

SUMMER 2025 Connecting

A newsletter for the friends and supporters of L.A. CADA



L.A. CADA Brings Life-Saving Resources to the Heart of Long Beach Pride

By Nolan Ross Samé-Weil, Director of Development

From May 16–18, L.A. CADA proudly participated in **Long Beach Pride**, bringing life-saving resources, vital health information, and direct connections to care for thousands of attendees. Our team was out in full force throughout the celebration, making sure that festivalgoers had access to tools, education, and support that could make a real difference in their lives.

The weekend began on Thursday, May 16, with **Teen Pride**, an inspiring event dedicated to celebrating and empowering LGBTQIA2S+ youth and their allies. In this safe and affirming space, our team connected with young people through open, supportive conversations, offering information on mental

health, harm reduction, and substance use prevention. We provided educational materials, answered questions, and reminded youth that their health, safety, and self-worth matter. Teen Pride was filled with laughter, music, and community spirit, an energizing way to kick off the Pride festivities.

Over the following days, our outreach continued at the festival, where we distributed naloxone nasal spray and fentanyl test strips, provided demonstrations on their use, and shared educational resources on overdose prevention, recovery, and wellness. We engaged with hundreds of attendees, many of whom left with new knowledge,

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A message from
JUAN NAVARRO
Chief Executive Officer, L.A. CADA

Access to Opioid Treatment

As we enjoy the final moments of summer, with the approach of Recovery Month in September, I'm reminded that 5.7 million Americans live with an opioid use disorder. It's troubling to know that fewer than one in five of them received Medications Assisted Treatment in 2023. The National Institute on Drug Abuse tells us that Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) – including buprenorphine, naltrexone, and methadone – is the most effective method of treating opioid use disorder. Why are more people not accessing it?

The Foundation for Opioid Response Efforts (FORE) recently conducted a study to answer that question. The findings showed that MOUD is not widely accessible, even in areas with high rates of OUD. ScienceDirect documents that only 41% of licensed SUD treatment facilities offer MOUD. And only 34% of outpatient mental health treatment facilities (MHTF) offer Medication Assisted Treatment. Fortunately, Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics, a subset of MHTFs such as L.A. CADA's Wellness Center, are more likely to offer it (51% vs. 33%). Another barrier to treatment is the fact that some recovery folks still cling to the debunked belief that using medications to become sober means you are not really sober.

It's clear that our communities must broaden access to MOUD, including making it available through non-traditional outlets such as pharmacies, emergency departments, primary care offices, and other health care settings. The 2025 FORE study showed that MOUD offered in non-traditional settings works. The vast majority of emergency room patients with OUD (85.8%) accepted the offer of treatment. Of those receiving treatment, almost half (49.7%) remained in the program for 30 days, compared with 22.7 percent of patients with OUD who declined the offer.

Let's spread the word about access to MOUD. L.A. CADA, a nonprofit community-based behavioral health organization here in L.A. County, offers Medication Assisted Treatment within our residential and outpatient facilities. We also provide outreach and treatment for transitional age youth through L.A. CADA's state-funded Youth Opioid Response program for transitional age youth.

We're here for you at (562) 906-2676.

Juan Navarro

Long Beach Pride, continued from page 1

connections, and a better understanding of the services available to them. By meeting people where they were, right in the middle of the Pride celebration, we were able to break down stigma and encourage open conversations about health and recovery.



The festivities reached their peak on Sunday, May 18, with the iconic **Long Beach Pride Parade**. As colorful floats rolled down the streets and thousands gathered to celebrate love, diversity, and equality, our team remained committed to ensuring that health and safety were part of the celebration. Festivalgoers continued to stop by for resources, referrals, and a moment of connection, proving that even in the midst of joy and celebration there is a strong desire to care for one another.

Our impact throughout Pride weekend would not have been possible without the incredible generosity of our sponsors. We extend our deepest gratitude to **Long Beach Pride, Atlantic Alano Club, Raising Cane's, Transformational Living Homes (TLH), Nolan Ross & Company, Dignity Health – St. Mary Medical Center, Andrew Christian, The LGBTQ Center Long Beach, and SPUNK**. Their support gave us the resources, visibility, and reach needed to provide essential services to the community.

Long Beach Pride is more than a festival, it is a powerful expression of unity, resilience, and love. From the joy of Teen Pride on May 16 to the energy of the parade on May 18, L.A. CADA was honored to play a role in celebrating diversity while promoting health, safety, and compassion. This year's Pride proved once again that when we come together, we can celebrate authentically and care for our community at the same time.



TAY Patients Find Healing through Drum Circle

*By Darrell Garnaas,
Program Manager*

At L.A. CADA, we believe in creating spaces where young adults can heal, grow, and discover new ways to manage life's challenges. Our **Transitional Age Youth (TAY)** program, serving individuals between the ages of 18–25, recently had the opportunity to participate in a healing drum circle at the **Earthlodge**.

