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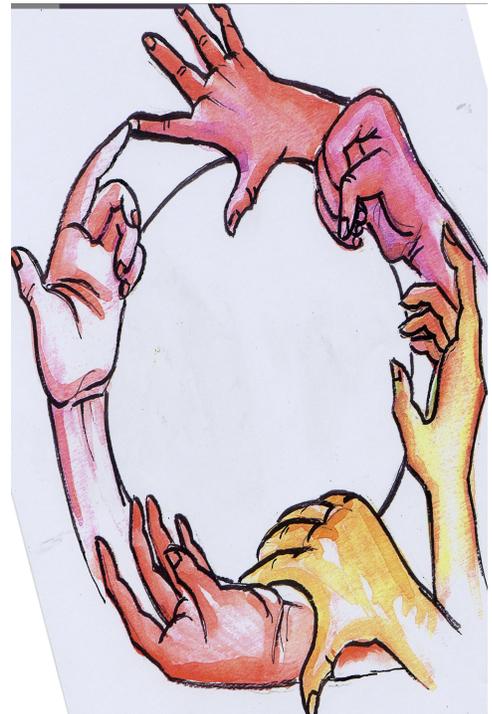
## THE AUGUST, 2015 THINKING ON THINGS LETTER

Hello mighty students: Yes--- it's August again and this happens once a year in case you're not aware !!! As long as that electrical system in your mighty brain is operating right, you'll continue realizing a letter comes out every couple of months and it provides you with your dose and nourishment of cultural literacy. Oh – and do I know you need it. Imagine going without the letter for a few months. The withdrawals will land you in a recovery program and you'll immediately get diagnosed with something like "The Launch Letter Deprivation Syndrome" which is treatable with IV doses of the last few issues of the letter. So – that's why I'm writing this short letter. Yes—I said short letter which is uncommon for me of course. But—I'll try to include the important things in this short, yet mighty letter. There's some creative writing, news about what I'm doing—and of course, news about happenings at Founders

All of the art in this newsletter is done by Arlene Gardipee who is our talented and amazing artist. Arlene earned her B.A. in Psychology and discovered, later in life, that her talent was in art. If you like her work, especially water color, please enjoy looking at it on my website. Arlene loves drawing hands, angels, flowers and still life in water color, ink and acrylics.

My website is:

[www.thelevylaunch.com](http://www.thelevylaunch.com)



### Founders House of Hope

All is good at Founders folks. The residents continued being employed in our supported employment program and we enjoyed outings and a few B-B-Q's at local parks and Seal Beach.

I think everyone knows that we self-published an anthology of poetry written by residents at Founders in March of 2014. The book is titled: Pages Left to Turn: Poetry by Restless Minds and you can read about it on my website: [www.thelevylaunch.com](http://www.thelevylaunch.com) need to brag about our newest author at Founders. Her name is Cecile Mermelstein and she just self-published her own book of poetry which will be available in a couple of weeks. Cecile titled her book: The Ironic Truth and it contains poetry that rhymes with lots of irony and magical realism weaved in with centaurs, unicorns and other mythical characters. I'll post more details about her book on my website. For now – we're all so impressed and proud of Cecile's accomplishment. Cecile began writing poetry at age 12 and this has been a lifelong dream to publish a book of poetry.

Here is the synopsis I wrote for Cecile's book

In this collection of poetry, the author uses irony to "tickle the mind" and to remind the reader that contradictions in life are inescapable and function as a reminder of how precarious and unpredictable life is. Mystery and the unanticipated events that emerge in our lives are teachable moments and according to the author "fate governs life." For the author, irony represents deliberate contrariness. Reading this poetry will remind the reader of life's twists and turns. The poetic form used in this book of poetry is rhyme, in addition to incorporating mythological characters such as dragons, mermaids, centaurs and unicorns to have the reader dive deep into a world of magical realism. In the end, the reader will truly appreciate how the evocative themes and images expressed in the poetry captures the essential meaning of life.



