



# ***The Beach Voter***

League of Women Voters Beach Cities  
Serving El Segundo, Hawthorne, Hermosa Beach, Inglewood, Manhattan Beach & Redondo Beach



## **Mental Health Forum Brings Experts Together**

On Monday April 24, more than 90 people attended "Mental Health is Everybody's Business," a forum at the Toyota Meeting Hall, Torrance Cultural Arts Center in Torrance. The Leagues of Women Voters of the Beach Cities, Palos Verdes Peninsula and the Torrance Area co-sponsored the forum with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, SBCC Thrive LA, the Beach Cities Health District and the Manhattan Beach Senior Resources Committee.

After Barbara Arlow, LWVBC President, introduced special guests, including Janet Turner from US Representative Ted Lieu's office, Jenn Hardy from California Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi's office, Youngsook Kim-Sasaki, Service Area 8 District Chief, LA County Dept. of Mental Health, and Paul Stansbury,

President of the National Alliance on Mental Illness South Bay LA County, the Forum began with Dr. Sam Chan, former District Chief, Children's Systems of Care, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. Dr. Chan's topic "Brain Research Frontiers and Critical Public Mental Health Issues," (See p. 4)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE	PAGE
Mental Health Forum	1, 4-5
Inside this Issue	2
New Members & Contributions	3
Annual Meeting – Running for Office	3
Tri-League Brunch – “How to Bring Homeless Back Into Community”	6-7
Calendar	8
Insert: Legislative Interview With Assembly-member Al Muratsuchi	

The League affirms our belief in our commitment to diversity and pluralism. There shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the League on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin or disability. The League recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision-making.

The League of Women Voters encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a League member. The League does not endorse, support or oppose candidates or political parties.

The Beach Voter

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**New Members**

We have three new members this month: Therese Neyslaedter of Hermosa Beach, Pamela Jamar of Redondo Beach and Julie Zander of Westchester. Welcome to all, we look forward to seeing you at one of our future meetings.

**Non-Event**

The generosity of our members continues with contributions from Harriet Chase, Marge Thelen, Mignon Thiem Murphy, Carole Wagner Vallianos, Olivia Valentine and June Weiss. Thank you all for helping to keep our League strong and vital.

Susan Grebe, Treasurer

**Annual Meeting Speaker Urges Women to Run For Office**

by Joan Arias

On May 6, 2017, Penny Markey opened her beautiful home to the League for our Annual Meeting. The highlight of the program was Diane Wallace's presentation on running for elected office – losing and winning. She noted that 27% of all elected offices in the United States are occupied by women although women represent 51% of the voting public. She said that studies show that women have a better chance of running if they are asked to run! She encouraged everyone to run for office. In the South Bay only 11% of elected officials in the South Bay are women (but 4 out of 5 of the Los Angeles Supervisors are women!). Local school boards have more women representatives but women are not heavily represented on city councils. She pointed to the bipartisan women's effort at cooperation in the United States Senate as an example of women working together.

Diane noted that we need to encourage women; we need to hold events so that women who are running (or might run) can meet and greet local people. She added that women are not comfortable with fund raising and this is a problem that we need to work on. Even small contributions add to budgets. Based on her recent experience with the Manhattan Beach City Council election, she pointed out that outside groups with money can have (and did have) a huge influence. Diane is a member of an organization that would like to see full disclosure of donors and full transparency in elections.

Her counsel to all who run was that you must be willing to lose! You must develop a thick skin. Money makes a big difference although her triumph was that she managed to run for City Council without going into debt and without accepting funds from organizations or business groups! She gave us a great deal to think about.

(Mental Health Forum – continued from p. 1.) focused on the brain as "the most critical and complex organ in the body" (despite the fact that it only weighs 3 pounds!). He noted that we are now in the "Golden Age of Neuroscience" and referenced President Obama's Brain initiative (Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies) as a bold new research effort to revolutionize our understanding of the human mind and uncover new ways to treat, prevent, and cure brain disorders like Alzheimer's, schizophrenia, autism, epilepsy, and traumatic brain injury. Dr. Chan added that Elon Musk's (founder, CEO, and CTO of SpaceX) "new frontier" is the Brain! Dr. Chan talked about the anatomy of the brain and which parts of the brain control certain functions. He noted that the brain is a social organ and pointed to Daniel Siegel's book *The Neurobiology of "We": How Relationships, the Mind, and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*. Dr. Chan described a state of well-being as one in which individuals realize their own abilities, can cope with life stresses, work fruitfully and productively and are able to contribute to the community. He emphasized that there is "no health without mental health."

By age 14, half of all mental disorders begin to manifest and by age 24, 3/4 of all mental disorders are evident. The most common disorders are anxiety (especially hidden anxiety) and depression. These have huge costs and yet we have inadequate treatment resources. He pointed to the gap in available treatments and a long list of issues affecting mental health: poverty, substance abuse, neglect, loneliness and social isolation are some of these.

