



Transitions Mental Health Association

# Reaching Out

INSPIRING HOPE, GROWTH, RECOVERY AND WELLNESS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

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## TMHA BOARD MEMBERS

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## Volunteer Spotlight

**Dr. Kelly Moreno moved to the San Luis Obispo area in 1990 to seize an opportunity to teach in the Psychology Department at Cal Poly.**

In his beginning years, Dr. Moreno supervised many undergraduate psychology internships, and this led to his first exposure with TMHA.

It was not until the late 2000's that a deeper partnership took hold. The catalyst was the Great Recession. Dr. Moreno recalled the challenging effects the recession had on the community, especially the detrimental impact on public services: "Mental health is always the first to go,"

**"I love groups, to have a place to belong—to have a community—is so saving." — Dr. Moreno**

he acknowledged. Hoping to give back to members of his community who could not afford private therapy, Dr. Moreno launched a pro bono therapy group at TMHA's Hope House Wellness Center. He has continued to facilitate this group as well as two individual appointments every Thursday afternoon.

We did some math and found that over the last 7 years, Dr. Moreno has invested around 1344 hours providing his skills to members in our community with half of those hours going to TMHA alone.

"I love groups," Dr. Moreno enthused, "to have a place to belong—to have a community—is so saving." He considers group therapy a "powerful antidote" from isolation, noting that group members are an invaluable support system for each other, assisting in areas that he has limited knowledge of, such as navigating the bus schedule

or finding outside resources.

When asked why he was drawn to the field of mental health, Dr. Moreno divulged some personal history that included family members experiencing mental health struggles. "This profession chose me before I had a chance to choose it. [Because of my family] I got really skilled at paying attention to other people and developed a skill set that was reinforced by teachers' praise," giving him the confidence to pursue the helping relationship as a career path.

Dr. Moreno is outspoken regarding the disconnect between society and mental health awareness. He observes that there is no difference between society at large and the mental health community; they are one and the same, but stigma around diagnoses has led to a disconnect.

"I tell people to leave their diagnoses at the door," he explains. "Too much of the mental health profession focuses just on the diagnosis. That's the easy part. Helping people — that's the hard part." Dr. Moreno's own approach is grounded in his personal mantra, "How can I best help this person today?"

It is the individual that motivates Dr. Moreno to continue facilitating the therapy group, and that collection of individuals continues to grow year after year. It is a life-giving experience for all concerned, and for that we are truly grateful. Thank you, Dr. Moreno for graciously providing your skills and support to our clients!



Kelly Moreno – "How can I best help this person today?"

# TMHA & Cal Poly – Serving One Community Together



# CAL POLY

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SAN LUIS OBISPO

For over two decades TMHA has been proud to partner with California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo in a wide variety of ways that enrich the lives of students, community members, and mental health consumers throughout our county. In these pages we capture the many threads of that collaboration, all the wonderful ways the two institutions reach out to each other. And don't forget—at current count, 28 TMHA employees are Cal Poly alumni, including our Executive Director, two of our Division Directors and several Program Managers and Coordinators.

And a big salute to three alumni sitting on our Board of Directors: Tim Williams, CEO of Digital West; Chris Richardson, Vice President at Richardson Properties; and Brad Rudd, Marriage & Family Therapist.

Cal Poly is grateful to have a community partner in TMHA. When facing mental health challenges, Cal Poly students can often feel isolated. It is easy to experience an exaggerated difference from one's peers, especially with emotional wellbeing as an invisible concern. Through our relationship with TMHA, Cal Poly students are introduced to the much broader range of mental health resources outside of the campus.

— Hannah Roberts, Psy.D.

Assistant Director for Community Prevention & Intervention, Cal Poly

## Growing Grounds Farm

We get between 3,000 and 5,000 volunteer hours from Cal Poly each year. Thanks to the Center for Community Engagement, we have the bridge to the Healing Garden, the roof on our office, another bridge across the creek, the pulling building where we sell trees, the floor to the seed bank building, and a concrete pad where our soil is delivered for potting production. Plus a Systems Engineering class analyzed our gallon potting system and built a table in order to improve efficiency and ergonomics for our employees.

