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Welcome Back



Welcome to the second edition of *The Excelsior/Jump Bulletin*.

It's been a busy summer—lots of clients, lots of crises, lots of recovery. Dr. Dee details some noteworthy developments in her latest letter. Also in this edition:

- An [Interview with Lynette Peraza](#), client turned client advocate, in the Success Stories section
- [Poetry](#) by Cathy G. (Excelsior, '07).
- [Updates](#) from recent Excelsior/Jump alums.

And, new in this edition:

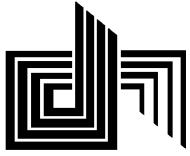
- [Recommended Reading](#)—including a variety of recovery-related book suggestions.
- [Staff Snapshot](#)—a brief profile of an outstanding Excelsior/Jump staff member. In this issue: Excelsior House's Rod Smith.
- Expanded links to housing and services in [The Excelsior/Jump Resource Guide](#).

Thanks for reading. Let us know what you think.

The Excelsior/Jump Bulletin is designed to help keep Excelsior House and Jump Street clients, staff, and friends to keep in touch and up-to-date with goings-on at the houses.

The Bulletin is edited and designed (with a lot of assistance from MS Publisher) by Excelsior House therapist, Will Baum, MSW.

Contributions, thoughts, and suggestions are welcomed and encouraged! Write us anytime at EJB@didihirsch.org.



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A Note From Dr. Dee

It's been another busy season at the Crisis Houses! The summer has seen new staff, new programs, and a rollicking first-ever retreat for staff of both Excelsior House and Jump Street.



Also, the 21st Century has finally arrived at the houses. The online bulletin you're reading is only part of our merger of technology and recovery. We have introduced a new effort to orient all Excelsior/Jump clients to the Internet—signing all clients up for email and adding computer skills to the house program schedules. We hope to help clients connect to resources, communicate with the houses, and, of course, with each other.

In an effort to provide outcome information regarding the continuing success of our alumni, we've begun collecting data from the Excelsior House and Jump Street alumni via an online survey set up through questionpro.com. This allows us to gather information about the improvements Excelsior/Jump alums have made—tracking progress in housing stability, sobriety, hospitalizations, and client support system. Former clients, watch for emails from update4gifts@didihirsch.org—it's the survey. Don't delete that email!

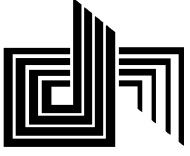
Also new this season: Group schedules at both houses have been revamped to further emphasize and encourage clients to plan for returning to school and work. Staff has boosted efforts to take clients to outside 12-Step meetings. We've also increased use of literature and concepts borrowed from Dual Recovery Anonymous, and clients have responded to it with a sense of discovery, enthusiasm, and relief—"Finally, someone gets it!"

As the only Crisis Residential Programs in Los Angeles County, we strive to bring services of the highest quality and value to the population we serve.

Thanks as always to all our clients and staff for your hard work! You're the best!

Dr. Dee Chappellear

Director of Crisis Residential Programs



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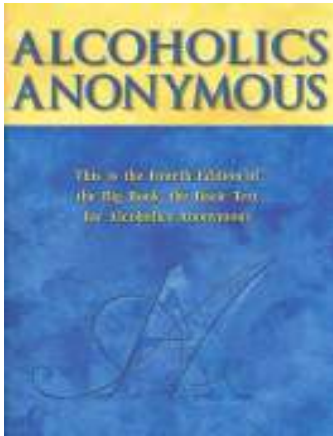
Client Corner

Contributions from current and former Excelsior House and Jump Street clients.

The following is a poem by Cathy, who completed the Excelsior House program in the Summer of '07. This poem is her tribute to the power of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous in her life.

