

PORTALS pathways

turning lives around since 1955

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Portals' Rising Stars Grace the Red Carpet and Shine at the Member Recognition Luncheon

Klieg lights. A long red carpet. Pomp and circumstance. Honorees and



Event emcees Brenda James and Chuck Woodruff share a light-hearted moment with Mariposa Clubhouse Employment Specialist/Supervisor of the Employment Team Sean Foster on the red carpet entry to Portals' Annual Member Recognition Luncheon.

guests arriving for the recognition ceremony. The Academy Awards? The Emmys? The Grammys? None of the above. It was Portals' annual member recognition event – Rising Stars – when 96 members earned honors in seven categories: Sobriety, Independent Living, Employment, Volunteerism, Education, Leadership and Special Achievement.

In pageantry often associated with such celebrity events as the Academy Awards and the Emmys, the honorees were welcomed by event emcees and fellow award winners, Brenda James and Chuck Woodruff, at St. Anne's on the afternoon of Friday, October 27, 2006. Dressed in white formal attire, with microphones in hand, Brenda and Chuck cheerfully greeted the honorees, congratulating them on their accomplishments and invited them to express their feelings in being honored. As an



Among the interviews Brenda and Chuck conducted on the red carpet was one with Community Connections Clubhouse member John B (center).

arriving member put it, "This is greater than the Academy Awards!"

As honorees, staff and guests entered the dining room, they were greeted by the music of Portals' member Robert "Cool Breeze" Dedeau, a classically-trained guitarist whose selections included jazz, rhythm and blues, and rock. During lunch, entertainment was provided by rhythm and soul vocalists, 4.U.Only, followed by a stellar program that not only featured the award presentations, but the talent of Portals members.

Ranae Hosea, President of the Member Council and seeking a career in peer coun-

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Portals' Member Employment Awardees

- Julie B
- Shirley B
- John C
- Ruth H
- Brenda J
- Shanandral K
- Troi K
- Ray L
- Annie M
- Lisa M
- Gina Marie P
- Philip R
- Brenda R
- Afra S
- Theresa S
- Alvina S
- Sandra T

Ruth Credits Employment in Her Recovery



Employee. Student. Volunteer. Mother. Advocate. All are roles that Ruth plays with enthusiasm and dedication. Only five years ago, however, Ruth was suffering from deep depression after her mother's death. She was homeless and unable to continue working. Ruth came to Portals, and, after treatment and support, is back at work, providing assistance with household chores to elderly people unable to remain safely in their homes without aid. Ruth finds her work rewarding. "I feel that I am making a difference in their lives," she says.

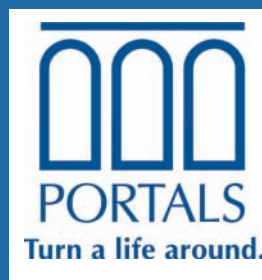
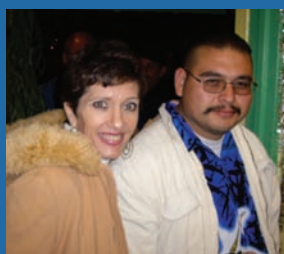
"Portals lifted me up and strengthened me after my mother passed away. The most important thing is knowing that you need help and to be lucky enough to find those who can help you." At Portals, Ruth works with case

worker Sharon Walker and other staff, and is involved in many of the programs at Portals' Community Connections Clubhouse in South Los Angeles. When she sees potential in other members, she lets them know. "We can all make a difference by encouraging others," Ruth says assuredly.

Ruth is an enthusiastic motivational speaker at Portals' Job Club, where she and other employed members share their job skills and work experiences with members seeking training and employment. She enjoys the weekly socialization programs at Community Connections Clubhouse, citing the recent visit of the Tuskegee Airmen as an appropriate way to celebrate Black History Month.

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recovery • wellness • reintegration



“Employment Plays a Vital Role in Recovery”

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO



Jim Balla

This edition of Pathways focuses on employment and its importance in helping persons with severe and persistent mental illness in their recovery and in improving the quality of their lives.

In “The State of the Union for People with Disabilities,” a recent report provided by the National Organization on Disability, the issue of employment for persons with disabilities is raised: “Only 35% of Americans with disabilities of working age are employed full- or part-time. That number is in con-

trast to 78% of Americans without disabilities.” The report continues: “It is a national tragedy that so many years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which promised to remove barriers to employment, the vast majority of Americans with disabilities remain unemployed.”

According to Deborah Becker, Ph.D., a research professor at Dartmouth Medical School and a national expert on employment issues with the mentally ill: “Helping people with mental illness find work can be a major step in their recovery and an important part in helping them develop a healthy psychological life.” Dr. Becker’s comments are echoed by her professional colleague, John Brekke, Ph.D., Associate Dean of Research at the USC School of Social Work, who states: “For

people with severe mental illness, research findings indicate that improvements in employment outcomes are often linked to improvements in both self-esteem and satisfaction with life. This makes employment a key ingredient in recovery.”