## A Life of Gratitude

By Barbara Sparks

“God has blessed me with 80 years of life. There’s a time to live and a time to die. I’m ready to die. I don’t want to be in pain. I want to die in my sleep.” “Mother, God has blessed me with fifty-five years of having you in my life.” Two weeks later my mother died peacefully in her sleep. I don’t ever remember my mother complaining. If she experienced rough spots or roadblocks in her life, she always found a way to bring humor into her discussion of the experience.

My mother had many sad events in her life. Her mother died when she was a sixteen. She was left to raise Betty, her two-year-old sister. Because she was so young, Mother had to defend her right to raise Betty. In court, the judge asked Betty where she wanted to live. Betty, immediately exclaimed, “With my sister!” “Well young lady you can.” the judge said with a smile. My mother expressed then and throughout her life how grateful she was to be able to raise her sister. Mother was grateful for the ability and opportunity to achieve things that she could only dream of since so many obstacles stood in her way. She repeated two quotes throughout her life. “Nothing beats a failure but a try. ” “For all things give thanks.” The echoes of those quotes are a constant reminder of my mother’s life philosophy. In 1960, at forty-two years old, she completed the two units she needed to graduate from high school and marched proudly across the stage to receive her high school diploma. She went on to college and earned her Bachelor of Science Degree and Masters of Science Degree. Her lifetime dream of becoming a teacher was fulfilled when she was fifty years old. She retired at seventy-four. She took nothing for granted. She expressed gratitude for the purchase of her first car, first home, and her ability to take road trips across the United States. She reveled at the beauty of the sky at sunset, the forest and the power of the rapids. She was grateful for all God’s creations. The final trip of her dreams was to Israel. Though she was losing her sight and couldn’t walk with the energy she had had in the past, she was still grateful that she could go. She experienced all that the tour provided which included a ride on a camel. My mother lived her life with zest and zeal and was always ready to experience each adventure and gift that God provided while happily expressing how grateful she was. She taught me by example how wonderful it is to live a life of gratitude.

Today, Thanksgiving Day, November 22, 2012, on the anniversary of my mother’s death, November 22, 1998, I am grateful for all I learned about gratitude from my mother and the blessing of having her in my life for fifty-five years.

“We have figured it all out except how to live”

Jean Paul Sartre

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If anyone is interested in joining any of my classes at the senior centers—here is my schedule:

Cerritos Senior Center: Mondays from 3:00 – 5:00

Norwalk Senior Center: Fridays from 9:00 – 11:00

La Mirada Activity Center: Veterans Legacy Project: Mondays from 9:00 – 11:00

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I’ve been volunteering at a community called Carmelitos in Long Beach which is operated by the Los Angeles County Housing Authority. The 10 residents that attend my weekly group are wonderful, motivated older adults willing to increase their cultural literacy and learn together. I’ve been here a little over a year and we’re enjoying our time together.

The residents at Carmelitos are artists, writers and quite creative. Many of the students in my class designed note cards with inspirational quotes and beautiful images. I have included some of these cards in this newsletter for you to appreciate.

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“The best use of a life is to spend it for something that will outlast it”  
William James

## I'm Grateful

By C.O. Chang

The foremost gratitude of mine is reserved for the fact that I have been a sentient being full with compassions, feelings, and emotions like numerous others – those who lived before me, those who share the current world with me, and those who will come after me. It has been the wonderful results from a mixture of raising, nurturing, demanding, supporting, and guiding by all parents, family members and relatives, teachers, intended and unintended role models (for one to make an educated adoption), and the “supreme creator.”

On a global level, I'm grateful for the realization that more people still hold the conviction that human beings are basically inclined or disposed toward what we perceive to be good. Conflicts of a variety nature present constant challenges. But the continuing efforts devoted by concerned people to make the world a better place serve as an eternal hope.

On a daily basis, I'm grateful to the recognition that a rich life is consisted of bitterness and happiness; a reasonable life is consisted of failures and successes; a fair life is consisted of loses and gains; and a natural life is consisted of death and birth. “For heaven is neither a place nor a time – the kingdom of heaven is within.”

I'm delighted to find and grateful to one of the world's leading religious leaders for his well-thought endowment. The endowment intends to promote secular ethics targeting not only those who are religious, but also all those who may choose not to identify with a religious tradition, yet still yearn for a life of spiritual fulfillment. A fulfillment to be achieved through working for a better world.