BIG BOOK

My big book sat upon that shelf
 Not thinking long ago if it could hinder or help
 All those really great stories people
 Have written about themselves
 Giving me reason to know
 I can make it in this life.
 When all their stories are all so true
 Teaches me I can make it with no more pain
 No more drugs 'cause I know I can sustain
 Life is so beautiful now that I know
 God can hear my prayers.
 Everything is all so clear
 My sponsor calls upon me every day
 And tells me all I need to do is work my steps
 And be honest in every way.
 I have gained so many friends
 Some I wish will never come to an end
 There is no pretending
 Recovery is the way to get your life back
 And I pray
 That you stay.



We want your writing! Send us ideas or material for the next issue:

EJB@didihirsch.org.



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Lynette Peraza

Client turned client advocate

Lynette Peraza was a client at Excelsior House when she had no one else to turn to. She recently returned to Excelsior House to recommend Project Return to clients. She should know; she's Project Return's new Associate Director. Here is her story, as told to Excelsior House therapist, Will Baum.



I was married, I had everything. I as a good respectable citizen-type—house, cars, family, job. Then, in 1984 I had my first major bout of depression (though I'd pretty much been depressed all my life). I ended up taking time off and getting on medication.

After six months, I felt strong enough to baby-step my way back into work. Even though I had a degree in food service management, I took a job washing dishes. It was a good way for me to not take on so much, to slowly build up my confidence. For a while, it felt like, "This depression never going to happen again—it was just a fluke."

Then, in 1989, I came out to my family. That went over like a lead balloon. They literally threw me out of the family. And then—a lot of it's a blur—around 1992, I found out that I had contracted liver disease—Hep C. I still don't know the cause. I had to go on disability. I ended up becoming super-depressed and suicidal.

When state disability ran out, I applied for SSI and could not get it—they denied me over and over. I went in front of a judge—my attorney was a half hour late, and I was unable to defend myself. I was in constant tears, shaking. My mind was just shut off. The judge was asking me all these questions I couldn't answer. I couldn't remember dates, nothing, I was terribly confused. I was hung out to dry.

That's when I hit bottom. That's when I did things I'm not proud of. Bottom line: I survived. I attempted suicide a couple of times. Back then I couldn't see light at the end of the tunnel.

I had a roommate in the Valley, had no money coming in, had \$400 for rent. My roommate told me she was leaving the next day—I didn't have enough money to cover the rent. I literally panicked, I shut down. I had nowhere to go. I was beyond desperate—very, very frightened. I was making calls all over. San Fernando Valley Mental Health gave the only referral they could give me: Excelsior House.

When I get sick, I just get down—totally helpless. Excelsior House provided support, a roof, staff was very kind. I managed to get GR [General Relief]. Excelsior helped me get HIV-tested—very scary and a huge relief. I needed a place to live. It took about three weeks. They got me into Portals.

“Back then, I couldn't see the light at the end of the tunnel.”

Know of a success story for the next bulletin?

Write us!:

EJB@didihirsch.org

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Lynette Peraza

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After Portals came the Selby Hotel. I was there for about four years. It wasn't very much, just a small room, but it was mine. During that time, I was reclusive. I didn't see anybody. I thought my life was over.

I saw a flyer in the lobby for a group: Fruits & Nuts. I went, I sat down, thinking, "These people aren't like me." To my surprise I found they were exactly like me.

They asked me if I'd be interested in being a group facilitator. I think it was out of desperation—they'd asked everyone else. It wasn't until my second year that I started really getting involved—car washes, bake sales, outings. Eventually, I was asked to supervise a pilot project—a new approach to intakes. I did that for about a year. Then, there was talk of forming a "warmline." I was interviewed and I was hired.

The Friendship Line's first call was Nov 1, 1999. It's staffed by consumers—consumer-run, just like everything else in Project Return. We offer peer support—not to psychoanalyze, not to be case manager. Just to be there, support. To help callers see options and leave it up to them which option they want to try. A lot of people who call us are shut in, are lonely. They may work, but it's all they do. We encourage them to get out, stay social. One of our philosophies: If you stay social, you have a better chance of staying out of the hospital. Right now, we're averaging 24 calls a night.

