STORIES OF TRIUMPH AND PROGRESS FROM CASA COLINA

# keystone 2022





Whether it's patients, staff, or our beloved community, at Casa Colina, people really are our highest priority.





#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Casa Colina, Inc. and Affiliates

Our Board of Directors provides a special kind of leadership. Their responsible oversight and forward thinking enable Casa Colina to continue to grow in dynamic ways and evolve into one of the country's top medical, surgical, and rehabilitation facilities They comprise physicians. community leaders, and previous patients.

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Kiana Webb Daniel Wilson, MD, PhD At Casa Colina, it is our vision to lead and define excellence in specialized medical, surgical, and rehabilitative care. That's why we pursue the most state-of-the-art technology. It's why we continuously upgrade our facilities for safety and security. And most importantly, it's why we empower our talented clinicians to always pursue the patient's best interests.

Without the backing of our wonderful supporters, we could never achieve our greatest potential to serve. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, your support has not waned. Even though Casa Colina pivoted from our preferred in-person events to newer endeavors like online fundraising campaigns, our donor response was as strong as ever.

In April 2021, we hosted our first-ever Virtual Tribute to Courage Gala (p. 19), inviting you to join us online for a program that featured actor Bonnie Hunt, as well as a VIP tour of Casa Colina Hospital. The result was our best yet, with hundreds of thousands of dollars raised in support of Casa Colina patients in need. We plan to return to an in-person event this fall, which we hope to make even more successful.

Support for our mission remains strong, because you recognize our value and dedication to this community. To ensure that continues, we've worked hard to stay financially viable into the future. In 2021, Casa Colina received its first A- rating from Standard & Poor's (S&P), one of the top credit-rating agencies worldwide. We have always been committed to smart financial decision-making that ensures our longevity. This rating is a recognition of that commitment, and we couldn't be prouder to achieve it.

We will miss the ingenuity, humanity, and ambition of Felice L. Loverso, PhD, who has announced his retirement as Casa Colina President and CEO effective fall 2022. While Dr. Loverso leaves big shoes to fill, I have no doubt the Casa Colina Board of Directors will identify the next great leader to guide this institution into its most successful era yet. We've begun our search for a new CEO and are excited to build upon the many great steps Casa Colina has taken under Dr. Loverso's impassioned leadership. We thank him for his heartfelt service to our patients and families.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, thank you for supporting Casa Colina's mission of hope and healing.

HERE'S TO A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD.

Edward R. Blackman

Edward "Randy" Blackman Chairman, Board of Directors



Since our opening in 1938, our staff have been the driving force behind Casa Colina's growth and success. While we seek to build the most modern facilities, without the right individuals to help steer the ship, our mission simply would not succeed. People have always been our highest priority.

That's why we've done everything in our power to protect their safety and mental well-being during the Covid-19 pandemic. We invested more than \$4 million to create a "bubble" around Casa Colina, so that our staff remain confident in their ability to treat our patients with compassion and dignity, and so those patients can concentrate on what matters: their recovery. From testing and mental health support to providing vaccinations and PPE, Casa Colina has spared no expense to reassure our people that we recognize their continued commitment in the face of these challenges.

The result? While the U.S. healthcare sector has seen massive burnout, with 1 in 5 healthcare workers resigning since February 2020 according to data, Casa Colina has retained employees at historically typical levels. Amid this Great Resignation, our employees have simply resigned themselves to providing the high-quality, compassionate patient care that has earned us several recent national distinctions.

With our ever-growing clinical, educational, and research efforts, combined with a bedrock of financial solvency, our future here at Casa Colina has never looked more promising. And it is with these building blocks for our future in place that I have made the bittersweet decision to step down as President and CEO of Casa Colina this coming fall, after 24 years of devotion to this great institution. Our patients, families, and community can have the utmost confidence in our Board of Directors to find Casa Colina's next leader, who I am certain will improve upon our efforts for the last two decades. Leadership may change, but one thing remains the same: our unwavering commitment to patient care.

I am confident our best is yet to come, and that's because of our amazing people. In this issue, we introduce a few of the many Casa Colina staff members who are committed to providing this extraordinary level of service. Whether it's in ICU nursing and case management (p. 4), neuropsychology (p. 6), or medical research (p. 8), these are some of the innovators, big thinkers, and clinical experts who will guide us toward a better, brighter future.

On behalf of Casa Colina's most valued resource—our amazing physicians and staff—I wish our community health, happiness, and security as we build upon our 85-year legacy of healthcare excellence.

THANK YOU FOR TRUSTING US WITH YOUR CARE.

Felice L. Loverso, PhD

Julie Loco

President and CEO

**Powered** by P Mee emp are SUCC

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Performance

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## powered beople

## Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare is truly powered by people.

Our unique, physician-led approach to care succeeds thanks to the talent, commitment, and collaborative spirit of our amazing staff. Our people don't operate in a silo—every patient is supported by a comprehensive, interdisciplinary team who tailors the plan of care to maximize their recovery outcome.

That success means finding the right people, who since our beginnings have pushed us to the forefront as a premier provider of specialized rehabilitative care, and more recently medical and surgical care. It's those very same individuals who recently earned Casa Colina national recognition as a Top 27 Patient-Recommended Hospital in 2021 and a Five-Star rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in 2020.

Our Board of Directors and leadership are dedicated to fostering an environment of cooperation and mutual respect, where employees can learn, grow, and bring ideas to the table in support of patient care. Our goal is to







nurture the next generation of clinicians who will embody our values—compassion, collaboration, and integrity—and ensure we can serve our community well into the future.

Preparing for success tomorrow means having the right people today. This issue of *Keystone* features some of our most remarkable staff—clinicians, researchers, and leaders—who are helping to pave the way for Casa Colina's future. Through their leadership, vision, and commitment to patient care and safety, these individuals represent the best in all of our employees, and remind us each day what it means to be part of the Casa Colina family.

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KEYSTONE 2022



Rudy de Jesus, RN

At Casa Colina, we're always moving toward excellence.

Whether earning advanced clinical certifications, mastering new technology, or keeping up with best practices, our employees continually hone their skills and knowledge. The result is well-rounded, confident caregivers who can step into multiple roles and are capable of mentoring those that come after them. And there are not many employees who embody that notion better than Rodolfo "Rudy" de Jesus, RN.

As Director of Patient Services at Casa Colina Hospital, Rudy has been forging a path toward excellence for the nursing staff and case managers since he arrived.

