



Transforming Lives Since 1942

Dr. Norman Farberow Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

Norman Farberow, Ph.D., 91, the co-founder of the Suicide Prevention Center and one of the world's greatest pioneers in the study of suicide and suicide prevention, received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare (NCCBH) in April at the organization's annual conference. Frequently honored during his career, this award acknowledged his contributions as a volunteer since his retirement 20 years ago.



Dr. Norman Farberow

Many words describe Dr. Farberow: mentor, innovator, leader and legend. But for everyone who knows him, there is one word that describes his greatest quality: compassion. After World War II, where he served as a captain in the Air Force, Dr. Farberow began working closely with veterans hospitalized at the V.A. in West Los Angeles. Many were contemplating, or had attempted, suicide. Their emotional distress was compounded by the social, cultural and religious taboos associated with suicide. Joining with Dr. Edwin Shneidman, who also was at the V.A., Dr. Farberow embarked on his lifelong quest to understand why certain individuals feel compelled to take their own lives and what can be done to help ease their pain.

Their collaboration led to the founding of the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center (SPC) in 1958, the nation's first scientifically and clinically-based program to study and prevent suicide. In their first year, they established the first 24-hour telephone suicide prevention crisis line in the nation. Other innovative efforts included therapy for chronically suicidal individuals, suicide bereavement support groups and an interdisciplinary research program examining the relationship between substance abuse and suicide. Dr. Farberow also played a key role in advancing our understanding of suicidal behavior among gay men and suicides among the elderly.

The model for other suicide prevention centers around the world, the Suicide Prevention Center (SPC) continues to be a leader in the field. Now part of Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, its 24-hour suicide hotline is a member of a national network and is actively involved in research being conducted by Columbia University. Offering a full continuum of suicide-related services, last year SPC helped more than 1,000 people

who had lost a loved one to suicide, and it trained more than 10,000 youth and adults how to recognize and respond to the warning signs of suicide. Harkening back to the days when Dr. Farberow and Dr. Shneidman studied suicide notes provided



Dr. Farberow and Dr. Edwin S. Shneidman

by the County Coroner, in collaboration with the coroner and other members of the Mayor's Crisis response team, SPC provides immediate support at the scene of suicides

Since his retirement, Dr. Farberow has continued to play a vital role in the growth and development of the Suicide Prevention Center. A member of its Advisory Board, he generously donates his time to facilitate survivor groups, mentor staff and train crisis line volunteers. He continues to share his expertise with health care organizations throughout the world, consult on films and television programs, and advise mental health providers following large-scale natural disasters. His work and legacy has had and will continue to have an indelible impact on clinicians, researchers and volunteers worldwide.

Dr. Farberow is an emeritus Clinical Professor in Psychiatry at the University of Southern California School of Medicine, a former president of the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP), the American Association of Suicidology and of the Division of Clinical Psychology and Psychologists in Public Service in the American Psychological Association. He is the author/editor of 16 books, 51 book chapters and nearly 100 journal articles on suicide.



Dr. Farberow conducting a training (circa 1960)

The Long Shadow of Schizophrenia



By Dr. Kita S. Curry,
President/CEO

In a survey, Americans said they'd rather tell an employer they'd been jailed for a petty crime than disclose a psychiatric hospitalization. Now that's stigma! We're making progress in some areas. With so many ads about depression and anxiety, we now even tell our doctors what to prescribe for us. But, we still have a long way to go with educating people about schizophrenia.

Affecting approximately one percent of the population, schizophrenia is nearly as common as epilepsy and Type 1 diabetes—yet few illnesses are so feared and misunderstood. We no longer blame demons or bad parents, but other myths and misconceptions abound.

People with schizophrenia do not have split personalities. Nor are they generally dangerous. Besieged by strange thoughts and hallucinations, they tend to be withdrawn and frightened and are far more likely to be victimized. A small group of people with schizophrenia—those who are untreated and paranoid and also abusing alcohol or other drugs—do have a tendency to be more aggressive, but this is the case amongst almost any group abusing drugs or alcohol.

