

UCLA/VA

Veteran Family Wellness Center | 2019 Annual Report

To Our Veterans and Families, Partners, Supporters and Friends.

As we review 2019 in this annual report and venture onward into 2020, the UCLA/VA Veteran Family Wellness Center (VFWC) team hopes that this year brings wellness for you, your family and your community.

We're proud to announce that the VFWC's team served a total of 8,962 individual Veterans, their families and children through Resilience Training sessions, outreach, events and workshops in 2019.

At the dawn of this new year, the VFWC has also continued to strive to build relationships in support of the Veteran and families community. This year VFWC team members attended 160 outreach events and have continued to actively participate in initiatives that are at work building the supportive fabric of community for those we serve such as the The Los Angeles Mayor's Veteran, First Responder and Family Suicide Prevention Challenge, Los Angeles Veterans Collaborative, and the West Los Angeles VA Services Council. We also partnered on some incredible events for Veterans and families, including The Heal at the stunning Getty Villa.

2019 also brought crucial grant support from generous donors, including:

- The Saint John's Health Center Foundation
- The Ahmanson Foundation
- The McCormick Foundation
- The Steinmetz Foundation
- Boeing
- The Tilley Family Foundation

Additional in-kind donations and services were offered by: The Getty Museum and Villa, Big Sunday and NewMark Merrill, the Pasadena Marine Reserve Center's Toys for Tots, the UCLA Nathanson Family Resilience Center, the David Lynch Foundation, Village for Vets and the Shakespeare Center of Los Angeles.

We simply could not undertake our mission in the ways we've been able to without this vital support. To our donors, thank you, both as service providers, Veterans and family members ourselves! Currently, we have 7 Veterans and/or family members on staff (you can read more about them on page 5).

In 2020 the VFWC will continue to move toward the creation and expansion of meaningful and timely offerings via the piloting of our new evidence-based and innovative TEAM (Transition, Engagement And Mentoring) Transition-Resilience program, and our Veteran Family Peer Navigator (VFPN) model that incorporates a family lens that's been absent in wider peer support models. The Center is also in the midst of unveiling a one year marketing campaign and outreach contract with We Are the Mighty, so be on the lookout for us!

To Happy, Healthy and Prosperous Roaring 20's,

Tess Banko, MSW/MPA
Executive Director

Tom Babayan, MFT
Director of Veteran and Family Services

UCLA/VA Veteran Family Wellness Center (VFWC)



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs
VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System

For more information, contact **Melissa Lee**
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Who We Are

The UCLA/VA Veteran Family Wellness Center (VFWC) provides comprehensive, holistic and accessible behavioral health, wellness and resilience services to Veterans, Guard and Reserve and their family members (including children, significant others and extended family members) regardless of military discharge status or ability to pay. The VFWC highlights a strong connection between UCLA and the VA and supports a network of care for Veterans and their families by offering quality evidence-based programming, vetted resources, and coordination with community-based assets and organizations. Programming offered at the VFWC aims to strengthen Veterans and their families by providing family-inclusive services, educational and preventive care and events designed to mitigate stress and enhance wellbeing. All services are free and confidential.

2019 Services in Review



In 2019, across all lines of service to Veterans and families, the VFWC served 8,962 individual Veterans and family members including children through Resilience Training sessions, outreach, events and workshops.

The UCLA/VA Veteran Family Wellness Center (VFWC) coordinated (3) signature annual events:

- VFWC 3rd Annual Veteran and Family BBQ (Sponsored by Boeing)
- VFWC 3rd Annual Holiday Open House (Sponsored by NewMark Merrill Inc., supported by Big Sunday, Toys For Tots/Pasadena Marine Reserve Center and Dream Catchers)
- VFWC 1st Annual Wellness & Recreation Day (Sponsored by the Saint John's Health Foundation Community Impact Fund in partnership with Higher Ground Los Angeles, Angel City Sports and Sports & Social Change).

The VFWC partnered on VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System campus events including:

- VA Baby Shower (Supported by the Los Angeles Yarn Angels & Palisades American Legion Post 283)
- VA/Daughters of the American Revolution Women Veterans Brunch in the Garden
- VA Annual Homeless Veteran Stand Down
- VA and Los Angeles LGBT Center Pride observance

In addition, VFWC general operating and programmatic grant support was generously given by the Saint John's Health Foundation Community Impact Fund, the Steinmetz Foundation, the Ahmanson Foundation, the McCormick Foundation's Welcome Back Veterans Program, The Tilley Family Foundation, and Boeing.

