Group therapy restores relations, trust

Each month our clients are offered four different kinds of group therapy: a cooking class; the healing club, which offers clients the opportunity to explore new areas and attractions in San Diego; an expressive arts group; and a self-care group. If you were to look in on any of these groups, you might hear laughter and see lots of smiles. Our clients benefit from a holistic approach in the services they receive.

Some people are familiar with the Biopsychosocial model (BPS) developed by George Engel in 1977 in his attempt to revolutionize the American medical model. The BPS model assumes that mental health

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Local torture survivors celebrate June 26

More than 20 clients (adults and children) celebrated health and recovery with the Alternative Healing Network (AHN) and SURVIVORS’ staff and interns at the Rady Children’s and Scripps Health City Heights Wellness Center on June 26, the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

The celebration kicked off with clients signing a quilt made by Julie Freeman, a counseling intern, and several artistic clients. The children had fun with finger paints and got to know each other through good-natured teasing despite language and cultural differences. Clients were then introduced to AHN’s practitioners who offer donation-supported healing treatments at weekly clinics in San Diego.

Some clients experienced acupuncture, meditation, or massage for the first time. All enjoyed themselves as they indulged in healing modalities throughout the afternoon. Recovery from politically motivated torture has many facets. Learning self-care, practicing healthy choices, and surrounding one’s self with loving relationships are some of the most important tasks for every survivor.

For our detained torture survi-

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Free screenings of the film The Visitor

SURVIVORS is hosting several free community screenings of The Visitor this Fall, through partnerships with Active Voice, an organization that puts together film-based campaigns on social issues, and Participant Media. Screening dates and locations include:

- Tuesday, Sept. 30, at 7 p.m. Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, USD, 5998 Alcala Park, San Diego, CA 92110
- Monday, Oct. 6, at 7 p.m. IR/PS Robinson Auditorium, UCSD, on International Lane
- Friday, Oct. 10, at 9 p.m. Little Theater, SDSU, adjacent to Hepner Hall

Find directions and additional information at www.notorture.org.

Mission Statement

Survivors of Torture, International:

- Facilitates the healing of torture survivors and their families;
- Educates professionals and the public about torture and its consequences;
- Advocates for the abolition of torture.
Human rights violations take center stage

By Jeanette Barrack, board chairperson and Kathi Anderson, executive director

This August, many of the biggest news stories about the Beijing Olympics were not focused on the beautiful gymnastic routines, record-setting races in swimming and track, nor the visually-stunning opening ceremony. Instead, the world watched as international leaders raised concerns about torture and other human rights violations.

Amnesty International issued a report that emphasized China’s arbitrary detention, imprisonment, ill-treatment and harassment of human rights defenders, including journalists and lawyers.

In 2003, SURVIVORS hosted one such defender: Harry Wu. During an event at the Museum of Photographic Arts, Wu described his 19 years of detention and torture in China, as well as the ongoing lack of human rights there.

Wu’s words were heard around the world in August when The New York Times and various other media outlets interviewed him. He also met with President Bush to voice his concerns.

In the SURVIVORS community, these news stories resonate deeply with us and we worry about those individuals whose rights have been trampled upon because we know from our clients how they struggle every day to recover from torture and other human rights abuses.

Sometimes we all feel too small, and too disconnected, to do anything about issues of international concern. But as a supporter of SURVIVORS, you are contributing to creating a healthy community for torture survivors. We thank you for your continued support of our programs and advocacy work and your willingness to take time to read about these current issues.

When clients cook together, explore a museum gallery in pairs, or share the beauty and freedom of the trails at Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, the disruptive effects of politically motivated torture are mitigated by restoring relations, normalizing interactions, deepening trust, re-establishing personal space, and exercising rights and choices.

While the therapy groups at SURVIVORS may sometimes look like parties, something very deep and beneficial is actually going on. Our clients continue to show progress in their healing.

Thank you to Jessica Huang, print media design student at Northwestern University, for creating this new look for SURVIVORS’ newsletter.

Update for the Ralphs contribution program

The Ralphs Community Contribution program has been an ongoing success. We wanted to tell you that there’s a new application for participants for the contribution term that began on September 1.

Current participants: All Ralphs members are required to have new Ralphs Rewards Cards (formerly Ralphs Club Cards). To get a new card, members have to fill out a short application at their local Ralphs store and then reregister online to support SURVIVORS in the new term.