He particularly noted that the recent presidential election created enormous stress, pointing to a poll showing that 2/3 of Americans say they are stressed about our future. In a study of happiness (the Scandinavian countries came out on top!) we did not do very well. And He described happiness as wanting what one has rather than "success" which is having what you want! He stressed the importance of physical health for mental health - the integration of both.

As moderator of the forum, Dr. Chan introduced Dr. Laurel Bear, Assistant Superintendent of Student/Employee Welfare for the Alhambra Unified School District. Dr. Bear described the District's special program, "Gateway to Success - Building a Learning Community of Care," which promotes student and staff welfare by delivering services at the school in the belief that the earlier treatment begins, the more success will be achieved. She noted that "kids who need love the most will ask for it in the most unloving of ways, quoting from "Russell A. Barkley, a clinical professor of psychiatry at the Medical University of South Carolina and an author of books on ADHD. The program she describes helps professionals work with students who act out by engaging rather than removing them. She noted that trauma causes a range of problems and the Gateway to Success program attempts to identify the need for mental health treatment and helps eliminate the school-to-prison gateway, focusing on intervention and referral rather than punishment.

The next member of the forum, Dr. Lishan Workeneh, Assistant Chief, Psychiatry for the Kaiser Permanente South Bay Medical Center, talked about integrating mental health into the health setting, collaborating with other physicians and health workers. She emphasized the need for integration of mental and physical health programs especially for teens since so many mental disorders begin during the teen years. Mental and physical practitioners often get "Siloed" and the Kaiser program emphasizes integration and reaching out by patient visiting even electronically through a Skype-like telemedicine.

Dr. Debbie Innes-Gomberg, Deputy Director, Adult System of Care, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health also emphasized that there is no health without mental health and pointed to the fact

that suicide is now the second major cause of death among young people. Accidents are the first but suicide has surpassed homicide as a cause of death. She pointed to the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63 from 2004) which placed a 1% tax on people making more than a million dollars a year and profoundly changed mental health treatment. For the first time, it provided money for prevention. She described the service continuum as now including services for people who already suffer from mental illness. There are now funds for learning and testing out models of care as well as workforce education and training.

Dr. Innes-Gomberg is looking at alternative delivery mechanisms such as telemedicine and focusing on "Recovery: recovery, resilience and reintegration" to transition clients back to the community with outreach and services. She described housing initiatives and early intervention programs as well as campaigns for stigma reduction and discrimination. She described the Mental Health Services act as a vehicle for change, noting that Adult Full Service Partnership (FSP) programs are designed for adults ages 26-59 who have been diagnosed with a severe mental illness and would benefit from an intensive service program. The foundation of Full Service Partnerships is doing "whatever it takes" to help individuals on their path to recovery and wellness.

The final speaker, Cathy Williamson, Community Service Counselor, Adult System of Care, LA County Department of Mental Health told her personal story of having a child with a mental illness and the challenges she faced in working with him, the importance of empathy, openness and listening as well as the importance of demystifying the issue of mental illness.

A brief question and answer session followed after which attendees had time to review the materials and information distributed by the attending groups.

KUDOS	KUDOS	KUDOS	KUDOS
<p>Thank you to the Tri-League Mental Health Committee for putting on a great forum. It was a joy for me, in the last six months, to be working with a creative, intelligent and dedicated committee. The forum was a success as shown by the number of attendees, their attention to the speakers, their interest shown at the resource tables and their conversations with the panelists after the program. The committee included Dr. Sam Chan, former District Chief, LA County Dept. of Mental Health; Paul Stansbury, President, National Alliance on Mental Illness South Bay Los Angeles; Felipe Ocampo, LA County Dept. of Mental Health SPA 8; Debra Estroff, Ellen Beaumel, Jan Nathanson, Joan LeSage, Margaret Thelen, Marty Leveille, Penny Markey, Ellen Alkon (PVP), Vi Iungerich (PVP), Jackie LaBouff (Torrance Area). Others who helped at the Forum included Peggy Bartlett, Susan Grebe, Ruth Hart and June Eicker.</p> <p>Harriet Chase Mental Health Program Chair</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>THANK <u>YOU</u> HARRIET CHASE!</b></p> <p>Once again, under your leadership, our annual spring membership meeting, <b>MENTAL HEALTH IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS</b>, was a huge success.</p>			

## Tri-League Brunch April 8, 2017

By Joan Arias

On April 8, 2017, a League of Women Voters Tri-League (Beach Cities, Palos Verdes Peninsula, Torrance Area) group of 60 gathered at the Depot in Torrance for brunch and to hear Dr. Mark Ragins speak on "How to Bring the Homeless Back into the Community."

