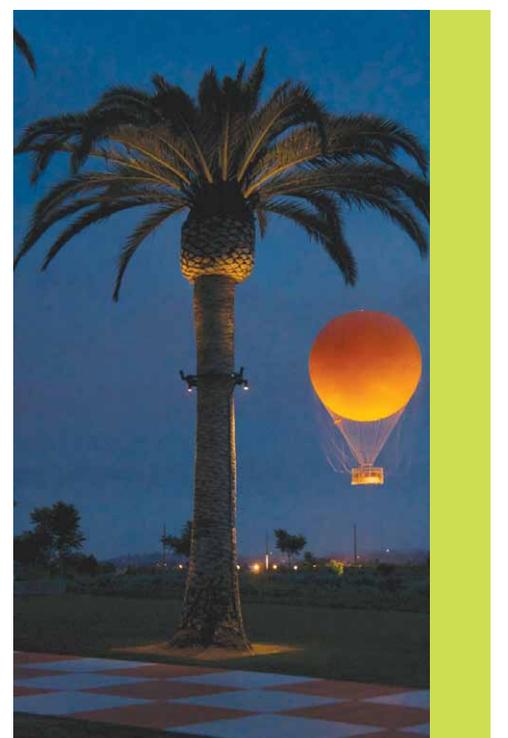
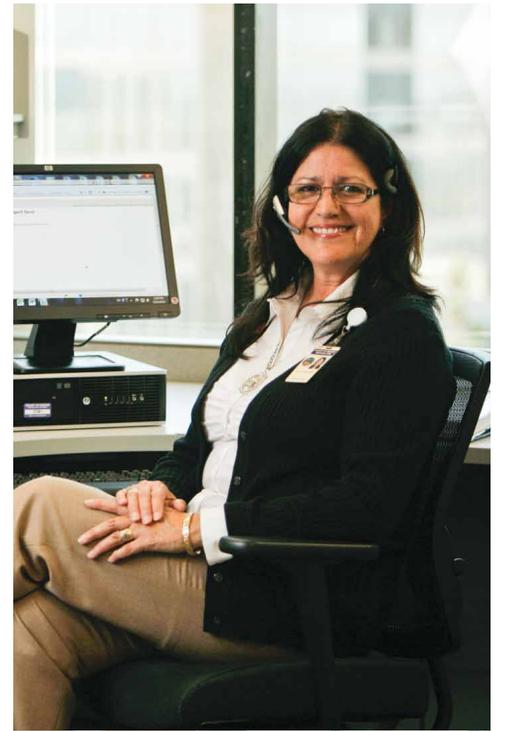




# HERE FOR YOU

Orange County Health Care Agency  
Behavioral Health Services



Orange County | Behavioral Health Information & Referrals

**855-OC-Links**  
(625-4657)



WELLNESS • RECOVERY • RESILIENCE

A Special Advertising Supplement



Viviriana "Vivi" Rivera, center, relaxes with sisters Esmeralda, 13, and Stephanie, 18, who recently came home from college on break. When their parents died, the siblings struggled to find housing, medical care and other services.

PHOTO BY SALVADOR OCHOA

# SOMEWHERE TO TURN

*After both parents die, young siblings discover they are not alone*

BY MICHELLE CARL

**V**iviriana "Vivi" Rivera has cared for her three younger siblings ever since her mother died when she was 11. But she always had her father to rely on.

Then when her father died suddenly from a heart attack in 2012, the four siblings ranging in age from 11 to 20 were all alone.

Vivi found herself doing things few 20-year-olds have to do. She applied for welfare and food stamps. The college student stopped going to classes and had to get a job. She and her siblings were in danger of being homeless. Her brother was kicked out of school because of his behavior issues and a sister had no legal residency in the U.S.

But Vivi found help from so many people — strangers, teachers and social workers. One place she found help was Boys Town Family Support Services, an Orange County Health Care Agency Behavioral Health Services contracted program. Boys Town connected her to a peer mentor, Diana Fernandez, who helped Vivi find low-cost medical care, a food pantry and housing options. The resources kept Vivi and her siblings going.

