

The Bradley *Bulletin*

News and notes for our friends and supporters.

Fall 2020

PARENT SUPPORTERS SAY 'BRADLEY IS LIKE FAMILY TO US'

Twenty-three years ago, Diane Hunter and Manuel Irujo took a leap of faith and agreed to go on a blind date. They hit it off so well, they got married a year later. Not long after tying the knot, the New Bedford, Massachusetts couple adopted Alexander, a two-year-old boy from Russia, who became the light of their life.

But when Alexander was four years old, Diane and Manuel began noticing behaviors in their little boy that were concerning. "He started developing tics," Manuel recalls, "like banging his elbows, falling to his knees, and staring at the sun until he hurt his eyes. Over time, the tics got much worse and he started having difficulty interacting with others."

The couple knew they needed help for Alex and made exhaustive efforts to find appropriate care and resources. But they couldn't find the right fit for him—until they found Bradley. "A friend of mine suggested we call," Diane says. "Being from Massachusetts, we didn't know a lot about the hospital. But we found out...and we're so glad we did!" Diane's professional background is in health care management. She works for a Boston-based psychiatric group and is currently a member of the Complaint and Resolution Committee of the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Disabilities. So, at the time, she had some understanding of what Alex was experiencing and needed. Still, she says she's been blown away by the quality of care her son has received.

"We tell people all the time about Bradley's exceptional services and programs, and their compassionate, committed staff," Diane says. "But you can't put into words just how profound an impact Bradley has on families like ours unless you live it. They really are like family to us."



Diane Hunter and Manuel Irujo

Alex, who turns 22 in November, has been treated at Bradley for almost 18 years, receiving care for autism, developmental delays, OCD, and Tourette's syndrome. He's also attended the Bradley School, which provides critical educational programs for children and adolescents whose psychiatric and behavioral needs cannot be met in a public-school setting.

Fueled by their strong connection to Bradley, the couple have become passionate advocates and generous supporters. Diane is on the Bradley Hospital Foundation Board of Trustees and Family Advisory Council and has been an active member of the Bravo Bradley committee. Manuel, a chemical engineer and vice president of operations for a biosolids management company, serves as a Governor for the Bradley Hospital Foundation. Among other things, the couple's philanthropy includes donating to fund-a-needs, bidding on auction items, and attending Bradley fundraising events. These days, Alex is doing great. He's enrolled in a program at Bristol Community College and eagerly awaiting his stepbrother Adam's wedding—where he'll be the best man.

SAFEQUEST OFFERS OPPORTUNITY TO TREAT MORE PATIENTS

All levels of treatment at Bradley Hospital are in their highest demand in history, with waiting lists that are maxing out. With the need for hospital services continuing to grow, Bradley's afterschool intensive outpatient program, known as SafeQuest, is increasing its capacity and specialty areas to help serve more families, sooner.

Building on the longstanding success of our adolescent SafeQuest program, this October, a new SafeQuest program opened for the Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities (CADD). The program treats children 10 to 17 years old who have Autism Spectrum Disorders or developmental disabilities, along with co-existing emotional or behavioral concerns. "We're trying to meet the expanding need as we're getting more and more kids referred to the partial program," explains Maria Regan, LICSW, director of the CADD partial hospitalization program.



CADD SafeQuest runs 3 to 7 p.m. five days a week, with a treatment emphasis on building emotion regulation and social skills, while providing group, individual, and family therapy. Adding this afterschool outpatient program to the services available to CADD patients completes the continuum of care options available for this population. In addition to CADD SafeQuest, a children's SafeQuest is planned to open in early 2021 and will serve children 7 to 12 years old. Anne Walters, PhD, director of the Children's Partial Hospitalization Program says, "With our waitlist for children's partial being 3 to 4 months long consistently for several years, SafeQuest will be another way to serve additional children."

The SafeQuest programs are ideal for patients who can function at school but need more support outside of school hours.

CBT TREATMENT TAILORED TO SUICIDAL LATINX TEENS

Communication between adolescents and their parents can be a struggle even in the best of circumstances. For second generation American of Latin American origin (Latinx) youth, their parents were not born here and usually don't speak the language as they do, making the challenge even greater. Add to that, a suicidal crisis, and the outcomes are not likely to be what we would hope.

In a randomized clinical trial, Bradley Hospital psychologist Yovanska Duarte-Velez, PhD is testing an innovative approach to treating Latinx patients who have suicidal behaviors. This approach uses a socio-cognitive behavioral therapy (SCBT) approach that teaches skills to change thinking and behavior to achieve a lasting improvement in mood, while adding components that

take the Latinx culture into consideration. "There are a lot of specific stressors in the Latinx culture," says Dr. Duarte-Velez, who started developing this treatment in Puerto Rico, "and I've been offering specific tools to address them."

According to the CDC, Latinx teens consistently attempt suicide more often than their white and black peers. Dr. Duarte-Velez's goal is to demonstrate that a culturally-focused protocol is effective and to make it accessible to other providers in the community. "If a teen has a vision of what's best for him or herself in the American way, their Latinx parents might see it through a lens based in their home culture. It can be hard for the two to communicate—especially when there is a crisis," she says. "It goes beyond communication and into perspective, and I'm working to bring the two together."



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