



# The Sun

Fall Edition 2023

“Autumn is the season that teaches  
us change can be beautiful”  
- Heather Stillufsen

## We Are Open

Coastal Plains Integrated Health serves the 9 counties of the Coastal Bend. Normal hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday—Friday.



**Coastal Plains**  
Integrated Health



# Fall Observations



## September

National Suicide Prevention Month  
National Recovery Month  
Childhood Cancer Awareness Month  
Blood Cancer Awareness Month

## October

Down Syndrome Awareness Month  
Emotional Wellness Month  
National Breast Cancer Awareness Month  
National Bullying Prevention Month

## November

National Alzheimer's Disease  
Awareness Month  
National Family Caregivers Month  
American Diabetes Month  
Lung Cancer Awareness Month

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# The Sun

Fall  
2023



## Suicide Prevention Awareness Month



**988**  
SUICIDE  
& CRISIS  
LIFELINE

CPIH Crisis Hotline  
1-800-841-6467  
Veterans Hotline  
1-800-273-8255 Press 1  
Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
1-800-273-8255  
Trevor Lifeline  
(LGBTQIA+):  
1-866-488-7386  
Crisis Text Line:  
Text HOME to 741741

September was National Suicide Prevention Month. Every year September is dedicated to raising awareness around the topic of suicide through educational workshops, seminars and various resource events. Similar to Mental Health Awareness Month in May, Coastal Plains Integrated Health raises awareness with a focus on early intervention and suicide warning signs. Early intervention is a key step to prompting recover. We believe that starting a dialogue on the topic of mental health will encourage discussions within the family, teachers, and peers. Suicide is a sensitive topic with a common myth being the discussion will put the idea in the person's head. When discussing suicide and mental health, Coastal Plains takes into account the sensitivity of the audience with professionals in place in the event should anyone be in crisis. Having this in mind, suicide and mental health are topics that need to be addressed out of concern for everyone's overall health.

This year Coastal Plains continued to promote awareness by collaborating with local Independent School Districts (ISD). Sierra Zavala (Community Relations Coordinator), Annette Quam (PASRR), Sylvia Castillo (Assistant Youth Program Manager), Imelda Barra (Youth Empowerment Program Manager), Abigail Vasquez (Children's Navigator) and Linda Perez (Children's Mental Health Director) traveled across the Coastal Bend to deliver Suicide Prevention seminars.

Each grade level had tailored presentations to fit the sensitivity of the subject. Presenters highlight what risk factors can lead to a person developing a mental health disorder as well as discuss emotions and symptoms regarding depression, anxiety and non mental health related factors that can lead to suicide. Presenters also highlight protective factors, self care, recognizing warning signs and calling for appropriate professional help. Various resources were also provided including the Coastal Plains Integrated Health Crisis Hotline, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (also known as 988) and other demographic considered hotlines.

This year Coastal Plains provided Suicide Prevention seminars and workshops to Portland ISD, Falfurrias ISD and Riviera ISD of varying grade levels. Coastal Plains also participated in various Suicide Prevention Symposiums in such as the Suicide Prevention Symposium hosted by Kingsville ISD and the 9th Annual Suicide Prevention Symposium hosted by Suicide Prevention Coalition of the Coastal Bend.

These events are essential to promoting outreach not just for resource awareness but starting conversation. By taking the time to sit down and talk about these subjects, we open the door to treatment and reduce the stigma associated with mental health disorders.

## “The Strength Starts Within You.”



In September of 2022, Theresa “Terry” Cuellar sought addiction/mental health services with Coastal Plains after coming to terms with her use of cocaine and wanting to help her mental health.

As a child, Terry grew up in an environment where cocaine was regularly used. Terry described her experience, “I grew up around it and started using it when I was 13. To me it seemed normal.” After years of exposure and use, Terry recognized her mental health was starting to struggle. She started having symptoms of anxiety and depression that she believed was made worse by the use of cocaine. After discussing with her social groups and the encouragement of her wife, she came to the conclusion that the continued use of the substance would not carry her to a “normal” healthy lifestyle.

“I was not suicidal but I was angry a lot. I wanted to get help for my anxiety and depression before it got to that point,” Terry explained. She was

recommended to Coastal Plains Integrated Health, formally Community Center, by her friends. She had an awareness of Coastal Plains in her city and that they were a resource for individuals seeking assistance for their mental health, however she was unaware that the facility also offered Substance Use Services at the time. When enrolling into the Adult Mental Health program, Terry was referred by her case manager, Nora Govea, to Jennifer Flores (Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor) for the CPIH Substance Use Facility in Alice Texas.

