

County to expand mental health services

New hires include psychiatrists, a drug disorder services chief

By Jondi Gumz

jgumz@santacruzsentinel.com
@jondigumz on Twitter

SANTA CRUZ » In the midst of uncertainty about future federal funding for their \$717 million budget, Santa Cruz County supervisors got good news from their own health care staff Wednesday about expanding mental health and substance abuse services.

Giang Nguyen, who oversees the Health Services Agency, and Erik Riera, director of mental health and substance abuse ser-

vices, listed several improvements that have been made or are on the way:

- Two mental health specialists will be hired for the mobile emergency response team with weekend hours and nights.
- Much-needed vacancies for psychiatrists, doctors and nurse practitioners have been filled, though some openings remain.
- A pilot program with Stanford will bring six doctors into county clinics for a six-month medical residency.
- A dozen county clinicians are

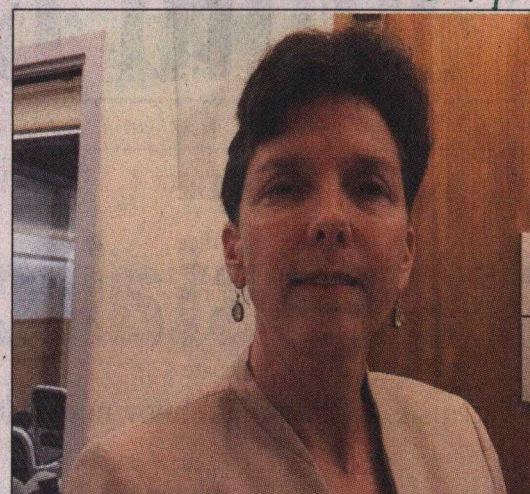
trained to provide medication-assisted treatment to people addicted to opioid painkillers.

▪ With an estimated 20,000 county residents experiencing substance use disorder, the county plans to double the 1,500 existing treatment beds via Medical expansion.

▪ A new chief of substance use disorder services, Shaina Zura, started June 1.

▪ So far, 19 first-time mothers are in the new Nurse-Family Partnership program, which started

BUDGET » PAGE 3



Ellen Timberlake, Santa Cruz County director of human services, provided details Wednesday on the new \$350,000 Thrive by Three initiative.

JONDI GUMZ
— SANTA CRUZ
SENTINEL

SANTACRUZSENTINEL.COM | LOCAL NEWS-A | 3

Budget

FROM PAGE 2

in May to help new moms get prenatal care and have healthier babies.

A budget of \$146 million and staffing of around 550 positions are proposed for health services next year, with more than half the jobs devoted to behavioral health.

Nguyen said the county's Behavioral Health Center serves 3,000 people a year and primary care clinics now serve people with mild to moderate mental health conditions.

Riera said a grant from Central California Alliance for Health helped recruit psychiatrists, with six of 11 vacancies filled.

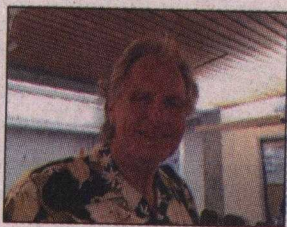
All three openings for nurse-practitioners are filled, he said, and the clinics, which needed three doctors and four nurse-practitioners, now needs just one of each.

The human services department, which will have a budget of \$126 million and staffing of 598 positions, helps about 91,000 people a year, intervening when children or elders are abused or neglected, checking food stamp eligibility, serving veterans, overseeing in-home supportive services and job



PHOTOS BY JONDI GUMZ — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Shaina Zura is Santa Cruz County's new chief of substance use disorder services.



Bob Campbell, director of the Foster Grandparent Program, which is under the umbrella of the Seniors Council in Aptos.

training.

Because of funding constraints, some 39 positions will not be filled, and people applying for food stamps will have longer waits, director Ellen Timberlake said.

Timberlake gave details on the new \$350,000 Thrive by Three fund, an initiative launched by the supervisors to reduce the rates of child maltreatment and babies and toddlers in foster care and increase the percentage of young mothers get-

OPENINGS

Many vacant positions in county mental health and at clinics have been filled but a few remain open.

Mental health

Was	Now
11	5

Nurse practitioners	3	0
---------------------	---	---

Clinics

Was	Now	
Physicians	3	1

Nurse practitioners	4	1
---------------------	---	---

Source: Erik Riera

ting first-trimester prenatal care.

Home visits with supportive services were the top priority for two dozen nonprofit representatives working on Thrive by Three.

The supervisors confirmed support for the new "core investment" approach to funding services by nonprofits for \$4.32 million for the next three years.

Supervisor Greg Caput pushed for \$15,000 for the Foster Grandparent program, which provides mentors to school children. He got agreement for one year of funding, which Foster Grandparent Program director Bob Campbell said would leverage \$150,000 in federal funds.