



Transitions-Mental Health Association

Reaching Out

INSPIRING HOPE, GROWTH, RECOVERY AND WELLNESS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Spring 2017 - Volume 12, Issue 1

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It Takes a Village

TMHA has operated the SLO County Youth Treatment Program (YTP) for over 25 years.

YTP is a nine-bed residential treatment program serving young people who require 24 hour therapeutic, mental health care. **Picture a single house in the community, where up to nine young people can all receive a remarkable level of special care and recovery services.**

The program receives funding for room and board from the State Department of Social Services and additional funding from the SLO County Department of Mental Health for mental health treatment and medication support.

So much time and money goes towards the fundamentals of this valuable program that a simple fact threatens to get lost in the mix: our clients are teenagers who are still growing up. They need to play, laugh, exercise, and have their minds challenged. They need adventure. They need to tap into their capacity for joy.

That is where our community has stepped in, time and again.

Through the combined efforts of the Janssen Fund, Central Coast Funds for Children (CCFC), Rita's Rainbows, two Rotary clubs in the City of SLO, and a new nonprofit called Infinite Music, the residents of YTP are assured of activities that engage their bodies and souls.

"A number of our youth love dropping in at the YMCA to lift weights or pursue other workout regimens," Program Manager Alley Jensen shared. "In recent years

we have had several talented athletes and artists who joined traveling soccer clubs and enrolled in local dance and art classes. A few kids have become really interested in yoga. One of our girls joined the Varsity Cheerleading Squad at Morro Bay High School, and the uniform and practice wear cost upwards of \$1,000."

Whether providing gym memberships, sports equipment, bike rentals, reliable footwear, or boogie and skim boards,

our community partners enable Alley to grow a variety of opportunities for the kids at YTP. Some of these have proven to be remarkable building blocks towards growth.

For the past three years, a grant from the CCFC has given residents the opportunity to participate in an Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy program, operated in Los Osos by Gina Sears, LMFT.

The program teaches critical life and communication skills. Horses mostly use non-verbal communication and thus are wonderful teachers to help the kids better understand how their non-verbal communication might be impacting or influencing others in

their lives. Horses also demand that the teens working with them be aware of their surroundings at all times. In order to stay safe around horses they must be observant and present in their bodies. To care for horses takes dedication, time, and effort and the YTP kids learn a strong work ethic through the program.

Two years ago, the Janssen Youth & Youth Sports Fund provided a grant for a first-time Climbing Challenge



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The Latest from Bishop Street Studios

We are delighted to report that the Bishop Street Studios Capital Campaign has reached the 80% mark, with donations and pledges totaling more than \$1.2 million. We thank all of you for your invaluable support and generosity!

Meanwhile, a great deal is happening behind the scenes. The Design and Development Team is now in place and is preparing detailed construction documents that will be ready for City submittal by mid-May. This group is headed by the excellent architects at Ten Over Studio. As part of this effort, preliminary work has begun at the site. Soil testing and boring is underway, and we will soon be conducting brick shear testing to gauge seismic strength. The activity on the site has already caused some dog-walkers to wonder about the “noises” within the building, harking back to the days when the building was thought to be the exclusive domain of graffiti artists and ghosts. We deeply appreciate the patience of all our neighbors! Learn more at www.bishopstreetstudios.org.

TMHA Website Updated

TMHA has a fresh new look online, one that we are excited to share with the community. With work from LIFTOFF Digital and 20/20 Creative Group we just launched our new web site. Please take a moment to check it out at www.t-mha.org. Be sure to let your friends know that this is a wonderful resource for anyone seeking information about services in San Luis Obispo and North Santa Barbara Counties.



Board Member Spotlight: Lisa Katherman

TMHA's Board of Directors is an artful assembly of diverse experiences and passions. Our Board roster includes experts in such areas as finance, law enforcement, education, technology, and nonprofit governance.

Lisa Katherman, one of our two brand new Board Members, arrives with her own unique and valuable expertise: the lived experience of a family member touched by mental illness. “Hope is my middle name,” she smiles. “I’m an optimistic person and I find TMHA’s culture of recovery so inspiring.”

Seven years ago, Lisa and her husband Charlie were faced with a sudden challenge when a loved one left college with mental health issues. Lisa was referred to NAMI in San Luis Obispo, and they recommended TMHA Family Services.

“I took all those classes on Tuesday,” Lisa recalls. “It was so educational, like Mental Health 101. That first day, it was such a revelation driving up and seeing that the parking lot was full. I thought: I’m not the only one who needs help.”

Lisa quickly forged relationships with many members of her support group, with staff providing constant guidance. “It was like they became your friend,” she said. “You could call them any time and ask them questions. My husband and I had so many ups and downs, and Family Services was there for every step.”

What happened next came out of the blue.