"I always had a big vision of Casa Colina in my mind," says Rudy. "We were given the opportunity to be a center of excellence [in medical-surgical care]. So let's have a big vision of what we can be, not just be narrow-minded. Because that's what we're all about."

Thanks in no small part to the amazing work of those very nurses and case managers, Casa Colina Hospital recently achieved just that level of recognition, earning accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), which focuses on the broad continuum of medical rehabilitation, including

patient care and safety, outcomes, education, community reintegration, and more. To top it off, in the same month they also helped us to earn the Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval for Advanced Total Hip and Knee Replacement Certification, a signature service provided by Casa Colina's renowned Revive Joint Replacement Program.

It's these hallmarks of excellence Rudy has come to expect from Casa Colina's staff, even amidst the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"All of us share the same vision," he says. "We're here for patient care and are willing to do whatever is needed to make sure patients benefit." That's why he encourages his staff to pursue advanced certifications that bring added skills to the team.

"I feel like, with the right training, there's nothing we can't do."

Amazingly, years earlier, a career in healthcare wasn't even on his radar. After moving to the United States from Mexico in the late 1990s, Rudy was making ends meet in construction. It wasn't until a friend decided to go to nursing school that Rudy considered it. He enrolled. He graduated. And soon, after landing a job at a local

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hospital, Rudy found himself performing not only bedside nursing, but administrative and supervisory duties.

Rudy first applied for an ICU nursing position at Casa Colina Hospital in 2016. But with previous experience in patient care, administration, and leadership, he was soon given a dual role of ICU charge nurse and case manager. Rudy was able to perform both bedside shifts and administrative duties, which gave him a crash course in Casa Colina's patient-centered approach to care. As a supervisor, he found an environment where his clinical expertise was valued, with freedom to create better workflows and bring his own ideas to the table to improve patient care. He was hooked.

"The vision of Casa Colina is making sure the patients get the best care," says Rudy. "And one of the things I really liked is that if we needed some type of special equipment or supplies, leadership never said no."

Rudy recalls a critically ill patient brought in from a local acute care hospital with neurological symptoms of undetermined nature. In Casa Colina's ICU, he was intubated and eventually tracheotomized to save his life. Casa Colina's clinical team put their heads together and determined he had likely contracted the rare West Nile Virus. Tests quickly confirmed it, and their comprehensive next steps helped the patient gain the best chance at recovery.

Rudy thinks about that patient often. Because of the dynamic, collaborative nature of Casa Colina's continuum of care, they were able to correctly diagnose, provide medical treatment, and get the patient into inpatient rehabilitation, all in just days, and all on the same campus. The man walked out of Casa Colina Hospital 18 days later.

"To me, his outcome represents all the things that we can do at Casa Colina," he says. With a broad range of medical, surgical, and rehabilitative services, Casa Colina is uniquely positioned to help patients with complex neurological and orthopedic needs, says Rudy.

What's more, he's proud to watch his fellow nurses and case managers grow alongside the institution as it continues to earn accolades. Because Casa Colina is willing to invest time and money to train staff, Rudy says this creates loyal, skilled employees who elevate Casa Colina's profile as a premier healthcare provider.

"The best money invested is in your own staff," he says.
"If you invest in the people that already love the culture of
Casa Colina, it's going to take some time to get them to
be an expert, but eventually they're going to be your best
people, because they're really going to know us."

determined he had likely contracted the rare West Nile Virus.

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steps helped the patient gain the best chance at recovery.

## fullcircle

For a clinician-in-training, there's no place like
Casa Colina. With an array of residencies, fellowships,
and practicums, and patients with a broad range of
neurological and orthopedic conditions, it's an ideal
training ground for burgeoning doctors, nurses, and
therapists. Our programs equip each new crop of
caregivers with the knowledge and experience to improve
patient outcomes wherever they land.

And while it's always satisfying to see our students spread their wings and fly, once in a while, if we're lucky, they stay right here at home.

Elizabeth Cisneros was one such student. Dr. Cisneros entered our pre-doctoral Neuropsychology Practicum in 2008. A PhD student at nearby Loma Linda University, she had studied many of the diagnoses treated at Casa Colina's Transitional Living Center (TLC)—including the complex neuropsychological needs of patients with traumatic brain injury (TBI)—but she had never had the opportunity to work directly with these patients. Given her existing interest in neurodegenerative conditions like dementia and stroke, it hadn't been on her radar.

"I never really imagined working long-term with people with TBI," says Dr. Cisneros. "But I just fell in love with the work when I was at the TLC. It became obvious that this was my group of patients."

Often, TBI patients have trouble controlling emotions and impulses due to neurological changes in the brain. Helping these individuals to improve their mental health post-injury is a critical component for successful treatment—one that is sometimes overlooked at other rehabilitation centers. Casa Colina's neuropsychology teams help patients and families address the complex cognitive and behavioral deficits associated with these disabling injuries.

"My goal is to understand what's going on and how that's going to affect the patient as they try to go back to work, or parent their kids, or navigate their marriage," she says. "Because those are the places where the deficits really come out, and that is what's meaningful to people."

As a practicum student at our TLC, Dr. Cisneros felt she had found a pathway that both stimulated her own interests and had a positive impact on patients' lives. But, as with any student training, her time there ended. She found herself missing the work. The following year, as she completed an internship at a nearby county forensic program, she thought more and more about how she might return to Casa Colina. As luck would have it, our Neuropsychology Department was seeking a postdoctoral fellow. Dr. Cisneros returned as a fellow after finishing her PhD and eventually was hired on as a staff neuropsychologist at the TLC in 2011.

She came for the clinical training. She stayed to make a difference

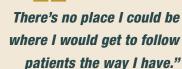
And, for someone dedicated to lifelong learning, it's the perfect fit. She not only gets to share a roof with a diverse, talented group of clinicians, but she can continuously grow her skills and knowledge as she tracks her patients through Casa Colina's expansive continuum of care.

"Our amazing group of psychologists and neuropsychologists is all about teamwork and supporting each other, which makes working here such a pleasure," she says. "There's no place I could be where I would get to follow patients the way I have."

In fact, she still sees patients weekly or monthly that she's worked with for 10 or more years, tracking their recoveries through acute rehabilitation, transitional living, and outpatient rehabilitation, all the way to home and community reintegration.



a Elizabeth Cisneros, PhD



"To be able to follow them from rehabilitation, to trying to go back to work, navigating through challenges with their families, and now, to see what aging looks like on top of it all—that's a special experience for any clinician. The patients I've gotten to follow—it's really magical."

