



Newsletter

Spring 2014



GRADUATION TO LIFE'S NEXT CHAPTER:

Rick Crispino, Executive Director Retires

As I was walking into Bonita House for my first day on the job in June 1978, a client asked me, "Are you the new Executive Director?" I smiled and said yes, and he said, "Too bad, since Alameda County staff just gave notice that our agency funding is being eliminated due to the recent passage of Proposition 13."

That interaction began a cascade of community organizing that culminated in the Board of Supervisors rescinding the recommendation to close Bonita House and all other non-profit mental health organizations.

Needless to say, that first chapter of my 36 years with Bonita House left an impression on me and my colleagues about the need to stay vigilant in promoting and expanding community-based alternatives to the institutional care, or incarceration, of people living with mental illnesses.

I was drawn to Bonita House by the guiding principle of the organization: *to hear the voices of consumers and family members*. Since its founding in 1971, the agency has encouraged client and family participation on the Board of Directors, as well as direct feedback about formulating and improving our programs.

The agency has always emphasized the capacity of individuals to grow and live freely in the community of their choice. It creates environments that promote opportunities for healing and growth. It encourages creative risk-taking by staff and clients. And it recognizes the collective wisdom that staff at every level in the organization bring to our efforts.

Our friendly board, staff, clients and families have inspired me to stay on as Executive Director for these many years. I have enjoyed coming to work. I know that sounds foreign

to many, but for me, it is true. Together, we have developed services that are respected by those in our field of work. One of the guiding principles we have used over the years is, "Would we want a family member in a similar situation use our services?" The answer is a resounding "Yes!"

I have enjoyed many additional chapters over the years. Working with others throughout the state to mainstream services and activities that were once considered "non-traditional" approaches of support for families and individuals living with a mental illness. Moving into true dialogue and partnership with government managers on behalf of mental health consumers. Seeing consumers of services and their family members gain clout and respect for their lived experience, and watching that experience be utilized in service planning and delivery. The consumer rallying cry "nothing about us without us" has truly become a reality in mental health services in California.

It has also been fascinating to watch the demographics of the state change to include people from all corners of the world -- and the development of mental health services to meet the varied needs of what will soon be a "majority minority" state.

Now it is time for me to move on to my life's next chapter. This chapter that will usher me into retirement in Minneapolis with my wife, Mary Suilmann, and the opportunity to be creative in other ways. But as I leave, I know that the foundation of Bonita House that engaged me for 36 years is strong, and that this organization will continue to be a leader in the provision of quality behavioral healthcare for decades to come.

Rick Crispino



Message from the Board

Dear Community Members,

The Board of Directors is pleased to announce that after a thorough search, **Lorna Jones, M.Ed, MBA** has been selected as the new Executive Director of Bonita House, Inc.

Lorna has led behavioral health care organizations for over twenty years, including Community Vocational Enterprises in San Francisco, and prior to that, in Massachusetts, the Tri-City Mental Health Center, the Behavioral Health Care Network of Massachusetts, and the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center. She is a member of and alumni liaison to the LeaderSpring Board Council, and a member of the National Forum on Information Literacy and the American Society for Training and Development.

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Executive Director

As a seasoned executive director and big-picture thinker, Lorna has a proven track record of driving processes toward tangible results, recognizing untapped potential, developing new programs, and diversifying revenue. She has a passion for the Bonita House mission, and reflects the values our organization is known for: collaboration, transparency, inclusion, respect and dignity.

At this crucial juncture in Bonita House's history, the Board looks forward to partnering with Lorna to build on the legacy developed by our beloved, retiring Executive Director, Rick Crispino.

Lorna begins her tenure as Bonita House Executive Director on Monday April 28, 2014.

If you do not get an opportunity to meet her before, please join us at Rick's retirement party on Friday May 30th to meet Lorna and bid Rick a fond farewell.

Sandy Spiker, President
Bonita House, Inc.
Board of Directors

Bonita House Residential Program Welcomes...

In October, Bonita House, Inc. welcomed *Shana Burns, LMFT*, as the new Program Director of the Dual Diagnosis Residential Treatment Program in North Berkeley.

A graduate of the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), Shana comes to Bonita House with a long history of experience in outpatient recovery programs, as well as working with people involved in the criminal justice system who have co-occurring mental health and substance abuse challenges.

Having worked in the private sector for the past seven plus years, Shana

is excited about making the shift to community-based mental health.

She recently expanded the program to include additional evidence-based, trauma-informed, dual diagnosis

therapeutic groups, and hopes to help the agency develop community aftercare options for people graduating from transitional residential treatment.

“Bonita House, is a very special, healing place, rooted in a deep history,” Shana says. “The Dual Diagnosis Residential Treatment Program

promotes an atmosphere of hope to help people envision and live a life of sustained recovery.”



