As Executive Director, I get excited by milestones such as, “this month marks the completion of our current strategic plan!” But this is really your milestone, cherished TLC members. I hope you too will be excited by all we’ve accomplished together, and the future you’re making possible.

In 2013, the Board of Directors set out three bold steps that would enable us to have the greatest impact on reducing the suffering caused by body-focused repetitive behaviors.

**Bold Step #1: Launch a BFRB Research Alliance to Accelerate the Pace of Research and Discovery**

This step became the BFRB Precision Medicine Initiative. And it certainly was bold for an organization of our size. **But you stepped up.** We launched fundraising in the spring of 2014 and by summer 2015 we had raised the first $1 million needed. As you read this, physicists are hard at work calibrating fMRI machines in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Boston, thanks to your donations. I am thrilled that **we are now launching participant recruitment** (see page 5). This is ground-breaking work on a scale that has not existed for our community. **It is only possible thanks to you and the heartfelt dedication of our Scientific Advisory Board (SAB).** I hope you’ll consider volunteering to participate at one of the three research sites.

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Our dedicated SAB members discuss progress and lay the groundwork for Phase 2 of the BPM Initiative at their annual meeting, this past April.
Upcoming Events

Get tickets and details for these events and more at bfrb.org/events

TLC Presents: This is My Brave, Los Angeles, CA
January 22, 2017

TLC has teamed up with This is My Brave, a community of advocates dedicated to ending the stigma surrounding mental illness by sharing our true personal stories through poetry, stories, and song.

Join us in Santa Monica at the Moss Theatre for an all-new, live presentation of touching stories, original music, comedy, and poetry performed by a dozen individuals living with or loving someone with a mental illness.

Professional Training Institute: San Francisco, CA
February 17-19, 2017

A three-day advanced clinical training, the PTI provides clinicians with practical training in current and effective cognitive-behavioral treatment approaches for these behaviors. San Francisco PTI faculty include Charles Mansueto, PhD, Renae Reinardy, PsyD, and Stacy Shaw Welch, PsyD.

Annual Conference on BFRBs: St. Louis, MO
April 21-23, 2017

Tickets are on sale now! Join the BFRB community in St. Louis for a weekend of education, community, and support. This year, we’re offering a special pre-conference treatment intensive for adults with BFRBs. Visit bfrb.org/conference for program information.

Upcoming Webinars

- From the Inside Out: For Parents, with the Millennial Task Force
- Mindfulness and Acceptance in BFRB Recovery, with the OCD Center of Los Angeles.

Visit bfrb.org for detailed event information.
Community Members Making a Difference

Samantha S. (left) of Ohio delivered a big surprise at the TLC Annual Conference in Dallas: a check for $500. Samantha’s school had raised $1,500 to be split among three nonprofits, and Samantha successfully campaigned for TLC to be one of the recipients. Then, six months later, 12-year-old Samantha topped that with another donation of $1,020! She wrote a very personal and moving “Friends & Family” campaign letter with details about her struggles and how TLC has helped her. For most of the 30 people who received the letter, it was the first time they’d learned how BFRBs affected Samantha. They responded with love and support, assisting Samantha in her own journey and supporting TLC in its mission.

Sarah Funderburk (right) began running while in college but it wasn’t until 2014 that she set her sights on the 2016 New York City Marathon. This fall, she tied two goals together: running her first marathon and raising funds for TLC. An active member of the NYC support group for the past four years, Sarah had only told a few people about her struggles with skin picking. So, with tremendous courage, she signed up for the NYC Marathon and sent a mass email to her friends and family with a request for donations. The response exceeded her expectations, allowing her to make a gift of more than $700.00 and find a new community of support among her family and friends.

SoCal HEART support group members Emma and Avery created this original design to be used on BFRB Awareness Week t-shirts. The group created shirts that they sold online to other group members, parents, and some online fans, raising $486.98 to support BFRB Awareness Week. Stay tuned for opportunities to purchase t-shirts and other merchandise with this beautiful artwork!

