



SANTA BARBARA  
FOUNDATION

COUNTY CONNECTIONS

# SUPPORTING WELLNESS

IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY



**FEATURING:** Mental Wellness Center,  
Latinx Mental Health, Promotores & More





## A MESSAGE FROM RONALD V. GALLO, Ed.D. PRESIDENT & CEO

“Hope springs eternal.” The British poet Alexander Pope wrote that phrase some three hundred years ago to convey the buoyancy of the human spirit. It continues to resonate – and it probably accounts for one of the reasons we humans are still here – but sadly, we must also acknowledge that something in the human spirit is amiss these days. One can have varying and strong opinions about causes and correlations, but what is inarguable is that the state of our mental health is troubling seemingly worldwide, but also right here in beautiful Santa Barbara County. That is what prompts this issue devoted to mental health, and specifically, the ways that the Santa Barbara Foundation – and its network of partners – is addressing this urgent issue.

The urgency comes not least from the alarming increases in our suicide rates. The California Department of Public Health’s recent *Preventing Violence in California* study (March 2019) notes that Santa Barbara County is ranked 18 out of 58 counties with a suicide rate of 13.2 (more than 3 points higher than the state average of 10.7). Tragically, suicide is the second leading cause of injury death in our county. Ninety percent of these deaths are due to an underlying mental illness.

While suicide rates may be the most vivid manifestation of mental health deterioration, it is regrettably but one of several indicators. The National Center for Biotechnology (NCIB) tells us that 1 in 5 Americans experience a mental health disorder in any given year. It has recently been reported that depression figures in our county are 5% higher than the state average and 13% higher than federal authorities say they should be in our region. Couple these statistics

with concomitant increases in childhood trauma, child and sexual abuse, and opioid addiction, and what comes into focus is a population – and most horrifically our babies and youth – under extreme stress. Allowed to continue without abatement, this surely threatens our resilience as a county.

What are the barriers to that abatement? First and foremost, it is the lingering stigma we continue to attach to mental illness. This is a disorder that is all too often painfully suffered in isolation. There are the barriers of geographical remoteness and limited transportation. There are language and cultural barriers. There is the barrier of insufficient funding and insurance reimbursement.

The good news is that our nonprofit organizations, not surprisingly, are rising to the occasion to bring those barriers down. I hope this publication leaves readers ultimately optimistic as they learn of the innovative approaches being taken – countywide – to address mental health issues with a vigor and creativity that is unprecedented in our region. The Santa Barbara Foundation’s role is to identify, support and facilitate the scaling of the most effective efforts. We recognize a responsibility too to speak out on this issue, to educate and engage our donors, to do anything we can to help to reduce stigma, to be a repository for community learnings, and to champion those of our neighbors who are seeking a life of less discord, confusion, violence and disconnection. The success of all of these efforts, especially by our nonprofit partners, will help bring about our best collective future.

# CALM ADDRESSES CHILDHOOD TRAUMA COUNTYWIDE

By Sam Waterstone

Over the past several years, there have been roughly 5,000 reports of child abuse and neglect each year in Santa Barbara County. A majority of those reports are made in Northern Santa Barbara County, mostly in Lompoc and Santa Maria. On top of this, studies show that the vast majority of child abuse cases go unreported, meaning that thousands more children are likely dealing with traumatic home lives.

Luckily, inspiring work is being done by organizations like Child Abuse Listening Mediation (CALM) to address these issues. CALM is a local nonprofit that has served children and their families in Santa Barbara County for nearly 50 years. They focus on ensuring that children are safe from abuse and treat children that have already endured traumatic experiences. The organization originated in Santa Barbara, and in recent years they have thoughtfully expanded to cover the entire county. In the past decade they added offices in Santa Maria and Lompoc, and last year they introduced four individuals from North County to their board.

CALM was a recipient of the Santa Barbara Foundation’s

*PHOTO: CALM’s staff based out of their Santa Maria office, pictured here, work to prevent, identify and treat childhood trauma in North County.*



Core Support for Basic Needs grant in 2017 and Early Care and Education grant in 2018, and they have utilized this funding to increase and improve behavioral health services in North County. CALM currently has 40 staff members based out of the Lompoc and Santa Maria offices, serving all of North County, including the cities of Santa Ynez, Guadalupe, and Cuyama. While the organization has made great strides in North County, they aspire to be doing much more. For instance, CALM has behavioral health professionals embedded in 22 preschool and afterschool sites in Santa Barbara County, but only one of those sites – the Santa Maria Valley YMCA – is located in North County.

