

The Achievable Foundation

It's **achievable**

Winter 2018

From the CEO's Desk: Carmen Ibarra



Celebrating our 5th Year!

This is an exciting year for The Achievable Foundation, it is the five-year anniversary of our health center opening in 2013! In that time our staff, patients, and friends have seen a lot of changes and we are now providing services to a record number of individuals. Although our journey over these five years has not been easy, it has certainly been memorable.

The idea for The Achievable Health Center, a first of its kind community clinic specializing in serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), was the vision of The Achievable Board and several idealistic, committed staff members from the Westside Regional Center (WRC). Danise Lehrer, Achievable's first executive director, brought together a team of dedicated individuals whose vision, perseverance and

efforts helped make this dream a reality.

There was initial excitement and momentum as almost one million dollars were raised from individual and foundation partners to build the health center. Unfortunately, that enthusiasm was soon curbed by the realities of this major undertaking. Our first major challenge came when Achievable's initial application to receive federal funding and designation as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) was turned down. Despite this, the team was willing to forge ahead to create a community clinic that could become the inspiration and model for others. Luckily the federal government soon realized that more FQHCs were needed as part of the roll out of the Affordable Care Act. In November 2013, Achievable became a federally funded community health center designed to care for those in our community most in need of high quality, integrated health care services.

While our doors opened on September 30, 2013 and we saw our first patient on October 1, there were additional struggles. More staff had to be hired, systems needed to be updated and new ones put into place. We struggled to raise the money needed to hire and retain mission oriented staff and purchase the critical medical supplies required by a facility like the one we had just opened. During that first year we relied on partners like WRC and the Material World Foundation to help us continue seeing patients. We didn't actually receive our first reimbursement check from Medi-Cal until almost one year later, August of 2014.

Our success today is a testament to the hard work and passion of both the team that opened Achievable and the staff that have joined us since. It takes a lot of vision and courage to create and join a health center that serves a population too often neglected within the medical community. The staff that work at Achievable today make up the fabric of who we are and allow us to deliver high quality, compassionate care to all that walk through our doors. They are also the reason we are poised to take our dream to the next level.

The next five years will be exciting for Achievable. We continue to hire new providers and clinical staff to further enhance the services we offer our patients. And while we've been under threat from potential federal funding cuts, we've survived unscathed so far. In the near future we hope to open a new site in conjunction with another regional center and form partnerships with local medical schools to help train the next generation of providers. As we reflect back, I want to thank all of you - our partners - for helping to make our vision a reality.

Q&A with Emily Johnson, Resident, Tacoma Family Medicine



Emily recently completed a month-long rotation at Achievable, working with Doctors Michelle Catanzarite, Lauren Wu and Yassi Omidvar as a part of her residency training in family medicine. Emily came to Achievable with a personal interest in working with patients with I/DD. We know Emily will have a positive impact on many families in her bright future.

Q: How did you come to work with Achievable?

A: I had initially heard about Achievable at an American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry conference in Los Angeles in 2015 and was intrigued by the mission. My ultimate goal is to primarily work with patients with intellectual disabilities, so I have been working to get as much experience caring for this population during residency as possible. Achievable seemed like a great place to complete this rotation and to work with patients with disabilities.

Q: How did you become interested in working with people with I/DD?

A: In many ways, my interest in working with people with I/DD started at birth when I was introduced to my older brother, Erik who has Down syndrome. I really grew up in the I/DD community. I have worked and volunteered with various organizations that work with people with I/DD including Special Olympics, Adam's Camp (a summer camp in Colorado for children, teens, and young adults with I/DD), Best Buddies, and others. I always knew I wanted to work with people with I/DD, and I eventually decided to pursue medicine as a way of doing so. I chose to go into primary care after observing how difficult it is for many patients with I/DD to get a good primary care doctor who understands their needs. I have a particular interest in primary care of adults with I/DD and the transition from pediatric to adult care.

Q: What does Achievable do differently?

A: The American health system is not well equipped to serve patients with intellectual disabilities. It encourages providers to see as many people as possible in short periods of time. In many ways, it discourages providers from caring for patients with disabilities. Achievable provides a more optimal health care environment by allowing for longer appointment times. Of particular importance is that Achievable also has providers that have experience working with patients with disabilities. In medical school, you hardly get any specific training in working with patients with I/DD, so this is particularly hard to find in a typical medical clinic.

Q: Why is something like Achievable helpful?

A: I could probably write a long essay answering this question. Primary care physicians are becoming increasingly overloaded with demands to see more patients and complete more clerical work. Most primary care physicians only have 15-20 minutes with patients, which is hardly enough for a healthy patient, much less a patient with an intellectual disability. It is hard to provide complete and comprehensive care in such a short time period. I think it is especially important for patients with intellectual disabilities who often have complex medical histories and require additional time and support with communication.

