

# A Bridge and Beyond

August - September 2025



**"It's like going**

back to school. You know,  
autumn! Time for Harry Potter."

— Robbie Coltrane



**"Life starts**

All over again when it gets  
crisp in the fall."

— F. Scott Fitzgerald



**"I'm so glad**

I live in a world where there are  
Octobers."

— Anne of Green Gables



**By this time my blood type is pumpkin  
spice...** ☕

"It's the first day of autumn! A time of **hot chocolatey mornings**, and **toasty marshmallow evenings**, and, best of all, leaping into leaves!"  
— Winnie the Pooh

Happy fall! 🍂 🍁



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## **News from El Monte** 📢

### **Aloha! Sitewide Luau Brings Fun and Fresh Treats** 🌺

Our residential clients and staff from both Casitas Esperanza and Tranquilas came together for a festive **sitewide luau**, full of laughter, music, and community spirit. The event featured traditional luau activities, colorful decorations, and plenty of opportunities to connect and celebrate together.

A special highlight of the day was **fresh watermelon from our very own garden**, enjoyed by all attendees—a sweet and refreshing treat that made the celebration even more special.

Thank you to everyone who helped bring this vibrant event to life! It was a wonderful reminder of the joy and connection that make our residential community so unique.



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## **Celebrating Vivian's Retirement After 31 Years of Dedicated Service**

A year ago, we introduced readers to Vivian as we celebrated her incredible 30th work anniversary. Last month, we came together once again—this time to honor her retirement after 31 years of dedicated service with our Agency. To mark this milestone, our staff hosted a party in her honor.

Vivian's career was defined by her passion for making every day meaningful. She brought creativity, warmth, and a personal touch to her work—whether it was teaching clients to crochet, sharing her love of gardening, challenging clients to a game of pool or ping pong, hiking, or even sharing pieces of her coin collection. Her approach to care was simple yet profound: treat clients as if they were family, speak to them with kindness and respect, and don't take things personally.

The retirement luau was a joyful celebration of Vivian's impact. Staff decorated with tropical flair, shared stories of memorable moments, and enjoyed good food and laughter while reminiscing about the many ways Vivian touched the lives of everyone around her. It was a fitting tribute to someone who always made her work feel less like a job and more like a community.

Vivian's legacy will continue to inspire both staff and clients alike. Her dedication, energy, and warmth have left an indelible mark, and while we will miss her daily presence, we celebrate her next chapter with joy and gratitude.

Thank you, Vivian, for 31 years of extraordinary service. You've made a difference that will be remembered for years to come!





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## News from West Covina 📣

### Client Success Story: Jesus 🇸🇵

Our outpatient program at Project Independence is proud to celebrate the success of one of our clients, Jesus. Through dedication and support, Jesus was connected to LA County's **Youth@Work** program, where he gained valuable job readiness skills and resources to prepare for employment.



With his hard work and persistence with the support of our team, Jesus was recently hired by Grocery Outlet. This accomplishment represents more than just a job—it is a step toward greater independence, confidence, and opportunity.

We are proud of Jesus for his achievements and excited to see him continue building a bright future. His story reminds us of the impact of connecting clients to the right supports at the right time.

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## News from Woodland Hills 📣

### Client Success Story: Heading to UC Berkeley 🇸🇵

One of our outpatient therapy clients will soon be discharged as he begins an exciting new chapter—attending UC Berkeley this fall. He worked closely with his primary therapist, **Megan**, and continued his journey with support from our therapist **Nancy** during Megan's time out of office.



Grateful for his time with BRIDGES, he was eager to share his story in his own words for our newsletter:

*"I am beyond grateful to have been a part of BRIDGES for about a year and a half. I looked forward to my weekly meetings as a space to learn and, ultimately, to be myself. My favorite thing about these sessions is how great you feel afterward. That's not to say I didn't like my therapist (they were the best—HELLO). It's just that these sessions reminded me that I had done something good that day—for myself. They taught me that I can both give and receive good from anything I come across. That was special to me as a teen and will continue to be special as I navigate through my little big life.*

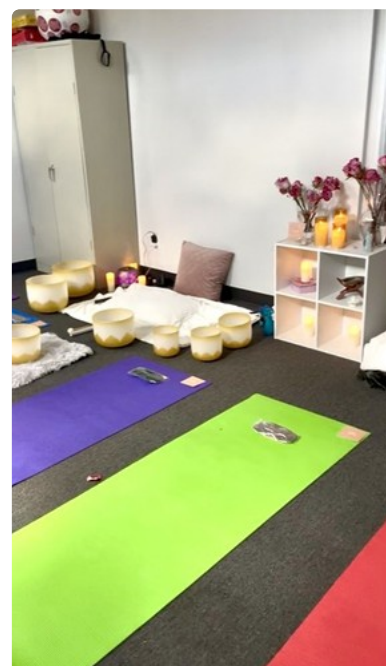


*This fall, I am moving away to attend UC Berkeley. I am confident that BRIDGES has equipped me with the tools and belief in myself to succeed in this new environment—socially, emotionally, and academically. There are no words to express my gratitude for the candidness of all those I encountered in my journey here. I aspire to one day have the empathy and relatability of these folks. For now, I know that I will take the lessons and skills they helped me refine wherever I go—always."*

### Wellness Activity: Sound Bath with Tamara ￼￼

BRIDGES TruStart recently held a team-building event for both the Outpatient and FSP staff, where participants took part in a sound bath! The sound bath was led by one of our own outpatient interns, Tamara Amend. Tamara is trained in the healing art of meditation sound baths and has applied this practice in various settings with both clients and colleagues. She generously shared her knowledge with our teams and guided us through this mindfulness meditation experience.