“The Santa Barbara Foundation has been really helpful in getting the preschool and afterschool programs going in North County,” said CALM Development Manager Sandra Fuhling, who has worked in their Santa Maria office since 2012. “We’ve been doing this work in South County for years, and we’re just starting to look at it up here. The Foundation’s grant was actually the first funding we received to be able to start developing these programs in North County.”

CALM has several departments that provide services countywide. Their Great Beginnings Department provides prevention and intervention services for families with young children that show risk factors relating to potential trauma. This department also helps mothers experiencing (or at risk of) postpartum depression, as well as families that need extra parenting support, such as young parents without a great understanding of youth development or how to appropriately discipline their children.

CALM’s Childhood Trauma Treatment Department treats children who have already experienced trauma. Therapists typically meet with children and parents once a week to treat trauma and help families heal. Within this department, CALM has several contracts with the county’s Department of Social Services to



handle more intensive cases, including many involving domestic abuse.

“One of the most common things we see, especially in North County, is kids who have witnessed domestic violence or violence that is ongoing. We also see quite a few neglect cases, and we serve children that have suffered physical or sexual abuse,” said Fuhring.

The area where CALM is experiencing the most growth, particularly in North County, is their Community Strengthening Collaborations Department, which focuses on developing partnerships with other agencies, schools, and healthcare systems. This includes the CALM staff embedded in preschools and afterschool sites.

“CALM understands that with the sheer number of children who likely need our services, there is no way that our staff can see each child and family individually,” Alana Walczak, CALM’s CEO, explained. “Our goal is to increase our presence in the community in order to support professionals that work with children every day – teachers, childcare providers, pediatricians.”

CALM has developed programs to help teachers become more trauma-informed so that they can more appropriately support their students. In Santa Barbara, CALM staff are embedded into pediatric clinics where they conduct trauma screenings for children at their well-baby checkups. CALM hopes to expand this service into North County in the near future.

“We recognize that preventing and treating early childhood trauma is essential to building healthier communities, especially in areas of North County that have high rates of child poverty,” said Kathy Simas, the Santa Barbara Foundation’s North County Director. “Through the Foundation’s new Behavioral Health Grant Program, we support agencies that provide quality behavioral health services for people in need.”

The Santa Barbara Foundation is committed to investing in community-based agencies that provide critical services for behavioral health care in Santa Barbara County. By empowering local experts in the field to utilize evidence-based practices that support our most vulnerable populations, we are helping our communities grow stronger and healthier.

To learn more about CALM and how they help our communities thrive, visit [calm4kids.org](http://calm4kids.org).

# BRIDGE CLINIC OFFERS TRANSITIONAL CARE FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE

By **Quinisha Jackson-Wright**

The Bridge Clinic, the result of a collaboration between Cottage Hospital and the Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics, was created to expand behavioral health services and offer medication assisted treatment for patients with substance abuse disorders in Santa Barbara. With the support of grant funding from the Santa Barbara Foundation in 2016, the clinic has been operating since January 28 and is staffed by two physicians, Dr. Erickson and Dr. Paule, along with a licensed social worker and Patient Access Navigator.

The clinic offers short-term treatment, with most patients staying for up to eight weeks, who are then referred to their primary care physician or other medical professionals who provide long-term services. Thirty-three patients have received treatment thus far, which averages out to one patient per day. If patients do not have a primary care provider, SBNC is available to provide assistance.

“We started very small. I had a fear that we would be overwhelmed immediately,” explained Dr. Charles Fenzi, CEO and Chief Medical Officer of SBNC. “Now we’re discussing what we can do to grow this and continue to sustainably manage the demand.”

The staff at SBNC says that a major advantage of the Bridge Clinic is its proximity to Cottage Hospital, therefore allowing hospital personnel to make the transition for patients quick and efficient.

“The second day we were open, a patient was released from the hospital and the charge nurse literally walked that individual across the street to our clinic,” recalls Maria Long, Director of Development and Communications at SBNC.

“There’s such a short window of time after an incident involving substance use, for an individual who has made the decision to seek treatment,” Long continued. “What’s great about the Bridge Clinic is that it’s right there during that time window for patients to receive the treatment they need.”

When asked what concerns prompted the collaboration between Cottage Hospital and SBNC, the staff says the large

epidemic of opioid usage was a significant factor, along with a heavy volume of substance-related emergency room visits.