This meditative event brought our patients together in rhythm, reflection, and community. The experience was powerful for everyone, but one young man's transformation stood out. He has been battling severe anxiety, yet during the drum circle, he flourished, smiling, engaged, peaceful, and deeply grateful for the moment.

Moments like these are the heart of our quarterly theme: **Empowering Change**. Healing does not always come through words, it can also be found in the beat of a drum, the strength of community, and the courage to try something new. For our TAY patients, this was more than just an activity; it was a step toward resilience, confidence, and self-discovery.

Together, we are empowering change in the lives of young adults, giving them tools not only for recovery but for building brighter, healthier futures.



Outside Earthlodge where TAY patients participated in a Drum Circle.



Santa Fe Springs Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. Newest Board member, Priscilla Rodriguez, at center in green dress.

FROM ADVOCACY TO ACTION: Representing Behavioral Health in the Chamber of Commerce

*By Priscilla Rodriguez,
L.A. CADA Community Engagement Manager*

This summer, I was honored to be inducted into the **Santa Fe Springs Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors**, a milestone that reflects not only a personal achievement but a powerful opportunity for our mission at L.A. CADA to reach even further into the heart of our community.

Serving as L.A. CADA's Community Engagement Manager, I've seen first-hand how impactful our programs can be when we connect with the right partners, whether it's city leaders, local businesses, or service organizations. Now, with a seat at the table through the Chamber, I'm excited to help ensure behavioral health has a strong, visible voice in those conversations.

Being on the Chamber Board allows me to advocate more directly for the individuals and families we serve. It's a platform to build new relationships, educate others about the importance of treatment and recovery, and open doors for collaboration that can lead to more inclusive, healthier communities.

At the installation ceremony, I felt a deep sense of pride not only in joining the Chamber, but in representing L.A. CADA's commitment to hope, healing, and long-term support. It was a moment that reminded me how far we've come, and how much further we can go when our voices are present in leadership spaces.

I look forward to using this role to continue building partnerships, sharing our impact, and making sure our community knows that behavioral health isn't just part of the conversation, it's essential to it.

A Joyful Welcome at Alice's House

By Citlalilt Pastrana, Program Manager

At Alice's House and through the **Pregnant and Postpartum Women (PPW)** program, we see every day how resilience and determination empower lasting change. The mothers in our care are courageously fighting to stay sober, rebuild their lives, and create safe, healthy futures for their children.



We recently celebrated the growth of baby **Selena**, now 4 months old, a beautiful reminder of new beginnings and the enduring bond between mother and child. Her story reflects the progress of mothers who, while in treatment, are rewriting their futures and nurturing healthier paths for their families.

Each milestone, from the joy of a baby's smile to the courage of a mother's recovery, reflects the transformative power of love and perseverance. Together, we are empowering change that uplifts families and strengthens our community.



Joshua Romero Raises the Bar!

By Megan Chacon, Long Beach RBH Manager

His journey of growth, education, and dedication is a compelling reflection of this quarter's theme: **Empowering Change**. His continued commitment to advancing his career while serving our community exemplifies the kind of leadership and purpose that inspires others—both within our organization and beyond.

In our agency we talk a lot about empowerment, commitment and growth, **Joshua Romero**, has embodied all three, showing us what it truly means to invest in oneself while continuing to give his very best to the team, his role, and shared mission.

Recently, Joshua reached a major milestone: he earned an Associate of Arts degree. That's no small feat, balancing coursework, exams, and late-night studying with the demands of a full-time job at L.A. CADA as our **Long Beach Carson RBH House Manager** for the last two years, and has been employed with us for three years. Yet, Joshua rose to meet it with determination and grace.

We recognize his efforts not just as achievements, but as an examples of what it means to push forward, to grow, and to serve with purpose. His accomplishments remind us that an empowered employee will empower others. His journey is far from over and he's looking forward to where it leads him next.

We congratulate Joshua Romero on this well-earned academic milestone and thank him for continuing to raise the bar within the agency.



Joshua Romero, Long Beach RBH House Manager at Carson House.

See the Impact Up Close ... Schedule a Site Visit Today!

Curious about the life-changing work happening every day at L.A. CADA? We'd love to invite you for a **guided site tour** of our facilities, where you'll meet our dedicated staff, see our programs in action, and witness how we're supporting individuals and families on their path to recovery and wellness.

Whether you're a community partner, funder, advocate, or simply someone who wants to learn more—this is your chance to experience the heart of our mission up close.

Here's some of what you'll gain from a visit:

- A firsthand look at our treatment and support services
- Insight into the continuum of care we provide
- Powerful client success stories
- Opportunities to connect and collaborate

To schedule a visit, please reach out to events@lacada.com or call us directly at **(562) 777-7500**.