“Weekly visits with Jennifer has helped me a lot. Talking with her is just different. I still get depressed sometimes but not as bad... the people there help.” Through Coastal Plains, Terry was able to acquire an official diagnosis for her treatment and received access to the Integrated Health Program for overall wellness. Jennifer Flores also helped Terry enroll in A.A. (Alcoholics Anonymous) and N.A. (Narcotics Anonymous.). Though this program Terry now has a sponsor as well who also helps her make it to her meetings. She feels these meetings in addition to Coastal Plains really help her in recovery.

“Terry has really shown that she is committed to the program, and she was one of the first individuals enrolled when I was brought onboard to Coastal Plains. We are so proud of her,” Jennifer Flores remarks. When asked if Terry had a strong support system outside of Coastal Plains she stated that she has a great set of friends who are there for her, and her wife is very supportive. When there are days when she feels she is not doing too well, Coastal Plains is closed and her sponsor is unavailable, her friends have come to support her.

Terry encourages people that are in similar situations and wanting to find help for substances, to keep coming to meetings, come to appointments, talk to Jennifer and to be strong. She explains, “They are not alone. I used to feel like no one understood. Now I've met people who have gone through similar experiences, and I don't feel alone. The strength starts within you. Set yourself some goals. If you can keep up with something, then you can keep up with being strong. Even if you feel like you are alone you are not. Its not a bad life just a bad day.”

Theresa Cuellar has been sober for 3 months, continues to attend appointments with Coastal Plains Integrated Health. And regularly attends A.A. and N.A. meetings. Terry is also an official member of the Planning Network Advisory Committee that consists of Coastal Plains Clients who review and provide input on services updates for Coastal Plains.

## Coastal Plains Integrated Health

*By Leonel B. Trejo Jr.*



For the past twelve years our Center has been expanding in the types of services we provide to our community. One big change that has occurred was the implementation of primary care (PC) services and substance use disorder (SUD) services. We initially began offering PC services to only Jim Wells county residents and over time we were able to secure federal dollars which helped expand this care and add SUD services to all our nine (9) counties. Historically, our Center only focused on the mental or behavioral wellbeing of individuals served. As we transitioned to this new whole health model our focus was now to treat individual's mental, physical, and socioeconomic wellbeing. The hope was to promote resilience, prevent disease and restore health. Over time we saw many individuals move toward recovery with this model of care and finally get the help for their primary care as well as substance use needs. As we have evolved in the type of care provided by our Center, our name no longer represented the types of services we were providing at Coastal Plains. I shared these concerns with senior management along with our board and all agreed a name change would need to take place. In my opinion it was important that we branded ourselves appropriately so we could reach individuals in our community who needed integrated care.

I received several recommendations for our Center's name change, and during our September 2023 board meeting all members were in agreement that "Coastal Plains Integrated Health" was a name that embraced the new direction we had taken as a Center. I was very happy with the decision because I truly believe this new name now represents the great work we provide to individuals who come to us for care. We now have most of our signage that has been updated in all our buildings with the exception of Kingsville which should happen in January. Our website has also been updated and staff will be receiving new business cards with the Center's new name. I also plan to visit several of our sites in the next few months to promote our new name by handing out shirts and tumblers during wellness and other types of meetings. I look forward to this new fiscal year even though we have had some challenges these past couple of months due to ransomware attack. Some upcoming highlights this year include awarding the construction of our new Alice facility in our February 2024 board meeting, licensing our Taft site to be able to provide SUD services, and expanding our Early Onset program so we have more staff helping with this intensive program. Here's to a great new year.



## Fall Festival



## Elaine Farmer Self-Determination Award

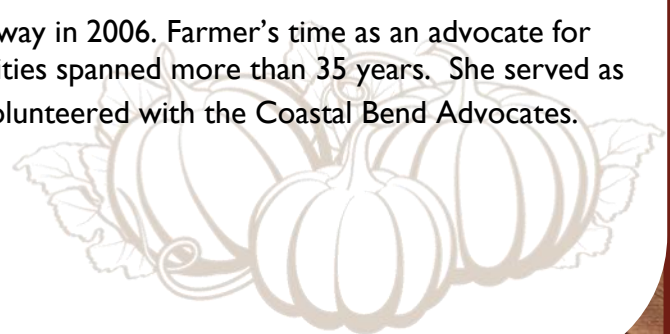


Trisha Bietendorf of the Coastal Plains Integrated Health (CPIH) Taft Center received the 16th Annual Elaine Farmer Self Determination Award during the 2023 Fall Festival at Welder Park in Sinton, TX. The Annual Fall Festival is held for clients enrolled in Intellectual Developmental Disability Services. This festival is held for clients to play games, wear costumes and announce the Elaine Farmer Self Determination Award.