“The hospital reported there was a monthly average of 83 people visiting the emergency room for issues arising from a substance use disorder,” said Nancy Tillie, COO and CFO of SBNC. “To lessen the continuous cycle of [patients] going in and out of the ER without getting the [proper treatment], services from the Bridge Clinic are a way to help at that point in time.”

SBNC also has plans to expand services to the westside of Santa Barbara. The new facility will provide three additional exam rooms for medical care, six spaces for dental care, and two areas for behavioral health services.

In addition to the Bridge Clinic, SBNC pediatricians are engaged in an ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) study program, which screens the parents of children ages 0-3 for risk factors that may have long-term effects on physical and mental health.

“If the child has one or more risk factors, or the parent has two or more, they are referred to a Patient Access Navigator who can provide resources for the family,” Tillie explained. “If there’s food insecurity or housing issues, they will be connected with the services necessary to address them.”

There are also therapeutic sessions available for families through CALM, with services provided onsite or in-home.

“The goal is to build resiliency that takes children and their

families off the path of continued trauma,” Tillie said. “Studies show that [mental/emotional] trauma also has an impact on physical health, which leads to things like heart disease, cancer, and substance use. We’re starting early so that hopefully the Bridge Clinic won’t be necessary in the future.”

Starting on April 8, SBNC and Cottage Hospital will hold a lecture series to provide education on services offered at the Bridge Clinic.

“There will be an explanation of services provided and how they all interlink,” Long said. “If time allows, there will also be tours of the clinic, which is directly across the street from the old entrance of the hospital.”

The SNBC staff emphasizes the importance of making substance use treatment a community effort, and has several partnerships with other organizations, including the Council of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (CADA), Sanctuary Center, Direct Relief, and New Beginnings.

“These are organizations we can refer patients to, that have more services than what we may be able to provide at the time, or long-term resources,” said Tillie.

To learn more about SBNC and its upcoming Bridge Clinic lecture series, visit [sbclinics.org](http://sbclinics.org).





# DEMAND FOR LATINX MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES REACHES "ALL-TIME HIGH"

By Sam Waterstone

Each year, one in five Americans experiences a mental or behavioral health disorder. Seeking mental health services has long carried a negative connotation, but public perception has begun to shift in recent years. More people than ever understand that mental health issues don't discriminate by age, gender, sexuality, race, culture, or economic status, and are finally seeking the treatment and support they need.

Behavioral health service providers in Santa Barbara County are struggling to keep up with the increased demand, and are constantly searching for diverse, qualified mental health practitioners. Experts in the field are calling for more inclusive and individualized treatment, arguing that when lives are at stake, the only solution is to provide immediate and effective preventive care.

In Santa Barbara County, this issue greatly impacts the many Latinx (meaning, "of Latin American origin or descent, used as a gender-neutral or nonbinary alternative to Latino or Latina") community members in need of equitable access to culturally inclusive mental health services.

Latinx individuals, many of whom identify as bilingual and bicultural, make up 38 percent of the population in Santa Barbara County. Behavioral health service providers like Child Abuse Listening Mediation (CALM) – which was awarded a contract by June 2018 to provide mental health services to Santa Barbara Unified School District (SBUSD) – serve a majority Latinx client-base; in 2018, 70 percent of CALM's clients identified as Latinx.

Santa Barbara County experienced a tumultuous 2018 that brought natural disasters, a nearby mass shooting and drastic changes to immigration policies, and local mental health experts have noticed a significant increase in demand for mental health services, especially among youth and Latinx community members. Accordingly, service providers

are experiencing a particularly high demand for bilingual and bicultural mental health practitioners.

"The need for bilingual and bicultural mental health practitioners is at an all-time high," says Dr. George Ayoub, the Interim Chair of the Master's in Clinical Psychology (MACP) Program at Antioch University, Santa Barbara. "The need is evident in the school districts, in the universities, and for anyone connected to the community," he explained.

According to Dr. Ayoub, creating culturally inclusive spaces for Latinx individuals is extremely important, and the reason might seem quite obvious: in order for mental health treatment to be successful, clients need to be comfortable with their practitioner. "When somebody goes in for

PHOTO: Students in the Master's in Clinical Psychology Program at Antioch University, Santa Barbara have the option to participate in a Latino Mental Health concentration.



counseling, if they meet with someone who understands them, then they're much more likely to come back," said Dr. Ayoub. When coming back might mean saving someone's life, it is clear that this issue needs to be prioritized.

