



HOPE STARTS HERE



SUICIDE IS PREVENTABLE



PREVENCIÓN DEL SUICIDIO:
RECURSOS EN ESPAÑOL
PÁGINA 9

"People do recover if they're given the appropriate support and services that they need to do so."

LINDA MORRIS

INTERIM DIRECTOR OF LAKE COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



PHOTO BY ED OSWALT



The greatest risk factor for suicide is depression.

80% of those seeking treatment for depression are **treated successfully.**

There are

6

24-hour **crisis hotlines** available to Lake County residents. (See back page for list of phone numbers.)

90%

of people who attempt suicide **do not die** by suicide.

Prevention works — the suicidal impulse can pass and individuals can recover.

Lake County has

65

trainers for the

QPR

(Question, Persuade and Refer) suicide prevention program, and 4 trainers for **ASIST** — Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training

The **risk**

factor for suicide attempts increases

6x

when associated with drug or alcohol abuse disorders.

OFFERING A CONNECTION TO HOPE

LAKE COUNTY SUICIDE PREVENTION TASK FORCE SEEKS TO SAVE LIVES THROUGH OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

BY SHANNON SPRINGMEYER

For Linda Morris, it started with a childhood experience watching the film "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," which details the conditions within a mental institution.

"I felt a great deal of compassion for the people who were in the institution, and I didn't like the cruelty and injustice that I was seeing," Morris says.

This experience, coupled with witnessing the effects of mental illness and addiction in members of her extended family, gave Morris a start on what was to become her life's work. Morris has worked in mental health services for more than 20 years, and now serves as Interim Director of Lake County Behavioral Health. The department provides mental health and substance abuse services for children, youth, adults and families, including group and individual therapy, treatment, crisis intervention, and linkages and referrals to services.

"Over the years, I saw that a lot of people do recover if they're given the appropriate support and services that they need to do so," Morris says. "To me, that's a very hopeful thing. I truly believe that people do recover and I really like being a part of that."

One important way the department is contributing to mental wellness in the community is through the Lake County Suicide Prevention Task Force. Morris says the committee was formed in January 2013 in response to the tremendous impact of the high suicide rate within the Lake County community.

The efforts of the task force are inspired by the basic fact that suicide deaths are preventable — a person experiencing a suicidal impulse can get through the crisis with the right kind of support and intervention, says Stephanie Wilson, Workforce Education and Training Coordinator at Lake County Behavioral Health and a member of the task force. The group is working to increase awareness and empower the community with life-saving skills by offering suicide prevention trainings. Wilson says the efforts have already proven effective.

"Workshop participants have come forward to tell us how they have been able to use the suicide intervention they learned in the ASIST workshops and have helped to save lives," Wilson says.

Educating the community about available resources, such as the North Bay Suicide Prevention Hotline of

Lake County and mental health services available through Lake County Behavioral Health, is also a primary goal of the task force, Wilson says. The county's four wellness centers are another important resource where people can get peer support, connect to services and receive suicide prevention training.

Embedded in the task force's efforts is the department of Behavioral Health's commitment to early outreach and intervention and a trauma-informed approach to services. Morris says that trauma can range from a one-time traumatic event to chronic, repetitive events. Examples of traumatic events include acts of violence, sexual abuse, accidents, natural disasters and loss of a parent or child. For some, these events can lead to an increased likelihood of developing mental health and/or substance abuse issues and higher rates of suicide. Wilson wants the community to know that education and a connection to services can make the difference.

"There's help out there," Wilson says. "There's hope."

Read on to learn how to recognize the warning signs of suicide, what to do and stories of those who found the help they needed.

From left, Peer Support Counselor Stephen Ashby and Program Supervisor Jolene Chappel collaborate on program planning for The Harbor on Main.

PHOTO BY ED OSWALT

REACHING OUT TO YOUTH

BY MIKE BLOUNT

RESOURCE CENTER PROVIDES SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING

As a high school senior, Nura Brown wanted to find a way to make a difference in her community. Through the work experience program at her school, she found an opportunity to work at The Harbor on Main, a resource center providing mental health, social and practical support for youth ages 15-25. The Harbor serves more than 500 youth in Lake County.

Since Brown started working with the organization, she learned how to give CPR training, provide housing assistance and help prospective job applicants with their résumés. But a traumatic event inspired her to reach out to other young people about something much more personal — suicide prevention.

In 2013, Brown lost her 18-year-old cousin to suicide.

"It was shocking that someone so young felt like they needed to take their own life," Brown says. "I took it very hard."

Brown had become a part-time peer support counselor at The Harbor on Main earlier that same year. Soon Brown was helping Program Supervisor Jolene Chappel start a suicide prevention group at the center. Staff at The Harbor has plans to take the group into local high schools in Lake County to talk to the students about suicide and provide QPR training. The QPR program — which stands for Question, Persuade and Refer — teaches participants how to recognize the signs of suicide risk and effectively intervene.

"We're going to give them certificates after they complete the

training," Brown says. "They'll know what to do if they encounter one of their friends who is having a hard time and know what to do to help them — how to be supportive and what resources are available."

The training has the real potential to help save lives — according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide is the third leading cause of death for people ages 15-24. As a member of the Lake County Suicide Prevention Task Force, The Harbor provides a valuable link to this at-risk population. Brown says that the most important thing people can do if they believe someone is at risk is to ask the person if he or she is having suicidal thoughts.

"A lot of people are afraid to ask someone if they are having suicidal thoughts because they are worried they will offend them or cause them to be

more depressed," Brown says. "Talking about it is good. People may feel it is a taboo subject, but they shouldn't be ashamed. It can lead to them building a support system that can help the person in need."

Brown stresses it's equally important for survivors of loved ones who have died by suicide to reach out and get help if they need it.

"Being a survivor of suicide can affect you, too," Brown says. "Suicide can stay with someone even after a long period of time has passed. It's important that survivors talk about their problems, too."

In addition to national support groups and resources available to survivors of suicide loss, the Lake County Suicide Prevention Task Force is developing local resources for individuals who have lost someone to suicide.

"Talking about it is good. People may feel it is a taboo subject, but they shouldn't be ashamed."