— Craig Wilson, Program Manager  
Growing Grounds Farm SLO

## Training Opportunities

Our relationship with TMHA is key to providing our graduate students with the foundational knowledge and experiences necessary to become competent marriage and family therapists. From classroom presentations, to co-facilitating support groups and our newly developed traineeship partnership, our students are gaining invaluable knowledge and skills salient to their professional development. Our partnership with TMHA is vital to fulfilling our "learn by doing" approach in training future clinicians to meet the mental health needs of our diverse communities.

— Lisa I. Sweatt, Ph.D., Coordinator,  
Cal Poly M.S. Psychology Program

Jesse Westfall is our first counselor trainee and began her work at the Youth Treatment Program this fall!



**Fun Fact:** Growing Grounds Farm received the Cal Poly President's Community Service Award for Outstanding Community Partner in 2006 and 2013.





## Adult Transitional Program

The Engineers Without Borders class came to install the pavers in our driveway. They were very friendly and took time out of their schedules to make the driveway very nice. At times they would get here before 7 am and were rushing to get the project completed before graduation.

**- Tom Quintana,  
ATP Program Manager**

I was impressed with how they were able to take on such a physically demanding construction project and complete it in such a timely and professional manner. The project looks great and I would like to thank the entire team and the others who participated in making this new driveway a reality.

**- Rob Reynders,  
TMHA Property Manager**

**Fun Fact:** TMHA has a regular presence on campus through participation in health fairs, classroom presentations and Week of Welcome activities. We have supported sororities with their suicide prevention efforts culminating in an annual awareness walk.

## Landscape Architecture

In 2014, when Professor Margarita Hill heard about Bishop Street Studios through Chris Manning, our landscape architect for Nipomo Street Studios - and Cal Poly instructor, she was intrigued by the proposed use as affordable housing for TMHA clients. A collaboration formed using Bishop Street Studios as a backdrop for Prof. Hill's Senior Landscape Architecture students. The students met with clients, staff and existing tenants, touring existing housing programs to learn what was desired in housing and needed for recovery. The community learned about landscape architecture and the ways it could be employed to promote wellness. The class developed 12 different plans and presented them in a community meeting attended by TMHA Board members, clients, staff, and neighbors of the project. A graduate of that class went on to develop the final landscape plan with our architecture team.

**- Jill Bolster-White,  
Executive Director**

## SLO Hotline

If we go back to 1970 when Hotline began, there have probably been several hundred Cal Poly students who have provided many thousands of hours of volunteer service, assisting tens of thousands of callers.

**- Mike Bossenberry,  
SLO Hotline Program Coordinator**

**Fun Fact:** TMHA has had 7 AmeriCorps Fellows — all Cal Poly Graduates.

## Community Outreach

In 2011, we collaborated with the Cal Poly University Week of Welcome (WOW) Awareness Committee. The students wanted to create a documentary, modeled on TMHA's "SLOthe Stigma," which would be tailored specifically for college age youth and cover topics such as stress and the seriousness of depression and suicide on campus. The result, "Mental Health Awareness: Our Personal Journeys," was one of the most rewarding projects I've ever worked on. I am proud to say that, five years later, the film is still shown to students during WOW week.

**- Shannon McOuat,  
Community Outreach Manager**

## Make a Difference Day

MADD is a national day of service that brings community members together in an effort to connect with their cities and volunteer in local nonprofits, schools, and on behalf of local families. Cal Poly organizes an effort annually, setting up volunteers with various organizations throughout the Central Coast. The Growing Grounds Farm in Santa Maria is proud to be one of Cal Poly's partners and hosts hundreds of community members and students every year through MADD. Volunteers get to experience the therapeutic nature of horticulture and gain insight into how the farm is providing supported employment to mental health services clients.



# HASLO - Our New Partner Once Again

As many of you have heard, TMHA is advancing our agency goal to create more supportive housing in the City of San Luis Obispo with the Bishop Street Studios project. We are partnering with the Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo (HASLO) to renovate the old Sunny Acres building above Johnson Avenue and add three new buildings designed to complement the original. All in all, we will create 34 single-occupancy apartments.

