

The Art of Hillview

“Calvin Banks and the Tellers”

By Kevin O’Connell



Kevin O’Connell, a self-described “big music fan,” created this likeness of reggae band Calvin Banks and the Tellers during one of the group’s performances at a Pasadena club. Using markers (he favors gold and silver metallic ones), Kevin creates life drawings wherever he is – at the Hillview Clubhouse, at a bar, at a club or outdoors. “To me, drawing is like meditation,” he says. “I’m concentrating on getting the line

right, on how things fit together, on how I can make the piece better.”

Kevin began drawing at the age of three. He drew on the inside cover of every book in his parents’ house. Today, he creates his works on found materials – predominantly cardboard but sometimes plywood.

A Hillview client for about four years, Kevin says, “If I won millions in the lottery, I’d give half to Hillview. They do good work.”

President/CEO:
Eva S. McCraven, Ph.D.

Director of Community & Public Relations:
Sande Weiss

The mission of Hillview Mental Health Center is to provide comprehensive, compassionate and culturally sensitive mental health services to adults and youths in the East San Fernando Valley. Along with challenges of mental illness and substance abuse disorders, our clients suffer the burdens of poverty. Hillview’s approach addresses all of these concerns: We offer a full range of outpatient behavioral health and substance use disorder services while working with government and community agencies to meet practical needs such as housing, employment and transportation. We help our clients assess their needs, goals and strengths to empower them to live as independently as possible as participating members of the community.

Hillview Mental Health Center, Inc., is a nonprofit corporation that serves as a gateway to recovery, independence and health for nearly 2,000 East San Fernando Valley residents each year.

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It Takes Resources to Help Marginalized Clients

Hillview Needs Your Support

Message from Eva S. McCraven

President and Chief Executive Officer



Hillview Mental Health Center provides specialized care to adults with serious mental illness. We help people dealing with the most difficult challenges, such as homelessness, previous incarceration and substance use disorders. This year we will receive 96 new clients who face these problems. Half will come to Hillview directly from prison or prison hospitals. Others will have been chronically homeless or mandated to undergo outpatient mental health treatment in lieu of jail.

To serve these clients, we are hiring eight to 10 new service coordinators. These coordinators will act as liaisons to our psychiatrists, psychologists, nurse practitioners and social workers who provide essential treatment services. In addition, our new coordinators will link clients to external resources for primary care and employment opportunities.

We must identify and train candidates who

can deal sensitively with high-need populations and learn to understand the unique issues they face. College or university programs do not provide this specialized training, yet it is vital to our work.

You Can Make a Difference

Plainly put, recruiting and training staff members to effectively assist our new clients requires funds that Hillview does not receive from government sources. We need your help to provide this critical service. Please consider

making a new or increased gift to Hillview Mental Health Center that will help us recruit the strongest possible candidates and provide them with intensive training. You can do this by visiting our website, www.hillviewmhc.org, and clicking on the “Support Us” tab. Your generosity will enable us to give some of society’s most disadvantaged members the tools they need to live independently and safely in our community.

“We help people dealing with the most difficult challenges, such as homelessness and previous incarceration.”

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A nonprofit corporation serving the East San Fernando Valley since 1966

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Hillview Helps Clients Qualify for and Find Affordable Housing

Sarah Sluder, housing coordinator, discusses the hurdles



Sarah Sluder

Hillview serves one of the most economically disadvantaged populations in Los Angeles County, therefore we work with a high percentage of homeless clients. We place a high priority on finding them suitable places to live. "It's impossible to focus on any other aspect of your life if you don't know where you're going to sleep at night," says Housing Coordinator Sarah Sluder. "It's an all-encompassing problem."

Hillview devotes significant resources to securing housing. Case managers help identify clients who need housing, and Sarah works full-time to make it happen. "Securing Section 8 housing is time consuming and complicated," she says. "The process involves numerous steps and can take more than a year to complete." The application form alone is 82 pages

long. Clients must visit the Housing Authority office in person on two separate occasions, and Sarah accompanies them on those visits.