In an effort to address this unmet need, Antioch's MACP Program offers an optional Latino Mental Health concentration that gives students the education and hands-on experience they need to become qualified bilingual and bicultural mental health practitioners. Dr. Ayoub is developing partnerships with local educational institutions (including SBUSD and Santa Barbara City College) with the goal of recruiting more local students who possess the "superpower" of being bicultural and bilingual.

At the Santa Barbara Foundation, diversity and inclusion are central to the organization's mission.

"We want to ensure that all communities have access to effective social services that are understanding and inclusive of their language and cultural identity."

**-GUILLE GIL-REYNOSO**  
Community Engagement Officer at SBF

"We want to ensure that all communities – including all those who we represent, engage, and work with – have access to effective social services that are understanding and inclusive of their language and cultural identity," said Guille Gil-Reynoso, Community Engagement Officer at the Santa Barbara Foundation. "We are focused on creating purposeful pathways to improve lives, and supporting inclusive behavioral health services is a critical aspect of those efforts."

The Foundation, through its 18-month strategic planning process, found behavioral health to be an issue

of importance in Santa Barbara County. A 2018 study showed that Santa Barbara's depression rate was 5 percent higher than the state average and 13 percent higher than the federal target figure, which was one of the factors that led to the development of the Foundation's Behavioral Health Grant Program. The goal of this new Grant Program is to support effective mental health programs that honor diversity by understanding the core needs of all Santa Barbara County residents.

To learn more about the Behavioral Health Grant Program (as well as the Foundation's other Grant Programs), visit the Grant Opportunities page on our website.

PHOTO: Local service providers like CALM serve a majority Latinx client-base, and they employ many qualified bilingual and bicultural mental health practitioners to meet this need.





# FAMILY SERVICE AGENCY STRENGTHENS FAMILY & SERVICES IN NORTH COUNTY



By Sam Waterstone

In July 2017, Family Service Agency (FSA) merged with the Santa Maria Valley Youth and Family Center (SMVYFC). FSA has served Santa Barbara County since 1899, working to meet the basic needs of vulnerable families. However, prior to the merger, most of its services were only available in South and Mid County, while SMVYFC provided family services in the Santa Maria Valley and surrounding areas.

As a result of the merger, the organizations combined their staff and boards to serve the entire county. They agreed to operate under the FSA name, but continued using the name “Santa Maria Valley Youth and Family Center” in the Santa Maria Valley to maintain the existing identity. The merger has strengthened family services in Northern Santa Barbara County – a region dealing with relatively high rates of poverty and gang violence – where counseling services are in high demand. The region also has a large immigrant

*PHOTO: FSA works with all age groups providing services that are holistic and address social and emotional needs.*

population in need of culturally-inclusive mental health care.

FSA works with family members of all ages, from babies to seniors. The majority of its resources are directed towards providing basic needs, parent education, and behavioral health services for youth and their families, which helps working families thrive despite the many challenges they face. In Santa Barbara County, and especially in North County, there is a great need for services that support behavioral health for young people.

“Generally speaking, we’re seeing a lot of things that make young people anxious and depressed. Gun violence, domestic violence and cyber bullying are all major issues,” said Lisa Brabo, Executive Director at FSA. “The immigration situation is particularly strong in North County because

of the agricultural industry. The fear for many kids that their parents are going to get taken away, and for parents that they will be separated from their kids, is very real. It’s happening quite a lot.”

Parents are also dealing with extremely high-anxiety situations. A large portion of the workforce in North County are agricultural workers, many of whom are immigrants worrying not only about making a living and supporting a family, but about their immigration status as well.

“There are certain aspects of life – finding work, housing costs, raising children, etc. – that make us all anxious. In North County, because of what they have going on with the agricultural industry, the uncertainty of immigration policy, and the prevalence of gang violence, the stressors are even stronger. That’s why mental health services are so important, to help people with coping skills so they can deal with those things,” explained Brabo.

FSA, a recipient of the Santa Barbara Foundation’s Core Support for Basic Needs grant in 2017 and 2018, offers an array of impactful services that provide education and outreach, mental health treatment, and counseling for families in crisis.

According to FSA, “eighty percent of [FSA] services are delivered on school campuses, at community centers or in clients’ homes.” Their school-based counseling consists of counselors embedded in several elementary, junior high, and high schools around the county. FSA also holds counseling sessions at their program sites in Santa Barbara, Lompoc, Carpinteria, Santa Maria and Guadalupe, and counselors make in-home visits for clients in need of more intensive mental health counseling.

