



Southern
California
Counseling
Center

dialog

Fall 2019

A publication for supporters of the
Southern California Counseling Center

Gail Wilburn

Stepping Away After Eleven Years
as SCCC's Executive Director

OUR IMPACT
Building on Strengths
Forging Resilience

How Far We've Come!

Gail Wilburn, Executive Director



Since going from counselor to Executive Director in 2008, a lot has changed at SCCC, but our mission has remained the same for the past 50 plus years. We change lives and strengthen communities by providing affordable mental health counseling to people in need. I am proud to have led the Center for the past 11 years and I'm grateful for the opportunity to have worked with so many talented, caring counselors, supervisors, Board and staff members.

Taking the reins in 2008 during the "Great Recession" was challenging but also invigorating. As we joined together with hard working and generous Board members, we, as a staff, were determined to forge ahead, believing in our service to our clients and our counselors in training. Along the way, we gained generous support from foundations and individuals that enabled us to look ahead with vision and planning. Our Board members encouraged us to dream, and we sure did!

In 2014, we hired our first psychiatrist, making affordable, medical evaluation available for the first time in our history. Because the need was so great, we brought on a second psychiatrist in 2016. Dr. Kim Cookson began a yearly Trauma and Resiliency Training Program in 2012. Our School Based Program grew to include nine schools, along with an excellent training program for our counselors. In 2016, we partnered with the Karsh Family Social Service Center of the Wilshire Blvd. Temple to provide services for SCCC and Karsh clients in Koreatown. And, after providing counseling services for members of the Watts Labor Community Action Committee in Watts beginning in 2014, we opened our first satellite office on the grounds of WLCAC in January 2018.

I send my deep thanks to all who have made this wonderful ride possible. I look forward to news of the places the Center will go as we move through a new and exciting landscape.

Gail M. Wilburn

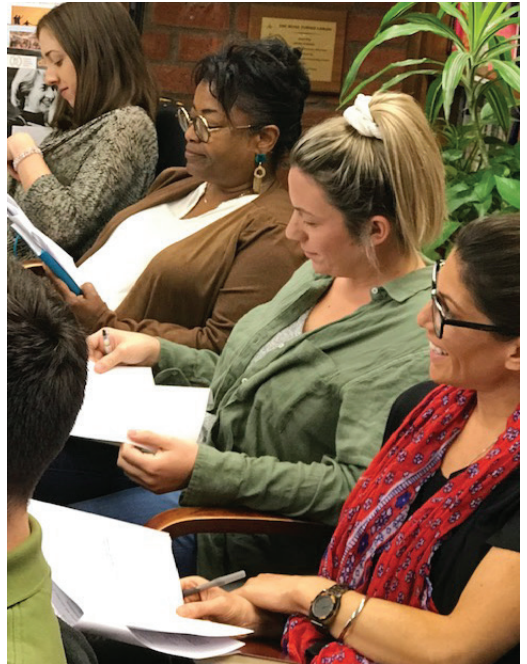
Charting A Path Ahead

Margo Peck, Board Chair

It's remarkable to look back and see how far the Counseling Center has come, the milestones and challenges that have been key to making us who we are in 2019. All that wouldn't be possible

without the bedrock foundation SCCC relies upon—a carefully thought out mission and values, a strategic planning process that has been instrumental in carving our success over the past six years, but most importantly, we depend on the dedication

and commitment of donors, volunteers and



Counselors in training, top to bottom, Christine Archer, Kimberlee Minor, Zena Rice-Sarantis and Karly Meola.

staff who stand behind our efforts to change lives and strengthen communities with affordable, accessible mental health services, training and support.

As we approach the end of the year and 2020, the Board of Directors wishes to thank Gail Wilburn for all her efforts in guiding the Center's work over the past 11 years. Her departure means we all should reflect on the importance of approaching change and transition with the same spirit that drives all our undertakings at SCCC. The Board is focused on conducting a thoughtful, comprehensive search for a new director who can help further our efforts to address the diverse complex and changing needs of our communities. We seek a person with the skill, background and wisdom to understand what makes a nonprofit strong as well as how services and training can be conducted with the greatest cultural sensitivity. We believe that mental health care should not depend on sheer luck or fortune, but be easily available and accessible to all. With that in mind, we trust that this process will be meaningful and transformative for us all. It is with full appreciation for the flexibility and integrity of our volunteers and staff as they participate in this vital process that we pledge to keep everyone informed as we move ahead. Our deep thanks to all of you for your understanding and support.

Margo Peck

Why Care about Mental Health?

