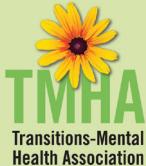




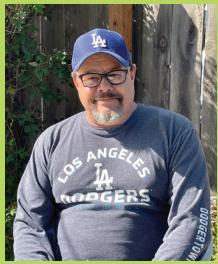
SPRING 2023

WE SHARE THE JOURNEY



No one should confront a mental health challenge alone.

It takes compassion, collaboration, and creativity to move forward with confidence. In this issue, we celebrate some of the ways TMHA has had a positive impact in our communities.



Brent joined Adult Transitional Program (ATP) in 2021 and moved into Community Residential Program two years later. He's been certified in Mental Health First Aid, WRAP, ASIST and recently received a scholarship to pursue his Peer Certification.

I was diagnosed with bipolar II disorder in 2005 and I got permanent disability in 2015.

Living in ATP and taking classes like Peer to Peer and Mental Health First Aid, I realized I have something to offer. Mental health services saved my life, and I think it's important that we keep them going, and if there's any way I can help TMHA, whether I get paid or not, I want to be a part of the solution moving forward. I think the diabolical nature of mental illness is that the illness itself can prevent people from accessing services. I was fortunate that I had my mom help me get my footing with county mental health. But if I had to go in there on my own: quasi-homeless, living out of motels, not understanding what was going on, I never would have accessed those services. Because it was just too much. So I really believe it's important to have an advocate. We all have trauma of some sort, and I'm just trying to figure out what's my place in this.



Jennifer connected with Helping Hands of Lompoc several years ago. She's been an active member, also taking online classes from the Wellness Centers. She hopes to start volunteering at the Lompoc Library later this year.

I was newly diagnosed with bipolar I and I was having a lot of anxiety. It was really good for me to get out of the house and go to Helping Hands. TMHA helped me grow and helped me get out of my comfort zone and not stay stuck. Take challenges and set goals and reach them. All the leaders and staff at TMHA are very inspirational. I want to be like them, they're so supportive. They have lived experience so they can really relate to the members. When I was having panic and anxiety attacks regularly, I got support from a few different staff at TMHA. They shared their own experience with panic attacks and what they did to overcome them. They always offered a listening ear. I still have attacks but they're not as intense and they're not as long. So I'm making progress.



From L to R: Dustin, James, Case Manager Kristina McNichol, David & Sassy, Jennifer

Harmony in the House

TMHA's Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP) serves chronically homeless individuals who are likely to be approved for Social Security Disability assistance. The newly expanded outreach program provides case management and temporary housing to clients while staff work with them on a detailed application for benefits.

James was the first to arrive. Last fall he connected with the Library Outreach team and began attending Life House Wellness Center in Atascadero. In short time, he was working with Kristina McNichol, HDAP Case Manager, applying for benefits and scheduling major dental surgery with CenCal.

Soon James had a roommate. Dustin had connected with TMHA after an 8-year period on the streets. "I was homeless, I did not have a CalFresh card, and I had a track phone that was running out of minutes," he recalled. "And I knew I had to do something because I wasn't going to be able to keep in touch with anybody."

David arrived next. "I spent a year and a half on the streets," he said. "It was one of the hardest things I think I've ever had to suffer through in life. If it wasn't for TMHA and Prado, I wouldn't be here right now. I bust my stars every single day, I'm so grateful being here."

Finally, the new year brought Jennifer to round out the house. "I was at ECHO, and I knew that was a 90 day program," she shared. "As I got close to the end, I was getting really nervous and my case manager gave me the number of Melissa Reed with HDAP. And

within a few days Melissa and Charlie Jackson came and met with me and I could not believe the amount of services they opened up for me.”

“I’ve been doing this for 15 years,” said Mark Lamore, TMHA’s Director of Housing. “This house has never looked so good. To have four individuals with all these different stories come together and form a cohesive unit...I am just so impressed.”

Naturally, there were growing pains. As James remembers, “the first time we had a team meeting it was hard. We had little arguments, it got a little rough verbally. But thanks to Kristina and Melissa, now we have a talking stick, so we don’t interrupt each other. And we have the Four Agreements. We started using that, and it was so good.”

