



PROYECTO NUEVA VIDA

A Unique, Culturally Specific Collaborative in Bridgeport, CT

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

FALL 2011

FAMILY

FORUMS:

- 2.7.12 Your Health w/ Dr. Torres @ **ARETYO APTS 665 ARCTIC ST.**
- 3.15.12 Recovery
- 4.19.12, Living w/ Diabetes
- 5.17.12 Annual Focus Group

St. Luke's/St. Paul's Church, 592 Kossuth St., Bridgeport, CT
5:30—7:30 pm

PNV MENTORS GROUP

Meets
FRIDAYS, 5:30 pm
Project Courage
594 Kossuth St.,
Bridgeport, CT

MONDAYS, 7 pm,
Areyto Apts.
665 Arctic St.,
Bridgeport, CT

A Farewell to Jose Torres

Nuestro Hermano y Amigo Jose Angel Torres entered into heavenly rest Friday, January 20, 2012 at Yale New Haven Hospital.

Jose was born on July 26, 1950 in Moca, Puerto Rico to Ernesto Torres and Juana Gonzalez.

Jose was born and raised in Puerto Rico. Jose attended school in Puerto Rico and served four years in the U.S. Navy. He received a Masters degree from the University of Puerto Rico, and later a Masters in Social Work from the University of Connecticut

He leaves seven siblings, Mildred, Monse, Luz, Miriam, Rene, Juan, and Eddie. He leaves two cherished daughters, Isela and Milagros and a son, Onyx. He also leaves grandchildren, Isabella, Gustabo, Patricia and one more little princess. In addition, he leaves a former spouse, Martha Mora, as well as a step-daughter, Morella Mora.

Jose Torres was employed by the Chemical Abuse Services Agency, Inc. (CASA) as a Recovery Support Coordinator for the last nine years. His legacy includes his endless contributions to the recovery community and the Peer Mentors group of Proyecto Nueva Vida. He will be remembered as an avid champion for recovery oriented care and social justice. In addition to his generous sense of humor, Jose had a unique ability to see and bring forth the very best in everyone.

Asher Delerme, Executive Director of CASA, said Jose "had an

extraordinary impact on the lives of the persons we serve and the staff he worked with, including myself."

Marta Moret, President of Urban Policy Strategies, said, "I worked closely with Jose on Proyecto Nueva Vida. He as a one-man army for culturally competent, community and family focused substance abuse treatment for Latinos. I will miss his infectious humor [no one told a joke in Spanish better than Jose] and his fierce dedication to his work and those he loved."

Bridgeport State Representative, Andres Ayala, who worked closely with Jose on the Areyto Apartment project said, "Jose was an amazing advocate for people who felt like they did not have a voice. Jose's work with Proyecto Nueva Vida is a model program which provides recov-

ery in a culturally competent way which has been proven to work, and the reason why it worked was because Jose dedicated his life to it's success."

Jose Ortiz, who wrote the PNV grant while at DMHAS and nurtured it for 9 years said, "It's hard for me to think about Jose without thinking of PNV. I remember when Jose first started with PNV – he was full of energy and it was, at the time, just what the program needed. Jose was passionate and had an uncompromising commitment to the program, especially the mentors. I will miss him....a great friend and colleague."

On January 25, a beautiful memorial service was celebrated in Jose's spiritual community, St. Luke's/St. Paul's Episcopal church.

GRACIAS POR TODO, KID !!



Jose Angel Torres
1950—2012

November Family Forum Addresses Mental Health Needs

PNV WISH LIST

- Toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Soap
- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Razors
- Feminine hygiene products
- Lotions

If your business, organization, or church can help with these items, please contact Judy Leon at 203.367.8441x237. Muchas gracias!

In the largest Family Forum audience ever, over 100 adults and family members attended the November 17, 2011 Family Forum at St. Luke's/ St. Paul's Church in Bridgeport. As always, the event began with a dinner of Caribbean-style Spanish rice, beans, pork, and chicken served up by the PNV Mentors and staff.

Through a family system recovery approach, where addiction is seen as a family problem requiring family support to bring about change, the PNV Family Forums serve as a proven way to engage the consumer's family in the recovery process.

This PNV Family Forum addressed disparities and stigmas that pose challenges and barriers for getting Latinos into mental health treatment.

A question and answer format encouraged group participation. The problem of too many

consumers being paired with too few Spanish speaking psychiatrists and therapists was one of the first topics ad-



ressed. Many participants also shared their fears of being over medicated, experiencing side-effects, and being labeled "crazy" as reasons why they don't seek treatment or continue in treatment.

A particularly poignant question was posed by CASA's Clinical and Recovery Support Coordinator, Jose Torres, who asked, "Would you rather be identified as a substance abuser or someone with mental

health problems"?

Consumers overwhelmingly chose to be identified as a substance abuser. Their reasoning was because consumers felt those with substance abuse problems had more hope for recovery, and there was less stigma attached to that than to people with mental health problems.