Come see how hope, healing, and community come together every day at L.A. CADA.



Rigo Contreras, L.A. CADA Assistant Program Manager, takes Osvaldo Pena, Southern California Gas Company, on a site tour.

DOWNNEY PRIDE 2025

5th Annual Celebration of Unity, Diversity, and Empowering Change

By Priscilla Rodriguez, Community Engagement Manager

This year marked the fifth annual **Downey Pride** celebration, a milestone for the city and community. As the presenting agency, L.A. CADA was proud to bring together thousands of residents, families, and allies to celebrate diversity, promote inclusion, and honor the vibrant LGBTQIA+ community in Downey.

Downey Pride was founded on the belief that every individual deserves to feel seen, valued, and supported. What began as a grassroots effort has grown into one of the city's most meaningful celebrations, showcasing not only the beauty of diversity but also the power of community when we come together for a common purpose. The mission has always been to create a safe, welcoming space where people can celebrate who they are while building bridges across cultures, generations, and neighborhoods.

This year's Pride was made possible thanks to the leadership of **Supervisor Janice Hahn**, the main sponsor, whose commitment to equity and inclusivity continues to set an example for communities across **Los Angeles County**. Deepest gratitude to **Juan Navarro, CEO of L.A. CADA**, for his continuous leadership and support in helping to move forward with this event as the presenting agency. The unwavering support of **City of Downey Council Member Mario Trujillo** and his husband **Henry Trujillo**, has helped make Pride a true reflection of the city of Downey's values.

Following is a list of the generous sponsors who made this year's event a reality: **City of Downey, Molina Healthcare, Reyes Coca-Cola Bottling, Muevelo, SoCal Gas Company, The Whole Child, Downey Chamber of Commerce, Jesse Malgar, Nolan Ross and Company, Long Beach LGBTQ+ Center, Latino Equality Alliance, iZone Marketing, Senator Bob Archuleta,**



On stage (l-r) Lola; Tony Direct, Influencer; and Joaquin.

Assemblymember Blanca Pacheco, Meruelo, La Chula Restaurant, Long Beach Pride, VYLLA, Kustom Life Co, Yoeweb Design, Mr. Menudo, El Pescador Montebello, Epic Live, and Liquid IV.

Numerous experiences made this year's Pride so memorable! **Angel City Market** hosted over 35 local vendors, while **L.A. CADA** coordinated more than 35 **Community-based Organization (CBO)** booths, offering attendees the chance to connect with vital resources and services. Guests enjoyed food trucks and dessert vendors, creating a festive and welcoming atmosphere. Families and children took part in activities like face painting, while the community came together to enjoy live performances and music from **DJ Grecko**.

Attendees also enjoyed special contributions from community partners. **City of Downey Councilmember Horacio Ortiz**, co-owner of El Pescador Montebello, helped ensure Pride guests were well-fed, while **Black Knight Patrol Security** generously donated their services and even provided ice cream in the VIP Lounge. We are proud to share that the VIP Lounge was completely sold out, a true reflection of the growing excitement and support for Downey Pride. Additionally, Liquid IV provided generous product donations, helping to keep guests hydrated throughout the event.

The Downey Pride core committee, internal staff, and finance team, worked tirelessly behind the scenes to bring this event to life. Their long hours and dedication ensured that every part of Pride ran smoothly. Many generous volunteers showed up and worked so hard on the day of the event, dedicating their time and energy to make sure every guest felt welcome and every detail was cared for. Together, their efforts created the foundation of this year's success.

Together, partners and community demonstrated that Pride is more than a festival, it's a movement. By investing in Downey Pride, they have invested in a stronger, more inclusive future for the city.

In celebration of this fifth year, great progress has been made and additional work still lies ahead. Pride is not only about celebration but also about advocacy, representation, and creating lasting change. Each year, more families, young people, and community leaders join in, proving that Pride has become an essential part of the fabric of Downey.

The Downey Pride Committee thanks everyone who has stood with them on the journey. Each performance and moment of connection exemplifies the commitment to the mission of Pride: celebrating diversity, promoting equality, and empowering change.

Here's to five years of Pride, and to the many more milestones ahead.



Downey Pride Committee (l-r) Joe Amaya, Development and Logistics Manager; Priscilla Rodriguez, Community Engagement Manager; Juan Navarro, CEO; Nolan Ross Same-Weil, Director of Development; Monica Soto, Director of CENS; Jocel Bibera, Alumni Services Manager; and Kaitlyn Cudmore, Administrative Assistant.



(l-r) Carlos Aguilar, TAY Program Coordinator; Nicholas Wenster, TAY patient; and William Shelton, Community Services/TAY Manager.

