



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**GROWING GROUNDS FARM RECEIVES GRANT FUNDING
FROM HAROLD J. MIOSSI CHARITABLE TRUST FOR SEED BANK**

San Luis Obispo, CA –Transitions-Mental Health Association (TMHA) has received a grant in the amount of \$10,500 from the Harold J. Miossi Charitable Trust for the continued operation and expansion of their Growing Grounds Farm Seed Bank.

A Seed Bank is a collection of locally cultivated seeds that are stored and categorized by species and locality. The most essential reason to create a Seed Bank is biodiversity. “To put it simply, we don’t want to lose any plants that may prove valuable in the future,” explained Craig Wilson, Program Manager of Growing Grounds Farm in San Luis Obispo. Now in its second year of collection and sales, the Seed Bank concept is showing great promise.

The Farm has local organizations and generous grant makers to thank for helping the kernel of a good idea germinate. “The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County got the ball rolling. We really became interested in seed collection and processing because we learned that they need locally collected seeds for a large project in the Nipomo-Guadalupe Dunes area,” recalled Wilson. “They were looking for someone who could collect and process seeds from that site.

The Growing Grounds Seed Bank was established in 2012 with an initial \$7,500 grant from the Harold J. Miossi Charitable Trust, established by a local ranching family, which allowed the Growing Grounds Farm to convert an existing shed into a clean, climate-controlled work and storage space.

Leveraging this grant, TMHA received funding from the Giles W. and Elise G. Mead Foundation for the purchase of an automated seed cleaner, which greatly increased the capacity and allowed the Farm to begin offering that service to others.

“Small scale seed cleaning is a very laborious process and can require specially-made costly equipment,” explained Wilson. A grant from the Hind Foundation and a second grant from the Harold J. Miossi Charitable trust in 2014 allowed the Seed Bank Project to complete the acquisition of necessary equipment to become fully functioning.

Today, the Seed Bank is a growing business within the Farm, collecting local seeds from Central Coast-specific regions, cleaning them, and growing out the resulting restoration stock for sale to others. Eventually, Growing Grounds Farm would like to house a comprehensive collection of locally collected seed for restoration purposes throughout SLO County.

The ultimate goal is for the Seed Bank to be self-supporting through the sale of nursery stock grown from collected seed, the sale of seed itself, and the processing of seed from other organizations. “Proof of this concept is there,” said Wilson. “In the brief time we have been up and running we have had three contracts and are working on a fourth.”

The larger goal of the project, is to become a permanent source of locally collected native plant seed and nursery stock for restoration efforts throughout the Central Coast. “We’ve had an outpouring of support for this project, not only for the environmental benefits, but also for our nursery business and employees,” said Wilson.

For over 30 years, TMHA has operated the **Growing Grounds Farm** of San Luis Obispo, one of California’s most compassionate, proactive forms of treatment for adults suffering from mental illness. A combination of horticultural therapy and vocational training, the farm provides a disenfranchised population with true employment opportunities while maintaining a supportive environment. Our employees are diagnosed with persistent illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder or major depression.

“The Seed Bank offers workers at the Farm another skill. They can recognize when a seed is ready and collect it. It’s an opportunity...that skill can be leveraged into a local job,” said Wilson. He notes that the Seed Bank provides training and education for program clients in the science of seed collection, processing and storage techniques.

ABOUT TMHA

Transitions-Mental Health Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to eliminating stigma and promoting recovery and wellness for people with mental illness through work, housing, community and family support services. TMHA operates 30 programs at over 35 locations that reach over 2,000 people and 1,500 families in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties. The emphasis of TMHA's many services is to teach vital independent living skills, and build a framework for community re-entry through personal empowerment and hands on experience. For over 30 years, TMHA has been dedicated to providing housing, employment, case management and life-skills support to teens and adults with mental illness; and support, resources and education for their loved ones. For more information, visit www.T-MHA.org.

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