The Elaine Farmer Award is given to an individual who receives IDD services demonstrates their ability to advocate for themselves and others based off skills learned to become more independent. Trisha has overcome personal obstacles and has continued to thrive

while living independently. She has been an advocate for her own personal healthcare and health others at the center who need a little extra help. Trisha is an inspiration for others to be resilient. Despite obstacles she always has a smile to share with others.

The award is named for Elaine Farmer who passed away in 2006. Farmer's time as an advocate for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities spanned more than 35 years. She served as the Director of Quality Management for CPIH and volunteered with the Coastal Bend Advocates.



## Company Picnic

On October 27th, 2023 Coastal Plains Integrated Health held the annual Company Picnic at the Rockport Saltwater Pavilion. The Company Picnic is a company event that celebrates staff accomplishments and engage in friendly competition. Can't forget that good Macs Bar-B-Q.

This year's picnic games consisted of Horseshoes, Dartball, Basketball, Pumpkin Decorating, Salsa, Noodle Race, Loteria and a Costume Contest. Also cant forget the SPIRIT AWARD!!

Once again Leo Trejo and Jonathan Heyward took the title as Horseshoe Champions for 2023. Kayla Pacheco placed first in basketball while Dartball was claimed by Ben Damien. JoAnna Mora won the tastiest salsa while the Rockport Clinic sprinted to first place in the Noodle Race. Isabel Vasquez's It pumpkin scared its way Best Pumpkin.

With horns and awesome decor this years Spirit Stick award was hard to choose as all our centers brought their "A" game representing their centers. This year the honor goes to the Bad News Bears Alice Center. Way to go team!!

This year's costume contest displayed amazing creativity and craftsmanship. In the group portion, we had a the Conehead Family and Disney Group. In the singles portion, we had a Jedi, Titan Speakerman, Photo Booth Gal, and even Denise Bryans (our previous Coordinator) made a cameo. You win this round Titan Speakerman. Ben Damien won Best Costume from our individual contest while the Coneheads got to bring the Best Group trophies back to Remulak. Well played Jorge De Los Santos, Joel Johnson, Cindy Gonzalez, Celina Utley and Yvonne Flores.

The Company Picnic also serves as a moment to recognize staff for providing excellent customer service. While we commend all our staff for everything they do for our agency, these individuals were honored for going above and beyond to serve their community. (Chief Executive Officer) Leo Trejo, Board Member Commissioner Tom Yardley and administrative staff presented awards to Jennifer Flores, Isabel Vasquez, Timothy Dominguez, Norma Vela, JoAnna Mora, Brooke Guild, Olga Garcia, and Carol Salazar.

Coastal Plains Integrated Health thanks the Company Picnic Committee for organizing the event and managing each game that was provided.



## Customer Service Awards

### Jennifer Flores

Jennifer Flores has been a vital part of our SUD program since its implementation in December 2022. As Coastal Plains first employed LCDC, she has helped our clients in need of SUD services navigate their way to and through sobriety. Two individuals specifically, had nothing but positive things to say about Jennifer. At the time of my contact, one client was days away from six months clean and sober. I could hear the pride in her voice when she spoke of her sobriety, and she voiced what an accomplishment maintaining sobriety was for her. "That program helped a lot. I'm going on six months. I don't feel alone. I don't feel by myself. I know I can call and talk to Jennifer and she's so supportive. I don't call her every day, but I know she's there and she cares. I don't feel belittled, put down or judged. I feel stronger. I have a lot more clarity. I still have my hard moments. Coastal Plains alone is helping a lot. It's like a breath of fresh air just knowing somebody cares. I look forward to going every week to tell her how great it is going and if not, she helps me through it." Another client stated. "I'm going to tell you honestly, if it had not been for Jennifer, I'd still be in the same place I was. I knew nothing about AA before here. Look at me now, 124 days sober." I would like to congratulate Miss Jennifer Flores on an excellent job well done and thank her for her life changing difference she has made in the lives of our clients. The impact she has made is immeasurable. Any client struggling with SUD that finds their way to our doors for help will find their own road to recovery with the kindness, patience and expertise of Jennifer Flores.