The Story of Nicholas Wenster

By William Shelton, Community Services / TAY Manager

Nicholas Wenster entered treatment through a court-ordered mental health diversion program, under conditions set by both **Alhambra** and **Pomona** courts. His journey began on August 29, 2024, when he was admitted to L.A. CADA's **Nuestra Casa residential treatment program**.

Through consistent progress and demonstrated commitment, Nicholas successfully stepped down to Outpatient services on October 28, 2024. Concurrently, he joined the **Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) Recovery Bridge Housing** program at **Casa Consuelo** in Whittier, CA.

During his time in the TAY house, Nicholas built strong connections with his peers, becoming a positive and respected role model within the community. His personal growth was further supported through the **Men's Community Reentry Program (MCRP)**, which allowed him to continue fulfilling his mental health diversion requirements while strengthening his recovery journey.

Nicholas took full advantage of the opportunities provided to him. He enrolled in the **Kinship Program** and secured employment as a maintenance worker at a sober living facility. Additionally, he found a healthy outlet through the **Judo Program**, which helped him release anger and build emotional regulation skills.

He actively participated in weekly outside recovery meetings and embraced leadership roles,

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Ask Dr. Holmes...

Dr. Randy Holmes is Board Certified in Addiction Medicine and Family Medicine, and is on the staff at PIH Health. He also serves as Chair of the California Society of Addiction Medicine (CSAM), and is a Public Policy Committee member of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM).



Questions may be emailed to administration@lacada.com.

Q: How can empowering individuals in treatment to take ownership of their recovery journey improve long term behavioral health outcomes?

— A New Counselor

A: Dear New Counselor,

Those of us who work in the addiction field are constantly trying to engage our patients in their recovery journey. Taking ownership of this process is an essential part of moving into a life that does not involve drugs or alcohol.

In the 12 Step model of recovery, the 1st Step asks that we admit we are powerless over alcohol or drugs and that our lives have become unmanageable. This admission means we accept ownership and thus are responsible for the creation of our recovery path. Many of our patients struggle with this, relying instead on self-will, just “being strong,” or a change in scenery to prevent relapses. The task of treatment providers is to empower our patients to accept ownership of their path into recovery. Ownership of one’s recovery can mean being responsible for finding and getting to recovery meetings, making and keeping appointments with doctors and counselors, taking medications as prescribed, and making amends to people who have been harmed during the drinking or drug using days.

There are many benefits that accrue to our patients who can embrace their recovery and move forward into sobriety. When people feel a sense of control over their recovery, their motivation and engagement in activities improves. They are more compliant with our recommendations. They adhere better to treatment plans and become willing to make positive lifestyle changes. As individuals begin to make decisions and see positive results, they gain self confidence in their ability to cope with triggers, manage stress, and avoid relapse. They can begin to mend broken families, which often have had years of broken promises and failed attempts at reconciliation.

Empowered people are more resilient and gain confidence in their ability to manage the everyday challenges in life without resorting to unhealthy behavior. People who take ownership are more empowered and less reliant on systems of care. They become less passive recipients of care and more active participants. This can reduce long term dependence on mental health systems and promote good healthy maintenance behaviors. People who take ownership have better therapeutic relationships with counselors, mental health providers, and their families. People feel heard and valued, which strengthens the therapeutic alliance. Their adherence to counseling appointments and medications improve as they become more engaged in treatment.

Sustainable recovery hinges on behavior change that comes from within. We can only do so much with medications and incarceration. Empowerment facilitates ownership of choices and consequences, which helps individuals internalize new habits and maintain recovery. We give individuals tools, a voice, and the confidence to direct their recovery journey. We create a path that is more enduring, resilient, and meaningful.

Nicholas Wenster Story, continued from page 11

including serving as a panel speaker. Through sharing his story, Nicholas found strength and purpose, inspiring others while reinforcing his own recovery. He not only worked closely with his sponsor through the 12-step program but also encouraged others to find sponsors and engage in their own recovery process.

Motivated by his transformation, Nicholas expressed a desire to return home and pursue a career in the addiction recovery field. With renewed purpose and a clear vision for his future, he successfully fulfilled his Alhambra court conditions and reunited with his wife.

Nicholas shares, “In simple terms, L.A. CADA has given my life back. I came here broken and hopeless. As a result of the amazing people here and sticking around and doing the work, I have accomplished everything I could have ever wanted. I look forward to achieving more in my life.”

"La Fuerza" Within

By Annabel Escobar, Health and Safety Supervisor

Earning my bachelor's degree in social work represents far more than an academic achievement. It is a symbol of healing, purpose, and the belief that change is possible. Not just for ourselves, but for the communities we serve.