In honor of her 16-year struggle with skin picking disorder, Shemika Blocker (right) of Nashville shared her story with friends and family, and invited them all to help her raise public awareness about the disorder. Her sale of t-shirts, in conjunction with an awareness walk she held in October, raised $196.11 for TLC programs.

Bridget Bradley and Pavitt Thatcher are leading an organized effort to create resources and raise awareness in the UK. They co-lead the London support group, and Bridget has founded two others in the region. During BFRB Week, they organized awareness stalls at local markets, where they sold homemade goodies and TLC fiddles to raise donations. Pavitt walked 5k, each day for 5 days, and appealed to her friends and family to donate in support of their awareness raising efforts. Together, they raised $975.00 US dollars for TLC, funds that will continue to support outreach in the UK.
Our leadership team for the BFRB Precision Medicine (BPM) Initiative has been hard at work over the past few months getting all the necessary pieces in place for each of our collaborating research sites to begin working with patients. We asked them to take some time out from the complexity of their day-to-day work, and share with TLC members about why the BPM Initiative is a big deal.

**TLC:** So many of us with BFRBs feel like we have tried every treatment under the sun and come up empty-handed. Why is the BPM Initiative more likely to reveal new, more effective treatments, where past research has not?

**Emily Ricketts, PhD:** Past studies haven't been large enough to reveal substantial patterns in BFRB symptoms. Because the BPM Initiative is looking at all facets of our complex human systems – genetic, environmental, neurological, behavioral – it will give us a much more holistic understanding of how BFRBs work and lead us to hypotheses for promising future treatments.

**Tara Peris, PhD:** The major barrier for developing any new treatments is lack of understanding about what drives these conditions – if you want better treatments, you have to understand the illness in a much better way than we do now. BFRBs are way behind other mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, or OCD. If you walk into a clinic wanting treatment for OCD, you'll have at least a few good evidence-based treatments available to you. You'll also have a pretty good chance that those treatments will work well for you. That's just not the case for BFRBs. Currently our best treatments, while providing vital help for many, do not bring long-term remission to the majority of patients. The BPM Initiative is designed to provide that clearer understanding, and it's bringing a whole different level of sophistication to this research.

**TLC:** Realistically, what do you hope we can all be celebrating about the BPM Initiative three years from now?

**Emily:** I hope we will have identified some clear sub-types of picking and pulling, and that we will have promising hypotheses about new treatment strategies to match each of those sub-types.

**Tara:** I also hope that we'll have gained a better understanding of why some people respond better than others to the treatments we already have. The goal is optimizing outcomes with existing treatments and developing new ones. Together, that will help us to match the right people to the right treatment.

"The goal is optimizing outcomes with existing treatments and developing new ones. Together, that will help us to match the right people to the right treatment."

-Tara Peris, PhD, BPM Director

**TLC:** When might we hope to see new treatments available for BFRBs?

**Tara:** The next three years will give us a much deeper understanding of how BFRBs work, but we still won't have tested any new treatments by that time. Our hope is that the knowledge gained from these next three years will position us to compete for major federal funding through the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Assuming we are able to secure that funding, it's not unreasonable to hope that 7-10 years from now,
we’ll have some new, more effective treatment options available for BFRBs.

**TLC: How can those of us affected by BFRBs help to support this research?**

**Tara:** Patient and family advocacy can make a big difference in how much attention and resources are directed towards research on a particular disorder. Autism is a great example of this – grassroots advocacy for autism has been phenomenal. That advocacy is a part of what keeps funding available and reminds the scientific community that this disorder matters. So telling your story and raising awareness about BFRBs can make a big difference in the long run.

**Emily:** People can also volunteer as study participants in the BPM Initiative. We will start our first round of recruitment in January, and people can be in touch with us any time before that for more information about how to be part of this study.