Specifically I'm grateful to this discussion group. The atmosphere of open-mindedness and mutual-respect is to be cherished for a long time. The choice of topics elevates ones horizon on life's perspectives. It makes one coming to and being thankful for the realization that actual doing or not doing is more important than merely knowing – don't be refrained from doing good no matter how little it may be and don't be allured into acting evil regardless how trivial it may seem.

“In order to understand the world, one has to turn away from it on occasion.” Albert Camus (existential novelist)



## Creative Writing by Residents of Founders House of Hope

By Andy Knight

Founder's is the place I live where we all participate and give. Giving and sharing for one another like a band of brothers. Money draw Tuesday's gives excitement and cheer. Spending our money wisely saving the rest for the year. The food comes in many varieties from Chinese to Mexican. It helps to know a little Spanish when getting in line for seconds again. In back we smoke taking time to reflect on a joke. From characters we once knew to the childhoods from which we grew. From Bipolar to Schizophrenia we are all dealing with a dilemma. Medications our cure knowing what to take is up to the doctor for sure. From Irma to Judy we are all put in check when unruly. And in time we begin not to listen to those who are untruthful. Group time is always played out in a serious way when Dr. Levy comes each and every day. Making our troubles disappear he steadily keeps our minds in gear. Founder's is a haven for me now but in the future I hope to move out somehow. For it won't be long for my illness to be gone keeping my head up right and strong.

### Remembering My Mother

By Cecile Mermelstein

My mother loved me as all mothers do. Even though her words were few. She'd bundle me up when it snowed outside and strapped me in when we went for a ride. She'd make me hot chocolate when days were cold. Wrap her arms around me though her arms were old. Cuddle me if I had a nightmare and joke on Halloween so I wouldn't feel scared. She'd bake me a cake for my birthday and taught me in Church how to pray. She'd never have any prejudice, and put me to sleep with a gentle kiss. You taught me Mother to be proud. I'm free and I'll always remember that you loved me.

## GRATITUDE By Dorothy Hicks

First, I am so grateful to the Lord for blessing me everyday with the health and strength to get around and do all of the things that I do. I am thankful for the family that I have and for the love that we have for one another. It's such a great feeling to say "I love you" each night to my husband and my daughter. I am so happy to have a loving and compassionate husband. He is someone who's always there to share the responsibilities, especially when it comes to taking care of our daughter when she's ill at home or when she's in the hospital.

I am thankful that I was fortunate enough to retire at 55 after working at one job for 32 years. It is such a blessing to not have to work everyday and still be able to do so many things that make me happy. I am grateful to my parents who raised me to always work hard, set goals, and be determined about what I wanted. I am grateful that they showed my brothers, sisters and me how to help others and how to be a friend. Because of the rearing that I received, I have become a very caring and positive person.

I am grateful that I grew up in the church and realized that there was always a higher being that I could pray to and believe in. I am thankful for all of my sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews, sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law and distant cousins.

It's so uplifting to keep in touch with old friends from high school and college. I love it when we catch up on the phone and especially when I get to see them in person. I am grateful that I can go to school and college reunions and come back home feeling really, really great. I am thankful that I have met so many good and caring people since I've retired and so many of these people have become great friends and associates. I now have a whole new support group that I did not have before. It's a wonderful feeling.

I am thankful that I have had so many new experiences since I've retired. I am thankful that I can truthfully say, I have never been bored and I don't think that I will ever be bored. There are still so many things that I don't have time to do that I would like to do.

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### Gratitude

#### By Peggy Culhno

To borrow my parish's calling to our congregation to accept a Christian Stewardship, I am foremost grateful to God's generosity.

The gift of faith gives me great strength, especially during troubling times. Because of this gift, I am blessed to enjoy a very rich life. I revel in many loving and nurturing relationships, both from family and friends.

The health of those dear to me and of my own health is something I never take for granted. So many people suffer from such terrible illnesses and I am humbly grateful for our health. I feel truly blessed and grateful to be born and living in the greatest country in the world. The security of financial stability creates a much less stressful environment in our lives. The gifts of aptitude, ability, interests, skills and passions to name a few enrich our lives. Many of these gifts we are called to share with our brothers and sisters. Life is fluid and often times circumstances change. It might then be a good time for us to stop and count our blessings.