For more than 52 years, Portals has advanced the key principles of psychosocial rehabilitation – including meaningful employment – blended with best practices in clinical interventions to help each of our members in developing their individualized care plans for recovery, wellness, and reintegration back into the community.

At Portals, staff in our Employment and Education Services Program are making a significant difference in the lives of our members, and our outcomes prove it. For example, Portals’ members are employed in forty-three different local companies and members represent 25% of Portals’ total

agency work force. In Portals’ AB2034 program, 35% of enrolled members achieve employment, in contrast to only 20% of enrolled members for other mental health services agencies in California.

I invite you to enjoy this edition of Pathways, and to read about the courageous men and women – including Chuck, Ray and Ruth – who have taken the steps to prepare for and gain meaningful employment. I am confident you will be heartened – as we are on a daily basis – by their achievements.

At Portals, each of us is dedicated to our brand slogan: “Turn a life around!” We hope that you will be inspired by the articles presented on our employment program – as well as our many other initiatives – and will support us in our important efforts. Thank You!

Portals’ Intern Program

Portals’ Intern Program gives university students pursuing an advanced degree or licensure in social work the opportunity to develop social work and clinical skills by working directly with severely and persistently mentally ill consumers. Interns gain valuable experience and perspectives from working directly with experienced clinicians and paraprofessionals, which in turn, complement their classroom work.

At Portals, the Intern Program is growing in response to great interest and need. Interns are placed in the setting appropriate to their interest and agency need. Currently, there are four active interns. Erin Johnson and Vincy Lee are first year students from USC, working in the Transitional Age Youth (TAY) and Community Living Programs under the supervision of Yvette Willock, LCSW at the Wilshire Clubhouse Recovery and Wellness Center. Geraldine Gomez and David Barrera are second year students from California State University Los Angeles and are supervised by Betsy Phillips, Ph.D., Clinical Project Manager for the USC



Portals’ Intern Program for 2006 – 2007 (from left to right): David Barrera, Geraldine Gomez, Vincy Lee and Erin Johnson

research project.

Portals supports interns in getting experience in the area of mental health. Interns develop their therapeutic counseling skills by interacting directly with members while under expert staff supervision. The first year student interns work with Portals 16 hours a week during the school year from early September to the end of April. The second year student interns work for

20 hours a week for the same period of time.

The interns spend one academic year at Portals and one year at a different social service provider, in order to broaden their training experience. After completing this rigorous two year program, Erin, Vincy, Geraldine and David will be well on their way to successfully achieving their Masters Degree in Social Work (MSW).

Ruth

(continued from page 1)

Family is important to Ruth, and she remains close to her three grown sons. “I realized after coming to Portals that my mother would want me to succeed.” To help her achieve that success, Community Connections linked Ruth to the Los Angeles Trade Technical College’s Disabled Student Center for enrollment in classes that will improve her study skills. Ruth also attends Manual Arts Adult School, where she is pursuing her high school diploma, with plans to become a dental assistant. “I had tried to achieve this goal some time ago when I enrolled at Pacific Coast College,” confessed Ruth, “but did not succeed at that time. Portals has taught me to never give up, so I’m trying again.”

Ruth works 25-30 hours a week, goes to school, and tirelessly serves Portals’ members and others asking for help. “My employment keeps me focused; easing the day-to-day coping, but Portals has taught me that I must take care of my own mental health first.” Portals’ staff and programs have given Ruth the opportunity for the help she needs; she wishes the same opportunity for others.

Member Recognition Luncheon

(continued from page 1)

selling, performed a reading of her poetry. Ranae’s performance was followed by a high-energy and reflective skit performed by Portals members, entitled “I Survived,” humorously depicting the chaos and turbulence often encountered when seeking treatment and support in the mental health system. The moral? Portals is the answer!

Receiving the Special Achievement

Award, Annie McMillan and Gary Nollins – whose remarkable stories were carried in previous editions of Pathways – offered powerful and inspiring testimonials.

Portals’ President and CEO Jim Balla shared in the awards presentation along with staff members Sandy Escobar, Edna Mercorios, Anna Aithal, Victoria Onwualu and Jana Plasters. As Jim reminded all who were present, “Today, we take time to celebrate and honor 96 awardees in seven categories for their individual

“This is greater than the Academy Awards!”

and collective achievements. We honor and respect your courage in setting and pursuing your goals. Your accomplishments truly inspire all of us.” Jim thanked emcees Brenda and Chuck, and expressed how privileged he feels to be a part of what is always a rewarding occasion. Jim continued, “There is a Latin expression that I feel symbolizes each of your individual

paths to recovery and wellness, obtaining the quality of life that each and every one of you so justly deserve. This expression also compliments today’s theme ‘Rising Stars.’ It is Per Aspera, Ad Astra – Through difficulties to the stars.”

