

# Wellnest

EMOTIONAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

ANNUAL REPORT Fiscal Year 2020-2021



A YEAR OF Achievement → Perseverance





A YEAR OF Focus → Forward

You must never take your eye off of what's important, or allow adversity to determine your destiny. You move forward, with laser focused intention.

You move upward, with enthusiasm.

Day Treatment Intensive: Reyna Mendez, Noell Carter, Eberto Portugal, Zabela Bayramyan, Laura Roberson, Sarah De Santis, Vivian Tin Lieu, Lori Campbell, Damian Zavala.



# Let's grow.

Wellnest is bringing leadership and innovation to behavioral health and housing services. Our array of programs are designed to empower the children and young adults of Los Angeles to get on track to success—to reach goals in school, build healthy relationships, and enjoy emotional well-being. A team of compassionate professionals offers behavioral counseling and support to over 4,200 individuals and families annually. Services are provided at five community-based centers in Los Angeles.





### Our Mission

Through a holistic approach to emotional well-being Wellnest, offers hope, healing and opportunity to the children, young adults, families, and communities we serve. Our commitment remains steadfast as we enter our second century of service.

### Our Vision

That everyone has access to the support services needed to achieve the emotional well-being critical to reaching their full potential.

**148,976**

**Clients Engaged** Total number of clinical service touches and completed appointments with children, youth, young adults, and their family members or guardians.

**4,597**

**Clients Served** Clinical and Support Service Programs enrolled in our services. Unduplicated number of children, youth, adults, and family members benefiting from clinical services.

**7,333**

**Enrolled & Not-Enrolled in Clinical Services** Number of children, youth, adults, and family members benefiting from clinical services including Access & Wellness Center.

**2,531**

**Access and Wellness Center Services** Number of children, youth, parents/caregivers, adults, who received immediate help at the Walk-In Center.

**1,093**

**Family Resource Center** Unique community members and their children receiving family goods or resources through Walk-In Center.

**2,477**

**School Linked Services** Children and youth served in Los Angeles Unified School District, charter, and private school campuses.

**135**

**Healthy Families America Home Visitation Program** Families (newborn babies and their family members) receiving services through nationally-accredited, evidence-based model.

**4012**

**Community Engagement** Number of community members attending trainings, Critical Dialogues, Family FunFest, and other events open to the public.

A YEAR OF **Action** → **Accomplishments**

# Core Values

Defining who we are and how we make a difference.

## Excellence and Integrity

We uphold a well-established standard of excellence and accountability by using best practices and continuous quality improvement. Our staff acts with personal and professional integrity to ensure every child, young adult, family and community member is provided the highest level of care available.

## Empowerment and Respect

We respect the culture and individuality of those we serve. We encourage the expression of their preferences, goals, and aspirations, as well as meaningful contributions regarding decisions about the services and support they receive.

## Integrated and Accessible

We strive to offer a comprehensive and growing array of services readily accessible to children, young adults, and their families whenever and wherever they are needed. We believe that an integrated approach to care is critical to creating positive outcomes that support long-term growth.

## Family-focused Approach

We offer a family-centered approach to care that addresses the unique circumstances of those we serve. We provide services and support that focus on each person's needs in the context of family, community and other key influences.

## Life-long Wellness

We focus on a 360-degree view of wellness, offering life-long skills for improving and maintaining emotional and physical health. We offer tools for children, young adults, and their families to help improve quality of all aspects of their lives; including social, educational, financial, intellectual, physical and spiritual.

## Productive Partnerships

We responsibly steward donor support and facilitate partnerships with agencies, community resources, schools and families, to deliver the highest quality services. By linking constituents with the appropriate forms of assistance, we expand and amplify our impact on those in need.

CLIENT STORIES Our  Impact

## An Education Continues

**Luciana, 19, came to Wellnest's Exposition Park Outpatient Office in fall of 2020, alone and nervous about seeking help.** But getting that help was extremely important to her—since she was hit by debilitating anxiety about having to complete her first year of college virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic. Luciana preferred in-person services and proved an excellent student, consistently coming to the Wellnest office for face-to-face sessions. Gradually, her anxiety began to diminish, and she reported that the expert counseling gave her a space to talk about her feelings during the pandemic, better manage those feelings—and stay in school.





# Dear Wellnest friends,

Even as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, we are all still grappling with a turbulent range of emotions caused by this unprecedented social, health, and economic crisis—from fear and loneliness to anger, helplessness and perhaps a glimmer of hope. Our overwhelming concern for our health and safety, and that of our loved ones, has created a strain with serious implications for our mental health.

Prior to COVID-19, an estimated 450 million people worldwide suffered from a mental health condition at any given moment and 16 million U.S. adults had at least one major depressive episode in the previous year. Half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14, three-fourths of them by age 24. These needs skyrocketed with the pressures of COVID-19. So, did the economic cost. The World Health Organization has definitively linked mental health and economic productivity. The cost of treating depression, anxiety or trauma is enormous, with \$2.5 trillion spent annually worldwide on mental health care (projected to reach \$6 trillion by 2030) and \$1 trillion per year lost in productivity.

Meeting the practical, everyday needs of the families we serve has been paramount against this demanding backdrop. Wellnest continued to provide as many professional therapeutic and housing services possible, as well as viable resources, to reduce the stress and isolation our families were experiencing. Despite the extraordinary period we've been through the last few years, our staff members have demonstrated resilience, strength, commitment and the ability to successfully adapt to a formidable situation, overnight.

This crisis has sparked a heightened social consciousness about health and wellness with our families, in our communities, and at work. How do we build on this awareness and give mental health the equal standing it deserves alongside physical health? In 2021, Wellnest used multiple health promotion strategies to share the warning signs of mental health concerns and its effect on children and families. We initiated multiple media campaigns using social media platforms such as Facebook Live, Instagram and Twitter, featuring our in-house experts on the need to reduce stigma around mental health. Additionally, we served on industry panels and conferences to spread the word of the importance of emotional well-being with nationally recognized organizations such as Latina Style, Inc., Blue Shield of California, Mobility 21, USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, SPA6 Homeless Coalition, Univision and the American Medical Women's Association Women in Nonprofit.

Then, we further expanded our impact by expanding our partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health's Adult Outreach Triage Team (OTT) and Children Outreach Triage Team (COTT) services in SPA6 and SPA5. The OTT and COTT programs provide immediate intervention to assist children, transition aged youth, adults and their families/parents/caregivers in de-escalating behaviors that impact life functioning. Their interventions are designed to minimize risk, maintain living arrangements, prevent repeated hospitalizations and stabilize behavioral health needs.

