



12316 Venice Blvd, Mar Vista, CA 90066

847 Venice Blvd, Venice, CA 90291

WHO: Well Family Marian Place (formerly Well Baby Center)

WHAT: Supportive Affordable Housing Site Opening

WHEN: March 2024

WHERE: 847 Venice Blvd.

WHY: WFMP's is open for business

Media: For press materials or interviews, please contact Dr. Deborah Groening-Rother at 310-455-0669

“Our new mission provides newly housed families all the services they need to successfully adjust to their new lives, and at no cost to them. We will still provide services to the public at our sliding scale fees, but we will now serve children and families experiencing poverty, homelessness, and other serious traumas, regardless of their ability to pay”, explains Donna Rabin, Well Family’s Executive Director.

Well Baby Center's History

In 2008, Dr. Deborah Groening-Rother founded the non-profit Well Baby Center in a former thrift store on Venice Boulevard to provide affordable counseling for local families. Specializing in maternal mental health and infant-parent dynamics, the facility has provided services to thousands of clients on a sliding scale as well as training for hundreds of clinicians in our innovative childhood mental health model. The WBC community-based model of preventative mental health care served Los Angeles residents well over the years, but we are now ready to expand, serving more diverse populations at our new location and under a new name: **Well Family Marian Place.**

Groening-Rother raised her two boys in the heart of Venice in the 1980s while she was getting her Psy.D. in psychology. A native Angeleno, she loved the bohemian atmosphere of the Venice canals and the clapboard-sided beach cottages that were quickly vanishing under gentrification. In 2015 she preserved two of them near her and converted the property into a community garden and performance space. The Linnie Canal Art Garden lasted for five years hosting neighborhood weddings, neighborhood parties, poetry slams, low-fi concerts, and more, without ever charging a penny. The mental health benefits this community enjoyed by breaking bread together gave her the inspiration for Well Family Marian Place.

When the pandemic hit and in-person consultations became impossible, Groening-Rother began to rethink the center's mission. She stumbled upon a compound of **eight classic 1890 - 1930 cottages** built around a motor court at Marian Place and Venice Blvd. Turns out it was for sale so, combining her two passions – preserving old Venice and helping underserved and disadvantaged families, she collaborated with Venice Community Housing, an affordable housing developer/management agency, to develop a new kind of single-family dwellings model of affordable housing right in the heart of Venice, California.

Now renovated, **families will begin moving in January 2024 along with Well Family Marian Place** opening its onsite facility to provide counseling and enrichment opportunities to the resident families. Venice Community Housing will oversee property management services while Well Family will focus on providing clinical and social support services.

Who we are.

We are a community psychology center licensed by the Department of Public Health. Our clinical staff includes clinicians working toward licensure in the state of California as well as licensed therapists, supervisors, and clinical managers. We continue to strengthen our collaboration with longstanding community partners – Venice Family Clinic, C.L.A.I.R.E., Venice Community Housing, SPY, Harvest Home, St. John's Early Childhood Center, St. Joseph's, Maple Counseling, the Wright Institute, Reiss-Davis, UCLA's Women's Life Center, and professionals in the field of infant/child-parent psychotherapy to become an essential **Community Wellness Hub in 2024**. We continue to provide professional training in trauma-based, psychodynamic clinical approaches to our staff and to the public and to refer out hundreds of cases each year to our community partners.

Who we serve.

We have served thousands of clients since we opened in 2008. We have trained hundreds in our model of Early Childhood Mental Health. In the past our target population has been low- to middle-income families – those who could afford to pay sliding scale fees for services, based on their ability to pay our fees. During the pandemic, however, and thanks to support from the Cedars-Sinai Foundation, we adapted our services to being offered online and expanded our reach to provide services to the neediest: formerly homeless, undocumented, monolingual Spanish-speakers, and to those experiencing trauma and adverse childhood experiences but lack access to mental health support. Last year we returned to on-site services – especially important for children who suffered the isolation of a three-year pandemic but would be too young to benefit from online therapy. In fact, during the pandemic many mental health agencies went totally virtual, resulting in a dearth of available child therapists and an overburdened school psychological staff.

Why Marian Place?

The residents at Marian Place are renters just like any other renter except that they are able to afford living at Marian Place. Marian Place is **not** a transitional housing site. These families will be able to integrate into the community, their children will go to the neighborhood school, and the adults will be assisted in receiving jobs training and other life skills – which will enable the Venice community to thrive no matter what climate-related or otherwise challenging circumstances arise. A strong community is a protective factor against mental health disorders and is more crucial than ever because of the shortage of clinicians, the lasting effects of the pandemic and resulting social isolation, and the climate crisis. We plan to continue to address this growing need for connection by hosting regular community events including **Free Community Wellness Events**.

What we need.

As the founder and primary donor, Dr. Groening-Rother understands that to transition to the status of a public charity and to meet the community's growing mental health needs she needs partners — both private and public — to join the cause and to help create lasting change that will ripple out over many decades long into the future.

If you want to be part of making Los Angeles a more just, wholesome, and inclusive place to grow our children, join us! Becoming Medi-Cal providers will help us accomplish our goals, but we can't do this alone. With individual donations and corporate giving, we will be able to make an even bigger impact.

Please view our Well Family Marian Place video on our website <https://www.wellfamilymp.org>.