The afternoon concluded with a vocal performance by minister and Portals member Vickie Clark. Brenda thanked everyone and reminded all in attendance, “It’s all about the members.”

Laura Pancake: Making Member Employment a Priority

Laura Pancake is a champion of employment at Portals. Her goal is to make employment a reality for all consumers. “Employment is the ultimate vehicle for community integration,” she says with conviction.

For the past eight years, Laura Pancake, LCSW, has served in important program positions at Portals with a focus on pre-employment training and job development and placement services. From June of 1998 through April of 2003, she served as Program Director, supervising two psychosocial rehabilitation clubhouse programs and overseeing two agency-run businesses – The Corporate Cookie and Workforce Unlimited.

Laura’s focus has always been the implementation of new programs and groups addressing the employment and socialization needs of members. As Director of Programs, Laura led Portals’ Program Directors in accordance with contracts, policies, procedures and guidelines established by the CEO and Board of Directors, while ensuring program staff development through appropriate clinical training.

As Director of Employment Services – a position she has held since December of 2004 – Laura oversees the Employment Services Program for the entire agency and continues to ensure ongoing staff development through training that is focused on consumer employment.



Laura Pancake

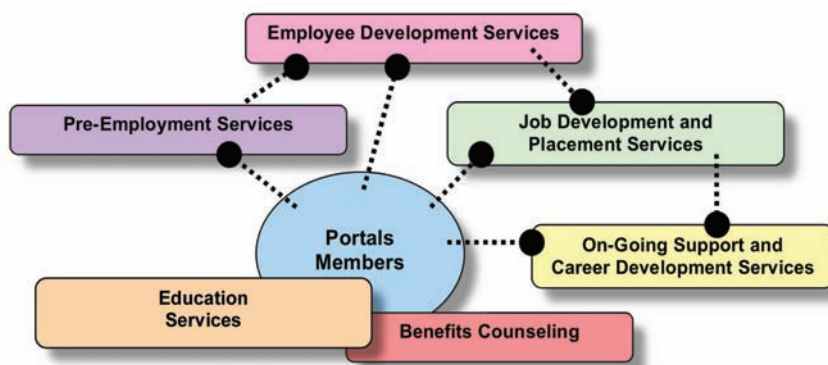
“Aside from personal fears and insecurities, the greatest barrier to employment among mental health consumers is a lack of knowledge about employment opportunities and resources, both for consumers and service providers,” Laura states emphatically. She strongly believes that “service providers must hold high hopes and

expectations for consumers when exploring employment opportunities,” and is quick to point out that Portals’ AB2034 Program achieves employment outcomes at a rate that is often as much as 15% higher than the averages for Los Angeles County. Portals’ education outcomes are consistently higher as well. Contributing to this accomplishment is the hard work of the managers in the AB2034 Program, who explore the interests consumers have in employment and make employment resources available during the initial intake process. This makes the possibility of employment a top priority from the moment the consumer enters the program. “Employment must be made a priority within the system, and the non-employment staff must be trained in employment issues. The AB2034 Program is doing this with great success.” Laura emphasizes it is important that employment staff participate in team meetings and collaborate with service coordinators on a regular basis, and declares, “Portals is dedicated to empowering program staff to become Champions of Employment for our members!”

Portals’ Culture of Employment

- More than 25% of Portals’ 200-person staff are mental health consumers.
- Employment services are available to all Portals members in all programs.
- The value of work is emphasized to all members.
- Employment outcomes are used in the agency-wide strategic planning process.
- Clinical staff not directly involved in providing employment services are trained on them.

Portals’ Employment and Education Services



Phases of Portals’ Employment and Education Services

A key principle in psychosocial rehabilitation is productive activity and work. In line with this core value, co-located at each of Portals’ Recovery and Wellness Centers is a full continuum of Employment and Education Services. The goal of Portals’ Employment and Education Services program is to ensure that each member is presented with the concept that work is a key component to recovering a meaningful and fulfilling life, that they do have the ability to work, and that they can receive whatever assistance is necessary to obtain and maintain a job that matches their interests, skills, and abilities. The phases of employment services offered at each Center include Pre-Employment, Employee Development, Job Development and Placement, and On-Going Support and Career Development. Members may

enter the program at any phase based on their individual needs and interests.

During the Pre-Employment Services Phase of the program, members are provided with an opportunity to explore the world of work and begin addressing the questions and concerns that commonly arise when individuals decide that they would like to establish an employment goal. Members meet both individually and in groups to work on issues such as assertiveness training, grooming and hygiene, career exploration, and the development of resumes and job applications.

Members who chose to participate in the Employee Development Services Phase of the program prepare to move into competitive employment in the community by working in paid transition positions at Portals or its social enterprise – Workforce Unlimited.

Members may be employed part- or full-time in a variety of positions, including receptionist, courier, custodian, office service worker or food service worker. Through working in paid transition employment positions, members improve their soft work skills, including effective communication with co-workers and supervisors, punctuality and time management, and the ability to follow through on and complete projects.