Don't forget to reach out to your local, state and national legislators and join Wellnest in our continued efforts to advocate for adequate funding to give mental health the equal standing it deserves. And please encourage others to do the same.



At the same time, we achieved the highest accreditation possible from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) agency-wide! The three-year CARF award—a "full accreditation"—recognizes that Wellnest has met and exceeded the best standards of operation. Together with the Board of Directors, we are incredibly proud that Wellnest has demonstrated our commitment to excellence in protocols and clinical practice, as well as continuous quality improvement.

**Throughout the year, in spite of the many challenges, we were steadfast in our commitments and saw reasons to be hopeful. In a significant nod to the future, Wellnest successfully completed our first housing development in 2021. The Nest on Florence, a beautifully designed, new 51-unit permanent supportive housing project, will soon be up-and-running and will help meet the most critical, emerging needs of Los Angeles' vulnerable young people, many of whom have young children. A grand opening and celebration are being planned for Spring 2022.**

We are incredibly grateful to the following foundations and donors for their generosity with our Housing for Promise \$4.5 million capital campaign in support of The Nest on Florence — The Rose Hills Foundation, The Ahmanson Foundation, Ralph Parson Foundation, Carrie Estelle Doheny Foundation, Lon V. Smith Foundation and YOU. Without such loyal philanthropic partners, we simply cannot help these young men and women from South Los Angeles regain independence and change their lives for the better.

It's not too late to join in supporting this life-and hope-affirming project. With your contribution, you help create a home for young men or women with so much promise. Your gift ensures that they will be able to find a safe place of hope, healing and opportunity—a place of promise.

In your own life...we encourage you to engage in self-care practices like meditation, therapy, exercise, nutrition, outdoor activities and folk or spiritual healing. These health and wellness techniques can help you recharge and find renewal in connecting safely with friends and family, volunteering in your community, and simply taking a break from our tech-overloaded world.

Good mental health benefits our relationships at home and at work. As we grow more resilient, we can better cope with life's challenges—even an unequalled global pandemic. I thank you for your continued and generous support of Wellnest! Because of you, we continue to meet the mental health and housing needs of those most in need. The children, young men and women and families we serve thank you, too.

Warmest Regards,

*Charlene Dimas-Peinado*  
Charlene Dimas-Peinado  
LCSW, EML  
President & CEO



## From the Chairperson

# Dear Friends,

The past year has been a pivotal one for us all. The global pandemic changed almost everything in our lives. The community we serve experienced a new level of hardship, intensifying the need for Wellnest programs and resources.

As Wellnest nears our 100th year of service, we are at a precipice of change that inspires us to look back at our beginnings and the very reasons the original Los Angeles Child Guidance Center was founded.

Today, Wellnest is stronger than ever in many ways. We are financially stronger and our services and geographical reach are expanding. Our stellar executive team led by our President and CEO Charlene Dimas-Peinado has been resilient and tenacious in their commitment to serve our community and support each other throughout an uncertain period. On behalf of the Board of Directors, we salute Team Wellnest for their steadfast determination and service above self at this turning point.

We have so much to be thankful for as we enter the next phase of our growth. This marks the third and final year of our three-year strategic plan. Back in 2018, we broadcast to the entire community our bold plans to improve our entire organization and we have done just that. We celebrate the many accomplishments realized over these past three years as we continue to strengthen our five core objectives: Community Wellness, Organizational Excellence, Community Engagement, Infrastructure and Resources, and Financial Sustainability.

One of the key accomplishments in this past year was the launch of our Housing for Promise Capital Campaign to support our first permanent supportive housing project, The Nest on Florence, a goal outlined in our strategic plan. We are well on our way to unveiling our second housing development in the coming year. Also in 2021, Wellnest held our first-ever Golf Tournament fundraiser with great success and created our Corporate Partners Group. These eminent business partners will help further our vision for the future and increase our visibility in the broader community.

**The days and months ahead are unpredictable, as we have experienced during this pandemic, but we are stronger from weathering these challenges.**

You can help us realize the full potential of The Nest on Florence—and stable housing for promising young people—with your gift to Wellnest today. Please give whatever you can and open the door to home and hope for these vulnerable and deserving youth.

Thank you, and wishing you a bright future!



Dan Carrillo  
Chairperson



## Board of Directors

# Wellnest continues it's legacy of strength

**The Wellnest Board of Directors welcomed three new members in 2021, who brought with them experience in affordable housing, community reinvestment and business development.**

**Alejandro Lara, MBA, MPP**, principal in Good Housing Partnership LLC, has two decades of real estate development experience—from nonprofit community development corporations to private affordable housing consulting firms and real estate investment banking. He holds an MBA from the UCLA Anderson School of Management, where he was a Toigo Fellow; a Master of Public Policy from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, where he was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow.

**Salvador Mendoza** is senior vice president and manager of City National Bank's Community Reinvestment Department, where he supports loan development and outreach efforts. He also provides research and development support for its Hispanic new business development. Mendoza, who chairs the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles Neighborhood Housing Services, holds a bachelor's degree in business and social science from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.

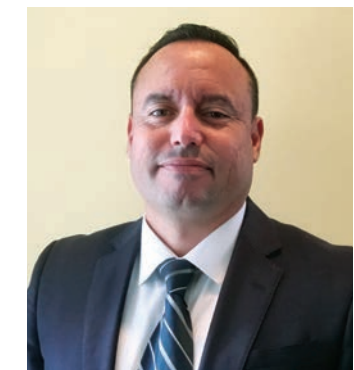
**Levente Orosz** is a vaccine account specialist in the Division of Public Health at Pfizer. His responsibilities include developing new programs, analyzing healthcare trends and ensuring that patients throughout Los Angeles County are screened, educated and appropriately vaccinated at each stop of their healthcare journey. An L.A. native, Orosz holds an MBA from UCLA Anderson School of Management, where he was a Riordan MBA Fellow, and a bachelor's degree in political science from UCLA.



— Alejandro Lara



— Salvador Mendoza



— Levente Orosz



## Life Learning Center

Support that changes lives.



**Evelyn Cortez**, a frequent user of Wellnest's Life Learning Center, was awarded a \$2,500 scholarship from the SoLa I CAN Foundation in June 2021, in recognition of her role as a positive agent of change who is invested in their community and furthering their education.

