



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Contact: Shannon McQuat, Marketing Coordinator
Transitions-Mental Health Association
805.550.7692, Shannon@t-mha.org**

**CALIFORNIA AG LEADERSHIP AWARDS
GROWING GROUNDS FARM \$2000**

Santa Maria, CA – Four residents of the Central Coast, dedicated to agriculture have donated \$2000 to Growing Grounds Farm in Santa Maria. Lisa Bodrogi, Cara Crye, Ivor VanWingerden, and Erin Huston are members of the California Agricultural Leadership Program. This statewide, two year fellowship through the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation is affiliated with Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and Pomona, Fresno State, and UC Davis. “We are a broad network of people who are advocates of the agriculture industry,” said Bodrogi.

After one year in the program the group participated in a service project in Washington D.C. and at the end of second year their service project was in South America. In Peru they fundraised and repaired 30 homes damaged in an earthquake. There were funds leftover at the end of their project so the funds were split up by region to be distributed. “The unique combination of giving aid to the mentally ill through farming and employment made Growing Grounds Farm an ideal fit for the group to sponsor,” said Bodrogi.

Bodrogi feels that their portion of the funds fit with the agriculture and mental health world. During her experience with the program Bodrogi went to a mental health facility and helped clients to prepare potted plants. “It was a moving and deeply rewarding experience that was truly joy-filled,” she reflected.

Growing Grounds Farm is a small business that does double-duty as an employment program. This program provides horticultural therapy, vocational training, independent living skills and paid employment annually to over 40 people with a severe mental illness. The donation will help to pay for client wages and staff at Growing Grounds Farm, which relies solely on sales and community support.

Having lived around the corner from Growing Grounds Farm for several years, Bodrogi was aware of the program and thought it to be a perfect fit. “I really appreciate what Transitions and the Farm is doing in our community. We wanted to help support that effort.”

“Our agricultural roots run deep at Growing Grounds Farm, attracting so many wonderful supporters to our four-acre farm that supports people and plants,” said Frank Ricceri, Associate Director at TMHA who oversees Northern Santa Barbara County programs. “The added beauty is the timing of this generous donation as it coincides with a challenge matching grant from an anonymous donor, effectively doubling the value of the donation.”

ABOUT CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION

Vision: California agricultural leaders united as a catalyst for a vibrant industry. **Mission:** We grow leaders who make a difference. **Basic Details:** The California Agricultural Leadership Foundation operates the California Agricultural Leadership Program (CALP), one of the premier and most respected leadership development opportunities in the United States. CALP aims to create leaders who will help ensure the long-term viability of California agriculture, who will think forward, who have the ability to engage and positively influence society, and who can participate in communication networks that enhance California agriculture. Fellows will take part in an intensive 20-month program designed to broaden their knowledge about leadership theory and skills, critical thinking skills, teamwork, public speaking, communication skills, personality types, social and cultural issues, the legislative process, current issues and their influence on agriculture, and service leadership. Seminars are delivered by four partner universities – Cal Poly, Pomona; Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo; California State University, Fresno; and the University of California, Davis – plus other academic institutions. Fellows will also participate in a 10-day national seminar that includes Washington, D.C., as well as a 15-day international seminar. Since the program was first delivered in 1970, more than 1,100 men and women have participated in Ag Leadership and have become leaders and volunteers in the agricultural industry, government, communities, business and education. **Website:** www.agleaders.org

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, and build a framework for community re-entry through personal empowerment and hands on experience. For over 30 years, T-MHA 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, visit www.t-mha.org.

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See photo next page.



Photo Caption: The check presentation took place during the Growing Grounds Harvest Festival on Saturday, October 16th. Pictured are: James (JT) Haas, Board President; Deborah Linden, Board Member; Tom Urbanske, Board Member; Jill Bolster-White, Executive Director; Joe Ivora, Board Member; Nancy Johnson, Board Member; Cara Crye, Leadership Participant; Lisa and Bill Bodrogi, Leadership Participant and spouse.