The most damaging myth is that schizophrenia is untreatable and unremitting. We imagine its trajectory culminating with lost souls shouting at imaginary companions. No wonder there is such a heavy curtain of secrecy and shame. No wonder those with schizophrenia are 50 times more likely to attempt suicide, and even more likely to take their lives, especially early in their illness.

This will change when we replace stereotypes with truth. People are the answer. Research shows that the best way to erase stigma is for people we can identify with to speak up. But this takes incredible courage—the courage shown by our 2009 Erasing the Stigma honorees.

Law professor Elyn Saks gave up her privacy to show that success is possible, despite schizophrenia. Rather than hide in the shadows, Shari and Garen Staglin inspired other parents of children with this illness, while also raising millions for mental health research. Film producer Gary Foster dared to make *The Soloist*, a film about the friendship of journalist Steve Lopez and Nathaniel Ayers, a homeless man suffering from schizophrenia. Most producers would have considered this film a bad investment.

We can all lead by example. We can choose to speak up, and help alleviate fears and misconceptions when others equate schizophrenia with failure or violence. Tell people about Nathaniel Ayers' tenderness and remarkable musical talent. Tell them Brandon Staglin is a website designer. Tell them Elyn Saks has reached the pinnacle of her career despite her illness. Tell them there is hope.

In The News

Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services and its programs have received significant media coverage over the past few months. Didi Hirsch staff provided information and expertise on suicide statistics and suicide prevention to a number of national broadcast outlets, including Dr. Phil and the CBS Evening News with Katie Couric.

Dr. Kita Curry was interviewed by NPR's Morning Edition and KCRW's Which Way LA about how the failing economy was impacting mental health. She and other Didi Hirsch staff and volunteers have appeared on many other local television and radio shows.

Media coverage like this helps raise awareness and informs people in our community about services that are available to them in times of crisis. A

few excerpts from recent coverage are below.

"The rising number of people losing their jobs and homes has caused a surge in calls to suicide hotlines. Didi Hirsch, which operates L.A.'s busiest crisis-prevention line, says calls are up as much as 60% from a year ago."

Los Angeles Times

"Warning signs are already erupting in parts of the U.S. hard hit by the housing crisis. In Los Angeles, calls into the suicide prevention center run by the Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center spiked 65% in the second half of 2008 over the previous year. There has also been a surge of training requests from fire and police departments throughout Los Angeles county – even from a mortgage counseling company – to

help deal with an upsurge in suicide risk . . . with any publicity about [the] center, calls spike, suggesting unmet need."

Time.com "Suicides: Watching for a Recession Spike"

"Loss is often a trigger – and there is more loss now that could trigger suicide among those that are already vulnerable . . . our 24-hour suicide hotline has seen an increase in calls, and it does seem to be partially fueled by anxiety and a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness."

Dr. Kita Curry on NPR's Morning Edition

To view a selection of recent media coverage, please visit:
www.didihirsch.org/news

ERASING THE STIGMA LEADERSHIP AWARDS 2009

The stigma of any mental illness has a profound and lasting effect on anyone facing mental health issues, whether it's one's own illness or that of someone they love. For the last 13 years, Didi Hirsch has been celebrating courageous individuals who help shatter stereotypes at our annual *Erasing the Stigma Leadership Awards*. This year's event focused on dispelling myths and prejudices surrounding schizophrenia.

The poignant personal stories of our honorees were framed by our award presenters, actor and activist Joe Pantoliano and Dreamworks CEO Stacey Snider. Levity was brought to the event by emcee, comedian Brian Copeland. Through his humor, Brian has been speaking out about mental health issues and his own battle with depression.

Our honorees shared touching personal stories about how schizophrenia has affected them.