Evelyn, 21, has been connected to the LLC for a few years, having received therapy, case management, and employment support at Wellnest's drop-in center for young adults. Now in her senior year at California State University Dominguez Hills, Evelyn was honored by SoLa I CAN for her hard work in making the Dean's List in both the Fall and Spring Semesters—despite the pandemic and switching to virtual learning.

**After graduation, Evelyn plans to enroll in a Master of Social Work program, become a Licensed Social Worker and be an asset for her community.**

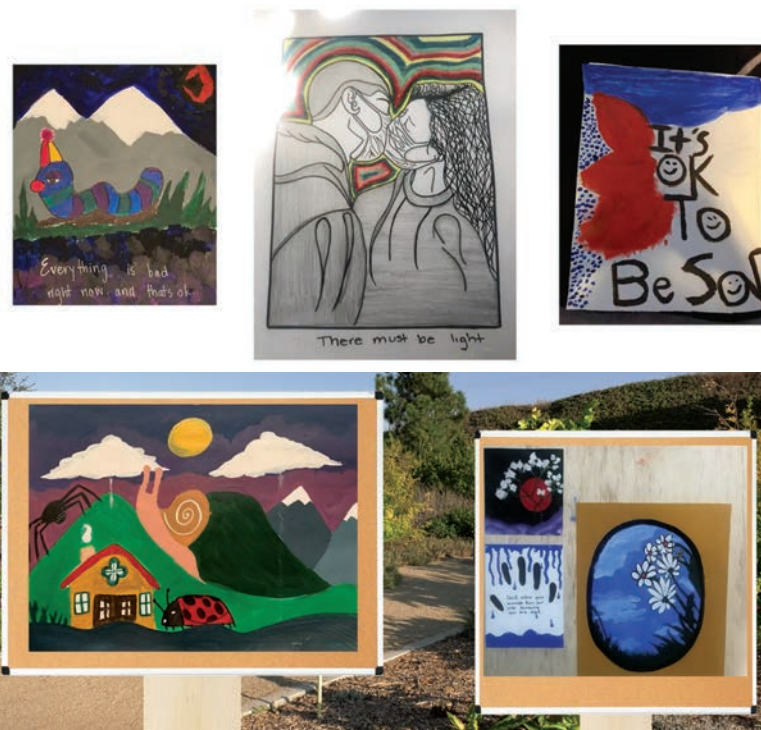
When she is not studying, Evelyn attends fitness boot camps and spends time with her grandparents, boyfriend, and cats.

Twenty-five college-bound students were chosen for the 2021 SoLa I CAN scholarships. Ceremonies took place June 25, 2021.

## Experience Our Voices

Young adults from Wellnest's Life Learning Center (LLC) developed the virtual art exhibit "Experience Our Voices" in 2021 to advocate for a world they wish to see vs. the world they're currently living in—and accomplished their goal despite the isolation caused by COVID-19.

**"Experience Our Voices" was originally planned as an in-person installation at the Stoneview Nature Center in Culver City, accompanied by a weekly in-person group to support the youth through their artistic journey. With the restrictions caused by COVID-19, that framework had to be creatively altered while staying true to the exhibit's message.**



The LLC team decided to use the youths' voices as guides through the exhibit and host the project virtually in its intended home at Stoneview. The participants came together virtually to express themselves in various art mediums. Through this experience, the LLC youth were able to reawaken, strengthen, and amplify their individual voices.

CLIENT STORIES **Our**  **Impact**

## Marco's Story: Rebuilding a Life

At just 17, Marco had already been hospitalized from multiple suicide attempts. The high school senior was failing one of his core classes and at risk for not graduating with his class—or at all. Anxious, isolated, socially withdrawn, he lacked a support system of family and friends.

Staff at Marco's high school referred him to Wellnest. He had never been offered mental health or community support and was guarded at first. But, gradually, as Marco spoke with a therapist at the Access and Wellness Center, he agreed to services in Wellnest's Life Learning Center (LLC), designed specifically for transition-age youth ages 15 to 25.

With severe anxiety and depression, Marco had trouble regulating his emotions and functioning well in his academic and daily life. Paying attention and asking questions in class were difficult. His social withdrawal meant lost opportunities for connection.

He bravely set out on what would become a two-year journey with the LLC. Wellnest surrounded Marco with a full-circle approach. Its Full Service Partnership provided intensive, coordinated services, including therapy, medication support, case management, rehabilitation and employment services.

Marco honored his weekly commitment to meet with his therapist, case manager and employment specialist. He set goals for his mental health, community involvement, education and employment. He worked on developing positive coping and social skills, engaging in pleasurable activities and managing his emotions.

He succeeded in other goals as well, completing high school and enrolling full-time in community college, achieving a 3.6 GPA his first year. While at LLC, Marco began volunteering with the social enterprise nonprofit, CultivaLA, increasing his sense of purpose, skillset and job readiness. He also began making friends.

As Marco learned how to link with community resources, he obtained legal support to apply for citizenship at zero cost. Through County Flex Funds intended to eliminate homelessness, he received support for rent, furniture and food—all of which helped lower his anxiety.

Marco "graduated" Wellnest in March 2021, having found the hope and passion to decide on a career path. His plan: to become a mental health clinician and help others as he was helped.






Taking Action

## Healing our Community



## Wellnest commitment to diversity, inclusion, access, and justice



The murder of George Floyd in May 2020, and the civil unrest that followed, impacted children, youth, and families nationwide and in the communities Wellnest serves. Here at Wellnest and in South/Metro Los Angeles, people were affected—directly and indirectly—by the loss and violence too familiar in communities of color due to historical and continued inequality and injustices felt by many.

Almost immediately, the Wellnest Healing in Community Committee formed, its members acutely aware that Black community members are disproportionately targeted and impacted by these forces. “For 97 years, on a daily basis, Wellnest has dealt with the traumatic consequences of violence perpetrated on communities of color, which represent a history of sustained cultural disruption and community destruction,” said Lisa Hirsch Marin, LCSW, MSOD, Wellnest Chief Operating Officer.

The Committee members came from all areas of Wellnest and shared an important purpose: to ensure that all staff, children, and family ethnic groups, genders, gender orientations, and religions, feel included, represented, celebrated, supported, and responded to individually and in community, in the spirit of healing in the organization.

