

Behavioral Health Commission Holiday Tea and Awards Ceremony

by Debi Pasco, Clerk of the Behavioral Health Commission

The Behavioral Health Commission (BHC) held their annual Holiday Tea and Awards Ceremony on Thursday, December 1, 2011 from 12-2pm, at the Behavioral Health Resource Auditorium in Rialto. The theme for this year's event was "*Celebrating Our Diversity through the Holiday Season*". Pictures, depicting various cultures and resembling stained glass, adorned the walls, and the delicious aroma of gingerbread, rugelach, sugar cookies, baklava, Mexican hot cocoa, sweet potato and pecan pie filled the room. Attendees included consumers and family members, community coalitions, Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and contract provider staff.

Welcome and opening remarks were provided by Commission Chair Susan McGee-Stehsel and CaSonya Thomas, Assistant Director Department of Behavioral Health. Attendees were invited to share how their culture celebrates the holiday season. Ms. Maria De La Torre from Chicas Peligrosas support group described the posada, a recreation of Mary and Joseph searching for a "room at the inn". Accompanying them is a choir of small children who knock on doors asking for lodging for the weary couple. Commissioner Dr. Roberto Casas shared a rousing rendition of Pancho Claus, A Bilingual Christmas "Noche Buena".

The BHC has a long history of granting awards for outstanding efforts and dedication for the provision of good service to consumers and their families. This year, the members of the Commission recognized:

- Carolyn Latta-Clark, Clinic Supervisor, Juvenile Justice INFO and Gateway Program
- Mark Callahan, TAY Rehabilitation Specialist, Victor Community Support Services
- William Nolan, Clubhouse Board Member, Victor Valley Clubhouse
- Curtis William, Clubhouse Board Member, Victor Valley Clubhouse
- Dr. Juan Carlos Pequeno, Needles Behavioral Health Center
- David Miller, Peer and Family Advocate II, Upland Community Counseling
- Dr. Ronald Smith, Program Manager II, West Valley Region
- Linda Charkins, Clinic Supervisor, Vista Community Counseling
- Thomas Denison, Social Worker II, Barstow Counseling Center
- Sheryle Burtron, Alcohol and Drug Counselor, Barstow Counseling Center
- Patricia Ike, Director, Student Assistance Program, Reach Out West End
- Armando Ontiveros, Executive Director, EMQ FamiliesFirst
- Sherri Park, Clinic Supervisor, Valley Star Children and Family Services
- Carolyn Latta-Clark, Clinic Supervisor, Juvenile Justice INFO and Gateway Program
- Paula Rutten, Program Manager II, Hospital Diversion Program at ARMC-BH
- Ryan Froelich, Clinical Therapist I, Mesa Counseling Center
- Lorraine Armenta, Social Worker II, Juvenile Justice
- Rachel Amundsen, Office Assistant III, Business Office

For the last three years, the BHC has sponsored a gingerbread house building contest during this event. Clubhouse and Transitional Age Youth (TAY) partners display their festive creations proudly and the BHC vote for their favorites. Amazing Place Clubhouse took 1st place again this year!

The Holiday Tea concludes with an opportunity drawing for twelve beautiful consumer art pieces from the 2011 DBH Calendar, presented by the artists themselves, and the gingerbread houses created by the Clubhouses and TAY centers. In addition, Lynda Ward donated a scrumptious candy cane cake for the drawing.

The members of Behavioral Health Commission appreciate the hard work and dedication of the behavioral health community in promoting **WELLNESS**, **RECOVERY** and **RESILIENCE** to all residents of San Bernardino County!