A significant number of participants shared in the group discussion. Jose Torres attributed the success of their participation to the fact that they were spoken to in words they easily understood, by people with whom they were familiar, such as mentors and PNV staff. I personally believe that the success of these meetings can also be credited to Jose Torres whose insight and understanding of the Latino culture/ community field is without match. - David Dejesus, CASA

Three Kings Celebration

Almost 150 PNV family members celebrated the annual Three Kings Day on January 6, 2012, held this year at the beautiful Bridgeport German Club hall on Horace St. Our sincere thanks to the German Club, to BPD Officer Nick Ortiz and to all who joined the festivities. Here are some picture from the event.



Culturally Centered Treatment at the Heart of CASA Recovery

Asher Delerme, M.S., LCADC, CCS, CCDP

Executive Director, CASA

Many of us in the treatment field believe that drug and alcohol addiction is a highly prevalent illness affecting all groups of people. While this is true, studies reveal that the impact of alcohol and illicit drugs is unfortunately, disproportionate in the African American and Latino communities. CASA and its programs continue to respond to the need to provide substance abuse treatment and recovery services that is respectful, sensitive, and inclusive of an individual's cultural and ethnic background. With this background in mind, CASA has developed a profound commitment for programming needs around cultural and cross-cultural issues as a means to understanding and addressing substance abuse and mental health problems in communities of color. The Proyecto Nueva program is a gleaming example of this approach.

CASA is aware of the powerful variant that cultural, environmental, socioeconomic, and political factors have on human behavior. CASA's approach to treatment and recovery has been rooted in part on the belief that effective treatment and/or recovery strategies for the African-American and Latino communities, should include (but not be limited to) the following goals for all staff:

- To understand that every individual is rooted in culture and as such culture has an influence on the beliefs and behaviors of everyone and that an individual's home language is a key component of their identity formation.
- To respect and incorporate the cultures of individuals and their families and to use the cultural groups represented in the communities served as the primary sources for culturally relevant programming. As such appreciate and be willing to utilize the vast spiritual resources in the African-American and Latino communities. Further be willing to apply cultural concepts of pain, illness, wellness, and recovery in assessments, diagnosis, and treatment. Be willing to develop an understanding and appreciation for cultural styles of teaching and learning in the implementation and development of recovery models. Understands that CASA's treatment approach recognizes and validates its clients through meaningful cultural celebrations and events that are as inspirational as they are empowering.
- To understand that culturally relevant and diverse programming requires learning accurate information about the cultures of different groups and discarding stereotypes. As such have an appreciation for the personal experience of being Black or Latino within a larger culture that can be indifferent, fearful, and at times hateful. Further, have an understanding of the concepts of marginalization and fractionalization as it applies to people of color as well as a thorough understanding of the historical realities of Slavery, Segregation, Migrations, and Civil rights. Further be willing to examine styles of communication with people of color as well as an understanding of non-verbal behavior among people of color.
- To understand that addressing cultural perceptions in making clinical/program choices and adaptations is a necessary, and appropriate practice and that culturally relevant and diverse programming examines and challenges institutional and personal biases. As such staff will continue to recognize and challenge their own as well as other's cultural biases and stereotypes encountered when reviewing treatment/recovery cases and models of treatment and services. Staff will maintain an ongoing appreciation and understanding of their own cultural background and its significance to cross-cultural situations.
- To understand that every individual has the right to maintain his or her own identity while being empowered to acquire the skills required to recover in our diverse society. As such staff will continue to employ a treatment approach that focuses on the intolerable intrapsychic tension and sense of worthlessness experienced by people of color that can also be a concomitant of substance abuse. Staff should be aware of the current confluence of negative forces threatening the African-American and Latino communities.
- To understand that culturally relevant programming requires staff that both reflect and are responsive to the Individuals, families and community served. Further understand that these staff can model and reinforce positive images in communities of color.
- To understand that multicultural programming for consumers enables them to develop an awareness of, respect for, and appreciation of individual cultural differences.

Overall, this culturally centered response to treatment has played an important role in the process of recovery for many of CASA's and PNV's clients who feel empowered and hopeful about themselves and their communities. CASA believes that, the conception of a multicultural perspective in addressing issues of prevention and treatment is an effective strategy for individual and continued community development. CASA remains committed to being a key community resource that offers culturally centered treatment for those individuals with behavioral health challenges. CASA/PNV can attest that culturally centered treatment continues to be equally validating and inspirational to all members of our communities.



The Proyecto Nueva Vida Community Advisory Board meets every FOURTH Wednesday of the month from 9-11 am at the Areyto Apartments meeting room, 665 Arctic St., Bridgeport.

New members who share PNV's mission of outreach to and community building with Bridgeport's Latino population are welcome to join us.

Please contact Iris Molina, Chairperson, at iris.molina@bridgeportct.gov, or 203 576-7471.

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To submit articles for the PNV Newsletter, please email danbraccio@ccgb.org

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Three Kings Event, continued