From Left: Gary Foster, Elyn Saks, Brian Copeland, Shari Staglin, Garen Staglin, Dr. Kita Curry, Joe Pantoliano

Elyn Saks

A *Leadership Award* was presented to Elyn Saks for educating and giving hope to people who suffer from schizophrenia. A Yale graduate and law professor at USC, she is an expert in the field of mental health policy and author of the memoir, *The Center Cannot Hold: My Journey Through Madness*. In it, Elyn writes of her lifelong struggles as well as accomplishments in the face of recurring bouts of acute psychosis. She told the awards audience a very poignant, yet startling reality of the stigma surrounding psychiatric illnesses. "In 1999 I was diagnosed with a serious physical illness. My friend Steve flew into town to take care of me. He said, 'My, you've gotten such beautiful bouquets of flowers.' At that moment I thought "When you go to a hospital for a physical illness people send flowers, when you go to a hospital for a psychiatric illness, they don't.

Shari & Garen Staglin

Shari and Garen Staglin received a *Leadership Award* for their contribution to mental health research. Their son Brandon, who was diagnosed with schizophrenia, was the inspiration for the festival. At our Awards, the Staglin's told the story of their son's illness and the fight they undertook to help bring him back to wellness. On stage, Brandon thanked his parents for their unwavering support.

Shari Staglin said, "Brandon was our super-achieving son. And in one day, he was just gone. We learned he came down with acute schizophrenia. We thought the word was ugly and we didn't mention it to him till years later." Garen continued, "But at the point he became ill, we had a choice: were we going to run away from this problem or run toward this problem? And because we had this beautiful vineyard, and access to great chefs, we decided we were going to run toward it and do everything that we could to host a wonderful event to raise money for research. In the last 14 years we've raised \$83 million, 100% of which has gone for mental health research. The work that's being done in science is amazing... and our commitment to you is – in our lifetime - we will cure these illnesses."



Garen, Brandon and Shari Staglin

Gary Foster

The *Beatrice Stern Media Award* was given to film producer Gary Foster for his determination in bringing Steve Lopez's book, *The Soloist* to the screen. The story chronicles the friendship Mr. Lopez formed with Nathaniel Ayers, a Julliard trained musician Steve encountered living homeless on the street, suffering from schizophrenia.

Gary reflected, "The process of making *The Soloist* allowed me unique access to a world I had never contemplated... That first solo walk on skid row was scary. I witnessed people smoking crack and shooting up. 'Could this be my city?' But in all the chaos, almost everyone I encountered said 'Hello', reached out a hand or smiled as I passed by. I started looking forward to my walks on San Julian street. I felt compelled to know this community better. While there was a social divide, there was not a humanistic one. I felt comfortable with the people who only weeks before I had feared... It is my most sincere hope that the legacy of *The Soloist* is acceptance and understanding. There are thousands of Nathaniel's on skid row, each with a story, each with dreams dashed, but also driven by dreams of a better future. It is my dream that people who see my film will consider my friends as valuable members of society."



Steve Lopez



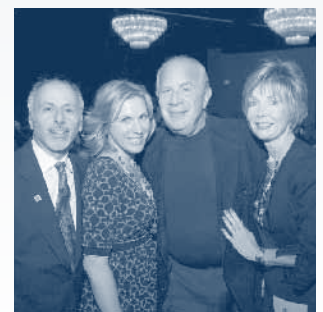
Stacey Snider and Gary Foster



Barbara Lindeman, Andrew E Rubin and Elayne Nathanson



Brian Copeland and Nancy Rubin



Jeff Khetian, Julianne Grossman, Martin Greenwald and Cheri Renfroe-Yousem

GIVING GIFTS

Every September, members of the community help raise awareness about suicide prevention at the annual Didi Hirsch Alive & Running 5K Walk/Run for Suicide Prevention. The event raises much-needed funds for our Suicide Prevention Center and its programs. In 2008 more than 4,000 walkers, runners, sponsors and volunteers from all over Los Angeles participated. For information on Alive and Running visit www.aliveandrunning.org.