### A Piece by Guillermo Galvan Freedom

Freedom is the capability to choose among options when planning your life or facing life circumstances.

We are free to choose in attitude:      to think positive or negative  
analyze critically life circumstances in order to act for your best or accept them as they come

We are free to choose in action:      by doing something or nothing when demanded      Do good or bad (evil)  
Act with purpose in life or drift in life

From the Christian perspective:      Truth will make us free; and what is truth?      Christ is the way, the truth and the life.  
Therefore we will be free following His Word

# For the Preservation of Mankind on Earth

By Roland Culhno

No nation, religion, culture and tribal authority may impose any law, canon tradition or rule that infringes on any person born on planet earth. Their right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The only limitation to a person's pursuit of happiness is when the pursuit trespasses on his neighbor's pursuit of happiness.

It is understood our planet was given to mankind by the mystical conscience of the universe. Therefore all nations pledge to maintain peace on earth and its wonder for the benefit of mankind and all species that inhabit the land and sea.

Of all the species on earth, only the human species has free will. Therefore only the human species has a conscience. Human beings are aware that they are part of something greater than themselves.

All nations will use the law of Moses as a guide to insure the mutual respect of its citizens among themselves.

All persons born on planet earth are equal to one another. Therefore, all slavery and its trappings are banned from earth. This includes religious, cultural and tribal rites that subjugate members of any group.

All and any human ideology that supports a philosophy of human or cultural supremacy over other human beings is banned from earth.

All people on earth may practice the rites of their religion. No religion may prescribe to the notion that it is the only true, absolute religion or assert religious exclusivity.

All persons on earth may enter into life partnerships regardless of gender. This is a human right as it pertains to the pursuit of happiness. However, human procreation has been ordained to be between human male and human female.

Though all species on earth share common needs and instincts such as hunger, cold, fear, procreation and survival, it is only the human species that can consciously make the decision to love or hate.

## Epiteph

By Lee Boga

Here lies the end— Of countless places Of innumerable faces Of books And dreams And dancing;

Of rude awakenings Of weeping And praying And waiting; Of optimism Of pessimism Of faith

Of love Of Leel!

COLOR ME Red and alluring. Green and cool. Black and beautiful.

WARNING LABEL Intimate relationships can be hazardous to health; Avoid when possible:

Smiles—infectious Kisses—addictive

Bodies—explosive No known antidote/cure at this time.

## HISTORY MAKING NEWS

I want everyone to know that we received a history making donation earlier this year in the amount of \$25,000.00 from Halsey Minor. Halsey toured Founders House of Hope and after meeting the residents, he made the donation. I was stunned and am eternally thankful to Halsey for his incredibly generous donation to Founders. The funds have already been used to expand the supported employment program, in addition to increasing the resident's hourly pay for working in Founders Hut – the on-site store we operate. In addition, we have instituted a once a month bagel breakfast program and dinner outing program. The funds will carry us for a few years, and again, we are so grateful for Halsey's generous donation that will enhance the resident's quality of life for years to come. We can't adequately express our gratitude to Halsey.

## Our Training for Police Officers Wins an Award

Well – I've got great news to share about the training we're doing for police officers on how to interact with the mentally ill. On May 5<sup>th</sup> – The Violence Prevention Coalition of Orange County selected our class to receive The 2015 Ambassador of Peace award. We are honored to receive this award for the training we've been providing since 2011 to law enforcement departments in Southern California. We are invited to a luncheon on June 5<sup>th</sup> at the Promenade and Gardens in Costa Mesa to receive this award.

Recently – we've trained the following police departments: Laguna Beach P.D. Anaheim P.D. Glendora P.D. and we are scheduled to train Whittier, Pasadena and West Covina police departments in the next few months. The good news is our class was POST approved a few weeks ago. POST is the Police Officers Standards and Training agency that approves classes for all law enforcement departments in the state. The POST certification means the course met additional requirements and is considered essential training for police officers.