NURA BROWN

PEER SUPPORT COUNSELOR AT THE HARBOR ON MAIN



The Harbor on Main

This youth-focused wellness center provides a variety of services, including independent living skills classes, a homeless youth shelter, suicide prevention training and peer support counseling.

16170 Main St., Suite F
Lower Lake, CA 95457

707-994-5486

Mon.-Fri., 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.

The Trevor Project

The Trevor Project is a national organization dedicated to providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth ages 13-24. Staff is available to talk 24/7 on the Trevor Lifeline at 1-866-488-7386. Visit www.thetrevorproject.org for information and resources, or to chat or text live.

ReachOut.com

ReachOut.com is a mental health service where youth under 25 can get help and advice for any situation they are experiencing. ReachOut.com tackles everything from finding motivation, relationships, peer pressure and getting through tough times. Visit www.ReachOut.com to find fact sheets, videos and stories of young people in similar situations. To speak with a counselor, call 1-800-448-3000.

RESOURCES FOR HOMELESS AND VETERANS

The Bridge

The Bridge Peer Support Center provides services including showers, peer support and counseling, laundry facilities, transportation and computer and phone access.

14954 Burns Valley Road
Clearlake, CA 94522
707-995-2973
Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
(8:30 a.m. - 9 a.m. showers only)

Lake County Vet Connect

Lake County Vet Connect provides information, referral to services and assistance to veterans. The organization operates two clinics in Lake County. One is held on the second Wednesday of each month, 9 a.m. to noon at American Legion Hall in Clearlake. The other is the third Wednesday of each month, 9 a.m. to noon at Umpqua Bank in Lakeport. For more information about Lake County Vet Connect call 707-274-9512.

Wounded Warrior Project

Wounded Warrior Project is a nonprofit organization that offers a variety of services, programs and events for military men and women who are wounded in service. Visit www.woundedwarriorproject.org for more information.

SENIOR SUPPORT SERVICES

Konocti Senior Support, Inc.

Serving all of Lake County, Konocti Senior Support, Inc. offers a variety of services to adults 55 years old and above. The Friendly Visitor program sends volunteers to homebound and isolated seniors. Senior peer counseling is available to help seniors grieve from a loss, maintain sobriety, reduce conflict and resolve issues. Call 707-995-1417 or visit www.konoctiseniorsupport.com.

Friendship Line

Institute on Aging's Friendship Line is a 24-hour, toll-free hotline for older and disabled adults. Isolation for older adults can often lead to depression or suicidal thoughts. For seniors in crisis, the Friendship Line saves lives by providing a connection to trained volunteers and counselors. Call 1-800-971-0016 to connect.

Lake County Senior Centers

Senior Centers offer congregate meals, home-delivered meals, outreach, social interaction, exercise and educational programs. Call centers for hours, location and more information, or visit www.co.lake.ca.us/Residents/Disclaimer/ResourceDirectory/senior.htm.

Lakeport Senior Center
707-263-4218

Clearlake Senior Center
707-994-8201, x 100

Highlands Senior Center
707-994-3051

Live Oaks Senior Center
707-998-1950 | 707-998-3198

Lucerne Senior Center
707-274-8779

Middletown Senior Center
707-987-3113

THE BRIDGE TO HOPE

CENTER HELPS ADULTS IN NEED, INCLUDING VETERANS AND HOMELESS

BY MIKE BLOUNT

Homeless people with serious emotional issues are one of the most underserved populations in the United States. At The Bridge Peer Support Center in Lake County, program lead and Peer Support Specialist Carole Ford works to make sure they have the support they need to get

homeless or both. Services include peer support and counseling, showers, laundry and meals (lunch and breakfast). On average, Ford sees anywhere between 25 to 40 people every day, with two to three new people every week. Ford says The Bridge is a big house with a living room. Guests can take refuge from the summer heat, take a shower, do some laundry or just hang out — things most of us take for granted.

Ford says many of the guests at The Bridge have mental health issues. They may have been deemed not eligible for traditional mental health services or may not be actively seeking help. The Bridge offers a critical link to support for these individuals, some of Lake County's most vulnerable residents.

"It's the only services they're receiving in the county," Ford says. "It's comforting knowing there is some place [where homeless can go] and have someone listen to their story and provide them with support, emotional support or a hug," Ford says.

Counseling is offered all day, every day at The Bridge. Ford says many clients naturally gather to support one another during the day, but there are two scheduled support groups each week. Ford says peer support is an important part of the recovery process and gaining self-sustainability.

"The people who come here learn from listening and being here," Ford says. "I've heard them using some of the communication skills they've heard me use. They're learning to be real peer supporters."

"The people who come here learn from listening and being here."

CAROLE FORD
PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST,
THE BRIDGE



back on their feet. At age 72, Ford says The Bridge is more than a job to her.

"There's a job and then there's a calling," Ford says. "I really know that I'm doing exactly what I'm supposed to be."

The Bridge is a wellness center that provides a variety of services to adults in need, including a significant number of individuals who are veterans,

SUPPORT FOR SENIORS

CHALLENGES OLDER ADULTS FACE CAN LEAD TO DEPRESSION

BY MIKE BLOUNT

Seniors at risk of depression or having suicidal thoughts experience challenges that may not always be obvious to loved ones. Senior Peer Counseling Program Director Barbara Nuckols says that those challenges could include past trauma resurfacing, loss of physical strength or mobility, ailing health, grief from the loss of their spouse or social isolation. But the one thing Nuckols believes is key to happiness in old age is hope.

"The difference between a senior who thrives and one who doesn't is hope," Nuckols says. "People who thrive in their senior years have not lost their imagination. They haven't lost that part of themselves that allows them to see they can have a life without pain."

Several resources are available for seniors experiencing depression. Konocti Senior Support, Inc. offers services such as peer counseling and a program that provides companionship through weekly social visits for homebound seniors who are isolated from family or loved ones.

Many senior activity centers offer social interaction through exercise programs, support groups, peer counseling and educational classes for older adults. Nuckols says that for many seniors, there may be a reluctance to hang out at a senior center.

"No one wants to be old," Nuckols says. "But you can celebrate that transition by sharing your experience with someone. Senior activity centers are a good source for that."

