

## **Hope in Recovery Wellness Centers Empower Clients**

By Melissa Murphy  
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Lorena Salinas, 41, of Dixon, considers herself a very happy, upbeat kind of person, but after an unfortunate injury at a local grocery store where she worked, she became very depressed and didn't know what to do.

"I was very independent, but then I couldn't function," Salinas said. "I relied on my mom and sister to help with cooking, driving and even bathing."

Salinas tore a ligament in her right hand and had to go through extensive rehabilitation to regain strength in the dominant hand. She lost her job and was struggling to find a place that understood her new limitations.

Isolated and depressed, Salinas ran into a former co-worker who invited her to Nueva Vida in Dixon - a light at the end of the tunnel.



Penny Rivera, who has suffered from schizophrenia for 22 years, received help and now helps others at Nueva Vida in Dixon. (Joel Rosenbaum/The Reporter)

Nueva Vida, as well as two other Wellness & Recovery Centers, one each in Fairfield and Vallejo, opened in late December under the management of Crestwood Behavioral Health in Solano to help provide services that focus on person-centered recovery in a learning environment, while partnering with local community agencies to address individuals' needs for those who are dealing with a mental illness.

"We're about empowering consumers," said Gail McDonald, the campus administrator for Crestwood Behavioral Health Center in Solano. "We are far more than just a drop-in center."

McDonald explained that consumers develop long-term goals, while the centers help them reach those goals.

The programs provided by Crestwood and Dreamcatchers help people work toward community reintegration with recovery education, vocational skill building, peer mentoring, computer training, community linkages, family and support system training, mobility training, warm line support and the opportunity for paid employment at a range of levels.

Approximately 26 percent of Americans 18 and older suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year, according to a press release.

After visiting Nueva Vida, Salinas started to volunteer her services, by using her bilingual skills to interpret and her outgoing personality to help at the center.

"I didn't want to be a burden to my mom," said Salinas, who is now a peer supporter. "Everything turned around when I came here (Nueva Vida). It helped build my confidence back up and it has been very rewarding."

Now, Salinas works full-time for the center in Vallejo, helping facilitate a variety of group sessions, giving advice and listening.

"Everyone is so supportive," Salinas added. "They needed me and I needed them."

Penny Rivera, 44, who has suffered from schizophrenia since she was 22, also found hope at Nueva Vida.

In 1982 Rivera's dad died and, as she explained it, that's when the voices started. Rivera had a nervous breakdown and was diagnosed as bipolar with schizophrenia.

Not being able to keep a job in the community, Rivera found comfort at the wellness center.

"It was a casual atmosphere," she said. "I love to talk and I have a great personality."

During her first visit, Rivera was hired and has worked her way up from doing janitorial duties to answering the phones.

"It changed my life," Rivera said. "I'm not lazy and I have a great attitude now."

On Friday, Rivera will begin a new phase in her wellness and recovery. She will start the Dreamcatchers program with a long-term goal of being a job coach, to help train others like herself to function at their own job.

Rivera also has been able to learn Spanish from her bilingual co-workers.

If Salinas could say one thing to those who are just like her or Rivera, it would be, "Don't ever lose hope. There is a light at the end of the tunnel."

The Recovery & Wellness Centers are located at 2201 Tuloumne St. in Vallejo, 558-1457; 1945 Kidder Ave. in Fairfield, 421-8242; and Nueva Vida at 409 North Adams St. in Dixon, 693-1190.

For more information, visit [www.dreamcatch.us](http://www.dreamcatch.us) or [crestwoodbehavioralhealth.com](http://crestwoodbehavioralhealth.com).

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