"She was like my go-to person, if I needed something," she says of Diana.

Diana offered one-on-one mentoring to Vivi over the phone for three months. Diana says the goal of mentoring is to build a trusting relationship and point participants in the direction of resources.

"It's about teaching them how to ask for help, especially when they're isolated and don't want to hear 'no' one more time," Diana says. "They're very tender people. It doesn't always sound like that on the phone, but they are very vulnerable."

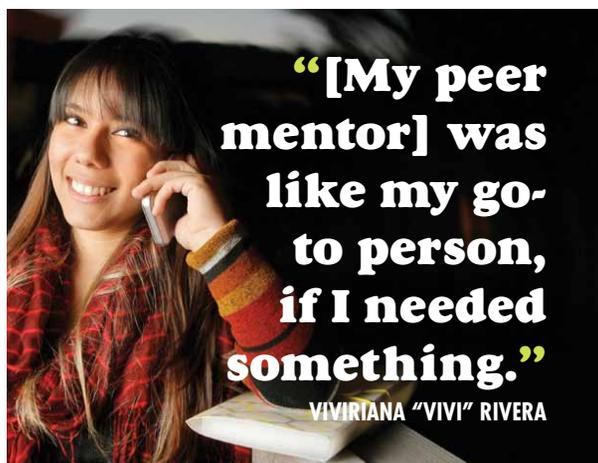
She was impressed with Vivi's efforts to keep her family together.

"Even though the odds were stacked against her and she was so isolated from family, her attitude was wonderful," she says. "Her sisters gave her that strength to push forward."

Today, 22-year-old Vivi is living in her own apartment in Santa Ana with her 13-year-old sister. Her 16-year-old brother is with a foster

parent, who can give him the attention he needs. Stephanie Rivera is away at college. Vivi has a well-paying job and is grateful for the help that came in unexpected places.

"My dad always said, 'Don't expect anything from family. God always finds a way to bless you, even with strangers,'" Vivi says. "I thank God for them being there in my life."



**"[My peer mentor] was like my go-to person, if I needed something."**

VIVIRIANA "VIVI" RIVERA

## YOUR CONNECTION: OC LINKS

### 855-OC-LINKS

Help is out there if you need it. You or someone you know may suffer from depression, homelessness, violence in the home, drug or alcohol use. These are all conditions that affect your "behavioral health" — your ability to manage the thoughts, emotions and actions that are necessary for everyday life.

Getting help used to be complicated. With so many programs in Orange County's behavioral health system — around 200 in total — many people didn't know where to get help or how to sign up.

"There were so many doors to have to go through and so many hoops to jump through," says Jason Austin, program manager for Orange County Behavioral Health Services. "People were just being bounced around from place to place and it was a very frustrating process."

That's why OC Links was created, to give people one door to go through for all the assistance they need. Since October 2013, the OC Links phone number and live online chat have connected people to many of the county's behavioral health services.

When you call OC Links, you speak with a Behavioral Health Navigator, a specially trained person who knows about the programs in the behavioral health system.

"What's really incredible about our program is it's people first," Austin says. "Our Navigators are incredibly supportive, nurturing, well-trained clinical people."

While listening to a caller's situation, the Navigator types key words from the conversation into a database. The database shows helpful programs the caller is qualified for.

The Navigator then contacts the program while the caller remains on the line. This is called a "warm transfer" and prevents callers from being given a list of phone numbers and having to explain their needs over again.

"It takes the customer service orientation of phone and online service and links it to behavioral health services, which really hasn't been done before," Austin says.

Austin says the response so far has been huge, with around 35 callers a day. People are sharing OC Links with their friends and family. Austin says it takes a lot of courage to pick up the phone and share your problems with a stranger, but it's the only way to start the process of recovery.

"The program overall is really about eliminating the stigma of looking for help," he says. "And so now you can call somewhere and have a trained ear and someone who can listen to you, not just in one program, but for all 200, and get you to the right place."



Jason Austin

# LEARNING HOW TO HEAL

Woman deals with grief over father's suicide through sharing

BY MIKE BLOUNT

**R**obin Thompson, 52, was driving to the airport in 2010 when she received a phone call. She pulled over and listened as her sister told her the news — her father had taken his own life.

