Aviva VP introduces new therapy approach at Expressive Therapies Summit

At the recent Expressive Therapies Summit in Los Angeles, Aviva Vice President of Programs and Services Jeffrey Jamerson introduced a new alternative therapy that uses digital media.

During a half-day workshop, Jamerson gave participants a hands-on opportunity to experience Expressive Remix Therapy (ERT).

Miriam’s journey to calm and strength

When Miriam came to Aviva’s Resource Family Agency as a client at age 10, her behavior was challenging. She refused to follow rules, she told lies and her language was inappropriate.

This wasn’t surprising given her family’s history of mental health issues. Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services stepped in and removed Miriam and her three siblings due to neglect, domestic violence and abuse.

Aviva placed her in one of our homes. Once situated in a more stable, caring environment,
Celebrating Changes, Commitments and Success

Aviva Family and Children's Services has recruited safe and loving homes for Los Angeles County foster children and youth for years, yet we always seem to need more foster families to meet the needs of Los Angeles' foster children. Aviva is not alone in this predicament.

With the implementation of new statewide reforms, which went into effect in January, this need is increasing significantly. These reforms, which put a strong emphasis on family, include moving away from long-term group homes while increasing care for foster children in home-based settings.

New Approaches to an Old Problem

Our approach was to look outside the box and for new solutions to an old problem—something Aviva has done for more than 100 years.

We are very proud to announce that Aviva is part of a Los Angeles pilot project to provide support and resources directly to extended family members in an effort to build more safe and loving homes from the inside out.

We're also helping families to meet the stringent standards required for a safe home environment. We train them to provide caring and effective interpersonal approaches for traumatized children. To make sure the children are safe, Aviva staff are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide ongoing support. Reflecting this shift, Aviva also changed the name of our Foster Family and Adoption Agency program to Aviva Resource Family Services.

Due to the strong emphasis on family, Aviva's Residential Treatment Program boosted our partnership with our Resource Family Services to find safe, caring homes for youth when they leave our Wallis Annenberg Residential Treatment Center.

Additionally, Aviva is awaiting approval to be certified as a Short-Term Residential Treatment Program under the new guidelines. In anticipation of this approval, our residential leadership is increasing staff training in trauma-informed approaches to enhance client supervision.

Celebrating Renewal of Spirit and Success

Aviva's flexibility to make these changes and continue to flourish is due to the generous support we receive from our donors. This spring, we look forward to our annual Gala in May when we celebrate individuals who have discovered or helped others to discover their own renewal of spirit. This year’s honorees continue to show their support and commitment to at-risk children and youth through volunteering, adoption and drawing attention to the despair and heartbreak of commercially sexually exploited children. If you haven't yet signed up to attend, reserve your space today at impact.avivacenter.org/agala.

As we celebrate our honorees and the changes in our services and programs, we remain steadfast in our commitment and belief that “every child and every family deserves a chance for a brighter future.”

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Aviva is a not-for-profit, non-sectarian agency that believes every child and every family in our Los Angeles community deserves the chance for a brighter future. We provide compassionate support, therapeutic services, and guidance to at-risk children and families.

Aviva is accredited by: Council on Accreditation
Aviva is a member of: American Association of Children's Residential Centers • Association of Community Human Services Agencies • California Alliance of Child and Family Services • Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles • United Way • Alliance for Strong Children and Families
A Gala: Evening of Celebration

At this year’s A Gala, Aviva will honor a group of people who have distinguished themselves not merely by their accomplishments, but also by their unwavering commitments to youth, social issues and Aviva.

“Each of Aviva’s 2017 honorees are exceptional in their own right. We are privileged to recognize their contributions and commitments to youth, and we are fortunate to consider them part of the Aviva ‘family,’” said Robin Broidy, 2017 A Gala chair.

Artistic Excellence Award: Paris Barclay

Paris Barclay is president of the Directors Guild of America and one of television’s most successful and honored directors. He has directed 150 episodes of television shows including “NYPD Blue,” “ER,” “The West Wing,” “Lost,” “The Good Wife,” “CSI,” “NCIS,” “House” and “Glee.” Barclay has won two Emmy Awards for “NYPD Blue” and received six Emmy nominations for producing and directing.

