME. MCHOME also got Carol to agree to see a psychiatrist and she eventually was willing to take medication to decrease her symptoms. After less than 6 months, a spot became available in Interim's permanent housing, and Carol moved into her own room in a shared apartment.

Kevin Gast, MCHOME Program Director, was inspired by Carol's progress. He noted, "I think this goes to show how important peers are in outreaching people who are homeless. Patience and persistence are really important ingredients to be successful with people who have been homeless for many years."

MCHOME is funded through a contract with Monterey County Behavioral Health (MCBH) through the Mental Health Services Act and is supplemented by grants and donations. Thank you to the Community Foundation for Monterey County Fund for Homeless Women which provides Interim funds for motel vouchers for homeless women on the Monterey Peninsula. The success of MCHOME depends on this collaboration with MCBH and our generous donors.

Interim's Welcoming & Engagement Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) was formed in January 2019.

The team brings community-based mental health services to consumers who are underserved and unable to access or effectively utilize office-based treatment to meet their mental health needs.

ACT is a multidisciplinary team approach with assertive outreach in the community. The consistent, caring, person-centered relationships have a positive effect upon outcomes and quality of life.

"ACT is an evidence-based practice that improves outcomes for people with serious mental illness who are most at-risk of psychiatric crisis and hospitalization. ACT is one of the oldest and most widely researched evidence-based practices in behavioral healthcare for people with severe mental illness.

The ACT team reaches out to people who may otherwise miss out on the resources available to them that can ultimately break the cycle of isolation and hospitalization. I am particularly pleased that our ACT is comprised of culturally and linguistically appropriate staff members who serve Latinos and their family members in our community," according to Dr. Jane Odegard, Deputy Director of Interim, Inc.

For this vulnerable group of consumers, who are largely Latino, Chicano, and Hispanic residents of Salinas and South Monterey County, the ACT team assists them in attaining community stability and reaching their recovery and rehabilitation goals, including finding and keeping employment.

Priorities for the ACT team are to reduce consumer mental health and substance use symptoms, which will reduce utilization of involuntary care and emergency room visits. Other goals

include assisting with the clients' mental health recovery process and developing skills necessary to lead independent or interdependent, healthy and meaningful lives in the community.

The ACT team is comprised of multidisciplinary staff serving Latino, Chicano, or Hispanic clients and their families or other natural support systems. The ACT team maintains a low consumer-to-staff ratio so that the team can meet with clients at least three times per week.

"The ACT program has helped me understand how to manage my symptoms with techniques to do at home. I also see a doctor and nurse in their office. All the staff have been very helpful and welcoming. I set goals to improve myself in this program. They also help with rides to my appointments. We are managing my symptoms with medication and staff members with talking and letting things out." – ACT client.

CONTINUED ON BACK »

Inspiring Staff Win Extraordinary Awards

Three special awards were presented in memory of Dr. David Soskin at Interim's annual Mental Health Awareness Banquet in May.

The awards were established by Marian Penn and William Soskin in memory of their son, Dr. David Soskin, the late Monterey County Behavioral Health Medical Director. The family established the award because of David's commitment to Monterey County. He grew up here and hoped to make this his home. The award is a reflection of the deep satisfaction he felt when working with Monterey County Behavioral Health and Interim staff and clients. The award honors his compassionate spirit, his kindness, and his ability to mentor mental health professionals as well as the patients in his care.

David Penn Soskin, died June 6, 2018 while recovering from brain surgery and courageously battling depression. Deeply compassionate and a gifted psychiatrist, he brought healing energy and brilliance to so many. While serving for three years as Medical Director of the Behavioral Health Department in Monterey County, he was a mentor and teacher to doctors and staff, a friend to his patients, and especially committed to caring for the underserved.

The Compassionate Service Award was granted to Yvette Carreon, the Monterey County Behavioral Health Access Supervisor. Yvette was honored for her amazing work helping to encourage her team members to provide outstanding clinical services and her extraordinary compassion in work with both staff and clients.

In response to the receipt of the award, Yvette noted, "The first time I met Dr. Soskin he talked to me about a favorite quote he had which was "...whoever saves a life saves the world..." I then proceeded to look this up and posted it on my office wall and every time he would come in



Mario Ramirez, with Dr. Amie Miller, Director of Monterey County Behavioral Health and State Senator Bill Monning.

to talk with me, he would notice it and say that was beautiful. Dr. Soskin not only saved a life, he saved many lives. He made a difference in everyone's life, both clients and staff. He made this world a better place because of his compassion and unwavering determination to make positive changes. His spirit encourages all of us to pay it forward and give back to the people we serve.

