Advocating for Torture Survivors

Every year, SURVIVORS and human rights organizations across the world mark June as torture awareness month. There has been increasing awareness of the ever-growing population of asylum seekers requesting safety in the United States. It is estimated that more than half of these asylum seekers will have experienced torture. As the only torture treatment center in San Diego County and our proximity to the busiest border crossing in the world, it is important that our expertise and services be available for all who need and want them. Therefore, we have centered ourselves in critical conversations throughout our community and strengthened strategic partnerships.

As the issue of asylum gains a wider audience, we attend diverse events, meetings, and conferences to advocate for torture survivors. This includes Executive Director Kathi Anderson – in her role as the vice-chair of the California State Advisory Council on Refugee Assistance and Services – acting as a moderator for state-wide meetings that focus on the mental and physical healthcare needs of asylum seekers and torture survivors. We also attended a press conference led by Governor Gavin Newsom who highlighted the support of the state to address the critical needs of asylum seekers. We are proud to advocate for the urgent need for services and assistance for asylum seekers on statewide platforms.

We had already seen a significant increase in the need for our services over the past three years. Comparing our data from the first quarter of 2017 to the first quarter of 2019 reveals an increase in requests for our services. We completed 10 medical and psychological evaluations in the first quarter of 2017 as compared to 49 in 2019 during the same time frame. Similarly, the number of detained clients (at intake) increased from four in the first quarter of 2017 to 56 in the first quarter of 2019. In quarter one of 2017, SURVIVORS served 18 new clients; whereas, in the first quarter of 2019, 65 new clients were served. In response to these expanded needs, SURVIVORS increased staff positions and office space to better serve those who need our services.

We are ignited to advocate for this community and to keep the critical conversation alive to ensure torture survivors and their families receive the help they deserve.

Clients Gain Peace Through Creativity

Our offices are decorated with art created, and then lovingly donated, by our clients. Over the years, SURVIVORS’ clients have made numerous pieces of art as part of their Healing Club art therapy sessions.

Art therapy is a form of expressive therapy that uses the creative process to improve a person's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Art is transformative and can give ‘voice’ to what cannot be communicated in words.

For the April Healing Club, Senior Mental Health Clinician Rachel Mahoney chose mandala art for our clients. "In many cultures, mandalas are used to symbolize and explore the self. The word mandala is Sanskrit for circle or completion, so clients were supported in creating mandalas as a way to meditate by using lines and colors to represent their dreams, suffering, hopes, experiences, and communities," Rachel explained. A client said he used the color green to “represent new life and moving forward, and I left blank spaces because I still have a lot of experiences left in my life.”

It helped our clients “focus and concentrate, build their self-esteem, and learn relaxation techniques," said Clinical Case Manager Nance Lovell. Our clients find art meaningful. As a client reflected, “Coloring helps me forget everything I have going on in my life…. I feel at peace.”

Client creates mandala art in Healing Club.
Qualified Charitable Distributions Made Simple

SURVIVORS has served over 3000 torture survivors in 22 years because of the generosity and charitable spirit of our donors, volunteers, and supporters. Recently, economists have been speculating that the new tax laws might adversely impact charitable giving. But charitable giving has never been simpler due to Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) and their ability to help meet philanthropic goals.

QCDs are a direct transfer of funds from Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) and can be counted toward satisfying required minimum distributions (RMDs) for the year. In addition to the benefits of giving to a charity, such as SURVIVORS, a QCD excludes the amount donated from taxable income, unlike regular withdrawals from an IRA. Equally important, SURVIVORS doesn’t pay income tax on the distributions we receive. So your entire donation will be used by SURVIVORS to fulfill our mission.

Each year, donors age 70 1/2 and older can transfer up to $100,000 from their IRAs to any qualifying charity including SURVIVORS. The donor can also establish a non-advised designated fund and can select charities in advance that will receive annual grants for a term-of-years or on an on-going basis. In order to qualify for the QCD, the donor cannot maintain an advisory capacity over the fund once it’s established (i.e., the donors cannot add or remove selected charities, or change the distribution plan). Furthermore, QCDs can also be used to pay the premiums on gifts of life insurance, the proceeds of which will be directed toward the non-advisory fund after the donor has passed on.

Giving these assets to SURVIVORS, instead of taking RMDs as income, may enable donors to avoid certain disadvantages that can come with a higher annual gross income from increased Medicare premiums or self-employment. Since QCDs are not subject to percentage limitations on charitable deductions, QCDs are an ideal strategy for donors who have reached the upper limit of their charitable deductions or who do not itemize deductions. QCDs are a win-win charitable donation that benefits both you and SURVIVORS’ clients.

Live Well San Diego Public Health Champions

The Live Well San Diego Public Health Champion Awards recognize extraordinary achievements by individuals and organizations in areas of public health service that protect and promote the health of the local population. The award honors the role of private/public collaborations that advance optimal health and wellness in the county’s diverse populations.

SURVIVORS was proud to be one of only two organizations to receive this year’s Live Well San Diego Public Health Champion award. Sasha Moore, former volunteer and interim medical case manager, explained in her nomination of SURVIVORS, “(SURVIVORS)… is an amazing team that gives hope to those who have forgotten how to hope, heals those who have been psychologically and/or physically tortured in ways that most cannot even begin to comprehend, and saves lives – every day.” SURVIVORS feels privileged to champion public health by helping torture survivors and their families heal while fostering a welcoming community in and around San Diego County.

