

SBCHC 75th Anniversary Series “Mental Health Month”

By Marsha Swails and Joanie Neumayer
Board Members

“When a child walks in the room, your child or anybody else's child, do your eyes light up? That's what they're looking for.”
Novelist Toni Morrison

As we honor those struggling with mental health issues, SBCHC is a shining gem in the South Bay landscape. In 1967, the Child Guidance clinic was added providing families with a full range of services from psychological treatment to family, group, and drug therapy. It was supported early on by the Guild of SBCHC, which later became the Las Candelistas women's group. Eventually, in 1977, a stand alone clinic was built in Torrance.



Redondo Beach Office, November 1967

The Child Guidance clinic provides help to over 250 clients each year. Outreach to schools in Redondo Beach, Manhattan Beach, Torrance, and El Segundo now serve around 1500 children and teens a year through the work of our South Bay Youth Project. Additionally, it provides schools with training for identifying mental health issues in students as well as strategies to help staff overcome burnout.

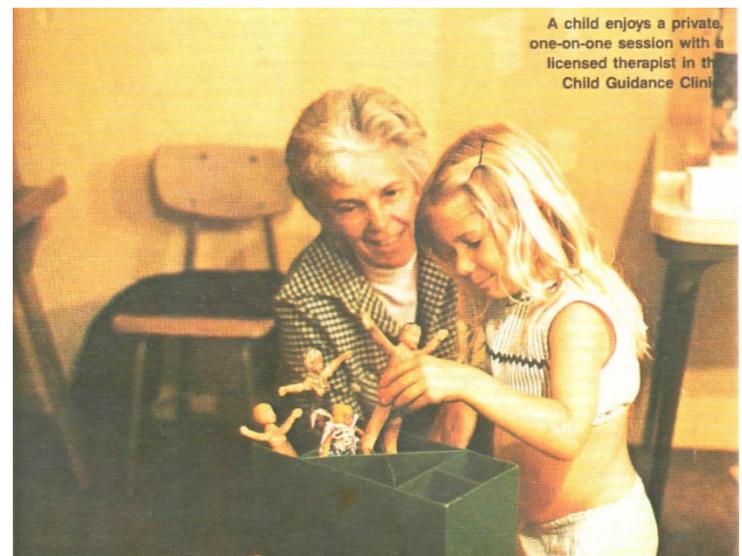
May is “Mental Health Month” and we have so much to celebrate because of the help our mental health clinic provides to children, teens, and their families. Angela Wilson, director of the clinic, is the heart of this service. During college Angela studied to become a Special Education teacher. However, her psychology classes inspired her to become a therapist instead. Several therapy positions eventually led her to SBCHC, where her work makes a huge impact on so many. A natural

leader, Angela deftly coordinates the mental health clinic and the South Bay Youth Project with many schools and community organizations.

As Angela and our mental health team navigated this past year of Covid-19, it turned out to be the busiest year in agency history. Families dealt with everything from losing jobs to losing loved ones. Some teens dropped out of school to find work so their families would not be evicted or they simply put food on the table. Recent studies show an increasing number of young people have thought of suicide -- from one in twenty to one in five. Depression and anxiety are common for so many.

Because of Covid-19, the clinic has largely utilized Telehealth. This technology increased the number of children and teens seen and has allowed quicker responses and more frequent contact as a twenty minute session can be squeezed between weekly appointments if needed. Children can interact in group sessions on Zoom. Also, offering telehealth eliminates the need for masks allowing the therapist and clients to see each other's facial expressions, a crucial window into what is going on. Telehealth has also eliminated barriers for parents who don't need to leave work to drive a child to an appointment or lack transportation all together.

Each of our services impact lives in such a positive way. This legacy, the gift of mental health, creates resilience to much of the stress that so many children, teens, and families experience. To them the South Bay Children's Health Center is a sparkling light, shining from the children's own eyes. The important work that our mental health professionals provide is life changing.



South Bay Lifestyle Magazine, 1989