
ARTICLE

Wellness Fair: A Kick-Off Partnership**San Francisco Psychological Association, CLASP, Glide Memorial Church
Wellness Initiative, Alliant University****By Ilene Serlin, Ph.D., with Cynthia Kessler**

When I began my presidency of the San Francisco Psychological Association in 2009, the recession had just hit. Our offices were filled with people in despair, uncertain about their homes and families, their futures, a whole new reality. Where was the voice of psychology; how could we help?

With the support of our board at our fall retreat, I envisioned two new priorities that would help the San Francisco Psychological Association be more visible to the community: 1) Giving our members an added benefit of caregiver satisfaction and regeneration by being able to volunteer with San Francisco mental health organizations; and 2) Joining with CLASP, other San Francisco community health associations, Alliant University, CIIS and other graduate schools to organize a Wellness Fair at Glide Memorial Church.

This Wellness Fair would celebrate a new partnership between mental health and other health organizations through whole person health and wellness toolkits. The San Francisco Psychological Association is a local chapter of the California Psychological Association that provides “members with varied benefits and our community with volunteer resources and other information” (from the SFPA brochure). One of its committees, CLASP (Colleague Assistance and Support Program) focuses on self-care, prevention and wellness. Alliant International University, another co-sponsor, “prepares students for professional careers and leadership” and “promotes the discovery and application of knowledge to improve the lives of people in diverse communities around the world” (from Alliant International University’s website).

GLIDE’s Health Services focuses on the homeless and poor, providing affordable, accessible and quality healthcare. It offers a full range of traditional health care services, as well as mental health, substance abuse, non-Western medicine and specific programs focusing on testing and prevention of HIV/AIDS and the treatment of diabetes. Located at Ellis and Taylor in the Tenderloin, one of San Francisco's harshest urban environments, GLIDE is an oasis that has served the poor and disenfranchised for over 40 years. From serving nearly one million meals a year, to holiday programs helping over 80,000, to operating a professional medical clinic, to youth job training, to offering weekly spiritual celebrations at GLIDE Church, and much more – GLIDE touches the lives of many people. GLIDE has helped thousands of disenfranchised and poor people get back on their feet and find their way to jobs, housing and spiritual fulfillment.

In August 2011, GLIDE Health Services (GHS) will open a new door to health promotion, disease prevention and client empowerment with the launch of the Wellness Center. The Wellness Center, made possible through a grant from the Federal Bureau of Health Professions, will build on the GHS nurse-managed model of holistic primary care to offer “hands on” classes in better eating (and cooking!), physical movement, stress reduction and improving relationships at work and with intimate partners. Clients will learn to “live well” with chronic diseases--such as diabetes, depression and chronic pain--through group and peer activities that will both educate and support them to sustain positive choices in diet and lifestyle. Glide’s popular recovery groups for clients with substance abuse issues will be expanded to include acupuncture, as well as smoking cessation and gender-specific groups on violence.

The Wellness Center will also have expanded TB surveillance and immunization services.

The intention of the Wellness Fair was to bring together a roster of community resources with mental health services like depression screening, and health services like blood pressure measures, and wellness tools like acupuncture, yoga and meditation, and nutrition.

After two years of meetings about how to best meet the community's mental and physical health needs, the Wellness Fair day dawned on April 8, 2011 with sunshine and much excitement in Glide Memorial's Freedom Hall. The result was an array of highly relevant community health and wellness services and resources assembled under one roof.

Volunteers from Alliant International University, San Francisco State's Dept. of Holistic Health, California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), UCSF and the SF Psychological Association greeted participants at the door, escorted them to registration and information tables, stamped their passports, staffed the tables and handed out healthy snacks and incentives. Participants sampled tables offering blood pressure and diabetes checks, depression screening, walk-in recovery, HIV/sexual health, an information table which offered such critical services as an LGBTQI Survivors of Suicide Grief Support Group and SFCD (Support for Families of Children with Disabilities), acupuncture and massage, the Shih Yu-Lang Central YMCA and Addus Healthcare, Richmond Area Multi-Service and Central City Hospitality House, yoga and meditation, biofeedback, dance/movement therapy, biofeedback, CLASP, the San Francisco Psychological Association, APA's Mind/Body Campaign, CIIS expressive therapies, SF Suicide Prevention, the Mental Health Association of San Francisco, Alliant University, and the Feeling Good Project.

SFPA's Ilene Serlin invited attendees to participate in what became a very popular dance therapy demonstration, while Richard Harvey offered an equally popular biofeedback demonstration. Cynthia Kessler, Joy Sassoon, and Dan Gaylinn provided information and APA brochures on topics such as stress, depression and anxiety, PTSD, and resiliency. CIIS's Expressive Arts Program, with its large rolls of poster paper and colored markers, invited participants to express themselves. Other popular offerings were chair massages, mini meditations for stress management, blood pressure screenings, HIV testing, and nutritional education and support.

While the Glide Health and Wellness Fair was mostly focused on a very under-served community, it also served as a very humbling reminder that no matter what our life circumstances, we humans still all have the same basic needs and can work together for the betterment of the community.

For those going to APA:

April 2012 Trip to Israel Trauma Centers

Session I: Friday, Aug. 5, 9-10:30AM, Renaissance Washington DC hotel: Div. 32 Hospitality Suite

Session II: Saturday, Aug. 6, 1-1:50, Grand Hyatt: Div. 56 Hospitality Suite