I was made an Assistant Director of Project Return Peer Support Network, and then—it's been about a year-and-a-half now—Associate Director. I've been there 12 years. It's been a big help in my life—realizing that I'm not alone, getting the support, and giving me a chance to travel all over the U.S. and even Japan to talk about the warmline, and help them set up new warmlines.

I still deal with my depression. I still deal with my liver disease. A lot of people, when they hear about recovery, they think it's a cure. To me, recovery is about getting to a place where you can recognize your symptoms and when you see them coming, deal with them.

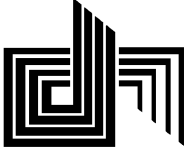
The people that I used to hang out with—so called friends—they told me I'd never get back what I had, that I'd never get married again. But I did. I've gotten my own home again, I'm happily married to Gayle (who I met at Project Return). The kids who I thought would grow to hate me didn't. We're close.

I don't rule out a time where I'd need to be hospitalized again. But I would know how to get services, who to see for support. My recovery would be a whole lot faster.

Life is good!

Project Return Peer Support Network's Friendship Line is open every night, 6:00 – 10:00 pm; 2:00 – 10:00 pm weekends and holidays. The toll-free number is (888) 448-9777.

“To me, recovery is about getting to a place where you can recognize your symptoms and when you see them coming, deal with them.”



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Emails and letters from Excelsior/Jump alums. Send yours to EJB@didihirsch.org.

Robert T. (Excelsior, '07)

May God bless every staff member here cause if it was not for them I would not be living today. They have shown me that life is not as hard as I thought and there really is something out there for me. And that there are people who care, all I have to do is look. I really believe in my heart of hearts that the staff are not just employees here, they are my friends forever. Thank you all!!!!

Chris H. (Excelsior, '07)

Hello Excelsior House:

You all are my favorites, I deeply appreciate all that you guys have done for me. You all are my friends 4 life. I am still sober, working closely with Charles and his F.S.P. [Full Service Partnership] crew who are very attentive to my needs, just as Excelsior House was and still is I'm sure. My family is doing well and they thank Excelsior House as well. S---- and J---- are still in the program and they are doing well. A---- and I also talk almost every day. See, Excelsior House not only improves the lives of clients, you all also help start everlasting friendships.

THANK YOU!

—Chris

John S. (Excelsior, '07)

hi everyone,

just wanted to say hi to you all and let you know that everything is going great here for me i am in my own place now got my ssi and the counseling is going good too. hope you are all doing good and that you are all still clean and sober. well, if any of you want to contact me here is my email add feel free to write dename48@hotmail.com. hope to hear from you all soon.

—john

ps kate: if you read this, email me your phone num. i have mislaid it. thanks. i would love to catch up with you and see how things are going with you

Sarah O. (Excelsior, '07)

I just wanted to update everyone on how I am doing. Well, I'm doing okay here [Bell Wellness Center]. It's really strict, but its nothing I can't handle. I've learned so much since I've been here, even though it hasn't been that long. I'm in classes all day, from relapse prevention to codependency, NA meetings and CA meetings.

Well, I hope to see you all one day, but until next time...

—Sarah O.

“Excelsior House not only improves the lives of clients, you all also help start everlasting friendships.

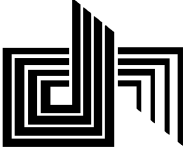
THANK YOU!”

- Chris H.

We want to hear from you!

Let us know how you're doing.

Write
EJB@didihirsch.org



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Walking Meditation—One Step at a Time

Excelsior/Jump clients leave the crisis program with beginning experience in mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness practice helps focus awareness on the present moment—drawing us, if only for a little while, away from past pains and future fears. Here is a variation on mindfulness practice—Walking Meditation, described in an excerpt from Excelsior House’s much-thumbed copy of Jon Kabat-Zinn’s book, Wherever You Go, There You Are. Instead of “One day at a time” or “One breath at a time,” the idea here is to focus your awareness on walking, “One step at a time.” Try it out and let us know how it goes.

