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MENTAL WELLNESS ART SHOW CONVERTS TO ONLINE PREVIEW

San Luis Obispo, CA - Transitions-Mental Health Association (TMHA) presents the *Opening Minds* Art Show Preview, an online display featuring the artwork of nine artists, along with interviews, biographies, and interactive links.

The *Opening Minds* Art Show is presented bi-annually, and was initially set to open for public viewing in May of 2020. Due to COVID-19, the *Opening Minds* art show has been postponed until May 2021. TMHA's website currently features nine of the participating artists at www.t-mha.org/OpeningMinds. Designed by TMHA intern Krystal Grisham and San Luis Obispo web design and digital marketing company, LIFTOFF, the artist webpage launches on Tuesday, May 26, 2020 as Mental Health Awareness Month comes to an end.

Each artist page on the *Opening Minds* Online Preview includes interviews that dive into the experience of self-expression through creative work. Mary Ann Oliver, the exhibition's featured artist, shares that her painting, *It Never Fits Right*, explores such issues as self-criticism and low self-esteem. "I wanted to do a self-portrait," Oliver says, "and I was looking through photos for source material. My husband had snapped a photo of me looking in the mirror as we were going out one night. And I thought, oh, I can make that so pretty: add some flowers on the table, paint the whole thing on a larger canvas. I didn't really look at the expression on my face initially, I just thought this would be a nice picture. But when I did look at my face I immediately thought, 'I am not being kind to myself in front of that mirror.' It was just so typical of my self-criticism."

Anthony Benevidez discusses his piece entitled *Depression*, saying "What inspired me to do this painting is that even though I have a great family, girlfriend, friends and career, every morning I still wake up with self-doubt, and for a split second contemplate how the world would be better

off without me. But I get up, meditate, exercise and get through these thoughts. What I am stating though is how it's okay to have these feelings, and if no one else validates you, I will!"

ABOUT OPENING MINDS

Opening Minds is a community art show in celebration of living mentally well. The Opening Minds art show was first developed in 1995 to offer people with mental illness an avenue for personal expression and a venue to share art with the public. The show has since expanded to include the entire mental health community: those in recovery, their family and friends, service providers, and more. TMHA's goal remains the same today: to help the community see that people should not be defined in terms of their illness but by their strengths, gifts and by the contributions they make to society. In 2018, the exhibition was visited over 7,000 times.

Opening Minds is funded in part by the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63) and cosponsored by TMHA's Peer Advisory and Advocacy Team (PAAT).

ABOUT TMHA

For over 40 years, Transitions-Mental Health Association (TMHA) has provided services on the Central Coast. TMHA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to eliminating stigma and promoting recovery and wellness for people with mental illness through work, housing, community and family support services. TMHA operates over 40 programs that served over 4,500 unique individuals and family members in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties. The emphasis of TMHA's many services is to teach vital independent living skills, and build a framework for community re-entry through personal empowerment and hands on experience. Since 1979, TMHA has been dedicated to providing housing, employment, case management and life-skills support to teens and adults with mental illness; and support, resources and education for their loved ones.

For more information about the *Opening Minds* Art Show Preview, please contact Caity McCardell at cmccardell@t-mha.org.

LINK TO WEBSITE: <https://www.t-mha.org/openingminds>