Seniors who are at risk for depression often don't

want to burden anyone with their problems. They may isolate themselves from friends and family. They may be reluctant to ask for help. But Nuckols stresses that it's important that seniors have social interaction to talk about their problems and get help if they are feeling depressed.

"There's still a big stigma about mental health for seniors," Nuckols says. "[Some people think] that it's not about getting help, it's about getting diagnosed and labeled as crazy." But Nuckols says that's not true. She encourages seniors to overcome their hesitation and reach out.

"It takes a lot of courage to admit you're in pain and get help," she says, but notes that connecting with someone can make a real difference in helping seniors feel better.

"The difference between a senior who thrives and one who doesn't is hope."

BARBARA NUCKOLS
SENIOR PEER COUNSELING
PROGRAM DIRECTOR



LIFE IN BALANCE

CULTURAL APPROACH CAN HELP HEAL NATIVE AMERICANS

BY MICHELLE CARL

Looking back, Batsulwin Brown says he wishes he knew. His cousin had become isolated from the community. He'd confided in Brown about his struggles reconnecting with his kids and that "nothing changed" no matter what he did.

"I just kind of figured things would be OK, things would get better," says Brown, 38, who also goes by the name Eagle. "I didn't realize until the actual event that took place that all the signs were there."

In 2012, his cousin died by suicide at age 33. And there have been many other suicide attempts in his family.



Batsulwin (Eagle) Brown, center, participates in a drum circle. Brown says it's important for Native Americans to incorporate cultural beliefs and rituals into wellness.

PHOTO BY ROYCE DAVIS

"A lot of my motivation now is to work with kids, and to work for tribal communities to live in harmony, live in balance."

BATSULWIN (EAGLE) BROWN

TRIBAL PRESERVATION OFFICER WITH BIG VALLEY RANCHERIA

"The impacts have been, personally — they've been a little hard to deal with," Brown says, adding that the incidents have caused him to experience symptoms of depression.

It's not just these suicides that have impacted him. As a member of the Elem Pomo tribe of Native Americans, anytime a

member of the tribe hurts himself, Brown feels the pain, too.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the ethnic group with the highest rate of suicide from 2005-2009 was American Indian/Alaskan Native. The problem is even more pronounced among youth. The suicide rate among American Indian/Alaska Native adolescents and young adults ages 15 to 34 is 2.5 times higher than the national average for that age group.

While he cautions that suicide is never the result of any one thing, Brown says knowing the historical trauma his people have experienced can give some clues to why suicide and other issues, such as incarceration and substance abuse, have persisted in the community. This trauma includes atrocities suffered at the hands of the dominant culture as well as the isolation and eradication of their own culture.

Brown believes Native Americans must understand and make peace with this history before they can address the problems they face today by embracing culture.

"A lot of my motivation now is to work with kids, and to work for tribal communities to live in harmony, live in balance," he says.

Brown does this as part of his job as a family advocate for Big Valley Rancheria. The job entails him visiting children ages 7 to 14 to train them on cultural teachings. But it also exposes him to many of the hardships youth face.

"Some of the kids I work with come from one-parent homes — single mothers, fathers," he says. "A majority of the people that are in their lives are not people who are sober. Kids are exposed to a tremendous amount of stress, seeing things they should not be seeing at their age."

Brown says many young people have told him it's easy to gain access to drugs and alcohol. Many times adults will give them these substances.

Following his cousin's death, Brown received training in QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer), a suicide intervention protocol. Now if he encounters a person exhibiting signs of suicide, he knows what to do. He hopes to teach more members of the tribal community QPR, so even more people will have the tools to recognize and intervene when someone is considering suicide.

"The big push is to get more tribal youth trained in QPR," Brown says. "That way they're on the ground and they know what to do."



CIRCLE OF NATIVE MINDS WELLNESS CENTER

The Western idea of wellness can be a lot different from the Native American one. In Western culture, diseases are seen as physical ailments, whereas native cultures see illness as a physical as well as a mental and spiritual problem.

"One of the things that we recognized a long time ago, systems don't necessarily speak the languages of the communities they serve, especially tribal communities," says Chris Partida, a Native American cultural specialist.

Opened in 2012, the Circle of Native Minds Wellness Center provides a place for Native Americans to gather, learn and share about wellness within a cultural context — incorporating tribal customs with the best practices of Western medicine. That could include anything

from drum circles and traditional healers to recovery programs and suicide prevention.

"There's a conversation in the community about accessing health where we didn't necessarily see that before," Partida says, noting that more people are trained in suicide prevention so they can respond to those at risk.

Circle of Native Minds Wellness Center

845 Bevins St.
Lakeport, CA 95453
707-263-4880
Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Pain Isn't Always Obvious

KNOW THE SIGNS

Suicide Is Preventable

www.suicideispreventable.org

Pain isn't always obvious, but there are usually some warning signs if someone is considering suicide. Learn the signs and how to get help. Hang this poster in a helpful spot or keep it on hand — you never know when this information can help save a life.

CRITICAL CRISIS SIGNS:

THESE SIGNS INDICATE A PERSON MAY BE IN IMMEDIATE DANGER OF SELF-HARM:

- › Threatening self-harm or suicide
- › Seeking methods for self-harm or suicide, like weapons or pills
- › Person has a weapon or other lethal means
- › Person is in the act of self-harm or suicide

IF YOU OBSERVE EVEN ONE OF THESE SIGNS OF A SUICIDAL CRISIS, DO THE FOLLOWING:

- › Call 911 or the 24-hour North Bay Suicide Prevention Hotline of Lake County, 1-855-587-6373.
- › Don't leave the person alone.
- › Remove all nearby means of self-harm, such as weapons or medications.
- › Take the person to the emergency room.
- › Do not put yourself in danger. Call 911 if you are concerned for your safety.

MORE SIGNS

THESE BEHAVIORS ARE OTHER SIGNS THAT SOMEONE MAY BE THINKING ABOUT SUICIDE. THE MORE SIGNS OBSERVED, THE GREATER THE RISK.