Nominated by Amy Stratton

### Isabel Vasquez

I nominate Isabel Vasquez. She is all around a great individual with a bright personality. She is always willing to help no matter what. This past year, she has helped me tremendously with encounters. When I'm sick, or have to leave early, she doesn't hesitate to stay late just to get all of the encounters done (and trust me, it's a long process since we cover all clinics). But we cover each other because we know how important it is for the clinics to have these entered accordingly. She has never once said "Well, that's not my job." She is a team player and will do what needs to be done to help. She is the first person to switch with me when we are assigned to help assist the phones up front due to conflicting schedules. She is like a right-hand man at this point for me. At the end of the day, it's all about our clients and she ensures things get done for them. I appreciate her so much for all she does. Her attitude at the workplace is uplifting and positive. She might love black, but her heart isn't black at all. It's a rainbow! She's my partner in crime (good crimes only boss).

Nominated by Sarah Gutierrez

### Timothy Dominguez

I would like to nominate Mr. Dominguez for this service award. He is a huge asset to the Center and is so deserving of this recognition. He is always ready to lend a helping hand with ANY task. He recently helped the HR dept with moving files back and forth from retention, no small task! At the height of COVID, he made sure the building was as safe as possible. wiping down ALL doors and exits every day. He not only ensures our fleet is up to speed but will gladly check a tire, battery etc for our own personal cars when we ask. It's hot outside but you will still find him out there checking the sprinkler system or needed repairs around the building. A true personal example of his willingness to help without being asked happened when I received a very large box at the office, it contained a piece of furniture for my home, he didn't know this obviously, but only saw that it was addressed to me. He came to my office and said "I see you received a large package, let me know if you need help setting it up". All these examples are true meanings of what a Risk Manager is about, caring about others but foremost ensuring our safety.

Nominated by the Sylvia Acevedo

### Norma Vela

Norma has shown great compassion for all of her patients. She has done an exceptional job hearing all of her clients out & never minimizing their symptoms. There are numerous examples I could name, but one sticks out the most. There was a young adult client she had initially seen when the client was released from prison. Initially the client was coming in for services as part of her probation requirements, but she thought she may as well try to get help. At first she was apprehensive to try meds, but Norma asked her to trust her. She was started on an oral antipsychotics with the hope of eventually being graduated up to an LAI. The client was terrified of injections but agreed to the oral meds. After being on them a month, and then missing her follow up appt & running out of meds, she contacted the office for a follow up appt. During that appt she expressed to Norma how she could feel the difference when she ran out of her meds, & how for the first time she felt "NORMAL". During that appt with

Norma, she agreed to trying the LAI. She was given the first dose & returned in a week to get the 2nd dose. She was so grateful to have given it a try, as it was working even better than her oral meds did. She has since continued to come in to receive her injection speak with her case manager regularly see Norma & has now moved back in with her family after being homeless since her release from prison.

Nominated by Sonia Trevino



## Customer Service Awards



### JoAnna Mora

Client came up to me last November in a local restaurant and wanted to speak with me. . I think to my self. "Oh here we go and just wanted to get away to enjoy my meal." But it wasn't as expected. She begins sitting with me while waiting had a convo me and proceeded to state she had very much appreciated all her caseworker did for her and wanted to let me know the good work she had helped her with. Pt also stated had it not been for this caseworker, she would have ended up in a hospital or worse on drugs that her caseworker had already helped her get sober and off the streets. She went on to say her caseworker is a good source to use when the chips are down for her as she also helps not only with getting away from the violence and helping her with keeping up with her job and staying away from drugs but also assists with skills to keep her "head straight" so that she is able to continue to work.

Jo Mora has gone above and beyond in not only telling the client what to do but also taking the client by the hand to show her how to do it and that she can do it and knows how to do it the next time she is in trouble. She states no other caseworker has ever done this much for her to get her straight. Pt went on to say had it not been for Mrs. Mora that she would not be where she is today. Jo Mora is very deserving of the Customer Service Award.

Nominated by Mary Zavala.



### Brooke Guild

Brooke has always been a team player and willing to help in any way. One situation that occurred was when she went above and beyond the call of duty to assist a client in need. During a few month timespan, making daily phone calls, weekly visits, transporting and linking, Brooke was able to give constant assistance. The Crisis Facility was unable to have enough staff during the 4th of July holiday for coverage and it threatened the ability to provide services for this individual client. Without hesitation, Brooke along with other staff stayed overnight at the Crisis Facility to allow the Crisis Facility to be "fully staffed" with their support. Brooke is fully dedicated to the clients of Coastal Plains and has proven her ability to go above and beyond.

