

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Welcome and recognition of TMHA and Farm supporters will be held at 1 p.m., Friday, June 26<sup>th</sup> at Growing Grounds Farm on 3740 Orcutt Road, San Luis Obispo.

**AN ANNIVERSARY TO REMEMBER: CELEBRATING YEARS OF SERVICE AT TMHA  
AND GROWING GROUNDS FARM**  
*TMHA and Growing Grounds Farm to Celebrate Anniversaries,  
Welcoming the Public to a Day of Tours, Activities, Music and Food*

San Luis Obispo, CA – Transitions-Mental Health Association (TMHA) is proud to announce the celebration of its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Growing Grounds Farm in San Luis Obispo on June 26<sup>th</sup> from 12 to 6 p.m. at the Farm on the corner of Orcutt and Johnson in San Luis Obispo. Recognition of those who have been especially involved with the success of the Farm will be held at 1 p.m.

“We are delighted to have two milestones to commemorate: the continued success of both Growing Grounds Farm as a vibrant local business and the overall mission of Transitions-MHA. We look forward to helping children and adults live, work and grow for many years to come,” said Jill Bolster-White, executive director of TMHA.

The event – which is open to the public – will include food, fun activities for children, and booths from organizations with whom TMHA collaborates, as well as tours of the Farm. Music will be provided by Hear the Darlings Roar, musicians from Café Musique and other musical guests.

“I’ve seen firsthand that the unique combination of compassion, horticultural therapy and vocational training offered at the Farm can change the life of someone who has mental illness,” said James “JT” Haas, TMHA board president. “There’s a tremendous satisfaction in bringing someone to a place where they can regain their self esteem and feel great because they’re productive again. That’s what makes this anniversary celebration so special: we’ve been doing this for 25 years.”

History of TMHA and Growing Grounds Farm

In the early ‘80s Barbara “Barb” Fischer, the executive director of then-SLO Mental Health Association, saw that clients wanted what everyone wants: a full life. A big part of that “full life” included finding a job. With gaps in resumes and a competitive job market, though, the SLOMHA clients were having little luck.

That’s when Barb decided to look for land to start a Farm program. It would offer horticultural therapy and plenty of jobs for her clients and grow produce for local restaurants. In 1984, she approached Pacific Gas and Electric Company about using their substation land on Orcutt Road. She began working with James “JT” Haas, an engineer at PG&E. Through their work and planning, the Farm became a reality. In the years that followed, a number of San Luis Obispo County restaurants – Big Sky, for example – served locally-grown produce from the Farm.

Since that time, JT volunteered often at the Farm, building structures and wiring greenhouses. JT has also served on the board of TMHA, most recently as board president. As a board member, JT was a driving force in merging SLO Transitions and SLO Mental Health Association to create TMHA in 1998. Barb has stayed on with TMHA as a board member, as well, guiding her successor Jill Bolster-White. Over the years, the Farm made a change from growing vegetables to nursery plants, a move to anchor it more in a sustainable market niche.

Throughout TMHA's growth and merger, Growing Grounds Farm has remained a flagship program of Transitions-Mental Health Association and is recognized as one of California's most compassionate, proactive forms of treatment for adults suffering from mental illness. The Farm now supports a population of 65,000 plants, most suitable for a Mediterranean climate zone, with a strong focus on water-wise California natives, select bearded Iris, restoration and mitigation plants. More than 1,000 people have worked at the Farm and have made real progress in their recovery.

"We truly have the support of San Luis Obispo County to thank for these 30 years," said Bolster-White.

#### **ABOUT T-MHA**

Transitions-Mental Health Association is a non-profit organization that helps children and adults live, work and grow in our community. TMHA operates 27 programs at over 35 locations that reach over 2,000 people and 1,500 families in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties. The emphasis of TMHA's many services is to teach vital independent living skills, building a framework for community re-entry through personal empowerment and hands on experience. For 30 years, T-MHA has been dedicated to providing housing, employment, case management and life-skills support to mentally ill adults, at-risk youth and homeless adults. For more information, contact [hbrown@t-mha.org](mailto:hbrown@t-mha.org) or visit [www.T-MHA.org](http://www.T-MHA.org).