My journey toward this degree was shaped by a difficult upbringing. I experienced ongoing domestic violence fueled by family addiction and mental health, and struggled with my own mental health from a young age.

As the daughter of immigrant parents, these challenges were not only painful but deeply misunderstood. Cultural differences created barriers. Topics like anxiety, trauma, depression, and addiction were rarely discussed or understood in our home.

Even though my father worked as a county social worker, the stigma surrounding mental health in our culture made it difficult to access the help we needed. The tools were there, but they never felt available to us.

My perspective and purpose changed in July of 2021 when I started working as an **Administrative Assistant** at our **Allen House** residential site. There, I witnessed the power of structured support, recovery, and compassion. I was often the first person to greet clients fresh out of incarceration, still in their jumpsuits, offering them food and a safe place to begin again. I watched individuals rebuild their lives with care, structure, and hope, supported by our treatment teams and the resources we provided.

In those moments, I saw pieces of myself in their stories. I understood the fear, the shame, and the weight of starting over. *But I also saw strength.* I began to realize that my own lived experiences had a purpose. They gave me the ability to connect with others, to understand their pain, and to help empower them through their healing journey.

At the time, I had planned to continue my major in English after earning my associate's degree in English Honors. But after witnessing the impact of this work, I knew Social Work was where I belonged. I changed my major because I wanted to be part of meaningful change. I wanted to give back to the community that helped me grow and ensure advocacy for those who do not yet have the strength or support to advocate for themselves.



(l-r) Recent graduates Guy Bercegeay, Michael Rubio, and Annabel Escobar. Throughout this journey, I had the privilege of being guided by my former supervisors, **Micheal Rubio, Director of Outpatient/Outreach Services**, and **Guy Bercegeay, General Counsel and Officer of Regulatory Affairs**. These two incredible mentors also recently graduated alongside me with their bachelor's and master's degrees. Their leadership, honesty, and passion for this field showed me what true advocacy looks like. They supported my growth, encouraged my education, and inspired me to keep moving forward.

This degree is more than a milestone; it is a commitment to empowerment. It is proof that with the right support, people can heal, grow, and thrive.

Social Work is not just a career; it is a mission to ignite change, uplift those who have been overlooked, and transform struggle into strength.

And here I still am, having celebrated my four-year anniversary with the agency on July 16, just as eager to grow alongside it as I was on day one. I remain committed to spreading empowerment and making a lasting impact in the lives of those we serve. I am also now pursuing my Master of Social Work (MSW) degree, continuing my journey to deepen my knowledge, expand my skills, and strengthen my ability to serve. Graduating alongside those who believed in me has been one of the greatest honors of my life. And this is only the beginning!



(l-r) Latanya Batteste is congratulated by Judge Hizami for a successful completion of treatment.

A Journey of Healing, Growth, and Renewal

By Bambi Adams-Hacegaba, Court Services Supervisor

Latanya Batteste was referred to our program through the **Community Collaborative Court (CCC)** at the **Clara Shortridge Foltz Criminal Justice Center (CCB), Department 43**. She entered our care after completing a separate residential treatment program and was admitted into L.A. CADA's **Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP)**, located in Los Angeles, while residing at home with her family. As part of her CCC agreement, Latanya was given the opportunity to complete L.A. CADA's **Substance Use Disorder (SUD)** treatment program in lieu of serving a prison sentence.

Latanya has a long history of substance use, having struggled with addiction for over 30 years. At the start of her treatment episode, she faced significant challenges, particularly around accepting personal responsibility and accountability for her past actions. She also lacked a strong sober support network outside of her immediate family. Despite these early difficulties, her treatment team remained consistent and compassionate, working diligently to meet her where she was and provide the structure and support, she needed to grow.

Through continued engagement in services and personal development, Latanya made significant strides. Initially resistant to returning to work or school, she eventually demonstrated renewed motivation and enrolled in school to pursue a degree in Addiction Studies. This shift marked a major turning point in her recovery and commitment to building a meaningful and sober life.

Latanya's successful completion of the CCC program is a testament to the collaborative effort between her treatment team, the court services team, and the CCB Department 43 court team—consisting of the Judge, District Attorney, Public Defender, and Probation Officer. Upon successful completion of her probation, she will be eligible for expungement of the charges that originally brought her into the CCC program.

This case highlights the transformative power of collaborative justice in providing individuals with a meaningful opportunity for change, healing, and successful reintegration into society. With a handshake from the judge, Latanya embarked on her new-found journey of sobriety.



Appreciating the delicious Pink Cloud Coffee samples and caps, while hosting a tour of the offices were (l-r) Priscilla Rodriguez, L.A. CADA Community Engagement Manager; Pink Cloud Coffee Representative; Dr. Randolph Holmes, Medical Director; Intern; and Damonte Watson, L.A. CADA Director of Integrated Care.