- | | |
|--|---|
| › Anger | › Neglect of personal appearance |
| › Anxiety | › Feeling hopeless, desperate, trapped |
| › Withdrawal from friends and family | › No sense of purpose |
| › Loss of interest in pleasurable activities | › Sudden mood changes |
| › Changes in sleep habits | › Talking about wanting to die or suicide |
| › Increased drug or alcohol use | › Putting affairs in order |
| › Ignoring a doctor's orders | › Giving away possessions |
| › Increase in reckless behavior | › Saying goodbye to loved ones |

FIND THE WORDS

TAKE ALL SIGNS SERIOUSLY. IF YOU OBSERVE EVEN ONE OF THE SIGNS HERE, TALK TO THE PERSON ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS. HERE'S HOW.

WHAT NOT TO SAY

Don't say: "You're not thinking about it, are you?" Or: "You need to do something about this."

Don't ask in a way that suggests you're looking for a "no" for an answer.

Don't say: "Fine! If you want to kill yourself then go ahead. See if I care."

Don't tell the person to do it, no matter how frustrated you may feel. This is the worst thing you can say.

Don't Say: "Don't worry, I will keep your secret. Your secret is safe."

Don't promise to keep their secret. "I care about you too much to keep your secret. You need help and I can help you."

1

"I've noticed that you've talked about feeling hopeless a lot lately..."

Start the conversation

- » Before starting the conversation, make sure you have crisis resources on hand, such as the North Bay Suicide Prevention Hotline of Lake County, 1-855-587-6373. Additional resources can be found below.
- » Mention what signs you've noticed. This makes it clear your concerns aren't "out of the blue" and makes it harder for the person to simply deny that there's anything wrong.
- » Ask directly about suicide. This makes sure you are both talking about the same thing and shows that you're willing to talk.
- » If the person answers "yes" to your direct question, stay calm, but don't leave the person alone and call 911 or the North Bay Suicide Prevention Hotline, 1-855-587-6373.

2

"I understand when you say that you aren't sure if you want to keep living. But have you always wanted to die? Maybe there's a chance you won't feel this way forever. Help is available and I can help you get it."

Listen, express concern, reassure

- » Listen to the reasons the person has for both living and dying. Let the person know you care and are concerned about them and that you take their situation seriously.

3

"Do you have any weapons or prescription medications in the house? Is there someone you can call if you think you might act on your thoughts of suicide?"

Create a safety plan

- » Ask if the person has any means of self-harm and help remove them from the vicinity. Do not put yourself in danger. If you feel unsafe, call 911.
- » Create a safety plan together. Ask the person to promise to not use drugs or alcohol and to not act on thoughts of suicide until meeting with a professional.

4

"I know it might feel awkward to talk to a counselor. But there is a phone number we can call. Maybe they can help?"

Get help

- » Provide the person with the resources you have prepared. Call the North Bay Suicide Prevention Hotline of Lake County anytime at 1-855-587-6373. If you feel the situation is critical, take the person to the emergency room or call 911.

NOT TO SAY

"Talking about suicide, you're not going to be stupid, are you?"

"You want to hear..."

"It's not to be selfish and you go right ahead!"

"Matter how... most dangerous..."

"Don't tell anyone. Safe with me."

"Say this instead: 'I'm not going to tell a secret like this. I can help you get it.'"

REACH OUT

Crisis lines:

Call 911 if the person is in immediate danger of self harm or not responding to your intervention

24-HOUR HOTLINE
NORTH BAY SUICIDE PREVENTION
HOTLINE OF LAKE COUNTY
1-855-587-6373

Suicide Prevention • Crisis Intervention • Toll free

NATIONAL
SUICIDE
PREVENTION
LIFELINE
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

The Trevor Lifeline

1-866-488-7386
www.thetrevorproject.org
24-hour crisis line for LGBTQ young people. Visit website for text and chat.

Veterans/Active Duty Personnel Crisis Line

1-800-273-8255, press 1
CHAT: www.veteranscrisisline.net
TEXT: 838255

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. THERE ARE MANY COUNTY AND NATIONAL RESOURCES TO HELP YOU AND THE PERSON EXPERIENCING A CRISIS.

Local resources:

Lake County Behavioral Health

www.co.lake.ca.us
Mental health crisis and non-crisis services,
substance abuse treatment
Lake County Behavioral Health
24-hour crisis line: 1-800-900-2075

Lucerne Clinic

707-274-9101
6302 13th Ave., Lucerne, CA 95458

Southlake Clinic

Mental Health: 707-994-7090
Alcohol & Other Drug Services: 707-994-6494
7000-B S. Center Drive, Clearlake, CA 95422

Learn more:

Know the Signs www.suicideispreventable.org
Learn more about suicide warning signs and how to help.

Suicide Prevention Training

Contact Lake County Behavioral Health at 707-274-9101 for information on suicide-prevention training options offered.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

www.afsp.org

Suicide Prevention Resource Center

www.sprc.org

American Association of Suicidology

www.suicidology.org

Adapted from the Know the Signs campaign, www.suicideispreventable.org.

A NEW BEGINNING

“Life is beautiful.”

NOEMI GALLEGOS

SURVIVOR OF A SUICIDE ATTEMPT

WOMAN SURVIVES SUICIDE ATTEMPT TO FIND HOPE, HEALING AND SUPPORT

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Noemi Gallegos has a message of hope for anyone contemplating suicide. She survived a suicide attempt in 2011, and wants those who find themselves feeling hopeless to know that recovery really is possible.

“I hope that people thinking about suicide get well and don’t harm themselves as I did,” the 51-year-old Lakeport resident says.

She spoke out to help promote the new Latino Wellness Center in Clearlake. Also known as La Voz de la Esperanza Centro Latino, it provides bilingual mental health counseling and other services to local residents for free.

With help, Gallegos has recovered significantly since June 18, 2011, the day she attempted to take her own life. That day, she was in a fast-moving car driven by her boyfriend, Placido Morales. Heeding the commands of a voice inside her head, she unbuckled her seat belt, opened the passenger door and threw herself onto the highway. Morales tried unsuccessfully to catch her as she flew out.

Gallegos suffered major head trauma, among other injuries. She was hospitalized for more than a month, first in Santa Rosa, then in Sacramento. But it wasn’t until the following year that a full picture of her mental health crisis became clear.