And of course, the former student has also grown to become the teacher. In her current role as Clinical Director of Neuropsychology, Dr. Cisneros oversees Casa Colina's Neuropsychology Practicum and postdoctoral fellowships in Rehabilitation Psychology and Rehabilitation Neuropsychology. She draws on her past experience in these very same programs to improve the training environment for each new group of students.

This year, she says, her postdoctoral fellows have treated 16-year-olds to 95-year-olds at all phases of neurological injury or illness. Her students and fellows also work with Casa Colina's Senior Evaluation Program, a service Dr. Cisneros helped to grow and refine, which assists families in navigating diagnoses of dementia, Alzheimer's, and other age-related conditions.

Now a valued member of Casa Colina's clinical and leadership teams, Dr. Cisneros reflects on being mentored within the same continuum of care she now helps to administer. The guidance has been truly invaluable, she says.

"I was fortunate to have supervisors who became mentors to me. And I think I fall into that same mentorship role with my students. I'm really proud of the students I've had the opportunity to train and work with—especially now since many have come back to work for us full-time. It's a full-circle kind of experience for sure."

**We're all about service** to patients and families. To achieve the best possible outcomes, Casa Colina has created an environment where our clinicians can learn, grow, and bring their own talents to bear on improving the care experience. One of the ways we do this is by giving them opportunities to collaborate on medical research.

As doctors, nurses, and therapists administer care, occasionally they see new and better ways to do it. Located on our 20-acre Pomona campus, the Casa Colina Research Institute (CCRI) works hand-in-hand with these frontline clinicians to pursue new, evidence-based treatments. As the only freestanding hospital in the state with an independently funded research department, Casa Colina is committed to scientific inquiry that has a meaningful impact for our patients, now and in the future.

Our Director of Speech-Language Pathology, Melissa Howard, MS, CCC-SLP, knows firsthand about that commitment. Having worked in Casa Colina's Transitional Living Center, Acute Rehabilitation Wing, Outpatient Center, and everywhere in between, Melissa has seen her share of what works for the patients—and occasionally what can be improved.

Earlier in her career at Casa Colina, while working with individuals with stroke-related dysphagia, Howard noted that "thick liquids"—consumable liquids commonly used to treat patients with swallowing disorders—had the unfortunate side effect of causing malnutrition and dehydration in her patients. Yet many of these patients were not yet ready to safely consume thinner options like water.

"Clinically, I saw a need for something different with how we were treating these patients," says the 20-year Casa Colina veteran. "And not just us, but the whole speech pathology world. I saw this lack of information and a gap in the way we were providing treatment."

So, in 2006, with physician approval, Howard went to work, mixing her own mid-range, "textured thin liquids" to fill that gap. For the next several years, using her mixtures, she saw increased patient satisfaction and improved outcomes. What's more, she knew her discovery could be useful beyond the walls of Casa Colina.

In 2013, she approached the newly hired director of the Casa Colina Research Institute, Emily Rosario, PhD, with the idea of reviewing and documenting outcomes in a systematic manner, all with the goal of sharing the successful textured thin liquids with other institutions.

"She came to me and said, 'I feel like this has value and my patients are happier. It would be nice to put this out there so that other clinicians can do what we've done,'" recalls Dr. Rosario.

Together they began putting objective measures to these new treatments, collecting both past and new data from real patients at Casa Colina Hospital. A few months later, they connected with researchers at Cal Poly Pomona to test and measure viscosities of liquids at different temperatures, seeking to better understand why certain patients benefitted nutritionally from one consistency over another.

In the ensuing years, Howard and Rosario would present at national conferences, sharing updates on the research with other clinicians to improve patient care beyond Casa Colina. As word spread, the groundbreaking work became a catalyst for a new industry standard for speech-language pathologists. In 2017, the International Dysphagia Diet Standardization Initiative (IDDSI), a global initiative to improve the lives of hundreds of millions living with swallowing disorders, identified a similar liquid consistency, which they termed "slightly thick." In 2018, Howard and Rosario co-published a well-received scientific research paper, "Use





a Emily Rosario, PhD and Melissa Howard, MS, CCC-SLP assist a patient on a modified barium swallow study.

of Textured Thin Liquids in Patients With Dysphagia," in the *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*.

The research continues to improve patient care globally. It all started with a single idea to help a Casa Colina patient.

"Melissa was meant to be a researcher in a way because she's very creative," says Dr. Rosario. "She's so focused on what's good for her patients that it drove her to do something that nobody else was doing."

One of CCRI's goals is to explore, document, and disseminate information about new interventions like Howard's—useful, effective treatments that improve lives. Whether it's their internationally adopted Fall-risk Scale for hospital patients, or their groundbreaking work with UCLA and the California Institute of Technology exploring braincomputer interfaces for individuals with quadriplegia, CCRI's primary purpose is always improving patient outcomes. Sometimes that calls for fancy technology. Other times, it simply takes the ingenuity and determination of a dedicated speech-language pathologist.

"Everything we do at CCRI is informed by the patient population and by working with clinicians like Melissa," says Dr. Rosario. "As researchers, we obviously have blind spots, so working with the clinicians helps us to hone in more on relevant issues and develop interventions that are more appropriate for patients."

The fruitful collaboration is no accident, says Howard, in large part thanks to the forward vision of Casa Colina's leadership team. In particular, she credits President and CEO Dr. Felice Loverso, a fellow speech-language pathologist, for encouraging a culture of clinical curiosity where the goal is always to improve patient care.

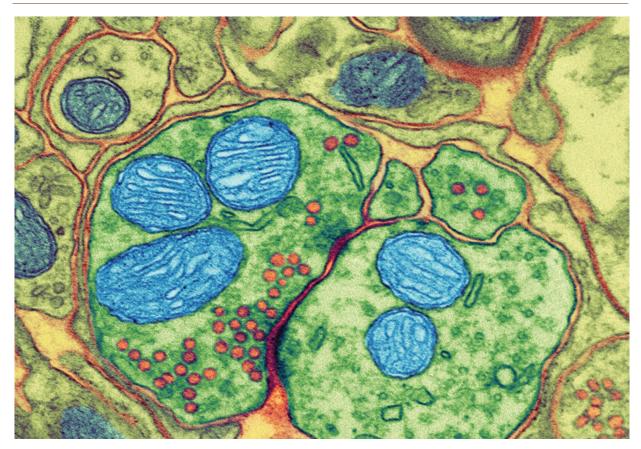
Dr. Rosario agrees, also noting the personal satisfaction that comes with witnessing the real, immediate impact her research has on Casa Colina patients. It's a reward not always afforded in more traditional academic research settings.