Come On By . . . The Coffee's On Us!

We love taking visitors on a **guided tour** of our facilities and showing them the work we've been doing! These tours aren't just about seeing our spaces, they're about understanding how L.A. CADA transforms lives every day. During your visit, you'll meet our dedicated staff and learn about the programs changing lives. Every visit helps us raise awareness and build stronger connections with the community we serve.

To schedule a visit, please reach out to events@lacada.com or call us directly at **(562) 777-7500**. Come see how hope, healing, and community come together every day at L.A. CADA.

HONORING MY MOTHER, HEALING MYSELF: Living the Life I Was Meant to Live

By Guy Bercegeay, General Counsel

I grew up in New Orleans, Louisiana—a city I love deeply for its culture and people, but one where alcohol is often woven into everyday life. After Hurricane Katrina hit when I was 13, my world was turned upside down. The trauma of that experience—seeing so much destruction, loss, and death—left a lasting impact on me. I started using alcohol and marijuana to cope, trying to escape the anxiety and powerlessness I felt.

Despite my substance use, I was high-achieving and never really faced external consequences. I stayed on top of school, avoided legal trouble, and even went on to earn my law degree. But underneath the surface, things were unraveling. In college and law school, I started experimenting with harder drugs and abusing prescription medications. My pattern of working hard and partying harder eventually caught up with me—especially after my mother passed away from breast cancer in 2018. That loss pushed me deeper into addiction.

I moved to California hoping for a fresh start, but my problems followed. Isolated during the pandemic, I finally hit rock bottom—alone with a bottle of Scotch and a bottle of pills. That was my turning point. I chose to enter residential treatment, followed by six months of outpatient care. During that time, I became a house manager at a sober living facility and made the decision to leave behind my legal career to work in social services.

But as I began working in the field, I discovered something unexpected (with L.A. CADA's help)—I could still practice law in a way that felt truly fulfilling and deeply meaningful. Instead of returning to a traditional legal career, I found purpose in using my legal skills to support causes I believe in. Fast forward to today, where I now serve as in-house legal counsel for L.A. CADA. I have the unique opportunity to protect and advocate for an organization that helps save lives every day—including mine.

I did not, however, abandon my goal of becoming a champion for social welfare causes. In May of this year, I graduated with my Master of Social Work (MSW) degree—something I never imagined achieving back when I was deep in my addic-

tion. Earning that degree while maintaining my sobriety and full-time work has been one of the proudest accomplishments of my life. My long-term goal is to combine my legal expertise with my training in social work to drive policy change in the behavioral health field, both locally and nationally. I believe that real change happens at the intersection of systems, and I'm passionate about being part of that work.

Recovery hasn't always been easy, but today I live with clarity, purpose, and a strong sober community. I have a fulfilling job, supportive friendships, and a future I'm excited about. My mother's last wish was that I wouldn't regress and spiral out of control after her passing—and today, I honor that wish one day at a time.



Mother, Laurie Bercegeay, with son, Guy Bercegeay, celebrating her 50th birthday party in October 2017.



Guy Bercegeay at his MSW Graduation in May 2025.

AFTERCARE RECOVERY PROGRAM (ARP) SUCCESS STORY:

Christian Oseguera

By Darrell Garnaas, Program Manager

Christian Oseguera entered **Recovery Bridge Housing** after completing residential treatment with **HealthRight 360**. He was enrolled in the **Aftercare Recovery Program (ARP)** due to his previous incarceration history and his desire to remain sober and avoid returning to custody. Christian has faced many barriers, including being placed on felony probation, living as an undocumented immigrant with minimal English proficiency, and battling a severe substance use history involving fentanyl.

Over the course of six months, Christian enrolled in ESL classes at **Whittier Adult School** and worked diligently to learn English. While he continues to face challenges with reading and writing, his spoken English is now nearly fluent, making it his second language. During his time in ARP, Christian was fully compliant with all treatment requirements and did not relapse. He also utilized **Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)** with suboxone to support his recovery from opioid use.

Seeking to change his criminal thinking and distance himself



from a history of gang involvement, Christian became connected with **Homeboy Industries**. He has now been employed there for over two years. Most recently, he was accepted into **Recovery Housing**, a **Substance Abuse and Prevention Control (SAPC)** program that provides one year of supportive housing along with **Housing Navigation Services**. Through this program, a housing navigator will work with him to secure permanent housing before the year concludes.

Throughout his journey, Christian has also been a strong advocate for his peers who are undocumented and formerly incarcerated. He has shown a genuine passion for helping others, often giving food from his own fridge, clothing from his back, and sharing any resources he has to ensure others have the same opportunities for recovery, so long as they are willing to accept the gift of change.