Barclay is married to Christopher Barclay and together, they adopted two sons from the Los Angeles County Foster Care system. Recognizing Barclay as a strong advocate for adoption and foster youth, Aviva is presenting him with the agency’s Artistic Excellence Award.
Impact Award: “I am Jane Doe”

Aviva is honoring the 2017 documentary film, “I am Jane Doe,” directed by Mary Mazzio, produced by Alex Sokolow and narrated by Jessica Chastain, with its Impact Award. This powerful film chronicles the battles several American mothers wage on behalf of their underage daughters who were sex trafficking victims on the adult classifieds website Backpage.com (formerly owned by the iconic Village Voice).

Mary Mazzio

Two words come to mind when describing Mary Mazzio:

Highly accomplished. She is an award-winning documentary film director, an Olympian, and a former law firm partner and founder. She is currently CEO of 50 Eggs, Inc., an independent film production company dedicated to creating films that have a social impact. A rower on the 1992 US Olympic team, Mazzio is a graduate of Mount Holyoke College and Georgetown Law School.

Jessica Chastain

Narrator of “I am Jane Doe,” Jessica Chastain is an award-winning actress. She received a Golden Globe Award and an Academy Award nomination for her performance in “Zero Dark Thirty.” Chastain launched her own production company, Freckle Films, in 2016.

Alec Sokolow

The co-producer for “I am Jane Doe,” Alec Sokolow is a writer who has worked on numerous films including “Toy Story,” “Cheaper by the Dozen,” “Garfield: The Movie” and “Money Talks.” He was among the team of writers who were nominated for the 1995 Academy Award for Best Writing (Original Screenplay) for “Toy Story.” He also was executive producer of “Gnomes and Trolls: The Secret Chamber.”
Honorees – continued from page 4

Humanitarian Award: Wrenn and Bill Chais

Wrenn and Bill Chais, this year’s recipients of Aviva’s Humanitarian Award, are a “power couple” who truly deserve the honor. In addition to serving on Aviva’s board of directors, Wren is of counsel to Locke Lord LLP and a business and securities litigation attorney with more than 25 years of experience. Additionally, she is a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) of Los Angeles where she advocates for foster youth.

Bill Chais is a writer, producer and director of episodic television and currently is the executive producer of the NBC drama series “Chicago Justice.” He co-created “Franklin & Bash” for TNT and created “Head Cases” for Fox Television. Prior to a career in television, Bill worked as a Deputy Public Defender for the County of Los Angeles, representing defendants in hundreds of cases from misdemeanors to death penalty trials. Bill graduated from University of California, Berkeley and Pepperdine University School of Law. Bill has volunteered for years with the teens in our residential treatment program, leading creative writing workshops and cooking classes. His engagement with them as a positive male role model is invaluable.

Spirit of Hope Award: Kalayah

Aviva’s 2017 Spirit of Hope Award winner Kalayah is the personification of strength and hope. She came to Aviva’s Wallis Annenberg Residential Treatment Center when she was 17, after Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services removed her from her abusive mother. She arrived frightened with only the clothes she was wearing and without any self-confidence.

According to Kayalah, the Aviva staff greeted her warmly and helped her find a new life, including mentors Bill and Wrenn Chais. “They made me feel special, like a person who mattered,” Kalayah said. After a year at Aviva and with a new sense of self, Kayalah was reunited with family out-of-state. Today she is attending community college and working towards a bachelor’s degree in nursing.
Miriam not only began to feel safe and secure, she also began to behave differently. Over three years, Aviva provided Miriam with a team of support that included a therapist, an Intensive Foster Care (IFTC) social worker, a Therapeutic Behavior Services (TBS) specialist and an in-home support counselor. The TBS specialist saw her at least three times a week, both at home and school. Over time, the TBS specialist was able to redirect Miriam toward more appropriate behaviors.