New participants: To have up to 4% of your grocery store purchases support SURVIVORS’ programs, you can go to your local Ralphs store and complete a short application to obtain a Rewards Card.

Everyone: To register your Rewards card to support SURVIVORS, visit www.ralphs.com and click “Community Contribution.” Select “Participant” and enter your card number, along with SURVIVORS’ NPO #84761.

Thank you to everyone who has supported SURVIVORS with this program!
Consortium advocates in Sacramento

In recognition of June 26, the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, representatives from the California Consortium of Torture Treatment Centers gathered in Sacramento to educate lawmakers about the effects of torture and how treatment centers in California play an important role in the recovery process for torture survivors.

Kathi Anderson, executive director, and Maren Dougherty, public affairs director, represented SURVIVORS along with Michael Martinez and McKay Carney, pro bono legislative advocates from Manatt, Phelps, & Phillips, LLP.

The day included a press conference, meetings at legislative offices, and an evening reception. At the reception, the consortium presented California Human Rights Champion Awards to honor Senator Darrell Steinberg for his work on the Mental Health Services Act and the late Representative Tom Lantos for his leadership on the U.S. Torture Victims Relief Act.

The Sacramento Bee published an op-ed on June 26 authored by Kathi Anderson and Greg Hall, senior program officer with The California Endowment. The op-ed emphasized the importance of ensuring that torture survivors in California receive the specialized care they need.

States such as Minnesota and New York have already taken the lead in creating health care programs that provide assistance to survivors of torture. California has been slower to respond to the needs of survivors.

Despite their successes, many treatment centers struggle to meet the needs of survivors who have come from more than 100 different countries, speak dozens of different languages, and have complex health and mental health needs.

At the press conference, survivors from Bosnia, Kenya, and El Salvador gave accounts of the atrocities they had suffered and how treatment centers provided help.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger issued a proclamation to recognize June 26.

“It is crucial that we assist them in their efforts to rebound and build happier, healthier lives,” he wrote. “Our Golden State has a proud legacy of offering kindness and safety to torture victims, and I urge all those who have been persecuted to take advantage of the many resources available to them.”

Survivors provides policy recommendations to the California Women’s Commission

On June 26, SURVIVORS’ board member Alisa Shorago testified at the San Diego hearing of the California Commission on the Status of Women. The commission is comprised of legislators, members of the public, and governor appointees. It strives to assess the needs of California’s women and children and influence policy change on their behalf.

Alisa described to the Commissioners how SURVIVORS provides help to female torture survivors. She elaborated by stating that women “are more likely than men to have suffered sexual abuse during torture. Also, women in refugee settings are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, rape, and abuse.”

At the end of her testimony, Alisa outlined three policy recommendations to the commissioners on behalf of SURVIVORS.

The first was to consider specialized care in regions where there are no treatment centers.

Secondly, she suggested trainings for graduate students and professionals to learn how to identify torture survivors and respond accordingly.

Finally, Alisa stressed that it is important to consider the increased revictimization of torture survivors. This often occurs because the offender believes the crime will go unreported due to a victim’s fear of authority figures.

The commission will compile all testimonies into a document that will highlight policy priorities. The document will then be presented to the public, Congress, Legislature, and Governor before the 2009/2010 Legislative Session.

Contribute through the Combined Federal Campaign

The Combined Federal Campaign is an annual charitable drive exclusively for U.S. federal employees. Federal employees can give to SURVIVORS using a convenient payroll deduction plan. SURVIVORS is listed as one of the Human & Civil Rights Organizations of America with the CFC number 24619.

To support services for survivors of torture through your CFC contributions, please contact your workplace CFC coordinator to fill out the appropriate paperwork.
SURVIVORS participates in Human Rights Vigil

From left: Dr. January Riddle, co-chair of San Diego LGBT Pride; Crystal Green; Allen Singer, performer; Ron deHarte, San Diego LGBT Pride executive director.

Crystal Green, SURVIVORS’ associate clinical director, spoke at the San Diego Pride Human Rights Vigil on July 18 in Balboa Park. She spoke about the crimes committed against the LGBT community that violate the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She said, “Let’s all uphold and practice in our daily work the human rights set forth in the Universal Declaration. At SURVIVORS we continue to welcome LGBT survivors of torture to share their stories of injustice, resiliency, and survival and to receive the services they need to recover.”