The David Soskin Consumer Employee & Volunteer Inspiring Hope Honorarium was presented to two Interim Inc. employees, Mario Ramirez and Sue DeGraw. This award was to acknowledge the importance of people who have lived with mental illness and are working to give back and are using their story of recovery and hope to inspire others.

Mario Ramirez is a Wellness Navigator for Interim's Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team. His connection to Interim began as a client of Interim's Bridge House dual diagnosis transitional residential treatment program where he came to deal with substance use and mental health issues.

Dr. Dave Soskin was Mario's psychiatrist during this time and was instrumental in his care and recovery. Mario greatly respected Dave and he invited him to Bridge House so that he could see

his treatment progress. It was a great example of how a doctor and patient could partner together on the recovery journey.

Mario successfully graduated from Bridge House and moved into Shelter Cove, transitional housing program where he not only continued his recovery but supported his peers by working as a Community Support Worker with Interim's Success Over Stigma program. Mario used his story to help educate the public and combat the stigma of mental illness. He then moved to the Peer Partners for Health program, a collaboration with Monterey County Behavioral Health, where he worked in a county out-patient clinic to help welcome and engage peers coming for services.

Mario now works full-time, as the first Wellness Navigator completely dedicated to serving Latino consumers in the new Interim Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) program. Mario also serves as a consumer representative on the Monterey County Behavioral Health Commission.

Mario noted, "I am truly honored to receive the David Soskin award. He was an inspiration to me on how to care for others. He gave me my first book on depression and since that day it made



Bridge House celebrates first full year in new location

"He was standing at the curb waving his arms and loudly talking to the mail box. As I drove by, he began to yell louder, and his hand movements became grander and broader. He obviously had some kind of mental health or substance use issue. I just turned the corner and kept going," a friend confessed to me.

While walking in downtown Monterey or Salinas, one often sees individuals like the one my friend described. According to the most recent report on homelessness in Monterey County, nearly 25 percent of homeless adults self-report that they have "PTSD" or "some other mental health problem." There is a place operated by Interim Inc. that helps individuals with mental illness and alcohol or substance use issues learn tools to manage symptoms of both.

Bridge House, which is celebrating its first full year in their new location, is a transitional residential treatment program for adults with co-occurring serious mental illnesses and substance use disorders. Staff utilize the evidenced-based practice of Motivational Interviewing in providing counseling services and other support to 14 clients, 24 hours, seven days a week in a non-institutional setting. Each resident stays for a period of approximately six months and focuses on mental health wellness while learning skills of substance use recovery. Residents also work to improve symptom management, personal, social and family functioning. The Bridge House program is licensed by the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing as a social

rehabilitation facility and certified by the Department of Healthcare Services for transitional residential treatment.

The highly successful program which opened in their current location in May of 2018, has served a total of 43 residents in its first year of operation. This beautiful \$3.3 million building was designed and built specifically to serve adults who are dually diagnosed with serious mental illness and alcohol or drug use issues.

Where were the residents before they came to Bridge House?

- 15% were homeless with no identifiable residence
- 33% came from a house or apartment
- 8% came from a justice-related facility (such as juvenile hall, California Youth Authority or a correctional facility or jail)
- 15% were housed in an adult residential facility or crisis residential, transitional residential or drug/alcohol facility
- Others came from a skilled nursing facility, a residential treatment center, or a 24-hour mental health rehabilitation center.

How long do residents stay in Bridge House?

Most clients stay in Bridge House for 3-6 months, others stay 7-12 months. In the last year, a few clients stayed less than 60 days. All clients were discharged voluntarily.

What kinds of mental illnesses are treated at Bridge House?

Bridge House clients are primarily on the schizophrenia disorder spectrum (37%) or diagnosed with bipolar disorder (30%). Other clients exhibited depressive disorder, or schizoaffective disorders that are either bipolar or depressive in nature.

What are the co-occurring substance use issues?

More than half of Bridge House's clients were using amphetamines or other stimulants prior to their admission. Twenty five percent of Bridge House clients were alcohol users, the rest used cannabis, opioids or other drugs. Ninety percent of Bridge House residents kept clean and sober during their stay at Bridge House.

Where did the residents go when discharged after their stay at Bridge House?

Most residents (32%) moved from Bridge House to the neighboring Shelter Cove Transitional Housing, where they can continue to work on their mental health and sobriety. Others moved in temporarily or permanently with family or friends or were discharged to an emergency shelter or motel; some were discharged to a medical facility or Interim's Manzanita House, which supports individuals in mental health crisis. One resident became incarcerated. Ninety four percent of Bridge House clients were discharged to a lower level of care.

