Consumers who have struggled with mental health challenges are all too familiar with the medical model of mental health care. Christina Murphy, for example, has firsthand experience being in and out of psychiatric hospitals since the age of six. She spoke at the grand opening of Sally’s Place on January 9th, 2019, sharing her experiences and how she was able to take recovery into her own hands at the age of 18. A key component for her was a respite center where she temporarily stayed and learned tools of wellness. Now, drawing on her own mental health journey, she will be the supervisor of Alameda County’s first peer-run respite center. She describes it as a “safe healing place,” where guests will obtain tools and strategies from peers who have faced similar mental health challenges and are familiar with the process of receiving care.

It was a great day for the grand opening of Sally’s Place, as it was also namesake Sally Zinman’s 82nd birthday. Sally Zinman has over 30 years of consumer advocacy and work with mental health legislation, and is respected by the many consumers who have learned from her. After over 10 years of advocacy by POCC members and the consumer community, the respite center has finally become a reality at 1525 B. St. in Hayward.

The primary goal of this respite is to provide peer-supported mental health services. It is a welcome place for the Respite’s new employees, as well. Services there are voluntary, in a homelike environment that provides non-clinical crisis support. Eligible individuals 18 years of age or older who are experiencing mental health distress must have an identified place to stay in Alameda County at the time of intake (which could include a shelter), and voluntarily agree to engage in services there. Guests can stay for up to 14 days and will receive support from compassionate peer staff who have lived experience.

Sally’s Place is Open!

By Corinita Reyes
Full article at www.POCC.org
Annual Holiday Cultural Training and Celebration

Ho, ho, ho, and happy holidays to all! The POCC held its annual event on December 20th, 2018 at St. Columba Parish in Oakland. The celebration was filled with music, singing, a photo booth, and most of all the joy of connecting with consumers over a nice, hot holiday meal. Guests came from PEERS, “BestNow!,“ the Alameda County Network of MH Clients, CAMHPRO, the ACAPPS Program, and Telecare, among other places. Alameda County BHCS Deputy Director, James Wagner, came, as did Lillian Schaechner, Older Adult Division Director, and staff from the Network Office.

The Elders collected toys for underprivileged children temporarily staying at a local shelter for women and their children. The African American Empowerment Committee raffled off turkeys to grateful individuals who found a lucky dot under their chair. All POCC committees contributed in some way to the holiday festivities. The Committee of Latinos (COLAT) sang beautiful songs in Spanish. Asian American Committee members did stand-up comedy. The Consumer Employment Advisory Taskforce and the Veterans Committee hosted games, and the winners received prizes. The Healing Trauma Committee had a table where people participated in artistic endeavors. The Events Training & Support Committee took care of the morning beverages and pastries.

Lunch was catered and served by Harry’s Hofbrau out of San Leandro, and was delicious.

It feels great to have had another successful event! Thanks to all for coming and participating.

By Mary Hogden
On November 29th and 30th, 2018, Alameda County BH hosted APIMHEC in Oakland. The opportunity to plan the conference with staff of a variety of ACBHCS departments such as Ethnic Services and Quality Assurance, and with people from other local agencies as well as organizations in southern California and Fresno, was an educational experience. The attention to detail was impressive.

A panel of four members of the POCC Asian American Committee, including myself, shared our stories before a full ballroom of conference goers. The support and attention of the audience was deeply appreciated.

Several other POCC members performed the onsite registration and assisted with set-up and additional needs in workshops.

The cultural entertainment was a highlight of the conference, with a dragon and lion dance opening the conference, and dance performances of Indian, Tahitian, and Vietnamese origins. A contortionist twisted and turned, fitting himself into small spaces and extricating himself in surprising ways. A youthful band with a female drummer and guitarist played R&B, hip hop, and more. So much was packed into the time we had, that we wanted to hear more from them.

Workshops were held on crisis response, education and advocacy in public schools, healing among formerly incarcerated persons, empowering refugees and immigrants, integration of mental health and traditional care, and many other areas.

Live interactive polling via texting engaged the attendees, and Reflection and Call to Action sessions endeavored to keep momentum going afterward. It was a very rich conference, and we look forward to the next one this year, the third annual such conference, which will be held in Fresno.