In the spring of 2012, Edgar Ontiveros, a Lake County mental health specialist who now works at the Latino Wellness Center, received a phone tip from one of Gallegos’s daughters that she was mentally ill. Ontiveros immediately visited Gallegos, and quickly became aware of the advanced state of her mental illness.

“Noemi was diagnosed with schizophrenia” in 2012, Ontiveros says. “It was caused by a series of traumatic events.”

Gallegos had spent two decades with an abusive husband who often beat her about the head with his fists. Depressed

and battered, she fled her Kelseyville home in the late 1990s, taking her four children with her. For several years, Gallegos and her kids alternated between staying with friends and living in the streets.

One night, authorities found the family sleeping in a Kelseyville park. The children were seized by the state and placed in homes. That’s when Gallegos began hearing several different voices in her head, voices that would tell her to jump from a moving car a decade later.

“When she talked to me, she also was talking to [invisible] people,” Ontiveros says. “At times, she seemed to argue with them.”

After Ontiveros’s visit, Gallegos soon began sessions with a county psychiatrist. She also received therapy and was placed on medication. As a result, Noemi has “really stabilized,” Ontiveros says. She still hears occasional voices, but ignores them, partly by listening to music or reading the Bible.

Her recovery has been aided by support from many places. Gallegos says she is grateful to Ontiveros and Morales, her boyfriend.

Equally supportive have been Gerardo and Patricia Serafin, a Christian couple from Kelseyville, she says. She wants people who are experiencing suicidal thoughts to know that help is available through loved ones and community agencies. Today, she feels much differently than she did in 2011.

“Life is beautiful,” she says.

LA VOZ DE LA ESPERANZA CENTRO LATINO LATINO WELLNESS CENTER



Preventing suicides among Latinos is a main goal of Lake County’s Latino Wellness Center, open since early May 2014. The center is the only facility in the county providing free mental health counseling to the Spanish-speaking. Its other services include:

- » Flu shots
- » Peer support
- » Computer access
- » Mental health education and information
- » English-as-a-Second-Language classes

La Voz de la Esperanza Centro Latino

Latino Wellness Center
14585 Olympic Drive #B
Clearlake, CA 95422
707-994-4261 or 707-533-3758
Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Lake County residents needing immediate crisis intervention should dial 1-800-900-2075 or 911. Both lines have bilingual operators, as do the North Bay Suicide Prevention Hotline of Lake County, at 1-855-587-6373, and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, at 1-888-628-9454.

Edgar Ontiveros, left, is a Latino cultural specialist at Lake County Behavioral Health. He helped Noemi Gallegos, right, begin to recover from mental illness that had resulted in a suicide attempt.

PHOTO BY ROYCE DAVIS

UN NUEVO COMIENZO

UNA MUJER SOBREVIVE UN INTENTO DE SUICIDIO PARA ENCONTRAR ESPERANZA, SANACIÓN Y APOYO

POR EDGAR SANCHEZ

Noemi Gallegos tiene un mensaje de esperanza para cualquier persona que esté pensando en cometer un suicidio. Ella sobrevivió un intento de suicidio en el año 2011, y desea que todos aquellos que se sienten ya sin esperanzas sepan que la recuperación realmente sí es posible.

“Yo espero que las personas que están pensando en el suicidio se sientan mejor y no se hagan daño a sí mismas como yo me lo hice a mí”, expresa Noemi de 51 años, residente en Lakeport, CA.

Ella compartió su caso para ayudar a promover el nuevo Centro Latino de Bienestar en Clearlake. También conocido como La Voz de la Esperanza Centro Latino, este lugar brinda gratuitamente consejería bilingüe de salud mental y otros servicios útiles a los residentes locales.

Con ayuda, Gallegos se ha estado recuperando significativamente desde el 18 de junio de 2011 —día en el cual intentó quitarse la vida. Ese día ella venía en un carro a alta velocidad conducido por su novio, Placido Morales. Haciendo caso a

las órdenes de una voz interna en su cabeza, ella se desabrochó su cinturón de seguridad, abrió la puerta del asiento del pasajero donde venía y se lanzó hacia la autopista. Morales trató sin éxito de agarrarla mientras ella salía volando.

Debido al impacto, Noemi sufrió un golpe grave en la cabeza, además de otras lesiones. Ella estuvo hospitalizada más de un mes: primero en Santa Rosa, y luego en Sacramento. Pero no fue hasta el año siguiente que la imagen clara de su severa crisis mental se hizo evidente.

En la primavera de 2012, Edgar Ontiveros, un especialista latino de salud mental en el Condado de Lake, que ahora trabaja en el Centro Latino de Bienestar, recibió una llamada de alerta por parte de una de las hijas de Noemi, diciéndole que ella estaba mentalmente enferma. Ontiveros visitó a Noemi de inmediato, y rápidamente se dio cuenta del estado tan avanzado de su enfermedad mental.

“Noemi fue diagnosticada con esquizofrenia en el 2012”, dice Ontiveros. “Esa enfermedad fue causada por una serie de eventos traumáticos que ella había vivido”.

Gallegos había estado casada veinte años con un esposo abusivo y violento, quien frecuentemente la golpeaba en la cabeza usando sus puños. A finales de los años noventa, estando deprimida y maltratada, ella dejó su casa en Kelseyville llevándose a sus cuatro hijos. Durante varios años, Gallegos y sus hijos a veces recibían hospedaje en la casa de sus amistades, pero en otros momentos tuvieron que vivir en la calle.

Una noche las autoridades encontraron a la familia durmiendo en un parque de Kelseyville. En esa situación, los niños fueron recogidos por el Estado y colocados en casas de familia. Fue en ese momento cuando Gallegos empezó a escuchar voces internas en su cabeza; las mismas voces que una década después, le dijeron que se tirara del carro a alta velocidad.

“Cuando ella hablaba conmigo, al mismo tiempo ella también estaba hablando con otras personas [invisibles]”, relata Ontiveros. “Otras veces, ella parecía que estaba discutiendo con esas ‘personas’”.

Después de la visita del especialista Ontiveros, Gallegos pronto comenzó a tener sesiones con un psiquiatra del condado; también recibió terapia y tratamiento con medicamentos. Como resultado, Noemi “realmente se ha estabilizado”, expresa Ontiveros. Ella todavía escucha voces ocasionalmente, pero las ignora mediante la lectura de la Biblia o escuchando música.