Residential Program Raised Vegetables Beds



Residential Program Meditation Garden



Annual Report

July 1, 2012—June 30, 2013

Building Community, Dignity & Hope with People Recovering from Psychiatric and Substance Use Disorders

Since 1971 BHI has provided and managed a continuum of treatment and housing programs for adults living with severe and persistent psychiatric disorders. Spanning a 18-year survey of our clients, over 91% reported receiving excellent services. Our current programs include:

- Dual Diagnosis Residential Treatment Program
- Berkeley Creative Wellness Center
- CHOICES Housing Program
- Dual Diagnosis Case Management & Psychiatry Services
- Dual Diagnosis Permanent Housing
- Homeless Outreach & Stabilization Team
- Dual Diagnosis Transitional Housing

Our Dual Diagnosis Residential Treatment Program is certified through the State of California Mental Health Department and licensed by Community Care Licensing as a Social Rehabilitation Facility. The Residential Treatment Program, Case Management Program, Homeless Outreach and Stabilization Team, and CHOICES Housing Program serve adults living with serious and persistent psychiatric disorders all of whom have co-occurring substance use disabilities.

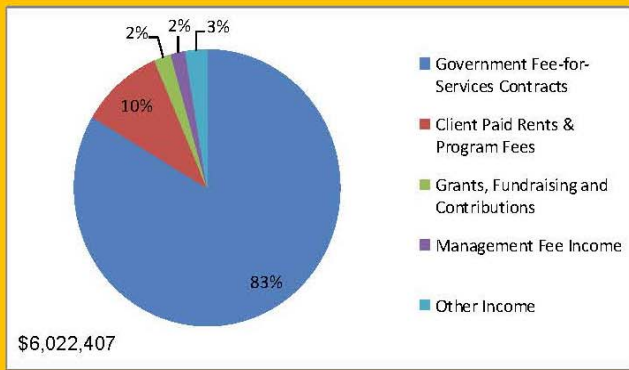
BHI is governed by a dedicated, volunteer Board of Directors which represents a wide range of community interests including client and family representatives, and those with expertise in the legal, financial, real estate, mental health, and administrative fields. For over forty years, BHI has administered contracts from every level of government. Since inception, all BHI financial audits have had unqualified opinions.

BHI treatment programs are guided by the combined values and principles of psychosocial rehabilitation and mental health/substance abuse Integrated Dual Diagnosis Treatment recovery models. BHI has a strong commitment to recovery for both mental health and dual diagnosis clients. Our values are reviewed regularly by clients, staff and the Board of Directors through the agency’s strategic planning process.

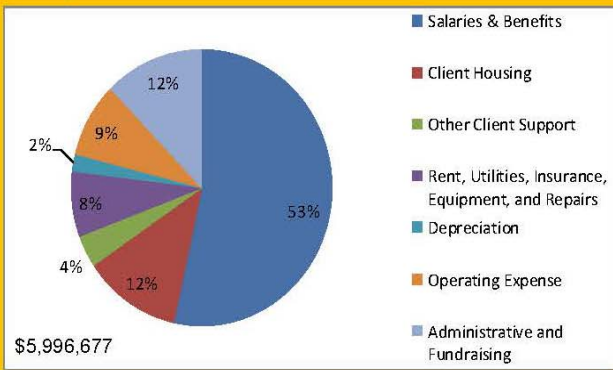
Agency Values:

*Welcoming and Respectful;
Cultivating Hope and Resilience;
Recovery and Self-Responsibility.*

Revenue



Expenses



Thank You to Our Generous Donors!



Once again, Bonita House thanks the many generous community members who supported our Annual Fund Raising Drive:

Jamie Almanza/Bay Area Community Services, Walter & Mildred Alvarez, Janie Anker, Anonymous, Bonnie Benard, Gordon Benner, Eva & Ken Berg, Barbara Bernstein, James Blume, Mary & Frederick Blume, Forrest & Barbara Bottomley, Mary Anne Broker, Marvin Brookner, Sara & Philip Brooks, Floyd Brown, Charles & Mary Bucher, Johanne Calhoun, Laurie Capitelli, Councilmember/City of Berkeley, Elizabeth Carty, Edward Chiera, Betty Christian, Susan & Richard Cochran, Louise Colombatto, Community Health Charities, Connemara Fund, Lloyd & Nancy Coyne, Mary & Rick Crispino, Ralph Crispino, Steve & Bev Croshal, Maria Curtis, Patricia Day, Elisabeth De Vogelaere, John Debenham, David & Vicki

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Walker, Janet Warzyn, Cecile
& Harold Weaver, Scott
Underwood & Susan Weiner,
Maureen Wesolowski, James
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Zelnik

LIFE AFTER BONITA HOUSE:

Checking in with “Graduate”

John Atkins-Kennedy

A major principle of care at Bonita House is that diagnosis does not define an individual or what they can become. With treatment, the right medications, support and consumer involvement, Bonita House clients can successfully manage mental illness for life.