**“It’s powerful when members of the executive team step back and allow staff to step up in a leadership position, thus fulfilling the Wellnest mission in diversity and inclusivity of voices that are not normally heard at this level,” said Tony Zepeda, steering committee member and Program Manager of Wellnest’s Life Learning Center.**

Among other initiatives, the committee researched African-American representation at Wellnest, and found that the staff reflects the communities of color it serves. In addition, more people of color have been promoted to positions of leadership within Wellnest over the past year, and Wellnest has increased outreach to the Black community in particular to encourage help-seeking behaviors and longevity in therapy.

In 2021 and beyond, Wellnest is rolling out specialized therapeutic modalities, including African, Latin, Asian, Native American, and LGBTQAA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Asexual, Allied and Plus) programs raising non-traditional interventions.

Over the past year, the committee met quarterly to process trauma related to social events of the day and to explore ways to celebrate diverse cultures, history, and relevant holidays. The committee helped to introduce training on bias, equity, inclusion, and racism, resulting in more than 15 workshops for Wellnest staff.

Wellnest also implemented plans in 2021 to continue building partnerships with small Black-and Brown-owned businesses in the community, as well as to bring such services as Parent Partners to local neighborhoods.



## Highlights

### Helping in Times of Crisis: 2 New Teams

**The Children Outreach Triage Team (COTT) and the Outreach Triage Team (OTT) are the newest programs to join the Wellnest trauma-informed, quality set of interventions and practice.**

COTT provides immediate crisis intervention to assist children from newborns to 16 years old, Transition Aged Youth (TAY) 16 to 21 years old, and their parents/caregivers in de-escalating behaviors that impact life functioning. The OTT program serves adults 18 years old and up.

The teams share a common purpose: to provide services, support, and linkage to children and TAY assessed by the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health's Psychiatric Mobile Response Teams (PMRT) and/or Law Enforcement Teams (LET). The children and young adults have been evaluated for involuntary hospitalization or placement disruption,

but ultimately do not meet the criteria necessary and are in need of immediate intervention and support.

Wellnest's COTT and OTT teams are deployed as referrals come in from PMRT and/or LET requesting services for clients in their homes, home-like settings, out in the field, or wherever support may be needed in the community. Included on the Wellnest teams are Parent Partners—staff with lived experience—who help create an additional level of trust for parents/caregivers and enable strong relationships to develop between the COTT/OTT staff, clients, and families.

By offering critical services at the right time, the Wellnest teams can help avert an emergent crisis and involuntary hospitalization. The result: less trauma and more hope for clients and families.

Left-to-Right: Maria Garcia, Pamela Valdez, Vernadine De Jesus, Eve Pashin, Daisy Ruiz, Sonia Zavala

CLIENT STORIES **Our**  **Impact**

### Access & Wellness Center

**Eighteen-year-old Raymundo\* first experienced debilitating anxiety as a young boy. Now, his difficulties engaging in social interactions or even leaving the house were keeping him from achieving what he wanted in life. He came to Wellnest's Access & Wellness Center, seeking help and ready to do the work.**

Through therapy sessions with Wellnest counselors, Raymundo began to understand the origins of his anxiety and to learn coping strategies that gave him more control. Gradually, he was able to take the initial steps toward going out and making friends. He started a job and even planned a possible return to school. His treatment ended with Raymundo on his way in the world

\* Name has been changed to protect client privacy.





## Highlights

### Expanding Services to Vulnerable Young People

Between ages 18-25 is a critical time period, when young adults experience the highest prevalence of mental illness of any age group, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Yet nearly half of those don't get help.

**In South Los Angeles, the number of homeless youths increased by 70% in 2020 over 2019, with a 42% increase in young families with children in shelters.**

In response to this pressing need, the State of California's Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission awarded Wellnest a \$2 million, four-year grant in July 2021 to expand services to vulnerable young people ages 12 to 25.

**“With this crucial funding, we can act now and act boldly to try to change these statistics as we open more doors for our youth, who are so full of potential,”**

said Charlene Dimas-Peinado, LCSW, EML, Wellnest President and CEO.

The funding will enable Wellnest to increase staffing at its Avis & Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center, which serves adolescents and young adults with such programs as mental health services, individual therapy, substance use counseling, employment and housing support, life skills development, and case management.

The expanded services are built on the models of headspace, a program of the National Youth Mental Health Foundation of Australia ([www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)), and allcove, a teen mental health program led by Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services and Stanford University's Center for Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing ([www.allcove.org](http://www.allcove.org)).

The added staff at the Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center include an employment specialist, substance abuse counselor, housing transition coordinator, and youth outreach specialist. The grant also will cover program costs, which include, but are not limited to services, training, technology, facilities, and facilities improvements.



A YEAR OF Expanding → Positivity



## Highlights

### Healthy Families America Accreditation

**Wellnest's Home Visitation Program received National Accreditation in 2021 as a Healthy Families America (HFA) site through Prevent Child Abuse America. To earn accreditation, a program must uphold and adhere to the highest quality and standards of home visitation services.**

The Home Visitation Program was commended for many strengths in providing its services such as connecting families to community resources, engagement and rapport-building with families, support of staff from supervisors and leadership, thorough follow-up on interventions, and activities that help families meet their goals.

Wellnest's Home Visitors support parents/caregivers in increasing their resilience as they learn to build trusting relationships, solve problems in meaningful ways, manage the stressors and challenges of caring for a young child, and access resources and services. In these home visits, families also increase their knowledge of child development, practice ways to support their child's social-emotional growth, and strengthen the parent-child relationship.

Each Home Visitor is also a Certified Lactation Educator and Certified Educator of Infant Massage. The Wellnest program encourages attachment early on in a child's life through breastfeeding support. In addition, caregivers learn skills to engage their baby in nurturing touch that supports bonding/attachment, sleep, and digestion.

### Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities Accreditation: Recognizing Excellence

**After a year-long review, Wellnest received the highest possible rating in April 2021 from a leading, independent accrediting body of health and human services.**

The three-year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) acknowledges Wellnest's outstanding adherence to international benchmarks of care.

During the in-depth, on-site CARF review, Wellnest was evaluated under three separate CARF manuals: Behavioral Health, Child Youth Services, and Employment. Together, those manuals contained a total of 3,000 standards.