Nominated by Jorge De Los Santos



### Olga Garcia

Olga, as IDD Crisis staff, is consistently available and eager to assist with any crisis that came through the IDD department. In one particular instance, Olga assisted with an individual recently throughout many months making daily phone calls, weekly visits, transporting and linking. Olga even stayed overnight during the 4th of July holiday in a hotel out of town to provide onsite support at a Crisis Facility to a consumer in crisis. Olga never once hesitated to aid the individual and IDD crisis team. I am proud to say that Olga is a great asset to Coastal Plains as well as the IDD team and I am glad to know that she will fill her new role as the Lead Crisis Intervention Specialist for IDD as she has proven her dedication to Coastal Plains.

Nominated by Brooke Guild



### Carol Salazar

Earlier this year Carol helped one of her client's get through a very traumatic event. Carol immediately acted and contacted APS and assured her client was in a safe environment surrounded by family. Carol made frequent in person contacts to ensure of her client's wellbeing. Carol notified IDD nursing who helped began the intake process for MH services for the trauma the client endured. Carol discussed counseling options with client, when client agreed that counseling services would benefit her, Carol assisted client with the application process. Carol also made sure that client would attend counseling sessions. Today that particular client is thriving. She is in a better place and is more involved with her family and friends. She is able to do things that she enjoys and is happy. This is just one example. Carol continues to go above and beyond for her each of her clients.

Nominated by Pamala Gomez

## A Look Ahead...

The Coastal Plains held an annual Angel Tree Donation for Group Home Clients. Gifts are donated anonymously.

Coastal Plains plans to participate in multiple Holiday Events.

## Winter Observations



### December

Worldwide Food Service Safety Month  
National Human Rights Month  
National Drunk & Drugged Driving  
Prevention Month

### January

Cervical Health Awareness Month  
National Birth Defects Prevention Month  
National Glaucoma Awareness Month  
National Volunteer Blood Donor Month

### February

American Heart Month  
Age-Related Macular Degeneration  
Awareness Month  
Black History Month  
National Cancer Prevention Month





**Meet the Author**  
**Sierra Zavala**

**Community Relations Coordinator**  
Have questions, suggestions or comments

about the newsletter?

Please email Sierra Zavala at:  
szavala@coastalplainsctr.org



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Coastal Plains Integrated Health

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Visit our website at:  
www.coastalplainsctr.org



**Coastal Plains Integrated Health**

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www.coastalplainsctr.org  
Crisis Hotline: 1-800-841-6467

## We're Here-Where You Live

**Aransas County**

**Rockport Mental Health Clinic**  
620 E. Concho  
Rockport, TX 78382  
361-727-0988

**Aransas Pass Mental Health Center**

1010 S. Commercial  
Aransas Pass, TX 78336  
361-226-3022

**San Patricio County**

**Taft Center for Integrated Health & IDD**  
201 Roots Ave.  
Taft, TX 78390  
361-528-4516

**Bee and Live Oak Counties**

**Beeville Center for Integrated Health & IDD Services**  
2808 Industrial Loop Blvd.  
Beeville, TX 78102  
361-358-8000

**Brooks County**

**Falfurrias Center for Integrated Health & IDD Services**  
101 W. Potts  
Falfurrias, TX 78355  
361-325-9776

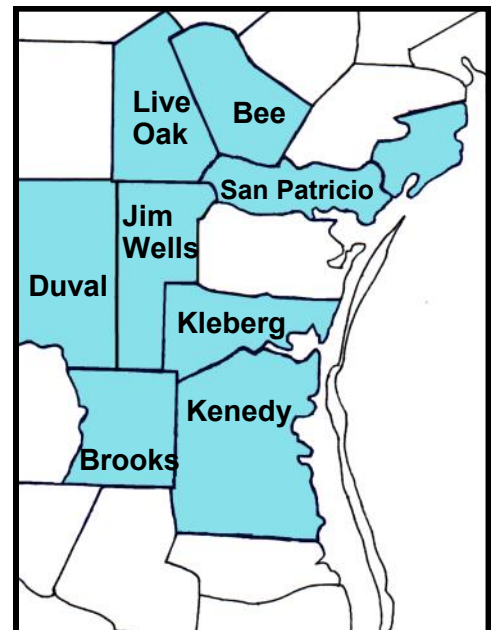
**Jim Wells & Duval Counties**

**Jim Wells Center for Integrated Health & IDD Services**  
614 W. Front St.  
Alice, TX 78332  
361-664-9587

**San Diego Mental Health Center**  
409 E Gravis  
San Diego, Tx 78384  
361-279-7296

**Kenedy and Kleberg Counties**

**Kleberg Center for Integrated Health & IDD Services**  
1621 East Corral  
Kingsville, TX 78363  
351-592-6481



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