In fact, we’ve begun to think about the transition to independence in the community as “graduation” from the formal mental health system.

John Atkins-Kennedy, 55, is a graduate of several Bonita House Programs, and this month we spoke to him about the factors that have made it possible for him to decrease reliance on the mental health system.

John arrived at the Bonita House Residential Program in 1996 after a sustained battle with schizophrenia/ bi-polar disorder and substance use. Like so many people with co-occurring disorders, he had experienced a lot of chaos and housing instability. But he was ready for change.

The initial change was not easy, and he experienced substance abuse relapse and repeated psychiatric hospitalizations before he established sobriety. “My anniversary date is November 11, 1997,” John says.

Bonita House Medical Director, *Dr. Floyd Brown*, first met and began to work with John after he had moved on to the Supported Independent Living (SIL) Program in the late 1990s. “He was doing pretty well,” Dr. Brown says. “He was clean and sober, and he needed a combination of meds to help him manage his symptoms. We were able to find him the right combination, and that can have a tremendous impact on one’s life.”

But the medications required maintenance and regular health checks to prevent side effects. This was difficult for John, who also struggled with Type II diabetes, but he made the commitment to maintaining his mental health with the medications.



*John Atkins-Kennedy and Dr. Floyd Brown
(left to right)*

In 2000, John moved onto the Bonita House Permanent Housing Program, and into his own permanent apartment. This was another key factor in his recovery.

Says *Mark Shotwell*, Program Director of the *Bonita House Homeless Outreach and Stabilization Team (HOST) Program*, “The provision of long-term,

affordable housing can help people get over the hump and closer to graduation from the mental health system. Without affordable housing, it’s much harder to leave formal mental health programs.”

Over the years, John held a job at an auto parts store, rose to a leadership position in his local 12-step community, and started co-facilitating the community meeting at SIL with a Bonita House counselor. This is giving him experience towards his ultimate goal: to become a Community Health Care Worker, helping other people in the mental health system. He is also taking classes at Berkeley City College to earn a certificate in this field.

Last year, Dr. Brown recognized that John was a candidate for graduation from formal Bonita House case management services. “He had gone beyond just being stable. He made changes to achieve life goals, and had become a leader in the SIL community.”

(Continued on page 7)

Initially, John had misgivings about the concept of graduation. “The way I looked at it was that they were talking about graduating from *recovery*, but for me there is no end date for that. It’s something I’ll always work on. But then they explained it meant I was at the point where I didn’t need a high level of care anymore.”

And so, John has moved on. He has a great community support system that includes a sister he speaks to almost daily, a brother who is also in recovery, and members of the 12-step community.

His sister encouraged him to take up water-walking at a local gym to help manage his diabetes, and he has quit smoking. Another important community connection he has made is to LifeLong Medical Care, a community health center where he receives regular primary care, gets medication services, and

sees a private therapist. Getting his medical and psychiatric care in the community is “part of the graduation,” John says.

“Bonita House has been very supportive for me, but now, I can basically do everything for myself.”

Dr. Brown agrees. “John’s done a really terrific job, and has utilized his support system well. Through all his challenges, he kept his focus and is still honing his recovery skills.”

John joins dozens of Bonita House graduates who live independently in the community, maintain jobs, work in the mental health field, raise families, and have achieved full and meaningful lives. The bottom line for John is that he can maintain his recovery and focus on his future. “I haven’t had mental health problems in a long, long time,” he says.

Fifty Graduate from Mental Health System

In October of 2013, the first graduation from the countywide Choices for Community Living Program was held at the Veteran’s Memorial Hall in Hayward.

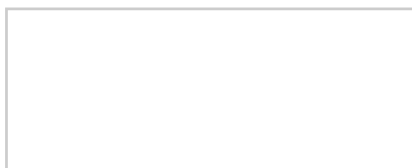
Choices for Community Living is a three-year program designed to assist Alameda County mental health consumers in graduating from the public mental health system. It provides participants with strengths-based case management, employment services, housing subsidies and supports and peer wellness coaches. Bonita House provides the housing component of the Choices for Community Living Program.

The graduation ceremony celebrated the significant accomplishments of fifty people who had been involved with the Adult System of Care for many years. These special individuals had achieved many life goals including obtaining competitive, living wage jobs. Moreover, thirty-two of those who had utilized the housing subsidy were able to sustain housing with their own income after graduation.

All participants had strengthened their natural support systems for ongoing wellness, and transitioned from case management to less intensive services in the community. We congratulate these participants for their success and wish them well as they move into the next phase in their lives and recovery. Their success shows us, once again, that ***Recovery is Real!***

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