Su proceso de recuperación ha sido posible por el apoyo recibido de muchas personas y lugares. Gallegos manifiesta que está agradecida con Ontiveros y con su novio Placido. Igualmente dice que ha contado con el respaldo de Gerardo y Patricia Serafin, una pareja cristiana de Kelseyville. Noemi desea que las personas que están teniendo pensamientos suicidas sepan que existe mucha ayuda disponible, a través de sus seres queridos y de las agencias comunitarias. Actualmente ella siente y vive de una manera muy diferente a como se sentía en el 2011.

“La vida es bella”, finaliza diciendo.



“La Vida es Bella”

NOEMI GALLEGOS

SOBREVIVIENTE DE UN INTENTO DE SUICIDIO

LA VOZ DE LA ESPERANZA CENTRO LATINO DE BIENESTAR

La prevención de los suicidios en la comunidad latina es una de las metas principales del Centro Latino de Bienestar del Condado de Lake, abierto a principios de mayo de 2014. Este centro es la única institución en el condado que provee consejería gratuita de salud mental para las personas que hablan español. También ofrece servicios adicionales como:

- » Vacunas contra la gripe/influenza
- » Apoyo de otras personas que están viviendo la misma situación
- » Acceso a computadoras
- » Educación e información importante acerca de la salud mental
- » Clases de inglés como segunda lengua

La Voz de la Esperanza Centro Latino de Bienestar

14585 Olympic Drive #B
Clearlake, CA 95422
707-994-4261/707-533-3758
Lunes - Viernes, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Los residentes del Condado de Lake que necesiten la intervención inmediata en una crisis, deben llamar al 1-800-900-2075 o al 911. Ambas líneas telefónicas tienen operadores bilingües, al igual que la Línea Directa de Prevención del Suicidio del Norte de la Bahía del Condado de Lake, en el número 1-855-587-6373, y la Línea Nacional de Ayuda para la Prevención de Suicidios, en el número 1-888-628-9454.

Edgar Ontiveros (izquierda) es un especialista latino del Departamento de Salud Mental y Comportamiento del Condado de Lake. Él ayudó a que Noemi Gallegos (derecha) comenzara su camino de recuperación de una enfermedad mental que se había traducido en un intento de suicidio.

FOTOGRAFÍA DE ROYCE DAVIS



According to the American Psychological Association, about half of the children in the U.S. experience a traumatic life event, such as abuse, natural disaster, violence, bullying or traumatic loss. Early intervention for trauma is important to both help kids recover and reduce the effects of mental illness later in life. Reactions to trauma will vary by individual, age, level of exposure, and other factors. However, these behaviors could signal that an elementary school child is having trouble dealing with a traumatic event:

- » Separation anxiety
- » Trouble sleeping
- » Changes in appetite
- » Withdrawal from friends, family or activities
- » Changes in school performance
- » Over- or under-reaction to physical contact or sudden movements & sounds
- » Outbursts of anger or aggression
- » More frequent headaches, stomachaches or tiredness
- » Repeated re-creation of an event through comments, drawings or actions
- » Emotional “numbness” or expressing no feelings at all about the event

With support, many children can recover quickly, while others will need help over a longer period of time. These resources can help:

- » For a crisis, call: 1-800-900-2075 or 911
- » For mental health services or to request help from a Parent Partner, call Lake County Behavioral Health.
Lucerne office: 707-274-9101
Southlake office: 707-994-7090
- » Visit the National Child Traumatic Stress Network at www.nctsn.org for resources and to learn more about childhood trauma.

Kathy Herdman, far left, collaborates with Lake County colleagues. As a Parent Partner, Herdman helps parents of kids with mental health needs navigate the system.

PHOTO BY ROYCE DAVIS



GETTING KIDS THE HELP THEY NEED

PARENT PARTNER OFFERS FAMILIES A POWERFUL ALLY

BY EVAN TUCHINSKY

Seven years ago, when his youngest son was 9, John Gregorio and his wife, Susan Power, found themselves in a position familiar to many parents of children dealing with the effects of mental illness. They knew their child had resources available; the trick was determining exactly which ones, then determining how to get them — all while keeping their own heads above water.

Their case manager at Lake County Behavioral Health suggested they call Kathy Herdman, newly hired as a Parent Partner: a liaison between parents and mental health professionals.

They called. Boy, are they glad they did.

“Before Kathy’ and ‘After Kathy’ is so different,” Power says. “Kathy helped us with a lot of this [process] and made sure we understood what we had to do.”

Herdman provided tangible assistance, such as input on their son’s Individualized Education Program (IEP), a team of Full Service Partnership (FSP) providers and a parent support group that Power says “opened up a whole new world for us.” Herdman also provided individual, emotional support plus a sounding board.

Parent Partners aren’t formal therapists. Rather, they’re peer advocates. They listen, assess what each child needs and help parents procure those services.

Herdman describes herself as a mix between a tour guide and an interpreter: “I’m essentially a voice for parents, and

I assist parents in navigating the system. I translate the system’s languages for parents, and the parents’ languages and feelings for the experts.”

She does so based on personal experience. Her own child received behavioral health care as a teenager, which exposed her to the inner workings of a county system in Southern California. Her background reassured Gregorio, a delivery driver, and Power, a family mentor.

“Unless you’ve been through it,” Power says, “there’s no way you can understand what it’s like to have your child falling apart, what it’s like to have a child who’s that young be that sick.”

Herdman, of course, hasn’t experienced every scenario personally. Her child never reached the point of considering suicide, though someone she was close to did die by suicide.

