



# Mental Health Association

OF SAN MATEO COUNTY

*Empowering people to create their best life*

## COMMUNITY SERVICE LEAGUE TO HOST 35TH ANNUAL KITCHEN TOUR

The Community Service League (CSL) will once again host the Annual Kitchen Tour, a major fundraiser for MHA. In its 35th year, this year's Kitchen Tour takes place on May 15, from 10 AM – 3 PM. Purchase tickets at [cslsmc.org](http://cslsmc.org).

The CSL Kitchen Tour is a self-guided tour of five distinctive

homes in Hillsborough and San Mateo. This successful event provides over 600 guests the opportunity to tour five beautiful homes, taste morsels of delicious food, and view many artisans' work. Proceeds from the event support StarVista and MHA.

"I feel inspired to support MHA through the Kitchen Tour," said



MHA board treasurer and CSL member Sara Furrer. "I love translating the passion of CSL's members into hands-on action."

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## PENNY'S STORY

While driving with a friend on February 19, 1996, I confided that I intended to commit suicide. She had me

turn the car around and drive immediately to Psychiatric Emergency at Chope (San Mateo Medical Center).

Finally, I surrendered myself to all the forces that be. At Chope, I admitted to my mental illness and substance abuse issues and acknowledged that I need to be treated.

I had to come to terms with my past. I gradually became aware that in early childhood there was something different about me. My

family designated me as the "Identified Victim." I endured alienation and stigmatization that continue to this day.

Decades passed. I lived in the dark side, numbing the pain with drugs and alcohol.

It was MHA that came to my rescue at a very challenging point in my life. Outstanding case management and supported housing—a place to call home—meant more to me than almost anything. My case manager at MHA encouraged, motivated, and sustained me in

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*Penny Coyote*

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## LETTER FROM **MELISSA PLATTE,** EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As you have all read or heard, the current average monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment in San Mateo County exceeds \$2,500 and continues to climb. This has become the topic du jour wherever we go. Not only is it becoming increasingly difficult to find landlords who will accept the maximum rent that some of our clients can pay using a voucher, our own employees are faced with the difficult task of moving farther and farther away in order to obtain any housing they can afford. The housing market in the San Francisco Bay Area has always been, and likely will always be volatile. MHA recognized this issue when we made the decision to purchase our first housing development in 1982, and we have been able, thankfully, to keep housing costs affordable for our clients throughout the upticks in the market. Not one of our clients has ever risked or lost housing because they couldn't afford it. We are extremely proud to be able to make that claim and, as we plan for Waverly Place Apartments, we look forward to making that a reality for an additional 16 individuals, for their lifetime if so desired. Now, if we could only create something similar for our staff.

In the meantime we all look forward to supporting the Community Service League through participation in the Kitchen Tour on May 15. Their fund-raising efforts over the past 30(+) years have allowed us to respond to critical needs in innovative ways that benefit our clients and their families.

As an agency we have been very fortunate to have such long-standing and loyal partners in the community including Sequoia Healthcare District and Kaiser Permanente Northern California Community Benefits Program and, as we plan for the balance of 2015, we see opportunities on the horizon and hope to continue making a difference. ☺

## SAYAT FINANCE CLASSES

"I am more aware of how I spend my money, if it's a need or a want," explained one of the MHA SAYAT (Support & Advocacy for Young Adults in Transition) clients who participated in the Creating Secure Future\$ program. SAYAT collaborated with the Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center (REC) and the Secured Futures Fund to support seven of our clients to create a pathway to healthier financial security.

"It's important to teach clients about money when they have the opportunity to learn these skills. It increases their ability to maintain stable housing, have clear budgeting skills, and help reduce the risk of homelessness amongst this age group," said Nora Razon, REC Program Manager.

The program taught the young adults to create and follow a budget, build and sustain good credit, save money, and understand how their current spending habits can negatively affect their future financial stability.

Participants attended three group sessions and two sessions with a Financial Coach. Since most SAYAT clients have little to no experience with finances, this collaboration supported them with new tools and skills necessary to become successful, self-sufficient adults. "I enjoyed being with people my age, learning together," said one participant. ☺



*SAYAT Case Manager Leticia Arreola-Garcia, Ahani,  
Financial Literacy Instructor Alicia, Denia, Keoni, and Kevonna.*

## KITCHEN TOUR CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

MHA staff serve as docents for the event, describing highlights of the house to visitors. Serving as docents is an opportunity

for staff to learn about the features of these beautiful houses and share in CSL's support of MHA. ☺



## ADAM'S STORY

When I came to Spring St. Shelter, I was homeless and suffering mentally. MHA conducted an initial assessment and created an action plan laying out my goals and tasks. The MHA Case Manager assisted me greatly to find housing, apply for a Shelter Plus Care housing voucher with the County's Housing Authority, schedule

walk-ins to look at apartments, and connect me with doctors. Spring Street Shelter fed me and housed me until I located my own housing.

My case manager also helped me obtain help through the El Centro counseling center, where I underwent counseling and therapy along with group sessions.

Today I have my own one-bedroom furnished apartment, medication that works, great doctors, a freelance job in Graphic Design, friends who support me, and a God who loves me.

Special thanks to Monica, Georgia, Marlene, and Michael. ☺



*Adam Mort*

## COMMUNITY SERVICE LEAGUE AUCTION BRINGS IN RECORD AMOUNT FOR MHA

The Community Service League held the “**Home for the Holidays**” **Holiday Auction and Luncheon** on Friday, December 5, 2014, at the Peninsula Golf and Country Club in San Mateo. The sold-out event raised a record \$65,000. In addition to the guest auctioneer, Congresswoman Jackie Speier, Spring Street resident Wendy Kodama spoke movingly to the attendees about how instrumental MHA and Spring Street staff have been in her recovery.

“I cannot begin to tell you the gratitude I feel, the relief, the peace I have now that I am receiving help from MHA,” said Wendy. “If I hadn’t been given a bed at Spring Street Shelter, I wouldn’t have had the chance to receive proper basic care, and a healthy structured environment. The staff are so full of encouragement. They offer me HOPE I had never known before.” ☺



*Wendy Kodama speaks at the “Home for the Holidays” Auction and Luncheon.*

### PENNY'S STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ways that are unbelievably important.

I've learned that positive action is key. I now attend a wide variety of groups, meetings, and classes. By socializing,

communicating, and attending these groups, my journey in recovery has helped me to feel better about myself. With the support of my MHA case manager, I now have over two years sober. I am grateful. ☺



Mental Health Association  
of San Mateo County  
2686 Spring Street  
Redwood City, California 94063  
[www.mhasmc.org](http://www.mhasmc.org)

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## MHA'S MISSION

The Mental Health Association of San Mateo County (MHA), a nonprofit organization, enriches quality of life, restores dignity, and reduces homelessness, particularly for those affected by mental illness and HIV/AIDS. MHA strengthens hope by providing shelter, support and opportunities for socialization.

## 40TH ANNUAL FRIENDSHIP CENTER HOLIDAY PARTY CONTINUES TO DELIGHT

On Friday, December 12th, 2014, hundreds of guests braved the driving rain to attend the 40th annual holiday celebration at the Community United Church of Christ, hosted by the Mental Health Association of San Mateo County.

For many of the guests, this party is their only holiday celebration. MHA made it a festive event with a traditional holiday meal, gifts

from Santa (who looks younger every year) and Mrs. Claus, music courtesy of Exclusive Sound Productions, and lots of dancing. MHA board members, staff members, and volunteers prepared the meal, decorated the hall, and served the guests. ☺



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