We are proud to highlight Christian's success within ARP and celebrate his many accomplishments. His story is a testament to resilience, compassion, and the power of empowering change. Christian has a bright future ahead of him.

Allen House Alumni Day Brings Hope and Connection

By Daniel Martin, Activities Coordinator

The spirit of recovery was alive and thriving at this year's **Allen House Alumni Day**, where over 30 alumni gathered to celebrate their journeys and reconnect with one another. The 10-hour event was filled with games, prizes, food, and fellowship, including a BBQ, lunch, and dinner, capped off with a powerful NA meeting that reminded everyone of the strength found in community.

The joy captured in the photo says it all as smiling faces, friends reunited, and families gathered together in celebration. For many alumni, Allen House was where their journey toward sobriety began, and returning as role models for others proves that recovery is not just possible, it is sustainable.

This event reflects our quarterly theme: **Empowering Change**. Each alum who walked through the doors has embraced transformation, choosing health, healing, and community over the struggles of the past. Their presence inspires current residents, showing that lasting recovery is achievable and no one walks this path alone.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who made this special day possible, and to the alumni whose stories continue to light the way forward. Together, we are empowering change and building stronger, healthier futures.



BRIDGE Brings Youth and Families Together

By Jazmin Davalos, Program Manager

Since its launch, **BRIDGE**—“*Building Resilience, Increasing Development, Growing Engagement*”—has served as more than just a connection point between families and treatment services. It has become a vibrant space where youth and their families can grow, learn, and heal together. And this June, the L.A. CADA Youth Department brought that mission to life through a full month of summer programming.

Throughout June, BRIDGE offered daily summer classes as a supportive alternative to summer school. Youth were invited to participate in educational workshops, prevention-focused activities, and meaningful volunteer work—all while enjoying meals, community bonding, and moments of fun.



Janet Guzman, Prevention Coordinator, and Jovenes Speak Up youth preparing and serving food to our clients and families at the Youth and Family Services offices.

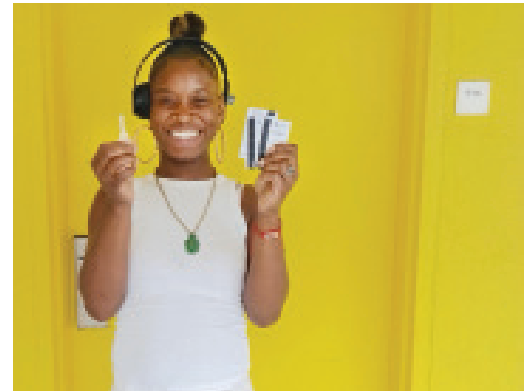
After workshops wrapped, students stayed to play Nintendo Switch, drawing peers together through friendly competition and shared laughter. These seemingly small moments helped spark real friendships and created a space where youth felt welcomed and encouraged.

Volunteers also played a key role in bringing BRIDGE to life this summer. Our youth leaders contributed by creating posters, writing newsletter highlights,

and developing visuals for our **Jóvenes Speak Up (JSU)** volunteer program. Some even helped prepare meals for fellow students and participated in interactive whiteboard games with parents and staff—ranging from health-related trivia to “Draw your favorite cartoon character.”

These summer activities weren't just about filling time . . . they were about strengthening relationships, building resilience, and promoting positive alternatives to substance use. From early intervention and education to shared meals and laughter, BRIDGE continues to serve as a vital link between youth, families, and life-saving support.

Thank you to our dedicated staff, volunteers, and youth participants for making this month such a success—and to the **L.A. County Department of Public Health** and **SAPC** for continuing to support our mission. Together, we're bridging gaps, one bright summer day at a time!



Celebrating Kelli's New Beginning

By Connor Baer, Program Manager

With a bright smile and the keys to her new home in hand, **Kelli Edwards** is stepping into the next chapter of her recovery journey. Kelli first came to L.A. CADA as a walk-in patient at the **Los Angeles Mission Females RBH in Skid Row**. Today, thanks to her dedication and the support of our programs, she has been linked to permanent housing while continuing out-patient services.

For Kelli, this moment represents more than just a new place to live, it symbolizes stability, independence, and hope. Reflecting on her time in the program, she shares:

“Being in the L.A. CADA program has helped me grow, learn, mature, and look at life differently. I've learned that life can still be enjoyed and fun without drugs or alcohol. When you put good energy into the universe, it blesses you with rewards beyond your wildest dreams—and I am living proof of that.”

Kelli's success story is another powerful example of this quarter's theme, **Empowering Change**. Through accountability, structure, and community, she has embraced the opportunity to transform her life. Her journey shows that recovery is not just about overcoming the past, it's about building a brighter future, one step, one choice, and one key at a time.