## About Elijah Levy

Dr. Levy's degree is in Clinical Psychology and he is an interdisciplinary thinker, enjoying the synthesis of philosophy, psychology and sociology to examine the science of human behavior. He has taught at University of Redlands since 1991 in the undergraduate and graduate school of business. Dr. Levy also teaches psychology courses at an integrated health school called Southern California University of Health Sciences. On several occasions, he has received Excellence in Teaching awards, in addition to being honored for his volunteering activities and distinguished service. Dr. Levy is the director of Founders Outreach, a nonprofit agency providing psychiatric rehabilitation services to 90 mentally ill residents residing at Founders House of Hope, where he has been at since 1997. He designed the psychiatric/psychosocial rehabilitation program, in addition to the supported employment program being implemented at Founders. Dr. Levy is the director of The Levy Launch a center providing corporate training, management consultation, life/career coaching and support to nonprofit agencies. He is the author two books, one on intercultural awareness titled *You, Me and Them*, a book of poetry titled *Crisis in Meaning*, and he has edited an anthology of poetry written by individuals with mental illness titled *Pages Left to Turn: Poetry by Restless Minds*. In 2007, Dr. Levy and a colleague produced a documentary on mental illness titled *Beyond the Shadow of Mental Illness* and he collaborated on a documentary of a Veterans Legacy Project group that he facilitates. Since 2011, Dr. Levy, Chief Charlie Celano and his brother Josef Levy have been training police officers on compassionate policing and how to more effectively communicate with the homeless, mentally ill in the community.

## **Quotes by my favorite – Kafka**

Anyone who cannot come to terms with his life while he is alive needs one hand to ward off a little his despair over his fate... but with his other hand he can note down what he sees among the ruins.

You can hold yourself back from the sufferings of the world, that is something you are free to do and it accords with your nature, but perhaps this very holding back is the one suffering you could avoid.

The relationship to one's fellow man is the relationship of prayer, the relationship to oneself is the relationship of striving; it is from prayer that one draws the strength for one's striving.

## Founders House of Hope

Founders House of Hope is a 90 bed, community based residential care center providing psychosocial/psychiatric rehabilitation for consumers living with Schizophrenia and Bipolar Illness.

The services provided by Founders Outreach, a nonprofit center include:

- Supported Employment
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Relapse Prevention
- Symptom Management
- Community Reintegration
- Social Problem Solving
- Creative Expression for residents pursuing artistic and writing talents

The psychosocial rehabilitation groups are skill building and designed to improve our resident's level of functioning and quality of life.

The program goals include improving quality of life, building self-empowerment, self-determination and self-sustenance. Our consumers are often neglected and socially isolated, unable to generate a positive evaluation of themselves. The focus of the program is identifying capabilities and interests, developing vocational skills, consumer strength, instilling optimism and enlarging our consumer's identity from a one-dimensional to multi-dimensional identity and our services are seen as an evolving process.

The services represent reservoirs of hope. All elements of the program contribute to creating a therapeutic milieu and environment of social caring. A unique model of self-empowerment and reinforcement for effective decision making leading to increased life satisfaction is promoted in daily programming.

### Skills Based Groups Offered in the Program

- Symptom Management
- Impulse Control
- Community Reintegration
- Social Problem Solving
- Creative Expression
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Relapse Prevention
- Social Skills Training
- Assertion Training
- Hope and Optimism
- Supported employment

### Program Objectives

- Maximizing choice, increasing skills and competency and providing unconditional support.
- Focusing on the consumer's aspirations and on the consumer's preferred level of intervention.
- Instilling hope and vision that consumers can grow with and in their community.
- Dedication to consumer empowerment and involvement of consumers in aspects of service delivery.
- A strong commitment to improve the programs at Founders; developing innovative skills based groups that foster desired change
- strong commitment to achieving outcomes.

## What does compassionate policing of the mentally ill mean? By Elijah Levy, Ph.D.

The character traits of a police officer require emotional stability, incorruptibility and being strong of mind and body. In addition, good judgment, justice, integrity, resourcefulness and the capacity for empathy and compassion are required. Officers are conferred power and entrusted to use it to perform their work, which can be dangerous, given they are first responders. Unless officers have the capacity to treat individuals with respect and dignity, they may act outside the parameters of the law. In sum, every action of a police officer has implications for every moment of their shift, and in the lives of the public. Finally, police officers are the heroic because their actions achieve moral outcomes.