During the Job Development and Placement Services Phase of the program, members work one-on-one with an Employment Specialist and a Job Developer, who assist them with preparing a resume, completing applications, conducting mock interviews, finding job opportunities that match their skills and interests, and applying for jobs in the community. Members also participate in regular group discussions with peers who are also applying for jobs in order to address their fears and questions regarding working.

The final element of the program, the On-Going Support and Career Development Services Phase, is available to members who have secured employment in the community. These members are provided with ongoing support – at their work site, in the community, or at the program – to help them retain their job. They are also offered career development counseling if they wish to advance beyond

their current position or find a better job. This includes assistance with obtaining necessary skills and training or negotiations with the member’s employer.

A critical component of the Employment and Education Services program – addressed throughout all phases – is Benefits Counseling. In order to overcome their fears of working and potentially losing their benefits, members must continually be educated regarding how their earnings affect their benefits and receive reassurance that they are able to maintain their benefits while working, if they choose.

Education Services are also offered at each Center. Members who are interested in attending school are assisted by an education coordinator with identifying the school environment that best meets their needs and securing the resources to enroll, including tuition and supplies. After members have begun to attend classes, they receive ongoing supported education services from their service coordinator. For members who are not yet ready to access community education services, each Center incorporates an Adult Education Learning Center staffed daily by a Los Angeles Unified School District credentialed instructor. In the Learning Center, members may work on basic literacy and math skills or prepare for their GED.

Tribute to Marv Weinstein: a True Champion of Employment

Family, friends and professional colleagues of Marv Weinstein, Portals' former President and CEO, gathered for a memorial service at the Skirball Cultural Center on November 3, 2006. Jim Balla, Portals' current President and CEO, told guests in his opening message that, “We’ve come together to share our final farewell to a good friend, a respected colleague, and a champion for the mentally ill. Marv was one of a handful of pioneers who focused on rehabilitating the whole person, not just their mental illness.”

Judy and Karen Weinstein, Marv's daughters, thanked the guests for their attendance, with Judy offering: “We are very grateful for the support Portals has given us through these difficult times. Portals was our Dad's heart and soul and, thankfully, his legacy continues through all the good work that all of you do. In many ways, my Dad was the kind everyone wants. He was creative, fun, active and an inspiration in the work he did. I learned a lot from him.” Judy and Karen then read messages from friends and associates not present. Among these was Marshall Rubin, who wrote, “We were able to be creative at a time when paperwork was secondary and program innovation primary, but also at a time when our professional interests and friendships dovetailed into a lifetime of sharing, fun, and concern for each other”.

Susan Mandel, President and CEO of Pacific Clinics, spoke of the innovative programs Marv created for treatment and support of Portals'

“Marv was one of a handful of pioneers who focused on rehabilitating the whole person, not just their mental illness.”

— Jim Balla

members. “Marv was convinced that there was no problem that couldn't be solved in some practical way to assure that Portals' members could succeed.”

Bruce Saltzer, Executive Director of ACHSA, remarked, “I am not afraid to say that I loved Marv Weinstein. I loved his passion. I loved his kindness. I loved his concern for others in need. I loved his incredible sense of humor. I loved his tremendous advocacy and willingness to pursue what was right, regardless of how others would react. And, perhaps most of all, I loved his friendship.”

Lea Champion, former Director of Volunteers and Director of Vocational Services, Training and Placement, described a time when hospitals were closing down, with the mentally ill placed in board and care because there was no funding for community programs. “If you have lemons, make lemonade! That was Marv's philosophy,” she said. At one point, Marv created Socials on Saturday (SOS). “Marv was determined to reach out to Portals' members and mental health clients who needed to feel that life is fun,” Lea recalled. “He told me to go out and find a place and get the volunteers. I found a church and enlisted the board and care workers



Roy Marshall (above), President and CEO of the Child and Family Guidance Center, proudly wears “The Firm” cap as he reminisces about Marv Weinstein (inset) and his fun side as founder of this social group of mental health professionals.

and student volunteers. We had food and music and everybody danced. Marv played the guitar and sang, and a good time was had by all. Marv was a man who was truly connected to a cause”

Dr. Lili Hodis, Portals' former Intake Supervisor, then Psychiatric Director, told of the contagious effect of Marv's enthusiasm. “He infected you with the feeling that you could do anything. I came to Portals fresh out of USC with a Masters in Social Work, and today I am a psychoanalyst!” Lili also recalled the lack of funds in early days, including the desperate monthly search for rent money. “Marv always made sure that the staff got paid and the members were served.”