"We truly have autonomy to be able to do what we think is going to be the best for the patient," says Dr. Rosario. "That's the greater culture here at Casa Colina. That's the most important piece of what we're doing."

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## gracefulgiving



Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare is committed to conducting medical research and expanding our programs and services in order to meet the evolving needs of our community. One of the ways we're able to do so is through corporate and foundational support from granting organizations.

To date for fiscal year 2022, the Casa Colina Foundation secured more than \$1.5 million to support clinical research, program development, capital projects, and more. We are grateful to the following organizations for funding these projects, supporting our mission, and helping us to pursue new and innovative ways to care for our community.

## Saving Limbs and Improving Community Health UniHealth Foundation – \$800,000

With a three-year grant from the UniHealth Foundation, Casa Colina is leading a new effort to address health disparities for individuals at risk for lower-limb amputation in our region. A budding collaboration with Keck Medicine of USC, local healthcare providers, and other community stakeholders, the Casa Colina Limb Preservation Program seeks to improve health education and access to timely, quality healthcare for this at-risk population, with the goal of addressing the disease processes that result in adverse outcomes like amputation. The grant supports the hiring of a wound care nurse and community liaison, as well as community benefits like free foot health screenings and educational materials.

#### Interactive Musical Playground

W.M. Keck Foundation – \$250,000

Research shows that participation in music-based intervention increases self-esteem, reduces anxiety, and

improves quality of life for children with autism and other developmental or acquired disabilities. In pursuit of innovative therapies for our young patients, the Casa Colina Children's Services Center is constructing a Musical Playground, an interactive play structure where everyday objects are reimagined as musical instruments. The playground will offer a fun, fulfilling experience that creates significant therapeutic benefits for children with disabilities, helping them to improve motor skills, cognition, socialization, and more. Funding from the W.M. Keck Foundation will provide several structural components, including Interactive Flowers, a Musical Water Harp, and Conductor Pads.

#### Children's Services General Operating Funds

Larry and Helen Hoag Foundation – \$50,000

Thanks to funding from the Larry and Helen Hoag Foundation, the Casa Colina Children's Services Center will soon provide its specialized pediatric rehabilitation services to even more youth in need. The award provides general operating funds to support comprehensive services for children with physical, developmental, and neurological disabilities that require therapeutic and rehabilitative services. The grant also supports expansion of existing programs and development of new ones to address the needs of young adults with disabilities transitioning into the community—a key priority of our Children's Services Center.

#### **Exploring Treatments for Long Covid**

Norris Foundation – \$45,000

"Long Covid" is a post-viral illness that is estimated to affect 10-20% of Covid-19 patients, regardless of initial disease severity or age. Long Covid symptoms can last for weeks or months and affect multiple organs, including the heart, lungs, brain, and kidneys, all with the potential to cause permanent damage if not addressed. Based on the rationale that Long Covid symptoms significantly overlap with functions of the vagus nerve, which serves as a conduit between the brain and body, the Casa Colina Research Institute (CCRI) will explore non-invasive vagus nerve stimulation as a novel treatment for this complex condition.

## Social Isolation and Quality of Life for Individuals with Spinal Cord Injury

Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation – \$45,000

During the Covid-19 pandemic, individuals with spinal cord injury (SCI) have been especially impacted. At increased risk for anxiety, loneliness, and depression, individuals with SCI have often been unable to access the social and support services they regularly depend on to decrease social isolation and improve quality of life. Remote support services have played an increasingly important role in connecting these at-risk individuals to needed resources. With support from the Reeve Foundation, CCRI is providing individuals with SCI new opportunities for social engagement using technology. The project's Adaptive Recreation Program connects participants to hobbies and interest groups that provide meaningful, sustainable social interaction, including gaming, art, gardening, fitness, and more.

### Additional funding received for FY22 includes several generous continuing grants:

### Therapeutic Interventions for Disorders of Consciousness

Tiny Blue Dot Foundation – \$350,000

Last year, CCRI received a three-year, \$350,000 grant from the Tiny Blue Dot Foundation to research therapeutic interventions for Disorders of Consciousness (DOCs). Led by CCRI's Dr. Caroline Schnakers and UCLA's Dr. Martin Monti, the project aims to improve the assessment and care of persons with DOCs such as coma and vegetative state, as well as to identify novel therapeutic interventions to treat this population.

#### **Exploring Motor Learning Post-stroke**

National Institutes of Health – \$275,000

In 2021, researchers at CCRI and USC received a three-year, \$275,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health to explore the effectiveness of "speed training" in improving motor control recovery for individuals with mild to moderate arm impairment following a stroke.

## Cognitive Neural Prosthetics for Clinical Applications

National Institutes of Health – \$225.000

In collaboration with the California Institute of Technology, the Casa Colina Research Institute continues to explore the capability of those with full-body paralysis to practice touchless control of computer signals using a specialized brain-computer interface. The research is funded by a five-year, \$225,000 continuation grant from the National Institutes of Health.

## EXTENDING A RECOVERY

GIFTS TO CASA COLINA'S FREE & SUBSIDIZED CARE FUND HELP PROVIDE HOPE FOR A FAMILY'S FUTURE.

**In January 2020, Stacy Elliott** awoke in the middle of the night. Something was terribly wrong. She stirred her husband. Phil.

"I was like, here," says Stacy, pointing to her right arm. "What's happening? I was scared."

Stacy was suffering an ischemic stroke. Within hours, it would leave her with full right-side paralysis and severe aphasia—and her family with an uncertain future.

"We were told by two brain specialists, including her surgeon, that she'll never use her right limbs again," recalls Phil. "She'll never speak or even understand language again."

But he and their three children kept hope. While the long-time Claremont resident stabilized in a local hospital, someone told them about Casa Colina's renowned

inpatient rehabilitation program for individuals recovering from stroke. They met with Casa Colina Director of Patient Admissions Sandi Plotkin, and she quickly agreed to start the admission process for Stacy.

"Sandi was really our first bright light," says Phil. "She was the first one to say, we're going to get you through this. It's going to be OK."

Soon, Stacy arrived at Casa Colina Hospital and began her three daily hours of specialized physical, occupational, and speech therapies tailored for stroke recovery. Stacy and Phil recall the kindness and patience of inpatient therapists like Demi Mearns, Renee Neilson, and Joe Ponce. Stacy's progress was slow but steady.