Who is the mentally ill individual the officer is encountering? It's likely this individual has been traumatized and experienced countless devaluing interactions in his/her life. Being victim to pervasive devaluation and stigmatization psychologically incapacitates the mentally ill individual and causes him/her to abandon hope; and without hope one cannot appreciate the possibility of meaningful living. The mentally ill individual is ultimately disempowered and unable to exercise effective self-determination while psychotic and homeless. This ultimate vulnerability is analogous to a sort of social death – being victim to the elements due to a diminished capacity to exercise effective decision making. Schizophrenia is a cruel, very debilitating thought disorder that attacks one's sensory and perceptual systems-- leaving one incapacitated, vulnerable and unable to exercise effective decision making to ensure he/she is safe in the dark, dangerous alleys and underground of our cities.

To enact the concept of compassionate policing of the mentally ill means that police officers are sufficiently trained to interact with these individuals in respectful and dignified ways that achieve the desired outcome. If unnecessary or unreasonable force is used with an individual perceived to be mentally ill, the potential for injury or more tragic outcomes increases. We know that officers are trained to control and give instructions to their subjects to ensure the safety of the officer and subject. In encounters other than with a mentally ill subject, this procedure will more likely achieve desired outcomes. We also know that the mentally ill are not more prone to violence than anyone in the general population. It is estimated that the mentally ill account for 3-5% of the violence in society. Undoubtedly, a myth is being perpetuated that the mentally ill are dangerous and violent. The reality is that the mentally ill are often too disorganized and lack the means and resources to commit crimes. The myth is sustained because some people believe that strange people with unusual mannerisms, delusions and weird ideas revealed by their symptoms are dangerous. In the end – the otherness we perceive in the severely mentally ill become a threat to our safety and as a result, the mentally ill are the most severely stigmatized human beings. The self-esteem and self-concept of the severely mentally ill continuously erode; depriving the individual of dignity, respect and the opportunity to make meaningful contributions to society. Unless officers understand and appreciate how interacting with a mentally ill individual requires a different set of communication skills, the potential for escalating force increases significantly. A psychotic, homeless Schizophrenic may be responding to a voice advising him/her the officer is actually a devil disguised as a police officer, and to not respond to their instructions. In this instance, a sufficiently trained officer should recognize that respecting the mentally ill individual's space, and reassuring him/her that he/she is not a devil could diffuse a potential use of force incident. Unless the officer appreciates that his/her mentally ill subject is terrified of him/her, and that this accounts for their defiant attitude to not sit on the curb and cross their legs, he may escalate the encounter which will invariably lead to a use of force. The use of force may leave the subject or officer injured.

Thus, training for officers, who are not mental health professionals, provides a practical guide to increase their knowledge and skills to arrive at desired results when encountering the mentally ill. In an ideal world, training officers on mental illness will reduce stigma, devaluation and will divert the mentally ill from incarceration to appropriate treatment facilities. Based on our experience over the last three years of training we have conducted for law enforcement, officers sincerely wish to honor their code of ethics by showing compassion for the mentally ill and as much as possible, direct them to needed treatment.



Drawing by Norma Jean Sanford

We do the best we can with what we have.

**By Linda Banton**

Be thankful for the bad things, for they open your eyes to the good things you weren't paying attention to.

The greatest challenge in life is discovering who you are.

The second greatest challenge is being happy with what you find.

**By Yvonne Jenkins**

It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question. The soul will have no rainbow if the eyes have no tears.

**By Ester Sinsun Padilla**

Life brings us many challenges. With a strong will, you never give up. Every day give a little bit more to conquer and be victorious.

**By Barbara Gower**

Give the pains of life away. Absorb the majesty of wonderful.

I'm more than the sum total of what you see. Try me, Try me, Try me.

I came. I saw and didn't always understand. But I took the path anyway.

**By James Ferguson, D.D.**

God is greater than anything that can happen to you. You are victorious.

We are spiritual beings having a human experience. Remembering God in you is far greater than your problems.