“Torture and Related Trauma” training a success

SURVIVORS is pleased to have partnered once again with the Behavioral Health Education and Training Academy via our San Diego County Mental Health Services contract. SURVIVORS provides trainings for mental health professionals and other county employees or contractors several times each year.

On June 10, Clinical Director Margaret Higgins, PsyD, and Associate Clinical Director Crystal Green, PhD, LMFT, presented to 165 participants at the Handlery Hotel in Mission Valley. Joining them was Julia Kuck, PhD, clinical network contractor, for a section on the neurobiological effects of trauma.

“It was a very eye-opening conference filled with a lot of unknown information for me,” said one participant in her post-training evaluation.

SURVIVORS will participate in trainings again next year. More information about the behavioral health classes and conferences can be found at http://theacademy.sdsu.edu.
SURVIVORS’ 2007-2008 volunteers share reflections

During the past year, SURVIVORS has benefitted from the talents and enthusiasm of four AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteers and Sara Goepfert, a visiting clinical intern from Switzerland. AmeriCorps*VISTA Charlene Peña is staying at SURVIVORS as the senior administrative assistant, but Jess Jolley, Blake Tye, and Julie Wall bid their farewells in August.

VISTA volunteers commit to serve full-time for a year, receiving only a modest living stipend and an education award. The board of directors and the staff thank these extraordinary volunteers for their commitment and dedication.

Sara Goepfert
“The opportunity to join our clients on part of their journey has not only been an honor, but has humbled me and broadened my perspective of the refugee and asylum process in the United States. The experience of working with SURVIVORS has been one of many interpersonal connections, events, team efforts, conversations, stories, and emotions. The importance of groups as a vessel of self-care, healing, expression, enjoyment and learning as well as the sense of community they provide, has been eye-opening to me. Facilitating and participating in these groups has been a source of great reflection to me on what connecting means to our clients and how we can provide a safe environment where part of the healing process can take place.”

Jess Jolley
“For the past two years I have had the privilege of serving as the Communications VISTA at SURVIVORS. I have faced the challenge of learning how to articulate the issue of torture and torture treatment in a gentle and thorough manner. I have learned the enormous amount of compassion and dedication it takes to work in this field. And I have experienced the joy of being part of a cause that I truly believe in. I am grateful to the staff at SURVIVORS for sharing their wisdom and skills. As I begin the next chapter in my life, I am excited to see the ways in which these lessons learned unfold.”

Charlene Peña
“The time at SURVIVORS has shaped my career path as I now get to be one of the staff. Working with well-respected professionals has shown me healing is possible with a great support network. Seeing clients smile and hearing their laughter is motivation to continue doing what I can behind the scenes.”

Refugee camp exhibit comes to Balboa Park

This fall, Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is bringing the interactive exhibit “A Refugee Camp in the Heart of the City,” to Balboa Park from Thursday, November 6, to Sunday, November 9. The camp is made up of materials that MSF uses in its medical work around the world. Guided by aid workers, visitors will explore real emergency refugee shelters; see how food is distributed in camps; taste high-energy biscuits that are distributed to combat malnutrition; and hear how MSF provides health care and epidemic control.

Many of SURVIVORS’ clients have come to the United States as refugees, escaping from torture that occurred in countries such as Somalia, Sudan, and Iraq.

The exhibit is free. To find interactive resources and to book time slots for groups to visit the exhibit, go to: www.doctorswithoutborders.org/refugeecamp/

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Thank you to all of our community supporters!

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Tia Chung  Summer Mencher  The list covers support received May 1, 2008, through July 31, 2008. We apologize for any errors or omissions and extend our gratitude for support that may not have been recognized.

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Alternative Healing Network, Inc.
Big City Bagels, San Diego
Corporation for National & Community Service (AmeriCorps*VISTA)
Easter Seals, South San Diego County
First United Methodist Church, San Diego
Knockout Pizzeria, San Diego
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Qualcomm, Inc., San Diego
Ralphs, Mission Center, San Diego

We are grateful for your generous support. Your donations of time and in-kind goods and services help SURVIVORS’ programs run smoothly.

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fellowship in forensic psychiatry at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). Currently, he is an attending psychiatrist at Sharp Vista Pacifica Chemical Dependency Recovery Hospital, a co-instructor for the forensic psychiatry course at the UCSD School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry, and a court-appointed expert for the Superior Court of California, County of San Diego. His specialties in medication management and psychotherapy for mood, anxiety, and grief-related disorders will be a tremendous addition to the clinical services provided at SURVIVORS. Dr. Kornberg, in turn, said he feels excited about being a part of SURVIVORS.