Within weeks, Stacy's insurance ran out for inpatient rehabilitation. While Stacy had made functional gains,

Casa Colina physicians, therapists, and support staff collaborate to achieve the best possible outcomes for patients like Stacy Elliott. Pictured (L to R):

David Patterson, MD; Phil Zuckerman; Renee Neilson, PTA; Stacy Elliott; Suranee Waleszonia, PhD; Amanda Perrotti, MA, CCC-SLP, CBIS; Joe Ponce, OTR/L;

Demi Mearns, MS, CCC-SLP; Sandi Plotkin, RN.

her therapists knew she would benefit from rigorous, continued treatment. They suggested Casa Colina's Transitional Living Center (TLC) Day Treatment Program, which offers six daily hours of structured outpatient therapies. Some of it would have to be paid out of pocket due to insurance limitations—pushing the family's finances to the brink. But Phil was determined to pursue it for Stacy's best chance at recovery.

Luckily, with its Free and Subsidized Care Fund, the Casa Colina Foundation could supplement the limited treatment afforded by Stacy's insurance provider, enabling her to continue her therapy for an additional two months. With regular, extended therapy, and with the guidance of TLC clinicians like Hannah Cone, Eunice Joo, and Amanda Perrotti, Stacy made great progress in the ensuing months.

"It was huge," says Phil. "To have that help—TLC was so important to her recovery. It was so helpful to have that rigorous rehabilitation. It was just a real gift."

"It was really nice," remembers Stacy. "The TLC, they were really good."

While Stacy's mobility is limited, and she struggles with speaking, she's made significant headway and continues to improve on tasks of daily living. She's even returned part-time to her job as the archivist at nearby Pitzer College. Clinical neuropsychologist Dr. Suranee Waleszonia and Stacy's therapy team even helped Stacy to get physically and emotionally resituated at work, visiting her onsite through Casa Colina's Home & Community Program.

Extended therapy and community reintegration services make a world of difference for patients like Stacy Elliott, bridging the gap between sustaining a life-changing injury and finding their new normal. Gifts to our Foundation enable Casa Colina patients to extend their recoveries through subsidized care and take advantage of a wide range of other community benefits.

Now, Stacy's enjoying the ability to reengage with her community. She's painting and cooking again. She drives locally and participates in a book group with friends. She's regaining sense of self through the everyday routines of work and family life.

Phil is just grateful that Casa Colina provided an opportunity to go farther in her recovery.

"Obviously, the therapy was for Stacy, but it's also giving our children their mom back," says Phil. "It's giving me my spouse back. Our children benefit. I benefit. The Pitzer community benefits.

"As she gets better, it's making a lot of people's lives better."



(a) With the help of extended therapies, Stacy Elliott has returned part-time to her job as the archivist at Pitzer College.

#### THE GIFT OF GIVING

When you give to the Casa Colina Foundation, you not only support free and subsidized care, but clinician training, medical research, health education, and so much more. For fiscal year 2021, your gifts to Casa Colina were a gift to your community, providing services that included:

- >> \$655,658 toward specialized care for 742 infants, children, and teens with disabilities
- 3 \$352,459 toward clinical research to find new interventions for individuals with disabilities
- Health information and access to resources for more than 1,000 persons through virtual conferences and educational sessions
- » 6,400 hours to train 8 doctoral students in psychology and neuropsychology
- » Virtual support groups that reached over 150 individuals with chronic diseases such as ALS, Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, and fibromyalqia

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, many of our community benefit activities were canceled or provided in a limited capacity, resulting in a decreased dollar amount of community benefits for FY21. Read the entire FY2020 Casa Colina Community Benefits Report by visiting casacolina.org/Community-Benefits-Report.

#### **FOCUS ON FUNDRAISING**

We're always exploring new ways to raise money for our patients and our community. Visit www.casacolina.org/give to learn more about how you can support Casa Colina today!

Ways to show your support include:

- Direct donations
- >> Naming opportunities
- >> Event sponsorship
- >> Memorial donations
- >> Commemorative brick or tile
- >> In-kind gifts
- >> Volunteering

For more information, contact Director of Fund Development Mary Koenig at foundation@casacolina.org or 909/596-7733, ext. 2260.



## Offs FROM THE heart

As a nonprofit organization, Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare relies on the generosity of our amazing community donors. But we also have a quieter source of philanthropy: our staff.

Just like our community donations, every dollar donated by Casa Colina employees is maximized to generate the greatest possible impact for our patients. They give back through recurring payroll deductions, one-time donations, volunteering, and in-kind gifts. And it all adds up to a whole lot of impact, allowing us to provide the specialized medical, surgical, and rehabilitative care that has earned us national acclaim.

In celebration of those valued employee donors, we'd like to introduce you to two staff members who've been long-time supporters of Casa Colina.

#### **Mary Lyn Barber**

When Mary Lyn Barber began as a social worker at Casa Colina's Adult Day Health Center in 1996, there was never any question that she would give back.

"I believe in investing back into the organization," says Barber. "It's just part of what you do."

Now a Patient Advocate in our Outpatient Center, Barber is one of the longest-standing donors to Casa Colina's Mother Smith Circle of Giving, an employee giving program supporting free and subsidized care for Casa Colina patients and families. She's been on board since day one.

Whether it's for a child with autism, an adult with a physical disability, or someone in need of specialized surgical care, she says, our services are just as critical for those who cannot afford them as for those who can.

"Insurance, non-insurance, whatever the reason is—I think there should be a way for people to have equal access to the care they need," she says. "So that's why I do it."

Barber attributes her strong giving nature to her parents, Joseph and Alberta, who she says instilled in her the core principle of helping those in need. She even remembers their family hosting orphans for the holidays, in addition to other philanthropic gestures. Today, Barber donates regularly to Casa Colina not just through her many payroll and event contributions but by volunteering her time whenever possible.

For Barber, her investment in Casa Colina is an investment in the future—a way to strengthen the organization and increase its ability to provide community benefits. She even speaks with new hires at employee orientations on the importance of contributing—why it's not necessarily the amount you give, but the symbol it sends.

"It means that we believe in the tenets of this organization," she says. "We believe in the services and what we can provide."

#### **Ross Lesins**

Ross Lesins' first title at Casa Colina was "PC Specialist."

It almost seems quaint. When he began at Casa Colina in 1989, there were just 15 computers on the entire campus. But in the 32 years since, Casa Colina has grown to meet its community's changing needs, reaching 1,000-strong employees who now necessitate hundreds of computers. And the job also evolved—Lesins is now the Chief Information Officer.

But one thing never changed: his commitment to giving back through payroll deductions, event support, and more.

"I've been a donor since the beginning," he says. "I believe in what we do. I know the money goes to a good cause. How could I not?"