**TLC: And of course, this research is entirely supported by the TLC community. We still have about $1M left to raise. So financially supporting this research is an essential way that people can help make the BPM Initiative possible. If you are interested in making a gift towards the BPM Initiative, you can do so at [bfrb.org/donate](https://www.bfrb.org/donate) or contact TLC’s Executive Director, Jennifer Raikes.**

**TLC: Is there anything else you’d like to share with the TLC community about the importance of the BPM Initiative?**

**Tara:** I see the BPM Initiative as an incredible opportunity for TLC to much more powerfully serve people across the country who are affected by BFRBs. As I look at what other organizations have achieved when families ruthlessly advocated for their loved ones, I see hope in it – hope for families with BFRBs seeking answers and a better future for themselves. Everybody feels the urgency of better answers, faster, for more people. And this BPM Initiative is the way we’re going to do that.

**Emily:** I see the BPM Initiative creating a “tipping point” for TLC. We won’t have all the answers at the end of three years, but it will put TLC in a whole different place in terms of its ability to advocate for BFRB families and catalyze additional future research. What we learn from the BPM Initiative will keep this field moving forward for a long time to come.

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**Participate in BPM Research!**

One of the most important ways that TLC members can help support this research initiative is to volunteer as a study participant. There will be three research sites: UCLA, University of Chicago and Harvard Medical School.

To be eligible, participants cannot be on any prescription medication for depression or related disorders. Because the study includes MRI procedures for brain scans, participants also cannot have any metal in their bodies – dental braces, pins from past surgical procedures, etc.

If you’re interested in volunteering, or have questions about your eligibility, send an email to research@bfrb.org that includes your name, city, state, phone and email.

**Come help us make history for BFRBs!**
**Bold Step #2: Rebrand TLC to Serve All BFRBs and Conduct a National Outreach Campaign**

After our successful advocacy campaign helped put Skin Picking Disorder into the DSM-5, we realized that TLC needed to make changes of its own to better serve all people with BFRBs. This spring, we launched our **new name, logo, and website** – bfrb.org! Over the past three years, our outreach campaigns have reached millions of people and popularized the term “body-focused repetitive behaviors” far more successfully than we even imagined. We launched new outreach programs like the **Millennial Task Force** (which nows run an online advice column) and the **Ambassador Training Program**, and host thriving social networks on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Instagram. **We even shouted from the rooftops with a billboard in Times Square!**

At least 1.5 million people pass through Times Square every day, and from April - July of this year, they saw the BFRB billboard. Watch the ad at bfrb.org/timessquare.

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**Bold Step #3: Increase the Number of TLC-Trained Clinicians**

Over the past three years, we have **doubled the number of Professional Training Institute courses** we offer, and trained eight new faculty members to enable continued growth. We have improved the program by adding supervised follow-up sessions for clinicians trained with the in-person PTI or through the DVD-course. **The number of clinicians trained through these programs has increased 43%**. In February, 2015, the Annals of Clinical Psychiatry reported that "Clinicians trained at TLC’s Professional Training Institute (PTI), or with TLC’s video series, the Virtual PTI, "saw an increase in the percentage of their BFRB patients who achieved abstinence" as well as an "overall increase in symptom reduction for their patients." However, lack of access to well-trained clinicians remains one of the biggest obstacles faced by our community. Much more work remains to be done!

The number of TLC-trained clinicians has increased 43%

97 peer-support groups are meeting regularly in 36 states, 3 provinces, and 8 countries

74 BFRB-friendly salons and online service providers are now listed on bfrb.org

Search for a therapist, support group, salon, or service provider at bfrb.org/findhelp
So what’s in store for the next three years?

TLC remains committed to a comprehensive approach to solving the problem of body-focused repetitive behaviors: community support, awareness-building, professional training, and research. As we start a new strategic plan, we’ll be focusing efforts in the following three areas:

OUTREACH – Sharing knowledge.