FSA runs a number of other community programs, including the Substance Abuse Treatment Program and the Strengthening Families Program. The Strengthening Families Program, which is being rolled out in North County for the first time this year, is a 14-week curriculum that engages youth, along with their parents and siblings.

“The program addresses communication skills, drug and alcohol use, and a lot of other major risk factors that

we see. These young people are primarily referred through probation, so we’re able to help them learn and grow through evidence-based practices while strengthening the family unit as a whole,” explained Maria Gutierrez, a Registered Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Counselor at FSA’s Santa Maria location. Gutierrez also works in the Strengthening Families Program. “We’re really excited to offer this service in multiple communities around the county,” she said.

**“The [Strengthening Families] program addresses communication skills, drug and alcohol use, and a lot of other risk factors that we see [affecting youth].”**

**-MARIA GUTIERREZ**  
**Registered Counselor at FSA**

Due to the extremely high demand for FSA’s services, the organization accepts funding from many different sources. FSA has contracts with schools and county agencies like the Department of Social Services and the Department of Behavioral Wellness. It receive grants from the state and federal governments, such as the federal grant it received to provide Mental Health First Aid training to parents and adults who work with youth. But in order to fill the gaps in between those publicly-funded services – to treat clients who walk into their clinics with a time-sensitive, crisis situation – it relies on private funding from organizations like the Santa Barbara Foundation.

“Behavioral health is a really expensive service to provide, which leads to a difficult funding situation for us. We provided behavioral health services to over 700 people last year, which costs millions of dollars, but there are still hundreds out there who need our services,” said Brabo. “So we have to find creative and meaningful ways to help families, and the Santa Barbara Foundation grant funding we’ve received helps us meet that local need.”

*To learn more about FSA and how they strengthen family countywide, visit [fsacares.org](https://fsacares.org).*



# NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT: PROMOTORES

By **Quinisha Jackson-Wright**

It started out as a routine home visit between a nurse and high-risk diabetes patient. The nurse went through her checklist, asking the patient if she had checked her blood sugar and eaten breakfast that morning. When the patient casually mentioned that she hadn't, the nurse gently but firmly reprimanded her.

"Do you understand that you are facing serious health complications?" she asked. "If you don't take proper care of yourself, things will only get worse."

The patient appeared to be unfazed. Seconds passed until Promotora Josefa Rios, spoke up. She had been asked to stand in as a translator for the Spanish-speaking patient and English-speaking nurse. She could sense the tension building in the room, and had an instinct there was more going on than what met the eye.

"May I ask her a question?" Rios requested. The nurse agreed. Rios then turned to the patient. "How are you?" she asked in Spanish. The patient hesitated before saying she was fine.

"No really...how are you?" Rios pressed. The woman's eyes filled with tears as she finally revealed the family and financial hardships she was facing that left her with little time or means to address her physical health. This exchange of information was given in Spanish, and the nurse was stunned when Rios translated the message.

With a better understanding of the woman's circumstances, Rios was able to coordinate with the nurse to offer assistance. Because of stories such as the one Rios describes, she and her colleague, Health Linkages Coordinator MaryEllen Rehse, believe the Santa Barbara County Promotores Network is a much-needed staple in the community. With the number of Spanish-speaking residents growing rapidly, Rios and Rehse say it is crucial to

*PHOTO: Promotores, like those pictured below, are dedicated to assisting residents who face language barriers when seeking access to healthcare.*



*PHOTO: The Promotores are a group of men and women with extensive knowledge of available community resources.*

ensure language barriers do not prevent residents from receiving proper care.

The SBC Promotores Network consists of individuals in Santa Barbara County with extensive knowledge of area health and wellness resources. Promotores have a desire to bridge the gap between Spanish-speaking residents and service providers who struggle to communicate effectively with this under-represented demographic.

Although key to their role, Promotores are not just translators. "These are men and women who have been well-trained," Rehse said. "To become a Promotora, there is a required 48-hour core training [over the course of several days], and monthly meetings. But even before going through this training, these are people who know

where to find help, what's new in the community, and they get the word out to those who otherwise wouldn't know about specific resources."

Rios says there are approximately 88 active Promotores in Santa Barbara County. Because of the unique skillset that Promotores possess, many have gone on to apply their skills in full-time positions within other organizations.

"Even if members aren't active in the core group, it's a great opportunity for people who know the community, to move into larger roles and expand their impact," Rehse explained.

"That's what we like to see," Rios added. "We have Promotores who have been hired on at other organizations, or were motivated to continue their education and become social workers because they want to see more Spanish-speaking social workers in the community."