Every day the Southern California Counseling Center stands behind its vision to ensure that those in need can access the services and support of our counselors and staff. We envision and work to create empowered communities where mental health care is a right, not a privilege.

We see empowered communities as essential to the health and well being of families and individuals everywhere. We're proud of our efforts that not only serve those in need but also train and support volunteers who strive to do what they can to help others improve their lives. In the process, they develop urgently needed skills and cultural sensitivity that make their work impactful. This issue of the newsletter weaves together the various elements that constitute our efforts in the broader community. All these elements depend on and integrate with the others to form a cohesive fabric of support.



Counselors discuss issues of identity and how they impact the counseling process with instructor Rev. Alexander Woo, LMFT, standing.

Most recently our Board of Directors reviewed our Strategic Plan and renewed our commitment to values it espouses:

Respect: We value and respect every person, honoring their history, cultural values and community context.

Volunteerism: Volunteer counselors and supervisors are at the heart of the Southern California Counseling Center; they are the connection to our client communities.

Training: We provide the highest quality training and education for our volunteer counselors and supervisors, other licensed professionals and individuals in other social service organizations.

Welcoming Environment: Our accessible, supportive environment reduces barriers to participation and to receiving care.

Empowerment: We support our clients as they access the resources required to grow, thrive, and make positive changes in their lives and their communities.

Learning: We continually evaluate and strengthen our programs and services through collaboration among clients, counselors,



Counselors exploring approaches to family therapy, left to right, Adrienne Rusk, Miri McKelheer and Alicia Dewell.

supervisors, staff, board members and the wider community.

These values were first adopted in 2013 and they still ring true today as we begin another training year with a new cadre of counselors beginning their journeys with us.

How the Journey Begins

Each year counselors apply to enter SCCC's training programs by undergoing initial interviews and evaluation groups, which are designed to identify strengths and weakness for conducting psychotherapy with the people we serve. Most come from graduate programs in psychology; others are paraprofessionals who demonstrate particular aptitude and dedication to serving the range of people who come to us for assistance. Paraprofessionals participate in the same training and supervision as those who completing graduate degrees and seek to complete hours for licensure. Counselors are asked to make a commitment to

We value and respect every person,
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and community context.

the process for two years. Many stay longer, refining their skills and helping more of those in need.

Throughout their work at SCCC, counselors meet weekly in groups and individually with licensed mental health professionals from the community who volunteer their time and expertise to ensure the quality of the services we provide. Currently, 85 professionals donate their time each week to assist our counselors and serve as important mentors to the trainees and associates who provide services and support to the community.

As counselors step into their role in delivering services and meeting needs, they do so through a range of programs that address specific issues and concerns. These programs connect with each other in meaningful ways, augmenting each other and making greater change possible for those we serve.

The Open Door Program—

Our main program provides individuals, couples and families with high quality, low-cost mental health counseling services, with client fees set according to a client's ability to pay. The program seeks to ensure that those with low income and little or no health insurance have access to affordable, quality mental health services.

The counseling services we provide address the full range of mental health issues and concerns, including trauma, grief and loss, parenting difficulties, anger and rage, economic hardship, job loss, poverty, as well as relationship issues, interpersonal



Counselors meet weekly in group supervision to discuss client needs. Above, left to right, Chrissy Comlish, supervisor, and counselors Megan Burford and Aurora Kaye.

conflict, and marital problems, among many others. We also work to identify and treat often debilitating mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, and provide crucial assessment of risks for suicide, domestic violence and child abuse. Our services help clients develop the skills and strategies they need to navigate personal and family crises; understand their own reactions, fears and concerns; and implement plans of action that

foster optimism, resiliency and hope. This program served 2,563 individuals and families in 2018.

The Abuse Prevention Program—

Also known as TAPP, this program provides anger management group counseling to help participants develop positive attitudes and behaviors needed to prevent family and interpersonal violence. Those who attend the program find new ways to manage conflict, stress, anger, and difficult emotions. Clients learn about the “cycle of violence” and ways to intervene on their own behalf to alleviate its impact in their own lives. The program features separate groups for men and women, as well as a separate group for survivors of interpersonal violence. Many who participate in this program are mandated to do so by the courts. This program served 153 adults in 2018.

SCCC Programs Create

Outreach Program—

SCCC's Outreach Program provides group counseling designed to address the roots of violence in our communities. Services include the Rage Resolution and Stress Navigation group, which provides a safe place where the anger and rage that often



Outreach counselors explore gender identity issues in group supervision. Above, left to right, Joshua Gonzales, Program Director Marianne Diaz, Farah Zerehi, Delia Aceituno and Ben Fineman.

fuels gang violence can be shared without judgment and participants can explore more constructive, positive interpersonal skills and attitudes.

