

THE JOURNEY

SPRING 2021

WHAT'S

NEXT?



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

www.t-mha.org

Getting Ready for the Next Chapter

Whether or not you intend to barbecue this 4th of July, changes are coming to pandemic life. The distribution of vaccines, the steady decrease of infections and fatalities has California communities talking about yellow tiers and a Return to Normal. But how easy is that return? And after a year of living with COVID, what sort of emotional baggage will we be carrying around?

In the last year...

42% of US adults surveyed reported symptoms of anxiety or depression (a 31% increase in a single year)

56% of young adults (18-24) surveyed reported symptoms of anxiety and/or depression

26% of young adults reported having suicidal thoughts

46% of Hispanic or Latino adults reported symptoms of anxiety or depression

- National Center for Health Statistics, Anxiety and Depression Household Pulse Survey

Luana Marques, a clinical psychologist at Harvard Medical School has been monitoring the mental-health impacts of the crisis in US populations and elsewhere. "Major events that have shaken societies, such as the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York, have left some people with psychological distress for years," says Marques. NIAID director, Anthony Fauci, echoes the point. "The long term ravages of COVID are so multifaceted," Fauci said, "especially the economic and mental health effects." In other words, after such a challenging year, none of us can simply flip a switch.



"We have been through a collective trauma over the last year," Jill Bolster-White admits, "but TMHA is doing everything it can as an agency to hear what the community needs and be there with the right resources." She points to our Behavioral Health Navigators, Family Services, and Central Coast Hotline's expanded Brief Therapy programs as great services anyone can reach out to.

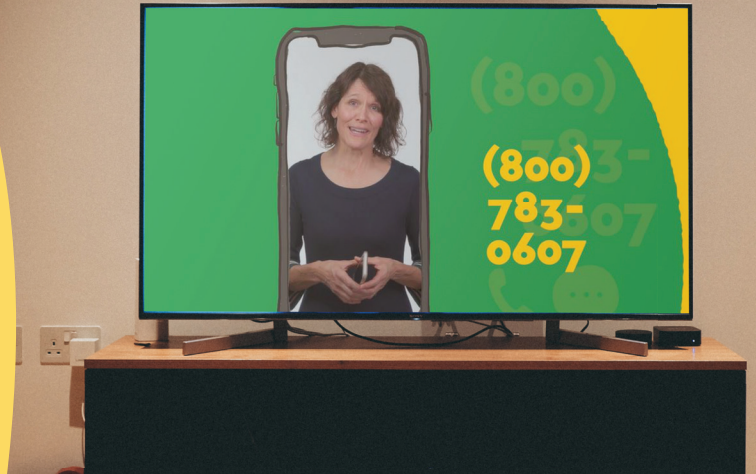
For our clients, it has been a blend of persistence, creativity, and out-of-the-box thinking to guide them through the last 12 months. These days, we all look forward to in-person activities and services. That doesn't mean it will be effortless. But it does mean, hopefully, we can start to show our smile without fear.



Hotline for All

2021 began with a lovely jolt, as our friends at Verdin Marketing chose TMHA to be the recipient of their annual 24-hour Give, in which they provide a free rebrand and makeover to a local nonprofit. What used to be called SLO Hotline is now Central Coast Hotline—a name change that affirms our relationship with both San Luis Obispo and Northern Santa Barbara Counties.

The Verdin team presented TMHA with a package valued at nearly \$100,000, ranging from free media and professional production to hours of creative and organizational expertise. They even held an online Wellness Kickoff event that raised over \$2,400 for the Hotline. For the *piece de resistance*, they provided our Executive Director with her long-overdue Kardashian moment. You can now catch Jill Bolster-White in a PSA on local TV, reminding us to put the Hotline number in your phone! You never know when you're going to need it.