Walking Meditation

Try bringing awareness to walking, wherever you find yourself. Slow it down a bit. Center yourself in your body and in the present moment.

Attend to the walking itself. You can focus on the footfall as a whole; or isolated segments of the motion such as shifting, moving, placing; or on the whole body moving. You can couple an awareness of walking with an awareness of breathing.

In walking meditation, you are not walking to get anyplace. Usually it is just back and forth in a lane, or round and round in a loop. Literally having no place to go makes it easier to be where you are...The challenge is, can you be fully with *this* step, with *this* breath?

Walking meditation can be practiced at any pace, from ultra-slow to very brisk. How much of the foot cycle you can attend to will depend on the speed. The practice is to take each step as it comes and to be fully present with it. This means *feeling* the very sensations of walking—in your feet, in your legs, in your carriage and gait...step by step. You might call it “watching your step,” pun intended, although it is an inner watching. You’re not looking at your feet!

Just as in the sitting meditation, things will come up which will pull your attention away from the bare experience of walking. We work with those perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and impulses, memories and anticipations, that come up during the walking in the very same way that we do in sitting meditation. Ultimately, walking is stillness in motion, flowing mindfulness.

It’s best to do formal walking meditation in a place where you won’t become a spectacle to other people, especially if you are going to do it very slowly. Good places are a living room, fields, or a clearing in the woods; isolated beaches are good, too. Push a shopping cart in front of you through a supermarket and you can walk as slowly as you like.

You can practice walking meditation informally anywhere. Informal walking meditation doesn’t involve pacing back and forth or going around a loop, but just walking normally...It involves recalling that you are here in your body. You simply remind yourself to be in this moment, taking each step as it comes, accepting each moment as it comes. If you find yourself rushing or becoming impatient, slowing the pace can help take the edge off your rushing and remind you that you are here now, and that when you get there, you will be there. If you miss the *here*, you are likely also to miss the *there*. If your mind is not centered here, it is likely not to be centered just because you arrive somewhere else.

“Remind yourself to be in this moment, taking each step as it comes, accepting each moment as it comes.”

From [Wherever You Go, There You Are](#)

by Jon Kabat-Zinn

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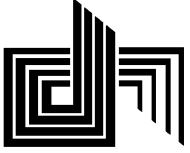
[About Us](#)

Staff Snapshot: Rod Smith



Rod Smith has been a counselor at Excelsior House for over a decade. He is loved and respected for the calm, consistent, and gentle authority he uses with staff and clients. When Rod's voice comes over the intercom at the beginning of a shift: "I need all residents on the first level, I need all residents on the first level," clients know it's time to get downstairs. Rod means business.

Rod wants everyone to be at their best and brings out the best in everyone. His intuition about people, born from his long experience, is uncanny. With his even-handedness and reliability, Rod is a powerful antidote to the stress and chaos many have experienced prior to arriving at the houses. In the words of one client, "When Rod is on, you know everything's going to run just right." These are just a few of the reasons Rod is this issue's Staff Snapshot.



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The client computers at the houses are always in use. Here are some client and staff picks for sites worth checking out:

Sarah O. (Excelsior, Summer, '07)

webmd.com

“Filled with information on mental illness, medications, etc.”



bored.com

“For fun, for entertainment—jokes, games, music, sports, quizzes. [Monkey Cliff Diving](http://MonkeyCliffDiving.com) is my favorite.”



Staff Tips

Valerie recommends:

[craigslist.org los angeles](http://craigslist.org/losangeles)

Free online classified ads—find or sell everything and anything.



Will recommends:

latimes.com

The *Los Angeles Times*—but more current and with more content than the print edition. And at a better price: free.



Liz recommends:

experiencela.com

Find fun things to do in L.A. You can search by price, area, and type of event.



Send in your web tip suggestions for the next bulletin to:

EJB@didihirsch.org



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Updates about staff arrivals, departures, and news of note.

