



Mental Health

Newsletter of the Mental Health Association in Santa Barbara

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Steve Lopez



Elyn Saks



JOIN US: Friday, May 21, 2010 Heroes of Hope Awards — Lobero Theatre

Join us as we honor Steve Lopez, *Los Angeles Times* columnist and author of *The Soloist*, and Elyn Saks, Associate Dean and Professor of Law, Psychology, Psychiatry, and the Behavioral Sciences at the University of Southern California and author of *The Center Cannot Hold*, whose accomplishments support our mission of removing the stigma of mental illness.

- Pre-event reception begins at 6:30 p.m.
- Tickets are \$150 and sponsorship levels are available
- Please call (805) 884-8440 or visit www.mhainsb.org

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HEROES of HOPE
MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
in Santa Barbara

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Message to Our Readers: Help Us Go Green!



The Mental Health Association invites you to pass this e-newsletter along to family members, friends and anyone who might be interested in learning more about us. If you would like to continue receiving future issues, news and important information from MHA electronically, sign up at our web site:

- 1) Go to www.mhainsb.org
- 2) Click the **We're Going Green** button
- 3) Fill in your contact information and click **SUBMIT**



Annmarie Cameron
Executive Director



David Prenatt
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Mental Illness Stigma Hampers Recovery & Understanding

Letter from the Executive Director & Board President

For our new MHA video we interviewed a number of people on the sidewalks of downtown Santa Barbara. We simply asked, “What do you think of when you hear the words mental illness?” To no one’s surprise most reactions included someone dangerous and probably homeless, who should be avoided. Too many reactions expressed the notion that people with mental illness should be locked up or kept apart from the rest of us. And if this idea was not spoken aloud, it was inferred, even by those who showed some understanding in their response to our question.

The reactions we received suggest a fear of mental illness and those who struggle with the effects of a brain disorder that can be frightening. What is the basis of our fear? Are we afraid that mental illness is contagious? Are we afraid of the possible awkwardness of interacting with someone whose social skills may be “atypical” and whose behavior may not always be predictable? Are we afraid of that which we don’t understand? Are we afraid to be associated with the stigma that is linked with mental illness?

According to the National Institute of Health, 26.2% of the American population over the age of 18 (1 in 4 adults) will experience a diagnosable mental health disorder in a given year. From anxiety disorders, depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, we all know or love someone who lives with some form of mental illness.

Most devastating is the stigma that surrounds mental illness. Once a person has disclosed that they live with a mental illness, or that someone in their family does, the reaction can cause a series of unanticipated consequences that can lead to misunderstandings; thus the spiraling nature of keeping mental illness a secret, and perpetuating the misconceptions rather than breaking them down. The stigma associated with a mental health problem can be far more damaging and destructive than the illnesses themselves. Mental illness is not an easy disease and can often be debilitating and especially difficult for the individual as well as his/her family. But, stigma can be equally debilitating.

One way we can eradicate the stigma of mental illness is to educate ourselves and learn more about those who courageously confront these illnesses. Through education, our fears about those with mental illness can be addressed and better understood. And, as we integrate people who struggle with the effects of mental illness more fully into our society, as we come to know them as neighbors, co-workers and fellow community members, we will find that our lives are in fact enriched. Many who suffer from mental illness are some of our greatest contributors to mankind — poets, writers, artists, scientists, teachers, social activists, and national leaders — representing virtually every category of human involvement.

Just as in the life changing chronic illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes, living with a mental illness requires lifestyle changes and diligent monitoring of physical health indicators; it is not only about the psychotic episodes that, unfortunately, may occur. It also requires understanding. The Mental Health Association in Santa Barbara is here to educate the community and eradicate stigma. We do this with facts, real stories and hopeful messages. Mental illness is a highly treatable illness — one that affects real people who are our neighbors, friends, families... and yes, even ourselves. ☺

Annmarie Cameron
Executive Director

David Prenatt
President, Board of Directors

Live Your Life Well: May is Mental Health Month

Mental Health America began promoting “May is Mental Health Month” in 1949, and now, over 60 years later, the Mental Health Association in Santa Barbara and mental health advocates across the country continue to celebrate this tradition.

As a community, we are all affected by times of ongoing stress and personal challenges in our lives. In light of Mental Health Month, the Mental Health Association hopes you will take this opportunity to take action to protect your mental health and enhance your well-being.