“I went into shock,” Thompson says. “I kind of had to go into this moment where I wouldn’t feel anything because I had to cancel my flight and turn around and drive back. I didn’t cry at first. I can’t say I wasn’t expecting it.”

The year prior, Robin began taking care of her father when his health drastically declined following a back surgery.

“I felt like a failure because I had kept him alive for the last few years, and if I had just been there, he might still be here,” Robin says.

He became reliant on pain medication and increasingly paranoid, a symptom of mental illness. He moved into an assisted living apartment building for seniors with nursing staff on site, but isolated himself from everyone.

“He wasn’t happy and no one could do anything right,” Robin says. “We tried to get him to go to mental health counseling, but he went to one session and decided he didn’t want to go back.”

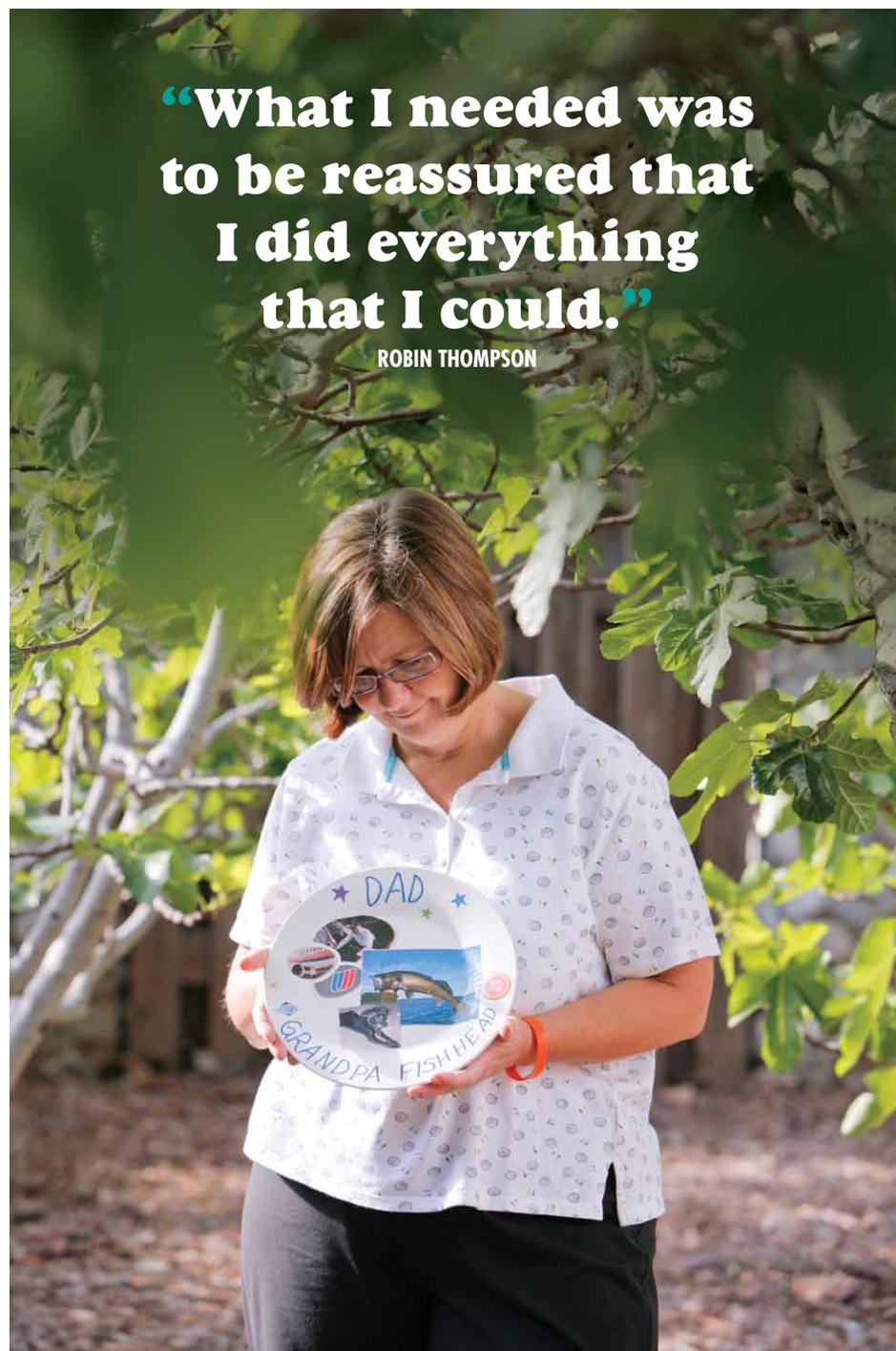
In some way, she felt responsible for her father’s death. After her father committed suicide, Robin reached out to the same counselor she had gone to with her father. It was the first time she opened up to anyone about what had happened and what she was feeling — the guilt, regret and heartache. She began attending a survivor’s group to talk to others who have lost loved ones after a suicide.