EXCELSIOR HOUSE

Excelsior House Welcomes Liz Lee...

Liz Lee, newly arrived in California from Texas, started as a Counselor at Excelsior House earlier this year. She writes, "I attended the University of North Texas where I received my B.A. in psychology with a minor in women's studies. While there, I spent four years as a Sexual Assault Survivor Advocate. I am looking forward to exciting adventures in client care."



...and Valerie Ortiz

Valerie Ortiz started as Counselor at Excelsior House the same week as Liz Lee. With Becky Moses moving to Jump, Valerie soon found herself answering to the title of Care Coordinator. "It's been an exciting transition," she says. "I'm having a lot of fun. Thanks to everyone for welcoming and supporting me!" When she's not at Excelsior House serving up wisdom and good cheer, Valerie is at USC working towards her Masters in Social Work.



...and Summer Brown

Summer writes: "I was born in Nebraska, I've lived in California for almost 12 years. I got my B.A at Cal State Northridge in Psychology and Human Sexuality and I'm working on a Master's degree from CSUN in Marriage and Family Therapy. I was a Counselor here in 2005. I'm excited to be working here again!"



Liz, Valerie, and Summer: Welcome! Great to have you aboard!

JUMP STREET

Good-bye, Razan!

Razan Seikaly, Jump Street's Therapist for over a year, has said her good-byes to Crisis Residential, but not to Didi Hirsch. Razan is now at Didi Hirsch's Inglewood Center where she is an outpatient therapist working with children. "It's a big adjustment, and I miss everyone at Jump, but, so far, I love it," she says. *Best of luck, Razan. Don't be a stranger.*

Rebecca Moses Leaps Houses

Rebecca Moses first joined the Excelsior House team as a Counselor last August. This summer, after a spell as an Excelsior House Care Coordinator, Becky made another move—this one to a new title and a new location. She is now the Therapist at Jump Street, taking over where Razan left off. "I'm happy to make the jump to Jump Street!" she writes. "It's a new opportunity to grow and work more intensely with the clients and staff." Becky completed her Masters in Clinical Psychology at Pepperdine University in December. Her traineeship was at Peace Over Violence, counseling survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. *Becky: Farewell...and welcome!*

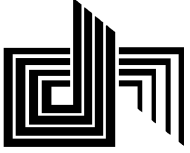


EXCELSIOR and JUMP

Arnie Daguil

Crisis Residential is very pleased to welcome Arnie Daguil, our new nurse! Arnie splits her time evenly between Excelsior House and Jump Street, where she can be found monitoring meds, taking blood pressure readings, running groups, and much more. Arnie received her BSN from Cal State L.A. How does she like the new job? "I love it! I love working with this group of people in such a nurturing environment. It's great to be a part of the team!" *Welcome Arnie!*





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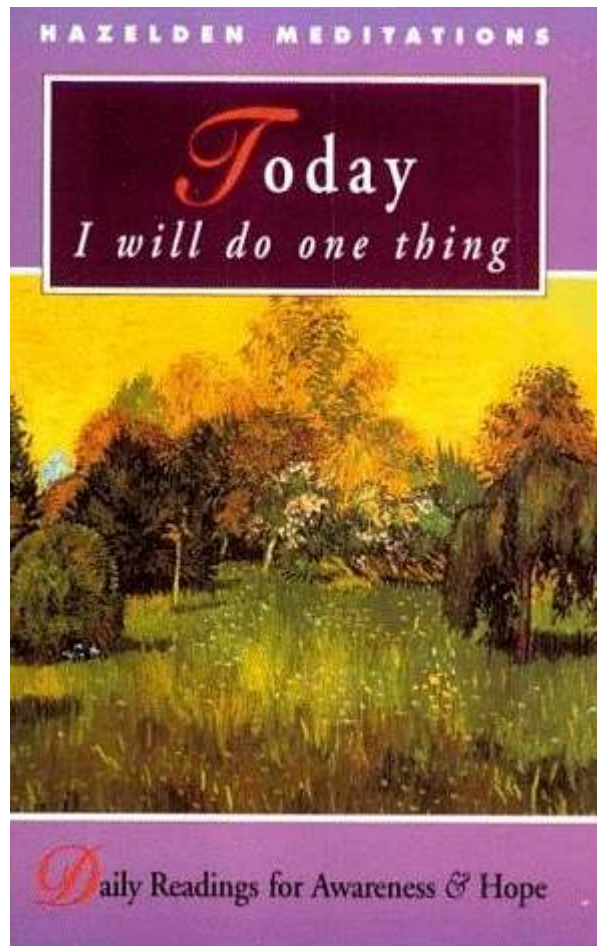
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Recommended Reading