Roy Marshall, President and CEO of the Child and Family Guidance Center, made a tongue-in-cheek presentation of the secret of Marv's success. “Marv,” stated Marshall, “was the Founder of ‘The Firm’”. Roy was then joined by other “Firm” members Elizabeth Pfromm, Executive Director of the Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic, and Carl McCraven, founder and Chief Financial Officer of the Hillview Mental Health Center. This illustrious group met regularly in Las Vegas. “Sitting around the blackjack table we would pool our money,” Marshall offered, “but nobody ever won! As the cards were placed on the table Marv would say, ‘Oh, The Firm doesn't like that card.’” Placing a cap, inscribed “The Firm,” on his head, Marshall continued, “We had hats, shirts and business cards to intimidate people. But no one was ever intimidated.” Dr. Eva McCraven, President and CEO of Hillview, and Carl McCraven's wife, proudly admitted to being a “Firm Groupie.”

Firm member Ian Hunter, Executive Director of the San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center added, “Heading for Las Vegas, where ‘The Firm’ ruled, Marv drove with gusto. It was like being on Mr. Toad's wild ride”. Ian paused for a moment, and then with a feigned somber tone declared, “Marv was not a father figure to me!” It was a humorous conclusion to an afternoon that underscored Marv's belief that people need to have fun.

Chuck Woodruff: A Tower of Inspiration

Chuck Woodruff is a tower of inspiration. Tall. Confident. Recovering. A talented public speaker and event emcee. Chuck has come a long way toward recovery in less than four years, since coming to Portals from jail in downtown Los Angeles. Over six foot four inches tall, he praises Portals and its staff, who have helped him toward his goal of becoming a counselor to others.

Chuck began abusing drugs and alcohol to ease the symptoms of an undiagnosed bi-polar disorder. “I came to Los Angeles from Dallas (in 2002) to celebrate my birthday, but, without resources, I ended up on Skid Row. Not long after that, I was in jail. Out of nowhere two guys attacked me, and I fought back hard.” Chuck knocked his attackers to the ground, and was arrested for assault. “Later, witnesses said that I was wrongfully attacked and forced to defend myself,



On December 6, 2006, Chuck Woodruff represented Portals at South Los Angeles' inaugural “Project Homeless Connect Day,” in which he distributed blankets and toiletries to those who stopped by his booth.

so the judge placed me on probation and sent me to a facility to treat my suspected dual diagnosis.”

That facility couldn't provide the help he needed, and Chuck returned to Skid Row, leading to another arrest in

2003 for violating probation. Fortunately, a sympathetic judge reinstated his probation. Additionally, he was referred to Portals.

“Bink (AB2034 Program counselor Robert Fiese) interviewed me and told me about Portals, where I would be able to address my personal issues and get the help I needed.” Case workers Sean and Gillian brought Chuck to Portals' Central Access Office. He was placed in

a Portals apartment, and enrolled in the Twin Peaks Dual Diagnosis program. Chuck often missed treatment, which resulted in eviction from his apartment. Sean helped Chuck find homeless services in downtown Los

Angeles, but finally, exhausted from life in the streets and self-medication, Chuck returned to Twin Peaks, grateful that Portals' staff would never abandon hope for him. “It was on November 24, 2003 that I made the decision to receive help. Terry, Herb, Martay, Jack and Daryl became my family and support system.” Chuck graduated from Twin Peaks, found a new apartment and a new job, and resumed working toward his goal of becoming a peer counselor.

Chuck meets with his therapist, Jessica, every day and his AB2034 program counselor twice a week. He is presently enrolled in a Dual Diagnosis Peer Counselor Training Program, and looks forward to repaying the society that has supported him as he moves toward a new and productive life. Chuck always ends conversations with a sincere, “You have a blessed day.”

Dinalba Vega Brings Enthusiasm and Skilled Counseling to Portals' Central Access Services Center



First impressions are so important. That is especially true at Portals' Central Access Services Center where potential new clients make their first contact with Portals. So, it is most fitting and appropriate that Portals employs Dinalba "Dina" Vega, MFT Intern,* as its Central Intake Unit Coordinator at the Center. Friendly and enthusiastic, Dina effectively assesses the

needs of new clients and places them in mental health programs – at Portals or other local agencies – appropriate for them. Dina brings many talents and experiences to her job, all of which benefit the potential new clients. She is a skilled counselor, has a thorough knowledge of Portals' programs, and has worked with other mental health service providers. Most importantly, she is skilled at triage – the process of sorting mentally ill clients into groups with common needs for immediate medical or mental health treatment.

"A person who has severe mental illness and has had multiple hospitalizations will be referred to Portals' Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Program," Dina says. "If they are homeless and on probation and suffering from a mental illness, they will be referred to the AB2034 Program. If they are homeless, with a dual-diagnosis and on probation, the

best place for them may be the No-Fail Program."

"We are not focused on the number of new clients we take in," said Dina, "but rather the number of clients who we feel can benefit most from staying in the program and receive the specific services they need to reintegrate back into society or return to their families."



Dinalba Vega, Central Access Services' Central Intake Unit Coordinator, is always hard at work making sure new clients are placed in the appropriate Portals program or referred to another.