No residents of Bridge House were hospitalized for psychiatric issues during their stay at Bridge House! And when residents of Bridge House continue their recoveries after their stay, whether by moving back home or continuing recovery at Shelter Cove, they are physically healthier than when they arrived. Besides learning skills to remain sober and reconnect to friends and family, Bridge House residents are connected to a primary care physician who treats their physical symptoms which may have caused or been aggravated by their substance use. Bridge House is improving the health of vulnerable adults in Monterey County. Congratulations to the staff and residents of Bridge House on their outstanding work this first year at their new location! You all are making a difference!

Thank you to our Generous Donors!

We apologize for omitting a donor on our last list: Thank you for your faithful support Ms. Christina Holston! Listed below are donations received between March 1, 2019 and July 31, 2019. Your kind gifts help bring Housing, Healing, and Hope to Interim's clients. THANK YOU!

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Look at What Your Donations Are Doing!

Shelter Cove renovations are happening! Two units have been completed and are occupied, with the remainder to be finished by the end of this year! This project was the "BIG IDEA" proposed by Interim, Inc. last year for the MCGIVES campaign, which is a special project of Monterey County Weekly, the Community Foundation for Monterey County, and the Monterey Peninsula Foundation. With their support, and because of generous donations from individuals and other foundations, we are adding 7 beds of transitional housing to our Shelter Cove program in Marina.



The addition of a ground-floor bedroom and full bath, along with the completely remodeled kitchens in each of the 7 units provides housing options for our clients who may have difficulty with stairs. This will increase our ability to serve the number of clients seeking Housing, Healing and Hope. Many Shelter Cove residents are formerly homeless and are working to remain clean and sober, and housed.

If you are interested in supporting this project, we are still approximately \$30,000 short of our goal. Please indicate on your donations that you wish to support the "Shelter Cove Remodel" project. Thank you.

Extraordinary Awards

CONTINUED



Sue DeGraw,
with Dr. Armie
Miller, Director of
Monterey County
Behavioral
Health and State
Senator Bill
Monning.

me feel that doctors really do care.”

Sue DeGraw, another Consumer Employee and Volunteer Inspiring Hope award winner, came to Interim in 2005 as a homeless client of MCHOME. Prior to entering MCHOME, Sue often slept in trees in order to protect herself.

Sue successfully completed the MCHOME program and wanted to support other consumers, so she went to work for MCHOME. For over 11 years, Sue has been employed as Community Support Worker in the MCHOME program, assisting other homeless people in their recovery. She knows many homeless people by first name. She loves doing outreach on the streets and is thrilled when she can help homeless people move into housing. She is compassionate, kind and unassuming. Sue is an unsung hero of homeless and mentally ill consumers who are reaching for recovery!

Sue noted, “I was very surprised and deeply honored, that I also received the David Soskin award. I do try to spread hope to everyone I meet.”

Interim is honored to work with the family of Dr. Soskin to keep his memory alive.

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)

CONTINUED

According to Gabriela Rangel, Admin Assistant II and Counselor I for the ACT team, “Clients are appreciative of the program and surprised by the type of work we all do; wearing different hats and communicating with each other about upcoming appointments and monitoring clients’ progress. We had a client waiting in our office who was surprised to see how we were all running around, communicating, and re-adjusting our schedule to help her get to her appointment on time.”

The ACT program operates during the day and evening, as well as provides a 24/7 on-call service. It’s available to adults who live in Salinas and South Monterey County with serious mental illness and serious functioning impairments, new to services, not engaged with services, and/or for those who have difficulty connecting to system’s services due to psychosocial and other barriers.

When asked what stands out as a service the ACT program provides that has significant impact, Gabriela states, “I think of when we first meet our clients and their family members, seeing the relief we provide them when they hear about our program. The client’s mental health symptoms have put such a strain on their relationships that the family members get a huge sense of relief and hope when they hear what services ACT provides; like help with transportation and a Psychiatrist and nurse on site when needed. I find this really impactful because this is part of the advocacy and education we need to provide to help family members better understand their loved one’s symptoms. The ACT team also teaches family members effective non-violent communication to help boost clients’ self-esteem, self-worth, and repair personal relationships. I find that the client is more engaged and accepting of their mental health when they receive the support from their family members.”

The Monterey County Behavioral Health system refers clients into the system and can be reached at 888-258-6029.