

FALL 2020

THE JOURNEY

A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER



Inspiring hope, growth, recovery,
and wellness in our communities

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TMHATweets

News From

San Luis Obispo County



Growing Grounds Breaks Through

Growing Grounds Enterprises consists of a nursery in San Luis Obispo, a farm in Santa Maria, and a retail store in downtown San Luis Obispo. “These social enterprises were always meant to be a great way for our clients to return to work or have that first experience in a safe, supportive environment,” says Frank Ricceri, Director of Vocational Programs. “The challenge was helping them with that next step—making a leap to a job in the community.”

This year, TMHA meets that challenge head-on. The agency received nearly half a million dollars in grant funding from the California Workforce Development Board to create a Breaking Barriers to Employment program. Workshops are led on both farms for client employees who learn valuable skills about leveraging their experience and finding work in the greater community.

“The agency received nearly half a million dollars in grant funding from the California Workforce Development Board to create a Breaking Barriers to Employment program.”

Kelsey Smith, new to TMHA’s Supported Employment, leads the workshops at the San Luis Obispo Nursery. “Lately, I’m seeing real cohesion in the group,” Smith says. “They’re sharing ideas and opinions, getting very comfortable being open. And people are motivated, they do work at home. For some, that means applying for a job, for others it means working on their resume. Everyone is at a different place with their journey.”

Breaking Barriers is projected to serve 65 TMHA clients as they look to enter the local workforce.

Vantastic!

Our friends at the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) made us a wonderful offer: design an ad campaign, and they’ll feature it on a few of their Runabout vehicles. Executive Director, Jill Bolster-White admires the final product.



Bishop Street Studios – One Year Later

Last November, Bishop Street Studios opened its doors with a Grand Opening celebration and a full house of excited residents. Today, more projects are under way. Our friends at French Hospital made a generous pledge to the project and will have a fountain dedicated in their honor. To put an exclamation point on the project, our very own John Byers is creating a mural behind the fountain.

“It’s called Celestial Sunset,” John explains. Based on an original illustration of his, John adapted and elongated the picture so “as you come through the door, you can already see the mural as it starts on the wall.” The end result fills the entryway of the original building with vibrant, joyful color.



TMHA Alumni Make Their Mark

When a nonprofit has been around for over 40 years, you grow deep roots in your community. In 2020, we saw two of our former staff assume the role of Executive Director at a pair of wonderful partner agencies.

Shannon McOuat was TMHA’s first Community Outreach Manager. Today, she is Executive Director of Hospice of San Luis Obispo, an opportunity that makes her “really proud, excited...and terrified.” She laughs and explains. “To do this for the very first time in my career...in a pandemic...keeping clients and volunteers safe. Wow, it’s such a challenge.”

Jane Pomeroy came to TMHA as part of the Americorps Intern Program. After working with the SARP (Sexual Assault Recovery & Prevention) Center and The Link, she is now Executive Director of RISE. “As an ED you’re wearing so many hats all the time. You are responsible for the fiscal health, the liability, the efficacy of the programs, and you’re the public face. And there’s never enough hours in the day.”

Both women credit their time with TMHA for building skills they use in their new positions. “For me it was the multi-tasking and wearing multiple hats,” McOuat acknowledges. “Plus I learned so much from Jill Bolster-White. Maybe the most profound lesson was how she

modeled being a working mother. She supported me and empathized with me so much, it was such a gift.”

Pomeroy tells a similar story. “So much of TMHA was about juggling and mentoring. I had multiple tasks and multiple supervisors, and they all encouraged me to try different things. I try to do the same now with my own staff, looking to get people connected with passion projects and developing their careers.”



SHANNON MCOUAT
Executive Director of
Hospice of San Luis Obispo

JANE POMEROY
Executive Director
of RISE



North Santa Barbara County



The Gift of Connection

Back in March, TMHA's two Recovery Learning Communities (RLC) in Lompoc and Santa Maria had to halt their popular support groups, communal meals and activities. Programs moved onto Zoom and stayed in the virtual realm for many months.

Last month, members have started coming together for small, socially distant in-person activities again.

“It was uplifting to be able to resume some semblance of life before COVID.”

“It was uplifting to be able to resume some semblance of life before COVID,” reflected Sandy Rives, the Program Supervisor. “I even purchased a personalized Yardzee game for the occasion! Members were excited about the opportunity to finally meet in person knowing that we still had to be cautious and wear a mask, conduct temperature checks, and keep our distance.”



Partners in Wellness

In recent years, TMHA has developed a fruitful working relationship with Allan Hancock College. This partnership blossomed last year with the formation of the Alliance for Mental Wellness which hosted a Suicide Prevention Forum on the Santa Maria campus.

This year, the AFMW has become even more active. Christine Harney, Director of Santa Barbara Program, points out that the partnership is a “response to the growing need for current and informed mental health education and access to local quality community resources.” The AFMW hosted a forum this fall focused on resilience, and distributed self-care bags at the weekly drive-through food pickup hosted on both Hancock College campuses. To learn more about their plans, visit www.allianceformentalwellness.com.



A New Bag of Tricks

Necessity is the mother of invention, and COVID-19 has prompted a number of innovative changes in TMHA programs. At Growing Grounds Farm in Santa Maria, the team did a quick pivot and created a popular new product for their neighbors.