**"Accreditation assures funding agencies, our partners, and the public that we have made a commitment to continually enhance the quality of our services," said Charlene Dimas-Peinado, LCSW, EML, Wellnest President and CEO. "Our clients will have even more confidence that they are in good hands, as we work hard to ensure the care they receive is held to the highest standards."**

During their review, CARF representatives noted Wellnest's multiple organizational strengths, including its teamwork and respect for employees. CARF also cited Wellnest's strong leadership, comprehensive strategic plan, exceptional facilities, and effective community partnerships.

CARF accredits more than 59,000 programs and services at more than 27,000 locations worldwide.

## CLIENT STORIES Our Impact

### Timely Intervention Sets Out a New path

**In April 2021, the effects of a serious eating disorder were clearly evident in a 15-year-old Tasha\*. She was severely malnourished, so weak she struggled to complete basic physical tasks and frequently needed hospitalization to stabilize her health.**



Tasha started therapy at Wellnest, extremely depressed, often entering into sessions with little hope about her future. Due to the severity of her symptoms, a team of individuals quickly assembled from Wellnest, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH), and UCLA to support Tasha in getting the intensive help she desperately needed. The objective: enroll her into a residential treatment facility as soon as possible.

For this to happen in a timely manner, multiple barriers had to be overcome requiring the coordinated efforts of many people. The pandemic only added to the difficulty of completing all of the necessary steps.

Wellnest held weekly Child and Family Team meetings that included Tasha's family, Wellnest staff, a DMH liaison, and her primary care physician to ensure she was as stable as possible. Her Wellnest therapist and case manager also had ongoing meetings with Tasha's mother to aid in managing all of the requirements for entering the treatment center. These sessions included education about Tasha's symptoms and about eating disorders.

**In individual therapy sessions at Wellnest, Tasha began to make progress. She became more animated, especially when discussing topics of interest to her. She started to process her fears about going to the treatment center during COVID-19, eventually agreeing it was the best place for her at that time. Gradually, she became more hopeful about her recovery.**

Tasha was admitted into residential treatment in July 2021, thanks to the efforts of the family, medical staff, and Wellnest team members. In that safe, 24/7 environment, she continued to gain more control over anorexia and create a brighter path to the future.

\*Named changed to protect client privacy





## Housing for Promise



The Nest on Florence—David and Susan Hirsch Building—  
Our dream of our own affordable housing  
has come true. Thanks to you.

**We believe housing is a basic need, essential to health and well-being.**

Until a person has stable housing, it is difficult, if not impossible, to direct their attention to attaining goals such as finishing school, securing a job, and becoming independent. Wellnest's **Housing for Promise** campaign has taken The Nest on Florence from dream to reality, creating a home for promising young adults in South Los Angeles.

**Wellnest takes action**

As we address the critical, emerging needs of Los Angeles' most vulnerable young people and families, it has become clear to us that we must take the next step. That is why Wellnest is proud to announce our bold response to the complex needs of the South Los Angeles community—The Nest on Florence, a vital housing resource for young men and women and their families who have become homeless or who are at risk of experiencing homelessness.

The Nest on Florence is a five-story, 40,484 square foot apartment building with 51 units of affordable housing, located at 410 East Florence Ave. in Los Angeles. It will include 34 furnished studio units, 16 furnished one-bedroom units, plus a two-bedroom unit for the on-site manager. The welcoming design includes a lobby, community room, offices for support services for the residents and for building management, laundry facilities, and secure bike parking.



**Join us as we celebrate this incredible milestone in Wellnest history.  
Our official Open House event will take place in Spring, 2022.**

Our Housing for Promise fundraising campaign has been a great success so far, but we still need your participation to reach our goal.  
Find out how you can help, visit [www.wellnest.org/Nest](http://www.wellnest.org/Nest)





## Community Events



Left-to-Right: Trang Le, Co-Founder, Millions of Masks for Children; Norma A. Vega, American Red Cross LA Region

## Millions of Masks for Children

The children of Wellnest families benefited from a timely donation from the Millions of Masks for Children Initiative, a growing nationwide effort sponsored by SmartAID to help protect kids from COVID-19.

FLTR, a leading supplier of a wide range of personal protective equipment (PPE), donated 27,000 protective masks to Wellnest in January 2021, along with masks donated to other L.A. organizations, such as the American Red Cross, Children's Institute, Children's Action Network, Children Mending Hearts, and Planet Hope. The international courier company DHL is helping to deliver the masks to vulnerable communities throughout Los Angeles and beyond.

“ We welcome the Millions of Masks for Children Initiative team and their generous donation, which will help protect the children we serve from COVID-19,” said Charlene Dimas-Peinado, LCSW, EML, President and CEO of Wellnest.

“ The challenges of the pandemic disproportionately affect vulnerable communities because they have fewer resources. We must all work together to offset this imbalance.”

At the time of the donation, Los Angeles County had reported more than one million cumulative cases of COVID-19 since the first positive case was confirmed in January 2020. Los Angeles County of Public Health officials have called the COVID-19 situation in Los Angeles the “worst disaster in decades.”

Left: Wellnest President and CEO Charlene Dimas-Peinado and Paco Retana, VP of Programs





A YEAR OF Collaboration → Contribution

## Inside Wellnest

### Finding Common Purpose in Collaboration

**The work of a fundraiser can be enormously difficult.** Among the many contributing factors, the one with most potential for generating stress is the relationship between an organization's CEO/Executive Director and the Vice President (VP) of Development.

In April 2021, Wellnest President Charlene Dimas-Peinado, LCSW, EML, President and CEO of Wellnest, and Andrea Salazar, Vice President of Advancement and External Affairs, participated in the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Greater Los Angeles Chapter panel, "Made in Heaven or.....? Exploring the Relationship Between the VP of Development and Your CEO."

The key, panelists said, is that the relationship can be a marriage made in heaven or filled with challenges, depending on the capacity and willingness of both individuals to accept the need for communication and collaboration. Such a partnership, when functioning optimally, "extends benefits to all the organization's constituencies, creates positive change, and dramatically increases fundraising potential," said Salazar.

"Andrea and I strive together to nurture and maintain a partnership that best serves the mission of Wellnest and the people who need our services as well as those who support this important work," said Dimas-Peinado.





## Community Events



Yesenia Felipa Hernandez - Home Visitor

### Feeding Our Community

**For three months in 2020, at the height of the pandemic, a few dedicated Wellnest staff volunteered their Saturday mornings to help feed the community.**

The Wellnest staff partnered with St. Agnes Catholic Church in South Los Angeles in the food distribution. Donations were gathered at the church throughout the week, then loaded into vehicles on Saturday mornings from October 2020 through December 2020 for transport to Wellnest's University Park site. There, families could pick up the free boxes of food.