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HOTLINE**
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More Than a Meal

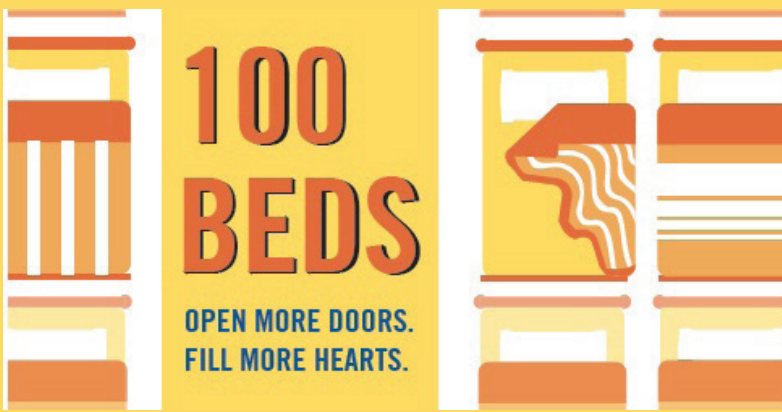
TMHA operates so many different programs (over 40 and counting), it's easy to lose sight of some of the ways we impact our communities. Did you know that both of our Recovery Learning Centers (RLCs) in North Santa Barbara County provide weekly meals and food bags to members? "People living with a mental illness have many stressors in life," RLC Program Manager Steve Greene points out, "and if we can offer meals and groceries to those in need, that is one less stressor for them."

Once COVID shut the doors of the Centers, the food distribution met more than just a physical need; it became a way to offer social connection while so many other things were interrupted. RLC members could count on a sack lunch, a hot meal, or a couple of bags of groceries in addition to a friendly greeting from a familiar face (albeit partially covered with a face mask). In the last 8 months, the RLCs provided 2,700 meals and 4,300 bags of groceries. Staff went above and beyond by offering home delivery to members in Santa Maria who were at high risk



Silvia Ortega with the meal hand-off.

for COVID complications. In Lompoc, Silvia Ortega went out into the community and distributed groceries to the Spanish speaking population twice a month. When she started her outreach, there were 8-10 households receiving groceries; within two months there were over 40 families. We salute this fantastic effort.



Open More Doors

How do you follow a project like Bishop Street Studios? You think just as big, and all over the county. This year, TMHA will launch 100 Beds, an ambitious capital campaign focused on creating more agency-owned housing for our clients. We know that safe and welcoming housing is the key to long-term mental health recovery. At the moment, we are working towards purchasing a 5-bedroom house in San Luis Obispo and developing 20 units of supported housing in Paso Robles. For more information about the campaign, write to mkaplan@t-mha.org.



A Tough Goodbye



This month, we bid a fond farewell to Barb Fischer, who will be retiring from the TMHA Board of Directors after 27 years of service. The breadth and scope of Barb's contributions would require a newsletter of its own,

but we cannot say goodbye without acknowledging that there would never have been a Growing Grounds Farm employment program without Barb's vision and determination. She saw our clients "wanted what everyone wants: a full life. And that includes finding a job." So she drove around the county, spotted a piece of land, met with PG&E, and somehow conjured up one of our most beloved programs. Thank you Barb, and happy trails!



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Accountability in Action

We have seen demonstrations from Paso Robles to Lompoc in support of our Asian American Pacific Islander community in the wake of an uptick of anti-Asian violence all over the country. Add this to the Black Lives Matter marches and protests of the summer and it is clear that racism and social justice are in the forefront of our community's mind.

We are proud to share that TMHA's own Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee consists of about 20 TMHA employees and is co-lead by TMHA board member, Joy Pedersen and TMHA staff members, Alley Jensen and Cailyn Ortega. This committee is dedicated to identifying and addressing the intersection between mental health and all forms of systemic oppression and is tasked with suggesting necessary improvements to our organization to ensure we meet the standards of equity our community deserves. The committee is developing a diversity statement and action plan, and we look forward to sharing our progress with you all.