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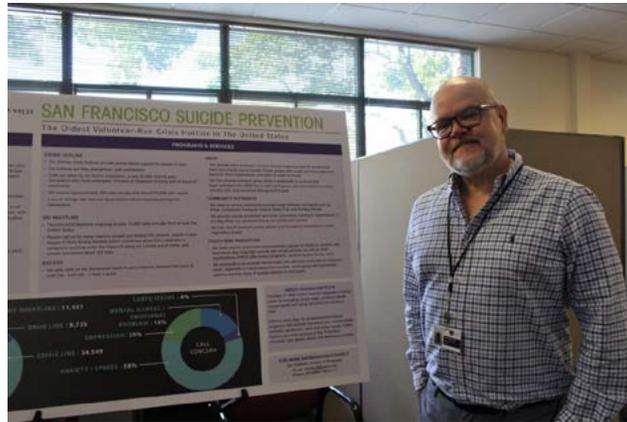


TRANSFORMING LIVES
& INNOVATING SINCE 1889

SPOTLIGHT

Van Hedwall

Director of Programs for
[San Francisco Suicide Prevention](#)



Van Hedwall, Director of Programs for [San Francisco Suicide Prevention](#) has a genial smile that he shares quite often and an earnest way of communicating his deep appreciation for the services that the staff of [San Francisco Suicide Prevention](#) provides.

Van was born in Oakland, California, where his father was a Lutheran Seminary student and his mother supported the family working at Moore Business in San Mateo. After his father became a Navy chaplain, life changed dramatically. Van, his sister Candice, and his parents lived all over the United States, including Rhode Island, Mississippi, Hawaii and northern and southern California. Olympia, Washington was home base for many years.

“Life as a Navy preacher’s kid was tough as we moved so often, usually 18 months here and there and occasionally, longer,” Van recalls. “My father was frequently at war (Vietnam, Gulf War), on ships, not present very often. Mother was a strong woman who kept all things in order, worked, bought every house we ever owned and kept the finances intact. I learned a lot from moving around so much; I learned to adapt quickly to new surroundings and people. I learned to survive being the new kid over and

over and over and developed ways to cope and strategize in group dynamics and became extremely humble and empathetic. The ability to relate to others in very directive focused ways eventually led me on a path to become a therapist.”

But before therapy, it was Tinseltown that beckoned Van. After graduating from Tumwater High School in Tumwater, Washington and from the University of Oregon’s School of Journalism with a B.A. in Telecommunications and Film, Van moved to Los Angeles to become a television and film producer. “My first job was as a production assistant on the original New Line Cinema John Waters movie “Hairspray” with Divine and Ricki Lake. I then worked on more New Line Cinema films, such as winning slasher movies such as “Critters,” “Nightmare on Elm Street IV,” Van says with a twinkle in his eyes. “I then went on to work for Binder Entertainment, who produced the Jane Fonda Workout and various partnered productions, including Pee-wee’s Playhouse Christmas Special and final season.”

After the scandal that ended Pee-wee Herman’s show, Van worked for [Dick Clark Productions](#) and was a production associate for many MTV music awards, but the

allure of Hollywood was fading. Van was ready for a change.

“Eventually, I grew tired of the narcissism and decided to leave LA; I moved to San Francisco to work for Francis Ford Coppola at [Zoetrope Studios](#) for several years. After a few years with the Copollas, I decided to leave the field of entertainment, as it didn't feel right for me anymore; something was missing. I needed to do something more meaningful, I didn't know what that was, but I knew I needed to start searching for it.”

After moving to San Francisco, Van volunteered at the [AIDS Foundation](#) for a couple of years and was an LGBTQ activist, participating in protests regarding rights and medications for HIV. “As I had been working for years in an administrative capacity in the entertainment field, I translated my skills to work for [UCSF](#), administrating an AIDS research laboratory and researching various current and new medications in the fight against AIDS. While I worked for [UCSF](#), I made the decision to go to graduate school to become a therapist and help my community further in dealing with the trauma, loss and stress that faced a dying community with very little hope,” Van shares.

He attended New College of California, a private graduate psychology school with a social clinical focus, where he specialized in LGBTQ therapy and started his practicum at [Pacific Center for Human Growth in Berkeley](#). After licensure and before coming to [San Francisco Suicide Prevention](#), he had a private practice and handled case management for the Catholic Charities residential program for people with disabling HIV/AIDS. Van also worked with

the homeless population in San Francisco, managed two Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs for 10 years with TNDC, served as a psychology professor at [Skyline College in San Bruno](#), initiated and developed a new residential program for Transitional Age Youth at [Fred Finch Youth Center](#) and ran two hospital based Intensive Outpatient (IOP) treatment programs for high risk adolescents and seniors for [Sutter Health at Mills Peninsula Hospital in San Mateo](#).

“ I like working with people in crisis. I enjoy de-escalating troubled people, I enjoy helping them to find better ways to cope and find it the most rewarding to set them on a new path towards better outcomes.

Van says, “The work we do at [San Francisco Suicide Prevention](#) can be daunting at times. The population we work with are sometimes at their highest state of crisis, sometimes they just need someone to listen to them, sometimes they just need a friendly

voice to help them gather their thoughts options and goals for the future, sometimes we have to make the hard choices with and for them because they are not engaged in critical thinking. The most rewarding part of that is that most of the time we know we have made a difference in someone's life. If for just a brief moment, we have changed their way of thinking and given them other options. We've provided them with linkage to services where they can transition into a more stable way of life.”