Marilyn Nobori is a dedicated Alive and Running supporter. Marilyn and members of her church's Japanese taiko drumming group give the participants an energetic, rhythmic boost at the start and finish lines. Six years ago, Marilyn came home to find her only child, 14-year-old Catherine Aiko Nobori, had committed suicide. Marilyn was certain she could never heal. But today, thanks to the support she received at Didi Hirsch, Marilyn is helping others who have lost a loved one to suicide.

The following are excerpts from her writings about the loss of her daughter, and the road she has traveled to heal her broken heart.

From Marilyn's writings:

Looking back over the six years since my daughter Aiko's death, I realize there were many gifts put in my path.

Gift of openness: *My husband is an extremely private person, but in those first days, he had the wisdom to say, "There is no shame in how Aiko died."*

Gift of presence: *From the moment I found my daughter, family and friends have been there. They gave me the gift of "presence."*

Gift of community: *Our church community is very supportive. Because of them, I stayed connected when my instinct was to run away. I let my tears fall when and wherever they came. It is a nurturing community that allows me space to grieve and memorialize my daughter. Every year, they are the foundation for Aiko's team at Alive & Running.*

Gift of humility: *I found several support groups, but the Mothers' Group at Didi Hirsch helped me to forgive myself. As I listened to the mothers' stories, I realized they had done everything they could, and their stories still included a suicide. Slowly, I began to forgive myself for being human. With this gift of humility, forgiveness is possible.*

Gift of hope: *Each moment was "one foot in front of the other." But somewhere in the foundation of my soul was a little light that offered hope, so I trusted that if I continued to step, I would journey somewhere.*

Gift of life and laughter: *Three days after my daughter died, my husband opened the front door and in walked a small stray dog. At a time when we did not want to get out of bed, this little dog would force me outdoors. I'd look at the crisp clear sky and twinkling stars and marvel at their beauty. The dog reminded us that we had life, and she made us laugh.*

GIVING GIFTS

Somewhere along the way my grief journey has become my life journey. I offer gifts to others by facilitating several bereavement programs, editing several bereavement/survivor newsletters, and each year organizing Aiko's Team for Alive & Running. Every day I miss my daughter. The hole in my heart is still there, but hope, love, joy has surrounded it and helped incorporate it into my story.

Wellness Centers/Psychosocial Clubhouses at Didi Hirsch: HELP US TRIM SOME FAT

A focus on fitness is a necessity, not a luxury. In the U.S., obesity, heart disease and diabetes are on the rise. And, nowhere is this more concerning than among those with serious mental illness, whose lifespan is 25 years shorter than the average American's.

Just worrying never solves problems, and it won't make us lose weight either! Resilient individuals cope by figuring out what they can do to make things better—and doing it. That's why Didi Hirsch has made healthy living an important part of our culture, for staff and clients alike. In our vending machines, we've replaced sodas with fruit and sport drinks. More and more of us are taking mid-day walks and using the stairs. We also have opened a Wellness Center where our members plan and prepare healthy meals, practice yoga and do cardiovascular exercises. They also volunteer at a local no-kill animal shelter, walking dogs that are waiting for a home. It's paying off. Our VP of Human

Resources lost 8 pounds just by walking.

Please consider donating materials or your time to help our clients with their Wellness effort.

Yoga mats

3-5 lb. hand weights

Exercise bands

Pedometers

Athletic shoes for men and women

Sports socks

Sweatshirts

Exercise DVDs

Vegetarian and Low-Fat Cookbooks

Food scales

Hand towels

Your expertise as a volunteer—teaching cooking, yoga, dancing and other healthy activities.

If you would like to make a donation, please contact Maja in the Development Department at (310) 751-5455.

Mindfulness in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life

Mindfulness has become a popular topic in psychotherapy and with the general public. It can be described as bringing full attention to one's daily activities and focusing attention on the present moment in a non-judging and accepting manner. A mindful state of awareness contrasts with what many call "automatic pilot" mode, with attention focused elsewhere. A simple example of mindfulness is focusing on the texture, smell and taste of lunch rather than wolfing it down while reading e-mails.