“We realized right away that we couldn’t run the Farm Stand in the normal fashion,” says the Farm’s Program Manager, Ariela Gottschalk. “By doing produce boxes and bags we could limit the amount that we needed to harvest since we were working in the early part of the pandemic with a skeleton crew. Folks would come pick up and wouldn’t even need to get out of their cars. We took payment by phone so the whole thing was touchless.”

These days, the Farm has welcomed back all client employees who observe all the necessary hygiene protocols as part of their workday. Meanwhile, the produce bags continue as a permanent feature. The Farm takes orders beginning every Tuesday afternoon, for pickup on Thursday. Call (805)934-2182 to reserve yours.



DR. PETER GARCIA
Psychiatry Specialist

Raising Our Profile

TMHA has had a presence in Santa Maria since 1993, expanding to Lompoc by the late 90’s. With seven diverse programs in place, we try to meet the local demand for mental health services. Just as important, we recognize the need to represent the community we serve. Part of that effort touches our Board of Directors, and this year we were pleased to welcome two new Board Members from North Santa Barbara County.

Dr. Peter Garcia is a Psychiatry Specialist in Santa Maria, California. A longtime colleague and collaborator of TMHA, Dr. Garcia affiliates with Marian Regional Medical Center. He practices an evidence-based care philosophy while meeting each patient where they are.

Olga Madrigal has worked as an administrator in the health field for the last 30 years, and currently helps run the Lompoc Health Care Center. Olga hopes to see TMHA raise its agency profile in her community. “I live in Santa Maria,” Olga shares. “I feel like my city still doesn’t have enough outreach to the Hispanic community. With common challenges like depression and anxiety, it’s important to know you’re not the only one who feels that way, and talking to someone can be such a great coping mechanism. I look forward to helping TMHA spread the word.”



OLGA MADRIGAL
Lompoc Health
Care Center

Olga and Peter, welcome to TMHA. We are delighted to have you representing your friends and neighbors.

Spotlight on Youth

In the past, only a small portion of TMHA's programs have focused on the teen and TAY (Transitional-Age Youth) population. As the needs of our young people reach a critical breaking point, our agency is making changes.

This year saw the launch of a brand new position: the Youth Behavioral Health Navigator. Jovi Calla Vella began working with TMHA two years ago as an intern, and joined our staff one year later. Jovi calls herself a "peer," someone with lived mental health experience – and she considers this to be a core part of her being. "To me, everyone has lived experience with mental health," Jovi affirms. She points out that this can range from people whose struggles help define their identity to those who have never considered the issue. "Mental health is a part of our entity," Jovi says. "It's what makes us human."

Clients who call Jovi are usually between the ages of 16 to 25. Whether they're looking for a therapist, the nearest food bank, bus passes, or they simply need someone to witness their experiences, Jovi is ready to take their call. "Quite frankly, we don't always know what our needs are," she explains, "and part of my role is to help people figure that out."

“Mental health is a part of our entity: it's what makes us human.”



Jovi Calla Vella meets with a client

- **27%** of college students have been diagnosed with depression.
- **57.7%** of students have felt “overwhelming anxiety” in the past year.
- **39%** of all students in the US report dealing with some kind of mental illness.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death in 15-19-year-olds.



Ileara Brown, Hotline Program Manager

Meanwhile, SLO Hotline is launching a brand new project in hopes of making similar connections.

“Statistically, we don't get more than 10 people under 14 calling in a whole year,” says Ileara Brown, SLO Hotline Program Manager. “Texting is definitely for the younger demographic. With college age and younger, they are less comfortable with a phone call.”

SLO Hotline is about to introduce its very first texting service. Initially available for 3 hours a day, the plan is to work out the kinks, foster word-of-mouth, and begin to connect with the youth in our community. We want to be there for someone who's in class and having a panic attack and wants to reach out and get help from us,” says Brown.

For information on hours of availability, check the TMHA website. A special flag will appear onscreen during the hours that the text line is available.

The TMHA Experience



“

I have an issue with anxiety, and it was really bad where I was living before. But in this apartment, almost all of it's gone. I can breathe again.

“

TMHA has helped me have a life that I can describe as 'Standing on my own two feet.'



“

Part of me just feels like I don't belong anywhere... TMHA staff makes me feel important, welcome, and wanted.



*All quotes from the 2019-2020 Client Satisfaction Survey

INSPIRING HOPE, GROWTH, RECOVERY AND WELLNESS IN OUR COMMUNITIES FOR 40 YEARS



HOW YOU CAN HELP...

Donations and in-kind services are both appreciated and vital. Please consider including TMHA in your year-end tax planning, or making a legacy gift. For more information on Planned Giving, please contact Michael Kaplan at (805)540-6513.

Volunteers are always welcome in our programs and fundraising events. One or two hours of your time can make a significant difference. Please visit our Volunteer page at www.t-mha.org.



WELLNESS • RECOVERY • RESILIENCY

TMHA receives funding from Proposition 63, California's Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) through collaborations with the San Luis Obispo County Behavioral Health Department and the Santa Barbara County Department of Behavioral Wellness.