While we primarily focus on those with serious mental health issues, we’re also concerned with the state of the community’s mental health as a whole. Advocate for yourself and get the care you need. And don’t forget that we are fortunate to have many incredible resources in Santa Barbara that can make a big difference. You deserve to be in good health.

An estimated one in every four people in the U.S. has experienced a diagnosable and treatable mental illness at some point in their lives. That translates to roughly 60,000 residents in Santa Barbara County alone who are battling depression, addiction, schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, anxiety or another form of mental illness. If you know someone who is struggling with mental illness, offer your support to help find the care they need. ☺

What’s New at MHA

The Mental Health Association Welcomes Three New Board Members

We are pleased to announce the three newest members of our Board of Directors: Aaron Clark, Ned Emerson and Ashley Woods.



Aaron Clark

Aaron Clark is President and CEO of Monarch Wealth Strategies, a financial planning firm in Santa Barbara. He previously worked with A.G. Edwards & Sons — where he was recognized as being one of the firm’s top financial consultants — and Wachovia Securities. A Santa Barbara native, Aaron holds a degree in Criminal Justice Administration from Santa Diego State University and is currently working toward a master’s degree in Personal Financial Planning. He is a member of the Financial Abuse Specialist Team for Santa Barbara County and sits on the board of the Montecito Rotary Club.



Ned Emerson

Ned Emerson recently retired after serving for over twenty years as an independent sales representative involved in selling sportswear to college bookstores. Ned holds a degree in Industrial Management from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He launched a screen-printing company while in college, which eventually became Shoreline Sportswear, and operated the business for 25 years. Ned serves on the board of United Cerebral Palsy, Work Inc. of Santa Barbara County, and joins his wife, Ann Lippincott, on the board of the Mental Health Association.



Ashley Woods

Ashley Woods is Executive Director of the Morris B. Squire Art Foundation and Founder/Executive Director of Rumble Art. A graduate of Cate School, Ashley holds a degree in Literature and Art from Pitzer College and a master’s degree in Contemporary Art from Sotheby’s Institute of Art in London. Ashley also sits on the board of Art From Scrap and is a certified Americorps JumpStart teacher.

A big welcome to all our new members! ☺

NAMI Loses A Key Founder



On March 30, 2010, Harriet Shetler, age 92 passed away. Harriet is credited with starting the grass roots organization of what has now become a nationwide outreach organization: NAMI. *To read the complete article by Jan Winter, [click here](#) or print this article by clicking the [PRINT](#) button above.*

New Family Advocate Joins MHA and NAMI South Santa Barbara County



Michaelo Balcázar

We recently welcomed our new Family Advocate,

Michaelo Balcázar. Michaelo provides free, confidential support services in English and Spanish to families affected by a loved one's mental illness. He has over five years of experience in providing crisis support, having worked as a family advocate for Transitions Mental Health in Santa Maria and responding to crisis situations at the Sansum Clinic in Santa Barbara. He has also held positions in sales and as a reporter for *El Mexicano* and the *Goleta Valley Voice*. Michaelo holds a degree in Computer Science from the University of California, Santa Barbara and is currently working towards a master's degree in Clinical Psychology at Antioch University. He has served as a volunteer for the Braille Institute and assisted with the English as a Second Language program for the blind.

To contact Michaelo, please call
(805) 884-8440 x105

NAMI South Santa Barbara County is a chapter of the state and national NAMI organizations. Locally NAMI operates as an auxiliary of the Mental Health Association. NAMI members assist with MHA programs for consumers and families, including the teaching of a free 12-week Family-to-Family education series, offered twice a year in the spring and fall. Contact our Family Advocate at 884-8440 to inquire about the classes.



Anne Greaney, Jill Mackay, and Cindy Somers received their awards at the Mental Health Association's annual meeting dinner.

Honoring our 2009 Volunteers of the Year

At the Annual Meeting dinner in December, the Mental Health Association announced its 2009 Volunteer of the Year award recipients: **Anne Greaney**, **Jill Mackay** and **Cindy Somers**. These three outstanding volunteers help fulfill our mission of providing support and advocacy to anyone affected by mental illness. Their dedicated efforts help reduce the stigma of mental illness and make a positive difference in the lives of many members of our community.