The VFWC also collaborated with and was supported by in-kind and donations from numerous external community partners in the last year. These included the Los Angeles Mayor's Office, the Getty Museum and Villa, American Legion Post 283 Palisades, Village for Vets, PsychArmor, Big Sunday and NewMark Merrill, UCLA and USC Athletics and Student Veterans Organizations, the Pasadena Marine Reserve Center's Toys for Tots, the CA Army National Guard, the UCLA Nathanson Family Resilience Center, the Los Angeles County Departments of Mental Health and Military and Veterans Affairs, the David Lynch Foundation, NewMark Merrill, Village For Vets and the Shakespeare Center of Los Angeles.

UCLA/VA Veteran Family Wellness Center 2019 Participant Feedback



Feedback from the community of Veterans and family members that participate in programming at the VFWC help define our priorities.

General Veteran & Family Participant Center Feedback (1/1/19 – 12/31/19)

- It is completely unbiased and very helpful. Every time I left, I felt empowered.
- It was very useful to learn different coping strategies and tension releasers, tips to hold family meetings, and how to identify and deal with negative thoughts.
- The Veteran Family Wellness Center is made up of the most caring professionals I've ever met.

Veteran & Family Resilience Services Ratings (1/1/19 – 12/31/19)

- **92% of participants** in VFWC Family Resilience Services reported that they found services “helpful” or “very helpful”.
- **98% of participants** in VFWC Family Resilience Services reported that they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with service.
- **98% of participants** in VFWC Family Resilience Services reported that they would “recommend” or “definitely recommend” the service.

Getting the word out: A collaboration with We are the Mighty

This year, the VFWC was honored to collaborate with the team at We Are the Mighty, a media group for and by the Veteran community, to help raise awareness about the programs available for Veterans and their family members at the VFWC.

This collaboration included the creation of online ads and articles with a video and billboards coming soon. The goal of this campaign is to highlight the inherent resilience of all Veterans and their families. While promoting the unique partnership between UCLA and the VA to support Veterans and their families in Southern California. Working with the We are the Mighty team highlighted the genuine sense of community among all Veterans, including those on our team and how when we work together anything can be accomplished.

Keep an eye out for the VFWC on your commute and social media feed!



Need a Lyft?

Getting to the VFWC has never been easier! Now Veterans and families throughout Los Angeles County can receive a free ride to the UCLA/VA Veteran Family Wellness Center! Call 310-478-3711 x 42793 or email info@vfwc.ucla.edu.

UCLA/VA Veteran Family Wellness Center 2020 Annual Calendar

Event dates and times are subject to change.
Visit vfwc.ucla.edu for the most updated events calendar
or call 310-478-3711, ext 42793.

1st Quarter

January

- 20 Martin Luther King Holiday (Closure)

February (National Salute to Veterans Month)

- 12 Los Angeles Veterans Collaborative, Los Angeles Veterans Advisory Commission
- 13 VFWC Staff Team Building/Professional Development
- 17 President's Day (Closure)
- 21 VFWC Community Veteran & Family Cultural Training (10a – 2p, American Legion Post 43)

March

- 8 Daughters of the American Revolution/VA Partnered Women Veterans Brunch (10a – 1p, Building 220 Rose Garden)
- 11 Los Angeles Veterans Collaborative, Los Angeles Veterans Advisory Commission
- 27 Cesar Chavez Day (Closure)
- 29 National Vietnam Veteran Memorial Day

2nd Quarter

April (National Month of the Military Child)

- 8 Los Angeles Veterans Collaborative, Los Angeles Veterans Advisory Commission
- 26 Mindful Warrior Month of the Military Child Event
- TBD Jackie Robinson Day Celebration (UCLA Athletics)

May (National Women Veterans Month)

- 14 VFWC Staff Team Building/Professional Development
- 25 Memorial Day (VFWC Closed)
- 25 UCLA & VA Memorial Day Ceremonies
- TBD VA National Baby Shower
- TBD Open House Series

June (UCLA End of Fiscal Year)

- 14 Army Birthday
- 27 VFWC Wellness & Recreation Day (10a – 2p, Building 220 Rose Garden)
- TBD West Los Angeles VA Community Carnival
- TBD LAPD Annual Symposium

3rd Quarter

July

- 4 Independence Day Holiday (Closed)

August

- 4 Coast Guard Birthday
- 13 VFWC Team Building

September

- 4–7 Los Angeles Fleet Week
- 7 Labor Day (Closed)
- 12 4th Annual VFWC Family BBQ (VFWC Annual Anniversary)