The criteria for being considered homeless mandate that a person be homeless continuously for 12 months or experience at least four episodes of homelessness within the previous three years that add up to 12 months. Applicants must provide letters from people in the community who have witnessed and can vouch for the applicant's homeless status. Sarah helps clients identify and approach those who may be able to provide this verification. Applicants must also possess valid identification, so Sarah takes many of them to the Department of Motor Vehicles or Social Security office to obtain it.

After securing approval for Section 8 housing, a client must then

find approved housing. This area lacks sufficient affordable housing inventory, and housing vouchers tend to pay less than the going rate for lodging. Many people vie for the few available units. Sarah tirelessly chases down appropriate housing and takes clients to inspect potential units for suitability.

Currently, Hillview is working with about 40 clients in various stages of attaining housing. Since starting in her position at Hillview in February 2018, Sarah has made about 20 housing placements.

"Once clients obtain housing they can focus on other aspects of their lives, whether that means attaining sobriety, going to school or work, or reconnecting with family," she says. "They can move on with their lives."



The People of Hillview:

Meet Our Devoted Maintenance Crew

Repairing and maintaining Hillview's five buildings takes skill and dedication, qualities embodied by maintenance manager Sam Stone and maintenance tech Adrian Palma. Together they keep the Hillview Treatment Center and Hillview Village safe and operational and ensure that facilities meet federal, state and local agencies' specifications.

"We do as much in-house as possible," noted Stone. In November, for example, he and Palma rebuilt guardrails, cleared plumbing stoppages, repaired light fixtures, and painted and patched walls.

The pair exemplify the sensitivity that is so important to our Hillview Village clients. "Everyone involved with Hillview has a core

of caring about the people we serve, including the maintenance department," said Stone. "We see them as often as any staff person. We have first-name relationships with the residents and are aware of their needs and respectful of their space."

Stone, who has been with Hillview for 25 years, has numerous professional certifications, including lead paint, hazardous material, water restoration and structural drawing. He has worked in construction, as a mechanic and as a cook, and he enjoys camping and fishing.

Prior to joining Hillview two years ago, Palma worked for 12 years at Douglas Emmett, which owns and operates office space and



The Hillview maintenance team: Sam Stone (left) and Adrian Palma

apartment units. Starting there as a day porter, Palma eventually rose to the role of operating engineer. He is trained in all facets of building maintenance, including HVAC, energy management, plumbing, electrical, and fire and life safety. Palma enjoys playing baseball and watching the Dodgers. "I love working for an organization that is helping people," he said.

HILLVIEW CELEBRATES

Thanksgiving

Nearly 250 clients and their families enjoyed food and camaraderie at Hillview's Thanksgiving lunch. This year, staff members bought 18 turkeys and 17 hams, and prepared such traditional dishes as stuffing and sweet potatoes.

The service organization Odd Fellows of San Fernando generously donated funds to support the lunch, with members Jim

Miles and Jesus Ochoa attending. "We've been supporting Hillview for about 10 years and made a significant increase to our contribution this year," said Miles. "We know about the good work Hillview does, and seeing the people here really brings it home," added Ochoa. "Given the epidemic of homelessness, it's even more important to help."

Hillview client Carol was among those thankful for the organization and the lunch. Although she now lives in Lancaster, she makes the trek to Hillview for her mental health care. "This is the best mental health facility in Southern California," she said. "There's no way I'd change."

Holiday Cheer

Every year, we present holiday baskets to the 85 residents living on the Hillview campus. The baskets contain a variety of goods, including clothing, personal hygiene items, cleaning products, food and a Target gift card. Staff members contributed

items, and program director Peggy Wilson-Jordan, Ph.D., a jewelry artist, created earrings and bracelets for all of the women. We would like to thank Shelter Partnership for generously providing many of the items that went into our holiday bas-



kets. Residents received their baskets at a Christmas party on December 20. Our thanks to CBC Cleaning and Restoration for catering this holiday lunch for the second year in a row.

Ilene Kramer, Lisa Treen and Sande Weiss (from left, above) helped assemble the much appreciated gifts.