

SPRING 2019

THE JOURNEY

ANNIVERSARY EDITION



Transitions-Mental Health Association

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

This year, TMHA celebrates **40 Years** of providing services to the Central Coast. We are fortunate to have a core group of staff and leadership that have been with the agency for over two decades and carry our history forward. Meet...

TMHA'S OVER-20 CLUB



Jill Bolster-White and Frank Ricceri circa 1995

Early Years

I was hired as a Rehabilitation Therapist to run the Arroyo Grande Wellness Center. When I started it was called Socialization Center, because most of the people the county referred to us had been in state hospitals. I drove a van around and picked people up. I was well qualified because my first car was

an old Cadillac. So I got to graduate from the Cadillac to a giant van that I'd drive through Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande, and Nipomo back when it was very rural. I'd head way out into the back woods to an old trailer, for instance, where a woman might be living with her family. I definitely knew people's moms and dads even though the clients were all older than I was at the time.

—Jill Bolster-White, Executive Director

I was originally hired in the summer of 1990 to work at what was then a Youth Services house for runaway youth. Eventually it grew into a program where the bottom floor of the house was 601 runaways [minors between 12 and 17, mostly female] and the top floor was a "Get Ready For Adulthood" program for teenage boys. So you had all these runaway girls downstairs and this crew of teenage boys upstairs. It made for...interesting times.

—Barry Johnson, Education & Advocacy Director



Kristen Alexander, Barry Johnson and Marci Johnson

I feel like I grew up, raised a family, and grew old all while at TMHA. I was hired in 1992 as an accounting assistant. We were located in the blue house on the corner of Johnson and Marsh, and when I started I worked on a typing cart set in the front window of the

living room. One year later we moved to South Street and I was promoted to finance manager. At that time the staff started a tradition of having lunch together every day. We would all sit in the conference room and eat and laugh and connect. Those were great times!

—Marci Johnson, Finance Manager

The TMHA Experience

It's a constant learning experience, constant adventure. You get to work with this incredible staff, these strong, smart women who are always educating themselves and encouraging the team to always evolve. I think the residential model is so strong, because we're fostering relationships with these kids. We're showing them there



Danny Bryant and Tom Quintana

are safe adults out in the world, and your past doesn't define your future. They have the power of choice.

It's great to be able to expose them to that.

—Laila Ness, YTP Assistant Program Manager

I've noticed that every TMHA program has a slightly different philosophy, and I think that's a good thing. We don't want to be The Brady Bunch, we don't want everyone to have the same approach, the same belief system. We may all share the same values—that's important—but our community, the folks we serve, they're not all the same. The fact that our agency is able to provide housing services, and drug and alcohol support, and employment services, and advocacy and even services to your family... it's a great, great thing. We're all working on a different piece of the puzzle and if you let the client drive the services, it all comes together.

—Danny Bryant, ATP Case Manager

Times They Are A-Changin'

What makes me smile is remembering back on how small we were. The SLO Wellness Center on Higuera, where I worked, included an office for our finance person, and right next door was our administrative office that had only four rooms. We were all so close, you could hear each other from one room to the next. Then to watch everything grow and grow! It's just amazing to me. It once felt like this little hub of a world.

—Kristen Alexander, Human Resources Manager

The whole Trauma Informed Care movement that's happening right now, it's so important. We're embracing

philosophies that will be prime evidence-based practices in the next five, ten years. We've always been innovative, and I think this puts TMHA definitely ahead of the game.
—Tom Quintana, ATP Program Manager

The organizational change I feel most positive about is hiring people with lived experience and the inclusion of family members—instead of having them “step aside.” Those changes had a real impact on our agency philosophy.
—Jill Bolster-White, Executive Director

I once counted, I've had something like 13 jobs here at TMHA. I came from a part-time line staff position to a full time Director position. Having all those mentors to learn from and all those co-workers to rely on built the opportunity that I came into. The cornerstone, the constant, is the level of talent here. The quality has always gone exponentially up. It's like Mount Everest. And that's the part that's neat to see.
—Joe Madsen, Housing, Forensic & Homeless Services Director

We would like to salute Director Frank Ricceri, ATP Staff Karen Larson, Anne Harris, and Eric Urbain who were not interviewed for this article. We appreciate all you've done for TMHA!