“What I needed was to be reassured that I did everything that I could,” Robin says. “It’s a process, and I was just starting. You have to learn to trust people before you can share your story.”

A year and a half later, Robin decided to move to Orange County to take a job. She felt the change of scenery and new experiences would help her heal. She had

“What I needed was to be reassured that I did everything that I could.”

ROBIN THOMPSON



Robin Thompson says she learned how to heal through sharing her story with others. PHOTO BY SALVADOR OCHOA

worked through a lot, but there were still bad days. Shortly after she moved, Robin saw a flier for a local survivor’s group held by Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, a county behavioral health contractor. She decided to join and the experience has made her stronger, she says.

“That type of agony in your heart is

so gut-wrenching,” Robin says. “You have to share because you can’t deal with that alone. Those sessions were so beneficial because we could talk about things that are so tragic, but the people in those groups understand and trust each other. You just have to take it one step at a time.”

## Suicide Prevention and Survivor Support

### WHAT ARE THE FACTORS?

In 90 percent of suicides, the underlying factor is mental illness. According to Rick Mogil, director of survivor support services at Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, the most common mental illness that results in suicide is major depression. Other factors could be a stressful time in someone’s life, such as a separation or divorce, loss of someone close, financial troubles, bullying, or any kind of abuse — physical, verbal or sexual.

### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

The primary reason that someone doesn’t seek any help is stigma. Someone contemplating suicide doesn’t want to be a burden to their family, so he or she isolates themselves. Other signs include a loss of appetite, changes in sleep patterns, irritability and feelings of failure or shame. He or she may threaten suicide, give away prized possessions or engage in risky behavior (sexual, drug abuse).

### WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

If you are thinking about suicide or concerned about a loved one, call the Suicide Prevention Crisis Line at 877-727-4747. OC Links can connect suicide survivors to support groups through the Didi Hirsch Survivor Support Program. Call 855-OC-Links or visit [www.ohealthinfo.com/oclinks](http://www.ohealthinfo.com/oclinks).



In the U.S., Pedro Fuentes, 79, was unable to be the sculptor he once was in Ecuador. He became depressed before finding a new outlet to explore his creativity through painting.  
PHOTO BY SALVADOR OCHOA



# THE ARTIST WITHIN

Former sculptor battles depression by reconnecting with art

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

In his native Ecuador, Pedro Fuentes made his mark as a metal sculptor — a career he hoped to continue when he immigrated to Orange in 1994.

But Pedro, then 58, quickly learned that in his new home, special licensing was required for the chemicals used to help shape his art.

“I felt like my wings had been clipped,” he says, explaining that he couldn’t afford the license. “I lost my passion for art and for everything.”

Pedro had come to the U.S. to reunite with his long lost sweetheart, Haydee, whom he first fell in love with in Ecuador. Haydee’s parents objected to the relationship, so she was sent to the U.S. But she never forgot Pedro. In 1993, after she had moved to Orange, she invited Fuentes to join her. They married in 1995.

Although he was in love, Pedro couldn’t escape the feelings of depression after his sculpting career crumbled. He would feel lonely watching his wife leave for work as a customer service technician. Speaking only Spanish, he had no local friends. He missed relatives in Ecuador.