Van's parents retired and now live outside of Phoenix, Arizona. His sister Candice is a mother of three and a grandmother of six. Van enjoys being a grand uncle and he also enjoys working with regional theatre when he's not on the job. In 2011, he was nominated for a local Tony award for costume design for the “Golden Girls Christmas Show”. When it comes to mottos for life, he has two: “this too shall pass” and “don't sweat the small stuff”. At last year's [Laughs for Life](#) benefitting [San Francisco Suicide Prevention](#), Van presented the award for Lady Gaga's [Born This Way Foundation](#) and he is looking forward to this year's celebration in April. 🎬



Sojourner Truth Open House

On January 24, 2020, Felton celebrated the start of the [Early Intervention Program](#) at our Sojourner Truth Center site with an Open House and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.



The event was organized by COO Yohana Quiroz and Early Intervention and Inclusion Director Michelle Kaye.

Yohana spoke about Felton's vision and replication of services expanding Felton's impact in this community; Michelle shared the importance of finally having early intervention services in the Bayview community. Phyllis Hogan, Training and Volunteer Supervisor, spoke about Felton's 49 year legacy of providing early intervention services to children with special needs.

Sojourner Truth Center Site Supervisor, Telma Alcantara told everyone about her special connection with Felton because her grandson with special needs received

services at Felton's Family Developmental Center. A Sojourner Truth Center parent spoke about how much his son has benefited from receiving care at the center.

The event was attended by Felton Early Care and Education staff, Sojourner Truth Center family members and Felton board members. The festive event received community support from funders and community partners including [First Five San Francisco](#), [San Francisco Office of Early Care and Education](#), the [Low Income Investment Fund](#), [Golden Gate Regional Center](#), [Instituto de la Raza](#), [Help me Grow](#), and [Support for Families of Children with Disabilities](#). It concluded with a ribbon cutting and a tour of the classrooms. 📷

VIDEO

Family Developmental Center

Each year, Felton Institute's Family Developmental Center celebrates the graduation of its preschool students. Find out why one mother is so very grateful for the instruction that her daughter received.

“ This program is really important to me because not only does it offer early quality education, but it also practices inclusion; and that is something very hard to find in San Francisco.

- June Hall



Heart Matters

When asked which organ in your body is most important, most people will say either the heart or the brain.

The brain collects information from stimuli and from within ourselves. The body then responds appropriately to take the right action. The heart's purpose is to pump blood to every cell and is often considered the seat of your emotions.



Did you know that you have brain cells in your heart? That means when you “know something in your heart,” you actually know it in your heart. Until the 1990s, scientists assumed it was only the brain that sends information. Scientific research has proven that the human heart possesses a “heart-brain,” composed of 40,000 neurons that can sense, feel, learn, and even remember. The heart can speak to the brain, generating sine-wavelike patterns. The old adage “Listen to your Heart” now takes on new meaning.

A group based out of Denver, Colorado, called [Heart-Math](#), has studied this connection between heart and brain for over thirty years. When your heart and mind are in harmony, they call that coherence. By understanding our heart and listening to what it says, we can shift our entire body neurologically, biophysically, and energetically. Simple ways of developing more coherence are through sitting quietly, meditation, or just simply enjoying nature.

Perhaps this is nothing new. Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote that the heart was superior to the brain and the center of reason, thought, and emotion. Other philosophers agreed. Arabic theorist Abu Nasr Al-Farabi is quoted as saying, “The ruling organ in the human body is the heart; the brain is a secondary ruling organ subordinated to the heart.” French philosopher Auguste Comte boldly stated that the brain should be subservient to the heart.

“One day we will learn that the heart can never be totally right if the head is totally wrong. Only through the bringing together of head and heart-intelligence and goodness shall man rise to a fulfillment of his true nature.”

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

[Felton Institute](#) acknowledges and integrates the importance of overall health in its programs. Current research is showing that the healthiest people have healthy brains and healthy hearts – leading to a better quality of life. One such successful Felton program is the [Senior Full Wellness Program](#), which includes comprehensive case management, counseling, and psychiatric services provided for older adults with mental health concerns.

From providing healthy food for families, responding to those at risk for suicide to the mental health programs for those who need it, [Felton Institute](#) runs more than programs in five counties. Felton aims to address the basic human needs of both body and mind, utilizing and integrating the best social science research.

This is the heart of Felton Institute's mission. 

EVENT

Laughs for Life 2020

Tickets are now on sale for San Francisco Suicide Prevention's Annual Gala and Comedy Show "Laughs for Life"!



This year's fundraiser will be held at the [Regency Ballroom](#) at [1300 Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco, CA](#), on Wednesday, April 22, 2020. True to tradition, it will feature a dazzling lineup of entertainment, inspiring speakers, and delicious food and drink.

[Laughs for Life](#) will bring our community together to celebrate the positive impact San Francisco Suicide Prevention continues to have on the lives of those in crisis and the shared vision of continuing the conversation of de-stigmatizing suicide. "Laughs for Life" includes a cocktail reception, silent auction, followed by a seated dinner, awards and comedy show.

Proceeds from the evening support [San Francisco Suicide Prevention's 24/7 hotline](#) and [community programs](#) which empower individuals to help themselves and each other through moments of crisis. 🍷

To learn more about San Francisco Suicide Prevention visit: www.sfsuicide.org.





Make a *Donation* to Felton Institute today!

Help Felton continue creating impact in the Bay Area by making a monthly or yearly commitment.

All contributions are tax-deductible.

Felton Institute is a tax-exempt organization registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit under EIN 94-1156530.



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Help transform your community!



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