When asked how the organization plans to increase community outreach, Rios says she wants to collaborate with other agencies in Santa Barbara County, and get everyone onboard with providing necessary services to residents.

"I think we [and other agencies] have a similar mission, but if we build stronger connections with each other, we can create the social change that we all want to see," she said.

One of these collaborations will be with Cottage Hospital, to assign Promotores to assist case managers in scenarios similar to what Rios experienced.

"The Promotores will go to the hospital and be available to the case management nurses," Rehse said. "This way, nurses can set up appointments for [Promotores] to meet with patients before they're discharged, and follow up with the patients when they return home. This will be a team effort to help in cases where there may be cultural or language barriers."

*For more information on the Promotores and upcoming events, visit the SBC Promotores Network website and follow on Facebook.*



# MENTAL WELLNESS CENTER PROVIDES POST-DISASTER SUPPORT TO RESIDENTS IN NEED

By Quinisha Jackson-Wright

In the aftermath of the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow, residents were confronting many challenges including the physical, mental and emotional impacts of experiencing such a catastrophic series of events. Two collaborative efforts emerged to address the trauma and mental health needs of our communities.

In the heart of Montecito, several organizations worked together to open the Montecito Center for Preparedness, Recovery and Rebuilding. The one-stop center became a hub of helpful resources for residents. This included California HOPE 805, a team of trained professionals created to provide emotional support to those who needed it.

“We quickly figured out that no one was immune from the trauma of what our community had experienced,” remembered Annmarie Cameron, CEO of the Mental Wellness Center (MWC). “Every day became an opportunity to offer comfort and normalize the post-disaster experience for everyone we encountered.”

Funded through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), California HOPE 805 addresses the needs of those directly or indirectly affected by the disasters, through a series of outreach efforts, including education, crisis counseling, and resource referrals.

At the same time that the Montecito Center was established, the Community Wellness Team came together weekly to create a wide reaching response to the community mental health needs. Fourteen agencies

participated, including the MWC, Cottage Health, Santa Barbara County Department of Behavioral Wellness, Institute for Collective Trauma and Growth, Santa Barbara Response Network, Hospice of Santa Barbara, Jewish Family Service of Greater Santa Barbara, and the Santa Barbara County Psychological Association.

“The emphasis was in supporting one another in our individual services, but also connecting our work,” Cameron said. “We would all show up for events or training to work together as a team rather than separate agencies.”

When asked about her key role in post-disaster relief, Cameron instead highlights her gratitude for the community response she has seen. She shares that the most positive outcome has been the notable level of residents’ compassion towards one another.

*PHOTO: The California Hope 805 team at Montecito 4th of July Community Celebration.*



“There has been a greater sensitivity and appreciation in the community,” she said. “Even if someone wasn’t personally impacted, they have empathy for others who have been. And that’s important – a major challenge in this work is getting people to understand others when they can’t physically see the effects of mental trauma.”

With that, she mentions there has also been a greater understanding that support for mental wellness should be provided at any time, not only at the point of severe distress.

“A big barrier in mental health, is that people have to exhibit signs of significant distress before they’re eligible for services,” she explained, “and we don’t do that with things like diabetes and heart disease. We don’t wait for someone to have a heart attack or an amputation before we get them help. So with mental health, it’s crucial to offer help even when there are no severe symptoms.”

Cameron says the one-year grant from FEMA allowed the MWC to hire 14 full-time staff members to assist in post-disaster relief efforts. That number has dropped to six, which she says is a good thing because it indicates that the need has decreased over time, while residents’ resiliency is increasing.

With the program ending on April 30, the California Hope 805 team is making one final push to provide support to affected residents while connecting them with ongoing resources as needed. This will include team members going into the Carpinteria, Montecito, and Mesa areas to distribute 5,000 door hangers as a reminder that help is still available.

In addition to continued disaster relief efforts, Cameron wants to address a county-wide trend she notices related to youth and mental health services. That is, she speaks to youth who have less stigmas around mental illness, but face barriers when seeking help from parents, teachers, and caregivers who dismiss their issues as “a phase” or “something they will get over.”

“The prevalence of anxiety and depression, especially among teens and young adults, is increasing,” she said. “It’s important to create a community culture that is informed, empathetic, and prepared to help when someone needs it.”

To address this issue, MWC is once again partnering



*PHOTO: Class of 2018 graduating seniors from the Mental Wellness Center's Youth Wellness Connection Council.*

with other community agencies. Together with Family Service Agency and the YouthWell Coalition, MWC will be offering Youth Mental Health First Aid, a free training course available for the next three years, targeted to parents and teachers. The goal is to educate adults on best practices when interacting with youth who are facing mental health challenges.

