A New Way to Beat the Heat!

On the warm afternoon of May 28, 2014, Los Angeles County officials joined in the ribbon cutting celebration for the new splash pad at Pathfinder Park, as dozens of children anxiously awaited the opportunity to cool down. As part of the new community center project taking place at the lower level of Pathfinder Park, a splash pad was constructed for families to enjoy during the hot summer days. Due to the overwhelming request by the Rowland Heights community, this amenity, which was not part of the original scope, was added to the project.

The Community Development Commission of the County of Los Angeles (CDC) oversaw the construction of the new 3,000 square foot splash pad and shade structure which was completed adjacent to the existing community center building at the upper level of the park. The splash pad includes areas of direct sun and shade for all to enjoy. There are 10 sprayers with a combined capacity of 165 gallons per minute, as well as water jets appropriate for age ranges from toddlers to teens. In addition, the area features a 1,000 square foot shade structure and seating for 50 people. A 4,000 gallon underground tank recycles water runoff, treats the water with an ultra violet system and minimal chlorine to cleanse water before it circulates back into the splash pad.

This project is made possible with the support of the County’s Fourth Supervisorial District, the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), the CDC, community members, and the design team of Gonzalez Goodale Architects. The splash pad is located at 18150 Pathfinder Road and will be operated by DPR.
Overcoming the Information Divide

Earlier in the year, the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (HACoLA) and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) reached a landmark information sharing agreement that not only preserves both agencies’ responsibility to protect their clients’ sensitive information, but also allows HACoLA’s Section 8 and Public Housing programs to operate in a much more streamlined manner. In April 2014, HACoLA began signing up its program participants for the new information sharing system.

HACoLA and DPSS are two large agencies subject to many overlapping laws and regulations. With the rise of technological advancements, regulators have begun shifting the method by which agencies, like HACoLA, gather and verify information before rendering a social service. For instance, HACoLA is required, at least annually, to verify a family’s household income to determine the appropriate subsidized rent. This is no small task considering HACoLA services approximately 23,000 assisted housing families, and manages 3,196 units of public housing. As part of this process, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that HACoLA attempt to acquire client information directly from the source, such as DPSS, when possible. Obtaining confidential information directly from the agency, rather than waiting for the family to submit sensitive information, is designed to streamline the process, but requires easily accessible, secure systems to be in place to avoid delays in information exchange. Following the outreach to participants, HACoLA staff went through a detailed training on the proper procedures for obtaining and safeguarding information through the data sharing system.

For nearly two years, Martin Peery, Manager for HACoLA’s Contract Maintenance Department, committed himself to understanding both agencies’ methods of operation and regulatory and privacy requirements. While negotiating the agreement with DPSS and legal counsel, Mr. Peery continuously consulted with key members from HACoLA’s Housing Management (Public Housing) and Assisted Housing (Section 8) Divisions, as well as its Information Technology Unit. Mr. Peery challenged both agencies to fully utilize their technological capabilities to deliver a cutting edge information sharing model that is both secure and reliable. These efforts culminated in a final product that streamlined the process and met everyone’s needs.

The new partnership with DPSS is a testament to HACoLA’s commitment to seize every opportunity to improve processes and implement procedures that benefit all of HACoLA’s clients and staff. Mr. Peery’s vision and perseverance were the key motivating factors that helped his team build a bridge between two agencies and ensure transparency and security while operating effectively and efficiently, a feat that is rare among public entities.

Martin Peery explains, “The significance of this agreement is that HACoLA case managers can now obtain a family’s DPSS income information directly from DPSS with the click of a button, instead of pursuing the family to submit their confidential income information. Prior to implementation of this new agreement, only a few designated HACoLA staff had access to request and obtain DPSS income information, which created a backlog and wait time of about a month, thereby jeopardizing the timely submission of the family’s annual reexamination.”
Late last year, the Community Resource Center (CRC) in unincorporated South Whittier partnered with the Southern California University of Health Sciences’ Chiropractic College (SCU) program to provide chiropractic health services to the local residents of the Southeast area of Los Angeles County. The CRC pursued the partnership for chiropractic services at their facility as an alternative access point for health services and a method to educate residents on healthy ways to improve their quality of life.

Over the last quarter, participation in the program has exploded! As South Whittier residents are seeing the effects of a drug-free, hands-on approach to health care that includes patient examination, diagnosis and treatment services, enrollment and service delivery have tripled from April to June. Since its launch, SCU has provided treatment once a week to 526 patients.

Chiropractors working at the CRC see the effects on the bodies of patients. Dr. Amir Aghlara, assistant professor, provides oversight of SCU’s students that work with the local residents. He explains, “Chronic stress causes muscles to tense and this tension creates pressures on the bones in the body, leading to misalignments in the spine and other joints. These misalignments can lead to common musculoskeletal conditions such as back pain, neck pain and even headaches.” The Chiropractors also refer patients to the appropriate health care provider when chiropractic care is not suitable for the patient’s condition.

Through the chiropractic care service, patients are also educated on relaxation techniques, posture and other therapies for stress. A balance of proper exercise, rest and diet are also important in helping reduce stress levels. The chiropractic treatments at the CRC helps local residents develop healthier responses to stress. For more information on this and other CRC services, visit www.swcrc.org or call (562) 946-2425.
The CDC joined West Hollywood Community Housing Corporation (WHCHC), West Hollywood City Mayor, and Councilmembers to celebrate the grand opening of the Courtyard at La Brea housing development. The development opened in May 2014, and provides 32 new affordable units for low-income persons with mental illness and/or HIV/AIDS, as well as transition age youth. The blending of resident populations is a special element that allows WHCHC, AIDS Project Los Angeles, and other providers to offer services to a wide range audience onsite and remotely.

The location, which formerly housed a retail store and two residential units, has been enlivened by the project, designed with the unique flair of West Hollywood. The predominant design element is a white aluminum ribbon at the main entry grandly welcoming residents, employees, and the visitors of AIDS Project Los Angeles, which occupies the first floor commercial space. Residents of Courtyard at La Brea will enjoy a GreenPoint multifamily rated building offering energy efficient and sustainable amenities such as a community garden and a composting program.

The CDC provided a loan of $3.7 million in Federal HOME funds, which includes $100,000 for the project’s energy efficiency components. HOME funds are one of the CDC’s key resources for financing affordable housing in Los Angeles County. In addition, HACoLA provided 15 Project-Based Vouchers for the special needs units and serves as the bond issuer for Union Bank’s tax-exempt bond loan.

CDC Welcomes the Next Generation of Professionals!

On April 22, 2014, the CDC celebrated “Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day.” Bright and early, 38 boys and girls between the ages of 9 to 16 joined their parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles at the CDC’s headquarters for a full day of “work.”

This year’s theme, “Plant a Seed: Grow Your Future” inspired the day’s events during which the children engaged in fun, interactive, and educational activities. From the idea of planting the seed of inspiration, the children designed a special CDC tree where they memorialized their dreams and aspirations for their budding futures. The tree is housed in the Human Resources conference room.

CDC Executive Director, Sean Rogan, sparked additional fun by answering questions from the children about his favorite sports team, his middle school grades, and his duties within the agency. Finally, the day ended with the children enjoying popcorn, shaved ice, and face painting.