

SPRING 2020

THE JOURNEY

KEEPING THE CONNECTION



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

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Reaching Out in Tough Times

On March 19, Governor Newsom issued a statewide Stay At Home order to quell the spread of COVID-19. TMHA began an immediate transition, moving the majority of our programs to remote delivery. As a provider of essential services, we understand that it is critical that our clients continue to feel connected and have access to the staff they are comfortable with. Severing that relationship at such a tense, uncertain time would have taken a huge emotional toll.

While our Homeless, Housing, Medi-Cal, and Clinical Services staff continue to provide select in-person visits at a social distance, most TMHA staff have decamped to their homes with iPads, laptops, and Zoom subscriptions—purchases made possible through emergency grants from the Santa Barbara Foundation, Bank of America, and the Community Foundation San Luis Obispo. That funding also enabled TMHA to provide many clients with cell phones, so they would not miss the opportunity to connect with TMHA staff.

A Message from Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

I hope you are finding your bearings as we complete our second month of Shelter at Home. Spring officially arrived with blue skies, warmer temperatures, wild flowers and new signs of life everywhere we look. It is helpful to see nature's growth and renewal as it gives me a sense of forward motion and hope. I think hope is necessary to balance what has been lost since COVID-19 became a part of our lives— from the loss of daily connections, rhythms, and rituals that we rely upon, to the human toll that the virus has taken.

It is hard to characterize all the feelings that I have about how TMHA staff have responded to this pandemic. It is a mixture of pride, concern, astonishment, and sheer admiration. It is undoubtedly a scary time for all of us and we are each grappling with our feelings around how to keep our mission moving forward and our clients supported, fed, housed and treated. I have seen staff and clients connect in different, meaningful ways, I have seen teams share resources and personnel, and I have seen the TMHA team check in on one another generously.

I have also seen so many of you, our friends and supporters, reach out to help with donations, messages of encouragement, home-sewn masks, and so much more. It is becoming a well-worn cliché, but it is no less true: we are in this together.

Stay well, and Thank You!

Jill Bolster-White



Jovi Calla Vela,
Behavioral Health Navigator

Keeps Me On My Toes

For Lompoc ACT (Assertive Community Treatment), the quick conversion brought all kinds of challenges. "It's been hard for the clients to adapt," Shurree Gioieni, Lead Clinician, acknowledged. "They are so used to regular in-person interactions with us. Moving to the telephone has raised a lot of anxiety which, in turn, requires even more phone contact."

Shuriee felt there was a big difference between telephone contact and video conferencing. “Zoom allows us to see how our clients are presenting. As a clinician, I can tell you that is absolutely key. I can see if they are nervous, unable to sit still, that kind of thing. Working on the telephone demands that I up my skills. I have to ask more questions, really do more motivational interviewing so the clients can guide their story. It not only keeps me on my toes, but gives the client a different kind of therapy.”

THEN



Art at Hope House, October 2019

Like the First Day of School

Michelle Madgett, Center Supervisor at Hope House Wellness Center, was enthused about the Zoom experience. Michelle has been leading a special group called Facing Challenge Together, to specifically discuss impacts of the pandemic. “The goal is to bear witness to what we ourselves experience and what others experience with compassion and kind regard. There is a lot of power in humans bearing witness to each other when struggling.”

And how did the first session go? Michelle breaks into a smile. “I felt like a little kid, with so much giddy excitement to see everybody. It was like the first day of school. In the end, it was the same format, the same flow, and the same great consideration that everyone has for each other.”

The Good Old Days

For Tony Arnold, a Case Manager with TMHA’s Homeless Services Program, the change has been more challenging. “I’m yearning for the human connection I used to have,”

Tony admits. “That connection is why I wanted to work at TMHA in the first place. It’s the same reason I loved being a teacher, for the up-close and personal interaction.”

Tony acknowledges that he’s learned how to get more out of his telephone interactions, but he can’t help but reminisce about the “good old days” (as in 8 weeks ago). “I can remember getting in the car with some of my male clients. And I’d notice one of them was wearing cologne, maybe a lot of it. And I’d say ‘oh, did you just buy cologne?’ Well this might lead to the fact that there was a new romantic interest in his life, and a great conversation would unfold. On the phone, I obviously can’t pick up on those kinds of cues.”

NOW



Joe Stewart leads Artistic Expressions Group on Zoom, April 2020

We Are All Smiling

For now, TMHA will continue to refine this process and consider integrating some techniques, like video connection, into our post-COVID future.

We’ll give the last word to a Member with Safe Haven Wellness Center in Arroyo Grande: “Having people to talk to who are going through a lot of the same feelings and emotions has brought good sharing and happiness. After the Zoom meetings we are all smiling, we are all talking and everyone is happy. The staff are so sweet and I am able to talk to them without there being any time barriers. I am grateful that I am alive and I am grateful that I can be there for others.”



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"It Never Fits Right" by Mary Ann Oliver

A Sneak Peek

This year's edition of Opening Minds, TMHA's signature art event, has been postponed due to COVID-19, and will now launch in May 2021. In the meantime, you can catch a glimpse of some of the magnificent art that will appear in the show and watch interviews with several of the participating artists. You'll find it all at t-mha.org/OpeningMinds.

May We Find a Better Way

by Joy Pedersen, TMHA Board Member

May we find a better way
To live on this Earth together
May we find ingenuity
To solve our problems better
May we find connection
As we live in isolation
May we find wisdom
In the stream of information
May we find creativity
As our lives are changing
May we find levity
In the memories we are making
May we find safety
In the new world we are creating
May we find strength
When we find our hearts are
breaking
May we find peace
In all of this uncertainty
May we find love
To give to all humanity



Now Playing

If you have young ones at home during lockdown, we can imagine the challenges you're facing: online classrooms, irritable or hyperactive energy, and maybe even increased mental health concerns. Amy Waddle of TMHA's High School Program and Graphic Design Specialist, Ten Crandall, created this brief video on some ways your kiddos and teens can engage in self-care. Watch it at tinyurl.com/TMHASelf-Care.

A New Tax Break

When filling out our taxes, most of us take the standard deduction, which is \$12,400 for singles and \$24,800 for married-filing-jointly. This year the CARES Act legislation allows you to write off up to \$300 in charitable donations made in 2020. In other words, if you donate up to \$300 to a nonprofit like TMHA, your adjusted gross income will be reduced by that amount, and you can still claim the standard deduction.

Whatever you can give, we are always thrilled and grateful. But please know that in these extraordinary times of coming together, there is a small added benefit to your generosity. We hope you can take advantage of it.