Consistent support from Aviva’s staff, coupled with the presence and unwavering patience of her foster mother, provided Miriam with a safe, nurturing and structured environment. Her foster mother involved Miriam in a variety of activities that helped her to normalize her behaviors and actually assimilate into family life.

As Miriam matured, she evolved from a ‘wild child’ to a loving teen. Through her stable and caring relationship with her foster mother, she recognized that her birth mother’s behavior was unstable and abusive. This recognition helped her to make significant strides in the on-going process of healing.

In January, Miriam was reunited with family, moving to Chicago to live with her maternal grandmother. She continues to maintain regular communications with her foster mother. Today, she is a star student who runs track and is more confident teenager.

This relatively new alternative therapy, on which Jamerson wrote his doctoral dissertation, is based on remixing digital media art to create and express personal stories.

According to Jamerson, “The objective of this therapy is to help clients tell their stories using digital media. In the process, they acquire new digital skills and discover that they have the capacity to change.”

The Expressive Therapies Summit, which was sponsored in partnership with UCLArts & Healing, featured more than 100 experiential workshops and master classes in arts and play therapies. This was the group’s first West Coast summit.
Donors sponsored viewing of Hidden Figures for Aviva Residents

The 2016 blockbuster hit film “Hidden Figures” showcases a time of dynamic social change. It puts race and gender politics front and center while providing a new perspective on our nation’s race into space.

Several Aviva supporters thought the film was so important they generously sponsored Aviva’s residential teens and staff to attend a screening in early February. Our sincere thanks to Barbara Lazaroff, Kay Collins, Tess Raferty, Betsy Salkind and Tonya Winfield who arranged this wonderful opportunity.

This 20th Century Fox film is the story of a team of African-American women mathematicians whose calculations for NASA were vital to several historic space missions, including John Glenn’s successful orbit of Earth.

Lazaroff said, “The film is extraordinary. And it is precisely the type of message and role models these young women need in their lives.”

Judging by the comments from those who attended, the film truly inspired many of the youth. Jessica said, “Despite the racism and discrimination [the women] faced, they made people respect them without violence.”

Bree was inspired by the “empowering message,” noting that “the women never gave up on their dreams.”

Maria said the film made her realize that “ladies are just as smart as men.”

UCLA Interns help Aviva Youth find artistic voice

Students from the Visual and Performing Arts Education program at UCLA work with teens from the Wallis Annenberg Residential Treatment Center once a week in a unique after-school art program. Spearheaded by Aviva’s art therapist Jessica Bianchi, the program teaches the teens to express a personal story through poetry, visual art and digital media.

This unique art program is a form of Expressive Remix Therapy, an alternative therapeutic approach that uses the creative process to help clients explore and reconcile their emotions, develop self-awareness, reduce anxiety and ultimately increase self-esteem.

Bianchi described the goal of the program as two-fold: to develop a sense of community and a safe environment in which the Aviva residents can express themselves; and to create an awareness among the UCLA students of how art can have a positive impact on at-risk youth.

“This program is good for everyone – the UCLA interns and the residential youth from Aviva,” said Bianchi.

Later this year, Bianchi is planning to present the group’s completed artwork to students studying juvenile justice at UCLA.
Street artist donates time and talent to Aviva

After meeting Aviva staff at LA’s Street Art House event earlier this year, Nicole Babaknia a.k.a. “Nicco Babs” decided to get involved with Aviva. The up and coming street artist is teaching our residents how to create digital pop art and surreal collages using the technology and tools provided in Aviva’s Digital Media Lab.

According to Babs, “I remix images to create abstract compositions and narratives. I like to think of each collage as a symbol of diversity. Every element had a place and story before now. Juxtaposing objects with different characteristics, colors, and textures is a fundamental part of my art style. I find inspiration in emerging technologies, millennial culture, music, travel, other artists and colorful things.”