By Adrianne DeSantis
On October 23, 2018 Assembly Member Rob Bonta of the 18th Assembly District hosted an awards celebration at Alameda Point. It was a lovely evening with the community coming together to celebrate and honor those among us that go above and beyond. One of the awards was the Social Justice Champion Award, and our very own Austin Tam received this huge honor. Austin has been a social justice advocate, supporter, and activist for more than twenty years. In 2014 Austin initiated a project sponsored by the Buena Vista United Methodist Church entitled the Asian Pacific Islanded (API) Disability Awareness Project. Motivated by the desire to remove the stigma for those with disabilities and mental health conditions within the API community, Austin launched the project by organizing a Disability Awareness Summit under the banner, “Make the Invisible Visible,” in collaboration with Alameda Unified School District. The summit brought together various organizations addressing disability and mental health challenges, with outreach to individuals and families in the API Community. Austin is the chair of the Asian-American Committee for the Pool of Consumer Champions, and is on the POCC Steering Committee. He has been a champion for other causes that affect our local, state and domestic communities.

And On October 25, 2018 the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission hosted one of their monthly meetings here in Alameda County. In this meeting we had two very huge pieces of news. The OAC named a Fellowship for a Consumer Advocate and one for a Provider Advocate. The Consumer Advocate Fellowship will be named the Sally Zinman Fellowship, and the Provider Fellowship will be named after the author of the Mental Health Services Act, Rusty Selix. Sally was presented with a proclamation and a plaque from Senator Beal and Khatera Aslami-Tamplen, members of the OAC.

In the same MHSOAC meeting, there were board elections for the Commission. We are proud to announce that the Consumer Empowerment Manager for Alameda County Behavioral Health Care, Khatera-Aslami-Tamplen, is the new Chair of the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission! By Mary Hogden
I’m Back
Hello POCC Family.
Yes, it’s me, Michele Moncrief. I have returned to work after being away for health reasons. I want you each to know I have missed you all immensely.
Thank you all for your prayers and well wishes.
Know that resilience is real, live, and active. Everyone have an awesome 2019!

POCC Membership Committee Soars into 2019
The POCC hosted 265 individuals at 11 new member orientations in 2018, and welcomed 141 new members. The POCC’s momentum is growing. Orientations are mostly held once a month at the Cove, ACBH’s administrative office in Oakland. Community based organizations partner with POCC to host orientations at their program sites. Examples of previous sites are St. Mary’s Center, Casa Ubuntu, Bestnow!, Highland Hospital Day Program, Villa Fairmont Mental Health Rehabilitation Center, and Town House Wellness Center.
“This committee works effectively together like a well-oiled machine,” said one committee member. MC and the Consumer Empowerment Department (CED) create excitement for new and returning members. Orientations provide information about membership, an opportunity for sharing the strengths and successes of the POCC, while promoting wellness and recovery. MC has seven active members, and welcomes new participants. It meets at the Cove the first and second Tuesdays of most months, from 1:00-3:00 p.m. We usually offer orientations the fourth Tuesdays.

AC Behavioral Health
Behavioral Health Care Services is now known as Alameda County Behavioral Health (ACBH) and recently revised its brand as part of a larger goal to update and modernize communication efforts.
The new logo-mark was officially launched November 1, 2018. It conveys a simpler, brighter, friendlier public face using simplified imagery which evokes accessibility, connectedness, and support for individuals seeking assistance with mental health and substance use issues.
The new brand is part of the plan to improve overall communications, including the internal and external website.

By Dale Bunce

Pictured left to right: POCC Membership Committee members: Bernice Black, Carol Brown (Membership Outreach Coordinator), Larry Vaughan and Michael Webb (Chairperson). Committee members not pictured: Sheila Bostic (Recorder), Sonia Artiles, Edgardo Artiles and Dale Bunce.
Chinese New Year
Starts February 5th

Oakland Asian Cultural Center
388—9th Street, Suite 290

Sunday, February 10th, 11:00-3:00

Free Annual Lunar New Year Celebration: featuring Lion Dancing, Chinese folk dance, Mongolian folk dance, guzheng/zither, taiko drumming and more.

The event will also include arts and crafts activities and a Family Reading Celebration with story time and music class especially geared towards children under 8 years old. Participating children will receive a new children’s book for free (presented in partnership with Eastwind Books and Go!Mandarin Music Class with support from the Oakland Literacy Coalition).

Gung hay fat choy! Gong xi fa cai!