In addition to providing information and referral services, Dina maintains an active caseload in Portals' Cal-WORKs program, in which members receive counseling, medication support, and life skills development in addition to vocational and employment services.

Before coming to Portals, Dina was an Adult Developmentally Disabled Therapist and Children's Program Therapist for ALMA Family Services, and a Bilingual Family Therapist at Pacific Clinics' Sierra Family Center. Dina graduated from the University of Phoenix, with a Master's degree in Psychotherapeutic Counseling with specialization in Marriage and Family Therapy. She is presently pursuing a Doctorate in psychology at Southern California University for Professional Studies.

* IMF# 40516 (Supervised by Danealia Maretka, LMFT# MFC34509)

Portals offers weekly agency-wide orientations

For potential members interested in receiving mental health services, Portals' informal orientation presentations are held every Tuesday at 1 p.m. at the Community Connections Clubhouse, and every Thursday at 1 p.m. in the auditorium at Mariposa Clubhouse. For more information, please call (323) 290-4378 (CCN) or (213) 639-2660 (Mariposa).

The Role of Employment In Recovery

- Reduces fear and social isolation
- Relieves symptoms
- Reduces stigma and discrimination
- Improves self-esteem
- Leads to true integration into the community

Ray uses work and faith to aid his recovery

Ray came to Portals two years ago, referred there by his probation program. Diagnosed with schizophrenia paranoia, Ray sought treatment to stay out of trouble. "I was hearing voices, and I wouldn't take my medications," Ray admits. "But you need to want the help Portals is there to provide."

As a part of his early training and experience at Portals, Ray joined the maintenance crew and developed valuable skills. After awhile, Ray began to volunteer at the Mariposa Clubhouse, applying his skills and helping to train others in maintenance. He recognized the importance of training and experience in helping to attain your goals in life. "Most people want to start at the top, not understanding that you have to start at the bottom and take baby steps before you can run," Ray insists thoughtfully.

For the past year, Ray has been doing maintenance work one day a week at a Hollywood restaurant. "My goal is to work up to more days," Ray asserts confidently. Restaurant co-owners



Denise and Betty appreciate Ray's efforts and say: "Ray works really hard, does his job, and never complains. We love him!"

Ray is a practicing Muslim and credits his faith with providing him perspective and understanding. "Everything you get comes from the earth and that's where we return," he offers with quiet assurance. He personally feels that while technology has advanced, man's behavior has not. "We are all fighting for peace while shooting at each other," he says. Ray has found the camaraderie at the Islamic Center in Los Angeles that he also finds at Portals.

He points out that Portals serves all nationalities and provides everyone with the opportunity for recovery. Ray works with a dedicated Portals team: Employment Team Supervisor, Sean Foster; Job Developer, Robert Rudder; and Employment Specialist, Yvita Montgomery. His case management includes personal budget and finance training, computer training and basic living skills. "Portals takes care of the whole person," he says.

Currently residing in a board and care facility, Ray is acquiring the life management skills necessary to eventually move into his own apartment. Sean Foster believes he will soon reach his independent housing goals as well as increase the number of days he works. Ray is proud of his employment. "The one thing I really like about my job is that the two ladies who own the restaurant thank me personally at the end of the day and let me know they really appreciate my work," he says, "and I receive the same appreciation from Portals' staff and members. It keeps me motivated to be the best I can be."

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Thank you for helping turn lives around.

We are deeply grateful to our donors whose support is essential to our success in serving our members.

July 1, 2006 to April 30, 2007

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In memory of Shirley Weiss-Bay

Ms. Marion S. Needelman

(If we have inadvertently omitted your name, we deeply apologize. Please let us know and we will include your name in our next newsletter. Thank you.)

Lend a Helping Hand to Our Members!

Every day, Portals' program

staff support members in their recovery, using a blended clinical and psychosocial rehabilitation model. On a 24/7 basis, Portals' program staff use a "whatever it takes" approach to providing support and services for members. And the results are impressive for our members, who show great progress in their recovery.

Among the key ingredients in the recovery process are Portals' socialization programs that give members opportunities to enjoy recreational activities, form new friendships, and celebrate special occasions with meals and festivities.

Additionally, for Portals' Transitional Age Youth (between 18 and 21 years old), the agency provides extra services and supports – beyond what are reimbursed through contracts – that help these young adults meet their basic needs. Tuition and textbooks for those in school. Educational and/or



cultural field trips. Rental assistance for the first apartment. Co-payments for medical treatments. Clothing. Food.

We invite you to lend a helping hand to our members by supporting our socialization programs and/or special services and supports for our Transitional Age Youth. Please refer to the contribution envelope in this edition of Pathways and consider making a donation today. \$100, \$50, \$25, \$500 or more. Any amount will be appreciated. Your tax-deductible, charitable contribution will help us to help our members in their on-going efforts to turn their lives around!