Lesins knew Casa Colina even before serving three decades in its Information Technology Department. His older sister required neurosurgery in 1976, when Lesins was in grade school. After, she came to Casa Colina for rehabilitation, and her therapy allowed her to live a more productive,

comfortable life and eventually graduate from college.

"It left a lasting impression on me, because she was a huge person in my life," he says. Sadly, she would pass away some years later. But, for Lesins, the point was made: This is a place that changes lives.

A decade later, he heard about an opening at Casa Colina. He interviewed and got the job. As an employee, he began to understand Casa Colina's value from a deeper perspective.

"Everybody I talk to recognizes the name, or they've had a loved one who's been here," says Lesins. "It offers so much. It's one of the cornerstones of our region."

The work done each day at Casa Colina has real impact, he says, creating stronger families, longer careers, and a more productive society. More recently, it helped extend the health of his elderly mother well into her 90s, allowing her to enjoy her remaining years with dignity and independence. It's this value, he says, that makes supporting Casa Colina easy.

"The giving I'm able to do—I'm confident that it makes a difference. I've never, ever regretted giving to Casa Colina."



Ross Lesins and Mary Lyn Barber



IN MEMORIAM

#### Richard Shubin, MD

It is with great sadness that we mourn the passing of Richard Shubin, MD, a beloved community physician and clinical neurologist who was a member of the medical staff at Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare since 2002. Dr. Shubin served as program medical director for Casa Colina's innovative programs in Multiple Sclerosis and Movement Disorders.

Dr. Shubin was highly committed to patients with neurological conditions, helping to improve the lives of countless individuals through his work at both Casa Colina and his private practice. He distinguished himself as a clinical researcher in the areas of Multiple Sclerosis, Sleep Disorders, and Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases, to which he devoted more than three decades' worth of study. Over his noteworthy career, Dr. Shubin served as site investigator for more than 100 clinical trials. authored more than 15 peerreviewed papers and book chapters, and was an adjunct clinical faculty member at the LAC-USC School of Medicine.

Please join us in remembering Dr. Shubin for his wonderful talents as a physician and in honoring his steadfast commitment to improving the health of our community.

#### A COMMUNITY OF CARE

At Casa Colina, it's our mission to optimize our patients' medical and rehabilitation outcomes, and to do so in a safe environment that respects their dignity, diversity, and individuality. And by giving to the Casa Colina Foundation, you become a part of that mission.

We owe our sincerest gratitude to the individuals, families, foundations, and businesses who have made Casa Colina their charity of choice. Your amazing support helps tens of thousands of patients each year to maximize their recovery from disabling injury or illness. allowing us to expand services, pursue new medical and therapeutic treatments, and provide free or subsidized care for the patients and families who need it most.

We truly could not reach as many individuals as we do without the help of this amazing donor community. Whether in the form of direct donations, estate planning, or in-kind gifts, your goodwill has a lasting, meaningful impact. Our community is also generous with its time. Last vear, our hardworking volunteers contributed nearly 6.000 hours in support of Casa Colina's specialized programs and services.



Every dollar we receive will be maximized to create the best possible impact for our patients. On behalf of all those patients served, and those yet to be served. Casa Colina thanks the following groups and individuals for their enduring kindness.

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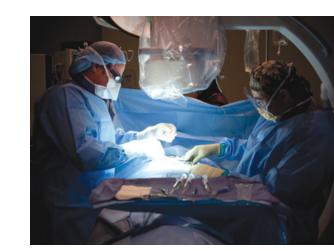
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We strive to keep accurate records. If you are aware of an error or omission, please contact the Casa Colina Foundation at 909/596-7733, ext. 2237.

#### CASA COLINA HOSTS FIRST-EVER VIRTUAL FUNDRAISER





Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare was pleased to host our first-ever virtual Tribute to Courage Gala on Thursday, April 8, 2021.

Livestreamed across our Facebook page and website, our debut online fundraiser celebrated the inspiring story of Joanne Lichtman, a former Casa Colina patient who overcame a catastrophic spinal cord injury to reclaim her life and embrace a brighter future. The event also featured a VIP video tour of our 20-acre Pomona campus with Casa Colina President

and CEO Felice L. Loverso, PhD, offering an up-close and personal look into where the magic happens at Casa Colina, as well as some of the amazing clinicians who make it a reality.

Thank you to all of the wonderful supporters who tuned in for our virtual event, which raised just under \$600,000 toward a variety of community benefits, including health screenings, education, and free and subsidized care at Casa Colina. Your generous donations strengthen our community and help us offer specialized medical, surgical, and rehabilitative care to more patients who need but otherwise cannot afford it. We extend special gratitude to our returning event host, actor and producer Bonnie Hunt, who joined us remotely from her home in Chicago, as well as to our many event sponsors.

Couldn't catch the live show? "Tribute to Courage 2021: A Virtual Event" is still available for viewing on our website by visiting casacolina.org/WatchTribute2021.

CASACOLINA.ORG KEYSTONE 2022

Stacy Yip

Sabrina Zimmerman

## **Growth & Progress**

#### 1 NEW EDUCATION CENTER UNDERWAY

To increase valued interactions with our community, Casa Colina is creating a new state-of-the-art Education Center on our Pomona campus. Casa Colina's previous meeting facility, the Tamkin Education Center, was turned into

treatment space in 2020 to meet growing demand for patient care.

Casa Colina broke ground in January 2022 on the 4,000-square-foot building, which will feature a contemporary interior design capable of facilitating intimate gatherings, larger community meetings, and everything in between—a collaborative space open to our patients, community, and staff. The center will be home to modern amenities and state-of-the-art audio/visual equipment, all accentuated by Casa Colina's trademark Mission-style aesthetic, inside and out.



## CASA COLINA LAUNCHES ENT PROGRAM

Launched in early 2022, Casa Colina's new Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) Program offers comprehensive medical, surgical, and rehabilitative treatment for conditions of the ears, nose, throat, sinuses, and larynx. Casa Colina's licensed audiologists and speech-language pathologists have partnered with ENT physicians from Keck Medicine of USC to treat these conditions, as well as vocal and swallowing disorders. All care is provided on Casa Colina's Pomona campus, helping to fill a local need for this specialized otolaryngology care.



#### 2 LIMB PROGRAM UP AND RUNNING

Lower-limb amputation is a growing concern locally and beyond. For individuals with diabetes or peripheral artery disease, common foot conditions such as ulcers, blisters, or other open wounds can become infected or heal poorly, causing otherwise avoidable complications. In drastic circumstances, this may include amputation of the foot or lower leg.