The Wellnest and St. Agnes volunteers were greeted with thank yous and blessings from the families receiving the donations. "Muchisimas gracias por esta bendicion," one mother said, while another couple had to hold back tears in gratitude.

The much-needed (and appreciated) groceries linked recipients, donors, and volunteers in the spirit of giving and community.



A YEAR OF **Hope** → **Healing**

### Keeping Connected

Charged with a mission to bring hope, healing, and opportunity for so many people, Wellnest found new ways to support the broader Los Angeles community during unprecedented times shaped by a worldwide pandemic.

It was a year that was deeply troubling for some, filled with constant change and struggle. Wellnest faced new challenges with how to connect, as well as how to create equity within those connections, how to pivot when necessary, communicate and be present in community.

Wellnest succeeded in being there for the children, teens, young adults, and families it serves—and in partnering with other organizations, both private and in the public sector, to create new programs and new possibilities. Here are a few examples of these community events:



## Community Events

### Summer 2020

#### Facebook Live Series Launches

As part of ongoing efforts to share knowledge and expertise, Wellnest created a new online platform a Facebook Live series, which debuted in August 2020. The focus was on what youth, parents, and families were living through in the moment, in addition to supporting professionals engaged in emotional health practices. Topics have included: Trauma and Working With Adolescents, Proactive vs. Reactive Parenting, and Cultivating Community to Promote Health and Wellness.

#### First Virtual Wellness Cooking Show

Also in August 2020, Wellnest debuted its first Wellness Cooking Show, live from Chef David Wolfe's kitchen. Viewers learned how to prep and cook a nutritious and delicious meal—and how fun and therapeutic it is to cook together!

### Fall 2020

#### Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities' Virtual Visit

The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) is an independent accrediting body of health and human services. Wellnest invited CARF to virtually visit us the week of September 21, 2020 to examine the quality of our programs with the goal of meeting internationally recognized standards. By spring 2021, Wellnest received the good news: CARF approved a three-year accreditation for Wellnest, the highest rating possible.

#### Racism, Policing, the Pandemic + Beyond

On Oct. 21, 2020, The Institute for Nonviolence and Days Of Dialogue, in partnership with Wellnest, hosted "Days of Dialogue: Racism, Policing, the Pandemic + Beyond.", a virtual dialogue with Los Angeles Police Department Southwest Division. Interested community members were able to tune into the vital conversation live or view the recording later.

### Winter 2020

#### The Nest on Florence – David & Susan Hirsch Building

In November 2020, Wellnest hosted a Virtual Groundbreaking Event for The Nest on Florence – David & Susan Hirsch Building. Taneil Franklin and Elijah Gonzales—young adults who benefit from Wellnest programs—joined the groundbreaking and shared their stories with other attendees, including members of Wellnest Board of Directors and other community agencies.

Also present were esteemed local and national elected leaders, including Lucille Roybal-Allard, U.S. Representative for California's 40th Congressional District; Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer, Sr., California State Assembly, 59th Assembly District; and, Curren D. Price, Jr., Los Angeles City Council Member, District 9.

#### 2020 Holiday Gift Drive

The Wellnest Advancement team hosted the 2020 Holiday Gift Drive, which embraced the spirit of the season with gift cards and presents for that year's "Adopt-A-Family."

### Spring 2021

#### Tackling Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

Wellnest collaborated with the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Network of Southern California to host a series of educational trainings, beginning in March 2021 and culminating in May 2021. Wellnest is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists.



### Coming in 2023 The Nest on Jefferson

**The Nest on Jefferson follows the Mission and Core Values of Wellnest as the organization's second housing development that will have holistic support services wrapped around permanent quality affordable housing in South Los Angeles.**

In partnership with Clifford Beers Housing, developer, and QDG Architecture, the Nest on Jefferson will provide 55 units of affordable permanent supportive housing in a diverse community within South Los Angeles and will be designed as a mixed-use development with above ground floor commercial space, community room, office space, garden area, laundry and mailroom for tenants. Each unit will include a full bathroom and kitchen, along with such furnishings as a bed, dresser, dining table and chairs and other basic essentials. Equally important for vulnerable young adults who may lack social or family supports, voluntary and tenant-driven services from on-site staff will focus on ensuring that tenants can obtain and thrive in stable housing, regardless of barriers they may face.





## Programs and Services

Challenges are part of who we are, who we have been, and who we will be from here on.

### Early Intervention & Community Wellness

**Intervening early in a child's life** builds confidence and resilience. Equally important is the development of healthy attachments during these early years. Wellnest supports children and families through therapeutic and supportive services in the community, schools, homes, telehealth, and onsite at one of our locations.

#### Day Treatment Intensive

Wellnest's Day Treatment Intensive helps children ages 2-5 years old who have difficulties with aggression, temper tantrums, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, as well as with managing behaviors or emotions in a childcare or school setting. Day Treatment's structured therapeutic environment offers music, movement, art, and play to support each child's self-expression and reduce challenging behaviors. Participation by parents and caregivers in family therapy and support groups forms a fundamental part of the healing process.

#### Early Intervention Outpatient Services

The Early Intervention Outpatient Program works to support and strengthen the relationship between child and caregiver, while simultaneously helping both develop skills to manage behaviors. Many families we serve are coping with such issues as separation, loss, difficulty in school, relationship challenges, depression, anxiety, stress, or traumatic events. Developmentally appropriate play and art help create a space in which a child can explore and express underlying feelings. Case management services connect families to such community resources as childcare, recreational activities, and more.

#### Family Resource Center

Wellnest's Family Resource Center provides free drop-in services and one-on-one support to individuals and families. Visitors access such basic essentials for children as clothing, shoes, hygiene products, and diapers. The Center links families to community resources for childcare, employment, food banks, recreation, and other support.

#### Healthy Families America Home Visitation Program

The Home Visitation Program sponsored by Healthy Families America is based on the belief that early, nurturing relationships can instill lifelong healthy development in a child. Our free, accredited program serves prenatal families and families with children from newborn to five years old in South Los Angeles and Metro Los Angeles. Wellnest's trained Home Visitors engage families in parent-child activities, infant massage, lactation support, and case management services.