A broad body of research supports the use of meditation and relaxation techniques in reducing stress, improving health, and decreasing the risk of stress-related health problems. As a psychotherapy technique, mindfulness can be used to treat a range of psychiatric disorders including anxiety and depression.

The Adult Outpatient Program at Didi Hirsch offers a 10-week study that teaches clients a variety of mindfulness activities such as sitting and walking meditation, guided imagery and relaxation techniques for relieving tension. After using these techniques, group members say they feel less anxious and depressed, and are more satisfied with their lives. When the group ends, clients are encouraged to continue using the techniques to deal with painful

emotions, and to handle situations that trigger relapses of anxiety and depression.

Daily life has stresses and challenges for all of us, so we can all benefit by practicing mindfulness in our daily lives.

Here are some tips:

- Each day is a new start. When you wake up, take a few minutes to become aware of your state of mind. Do you start your day with an attitude of gratitude just for being alive?
- Notice your breathing. "Don't forget to breathe!" is a great motto to help us become aware of the present moment. Take a few seconds to focus on your breath by saying to yourself, "I am" when you inhale and "relaxed" when you exhale.
- Less is more. In these days of multi-tasking and sensory overload, take time to focus on one activity. Simplify your life so you can become present in the beauty of the moment.
- Try five. Instead of trying to start with 20-30 minutes a day of mindfulness practice, try doing five minutes, and work your way up. Research shows that as little as 10 minutes of mindful activity per day can help reduce stress.

Bram Conley, MFT

Director of Adult Outpatient Programs at Didi Hirsch

In Memoriam Dr. Edwin S. Shneidman - Pioneer in Suicide Prevention

a remembrance by Dr. Kita S. Curry



Renowned pioneer in the field of suicidology and co-founder of our Suicide Prevention Center, Dr. Edwin S. Shneidman died at home on May 15th.

As his failing health confined him to smaller spaces, Dr. Shneidman's mind continued to roam. Last year, he published his 20th book—*A Common Sense Book of Death—Reflections at Ninety of a Lifelong Thanatologist*. Dr. Shneidman had an abiding interest in understanding and easing the psychological pain associated with suicide—a pain he described as psychache. Over the years, many people sought him out after the loss of a loved one to suicide, and he gave of himself generously.

After Dr. Shneidman became homebound, the world came to him. He delighted in the letters he received from around the world and his many visitors. Despite the gloom associated with his life's work, he was willful, mischievous and boyishly sweet. He also enjoyed being called a lovable curmudgeon. In 2007, Dr. Shneidman invited me to tea, because he and Dr. Norman Farberow were each receiving an *Erasing the Stigma Award* from Didi Hirsch. We discovered a shared passion for poetry and more visits followed. I will miss our afternoons of Melville, manuscripts and metaphor.

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

DIDI HIRSCH'S FRIENDS, STAFF AND PROGRAMS RECEIVE RECOGNITION

Kita Curry, Ph.D., Didi Hirsch president and CEO, received the Dr. *Evis Coda Award for Building Hope for Families* from the Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic. The Clinic cited Dr. Curry for her “exemplary contributions for advocating for stigma reduction and advancing suicide prevention services.”

Sandy Escobar, Ph.D., Division Director for Adult/Older Adult Services, was honored by the California Association of Rehabilitation Agencies (CASRA) with a *HOPE Award* for excellence in Program Management. Sandy developed and inspired our Full Service Partnership team, which engages those hardest to reach in treatment, such as a 65 year-old whose hoarding rendered her homeless.

Percy Castellanos received a HOPE Award from CASRA for excellence in Clinical Services. Originally a counselor on our suicide prevention crisis line, Percy spent the last two years as a Care Coordinator and Housing specialist in the Full Service Partnership program led by Dr. Escobar. Inspired by his experiences, he will begin a master's program in social work at UC Berkeley in the fall.