To help prevent these outcomes, Casa Colina has partnered with Dr. David Armstrong of Keck Medicine of USC, as well as podiatric surgeon Dr. Nava Mohammadi, to offer a Limb Preservation Program. Located on our well-appointed Pomona campus, the program expands access to foot care and promotes foot health education for those at risk in our community, including free monthly foot health screenings at our Pomona and Azusa locations. This critical new program is enhanced by a three-year grant from the UniHealth Foundation. For more information, visit casacolina.org/LimbPreservation.



### 4 SPIRITUAL GARDEN NOW OPEN

Casa Colina Hospital welcomed donors, staff, and community members to the grand opening of the new John P. Previti Memorial Spiritual Garden on November 11, 2021. The event unveiled this beautiful setting of non-denominational worship and reflection—one that will offer Casa Colina patients, families, and staff a quiet place to reflect and rejuvenate. Several major donors were on hand, including representatives from the John P. Previti Memorial Foundation, Pak Lee, and Ellen and Wing Tam, PhD.



## 5 MUSICAL PLAYGROUND IN THE WORKS

To enhance our therapeutic services for kids, the Casa Colina Children's Services Center is in the process of completing a multisensory Interactive Musical Playground. Supported by generous contributions from granting agencies, community nonprofit organizations, and private donors, the project will

feature large sonic flowers, a musical water harp, a musical staircase, and other interactive elements that children can use to create fun outdoor musical experiences.

The playground will offer CSC therapists a new tool to improve children's social, emotional, and behavioral skills. The CSC anticipates that 400 children will benefit annually from structured therapeutic sessions utilizing the new playground.

#### **6** HAPPENING ONLINE

Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare is proud to unveil our recent website update at www.casacolina.org. The new site offers a cleaner, more intuitive user experience to connect you with the information you need faster. It's modern, responsive across all devices, and full of great photos of real Casa Colina clinicians and patients.

Casa Colina has also begun offering free health education webinars. Find us on YouTube, and then head over to our Patient Education playlist to view a range of useful health education webinars, from Back Pain and Wheelchair & Seating options to Orthopedics and Foot Health. You can also follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for updates on programs, community benefits, and more—just visit our website and look for our social media buttons at the bottom of each page.







When Felice L. Loverso, PhD arrived in 1998, Casa Colina was at a turning point. Considering its dwindling census, aging infrastructure, and uncertain future, the new President and CEO could have balked.

#### Instead, he saw opportunity.

A speech-language pathologist by trade, Loverso began his career in medical schools and Veterans Affairs hospitals, ascending through varying levels of clinical leadership. The New York native eventually landed in Boston, where he served as the COO and CEO of Braintree Rehabilitation Hospital from 1994 to 1998, overseeing clinical operations for patients with a variety of complex rehabilitation needs. That time at Braintree instilled in him a leadership style that would come to define Casa Colina during Loverso's tenure, which will end with his retirement in fall 2022.

"I brought the ideas of 'team approach' and 'physician leadership' with me from Boston," says Loverso, reflecting on 24 years of service to Casa Colina. "With those ingredients, I knew we could achieve fantastic patient outcomes and foster a sense of empowerment among our clinical staff. And I think we did just that. We learned to be successful."

But culture-building isn't rapid-fire work. In the weeks, months, and years following his arrival, Dr. Loverso and the Casa Colina Board of Directors methodically began instituting

the changes, small and large, that would shift Casa Colina back toward its core business of acute, hospital-based rehabilitation—a tradition established in its 85-year-old roots as a treatment center for children with polio. Together, Dr. Loverso and the Board created a vision for the Casa Colina that exists today: a physician-led, continuum-based model of medical, surgical, and rehabilitative care.

"One of the first things we did was rewrite our mission statement to better reflect the culture we were going to establish," says Loverso. "That included honoring each patient's dignity, individuality, and self-esteem. This really resonated with our clinicians and support staff, and most importantly, it reflected how we would want to be treated as patients ourselves. This became our culture."

Staff buy-in was critical, after all. Dr. Loverso sought to forge new bonds with existing clinical staff and community physicians. Together, they established a collegial atmosphere, where clinicians were encouraged to pursue the patient's best interests. Empowering his clinicians helped to ensure that the patient was always the number-one focus.

He also brought a new, national credibility to Casa Colina's already-renowned rehabilitation operations. During his tenure, Loverso served as chair of the American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association and the Fund for Access to Inpatient Rehabilitation (FAIR Fund), helping to increase awareness around the field of inpatient hospital rehabilitation and promoting policies that expand access to it.

"From the start, we had a clear vision of excellence," he says. "We already had so many amazing clinicians in place. If you have the right people, with the right training and tools, then buildings don't matter."

Nevertheless, Loverso and the Board did set about improving the existing infrastructure, completely overhauling Casa Colina's 20-acre Pomona campus, including a state-of-the-art hospital opened in 2005, a Medical-Surgical Wing opened in 2016, a Research Institute

# One of the first things we did was rewrite our mission statement to better reflect the culture we were going to establish."

building in 2017, and endless upgrades to the Outpatient Center, Physician Specialty Clinics, Children's Services Center, Transitional Living Center, and more—all accentuated with Casa Colina's trademark Mission-style architecture.

In addition, Loverso oversaw expansions to Casa Colina's long-term residential programs for individuals with brain injury, including renovation of the existing Lucerne Valley residence and construction of a new Apple Valley facility in 2001. In 2008, Loverso and the Board dedicated a new outpatient rehabilitation center in Azusa to supplement regional demand for services. Even as Loverso leaves Casa Colina, construction has begun on a new Education Center and other projects.

All of this renovation was made possible, says Loverso, thanks to the establishment of the Casa Colina Foundation by his predecessor, Dale Eazell. These foundational funds enabled Casa Colina to borrow and build, giving leadership the freedom to pursue its vision.

As Casa Colina grew, one thing remained constant: a singular focus on exceptional patient care.

"At Casa Colina we've always asked ourselves, 'Is this a hospital that I would put my own mother, father, child, or partner in?' Because if not, then we're not living up to the standards we've set for ourselves," he says.

Current Chairman of the Board of Directors Randy Blackman attributes the establishment of those standards to Loverso's leadership.

"He's a true leader in that he engages with all the members of the team to share his vision and work together to achieve that vision, which is all about patient care," says Blackman. "Phil is definitely not the type of CEO that leads from the administration office." Blackman says it's evident how inspired Loverso is by Casa Colina's patients and families, sharing in their successes and heartaches.