(l-r) Gloria Duran, Megan Chacon, John Mora, Citlalilt Pastrana, Juanita Martin, Joe Amaya, Bill Rounds, Juan Navarro, Joe Angel Zamora, Priscilla Rodriguez, Jayden, Annette Rodriguez, Nolan Ross Same-Weil.

HONORED FOR ADVOCACY: L.A. CADA Recognized by City of Santa Fe Springs

By Priscilla Rodriguez, Community Engagement Manager

In May, in recognition of **Mental Health Awareness Month**, the **City of Santa Fe Springs** honored L.A. CADA for its continued dedication to promoting mental wellness and supporting individuals living with behavioral health challenges.

During a heartfelt presentation at City Hall, city leaders presented a Certificate of Recognition to our staff, applauding the impact of our prevention, treatment, and education efforts across the region. The moment underscored the growing awareness of mental health as a vital part of community health.

This public acknowledgment not only celebrates our team's hard work—it reinforces our belief that mental health deserves year-round attention, compassion, and investment. It also reflects this quarter's theme, **Empowering Change**, as community partnerships and visibility like this help break stigma and open doors to support for those in need.

We thank the City of Santa Fe Springs for standing with us to elevate mental health and for recognizing the role organizations like L.A. CADA play in building a healthier, more resilient future for all.

If you or someone you know
is in need of mental health or substance use services,
please call us at (562) 906-2676.

BUILDING HOPE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP: TAY House and the Catholic Church Food Bank

By Christopher Chavez, TAY House Monitor

At **TAY House**, we believe that every young adult deserves a safe place to grow, heal, and thrive. Part of creating that environment means making sure our guests have access to the necessities that allow them to focus on their future. One of the most important ways we've been able to provide that support is through our partnership with the **Catholic Church Food Bank**.

This has been a life-line for our young adults, many of whom come to TAY House facing challenges no one should ever have to carry. Through their generosity, we are able to keep nutritious meals and snacks on hand, ensuring no one goes to bed hungry. Having consistent access to food has helped bring comfort and stability to our home—two things our young adults often long for most.

Beyond meeting physical needs, the food bank's contributions also represent something deeper: care, community, and dignity. Our young adults see firsthand that there are people in their community who care about them and want them to succeed. That knowledge alone builds hope and encouragement.

We are truly grateful for the Catholic Church Food Bank and the volunteers who make this work possible. Their continued support allows us to focus on nurturing, mentoring, and guiding our young adults, knowing that one of life's most basic needs is being met. Together, we are not just filling plates, we are filling hearts with hope and showing our young adults that they are not alone.



Some of the greatly appreciated fresh foods provided to our TAY patients by the Catholic Church Food Bank.

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562.777.7500

Community Outreach Program

3675 Huntington Dr., Suite 101, Pasadena, CA 91107
626.314.2818

Downtown Outpatient and HIV Services Center

426 S. San Pedro St., Los Angeles, CA 90013
213.626.6411

Downtown Outpatient

307 Central Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90013
213.372.5233

Hollywood HIV Services Center

6838 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90028
323.461.3161 ext. 3818

L.A. CADA on Main Street

10924 S. Main St., Los Angeles, CA 90061
323.880.8159

Long Beach Outpatient and Community Services Center

5861 Cherry Ave., Long Beach, CA 90805
562.676.4259

Santa Fe Springs Outpatient and Community Services

11015 Bloomfield Ave., Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670
562.906.2676
WELLNESS CENTER: 1.844.804.WELL (9355)

QA and CENS

9300 Santa Fe Springs Rd., Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670
562.273.0462
CENS Toll Free: 1.844.804.SPA7 (7727)

Valley Homeless Community Outreach

2826 Valley Blvd., Alhambra, CA 91280

Youth and Family Services

10210 Orr and Day Rd, Suite B, Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670
562.348.0083

4th Street Field-Based Outpatient

1401 E. Fourth St., Unit A, Long Beach, CA 90802
562.606.2664

The Whittier LGBTQ Center

7639 Painter Ave., Whittier, CA 90602
562.261.5611

OUR MISSION

is to save lives, unite families, and protect the community through addiction counseling and healthy living education.

OUR VISION

is to enhance the educational and economic well-being of the people we serve by means of direct human services, advocacy, and referrals.

OUR VALUES

are to embrace the empowerment of people through compassion, perseverance and respect. We are able to provide a wide range of services thanks to a collaborative approach compatible with healthy communities, dedicated partners, and unique foundations.





Los Angeles Centers for Alcohol and Drug Abuse

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National
Recovery
Month

SEPTEMBER

Main Street
OPEN
HOUSE

OCTOBER 2

TOY
DRIVE

DECEMBER

Holiday
Pancake
Breakfast
with Santa

DECEMBER

Turkey Drive NOVEMBER

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ANY OF THE EVENTS ABOVE, email Events@lacada.com