



Opening Hearts. Creating Community.

*Shrinking the stigma of mental illness
throughout North Inland San Diego County*

October 8, 2014

8:30 a.m. – Noon

Community-wide interfaith conference
for clergy, staff, lay people

First United Methodist Church of Escondido, CA received a \$5750 grant in late April 2014 from the state Mental Health Services Act to host a community outreach event to help reduce the stigma of mental illnesses. Members of the Church's Believers In Action committee brought the proposal to the Church. A team worked together to develop a plan, write the grant and host the event. The goal was to provide tools and information to help clergy, staff and lay people from all walks of life and within all kinds of faith communities to respond with care, compassion, inclusiveness, acceptance and love to support those dealing with mental illnesses, whether they personally are affected or whether it is a family member or friend who is affected.

Here's a rough timeline and outline of the steps involved:

March – Grant applied for

April-May – Planning team of four volunteers, Senior Pastor and Director of Evangelism and Membership Ministries developed ideas to:

- 1) Host a training/needs assessment breakfast for clergy from the Escondido Clergy Association and other area faith communities to assess specific areas of need for recognizing and responding to members dealing with mental illnesses
- 2) Host a community-wide interfaith Conference during Mental Health Awareness Week with a renowned keynote speaker and several workshops that would provide needed tools and information
- 3) Create a branded title and logo for the breakfast and Conference
- 4) Invite and secure a date with the keynote speaker
- 5) Begin discussions about potential workshops
- 6) Began discussion about a creating cash-awarded contest involving art, poetry and video submissions for middle and high school youth

May 21 –

- Breakfast training/needs assessment was held. Catered food from Panera, organized by team volunteers.
- Guest speaker presented information about prevalence of teens and young adults impacted by mental illness and substance abuse.
- Roundtable discussion about other needs to information a community-wide Conference on Oct. 8.
- Laminated bookmarks, pens and a leather-bound book (a deal from Staples at \$5/each)

June-July –

- Planning continued with the staff and volunteer team.
- A Community Health Promotion Specialist from San Diego County Health and Human Services joined the planning team, helping provide access to additional resource personnel.
- Workshop ideas were refined and guest presenters were suggested and recruited.
- The Church was given access to the email database of member faith organizations affiliated with Interfaith Community Services. FUMC, Escondido, is a long-time member and contributor.
- A team volunteer with extensive administrative experience and Excel database management skill honed the list of nearly 400 churches.
- A dedicated email address was established from which the database volunteer would communicate electronically on behalf of the Conference team.
- Design was begun for a Save The Date postcard to be snail-mailed to all churches on the master list.

August

- Postcard was sent to Vista Print and snail mailed to 385 churches on master mailing list
- Conference agenda as finalized
- Mid-August – an email with the Save The Date postcard and a cover letter about the Conference was sent
- Planning continued
 - Food/Hospitality

- Room assignments for workshops
- Seating and room arrangements were discussed for Social Hall, where keynote address, large workshops, hospitality, and resource provider table/booths, would be held
- Timeline established for follow up emails encouraging registration
- Area mental health resource providers were invited to have a booth/table at the Conference
- A/V specialists to help with sound and multi-media presentations was secured for the event
- Photographer was secured

September

- Follow up emails about the Conference and encouraging registration were sent
- Judges for the youth art, poetry, video contest were secured
- Communications regarding A/V needs were had with speakers/workshop presenters
- Community mental health resource providers were confirmed
- “Goody bags” for each participant were designed and ordered.
- Goody bag contents were confirmed: Susan Gregg-Schroeder’s workbook: *Mental Illness & Families of Faith, How Congregations Can Respond,*” *Creating Caring Congregations brochure, notebook with Conference logo, pen, Lifesaver candies and small power bar*
- Media release was sent to a wide variety of area news media
- Food/hospitality preparations were finalized
- Volunteers to help with parking, registration, hospitality, set up/clean up were recruited
- Volunteers were recruited to serve as workshop hosts, introducing guest presenters and serving as room monitors
- Spanish language translator was secured to serve as needed

October 1-6

- Minute-by-minute timeline for Conference was prepared
- Keynote speaker and workshop presenter bios were written to be used for introductions

October 7

- Social Hall and workshop rooms were set, tables decorated, hospitality items arranged, AV checked
- Thank you notes for the keynote speaker and workshop presenters were written. Payment for services and gift cards of thanks were included.

October 8

- Registration tables set up outside
- Lights, Camera, Action!!! It was a great day! Lots of fun!
- 105 people signed in and registered. (We know that even more than that were here)
- 19 faith communities & 21 professional organizations were represented
- The Social Hall and workshop rooms were completely restored to their original state thanks to volunteers from Victory Outreach, an organization that helps rehabilitate former gang members. These young men were fantastic, and they stayed and participated in the Conference, too. A real blessing!
- Thank you notes were emailed to Conference team members and volunteers

October 9 – 31

- Expenses were reimbursed
- All documentation for the grant providers was submitted
- Planning to host Support Groups at our Church was begun

November

- Final invoice to grant provider was sent