### Intensive Services

**For youth who need more focused help**, our Intensive Services Division provides a higher level of behavioral health care. Families with children with severe emotional or behavioral difficulties can receive individually designed services at Wellnest or in their home, school, and the community—all depending on the family's needs. Specific programs include:

#### Full Service Partnership

Our Full Service Partnership (FSP) gives families with children experiencing serious emotional and behavioral problems the opportunity to receive an individually planned, coordinated array of services, which can include therapy, skill-building, case management, and medication. Our FSP team includes clinical therapists, parent partners, case managers, and psychiatrists. FSP also funds less-traditional services, such as a family's costs associated with supporting their child's mental health and pro-social behavior. Family involvement is required to effect change. Parents are assisted in navigating through systems of community resources.

#### Intensive Field Capable Clinical Services

Families throughout Los Angeles County with child welfare involvement can get help for their child's serious emotional disturbances through the Intensive Field Capable Clinical Services (IFCCS) program. Wellnest staff collaborate with child-serving providers in a strengths-and-needs-based approach, with child and family at the center. In addition to behavioral health interventions for the child, help is available for parents/caregivers in addressing their own trauma, which impacts both family and child stabilization. IFCCS also provides case management, psychiatry services and links to such community resources as housing, financial, and health services. Our staff responds to crises 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

#### Wraparound Services

This nationally recognized model of service delivery serves children and youth at risk of experiencing an out-of-home placement. An individual plan of care is developed for each child, driven by family-designated teams that include their treatment team, child welfare and/or juvenile justice workers, educators, natural supporters, and other community members. Wraparound's flexible funding allows teams to do "whatever it takes" to assist in keeping a child in the community and in their home. Interventions tailored to the needs and strengths of each family can include trauma-informed therapeutic services, other support services and activities that nurture a child's optimal functioning.



## Avis and Mark Ridley–Thomas Life Learning Center

The **Avis and Mark Ridley–Thomas Life Learning Center (LLC)** is dedicated to serving transition-age youth, ages 16-25. Within this vibrant, accessible center, young people connect to a variety of supports, such as therapy, case management, employment, education and career guidance, life skills, substance abuse counseling, and housing.

The 10,000-square foot drop-in center at 5054 Vermont Ave. provides a safe place for recreation and creative exploration, along with a chance to build personal strengths and a sense of community. Youth are able to engage in therapeutic and support groups, community-building opportunities, and focused individual therapy.

Case management ensures that each person is linked to the community services they specifically need. Life skills training teaches LLC participants to live successfully and self-sufficiently, while employment services allow for them to expand their abilities, knowledge and experience on the job. For many, this service helps them find and adhere to a career pathway.

Wellnest's community partnerships open doors for young people to develop a sense of community and build on it. Among other impacts and settings, such partnerships have enabled young people to improve social emotional well-being at a community garden, work through depressive symptoms while hiking, transition into their own apartments, and engage in healing circles.

### Hope for Housing LA

Wellnest also serves the vulnerable transition-age population through our Hope for Housing LA Program. In this scattered-site housing program, which launched in 2017, former foster youth are eligible to obtain furnished apartments in South Los Angeles and Metro Los Angeles. They also connect with a support team that provides tools for learning to live independently. Each young person receives focused support to prepare them for permanent housing at the program's completion. The program is growing. Initially, we served youth ages 18-21; in 2020 we expanded and began welcoming young adults up to the age of 25.

## Outpatient Services

Wellnest Outpatient Services take place where people need us—onsite at our facilities, in schools and client homes, at the park, or in other community locations. Behavioral Health Services, offered in English and Spanish, encompass individual, group, and family therapy, along with case management and psychiatric services. In group work, our clients are guided in using art, music, and other modalities to encourage healing and growth. With the unprecedented global event of COVID-19 in spring 2020, Wellnest Outpatient Services quickly adapted—and maintained services to our clients—utilizing telehealth and telemedicine technologies.

The following services continue to be provided safely using teletherapy:

### Integrated Service Management

Our Integrated Service Management Program called “Mind, Body and Heart” combines support for mental and general health in a holistic model of care. The program is conveniently located in a Federally Qualified Health Center in South Los Angeles to enable consumers to access all health care needs in one place, often on the same day. Participants also build wellness with such “non-traditional” health services as yoga, stress relief, art classes, and cooking.

### School-Based Services

Wellnest partners with the Los Angeles Unified School District to bring onsite behavioral health services to 35-plus schools, including charter schools. Our expert staff reach out to children and teens with emotional and behavioral issues that may significantly interfere with their ability to learn. We work with students facing possible suspension and expulsion or struggling with attendance and performance. Services include individual therapy and family counseling.

## Clinical Training and Intern Development Program

Wellnest's Clinical Training and Intern Development Program provides comprehensive training in a supportive learning environment for Master's-Level students pursuing degrees in social work. Our goal is to develop well-rounded, skilled therapists who can work with a diverse population in various mental health settings. Interns/Trainees receive a best practice curriculum with an emphasis on culturally responsive client engagement that includes assessment, diagnostic and treatment skills in all therapeutic settings—individual, family, and group psychotherapy.

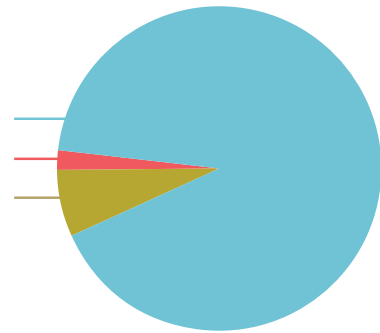
All of our practices in documentation responsibilities align with the California Board of Behavioral Sciences, the National Association of Social Workers, and ethical and legal guidelines. Individual and group supervision are provided. We currently have partnerships with University of California, Los Angeles; University of Southern California; California State University, Dominguez Hills; Azusa Pacific University; Boston University; and Columbia University.