"He is so impactful because of all the time he spends in the hospital with patients, families, and the teams of doctors, nurses, and therapists who are delivering their care," says Blackman. Indeed, Loverso can be found most Thanksgivings and Christmases in the hospital cafeteria donning chef's whites, serving dinner to patients and families unable to enjoy their own holiday meals together at home.

"That continual, direct interaction with patients inspires him to keep building Casa Colina and make it better able to serve its patients," says Blackman.

While Loverso's departure is a meaningful loss, says Blackman, he and the Board are confident Casa Colina's brightest days are still ahead and have already begun the search for its next leader. In the meantime, Casa Colina is positioned for continued success. It's as clinically and financially viable as ever. And for Dr. Loverso, that seemed like the right time to say farewell.

"We're leaving Casa Colina better than we found it," he says. "Our next leaders have the tools and foundation to expand upon what we've done. The next adventure will certainly be better than the last."

While it's a bittersweet departure, Loverso looks forward to more time with his wife, children, and fishing with his grandkids, as well as revisiting his East Coast roots. But until his final day, that commitment to service will remain.

"It's not the end. It's the beginning," he says.

"As committed as we were on day one, we are just that committed today about the future of Casa Colina."

#### CASA COLINA'S OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE



#### BALANCE SHEETS Consolidated/Unaudited

#### March 31, 2021 and 2020

Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$276,157,000	\$243,772,000
Net assets with and without donor restrictions	198,733,000	167,034,000
Long-term debt and other liabilities	49,717,000	50,658,000
Current liabilities	\$27,707,000	\$26,080,000
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Total Assets	\$276,157,000	\$243,772,000
Other assets	2,766,000	1,371,000
Property and equipment, net	94,375,000	103,714,000
Assets limited as to use	15,983,000	15,609,000
Investments	107,181,000	81,982,000
Current assets	\$55,852,000	\$41,096,000
ASSETS	2021	2020

#### OPERATING ENTITIES\* FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE Unaudited

#### Fiscal year ending March 31

Net Income from Operations Prior to Depreciation, Interest, and Amortization	\$21,024,000	\$19,715,000
Total Operating Expenses	\$100,360,000	\$97,114,000
Other expenses	35,003,000	29,791,000
Salaries and benefits	\$65,357,000	\$67,323,000
OPERATING EXPENSES		
Total Revenues	\$121,384,000	\$116,829,000
Transfers from Foundation for uncompensated care, community benefits, and other strategic initiatives	3,729,000	2,471,000
Other operating revenue	4,560,000	2,715,000
Net patient services revenues	\$113,095,000	\$111,643,000
REVENUES	2021	2020

**SPECIALIZED CARE, CLOSE TO HOME** 



Casa Colina opened its doors in 1938 in Chino, California, as an inpatient treatment center for children rehabilitating from polio. Since then, its staff, with the support of the Casa Colina Board of Directors, has continually expanded services to meet the growing needs of the community and beyond.

### Casa Colina offers the following medical, surgical, and rehabilitation services:

- ➤ Acute care hospital with 68 rehabilitation beds, six intensive care unit beds, 25 private medical beds, three operating rooms, and a gastroenterology procedure room; accredited by the Joint Commission and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities
- Transitional Living Center with 46 residential rehabilitation beds, day treatment program, and home and community services; accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities
- Outpatient rehabilitation centers in Pomona and Azusa
- Physician clinics with nearly 30 medical specialties
- ➤ Long-term residential facilities in Apple Valley and Lucerne Valley with 85 shared beds for people with brain injuries; 12 beds in Claremont for adults with developmental delay; licensed by the Department of Social Services

- Hyperbaric medicine, wound care, and limb preservation
- Diagnostic imaging
- Audiology
- Children's outpatient services
- Research institute
- Laboratory
- > Support groups
- > Wellness and fitness programs
- Community and professional education programs
- Outdoor Adventures recreational therapy program

#### Also on the Pomona campus:

- > Casa Colina Ambulatory Surgery Center
- Medical office building with Garey Orthopedics, Mountain View Urgent Care, Pomona Dialysis and Vascular Center, San Antonio Pharmacy
- ➤ Inland Neurosurgery Institute

To learn more about Casa Colina's continuum of care, visit casacolina.org.

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OPTIMIZE MEDICAL
RECOVERY AND
REHABILITATION OUTCOMES
FOR ALL PATIENTS IN A
SAFE ENVIRONMENT
THAT RESPECTS THEIR
DIGNITY, DIVERSITY, AND
INDIVIDUALITY.

LEADING AND DEFINING EXCELLENCE IN SPECIALIZED MEDICAL, SURGICAL, AND REHABILITATIVE CARE.

OUR VALUES

APPLY CLINICAL
EXCELLENCE, EDUCATION,
AND RESEARCH TO
ENHANCE QUALITY
OF LIFE IN THE
COMMUNITIES WE SERVE,
WITH A COMMITMENT
TO COMPASSION,
COLLABORATION,
AND INTEGRITY.

CASACOLINA.ORG KI

\*Excludes Foundation

KEYSTONE 2022



255 East Bonita Avenue P.O. Box 6001 Pomona, CA 91769-6001



CASA COLINA HOSPITAL AND CENTERS FOR HEALTHCARE 255 East Bonita Avenue P.O. Box 6001 Pomona, CA 91769-6001 909/596-7733 TDD-TTY-Q 909/596-3646 Email: care@casacolina.org casacolina.org









Casa Colina Hospital – Ext. 3000 Children's Services - Ext. 4200 Corporate Offices – Ext. 2300 Diagnostic Imaging – Ext. 4541 Finance/ Patient Accounting – Ext. 5558 Foundation – Ext. 2232 Human Resources – Ext. 2154 Laboratory – Ext. 3150 Outdoor Adventures - Ext. 2200 Outpatient Center – Ext. 3500 Padua Village - 909/626-4799 Physician Clinics – Ext. 3800 Research Institute – Ext. 2220 Transitional Living Center – Ext. 4100

CASA COLINA AZUSA CENTER 910 East Alosta Avenue Azusa, CA 91702-2709

626/334-8735

760/247-7711

760/248-6245

CASA COLINA AT APPLE VALLEY 22200 Highway 18 Apple Valley, CA 92307-3948

CASA COLINA AT RANCHO PIÑO VERDE 11981 Midway Avenue Lucerne Valley, CA 92356-7517

Learn how to support Casa Colina's latest fundraising efforts by calling 909/596-7733, ext. 2260 or visiting casacolina.org/give.