Athena Paquette Cormier, President, LWV Torrance Area, introduced the League presidents and honored guests from Torrance City Government. In a tribute to Jamie Ruth Watson, long-time League member and activist, Torrance Mayor Patrick J. Furey read a proclamation honoring Jamie and other attendees spoke of her love of books and her long service to the community. For a complete obituary on Jamie Watson, go to the Daily Breeze at:

<http://www.dailybreeze.com/obituaries/20170124/jamie-watson-1948-2017-civic-volunteer-planning-commissioner-loved-torrance-history>

Following the tribute, Athena introduced Dr. Mark Ragins, a psychiatrist who served as Medical Director at the MHALA Village in Long Beach, an award-winning model of recovery-based mental health care. Now a psychiatrist with the CSU Long Beach Counseling and Psychological Services, and award winning author and provider of psychiatric services, he began by pointing to the strong association between poverty and serious mental illness. He noted that he had to work in the public sector since resources and support such as funds and medical accessibility, are lacking for this population. "When you are suffering from mental illness, even if you start in the middle or even upper class, you can end up poor," he commented, pointing to the downward social drift experienced by people with mental illnesses.

He talked about his broad experiences including the "real education" he received during his time as an intern on Skid Row. "The normal systems don't work for homeless people...everything had to be 'drop-in'." He learned all the ways "normal doctors, social workers and other professionals" didn't work! Dr. Ragins said that people who work with this population had to demonstrate their willingness to "go past what no reasonable person would do!" The main barrier to providing help is that "people on Skid Row wouldn't follow any advice!"

Using the metaphor of a river of struggling people, he described how homeless people fit into the community. He pointed to the "web of relations in our community" (not the safety net below, but the connections we have in our active communities). He referenced a Robert D. Putnam's 2000 book **Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community** to describe the way in which people drift when "something breaks" in their lives. They drift away from their communities or the communities drift away from them. Ragins described the basic loneliness experienced by people suffering from mental illness, the "alone-ness." The two high risk factors for homelessness, he noted were people aging out of foster care and returning veterans who have lost their peer support and their communities. He noted that a high percentage of homeless people experience early death.

Continuing the metaphor of a river, he pointed to the normal societal reaction to homeless populations is to "make sure that the river doesn't go by MY house!" That is, the normal reaction is to give money, to vote for "fixes" within "the river." People try to build programs in the river but the basic problems with that approach is that we run out of money and political will (when programs get cut, often these are the

programs that suffer cuts. As well, we run out of compassion and we dehumanize the populations.

Rather than fixing things “in the river,” we must build a bridge to enable people to get back, to reconnect. Dr. Ragins dramatically talked about the need for people to do three things:

1. Help from the bottom (of the river)
2. Help people rebuild their own connections
3. Help people who are arriving and getting reconnected

He noted that there are many programs that do some of these things but it is very rare to find programs that accomplish all three. Many programs are disconnected. The more we focus on a single problem, the less we can really help because no one has only one problem; these programs must focus broadly and be integrated.

Dr. Ragins described “three lanes” for the homeless/mentally ill

1. What is going on inside of you
2. What are your relationships – how reciprocal are they?
3. Your roles – you were something but you have lost yourself and need to redefine yourself. What do you aspire to do and what needs to change to get there?

Dr. Ragins described his specialty as being “at the river’s edge” and seeing things as the people in the river see things. “We now have teams going out to meet people where they’re at.” He noted the importance of relating to people as they see themselves and developing good relationships BEFORE diagnosing the problem. He noted the importance of looking for opportunities to connect and reconnect rather than creating more programs.

Following Dr. Ragins’ very well received presentation and a standing ovation, he graciously responded to questions from the group. We all agreed that this was one of the best presentations we have heard on a very difficult and troubling subject.

For additional information about Dr. Ragins and a bibliography, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark\\_Ragins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Ragins)



Participants in the Legislative Interview with Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi that is summarized in the insert to this *Voter*. From left to right, Joan Arias, Athena Paquette (LWV Torrance Area), Assemblymember Muratsuchi, Barbara Inatsugu (LWV Santa Monica) and Karen McLaurin Buresch (LWV Palos Verdes).

The summary was prepared by Joan Arias and approved by Assemblymember Muratsuchi.

<b>CALENDAR</b>			
Date	Time	Subject	Place
Thursday June 1 – Sunday June 4	See LWVC website www.lwvc.org	LWVC State Convention	Sheraton Grand Hotel Sacramento, CA
Monday June 12	7:00 pm – 9:30 pm	New/Old Board Meeting	Home of Debra Estroff 1909 Spreckles Ln, Unit A Redondo Beach, CA 90278
Saturday July 29	9:30 am – 2:00 p.m.	LWVLAC Summer League Day ”Popovers in Pasadena”	Women’s City Club 160 N. Oakland Ave. Pasadena, CA



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