## 2021 Financials

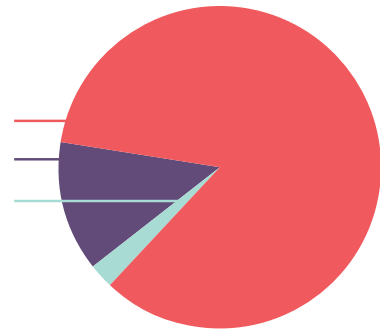
### Where the funding comes from

Public	\$25,824,687	84.1%
Private	518,018	1.7%
Others	4,378,772	14.3%
	<b>\$30,721,477</b>	



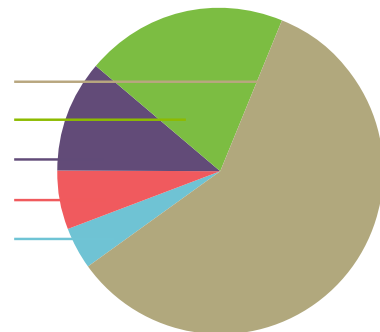
### Where the funding goes

Programs	\$22,954,413	84.6%
General and Administrative Expense	3,515,746	13.0%
Fundraising	649,955	2.4%
	<b>\$27,120,114</b>	



### How programs use resources

Behavioral Health Services	\$15,645,273	59%
Intensive Behavioral Services	5,474,684	20%
Birth to Five & Healthy Families America	2,895,530	11%
Access & Wellness Center	1,641,037	6%
Vocational & Employment Education & Housing	1,055,571	4%
	<b>\$26,712,095</b>	



## CLIENT STORIES Our Impact

### Home Visitation Program

**Sandra\* had a lot on her hands: three children under 5 years old: a 4-year-old boy and two daughters, one 3 years old and one just a year old.** Plus, their father was out of work due to a work-related injury that left the family behind on rent. Then the youngest child contracted COVID-19 just as the family received an eviction notice.

In 2020, Sandra enrolled in Wellnest's Home Visitation Program, a free program accredited by Healthy Families America. The Home Visitor linked the family to two important community resources: Eviction Defense Network and Angelino Housing Aid, which helped the family pay the back rent. Despite making up the arrears, the family was evicted, but subsequently won their case against the landlord in court. The family is now stably housed and continues to participate in the Home Visitation Program to better nurture their children's lifelong healthy development.

\* Name has been changed to protect client privacy.





## Giving 2020 – 2021

### Annual Honor Roll of Donors

We profoundly thank all those who live so lovingly and give so generously. Last year, you helped us and our community face the unprecedented. You are our shining lights, remaining steadfast in your efforts to build a brighter future for us all.

#### **DIAMOND** \$1,000,000-\$2,000,000

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health  
Mental Health Services Oversight & Accountability Commission

#### **VISIONARY** \$250,000-\$1,000,000

First5LA  
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health  
Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

#### **PLATINUM** \$100,000-\$250,000

AEG Community Foundation  
California Department of Rehabilitation  
Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services  
Everychild Foundation

#### **GOLD** \$25,000-\$99,999

Atlas Family Foundation  
Dignity Health  
QueensCare  
The Scott Family Charitable Fund  
UniHealth Foundation  
United Way of Greater Los Angeles

#### **SILVER** \$5,000-\$24,999

Arthur J. Gallagher & Co.  
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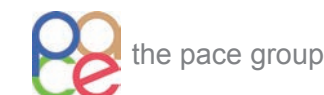
Wellnest

# Corporate Partners

In this time of turbulence and change, all organizations—both private and non-profit—are being asked to rethink their purpose and actions to create greater value for society. We appreciate that the individuals and companies listed here are stepping up to this challenge and increasing their value to their community, and their nonprofit and business partners.

With Wellnest, our Corporate Partners work together to offer more hope, healing and opportunity to the children, young adults, families, and communities we serve. Our goal is to connect what we do on a greater scale; to build a better business model, and to support and strengthen our community.

## 2021 Corporate Partner Members



Interested in contributing to our community's wellbeing and Wellnest's mission while reaffirming and increasing your own Company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives? Join us and network with other members, professionals and companies who understand the importance of connecting business to sound social solutions, driving profound community impact and growth. **For questions regarding our Corporate Partners Program, please contact Lauren O'Hara at [LaurenO@WellnestLA.org](mailto:LaurenO@WellnestLA.org) or at 323.373.2400 x.313**



## List of Officers and Directors

FY 20/21

Wellnest is indebted to the governing leadership of our Board of Directors. These individuals, working in close partnership with Executive Staff, gave generously of their time, talent, and resources in carrying out our mission.

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**Michael Stewart**, Creative Director  
**ACRO Printing, Inc.**

Contributing Photographers:

**Bobby Gulrajani**



A YEAR OF Investment → Opportunity

**What we all do today has a profound effect on those that need our help the most. Thank you for your generosity.**

Given the increased needs of the community, due to COVID-19, our commitment is now greater than ever before. Central to all we do is making sure that our communities, youth and families with the highest-need have the assistance they need—Such as the Nest on Florence – David and Susan Hirsch Building, a new housing facility for youth and families at risk of homelessness. It provides stable housing, mental health and substance abuse counseling, case management and much more.

Your contribution offers a helping hand to vulnerable young adults and families so they can enjoy a healthier future.

#### Ways to save in 2021

**Special Tax Savings for Cash Gifts:** Cash gifts made to qualified charities can be used to offset up to 100% of your adjusted income.

**IRA Required Minimum Distributions:** If you are 72 and older, you can support Wellnest with a required minimum withdrawal from your IRA without generating taxable income for 2021.

**Make the Deadline of December 31, 2021:** Make your donation on-line, or mail your check postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service on or before December 31, 2021.





To make an investment today, please visit [www.wellnestla.org/donate](http://www.wellnestla.org/donate).

To learn more about Nest on Florence, contact **Andrea Salazar**, VP of Advancement & External Affairs at [andreas@wellnestla.org](mailto:andreas@wellnestla.org) or 323-373-2400.



Wellnest is a nationally acclaimed, and leading provider of emotional health and wellness services to the children, young adults, families, and communities that we serve.



-  Instagram: @wellnest\_la
-  Facebook: /wellnestla1924
-  Twitter: @wellnest\_la
-  LinkedIn: /company/wellnestla

#### LOCATIONS

**University Park Office  
Administrative Offices**  
3031 S. Vermont Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90007  
T 323.373.2400

**Exposition Park Office**  
3787 S. Vermont Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90007  
T 323.766.2345

**Leimert Park Office**  
4401 Crenshaw Blvd., #300  
Los Angeles, CA 90043  
T 323.290.8360

**Avis and Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Life Learning Center**  
5054 S. Vermont Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90037  
T 323.373.2444

**Wateridge Office**  
5120 Goldleaf Circle #300  
Los Angeles, CA 90056  
T 310-388-9000

**Integrated Care**  
Adventist Health White Memorial  
1720 E. Cesar E. Chavez  
Los Angeles, CA 90033  
T 323.545.3522

**The Nest on Florence –  
David & Susan Hirsch Building**  
410 East Florence Ave  
Los Angeles, CA 90003