4th Quarter

October (VA Domestic Violence Month)

- 18 Air Force Birthday
- TBD VFWC Veterans in the Arts Event (Partnered)
- TBD West Los Angeles VA Stand Down

November

- 6–11 Community Veterans Day Events
- 26–27 UCLA Thanksgiving Holiday (Closure)
- TBD Conversations with Veterans
- TBD VA Clay Hunt Summit
- TBD VA Block Party & VA Stand Downs

December

- 13 VFWC Hopeful for the Holidays Workshop
- 24–31 National Guard Birthday
- TBD VFWC Holiday Open House (Early Dec)
- TBD UCLA Winter Holiday (Closure)

UCLA/VA Veteran Family Wellness Center Staff Biographies



Tess Banko, MSW/MPA, CPSS, serves as the Executive Director of the first of its kind UCLA/VA Veteran Family Wellness Center (VFWC) that serves Veterans alongside their families through resilience-based wellness programming in partnership with the VA. Tess deeply identifies with fellow Veterans and families on their paths to wellness and empowerment. A Marine Corps Veteran, she has held leadership roles in the military, Veteran and wider civilian communities for over fifteen years. Tess has a background in social work and public administration, including mental health and wellness, community development, organizational leadership and management. Tess is a strong supporter of collaborative, consensus-based initiatives and believes in accessible, preventive, strength-based approaches that span the continuum of Veteran and family member needs.



Tom Babayan, MS, LMFT, serves as the Director of Veteran and Family Services for the UCLA/VA Veteran Family Wellness Center. He has delivered prevention services to active duty military families and Veterans for over eleven years. Mr. Babayan pioneered the tele-delivery model, an innovative platform that uses video conferencing technology to deliver psychoeducation and training to Veterans and their families. Mr. Babayan specializes in helping military and Veteran couples achieve greater satisfaction in their relationship by enhancing their resilience skills.



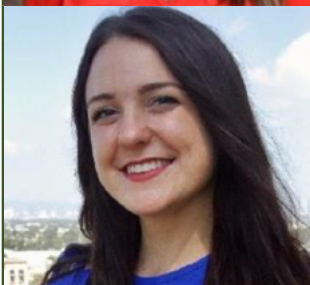
Melissa Lee serves as the Family Resource Coordinator for the UCLA/VA Veteran Family Wellness Center. She served as a Ground Supply Officer in the USMC from 2000-2004. She was stationed at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Camp Lejeune, and Camp Hansen, Okinawa. She did Veteran Outreach for Habitat for Humanity in the San Fernando/Santa Clarita Valleys, and for the last 2 years has volunteered with 22 Until None, a non-profit dedicated to ending Veteran suicide. She is married to a former Marine Corps Infantry Officer, and was stationed with him at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton and 29 Palms.



Jimmy Guevara, MSW, ASW, is a Resilience Trainer at the UCLA/VA Veteran Family Wellness Center. He served in the United States Marine Corps for four and a half years. He has been stationed in Okinawa, Japan, Camp Lejeune, NC, and deployed to Iraq for all of 2005. He attended Los Angeles City College and worked in the Veteran Resource Center. Soon after he transferred to Cal State Northridge, earning degrees in both Psychology and Central American Studies, while serving as outreach lead for the Veteran Resource Center on campus. He went on to earn a Masters of Social Work from the University of Southern California (USC), deciding to help his fellow Veterans and making it his new mission to provide resilience training to the Veteran community.



Sarah Schaub, AMFT, serves as a Resilience Trainer at the UCLA/VA Veteran Family Wellness Center. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from University of California at Santa Cruz and her Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Naropa University in Boulder, CO. Sarah is a strong supporter of diversity and inclusivity who is constantly striving not only to identify how each part of a system (familial or organizational) affects the whole, but also how each part can shift in order to facilitate desired change. Her current focus is to facilitate further resilience and posttraumatic growth with Veterans and their families.



Savannah Mercado, MSW Intern, is a Resilience Trainer at the VFWC. She is currently obtaining her master's degree in social work at the University of Southern California (USC), with a concentration in Adult Mental Health and Wellness coupled with Military Social Work. While at school, she serves as the Alpha Company Commander overseeing two platoons in the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) at USC. In May of 2020, she will be commissioning as an Officer in the United States Army. Along with her participation in ROTC, she assists with research through the Center for Innovation and Research on Veteran Military Families.