She estimates that one in three phone calls she receives from a parent involves a child in some form of crisis. If the crisis involves talk of the child harming him- or herself or others, Herdman follows the Lake County Behavioral Health crisis protocol. She urges the parent to

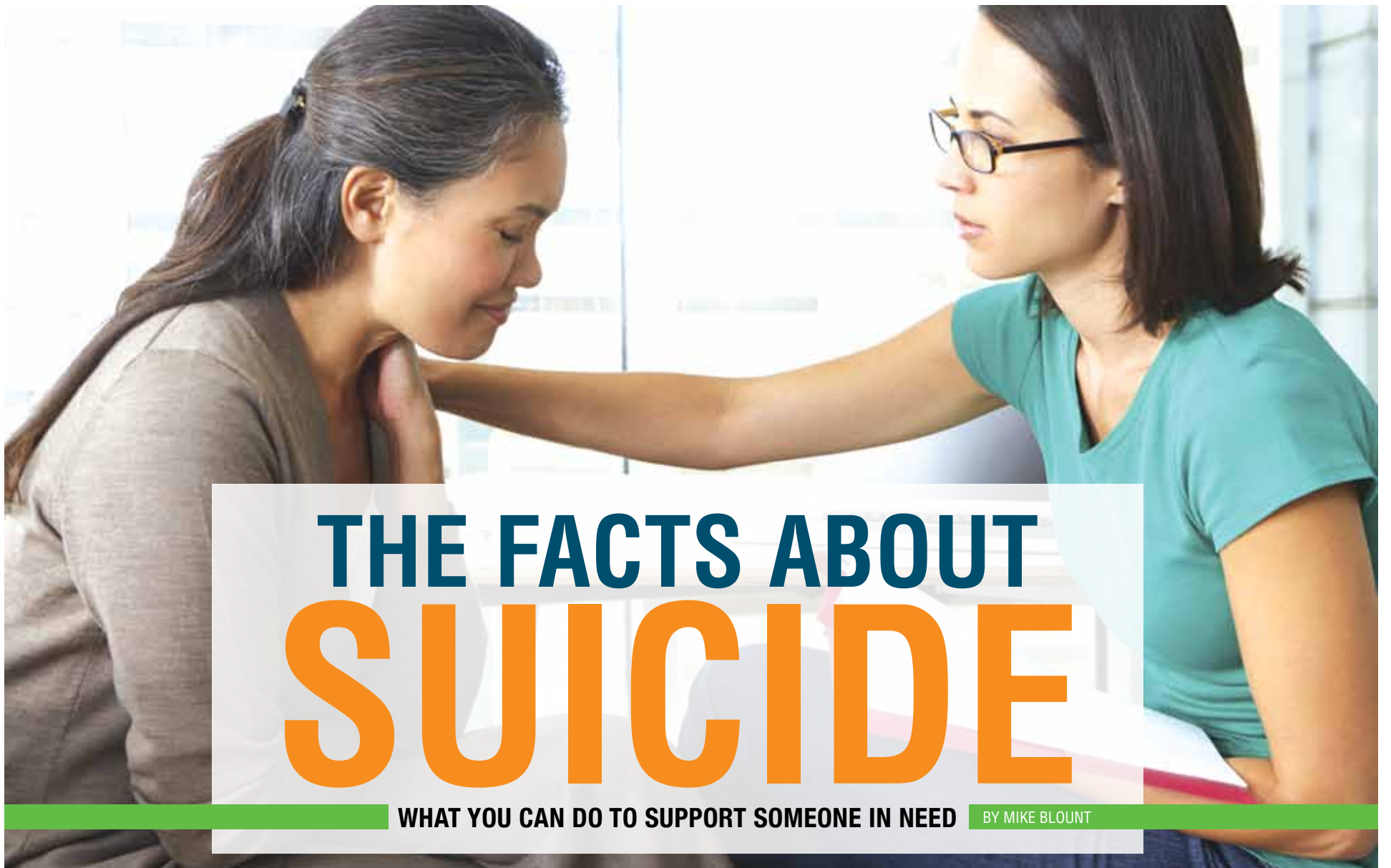
take the child to the emergency room for an immediate mental health evaluation, then calls back later for further consultation.

For any parent concerned about a child’s mental or emotional well-being, Gregorio and Power have basic advice:

“Absolutely call the Parent Partner,” Power says. “I can’t even begin to say how indispensable she is.”

“I’m essentially a voice for parents, and I assist parents in navigating the system.”

KATHY HERDMAN
LAKE COUNTY PARENT PARTNER



THE FACTS ABOUT SUICIDE

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT SOMEONE IN NEED

BY MIKE BLOUNT

Every day in our local community, people struggle with emotional pain. That pain isn't always obvious, and sometimes, it can cause someone to have thoughts of suicide. If you know the signs and what you can do to support someone in a time of need, you can make a difference. Theresa Ly, who works with the Know the Signs campaign to spread awareness and education about suicide prevention, explains what you can do to help save a life.

What is the Know the Signs campaign?

It is a statewide suicide prevention social marketing campaign, a project of the California Mental Health Services Authority, an organization of county governments working to improve mental health outcomes for individuals, families and communities. It is funded by counties through the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63). The campaign helps individuals learn about the warning signs for suicide, how to help someone in need, and how find local resources. In Lake County, there is a 24/7 suicide prevention hotline and mental health support services available through the county. You can find more information about Know the Signs and local resources at www.suicideispreventable.org.

Should you always take it seriously when someone talks of suicide?

Suicides are not common, but it's still really important for people to get connected to professional care. When someone is experiencing thoughts of suicide, that is a very real thing they are feeling. If they reach out to someone, it could be an indication that they are wanting to receive help. Through crisis lines, people can get connected to someone who will listen and help them get the care they need. In Lake

County in 2013, there were 277 calls to the national suicide prevention hotline 1-800-273-8255 (TALK). That's a good indicator that people are reaching out and receiving care.

Is there one sure sign that someone is thinking about suicide?

Warning signs are behavioral indicators that someone might be more at risk for suicide, but there is no one sign or checklist that will demonstrate that someone is thinking about committing suicide. Suicidal thoughts are a multifaceted issue and it's a unique experience for every person. There are several underlying causes of emotional pain — someone could lose their job or go through a major breakup — but some things you can look for are someone talking about suicide or feeling trapped, anxious or agitated behavior, restlessness or other sudden drastic changes in their personality. It's more about seeing there's something off or changed about a person and acting on your instinct to get that person help.

What should I do if I think someone is at risk for suicide?