“I knew Carol Armstrong from my health club,” Lisa explains. “And one day when I was scoping out the TMHA web site, I discovered she sat on the Board. So the next time I saw her I went out of my way to thank her. I told her our family had needed services and I thought it was a great organization.”



That acknowledgment did not go unnoticed. Several years later another TMHA Board Member, Cindy Johnson, called Lisa looking for some help. Cindy and TMHA were strong supporters of the Mental Health Hospital in Templeton, which was meeting a great deal of community resistance. Cindy asked if Lisa would participate in a meeting at TMHA headquarters with the Templeton Advisory Council, a group that was strongly protesting the plan. “I’m a pretty shy person,” Lisa laughs. “I’d never been a speaker before. But I’m passionate about helping people and I saw this as an opportunity.”

Lisa sat through the meeting, listening to several speakers describe individuals with mental illness in incorrect and stigmatizing language. “They were talking about crazy people who weren’t human. That’s when I told my story. I said I had a loved one with a mental illness who is a wonderful and affectionate person...and I think they were shocked.”

Lisa continued to advocate for the Templeton Mental Health Hospital, holding one-on-one meetings with four out of five County Supervisors. “Once again, there was a certain amount of surprise,” she said. “When there’s mental illness in a family, people form an image that’s simply not real. No one expected someone like me to walk in and talk about the experience.”

The Templeton facility was approved by the Board of Supervisors. Sometime later

Brighter Smiles for TMHA Clients

Over the last five years there has been a concerted push to integrate behavioral health and primary care. One of the common challenges with that equation is finding a way to make room for oral health.

For men and women living on the street, oral hygiene becomes a secondary priority. Many adults with mental illness lack the ability to identify, locate and access critical resources to take care of chronic dental problems. The current Community Health Clinic Dental offices are based in Nipomo and Templeton, which creates a transportation burden for any of our clients living in the City of SLO or North Coast. And above all, root canals and dentures are expensive—and they are not covered by Medi-Cal.

Carol Armstrong, a member of TMHA's Board of Directors, decided it was time to break the log-jam. "If you see a dentist regularly or routinely take care of your own teeth," she said, "you may not understand how much it affects your overall well-being." In considering the issue, Carol thought of her friend, Dr. Peter Nelson, a recently retired dentist. Dr. Nelson is also a friend of JT Haas, TMHA's Board President, so JT and Carol approached Peter from different directions. How could they find a way to serve TMHA clients with serious dental needs?

Carol Armstrong invited Lisa on a walk. "She told me there might be some people leaving the TMHA Board, and wondered if I would be interested. I said I'd be honored."

Lisa came to observe a Board Meeting and liked what she saw. "I was really impressed by how long people have stayed and served on the Board," she noted. "It speaks volumes."

The next step was an interview with the nominating committee, which included Jill

Dr. Nelson immediately understood the problem; more important, he was no stranger to using his expertise for charitable missions. In recent years he has been trying to build a dental clinic in Haiti. He was willing to help, but believed there was no feasible way to handle the volume of patients without getting a full team of dentists to agree to donate their time.

Nelson spoke with his former partners Alan Latta, Byron Problacion, and Robert Wells. All shared a philanthropic impulse, and had been generously donating their time locally and abroad. The quartet agreed that the program was worth pursuing, but impossible without the participation of their assistants, hygienists and office workers. TMHA put together a basic information package: who we are, how long we've been in the community, and why this was such a critical project. Within days we were told to move forward.

Program managers from 50Now, Full Service Partnership, Community Housing, Permanent Housing, and Homeless Outreach got together and identified 95 clients who required dental work. Dr. Nelson helped TMHA staff identify the ones who were in the gravest need. 26 clients were brought in for a first appointment in early March. The four dentists assessed

Bolster-White. "I was nervous going in," Lisa confessed, "but it quickly became an open conversation. I asked lots of questions about TMHA, and shared all my perspectives as a consumer. There's a whole lot that I know and have lived that so many others haven't faced."

By the end of 2016, Lisa accepted a position on the Board. She's participated in the two-day New Employee Orientation, and gone on several different tours of TMHA programs and facilities. When asked what

them all, rated them, and prioritized future appointments. Two subsequent clinics took place in the month of March for initial and follow-up treatment.

The clinics have been a model of efficiency: four teams of dentists and assistants working for a few hours on a Friday, while clients wait in the front room. "That's actually a nice feature of the project," Carol observes. "The waiting room is like a peer hub. Many of the clients know one another, and they are very supportive of each other."



Dr. Latta, Dr. Nelson, Dr. Problacion, and Dr. Wells

As for Carol Armstrong, the modest architect of the undertaking, the rewards were right in front of her in the waiting room. "This was such a great gift for so many of these folks. One client had to have all his teeth out," she recalls. "He came back into the waiting room with his mouth full of gauze, and still there was a big smile on his face. He told me 'this has changed my life. There may actually be a day when a girl smiles at me.'"

her most pleasant surprise has been, she doesn't hesitate. "The lived experience of so many staff. I had no idea—there were people sharing amazing stories even at the New Employee Orientation."