Cameron shares final thoughts on mental wellness in Santa Barbara County and how she sees it progressing in the future: “[MWC has] been in the community for 70 years. For the first five decades, we focused on adults who live with severe mental illness. Then it occurred to us that the number of [individuals] who suffer silently was increasing, and we had to reach them at an earlier juncture to minimize the impact of untreated mental illness.”

“The demand for mental health education is rapidly growing, and people want to know what they can do to help,” she continued. “Although we can’t cure [mental] illness, we can certainly support and help individuals and families manage their issues. We can be a resource so that others don’t have to live in isolation and pain.”

*MWC was a 2017 & 2018 recipient of a Santa Barbara Foundation Core Support for Basic Needs grant award (now the Behavioral Health grant program). For more information on MWC and its services to Santa Barbara County, visit [www.mentalwellnesscenter.org](http://www.mentalwellnesscenter.org).*



PACIFIC PRIDE FOUNDATION OPENS NEW COUNSELING OFFICE IN SANTA MARIA

Earlier this year, the Pacific Pride Foundation (PPF) utilized funding from the Santa Barbara Foundation to open a new counseling office at their Pride Center in Santa Maria (pictured below). PPF is a countywide agency that focuses on supporting the rights and well being of LGBTQ+ individuals, their families, and those impacted by HIV/AIDS. PPF counselors with an expertise in LGBTQ+ mental health and wellness use the new Santa Maria facility to host therapy programs for individuals, couples, and families.

"We are so grateful to the Santa Barbara Foundation for the investment they are helping us make to the city of Santa Maria," said PPF Executive Director Colette Schabram. "There is a need for LGBTQ+ people to be seen by therapists who can work with their unique identities. We are happy to have opened the doors to Counseling at the Pride Center in Santa Maria."

To learn more about PPF and their important work, visit [pacificpridefoundation.org](http://pacificpridefoundation.org).



A MESSAGE FROM JACKIE CARRERA  
CHIEF REVENUE & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

From the stories in this report to the unheard and untold stories across Santa Barbara County, it is evident that our communities are not immune from behavioral health and health care challenges. And when we pull data points from this *County Connections Report* and other resources in our community and put them on the adjacent page, the evidence is overwhelming. Gratefully, our local agencies are rising to the challenge to provide opportunities for community members to thrive and we support these efforts.

The Santa Barbara Foundation through its tenure of consistent grantmaking and community engagement has become a knowledge base of trends keeping tabs on the pulse of Santa Barbara County's most pressing issues. Accumulating this data sparked the rigorous research process of a strategic plan to make sure we are responsive in addressing the critical needs of our community. Behavioral health and health care was identified as a top priority of the Santa Barbara Foundation and we restructured our grant programs to align with these needs.

In January, our team went across the county to share this data in Community Information Sessions, meeting with social sector leaders to share how we can assist and connect them with opportunities for their organizations to succeed and make a difference.