Anne Greaney has served on our Board of Directors for two years. She is a member of MHA's Education Committee and the NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Steering Committee, and helps teach the NAMI Family-to-Family education courses. **Jill Mackay** has been involved with the Mental Health Association for over ten years. She teaches many of the Family-to-Family education courses, volunteers with the Psychiatric Health Facility and serves on the board of another organization that serves those with mental illness. **Cindy Somers** has been a member of the Board for five years and also serves on the Education Committee. She has helped teach "Mental Health Matters," MHA's curriculum for 6th grade students in the Goleta Elementary School District that helps the students achieve an understanding and compassion for those with mental illness.



Arts Festival
See more of this annual event on page 5.



Mental Health Arts Festival Celebrates Creativity and Gives Participants Opportunity to Shine

More than 70 local artists displayed their talents across De La Guerra Plaza at the 16th Annual Mental Health Arts Festival, which drew an enthusiastic audience on Saturday, October 10th, 2009. Coinciding with National Mental Illness Awareness Week, the annual festival provides people in our community living with mental illness an opportunity to showcase their talents at an event many of them look forward to all year. We saw a number of artistic mediums once again, including paintings, sculptures, poetry, jewelry, and music, as well as a very broad array of artistic styles.

While celebrating and supporting the beautiful work of our many artists, the event also aims to raise awareness of the effects of mental illness and to reduce the stigma associated with it. Stigma can be a major barrier to people seeking help with their mental illness when they need it.

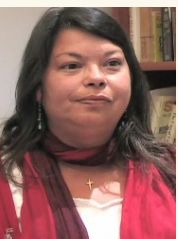
The Arts Festival demonstrates to our community that people living with mental illness are as diverse and radiant as the art they create — and will not be defined by an unfortunate reputation. Following our mission to be a strong resource in Santa Barbara on mental illness and advocacy, we are proud to host an event that spreads this message, while giving our participants a time to express themselves in creative and unique ways and to share their work directly with our community.



Top right, clockwise: James DeVoe displays his handmade jewelry, calling his art 'a creative and therapeutic outlet'; Roger Keeler's *Mission* (inset); Rodger Casier works with stencils and paint to create colorful artwork; the Annual Art Festival in De La Guerra Plaza

CLIENT PROFILE: My Journey to a Fellowship

By Lisa Hickerson, Member of the Recovery Learning Center at the Fellowship Club and MHA employee



Lisa Hickerson

I was a wife and a mom. My husband was very violent, which was not a good environment for me to raise my kids. I lost my husband and I lost all three of my boys. My mother had breast cancer and had to choose whether to save herself or save me. All my identities were gone: mom, daughter, wife. I had no support system. I wandered into Santa Barbara and I was too psychotic to make my way into a

winter shelter. Then, a homeless outreach worker had faith in me. It was my first step towards recovery. When I spiraled out again, I started talk therapy and began coming to the Mental Health Association's (MHA) Fellowship Club. Soon after, I got a job in the MHA's Care

Closet thrift store. I now participate in so many groups and activities at the Fellowship Club it feels like a second home. I lead an Independent Living group, play guitar, attend a creative writing class and Monday through Thursday I work in the administration office as part of the facility maintenance crew. At the Club, I chat with my friends, I do needlepoint in the art room, and use the computer to look up information. I am also a part of the Sharing Our Stories Group sponsored by the MHA; the MHA has a program to train us in public speaking and it gives me and others the confidence to share stories — this helps educate people and bust the mental health stigma. The Fellowship Club is a very healthy place for me. It is also a very serene place. You get to know and love all the personalities that are here. The people are genuinely kind and the staff is a great support

team. I love that I can do these things, that I have a voice. If you struggle with an illness that can unravel on you, you really need this support system and a place to be safe, rather than being on the streets. Wherever you are in your journey, there's someone who's been there or who is experiencing the same thing you are. It really is a *Fellowship* — a community of people who have been in the same boat you've been in. You are responsible to do better and help the next one down the road. It really works. I'm proud to say the quality of my life has extremely improved. This place helped me to make friends with my illness. We, as a community — as peers — discuss ways to help each other with our problems. This is my family. I'm absolutely enjoying life. All the hard work... it's paid off.