“Sometimes I would spend hours walking the streets, coming and going like the wind,” Pedro says. Pedro, who never sought or received mental health counseling, hid his depression from his wife for years because of the stigma associated with it. He says in Ecuador’s culture, men are not supposed to be melancholy.

His on-again, off-again symptoms continued until June

2013, when he joined ReCONNECT Socialization, a program that reawakened the artist inside him. A county-contracted program, ReCONNECT Socialization provides in-home case management, educational workshops, support groups, referral and linkage, and socializing opportunities to reduce isolation and mental health challenges. Isolation can lead to depression and health problems.

Through ReCONNECT, Pedro has found an outlet for socialization in art classes. He meets with a group of mostly older adults on Wednesdays to study various art forms, his latest being watercolors.

“Mr. Fuentes has blossomed,” says May Chung, director of ReCONNECT Socialization.

“When he first started taking the classes, he was quiet and kept to himself. Now, he’s more talkative and says that his classmates are like family to him. He seems to walk taller than before.”

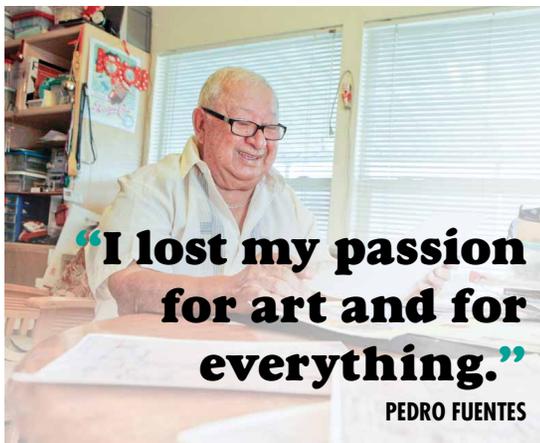
Pedro has studied many art forms, but this is the first time he’s worked with watercolors.

“When I’m painting with watercolors, I feel like I’m in a magical world,” says Pedro, 79, who likes to paint panoramas of the sea. “I’m able to concentrate

and forget about other things. Then, when classmates look at my work and say ‘Good!’ I feel even happier.”

Pedro knows good — because his life has been good recently. His dark feelings are gone, replaced by joyful ones, and his wife has noticed the change.

“He’s more positive about everything because he’s doing something he likes,” Haydee Fuentes says.



**“I lost my passion for art and for everything.”**

PEDRO FUENTES

## Early intervention

### WHAT ARE THE FACTORS?

Feelings of isolation and depression are early signs of mental illness, says May Chung, director of the Horizon Cross Cultural Center's ReCONNECT Socialization Program. Detecting these feelings early can improve one’s health and quality of life exponentially, she says. Most often, isolation and depression occur after a loss of some sort, whether it be the loss of a loved one, a job, a hobby or identity.

### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

Some common symptoms of isolation and depression are loss of interest in other people and activities, a general lack of motivation and a feeling that something is missing in life.

### WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

If you or a loved one is struggling with isolation and/or depression, OC Links can connect you to resources including psychiatric evaluations, in-home assessments and personalized socialization activities. Call 855-OC-Links or visit [www.ochealthinfo.com/oclinks](http://www.ochealthinfo.com/oclinks).

Uziel shows off the taekwondo medals and certificates he has earned. He started taking martial arts classes as part of GRIP, a gang-intervention program. His mother, Juliana Torres, was given parenting classes and other resources to prevent Uziel from joining a gang. PHOTO BY SALVADOR OCHOA

# GETTING A HANDLE ON BEHAVIOR

Program helps boy stay out of gangs

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Each time her son misbehaved at Kinoshita Elementary School in San Juan Capistrano, Juliana Torres was summoned to meet with the principal and the boy's teacher.

Each time, they would tell her about the latest incident involving her 8-year-old — how Uziel, a third grader, had physically injured another student, hurled obscenities at classmates or flashed gang signs.

When Juliana was asked to return a fifth time, in 2012, she expected a similar meeting. But that day, Juliana found about 16 people — including police officers and sheriff's deputies — waiting for her in a large room at the school.