Friendships developed, and David adopted his therapeutic dog, Sassy. “It was a long, dark winter,” Dustin admits. “It was rainy and stormy and pretty quiet. But now we have more people and better weather. We bring everything to the table and talk it out.”

James was recently awarded his benefits, and the HDAP team is helping to place him in independent housing. Once he transitions, a new face will move in, and the process will begin again. But for the residents of Atascadero House, there is one constant.

“Kristina has our back—150%,” Jennifer says. “She’s been amazing. So knowledgeable about the process of Social Security, and when I have a problem in the house and I speak to her, she somehow makes everything better.”



When Stephanie moved to the Central Coast, she searched for the community supports that fit her needs. She discovered TMHA, and our Behavioral Health Navigators connected her with the Wellness Centers.

I served in the military for 11 years. I have complex post traumatic distress disorder and bipolar disorder. Plus I was injured in the military. TMHA and Hope House and Safe Haven have been crucial to my health in that they provide real community. My younger brother was diagnosed with cancer the year before, and I had to go back to the Midwest to be with my family during his cancer battle. It was extremely isolating. As a post-operative transgender non-binary woman in a red state that has a lot of anti-transgender sentiment, it was difficult for me to even go back. But I needed to do it for my brother and my mom. I knew I would have no social or mental health support. I called, I asked is there a NAMI, is there anything? There was nothing. I had talked to Hilary at Safe Haven, and they allowed me to do the virtual groups. It was literally a life-saver. It kept me alive. There were times when I was suicidal and I’d look at the calendar, and see I’ve got a group tomorrow, I just need to hang on for a couple more hours. Safe Haven sustained me during a really dark time. This place is a home and a family to me.



5 years ago, **Bruce** nearly died of an overdose in San Luis Obispo County Jail. He was granted a release when authorities believed he would not survive. Bruce rallied, but he was frequently homeless. Advocates at CAPSLO and TMHA worked on his behalf, and he received a spot in TMHA’s permanent housing.



I was staying in the medical wing of the shelter. Joe Eister from TMHA got me to fill out all these applications for housing, trying to get me a place. He took me around to see a few, but there were lots of waiting lists. And then out of the blue they said, “Hey we have a house for you.” I love this place. I have a lot of gratitude for TMHA. Without them, I probably would have lost all of this and been out on the streets. TMHA came through for me just at the right time.



Transitions-Mental Health Association

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Farewell, Friend

We want to thank Anne Robin for nearly 10 years of dedicated, strategic and thoughtful partnership in providing mental health services for the citizens of San Luis Obispo County. As SLO County's Behavioral Health Administrator, Anne (pictured here in contract negotiations with a Harris hawk) expanded our county's youth services, mobile crisis services, oversaw the Crisis Stabilization Unit, and the pairing of mental health professionals with law enforcement officers. Above all, Anne was a tireless advocate for people with lived experience, championing the importance of their voice in their own treatment and their role in the workplace. We will truly miss her.



Stuck On Hotline

Our Youth Mental Health ARPA grant has enabled us to raise our marketing game with these new Central Coast Hotline stickers. We've got TMHA staff going into the schools and letting the students know they can now *text the Hotline*. Mary Mills, Associate Manager shared, "the moment I pulled out the stickers they were a HUGE hit. Two students immediately put them on the back of their phones."



May at The Bunker—a new art gallery and Nautical Bean coffee house located at 810 Orcutt Road in San Luis Obispo. For more information, please visit the TMHA website.

Opening Minds is Open!

There is still plenty of time for you to experience Opening Minds, a community art show that champions the idea that we should not be defined in terms of our illness but by our strengths, gifts and the contributions we make to society. The exhibition features the work of 23 local artists, and runs through the month of

A New Way to Help

If you're in spring cleaning mode, our programs are always in need of gently used items. To check our updated list, scan this QR code, visit our donation page at www.t-mha.org/donate.php, or call us at (805) 540-6500.



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