

The POWER of *Partnership*

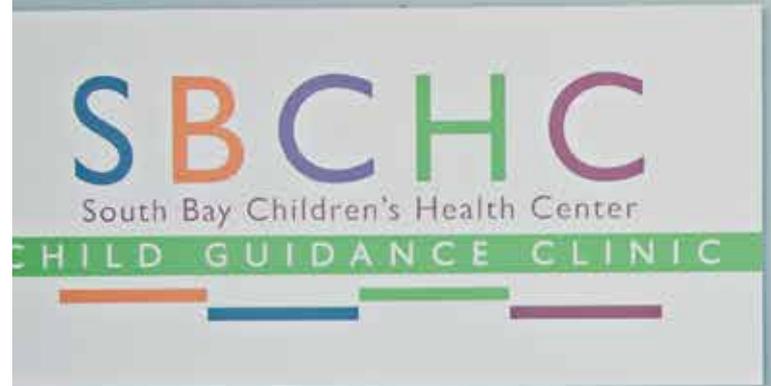
HEALING TAKES HELP. THAT'S WHY TORRANCE MEMORIAL REACHES OUT TO THOSE IN NEED VIA ORGANIZATIONS LIKE SOUTH BAY CHILDREN'S HEALTH CENTER.

WRITTEN BY LAURA ROE STEVENS | PHOTOGRAPHED BY LAUREN PRESSEY

Who hasn't been guilty of putting off their biannual trip to the dentist? Next time you try to dodge your dental hygienist, remember this: For some families, a trip to the dentist is a luxury. In fact, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 19% of children ages 2 to 19 have untreated cavities.

Keeping care accessible to all is important; that's why Torrance Memorial Medical Center contributed an estimated economic value of \$61 million in community benefits to its South Bay service area in 2013, the majority of which was attributed to subsidized care for medically indigent patients and other charity care. While the hospital doesn't have the ability to contribute such an amount in sheer cash donations, Torrance Memorial makes a concerted effort to provide benefits for the broader community by way of health screenings, community health education, supply donations and increasing collaboration with other nonprofit agencies that provide vital services in the community. An example

DEDICATED TO HEALTHY SMILES. BACK ROW: MARC SCHENASI, CONTROLLER; CHRISTINE BYRNE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR; LISA DAGGETT-CUMMINGS, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT. FRONT ROW: RACHEL GREEN, CLINICAL DIRECTOR; MEGHA SATA, DDS, DENTAL DIRECTOR; CLAIRE COIGNARD, DIRECTOR, HEALTH EDUCATION, TORRANCE MEMORIAL







RACHEL GREEN AND CLAIRE COIGNARD

is the South Bay Children’s Health Center (SBCHC), a 67-year-old Torrance organization that has provided thousands of low-income and uninsured families with high-quality dental and mental health services.

According to Claire Coignard, director of health education and outreach services for Torrance Memorial, the hospital has been partnering with SBCHC since 1998. She explains that SBCHC was chosen to receive assistance because it was clear the organization served “vulnerable populations” at medical or financial risk due to being uninsured, or underinsured, or those receiving Medi-Cal or Medicare. Being able to be a part of this process is one of the best parts of her job, Coignard says, reminding her that she works within a healing community—one that strives to help all in need. “It’s one of the reasons I love working for Torrance Memorial—the values are not just words on a page,” she says.

Today more than ever, SBCHC is critical to our community. Did you know that the South Bay has more families who qualify as “at-risk for food insecurity” than any other region in California? According to Lisa Daggett-Cummings, director of development for SBCHC, “The South Bay is a region of very sharp contrasts, further complicating equitable access to mental and oral health services for all families in need.”

For instance, more than 260,000 people in our community live at or below the poverty line. South Bay families reflect the highest level of food insecurity in the county, with 37% of the families in the region living at 300% of the poverty level or below. What that means is that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of families in the South Bay lack consistent access to an adequate food supply in order to feed their children—so taking them to a dentist or therapist is a luxury few can afford and many forgo.

To complicate matters further, 18% of all children of at-risk South Bay families are living with special needs—the highest percentage in the county, further challenging access to services, says Daggett-Cummings. This is where SBCHC steps in, assisting more than 25,000 families a year. When families can’t afford high-quality dental care, children can suffer from tooth or gum disease and pain that leads to school absences and a host of more serious preventable issues.

“Every family in America should be able to afford high-quality dental care. That’s what we are able to provide,” says Christine Byrne, MFT, SBCHC’s executive director. SBCHC has created a high-quality dental clinic for the entire family and, Byrne says, all who work there “are committed to providing care for those who need it most.”

South Bay Youth Project at a Glance:



Individual, family & couples counseling



Tutoring service



Parenting support groups



Domestic violence support groups

ON THE ROAD TO HEALING

SBCHC began in 1947 solely as a dental clinic to assist the neediest families but has expanded its services over the years to meet other dire needs within the community. Since the formation of its Child Guidance Clinic in 1967, SBCHC has offered affordable mental health services, including psychotherapy, to children and families struggling with emotional and behavioral issues.

The clinic's team consists of psychologists, psychiatrists, clinical social workers, and marriage and family therapists. Children, adolescents, and young adults up to 21 years of age and their families who have Medi-Cal and meet severity criteria are eligible for assistance.

"Mental health is one of the top health care needs for underserved families in the South Bay," says Byrne. "Our Child Guidance Clinic fills a need for so many local parents in search of affordable, quality mental health services for their children.

"At our Child Guidance Clinic, our team of specialists sees mental health and healing as a partnership, and they do everything they can to make sure their young clients feel safe and supported—they work together with the entire family. Their families know their children are on the road to healing."

"MENTAL HEALTH IS ONE OF THE TOP HEALTH CARE NEEDS FOR UNDERSERVED FAMILIES IN THE SOUTH BAY. OUR CHILD GUIDANCE CLINIC FILLS A NEED FOR SO MANY LOCAL PARENTS IN SEARCH OF AFFORDABLE, QUALITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR THEIR CHILDREN."

CHANGING LIVES, ONE CHILD AT A TIME

In 2008, SBCHC integrated the South Bay Youth Project, formerly run by the city of Redondo Beach, into its array of services. The program offers a full range of supportive child- and youth-focused mental health services.

One of the most popular is the Wilderness Program through the Redondo Shores Continuation School. Every year 10 teens at Redondo Shores are chosen to participate in a free, 10-week wilderness and leadership group. Each week these teens work with a therapist and Folcrum Adventures guides to hone their leadership abilities using rope courses in the Santa Monica mountains, trust-building exercises, teamwork and listening skills.

The program culminates with a three-days-and-nights camping trip in Joshua Tree National Park. According to SBCHC staff, many of the kids have not spent much time in nature nor had the opportunity to build confidence in their leadership abilities. Clearly, thousands of families in the South Bay are extremely grateful for the services provided by SBCHC.

For more information about SBCHC or to inquire about donating, please call 310-316-1212.