Her smile doesn't dim as she takes a moment to put this in perspective. "This journey I've taken—that so many at TMHA have taken—it makes you look at the world in an entirely different way. It makes you realize success is different for everyone. And that's how hope returns."

It Takes a Village (continued from page 1)

that began with sessions at the SLO-OP Climbing Gym, and led to an all-day rock climbing course with the Santa Barbara Adventure Company.

Tricia Righetti, the staff leader for the Climbing Challenge, recalls the day vividly. "We had one girl who successfully climbed to the top of the rock face several times more than anyone else, even on the most advanced skill level routes. *She could not wait to go up again each time.* It was truly inspiring to witness a child who struggles with believing in herself to work so confidently climbing up that mountain. These kids really proved to themselves and those around them how brave they are."

This year YTP has a brand new community partner: the Infinite Music Foundation. A newly formed nonprofit, Infinite Music provides innovative, regionally based music programs and events that foster education, empowerment, expression and appreciation for kids to transform their lives. In SLO County, the program plans to bring a new series of guitar and voice classes to local high schools. Infinite Music is

currently working with Alley and her staff to ensure that the young adults of YTP have every opportunity to participate.

Year in, year out at YTP we witness the powerful maxim: it takes a village to raise a child. We would add that it absolutely takes a village to keep them busy!



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LOOKING AHEAD

The **2017 Art of Recovery** show will take place at Helping Hands of Lompoc (RLC) at 513 North G St, Lompoc from May 8-12, and May 15-19 open daily from 4pm - 7pm. This is a community art show in celebration and support of living mentally well and was developed to offer people with mental illnesses a way to artistically express themselves. More information is available at www.t-mha.org.

Trunks of Treasure is happening on October 22, 2017 at Luna Red from 12 - 2:30 pm. This unique event offers a truly delightful afternoon full of suspense, great prizes, and fantastic wines along with a gourmet luncheon. More information will be available at www.t-mha.org under the Events section or call (805) 540-6510.

Grow Native Plant Sale is happening at Growing Grounds Farm in Santa Maria on October 14 & 15 at 820 West Foster Road. Shop the farm for a wide variety of drought tolerant California natives that will provide year-round sustainable beauty in your garden with minimal maintenance and expense. All proceeds will support Growing Grounds Farm and the people who depend on it for employment and therapeutic horticulture. For more information please call (805) 934-2182.



OUR DEEPEST APPRECIATION

The Brewers' Dinner 2017 raised over \$14,000! Thanks to Charles Hiigel: Wine Warehouse; Mike Larrabee: Central Coast Distributors; Beda and Helga Schmidthues: Bedas Biergarten; Vanessa North: Luis Wine Bar; Chef Russell Thomas: Café Fiero; Chef Shaun Behrens: Luna Red; Chef Paul Kwong: Mee Heng Low Noodle; Chef Neil Smith: Windows on the Water; Pastry Chef Benjie Puga: Shell Beach Brewhouse; George Peterson: Central Coast Brewing; Matt Brynildson; Firestone Walker Brewing Co., Chuck Silva; Silva Brewing; Steve Grossman; Sierra Nevada Brewing, Sheila Martins; North Coast Brewing and all our volunteers. Set your calendar for January 21, 2018.



Journey of Hope 2017: A Community Forum on Living Mentally Well - Thank you to all those who braved the weather to attend our January event featuring speaker Gabriella Grant on Trauma Informed Care. Our thanks to event sponsors: San Luis

Obispo County Behavioral Health Department, CenCal Health; Central Coast Psychological Association and host New Life Church. Additional thanks to resource table participants and all those who attended.

For 36 years, **Bowl-a-Thon** has been a tradition in our community and in 2017, the event raised over \$70,000 for SLO Hotline and other TMHA programs! Many thanks to our event sponsors: Morris & Garritano Insurance; MVME, and Carmel & Naccasha LLP. A big thank you to the community, TMHA staff, directors, clients and volunteers who made Bowl-A-Thon a success! **Bowl-a-Thon Snapshot:** 87 teams; over 450 bowlers; 9 days; 12 shifts and \$70,000 raised!



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HOW YOU CAN HELP...

Volunteer

Volunteers are always welcome in our programs and fundraising events. One or two hours of your time can make a significant difference. Contact volunteer@t-mha.org for more information.

Donate

Donations and in-kind services are both appreciated and vital to continuing the quality programs we provide. Funds are used not only to operate our 30 programs, but also household essentials for our supportive housing, clothing for adults and teens, and equipment for the farms.

Planned Giving

Please consider TMHA in your estate planning. Help us plan for the future of our community's mental health. Contact plannedgiving@t-mha.org.

*If you would like to donate your financial support
or time, please contact us at:*

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