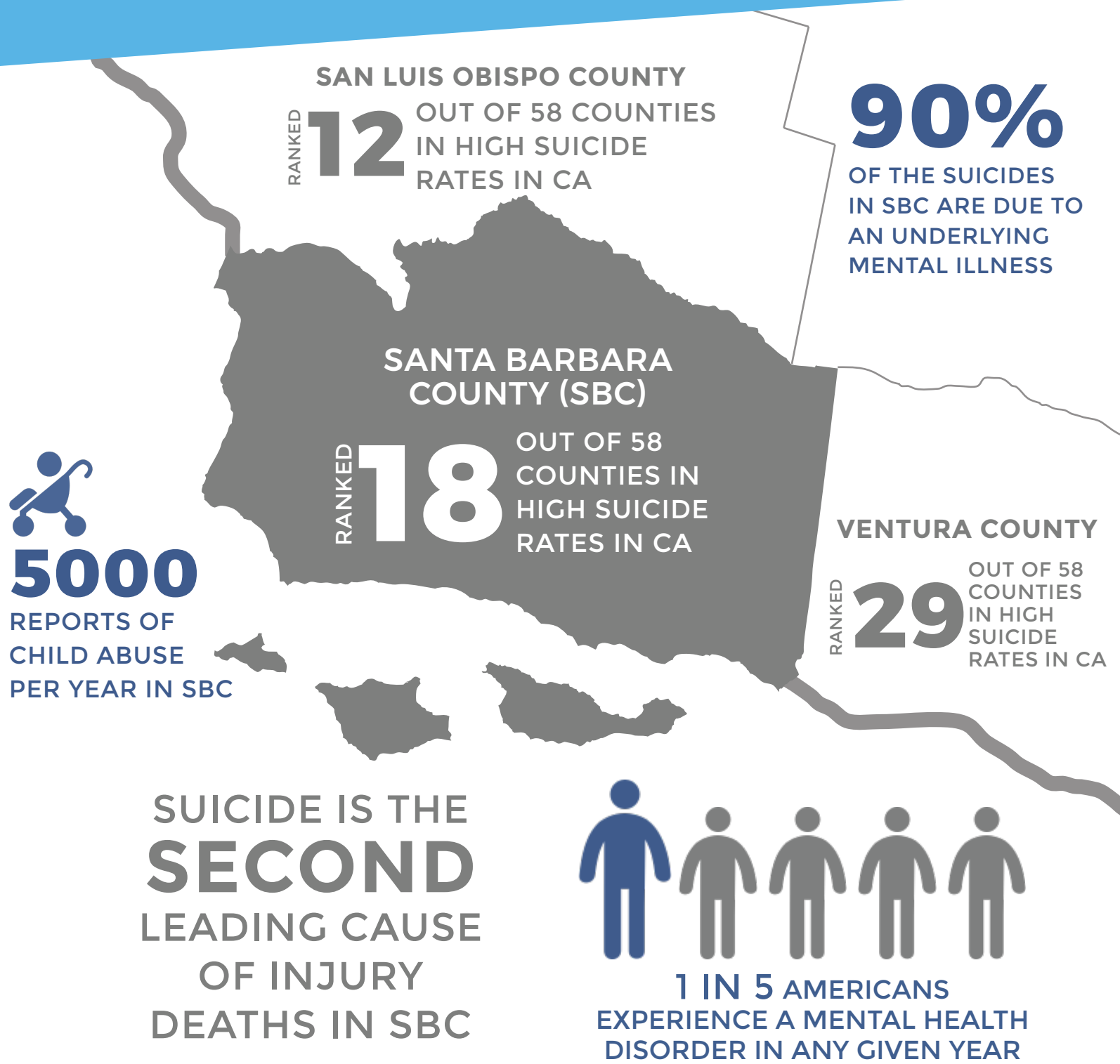
Our work is focused on cultivating leadership, promoting innovation, and fostering collaboration throughout our county. We are on the frontlines of trends and with your support through our Community Engagement Fund, you can help eliminate barriers that are keeping our communities from thriving. Invest with SBF today at [SBFoundation.org](http://SBFoundation.org).

Jackie



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Infographic below contains data mentioned in the County Connections Report.







 [SBFoundation.org](http://SBFoundation.org)

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## SBF'S COMMUNITY EVENTS



SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

### Leadership Awards

Please join us for the First Annual  
Santa Barbara County Leadership Awards!

**TUESDAY, MAY 14, 4 PM - 6 PM**

Hotel Corque, Solvang  
Program begins at 4:30 PM

**FREE TO THE COMMUNITY**

To RSVP please go to: [SBFoundation.org/SBCLAwards](http://SBFoundation.org/SBCLAwards)



**WEDNESDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 4**

**11:30 AM - 1:00 PM**

Coral Casino, Montecito

Nominations are open  
April 29 through June 7.  
Tickets go on sale July 29.

To nominate & purchase  
tickets please go to:  
**[SBFoundation.org/  
MWAwards](http://SBFoundation.org/MWAwards)**



**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7**

Celebrate Philanthropy honors individuals, couples or families who, through direct service or financial support, have demonstrated outstanding civic and charitable work in the Santa Maria Valley.

**[SBFoundation.org/CPAwards](http://SBFoundation.org/CPAwards)**

## ON THE COVER:

The Mental Wellness Center (MWC) offers various programs and collaborations for youth, including the Youth Wellness Connection Council. These programs are dedicated to promoting behavioral health resources for young people in Santa Barbara County. Read more about MWC's community impact on pages 11-12.

## INSIDE:

We have changed the name of this publication from our *Quarterly Report* to our *County Connections Report*. Don't worry, you will still receive this report at the end of the quarter, but we have organized themes and data points to share pressing issues in our communities. Donor acknowledgement and SBF finances will be in our new *Year In Review Report* that we will share with the community very soon. We hope you enjoy!

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