

SLO THE STIGMA

PRODUCTION NOTES

Synopsis

Funded by the Mental Health Services Act, SLO the Stigma is a public awareness campaign designed to reduce stigma surrounding mental illnesses and point to resources for help in San Luis Obispo County.

The centerpiece of the SLOtheStigma.org website is a 15-minute documentary video. The documentary highlights four individuals in SLO county living with mental illnesses and tells the story of their journeys from isolation into recovery.

The four stories are woven together to deliver key messages: that regular people have mental illnesses; that their lives are not governed by their mental illness; and, that treatment leads to fulfilling, happy lives.

Director's Statement

ALEC RAMSEY, 20|20 CREATIVE GROUP

"Mental illness has always been a deeply personal topic for me. Several of my family members live with mental illness while others carry the scars of its impact. I've heard the stories my whole life and explored the topic through art—mostly out of fear that I would inherit a mental illness. I have

not, but those early feelings helped set the stage for this campaign.

"In preparation for this project our team spent a lot of time researching personal stories of people's day-to-day struggles living with mental illness. I was deeply moved and genuinely changed by these firsthand accounts. These stories became our inspiration and model formula for the campaign.

"Our challenge was to find a way to get the general public interested in these stories. A singular print ad, commercial or billboard alone was not going to generate the impact for change we needed. Instead, we decided to use those tools to build public intrigue that would ultimately drive traffic to a website where we would be able to tell the complete story.

"We developed the name "SLO the Stigma" to localize the campaign and distinguish it from other national initiatives. It also created a mystery factor that begs the question: What stigma? Thematically, the secrecy we are building around the campaign mirrors the painstaking efforts some individuals go through to hide their own mental illness from others for fear of judgment. By shedding light on these stories and showing how prevalent they are, our hope is that people will feel safer coming forward and getting the help they need.

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Director's Statement CONTINUED

“The idea of dark silhouetted people sharing their innermost feelings was a visual I knew I wanted from the beginning and getting that to look right was crucial. I have collaborated with photographer Barry Goyette for years and knew he would be able to capture my vision. And he did. In contrast, the outdoor shots and “Enjoying Life” pay-off shots at the end had to burst with warm light and triumph, and they do. We went through painstaking efforts to get these shots—including hanging out the back of an SUV leading our motorcycle riders around Arroyo Grande— but in the end, the effort was worth it.

“Bill Bartlett and Hannah Brown organized and conducted the casting interviews and assembled these amazing stories. We crammed into a tiny studio to film the indoor videos. The close quarters created an intimate setting in which the unexpected happened. Our cast—local, everyday people—demonstrated remarkable honesty, candor, and courage during their on-film interviews. It is upon the integrity of their stories that this project can be called a success.

“Everyone that has worked on this project from beginning to end has felt a distinct pride in being part of something uniquely beautiful that is going to help make people’s lives in this community better. That pride and enthusiasm really show through in the end product. For me personally, I believe it’s the best work I’ve ever been a part of, and it quenches a lifelong dream I’ve had to direct a film. I’m honored to be able to call this my first.”

The Cast

NEIL TRAVIS

Neil worked for 50 years as a movie editor in Los Angeles. His career includes an Academy Award for his work on *Dances with Wolves*, which won best picture in 1991. Neil currently resides with his wife in Arroyo Grande.

AMANDA NELSON

Amanda lives with her husband in Pismo Beach, having moved to San Luis Obispo County from Washington D.C. six years ago. She has worked in various areas of communications—public relations, advertising, and website development. Amanda now works as a project manager in San Luis Obispo.

CURTIS POPPENBERG

After a career as an arborist, Curtis went to school for nursing in 2000 and is now a hospice nurse. A lifetime California resident, Curtis has split his time between living in San Luis Obispo County and Grass Valley. He currently lives in Nipomo.

BECKY CARROLL

Becky is a long-time San Luis Obispo resident. She enjoys crafts and artwork, much of which is available for purchase at Growing Grounds in downtown SLO. Becky lives with her family in San Luis Obispo.

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The Filmmakers

ALEC RAMSEY, DIRECTOR

Alec Ramsey is Creative Director and Co-owner of 20|20 Creative Group, a Brand Marketing firm in San Luis Obispo. A Cal Poly SLO graduate in graphic design, Alec originally majored in film and worked in the motion picture industry before moving to San Luis Obispo. He lives with his wife and three children in Paso Robles.

BILL BARTLETT, WRITER/NARRATOR

Bill Bartlett has had a career in communications focused on marketing. A University of Maryland graduate, Bill majored in English with a minor in Sociology. His career includes stints as a newspaper reporter, business owner, writer/creative director, facilitator, and professional race car driver. Bill currently works for 20|20 Creative Group as an Account Manager and lives in Arroyo Grande with his wife.

BARRY GOYETTE, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Barry Goyette is a photographer, designer and cinematographer who lives and works in San Luis Obispo. A Cal Poly graduate in Art & Design, Barry is an active member of the SLO County art scene, and produces work for a variety of non-profits and businesses on the central coast.

TODD PETERSON, EDITOR

Todd Peterson runs the San Luis Obispo based production company Red CANARY. A Cal Poly graduate of the Graphic Communication department, Todd enjoys living the wonderful San Luis Obispo life with his wife Holly, son Huck, and dog Soda-Pop.

DARREN CLARKE, COMPOSER

Darren Clarke was born and raised in Great Britain, but now lives in San Luis Obispo with his wife and son. He brings his expertise as a guitar player, recording artist, producer and published songwriter together to build an outstanding experience for guitar students at Modern Music Academy, which he founded in 2003. Clarke has a First Class Honors BA in Contemporary Music & Music Business from ACM in London and a highlight of his musical career (so far) was an opening spot for Aerosmith—legendary rock icons, in 2007.