"With a meeting that big, I realized this was serious," said Juliana, 29, whose lectures to Uziel about behaving in school had fallen on deaf ears.

The 90-minute meeting that followed was her introduction to Orange County's Gang Reduction and Intervention Partnership, or GRIP. The GRIP program provides case management for at-risk youths to redirect them from gangs. Interventions are aimed at improving school attendance, reducing family conflicts, and creating a better relationship between the participant and his school.

At the meeting, Juliana learned that Uziel was a prime candidate for gang membership — but there was still time to act.

"Your son is just a little boy," a law enforcement officer told Torres. "We can't allow him to slip through our hands and



fall into a gang."

School officials had reprimanded Uziel for his aggressiveness and profanity, for tagging his folder with gang graffiti, and for drawing disturbing images of guns, knives and rumbles.

Juliana wept as a GRIP member told her additional information — her son was hanging out with gang members in her home when she was at work. A family member who was in a gang would come by the house and expose the young boy to gang activities, almost daily.

"I knew that [the family member] was a gang member," Juliana said, but she never thought he would influence Uziel.

GRIP recommended changes and the family member was no longer welcome in Torres' home.

"I didn't want my son to end up like [him]," Torres said.

At GRIP's urging, Juliana, then a single mom, took a parenting class, which taught her to better communicate with her kids.

Uziel, now in fifth grade, no longer behaves badly. He improved his self-discipline by attending a taekwondo camp on a GRIP scholarship. He also was matched with a mentor.

"I figured out that gangs are bad for me," said Uziel, who wants to be a paramedic or a police officer.

**"I figured out that gangs are bad for me."**

UZIEL, 11

PARTICIPANT IN GRIP PROGRAM



## Support for the Whole Family

### WHAT ARE THE FACTORS?

Mental illness does not just affect one person. The moods and behaviors of a person with mental illness affect everyone around — especially the family. "We want to give families hope that we can help them and give them the support that they need," says Lilly Mucarsel, director of the outreach and engagement program at The Child Abuse Prevention Center.

### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

According to Mucarsel, depression, anxiety and stress are high-risk factors for mental illness. Family members are likely to recognize these signs and seek help early.

### WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

If you or a loved one needs support for the whole family, OC Links can connect you to resources including school readiness, crisis intervention, parent education, outreach and engagement and wellness programs. Call 855-OC-Links or visit [www.ochealthinfo.com/oclinks](http://www.ochealthinfo.com/oclinks).

Steve Kishishita is back in school studying psychology after taking time to deal with substance abuse and mental health issues.  
PHOTO BY SALVADOR OCHOA



## Co-occurrence

### WHAT ARE THE FACTORS?

It is not uncommon for a person who struggles with mental illness to also face substance-abuse issues. Co-occurrence is the term for when a person deals with both at the same time. Many times the two are mixed because the person is self-medicating an undiagnosed mental illness, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

Drugs and alcohol can appear to mask the symptoms of mental illness at first, but more often than not they actually make them worse, NAMI says. People who abuse substances are more likely to attempt suicide.

### WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

If you or a loved one is dealing with substance abuse and mental illness, OC Links can connect you to programs that address co-occurrence. Call 855-OC-Links or visit [www.ochealthinfo.com/oclinks](http://www.ochealthinfo.com/oclinks).

# TAKING CONTROL

*Dealing with substance abuse and mental health problems takes a two-pronged approach*

BY MEREDITH J. GRAHAM

**F**or Steve Kishishita, getting sober was only the first step toward getting healthy. That's because when he quit alcohol and prescription pills, his bipolar disorder and attention deficit disorder became more pronounced.

"I'd been self-medicating, and my symptoms came out after I quit drinking," he says.

Steve's alcoholism led him down a dark path that included losing his marriage, his job and his home. A stint in prison after several DUIs finally set him in a more sober direction, but then his mental health started to suffer.

"There was nervousness, depression, and I would hear things — auditory hallucinations," he recalls.

Steve was living on the streets, trying to stay away from alcohol and dealing with symptoms of undiagnosed problems. He says he was good at hiding those problems, which made it difficult to get the help he needed.