From a sibling perspective, it's so important to be seen in an environment where you feel supported and understood. You need a healthcare provider that is willing to spend the extra time to talk to the patient themselves instead of only the family members. My brother wants a provider who sees him as an individual rather than his disability. My brother lives a little too far (Colorado) to come to Achievable, but I would definitely have him go there if he could!

Q: What do you see as the biggest hurdle for patients?

A: There are so many hurdles that patients with disabilities face in getting good healthcare. I think one of the biggest hurdles is navigating a healthcare system that is not designed to meet their needs. In many ways, I think it even discourages providers from providing care to this population. I think this is particularly true for adults who have a very difficult time accessing high quality primary care.

Friends of Achievable

Do you want to help Achievable make a difference in the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities and underserved populations? Do you have experience with marketing, event planning, fundraising or other areas? Please join our "Friends of Achievable" Advisory Council today! Contact Josh Kruskol at jkruskol@achievable.org or 424-266-7483 for more information.

Update from Achievable: The Lee Weinstein Memorial Fund

On Thursday, January 4, Achievable's partner, the Westside Regional Center hosted an event to dedicate its new intake center to longtime Assistant Client Services Director Lee Weinstein.

Weinstein worked at the Westside Regional Center for 32 years before passing away from cancer not too long after retirement. At the event, Mr. Weinstein's partner of over 30 years, Michael Berman, announced the creation of the Lee Weinstein memorial fund at Achievable.

More than 120 attended and were treated to stories from Weinstein's former colleagues about his impact on the Westside Regional Center staff and clients. They witnessed the official unveiling of the new intake center sign, plus plaques in Weinstein's honor at the Regional Center and Achievable.

Weinstein spent his entire life in service of others, especially those marginalized by society. He marched with Martin Luther King Jr. at Selma and attended protests in Chicago to help establish fair housing laws. In his professional career, Weinstein served patients at Camarillo State hospital;



intellectual and developmentally disabled children and adults at the Westside Regional Center; and clients of Los Angeles' first AIDS clinic in West Hollywood.

The Lee Weinstein Memorial Fund helps provide care coordination for Achievable patients. Achievable patient care coordinators (meet Achievable's Diana Rivera later in this issue) assist patients and their families navigate the complex health care system they rely on, be it coordinating referrals to specialists, communicating with various providers, or acting as their advocate when needed. Achievable's patient care coordinators work in the same spirit that motivated Weinstein for more than 30 years to help improve the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities.

"Through the extraordinary work that the social workers at Westside Regional Center and the doctors at The Achievable Foundation provide, Lee's vision for turning what sometimes seems like a hopeless situation into a hopeful one continues on," said Berman.



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Achievable is hiring medical providers!!
If you are interested in being part of a team innovating a new
model of care for vulnerable populations, especially individuals
with developmental disabilities, go to our website to apply:
<https://achievable.org/contact-us/join-our-team/>

5901 Green Valley Circle, Suite 405
Culver City, CA 90230-6953

*The Achievable Foundation's mission is to provide high quality, integrated health
care to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families,
and other vulnerable populations.*



Meet Diana Rivera, Achievable's Patient Care Coordinator



Diana joined Achievable a year ago following a three-year term assisting with day-to-day operations at a community clinic, which she credits with giving her a full understanding of what patient care means. She initially served as Achievable's Referral Coordinator, dealing with the complexities of processing referrals and identifying in-network providers for patients who needed to see specialists such as speech or occupational therapy, orthopedics or endocrinology.

Diana, known for going a step beyond, moves into this newly created position to serve patients and families with complex considerations that affect the delivery of their healthcare. These are patients who may have multiple needs and referrals, limited insurance, or a small pool of approved specialist options that don't fit their needs. She helps ensure that families' and patients' needs are being considered from a holistic perspective and that care is being delivered in the most effective way.

Diana's role stretches beyond the walls of the health center, often troubleshooting issues not directly related to medical care. This can include helping secure specialist appointments following a referral, serving as a liaison between families and insurance

companies, arranging transportation to and from appointments, and even assisting with receipt of deliveries to ensure needed medical supplies reach patients.

Referrals for patients with I/DD are often not simple. With a limited number of healthcare providers who are familiar with the unique challenges these patients can face, finding the right match-up of provider and in-network coverage can be a challenge. When those cases arise, Diana is uniquely positioned to serve as an advocate for the family and can step in to explain why particular non-approved providers are critical to the patient's care and pushes for an exception when warranted.

"I like a challenge. I like to go outside whatever my role may be. I try to help patients in any way I can. I feel like that's needed," says Diana. "It's been very rewarding to help patients that really need extra support and seeing them reach their health goals."