

THE JOURNEY

SPRING 2022



NEW BEGINNINGS



Hotline in the Headlines

TMHA has a robust new partner, as Must! Charities is investing \$556,000 in the Central Coast Hotline. The grant will allow the program to add a 24/7 texting service to reach young adults, replace an outmoded phone system, continue an innovative Brief Therapy Clinic, and move the entire Hotline headquarters into a new building.

The addition of a dedicated text line will fill a crucial gap in our community. Although Central Coast Hotline receives over 10,000 calls a year, less than 1% are from people under the age of 21. “Teens prefer to text,” says Melanie Barket, Central Coast Hotline Program Manager. “We want them to use this resource anytime they need it, in the way they are most comfortable.”



Jill Bolster-White and Becky Gray

“What we love about this project,” says Becky Gray, Executive Director of Must! Charities, “is it is a rapid expansion project so we can more quickly meet the urgent needs facing people in our region.”

Starting this summer, there will be a monumental shift in how our nation handles crisis calls. The National Suicide Lifeline will be rolling out 988, the new number dedicated

to mental health emergencies and support. This will be a dramatic reshaping of the behavioral health crisis response system.

“When I heard of the 988 rollout,” Barket said, “I was painfully aware that our little ol’ Central Coast Hotline would not make the cut with our existing infrastructure. Then Must! Charities stepped forward to save the day. Their support will enable Central Coast Hotline to apply to become a 988 Lifeline Call Center and reach even more people in need!”

Talk That Matters

The Peer Advocacy and Advisory Team (PAAT) is a committee of peers who have lived experience with mental illness and work to advocate for those served by the mental health system, educating the community and reducing stigma. Over the years, the group has experimented with a variety of events. Recently, the program has been supercharged by the efforts of Stephanie Carlotti, the new PAAT Assistant.



Stephanie Carlotti

It began in January, with an unprecedented collaboration between PAAT and the Sierra Club: an online forum on Mental Health and the Climate Crisis. Attendance was robust, and the event was covered in the local press.

So far, Stephanie has organized three public forums. PAAT hosted an Ask The Director session with Anne

Robin, Director of San Luis Obispo County’s Behavioral Health Department, followed by a forum on employment and social security with input from labor attorneys and representatives of the Department of Rehabilitation. On deck: an in-person forum about the Governor’s plan for CARE Court, with input from local politicians.

“I think about these ideas as a consumer of mental health services,” said Stephanie, who also works as a Behavioral Health Navigator at TMHA. “I think: what would benefit me or someone who’s facing the type of challenges I once had? I see myself in the people I work with all the time. That’s why I like planning the PAAT forums so much, it’s all from a peer point of view.”

For more information about PAAT and upcoming meetings and forums, check out the Community section of our website.



A Fresh Start in Santa Barbara

“Honestly, it feels like a new chapter has begun.”

Those are the words of Christina Harney, Santa Barbara County Clinical Director. Christina has held multiple positions in our Santa Maria programs over the past 16 years, and currently oversees all TMHA services in the region. Recently, Christina oversaw major changes, starting with a brand new office building that now houses our Santa Maria Supportive Community Services.

“We were in a building that simply could not contain our full staff,” Harney explains. “The team needed more room for one-on-one meetings, better infrastructure, better parking. We are ecstatic to be in this new home.”

An equally exciting development is TMHA’s first opportunity to launch Outreach and Education efforts in Northern Santa Barbara County. The agency proposed an ambitious program of community trainings and presentations that was awarded over \$150,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The program will run for 15 months and, with strong outcomes, position itself for additional funding.

“This has been a long time coming,” said Michael Kaplan, Community Engagement Director. “We’ve had an Outreach and Education program in San Luis Obispo for over 15 years. We reach more than 10,000 community members annually, we provide Mental Health First Aid and other trainings—it is the very foundation of Prevention and Early Intervention. We are delighted to have Santa Barbara

County support funding a similar effort. It is such a relief to offer this to the communities of Santa Maria and Lompoc.”



Anna Wiens, Program Manager Growing Grounds Enterprises, 5th District Supervisor Steve Lavagnino, Toni Navarro, Director of Santa Barbara Behavioral Wellness

It is no coincidence that this new day is marked by a leadership change. Antonette “Toni” Navarro has taken the reins as the Director of the Behavioral Wellness Department in Santa Barbara County. On a recent tour of Growing Grounds Farm Santa Maria, Navarro expressed great enthusiasm for TMHA’s programs.

“After talking to her, I can see that the County is moving away from a focus on crisis services and starting to integrate more preventive work,” says Harney. “That is something TMHA has always placed great value on. Like I said: a new chapter!”



In Memoriam

One of our long-time leaders, Joe Madsen, passed away last month from complications from surgery. Joe was an incredibly dedicated member of TMHA who, in the course of his 24 years here, worked in youth services, homeless outreach and ultimately served as the Division Director of Housing and Forensic Services. He cared intensely about the mission, our clients, and his teams. Joe left us suddenly and much too soon. His programs are a testament to the amazing work he accomplished.



More Housing on Tap

In December, TMHA purchased a new property in the City of San Luis Obispo. Palm Street Studios will provide supportive housing to 8 adults living with a mental illness who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness. TMHA will construct 6 one bedroom apartments within the current building and add 2 one bedroom Accessory Dwelling Units. We have applied for over \$2 million in funds from the State of California's No Place Like Home program, and received funding from both the City and County of San Luis Obispo. Palm Street Studios is the first in several projects that are part of a long-term housing campaign called TMHA Studios. More details to come later this year!



Transitions-Mental Health Association

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Crypto and Venmo, Oh My!

Our fundraising continues to move with the times. Now it's even easier to make a donation to TMHA, you can simply Venmo your gift to us at @TMHA_SLO. And if you have been building your post-modern fortune through crypto currency, yes, we accept that too! You can make a crypto donation and we will immediately process the gift and convert it into old-fashioned dollars. Just click the DONATE NOW button at www.t-mha.org to learn more.



TMHA Summer of Fun

We've all been missing the good ol' days of Bowl-A-Thon, so we thought we'd cook up some terrific outdoor activities for you. This year, you can enjoy our very first **TMHA Summer of Fun**. In June we will be holding *Corks & Canvases*, a series of Sip and Paint Socials. July will ring in *Smashing Stigma!* – Pickleball to Benefit Mental Wellness, hosted by Templeton Tennis Ranch. August will feature TMHA's *Sunshine Celebration* – featuring games and a Mother Corn Shuckers concert by the sea at the Sea Pines Golf Resort in Los Osos. To learn more and sign up, use this QR code or visit our web site.