Award Winning Agency DVD Now Available

Portals' 2007 Agency DVD, developed in partnership with Topic Productions, has received multiple honors. Presenting the agency's new brand, "Turn a life around," the DVD won two Awards of Distinction and two Awards of Excellence at the 13th International Communicator Awards. In addition, the DVD was nominated as a finalist at the New York Film Festival, one of the most prestigious competitions in the film and video industry.

The DVD, which recounts Portals' history and highlights its current services, is given as a token of appreciation to the agency's donors. For additional information, please contact Ivan Rodriguez in Portals' Resource Development Department at (213) 639-2577.

Thank you to the following Employers of Portals' Members:

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Chief Ronald C. Banks, Chair, Portals Foundation Board of Trustees



Ronald C. Banks

Ron Banks has been a member, and past Chair, of Portals' Board of Directors since 1981. His sensitivity to the plight of the homeless mentally ill began during his 40-year law enforcement career, when he witnessed the wasted effort of rounding up men and women from the streets of Los Angeles, and detaining them for one night before

returning them to the street.

Chief Banks began with the Los Angeles Police Department in 1966 as a police officer, rising to the rank of Assistant Chief. In 1998, he was appointed Chief of the Inglewood Police Department. Since retiring in April 2006, Chief Banks has continued to be active in local, county and state organizations, offering valuable expertise in work with the homeless and mentally ill.

The Portals Foundation will focus its energies on the Western Avenue Capital Campaign that will expand and improve Portals' Community Connections Clubhouse and Jesse A. Brewer No-Fail Center.

As the Chair of the Portals Foundation Board of Trustees, Chief Banks is

proud of the Foundation's current fundraising focus on a new capital campaign that will provide expansion and improvements at Portals' Community Connections Clubhouse in South Los Angeles at the Jesse A. Brewer No-Fail Center.

Reflecting back on his earlier years with the LAPD, Ron shared, "Jesse Brewer was more than a role model in my law enforcement career. He was an inspiration to all who knew him by virtue of his selflessness, generosity and desire to improve the quality of life of those in need. Our ongoing work with Portals in providing vital services to the mentally ill serves as a tribute to his life and his legacy. We were honored to name our No-Fail Center after him."

Chief Banks believes that the Foundation's immediate focus is clear. "The ultimate goal is to create a Recovery and Wellness Center to effectively

develop the independent living skills of members," he says. "This will be accomplished by the Foundation's dedication to creating a more efficient and attractive facility on South Western Avenue."

Portals Foundation Board of Trustees 2006-2007

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Richard M. Dominguez

Michael J. Dunn

Community Connections Clubhouse Celebrates Black History Month with a Visit from the Tuskegee Airmen



Photo by Toni Frissell, 1945

On the afternoon of Tuesday, February 27th, Portals' members at the Community Connections Clubhouse were honored by a visit and special presentation by O. Oliver Goodall, Public Relations Officer of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen, Incorporated. This was the final event in a series of Black History Month socialization programs at Portals and the dining room was packed with an enthusiastic group of members who experienced an inspirational lesson in black history.

To open the special event, William Hester, Socialization Coordinator, welcomed guests which included Portals' President and CEO, Jim Balla, and Rene Woodruff of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH) and District Chief of Service Planning Area 6. The program began with poetry readings by Iris reciting "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou and Daryl reciting "Life is Fine" by Langston Hughes.

Jim Balla offered his personal support of Portals' Socialization Program and

then welcomed O. Oliver Goodall. "What can you say about the 99th Fighter Squadron and the 332nd Fighter Group never losing a bomber they escorted into enemy fire?" Jim asked the attentive gathering. "If they had accomplished nothing else, the distinguished record of America's Black Air Force today remains unmatched in combat. Please welcome O. Oliver Goodall."

“Hold fast to your dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly.”

— Langston Hughes

Oliver began by showing an exciting action-packed video of the history and combat record of the Tuskegee Airmen. The video emphasized how these brave young Americans overcame segregation and prejudice to become one of the most highly respected fighter groups of World War II. They proved conclusively that African Americans could fly and maintain sophisticated combat aircraft, paving the way for full integration of the U.S. military. "We had the highest IQ of any military unit," Oliver asserted proudly, pointing out that the young black pilots were eager to serve a country that was not yet ready to serve them. They had to prove themselves by working harder and with more confidence than their white brothers.

A lively question and answer period



Photo by Toni Frissell, 1945

followed. When asked what he learned as a Tuskegee Airman, Oliver quickly responded, "I was proud to be black." When asked what he accomplished, again there came a quick response. "I was a troublemaker." After the cheers died down, Oliver continued, "When the Commanding Officer at Freeman Field decided to segregate the Officer's Club, we organized a sit-in...twice! We were placed under house arrest...twice, but succeeded in closing the Officer's Club altogether. Such actions later prompted President Harry Truman to issue an executive order to integrate the entire U.S. military."