Upon walking into the TruStart conference room, the teams were welcomed by a calming ambiance created by faux candlelight, soothing music, fragrant essential oils, yoga mats, and an overall atmosphere that fostered tranquility. The sound bath session, led by Tamara, is a form of meditation that utilizes various instruments such as gongs and singing bowls to generate sound waves and vibrations aimed at promoting relaxation and reducing stress. This practice can provide physical, mental, and emotional benefits to participants. Tamara guided each group through breathing exercises, visualization techniques, and yoga Nidra. The overall experience was deeply meditative and relaxing. At the conclusion of this self-care activity, participants received positive affirmation cards and stones to further promote mental and emotional well-being!



Tamara will be hosting a six-week Mindfulness Meditation group starting on October 9th at BRIDGES TruStart. This group will incorporate various techniques, including body scan meditation, where participants become aware of their bodily sensations in a mindful way; movement meditation, which involves focusing on bodily sensations while mindfully letting go of any

thoughts and emotions that arise; and breathing space meditation, designed to create a mindful awareness of one's experiences. Additionally, Tamara will include expanding awareness meditation, focusing on breath, body, sounds, thoughts, and feelings. The goal of the group is to help participants develop an open awareness of whatever is most predominant in their consciousness.



## New Groups Coming Soon 🌱

We are excited to share that two of our interns, **Tamara** and **Jazmine**, will be facilitating new groups starting next month.

- **Mindfulness Group with Tamara**

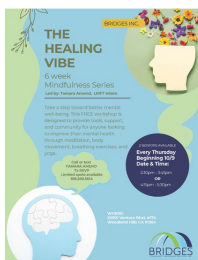
Held in the office on Thursdays beginning **October 9**, this group will focus on mindfulness practices to support emotional well-being and self-awareness.

- **Caregiver Support Group with Jazmine**

Starting **October 1**, this virtual group will provide support for caregivers of neurodivergent children. The group will include psychoeducation, parenting strategies, and a safe space for community connection. It will be open to our clients as well as parents of Capistrano Ave. Elementary students, a school we partner with through an MOU.

Both groups will run for six weeks. Flyers for each group are included in this newsletter.

For more information, please call the TruStart office at **(818) 657-0411**.



August 🌞



August is a month of transition—summer days are still in full swing, but the season of change is right around the corner. It's a time to recharge, reflect, and set goals as we prepare for the busy months ahead.

As vacations wind down and routines settle back in, August reminds us to take advantage of the long days and warm evenings. Whether it's enjoying time outdoors, spending moments with family, or simply taking a well-deserved pause, this month encourages balance between work and rest. It's also a great time to refocus on teamwork and projects before fall begins.

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## Monthly Shoutouts 🙌

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### September 🍂

#### September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

Each September, we join organizations across the nation in recognizing **National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month**. This is a time to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and connect individuals with lifesaving resources.

Across the United States, suicide continues to be a leading cause of death, and many people struggle in silence. By talking openly, offering support, and sharing resources, we can make a difference.

#### How We Can All Help

- **Listen without judgment:** Sometimes the most important thing you can do is simply be there.
- **Know the warning signs:** Withdrawal, hopelessness, increased substance use, or talking about wanting to die are serious red flags.
- **Share resources:** Remind others that confidential help is available 24/7.

#### Key Resource:

- If you or someone you know is in crisis, call or text **988** to connect with the National Crisis Lifeline for immediate support.
- In Los Angeles County, immediate support is available through the Department of Mental Health's 24/7 ACCESS line at 1-800-854-7771, which can provide crisis help, referrals, psychiatric assessments, and even mobile teams if needed
- Warm-Line & Veteran Support – Emotional support is available daily (10:30 a.m.–9 p.m.), plus a dedicated Veteran Line during business hours. Dial **1-800-854-7771**.

#### We All Have a Role

September isn't just a month; it's a reminder that **every conversation matters**. Let's lean on each other, be brave in empathetic outreach, and spread the word that help is always within reach.

By reaching out, listening, and reminding others they're not alone, each of us has the power to save a life.

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## Mindful Moment ☁️

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**From cozy classics to creative twists, these treats will sweeten the season. 🍪**



### 50 Easy Desserts You'll \*Definitely\* Want to Try This Fall

Move aside, pumpkin pie! The fall dessert recipes on this list will have you thinking outside the box with candy, cakes, and more.

🔗 [thepioneerwoman.com](https://thepioneerwoman.com)

**Wait, don't 🍁 yet! We still have to get our groove on...**





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