"I appeared too functional, or too normal. People high on drugs and up to no good had a better chance at getting help than I did," he says.

One day, while standing in line at a soup kitchen, Steve was approached by a woman who worked for the Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance (OCAPICA),

an Outreach and Engagement provider contracted with the Health Care Agency Behavioral Health Services. She said she wanted to help and handed him her card. The nonprofit partners with more than 30 local organizations to offer services and support for those in need.

"Ever since then my life started to change," Steve says. "I got linked to services, and people started to take me seriously."

OCAPICA connected him with places to get showered, fed and clothed, and it referred him to a psychiatrist, who diagnosed him with bipolar disorder and attention deficit disorder and prescribed medications to help him function.

"I went from being a corporate executive making almost six figures to the town drunk, in financial ruin," he says. "Now I'm building my life back up through Orange County mental health system."

He attends meetings for his substance abuse and is part of a support group for people with similar mental health issues.

"My own family doesn't acknowledge any mental health issues," Steve says. "I needed someone to be an advocate for me, and I needed someone to talk to."

He is back in school studying psychology and, thanks to medicine to control his ADD, he says he's already seen a difference in his ability to focus and absorb the material. He's also working several days a week at a local food bank.

"I pray for people and I give them food, but I see the whole picture," he says. "Some people are caught up in drugs or alcohol and some people are just not right mentally. With the right medication and the right help, they can get their life under control."

**"My own family doesn't acknowledge any mental health issues. I needed someone to be an advocate for me, and I needed someone to talk to."**

STEVE KISHISHITA



# IN GOOD HANDS

Navigators provide warm link to mental health services

BY SHANNON SPRINGMEYER

One thing you understand immediately about Rose Stock is that she wants to help people. She has been a licensed marriage and family therapist for 13 years and her compassion is as alive as ever.

“I was drawn to the field to be a part of the solution,” Rose says.

Now, as a Behavioral Health Navigator for OC Links, Rose feels like she’s really able to make a difference in the lives of people who call the OC Links Information and Referral Line looking for help with mental health and substance abuse issues.

“It’s been a very rewarding position because we get a chance to really help people who are sometimes frustrated,” Rose says. “They are looking for help but they get kind of passed around, I guess you could say, because they don’t find the right program.”

OC Links exists to provide people with a guide who can help them navigate the wealth of programs offered by Orange County Behavioral Health Services.

“When they talk to us, they get somebody who’s knowledgeable, somebody who’s friendly, and somebody who wants to help them, and I think that’s why they are so appreciative,” Rose says.

She says she often receives calls from family members who desperately want to help their loved ones, but find they lack the right expertise.

“They see that their loved one is suffering, but they

**“We just really enjoy being able to help people get where they want to be.”**

ROSE STOCK

OC LINKS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NAVIGATOR



Rose Stock enjoys the opportunity to help connect people to mental health and substance abuse services as an OC Links Navigator. PHOTO BY SALVADOR OCHOA

don’t know what to do, they don’t know how to help, and they’ve probably exhausted every way that they’ve thought of how to help them,” Rose says.

She recalls one caller, a grandmother in her 80s, whose grandson had reached out to her for help with drug addiction. Rose says she remembers clearly the sound of concern and need in the woman’s voice. The woman had a close relationship with her grandson, but lived out of town and didn’t know how to help, Rose says.

“So for her to be able to just talk to somebody here ... who could kind of explain what needed to happen, and

how she could best help her grandson, now that was just really rewarding,” she says. “It makes you feel like you’ve really helped.”

Navigators are happy to help educate callers, and can provide personalized guidance to link callers with what they need, even if they don’t know what they are looking for, Rose says.

“It’s that human contact, I think, that has made a big difference,” she says. “We just really enjoy being able to help people get where they want to be ... and I am just really proud to be an OC Links Navigator.”

## Connecting to Services Made Easy

### WHAT?

OC Links connects people with mental health and substance abuse information and services in Orange County.

### WHO?

Callers can include individuals calling for themselves, friends and family members calling for loved ones, health care providers or anyone needing information or services.