Jeffrey Jamerson, Aviva Vice President of Programs and Services, is excited to welcome Babs to a growing line-up of volunteers that use creative arts to engage Aviva youth. According to Jamerson, “Babs’ digital collage expertise fits in perfectly with other digital classes currently happening in the Aviva Digital Media Lab. On Mondays, we offer a “beat” production class using Ableton Live software. On Tuesdays, we have digital storytelling facilitated by UCLA interns, and now on Wednesdays, Babs is teaching youth how to navigate Adobe Photoshop and make digital collage pop art.”

Explore more of Nicco Babs’ work by visiting: https://www.niccobabs.com/

In memory of Jacqueline Banchik

Jacqueline Banchik (1943-2016)

Aviva Family and Children’s Services mourns the loss of our long-time friend and supporter Jacqueline (Jackie) Banchik, who passed away in December after a seven-month battle with pancreatic cancer. She was a founding member of Aviva’s Platinum Associates and a regular presence at our annual galas over the years. Jackie spent her life caring for her two children and her community, using her unparalleled skills in event planning and organization to benefit numerous charitable organizations. She is survived by her husband of almost 50 years, Howard, her children, Randy and Anissa, their spouses and six grandchildren.
We gratefully acknowledge our donors who make our work possible. This newsletter only reflects financial gifts given during the period of November 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017. *Donors’ cumulative gifts appear in our annual report.*

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Ken Roberts  
Wendy Wolf and Mitch Minzer

Solon and Judie Litman  
Tony Litman

In Honor

Allison and Melissa Silvers  
Stephanie Silvers

Debbi Landsberger  
Ronnie Alcalay

Elizabeth Rulon  
Kassie Marriner

Laura Alpert  
Terrie Scott

Leslie Kavanaugh  
Regina Bette  
Becky Birdsong

Robin Broidy  
Bruce Karatz

Vanessa Mancia  
Patricia Gonzalez

Wendy Wolf  
James Adler

Wrenn and Bill Chais  
Michael Hanna

A Special Holiday Thank You to Michelle Brookman and her Christmas Angels that she rallied to bring a ton of holiday cheer!

Robin Adler  
Vicki Arenson  
Julie Bardin  
Noelle Berman  
Stacy Blaugrund  
Liz Bliss  
Lynne Brookman  
Linda Brown  
Sheryl Craig  
Cori Davenport  
Debra Epstein  
Ingrid Fields  
Leslie Flores  
Elizabeth Friedman  
Alisa Garett  
Kate Gordon  
Jackie Herzog  
Charlotte Hollander  
Mikki Kane  
Kainoa Kanter  
Jill Kort  
Cheryl Kotlowitz  
Samantha Levy  
Diane Lewis  
Benita Litt  
Janet Loeb  
Deanna Lund  
Alison Moldo  
Synthia Praglin  
Cheryl Raiss  
Liz Reznick  
Dina Rimmon  
Denise Rosner  
Nancy Ross  
Jenny Savitsky  
Judy Savitsky  
Sari Schecter  
Tracy Seretean  
Robin Shephard  
Jane Sindell  
Lucy Stutz  
Mindy Weiner  
Jennifer Yousem  
Rashelle Zelaznik
We would like to thank all our donors who made holiday wishes come true. Without our friends, many of our families would not have a day filled with joy. 

Christmas was a phenomenal success. We were able to provide gifts and home goods to over 50 families. Tears of joy flowed when case managers and therapists delivered bags of goodies – everything from towels, blankets, dishes, to warm clothing. The children and teens received gifts they could only dream about.

Thanks to Enterprise Rent-A-Car, we were able to provide 20 families with groceries and gift cards at Thanksgiving. Keeping a 20-year tradition, Viking Charities gave us 25 turkeys and bags of groceries for Aviva’s most disadvantaged families so they could enjoy a Christmas dinner.

Aviva’s Elizabeth Rulon surround by Aerospace Christmas Angels.

Aviva CEO Regina Bette (r) gladly accepts Thanksgiving food baskets for 20 families from Debra Manson and Enterprise Rent-A-Car employees.