



Helping People with Developmental Disabilities Reach Their Maximum Potential

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

VALLEY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL CENTER NAMES DR. CLAIRE B. LAZARO AS NEW  
CLINICAL DIRECTOR

Valley Mountain Regional Center (VMRC) has named Dr. Claire B. Lazaro as their new Clinical Director. Dr. Lazaro will be taking over for Mary Sheehan, who is retiring as Clinical Director effective June 28th, 2019, after over 40 years of service with the agency. Dr. Lazaro will oversee the entire Clinical Department at VMRC, which includes the Assistant Clinical Director, Clinical Nurse Manager, Psychologists, Staff Physicians, Behavioral Services staff, Pharmacist Consultant, Clinic Coordinators and the Dental Coordinator.

“I’m so relieved and excited that Claire Lazaro has accepted our offer to be our next Clinical Director at Valley Mountain Regional Center”, said VMRC Executive Director Tony Anderson. “Claire not only brings the medical healthcare knowledge and experience to carry on the legacy of our previous advocate clinical directors like James Popplewell, MD and Mary Sheehan, RN, but she also comes to us with the heart of a parent advocate of two children with Autism.”

Dr. Lazaro comes to Valley Mountain Regional Center from Memorial Hospital in Modesto, CA, where she has worked since 2017, first as an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) nurse, and then as a “Float Pool” nurse. Prior to that, Dr. Lazaro worked at Doctor’s Hospital in Modesto, CA as a Coronary Care Unit (CCU) nurse and a Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) nurse. Dr. Lazaro has also spent time as a Research Assistant for Clinical Trials at Sarcoma Oncology Center in Santa Monica, CA. She is originally from the Metro Manila area of the Philippines, and proudly claims Tagalog as her primary language. Dr. Lazaro and her husband came to the United States in 2006, when her husband, who is a nurse, received a job offer in the states.

As a 7 year VMRC Board Member, whose term recently ended, Dr. Lazaro is familiar with the population that VMRC serves. In addition to being a former board member, Dr. Lazaro also cares for her own son and daughter, both of whom have a diagnosis of Autism and receive VMRC services. Dr. Lazaro spoke of her experience as her and her husband were introduced to the regional center system. “When my children were diagnosed with Autism, 1 week apart from each other, at ages almost 3 and age 2, we didn’t know a lot about VMRC, but everyone was there to support us in the process. It was a very challenging experience, but we were able to find support through VMRC and the different support groups like Family Resource Network and Disability Rights CA,” said Lazaro.



<http://www.vmmc.net>

Part of the reason Dr. Lazaro said that she chose to come to VMRC as the Clinical Director, was because of her life experiences. “I’m serving VMRC because I want to give back due to all of the help and support that we received as a family. At the same time, as a health care professional I want to help other people, especially those that are underserved. The people with developmental disabilities and mental illnesses, they are receiving healthcare disparities and I really want to promote health and support to them, and I want to let them know that they are treated with the same dignity and respect that every person deserves,” Lazaro said.

Dr. Lazaro will be finishing up her M.S. in Nursing this summer through Samuel Merritt University. She also holds a B.S. in Nursing from California State University, Stanislaus. In the Philippines, Dr. Lazaro holds an M.D. as a Doctor of Medicine and Surgery, and a B.S. in Medical Technology.

Dr. Lazaro will have a little over a month to soak in over 40 years of wisdom that outgoing Clinical Director Mary Sheehan will fill her with, as they will work together in transitioning Dr. Lazaro, up until Ms. Sheehan’s last day on June 28<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Lazaro will have a slightly different role than Ms. Sheehan, though, as up until now, Ms. Sheehan filled a role that will now be filled by Dr. Lazaro and her 2 assistants. Ms. Sheehan sat on the interview panel to fill the Clinical Director role, and she supports the choice of Lazaro. “I am very happy that the new Clinical Director is someone familiar with the mission of VMRC and she has great experience in the health care field and in the autism treatment fields,” said Sheehan. “I feel she will be a wonderful asset to the clinical team. I look forward to working with her on the transition.”

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