### HOW?

Call the OC Links Information and Referral Line: 855-OC-Links (855-625-4657). Or chat live: [www.ochealthinfo.com/oclinks](http://www.ochealthinfo.com/oclinks). Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m.-6 p.m.



Placing a call to OC Links

### THE LINK

- A Behavioral Health Navigator asks questions to assess the caller’s needs
- Navigators are trained clinicians
- It’s completely confidential
- Navigators use keywords to find good fits from their database of 200 county programs
- The Navigator determines eligibility for programs that fit the caller’s needs
- It only takes 10-15 minutes on average



Navigators connect the caller directly to a program staff person, and stay on the line to introduce the caller

### SERVICES

- Callers may be linked to one or more programs, including:
  - » Mental health services for adults and children
  - » Alcohol and drug inpatient and outpatient programs
  - » Crisis services
  - » Prevention and early intervention services
- Services range from clinical care to community-based support and education

CALLER



OC LINKS NAVIGATOR



SERVICE PROVIDER



HELP IS JUST A PHONE CALL OR CLICK AWAY. 855-OC-LINKS (855-625-4657) | [WWW.OHEALTHINFO.COM/OCLINKS](http://WWW.OHEALTHINFO.COM/OCLINKS)

# HERE FOR YOU:

## ORANGE COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Help is just a phone call away. If you need assistance for a behavioral health issue, trained Navigators are ready to take your call and connect you with services in your area. No problem is too big or too small. Help is available – and OC Links is the first step to getting it.

- Child or adult mental health
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Crisis services
- Early intervention/prevention

### SPEAK WITH A NAVIGATOR



**Health Care Agency Behavioral Health Services Information and Referral Line**  
**855-OC-Links (625-4657)**  
**TDD: 1-714-834-2332**

Speak with a trained Behavioral Health Navigator from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday. Help available in:

- English
- Vietnamese
- Spanish
- Any other language through an interpreter



### LIVE CHAT ONLINE

**[www.ochealthinfo.com/oclinks/](http://www.ochealthinfo.com/oclinks/)**  
Visit the web to chat live with a trained Behavioral Health Navigator from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday.

### OTHER RESOURCES

**CAT (Centralized Assessment Team)**  
**866-830-6011**

For assessment and evaluation of individuals experiencing psychiatric emergencies including threats to harm self, others or gravely disabled.

**24-Hour Suicide Prevention Line**  
**877-7-CRISIS / 877-727-4747**

Provides 24-hour, immediate, confidential over-the-phone suicide prevention services to anyone who is in crisis or experiencing suicidal thoughts.

**NAMI WarmLine**  
**877-910-WARM / 877-910-9276**

Provides telephone-based, non-crisis support for anyone struggling with mental health and/or substance abuse issues.

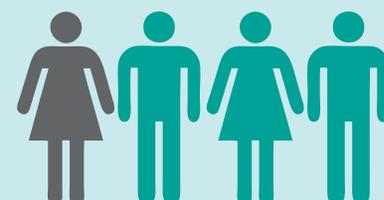


### Facts on behavioral health

#### WHAT IS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH?

Behavioral health involves the ability to carry out the thoughts, emotions and actions that are necessary for everyday life. The inability to do this could result from mental illness, a medical condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning. Behavioral health issues can include substance abuse, isolation, disruptive classroom behavior and more serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or major depression. It affects people regardless of their age, race, religion or income. It also affects friends, family and loved ones who interact with people who have a behavioral health issue. But just like other medical conditions, behavioral health issues can be treated.

#### FACTS:



## 1 IN 4

Americans has had a mental illness in the last year (61.5 million people)

For those with chronic mental illness, signs are present by age 14

## 50%

of the time.

They are present by age 24

## 75%

of the time.

Untreated mental illness can lead to:

- unemployment
- imprisonment
- homelessness
- violence
- dropping out of school
- unnecessary disability
- substance abuse
- suicide

SOURCE: NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR MENTAL ILLNESS

Pain Isn't Always Obvious

**KNOW THE SIGNS**

[suicideispreventable.org](http://suicideispreventable.org)