This is not the first time TMHA has partnered with HASLO, in fact the two agencies have been working together closely for over twenty years. Together they pioneered a collaborative program combining Supportive Housing Program funds with the Section

## 8/Housing Choice Voucher

Program to assist TMHA clients in obtaining affordable housing. This partnership has enabled TMHA to establish a 13-bed Congregate Housing program for the disabled homeless and a 20-bed Transitional Housing program for people who have been homeless.

But none of these programs quite compare to the ambitious scope of Bishop Street Studios. TMHA and HASLO will fund the estimated \$8 million in construction costs through a combination of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, State Mental Health Service Act Housing Funds, the Affordable Housing Fund through the Federal Home Loan Bank, and a capital campaign soliciting local donations.



The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program is critical: it is a federal program that uses tax policy to help develop affordable rental housing for very low-income individuals. Tax credits will ultimately provide 70% of the construction funding, and HASLO brings valuable experience in acquiring this type of support.

"Bishop Street Studios is an incredibly important project for our community, and HASLO is proud to be a part of it," said Scott Smith, HASLO Executive Director. "Just imagine the hope it represents for those in need, and the peace it offers to family members, knowing that their loved one will have an affordable, supportive place to live."

## How You Can Help...

Suicide prevention and mental health support. Confidential, free and available 24 hours of every day.



## HOW YOU CAN HELP...

### Volunteer

Volunteers are always welcome in our programs and fundraising events. One or two hours of your time can make a significant difference. Contact [volunteer@t-mha.org](mailto:volunteer@t-mha.org) for more information.

### Donate

Donations and in-kind services are both appreciated and vital to continuing the quality programs we provide. Funds are used not only to operate our 30 programs, but also household essentials for our supportive housing, clothing for adults and teens, and equipment for the farms.

### Planned Giving

Please consider TMHA in your estate planning. Help us plan for the future of our community's mental health. Contact [plannedgiving@t-mha.org](mailto:plannedgiving@t-mha.org).

If you would like to donate your financial support or time, please contact us at:

**Transitions Mental Health Association**  
P.O. Box 15408, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406  
(805) 540-6500  
[www.t-mha.org](http://www.t-mha.org)

*Thank You!*

## OUR DEEPEST APPRECIATION



Our annual **Trunks of Treasure** event took place on October 23rd at Luna Red in San Luis Obispo. The event was a truly delightful afternoon full of suspense, great prizes, and fantastic food. Our thanks to event sponsors Rabobank; Morris & Garritano; Dibuduo & Defendis Insurance; and Garcia Wealth Management Group.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Raffle tickets are available for our annual **Cabo San Lucas Vacation Getaway**. Winners will be treated to a week-long condo stay at the luxurious Pueblo Bonito Sunset Beach Resort and Spa, May 22-29, 2017. Two roundtrip airline tickets are included. Drawing will take place December 30. Only 400 entries will be sold! You may enter more than once. \$25 per entry. 5 entries for \$100. Keep an eye on the TMHA website at [www.t-mha.org](http://www.t-mha.org), for details.



Drop by the 11th **Annual Growing Grounds Downtown Open House**, Saturday, November 19 and Sunday, November 20 from 11am-4pm. 956 Chorro Street in Downtown San Luis Obispo (across from the Mission).



**Brewer's Dinner** will be held on Sunday, January 29th from 4-8 p.m. at the SLO Guild Hall – formally the SLO Grange Hall. Tickets are \$115 per person and \$900 for a table of 8. There is limited seating and tickets always sell out quickly!



Don't miss **Journey of Hope 2017**, Friday, January 20, at New Life Church in Pismo Beach. Now in its 8th year, Journey of Hope is a community forum on living mentally well. The event offers an opportunity to interact with mental health and community leaders, learn about local resources and best of all, celebrate hope. This year's keynote speaker will be Gabriella Grant from the California Center of Excellence for Trauma Informed Care – a wonderful speaker.

For over 30 years, **Bowl-A-Thon** has been a tradition in our community supporting SLO Hotline and other mental health safety net programs. Help "Strike Out Stigma" and get your team ready! Dates in March will be announced soon, *get your lane reservation in EARLY!!*