Our greatest reward is to see our clients, after utilizing the healing services we offer, go on to become functioning and productive members of the community. “I want to volunteer and be helpful in my community and San Diego,” one of our clients from the Middle East shared with us after he had succeeded in rebuilding his career and life in San Diego.
THE SURVIVOR

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Healing Society Members who have made five-year pledges of $1,000 or more per year. Thank you!

Kathi Anderson & Jesse Rivera
Jerry Baird & Linda Stark
Jeanette Barrack
Brad & Gigi Benter
Steve & Carmen Berry
Candace Carroll & Len Simon
Ann & Rich Durham
Denise & James Francis
Jan Gallo
Jean Greaves & Greg Olmstead
Lydia Grympa & Bob Oakley
Rick & Ann Hein

Individual & Family Financial Supporters who gave October 1, 2018-May 31, 2019. Thank you!

Anonymous
Aracelli Acevedo
Dee L. Aker
Mahvash Alami
Hannah Allen
Carol Anderson
Joyce Anderson
Margaret Anderson
Angela Asuncion
Cheri Attix & Steve Rivera
Joyce Bartos
Enriquea & Ronald Bauer
Susanna Beaudieu
Brendy Bell
William & Sheridan Bengston
Mark I. Berger & Jacquelyn Tolley
Joan K. Bobier
Richard Bonacci
Watson Branch
Jerry Buckley
Peggy Burns
Francine Busby
Jorge Cabrera
Lauren & Derrick Cartwright
Monica Chinisaz
Susan Christison & John Peter
Margie & Roger Coats
Donald & Mary Jo Crouch
Elizabeth Cychoz
Maryann Dean
Alicia DeLeon-Torres
Bettina Delsesto
Sharmine DeMoss
Tamara Diehl
Ginny Dunn
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Jean Emery
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Ger Fang
Lisa Lackey & Thomas Clark Farrar
Wendy Fiering
Marlene Forney
Laura Frazee
Mark Freeman & Alison Brysk
Sondra & Joseph Frisch
David Gangsei & Lindy Laub
Ali & Michelle Golchin
Camelia M. Gower
Timothy S. Griffiths
Laura Hageman & Thomas Bond
Ginger Hallerberg
John & Kaye Hambleton
Marie Hart & Wayne Liebold
Sara Hencz
Erika Hess
Gerald & Ingrid Hoffmeister
Myles Huck
Chase Johnson
Phil Johnson & Seth Krosner
Rick Johnson
Sonja F. Jones
Paula Herring & Tim Botisko
Merle & Kay Horst
Dalia & Gordon Hunt
Carl Josephson & Laura Harris
Rachel Kelly
Melvin & Jane Kieschnick
Philip Kuey & Emily Hart
Rebecca LeVasseur
George & Karen Longstreth
Michael & Mary McKay
Kate Miller
Gene Morones
Howard & Lianne Moseley
Darrell Netherton & Richard Wheeler
Pat Olafson
Kathleen Owens
Natalie Pearl Iraarza
Mahesh Podar
William & Martha Radatz
Grant Reeder & Scott Willford
Marlene Ruiz
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, San Diego

Organizations That Financially Support SURVIVORS who gave April 1, 2018-May 31, 2019. Thank you!

AmazonSmile
Bruce M. Abrams GLBT Torture Survivors Fund
Business Complete Solutions
Cajon Valley Union School District
California State University, San Marcos - Homie Up!
Calvary Lutheran Church, Solana Beach - Mission Endowment Fund
Change A Life Foundation
Christ Presbyterian Church, Carlsbad
Chula Vista Presbyterian Church
Community Service Association, San Diego Unified School District
First Lutheran Church, San Diego
Grossmont Healthcare District
Grossmont Union High School District Interpreters Unlimited
Jacob Dean Construction
Josephson-Werdowitz & Associates, Incorporated
La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club
La Mesa Sunrise Rotary Club Foundation
LANSolutions LLC
Law Offices of Jonathan D. Montag
Law Office of Julia Perkins
Lawyers Club of San Diego Foundation
Michael Ehrenfeld Company
Molina Healthcare of California
Nautilus General Contractors, Inc.
Pacifica Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America - Matthew 25 Fund
Pasadena Community Foundation in memory of Patrick Otis Healy
Presbyterian Women in the Chula Vista Presbyterian Church
Price Philanthropies Foundation
Rehabilitation Strategies
San Diego County Health and Human Services
San Diego Gas and Electric
Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, La Mesa
Sonnenberg & Co.
State of California Office of Emergency Services
Structural Group Inc.
The California Endowment
The Kroger Company
The Peacemakers Fund at The San Diego Foundation
The San Diego Women's Foundation
Sempa Giving Fund

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The Social Changey / Sana Mente Project
The Worldview Project
Thrift Financial - Thrivent Choice
Tobi Cares
Union Bank
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of San Dieguito
United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement
William H. Donner Foundation
After spending 22 years in the field, our organization is highly regarded in the international arena as an expert on the subject of torture survivors; the majority of whom are asylum seekers. In April, SURVIVORS was pleased to welcome United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNVFVT) Human Rights Officer Maria Luisa Bascur for a visit.

SURVIVORS and the UNVFVT have a long-established relationship. We have been a recipient of funding since the late 1990s to support our healing services. This visit gave SURVIVORS an opportunity to not only discuss the organization’s existing programs and outcomes, but also to help strengthen the bonds between our organization and one of the chief international leaders in the torture treatment community.

SURVIVORS, the only accredited torture treatment center in San Diego County, also acts as the eyes on the ground for the UNVFVT representative, who expressed particular interest in discussing and gaining our insight on current U.S. immigration policies and the flow of newcomers into San Diego County.

### An Opportunity for International Engagement

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