The Youth Violence Prevention Group serves teens at risk for incarceration and gang activity by providing a setting in which they can talk about their experiences, share their feelings, and gain support from one another and from skilled, caring counselors as they develop better interpersonal skills, greater capacity for sound decision making, and effective strategies for managing conflict without resorting to violence. This program served 79 adults and youth in 2018.

SCCC Watts—

In January 2018, SCCC opened a satellite center, SCCC Watts, on the campus of the Watts Labor and Community Action Committee (WLCAC) in South Los Angeles. In conjunction with SCCC's Outreach Program, trauma-informed mental health services are provided for families and individuals, as well as parenting groups, anger management groups, trauma-informed yoga, and individual, couple, and family counseling for both court-mandated and self-referred clients. SCCC-Watts serves approximately 2,800 clients annually.

Psychiatric Services—

Since 2014, SCCC has provided Psychiatric Services as an urgently needed adjunct to our mental health services. Two consulting psychiatrists provide psychiatric assessment and ongoing medication management two days per week at our Pico location. In addition, they provide training on the interface between psychiatric services and mental health counseling to our counselors, adding an important element to our training programs. This program served 165 adults in 2018.

Powerful Impacts

School-based Counseling Program—

With reductions in funding a continual problem for public education, schools' counseling staffs can be consistently overwhelmed, with as many as 1,000 students to every staff counselor. Needless to say, far too many children fall through the cracks day after day; without assistance, these children can fall further and further behind, and experience greater risks for gang involvement, violence and substance abuse.

Each week during the school year SCCC counselors visit nine public school campuses in the Mid-City area of Los Angeles to provide students with private, one-on-one counseling sessions at no cost

to either the student's family or school. The impact of a child receiving skilled, undivided attention from a caring, compassionate counselor on a weekly basis is invaluable. To help ensure that



Above, a new counselor supervision group, left to right, Caitlin Kwan, supervisor Paul Langlotz and Alegria Demeestere.

we address the often-complex issues facing students and their families today, we also provide them with family therapy free of charge at our location on Pico Blvd. This program served 165 students in grades K-12 in 2018.

Best Practices Parenting Program—

The Best Practices Parenting Program helps parents develop positive relationships with their children, as well as supports parents' goals and dreams for their children. The program explores ways in which parents can identify and manage the issues and realities that get in the way of their good intentions and create conditions for potential abuse and trauma. Topics include exploration of societal expectations, child development, discipline vs. punishment, and the acquisition of tools and resources for parents when seeking to meet the needs of their children. All too often parents in community settings can feel isolated and overwhelmed not only by their children's needs, but by economic, personal and relationship issues. The Best Practices Parenting Program offers parents a safe, compassionate environment in which to develop their own strengths as parents and put new

ideas into practice with support and guidance. This program served 20 adults in 2018.

Trauma and Resiliency Training and Services—

Since 2012, the Trauma and Resiliency Training and Services program trains third-year counselors and supervisors in state-of-the-art somatic treatment approaches for addressing the impact of trauma, which the field of mental health has increasingly recognized as underlying risks for depression, anxiety, violence and substance abuse. Trauma-informed work has become central to SCCC's mission to address the deeper issues among those we serve.

Community Counselor Certification Program—

Designed to support capacity for much needed counseling skills throughout Los Angeles County, the Community Counselor Certification Program trains paraprofessional counselors



Outreach counselors, left to right, Min Kang, Ryan Levin and Caroline Taylor discuss their experiences with group counseling.

working at other social services agencies, giving them essential counseling and interpersonal skills that help them to be more effective in addressing the needs of the low-income and underserved

communities they serve. Participants attending the six-month weekly training program come from agencies that deal with such issues as homelessness, LGBTQ+, HIV/AIDS, drug treatment, schools, gang prevention, violence prevention and other forms of rehabilitation. This program trains approximately 60 individuals annually.

Counselor Training Program—

SCCC has long held a national reputation as one of the premier training sites on the West Coast for psychotherapists seeking licensure in California. Currently, 110 counselor trainees and associates work as volunteers, providing more than 40,000 hours of counseling each year for low-income individuals, couples and families. In return, they receive excellent clinical supervision and training by 85 experienced licensed mental health professionals who also volunteer their time and expertise on behalf of those we serve.



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