Some recovery-themed (and otherwise inspiring) staff favorites. Clicking on covers takes you to amazon.com for descriptions, reviews, and ordering. Or try the library. Have books to add? Suggestions welcome!

To see the complete recommended reading list, go to <http://www.librarything.com/catalog/excelsiorjump>

One favorite:





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A growing list of helpful numbers and websites. For a more complete list, see the "Excelsior/Jump Resource Guide."

Counseling Centers

[Airport Marina Counseling Center](#) **(310) 670-1410**

7891 La Tijera Blvd.
Westchester, CA 90045

Psychiatric and counseling services for individuals, couples, and families.

[Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center](#) **(310) 390-6612**

4760 Sepulveda Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90203

Wide variety of services—counseling, case management, psychiatry, groups, and more—at several locations.

[Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center](#) **(323) 993-7500**

1625 N. Schrader Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90028

Group and individual counseling offered on a sliding fee scale basis.

Phone Referrals

[Los Angeles County Mental Health Access](#) **(800) 854-7771**

Service provider hotline offers information and referrals to local mental health system of care, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

[Self-Help Recovery and Exchange \(SHARE\)](#) **(310) 305-8878**

Referrals to wide range of self help support groups including 12-steps.

Legal Services

[Legal Aid](#) **(800) 399-4529**

445 S Figueroa St
Los Angeles, CA 90071

[Bet Tzedek](#) **(323) 939-0506**

145 S. Fairfax Ave.
Suite 200
Los Angeles, CA 90036

Twelve Step Meetings

[Alcoholics Anonymous](#) **(800) 923-8722**

[Cocaine Anonymous](#) **(310) 216-4444**

[Narcotics Anonymous](#) **(818) 773-9999**

[Dual Recovery Anonymous](#) **(877) 883-2332**

Referrals to a 12-step groups citywide.

Employment Services

[Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center](#) **(310) 751-5384**

4760 Sepulveda Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90203

Help with job searches, resumes, interviewing.

Case Management

[Didi Hirsch Full Service Partnership \(FSP\) Program](#) **(310) 390-6612**

4760 Sepulveda Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90203

Intensive, ongoing case management for transitional age youth and adults.

Advocacy/Information

[National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) **(800) 950-6264**

[National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#) **(866) 615-6464**

[National Mental Health Awareness Campaign](#) **(800) 273-8255**

Crisis Hotlines

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) **(800) 273-TALK** **(800) 273-8255**

[Suicide Prevention Center](#) **(877) 727-4747**

A program of Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center.

Suggest more community resources:

EJB@didihirsch.org



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Most clients come to us after a psychiatric hospitalization; many are substance users. Crisis residential programs include groups, individual therapy, and intensive case management, with a focus on relapse prevention and the psychosocial model of recovery.

For more information, contact Excelsior House (310) 412-4191, Jump Street (310) 855-0031, or email EJB@didihirsch.org.

To volunteer, contribute, or for more information about Didi Hirsch, please go to www.didihirsch.org.

Excelsior House
1007 Myrtle Ave.
Inglewood, CA 90301
Phone: (310) 412-4191
Fax: (310) 412-3942

Jump Street
1233 S. La Cienega Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90035
Phone: (310) 855-0031
Fax: (310) 855-0138

