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**The Guidance Center Debuts Original Documentary,
The Bridge: Pathways to a Trauma-Informed Community**

Documentary, featuring Mayor Robert Garcia, EdD, among other community leaders, to be screened on April 26 at The Art Theatre in Long Beach

LONG BEACH, Calif. – April 17, 2017 – [The Guidance Center](http://TheGuidanceCenter.org) announces the official debut of its original documentary film, *The Bridge: Pathways to a Trauma-Informed Community*, at a free public screening on Wednesday, April 26 at The Art Theatre in Long Beach.

Through interviews with community leaders and former Guidance Center clients filmed in Long Beach and on Catalina Island, the short documentary highlights the effects of poverty on mental health, and how cultivating a trauma-informed community is part of the wider solution for breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

Poverty is devastating for children and their families, impacting generation after generation as the cycle persists. Almost 30 percent of children in Long Beach are living below the poverty level, compared with 20 percent in California, according to City-Data. Catalina Island is among a number of Los Angeles County communities that has a higher percent of children living in poverty than the general population, reported by U.S. Census Bureau. The goal of this documentary is to humanize those facts, turn numbers into the faces they represent, and empower community members with a trauma-informed lens in which to see and help those affected.

The catalyst for filming the documentary was sparked in 2014 when Patricia Costales, LCSW, CEO of The Guidance Center, was concerned over the growing waiting list of children needing mental health services. Fueled by the urgency to help these children and prevent others from experiencing mental health crises triggered by poverty and community violence, Costales collaborated with other local organizations and Long Beach city officials to film this educational documentary.

“I knew that once we were able to help the children on the waiting list there would still be others after them in need of the same services,” said Costales. “That caused me to consider how much more effective we could be in helping these children if we thought of their school, their neighborhood or their community as the client. This documentary is one piece of how we’re broadening our focus and empowering community members through trauma-informed education to help make a difference in their schools, neighborhoods or workplaces.”

Because living in poverty often goes hand-in-hand with housing instability, food insecurity, and inadequate access to resources, many children growing up in these circumstances lack the safety and security needed for healthy emotional development and general welfare, according to National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN).

The documentary reveals how these shared experiences of trauma caused by poverty impact generations. In sharing of their own stories, current and former Guidance Center clients featured in the documentary acknowledge the magnitude of how that instability and insecurity impacted not only their own childhood, but also their children's, and how that has motivated them to break the cycle.

During separate interviews in the documentary, Costales and Nathan Swaringen, LCSW, clinical therapist in The Guidance Center's School Based program and head of It's About T.I.M.E. (Trauma-Informed Movement in Education) pilot program in Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) schools, explain how trauma acutely alters the brain. Ongoing or persistent trauma results in the brain being in a constant state of stress. This impacts almost every area of a person's life including, but not limited to, their ability to control impulses and learn in a traditional classroom setting, and can result in serious physical health consequences.

"It's not necessarily poverty that causes trauma; it's the anxiety, chaos and uncertainty that comes with being poor," said Costales. "That kid is not a bad kid. That kid is doing the best they can in really horrific circumstances. We might not be able to change their poverty circumstances, but if we can create those safe relationships and a different understanding of their circumstances then maybe it doesn't have to have a catastrophic impact. That kid may be poor but is better regulated, and is able to go to school and learn. Because if that kid can learn, that kid can succeed."

Offering a glimpse into Long Beach's poverty circumstances as well as local organizations who are adopting trauma-informed practices, expert interviewees in the documentary include Honorable Robert Garcia, EdD, mayor of the City of Long Beach; Robert Luna, police chief for City of Long Beach; Kelly Colopy, MA, director of Long Beach Department of Health & Human Services; Tiffany Brown, EdD, assistant superintendent of LBUSD; Elisa Nicholas, MD, MSPH, CEO of The Children's Clinic; and Giovanna Ferraro, business owner, community activist and a commissioner of the City of Long Beach Human Relations Commission.

Wayne Herbst, retired dean of students of Avalon School; Santa Dominguez, RN, MPH, nurse at Catalina Island Medical Center; and Enrique Dominguez, pastor of Singing Waters Christian Center, provide insight into the impact of poverty and its intergenerational cycle on Catalina Island.

The documentary was produced by Costales and Emmy Award-winning filmmaker, Matthew Murray. Evan Barthelman was the cinematographer. The original score was written by Emmy Award-winning composer Matt Pavolaitis and Emmy Award-nominated Colleen Grace.

Immediately following the documentary screening on April 26, there will be a short panel for further questions and discussion regarding the documentary. Doors will open at 6:00 p.m. Seating is limited; the public is encouraged to reserve their free ticket at bit.ly/the-bridge-doc. For more information on the documentary, visit www.tgclb.org/news-events/thebridgedoc/.

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About The Guidance Center

Established in 1946, The Guidance Center provides comprehensive mental health treatment to more than 3,000 children and families in the communities of Long Beach, Lynwood, Compton, Paramount, San Pedro and Avalon annually. The Guidance Center offers individual, group and family therapy, crisis intervention, case management, community education and outreach, and intensive mental health treatment. Headquartered in Long Beach, The Guidance Center also has clinics in Compton and San Pedro. For more information on The Guidance Center, please visit www.tgclb.org.