TLC serves a diverse population all over the United States and, increasingly, around the world. To more effectively serve our local communities, and strengthen the programs and services we can offer locally, we will be developing a regional model of service.

Over the next three years, we will launch a pilot program that concentrates the education, support and outreach components of TLC’s work into 3-4 defined geographic areas in different metropolitan regions. We will use the pilot to develop a process and set of materials for conducting outreach that can be replicated by trained local volunteers, thereby accelerating the pace of change.

To achieve this, we will team with our strong network of local volunteers and support group members to develop and train dedicated Regional Coordinator volunteers, and to identify and collaborate with partner organizations to facilitate outreach (e.g., school district administration, branches of parent-teacher associations, state or city psychology associations, local chapters of mental-health advocacy organizations).

TREATMENT – Supporting recovery.

Access to well-trained treatment providers is a crucial issue for our community. And to tackle it we need to improve access to best practice training. Thanks to a grant facilitated by TLC members, we have funding from the Herman Goldman Foundation to build an online version of our Professional Training Institute in the coming year. We will also work with our developing regional networks and partner organizations to raise awareness of training opportunities among local clinicians and to increase interest in specializing in this field.

RESEARCH – Finding a cure.

TLC is in a position to achieve the foundational research goals we have set for the BPM Initiative, over the next three years. With a robust fundraising effort in the next year, and a strong out-pouring of this community as research participants, we are on the path to delivering better answers, and to a competitive “place at the table” for future federal funding and corporate investment for future treatment studies.

As Executive Director, I am also excited by the work we need to do internally. To accomplish all these vital programs we will continue to strengthen our systems for Financial Oversight, Project Management, Internal Communications, Public Relations, and, of course, Fundraising.

And you make it all happen. I thank you for your membership and any additional gifts you are able to make at this time to support our programs in 2017. Your generosity determines how fast and how far we can go.

With love and gratitude,

Jennifer Raikes
Executive Director
Los Angeles, CA

Please donate at bfrb.org/donate or call 831-457-1004 to speak to a TLC staffer!
**Get Involved!**

**Shop for the Cause**

Are you an Amazon.com shopper? If so, visit smile.amazon.com and select The TLC Foundation for BFRBs as your preferred charity. Then, every time you use Amazon, start shopping from smile.amazon.com -- and a percentage of your purchase will be donated right back to TLC! Visit the "Get Involved" section of our website for more ways to support TLC with your online purchases.

**Share your Story**

Have an awareness moment you’d like to share? Is there something you want others with BFRBs to know? Have you learned some helpful coping mechanisms while on your BFRB journey?

Tell us about it! Visit www.bfrb.org/share to post your story, artwork, or poetry. Or, log in to the Member Center to read stories written by members of the community.

**Sponsor a Workshop, Training, or the Conference**

When you sponsor TLC programs and events, you bring individuals and families together to make life-changing connections with peers, support networks, services, and treatment providers.

If you are a treatment or counseling center, clinician, or a hair or skin care professional, or you have a product or service that benefits people affected by BFRBs, ...you will reach your audience and expand your business when you partner with TLC. Learn more at bfrb.org/sponsor.

**NEW SUPPORT GROUPS**

**CALIFORNIA**

Tarzana
For adults with a BFRB, as well as friends, supporters, parents, and others. Meets weekly on Sundays at 11am at the Tarzana Rec Center.

**COLORADO**

Denver
This group is a safe, non-judgmental place to learn from one another and share ideas, strategies and struggles.

**OHIO**

Berea
Free support group for pullers and pickers, and their loved ones.

**TEXAS**

Houston
Free support group for adolescents with a BFRB and their parents faciliated by local clinicians.

**Did you know?**

TLC offers videos, articles and a support group leader network to help you get your group up and running! Contact kelly@bfrb.org for details.

Visit bfrb.org or find us on social media @tlcbfrb