Didi Hirsch's Crisis Residential Programs, Excelsior House and Jump Street—the only programs of their kind in the Los Angeles area—received the Outstanding Program Award from The Los Angeles Mental Health Commission. In tranquil residential neighborhoods, each house serves adults with serious mental illness who have taken a turn for the worse. Crisis Residential treatment helps individuals avoid psychiatric hospitalization and transition back to the community after discharge. With a focus on increasing responsibility and independence, residents may stay up to a month while they find the proper medication balance, secure long-term housing and connect to on-going treatment programs.

The Urban Los Angeles chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) honored our Inglewood Center's Clubhouse with its Attitude of Gratitude Award. In collaboration with consumers trained by NAMI Urban LA, the Clubhouse more than doubled its membership this year, with particular success among Latino and African young adults. Activities, training and groups run by both members and mental health professionals draw individuals with serious mental illness out of isolation and reconnect them with the community.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBER!

Didi Hirsch is very proud to welcome Carlos Garcia to our Board of Directors. Carlos not only brings a broad array of professional expertise, but also a passion for helping those who suffer from mental illnesses, erasing stigma and increasing access to services in the Latino community. He is a senior client partner with the talent management firm Korn/Ferry International. In addition, he's a veteran strategic consultant and has extensive experience in executive recruitment. He's already lent his experience to the interview process of several of our new hires. Welcome Carlos!

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The Way Back Home

Imagine how stressful and unhealthy it would be to spend even one night on the street. No wonder chronic homelessness often culminates in serious illness and even death. Physical and mental illnesses are exacerbated by lack of care, exposure to the elements, filthy conditions and violent predators. In response, Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky spearheaded Project 50, a collaboration between 24 public and private agencies, including Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services which provides the substance abuse services. Project 50's goal was to move fifty of the most vulnerable residents of Skid Row into permanent supportive housing.

It began in early 2008 when outreach teams surveyed nearly 500 homeless individuals living on Skid Row and identified the 50 at greatest risk of dying. Ranging in age from 34 to 70, on average they had been homeless for almost 10 years. Over half were grappling with addiction, mental illness and chronic health conditions.

Next, all were offered immediate housing. Why housing before each individual demonstrated commitment to the program? Because once someone has safe shelter, most individuals follow through with treatment. But the reverse

is not true. The stability and trust that come with receiving housing promotes openness to substance abuse and mental health treatment, and other supportive services.

The results, after only a year, are phenomenal. 43 of the 49 individuals who entered housing still have a roof over their heads. The large majority of those with substance abuse or mental health problems have accepted treatment. Participants also have been enrolled in benefits that make the basic necessities affordable (e.g., General Relief, disability income and Medi-Cal insurance). The project is an economic as well as humanitarian success. In the year prior to enrollment, the County spent \$756,000 solely on ER visits, days hospitalized and days in jail for participants. With Project 50, each of these costs was reduced by 70%, or more, after a year.

Reflecting on the project's success, Supervisor Yaroslavsky said, "Not only are the vast majority of participants faring significantly better in their lives, but public money is being spent in a vastly more effective way." Didi Hirsch is proud to be part of this inspiring program.

*For more information visit:
www.zev.lacounty.gov*

* SAVE THE DATE

Alive & Running 5K Walk/Run

for Suicide Prevention

www.aliveandrunning.org

September 27, 2009 - North of LAX at West 88th St. and La Tijera Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90045

To register by phone, contact Maja Roble at (310) 751- 5455 or mlawton@didihirsch.org

Erasing the Stigma Leadership Awards

www.erasingthestigma.org

April 30, 2010 - The Beverly Hilton, 9876 Beverly Blvd.

MISSION STATEMENT

Didi Hirsch transforms lives by providing quality mental health and substance abuse services in communities where stigma or poverty limit access.

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YOU CAN HELP

Please support our programs and help those in need by donating to Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services. The current fiscal climate makes your generosity more critical than ever.

Make a donation online at
www.didihirsch.org
or call (310) 751-5455

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