“I envision finding tremendous satisfaction serving your clients, as well as working in tandem with other clinicians in serving such a unique and deserving population. The atmosphere at SURVIVORS has been wonderfully welcoming and supportive.”

Farewell, Dr. Dean

It’s always difficult to say goodbye to esteemed colleagues at SURVIVORS, especially when it is someone as special as Dr. Maryann Dean.

Dr. Dean has been our clinical psychiatrist since 2003. For the last five years Dr. Dean has practiced psychiatry twice a month at SURVIVORS’ office.

In addition to being incredibly talented and kind, Dr. Dean has always been respectful of individual and cultural differences that play important roles in successful psychiatric treatments. She encouraged our clients to seek other healing treatments too, such as group therapy.

Dr. Dean gave to SURVIVORS in other ways: she presented for SURVIVORS at professional conferences; she organized collections of clothes and household items for our clients; and her generous holiday donations allowed new arrivals to purchase gifts for their families.

Our staff and clients will miss Dr. Dean. We wish her the best in her future endeavors.
Thank you to all of our financial supporters!

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United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement

Restoring the spirits of torture survivors in San Diego County is accomplished with the help of our financial supporters. Because of you, survivors are rebuilding their lives. We are grateful.

These lists cover the period of May 1, 2008, through July 31, 2008. We apologize for any errors or omissions and extend our gratitude for support that may not have been recognized.

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part of the work and the hope survivors gain with specialized care, more people became open to the work. Knowing that one more person is aware of torture survivors or the services for this population allows me to believe the journey through life is a bright one.”

**Blake Tye**

“Over the past year, I worked on the organizational development of SURVIVORS. From getting coffee for clients to drafting board policy, I helped manage how we worked within our community. SURVIVORS has taught me that sometimes through collaboration we can achieve things impossible on our own. For example, I assisted in building statewide awareness by facilitating meetings for the California Consortium of Torture Treatment Centers. Nationally, I took part in bringing attention to immigration detention centers through a partnership with the ACLU.

My year at SURVIVORS has taught me invaluable lessons and helped me define what I want in a career. The past 12 months have brought me some of the most passionate and dedicated friends and colleagues I’ve ever known. I know I will always be able to look back and appreciate my time at SURVIVORS.”

**Julie Wall**

“This year with SURVIVORS has been an ideal learning experience while on the road between college and career. I have been challenged on numerous occasions. Even though I had little computer technology experience, I became the site administrator of a new client database. With the support of my team, I fixed problems, taught the system to other users, and left a legacy that will hopefully help sustain the organization for years to come.

I have also been extremely moved. As the Clinical VISTA, I helped organize group therapy sessions. I have seen friendships form between people of all ages and backgrounds. In creating a safe space, groups allow everyone to feel connected and the result, an expression of true emotion, has been awe inspiring.

Through my experiences at SURVIVORS, I have seen the strength of the collective human spirit. The compassion, love, resilience, and hope that SURVIVORS has shown me will forever affect my choices, my being, and my spirit.”
Survivors of Torture, International was incorporated in February 1997 in response to a need in our community to bring assistance to the segment of the population that struggles with the wounds of politically motivated torture.

It is estimated that 11,000 survivors of torture live in San Diego County and 400,000 - 500,000 live in the United States. Torture survivors may be left with lifelong physical and mental health problems if not treated by trained professionals.

Since 1997, SURVIVORS has engaged a caring network of professionals — board members, attorneys, interpreters, therapists, physicians, dentists — and all of you in the community who give faithful support and encouragement in many ways. Your support enables us to help torture survivors rebuild their lives. Treatment helps survivors heal, reconnect with their families, go back to school, and find employment.

Ninety-one cents of every dollar raised goes directly to SURVIVORS' programs. To learn more or to participate in our mission, please visit www.notorture.org.

This project publication was sponsored by Grant # 90ZT0070 from the Office of Refugee Resettlement. Points of view are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

We reached out to our numerous detained clients by offering them hope that there are people in the world who honor their sacrifices and are ready to help them restore their spirits and rebuild their lives. We hope those detainees will be able to celebrate with us in person next June 26.