The first thing you should do is be there for that person. You should never say things like, "You're not actually thinking about doing this?" or "That would be crazy if you did that!" That person is trying to get help, and what they are feeling is very real. Be able to sit and listen to them. Try to understand the distress that person is going through. Ask them if they are having thoughts of suicide, and stress to them how much you do care about them and tell them they are not alone. Make sure there are no weapons or prescriptions in the home, and if there are, reduce their

access to them. Make sure they are not taking substances that are altering their thinking and rationality. Make sure you tell them that you are there to help them get through it and keep that promise. Finally, know the local resources so you can get them connected to professional care.

Find out more about suicide prevention and the Know the Signs campaign at www.suicideispreventable.org.

"Through crisis lines, people can get connected to someone who will listen and help them get the care they need."

THERESA LY
PROGRAM MANAGER,
CALIFORNIA MENTAL HEALTH
SERVICES AUTHORITY



Theresa Ly works with the Know the Signs campaign to spread awareness and education about suicide prevention.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THERESA LY

THERE IS HOPE

Suicide really is preventable. Don't ignore the warning signs — take all risks of suicide seriously. By taking action you can save a life. These local, state and national resources can help you or someone you know in crisis, or provide you the knowledge and skills you need to be ready to reach out.

CRISIS?

 **Call 911** if you or someone you know is in immediate danger.



Veterans/Active Duty Personnel Crisis Line

CALL: 1-800-273-8255, press 1 | **CHAT:** www.veteranscrisisline.net | **TEXT:** 838255

Veterans in crisis and their loved ones can connect confidentially with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders.

The Trevor Lifeline

CALL: 1-866-488-7386 | **CHAT/TEXT:** www.thetrevorproject.org

24-hour crisis line offers a safe, nonjudgmental place for LGBTQ+ young people ages 13-24. Visit website for chat and text.

OTHER RESOURCES



Know the Signs

www.suicideispreventable.org
Know the signs. Find the words. Reach out. Learn how to recognize the warning signs of suicide, have a direct conversation with someone in crisis and find resources.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
www.afsp.org

Friends For Survival
www.friendsforsurvival.org
Resources for survivors of suicide loss.

LAKE COUNTY RESOURCES



Lake County Behavioral Health

Trauma-informed mental health crisis and non-crisis services for the severely mental ill, substance abuse prevention and treatment, linkages/referrals, and culturally sensitive peer support. Visit www.co.lake.ca.us — Click the Department tab and select “Behavioral Health.” Lake County Behavioral Health 24-hour crisis line: 1-800-900-2075

Suicide Prevention Training

One of the best ways to prevent suicide deaths is to attend a QPR or ASIST suicide-prevention training. Call 707-274-9101 for information about available trainings for individuals and groups.

The Wave of Hope

This traveling exhibit of portraits shares the stories of Lake County residents who have faced depression. Visit www.awaveofhope.com for more information.

Lucerne Clinic

6302 13th Ave.
Lucerne, CA 95458
707-274-9101
M-F, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Southlake Clinic

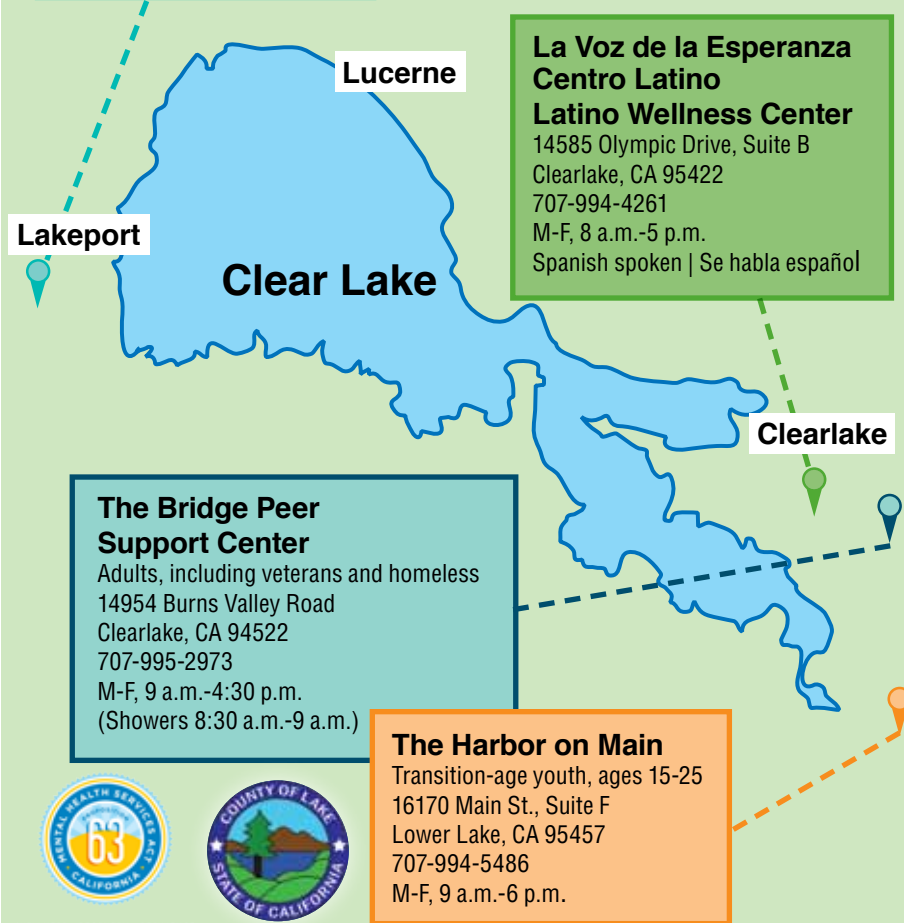
7000-B S. Center Drive
Clearlake, CA 95422
Mental Health: 707-994-7090
Alcohol & Other Drug Services: 707-994-6494
M-F, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Circle of Native Minds Wellness Center

845 Bevins St.
Lakeport, CA 95453
707-263-4880
M-F, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Lake County Wellness Centers

Anyone can access services at any location
(peer counseling, social activities, referrals and more)



The Bridge Peer Support Center

Adults, including veterans and homeless
14954 Burns Valley Road
Clearlake, CA 94522
707-995-2973
M-F, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
(Showers 8:30 a.m.-9 a.m.)

The Harbor on Main

Transition-age youth, ages 15-25
16170 Main St., Suite F
Lower Lake, CA 95457
707-994-5486
M-F, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.

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