RAISING THE ROOF



The rains may have slowed things down for a couple months, but construction is now full speed ahead and we are heading closer to completion. The first residents will be moving in to Bishop Street Studios this summer, and we anticipate having full occupancy by the fall. Here is a sneak peek of the new roof and floor for the

old orphanage, originally dedicated in 1931. We look forward to holding a celebratory ribbon cutting this October, which will be open to the entire community. We will keep all of you up to date.

New Homeless Service Ready to Roll

This spring, in collaboration with SLO County Department of Behavioral Health, TMHA launches a new mobile team approach that brings a range of services directly to our county's homeless population.

Homeless Mentally Ill Outreach Treatment (HMIOT) is part of a statewide program that consists of a team of specialists and a van fully equipped to provide meeting space, medication delivery, case management, and even tele-psychiatry.

“Our mission is to reach those folks who are disenfranchised from the system. These are people that aren't coming into the clinic or county mental health, so we can meet them and treat them where they're at.”

—Julia Tidik, Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner

The HMIOT team is managed by Miriam Vargas, and includes Jose Gonzalez as Case Manager, Margaret Shepard-Moore as Therapist,

Julia Tidik as Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner and a Peer Professional providing additional support. The quartet will establish consistent weekly locations, so people know when and where they can find the van. So far, 40Prado, ECHO Homeless Shelter, and Five Cities Homeless Coalition have agreed to provide regular sites.

“If someone hasn't been successful in the past about getting into the clinic or they don't trust mental health providers, we're hoping we can become their way in,” explains Julia. “Maybe the client starts with Jose, who can help them connect to resources, or get an ID card or sign up for Medi-Cal. From there, they can have Margaret do a therapy assessment, or I can do a psychiatric evaluation and prescribe medications. Above all, we can gradually build rapport from week to week and keep people in more of an engagement phase until they're ready.”



Miriam Vargas, Margaret Shepard-Moore, Julia Tidik and Jose Gonzalez

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Meghan Madsen receiving her award on March 9, at the Women's Wall of Fame Recognition Luncheon at the Madonna Inn

Our heartiest congratulations to Meghan Madsen, TMHA Program Manager of Wellness Centers and Education. Meghan was selected by the San Luis Obispo County Commission on the Status of Women for the Women's Wall of Fame in the Service category.

"Easing someone's suffering and watching the beauty that arises when people connect with one other is what motivates me to contribute to our community," said Meghan. She becomes TMHA's third Women's Wall of Fame honoree, taking her place alongside Executive Director, Jill Bolster-White and Linda Quesenberry, formerly from Family Services.

Knocking Them Down



Bowl-a-thon 2019 raised over \$50,000 for SLO Hotline and other TMHA programs. Pictured with Jill Bolster-White are Board Members Casey Appell, Steve Jobst, Dave Bernhardt, and Over-20 member JT Haas

Celebrating Wellness and Warm Feet



Maybe you saw them on parade at Bowl-a-thon. Perhaps you have quietly dreamed of the day that you could have your favorite nonprofit cradling your feet.

Well, the wait is over! To celebrate our 40th Anniversary, we have commissioned the creation of the fabulous TMHA socks pictured above. A big shout-out to Board Member Cindy Johnson and her colleagues at The Sock Drawer.

This spring we are giving them away as a Special Donor Premium. If you make a gift of \$100 or more, we will deliver a pair of TMHA socks (in Men or Women's size) to your door.

Don't delay! Use the enclosed donor envelope and check the appropriate box to ensure that you get a pair before they are all gone.

You will never find a better way to show the world how much you love us. 😊

Our Privilege To Serve

Since 1949, the United States has observed May as National Mental Health Month. This year, the Board of Supervisors in both San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties have expanded that designation, authorizing proclamations that recognize May as *National Mental Health Month and Transitions-Mental Health Association Month*, in honor of 40 years of service to the county.