Oliver concluded by offering the following advice: "Put family first. Put God in your life. Give someone a pat on the back. Shake someone's hand. Get to know your neighbor. We need to start talking to each other and not at each other. Most importantly, get your training and education so you'll be prepared, like the Tuskegee Airmen, to kick down the door when opportunity knocks."

Oliver's words of encouragement had special meaning to Portals' members who face the prejudice and injustice brought about by the stigma, not of skin color, but of severe mental illness. Encouragement and inspiration are crucial components in treating the mentally ill as they discover their inner strengths and capabilities through the education, job training and employment opportunities available at Portals. The weekly Clubhouse Socialization Programs have become a vital part of Portals' successful and continuing work in turning lives around.

Editor's Note: On March 29, 2007 at a ceremony in the Capital Rotunda in Washington, D.C., the Tuskegee Airmen received the Congressional Gold Medal – the nation's highest and most distinguished civilian award, and the most prestigious honor the United States Congress has to offer.



Renee Woodruff, District Chief of Service Area 6 for the L.A. County Department of Mental Health, shares a light moment with O. Oliver Goodall of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated, who spoke to members at Portals' Community Connections Clubhouse.

Looking Forward

Neighborhood Improvement and Beautification are Important Goals of the Western Avenue Capital Campaign

Richard Dominguez, Chair of Portals' Board of Directors, has taken the lead in developing and directing a capital campaign to expand and improve the Community Connections Clubhouse and No-Fail Transitional Facility on South Western Avenue. The project, known as the Western Avenue Capital Cam-

paign, will support a vital renovation in combining what are essentially two buildings to create a more productive and integrated Recovery and Wellness Center. This nearly \$1.7 million project is scheduled to be completed in early 2009.

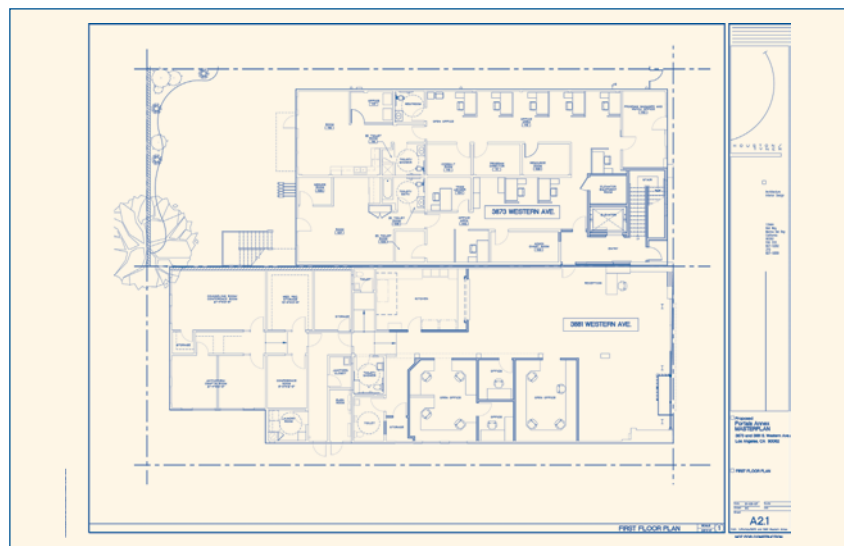
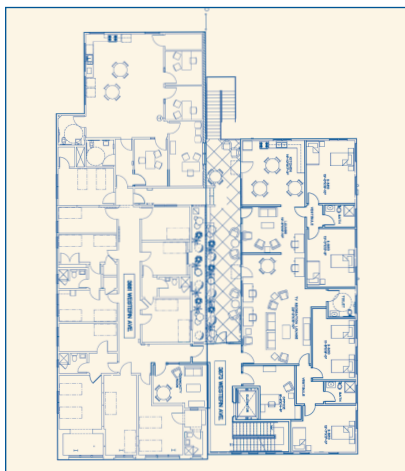
Richard's goal is to reach out to individuals and foundations that have a stake in the neighborhood and who support Portals' mission to help individuals living on the streets with severe mental illnesses receive proper treatment, education and job training so that they can successfully reintegrate back into society. Richard sees the renovation of the building and grounds as vital components in the improvement of the neighborhood, and will work closely with the neighborhood council and local businesses whom he hopes to enlist as partners in the project.

The renovations will provide greater security through a single controlled entrance, and access requirements for the handicapped will be upgraded to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The primary focus of the facility will shift to transitional

housing with 24 hour permanent support services.



Richard Dominguez



May is Mental Health Month

Since 1949, the United States has celebrated May as Mental Health Month. The goal - to raise awareness on mental illness and mental health treatment. Mental Health America (formerly known as the National Mental Health Association) is the sponsor of May is Mental Health Month. For more information, visit their website at www.mentalhealthamerica.net or call Portals at (213) 639-2577.



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