Caminar’s First Annual Mental Health Symposium Was a Success

The evening of May 7th was a memorable one for Caminar’s friends, staff, family members and other mental health advocates who gathered at one of the most picturesque spots on the peninsula, the Carolands Chateau in Hillsborough. After taking in the architecture, breathtaking views, and original artwork by client artists displayed in the chateau, guests gathered in the ballroom to listen to compelling presentations by mental health professionals Stephen Hinshaw, Ph.D. (UC Berkeley); Manpreet Singh, M.D., M.S. (Stanford); Vikaas Sohal, M.D., Ph.D. (UC San Francisco); and Brandon Staglin, a leading mental health advocate who was diagnosed with schizophrenia in 1990. Steven Adelsheim, M.D. (Stanford), moderated the event.

Each speaker took a turn sharing either personal stories of mental health conditions or the implications of their research and studies in the field. Groundbreaking research has led to discoveries about how the brain works; and advances in technology and medicine have changed the way we diagnose and treat these often debilitating conditions. As one guest mentioned, “It’s great to hear that there are so many other options for successful treatment than medications alone!”

One hundred and sixty people attended the sold-out event and overall feedback was very positive. One guest stated “The panelists were fantastic and shed light on current studies and research on mental health.” Another wrote “I felt chills listening to Dr. Hinshaw’s remarks.”

“A video recording of this event is available to view on our website. Our goal in hosting this and future symposia is to provide educational opportunities focused on mental and behavioral health, research, and the experience of people in our community living with mental illness. Through increased knowledge and acceptance of mental health disabilities, we hope people needing treatment will be more likely to seek help and that barriers to treatment will subside. If you missed this event, please join us next year in May, Mental Health Awareness Month, as we continue this series!
Art Groups at Caminar’s Residential Programs

Have you ever used art as a form of self-expression? Numerous studies show that drawing, painting, photography, music, and other forms of creative expression are helpful in promoting general well-being. With a grant from Aroha Philanthropies, Caminar began offering art groups in 2014 to residents of three mental health treatment homes in San Mateo County. The groups focus on “Photography and the Arts” and are facilitated by Michael Collopy, a world renowned photographer and mental health advocate. These groups improve clients’ self-esteem and self-confidence, and provide a safe space for self-reflection. One participant described the group as “a very freeing experience.” Another says she plans on participating in several community art activities, something she has always wanted to do but did not believe she would “fit in” due to her mental health issues. The group is therapeutic for participants and some have a new found interest in photography and other creative avenues of self-expression. Caminar is immensely grateful to Aroha Philanthropies for generously awarding the largest grant in Caminar’s history– $125,000 for the enhancement of art programs!

LETTER FROM THE CEO

As we close out another successful fiscal year, we have much to celebrate. We have welcomed four new dynamic members to Caminar’s Board of Directors: Betsy Pace, Grace Yang, Carol Middleton, and Donna Barulich. Our 50th anniversary event at Levi’s Stadium raised over $420,000, and Aroha Philanthropies awarded Caminar the largest grant in our history. Our First Annual Mental Health Symposium sold out and highlighted promising research in mental health, and we earned a three-year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) for virtually all of Caminar’s programs.

Most importantly, we celebrate our courageous clients’ successes! Although the path to wellness is often long and challenging, Caminar clients continue to step down to lower levels of care and progress on their journey to stability and recovery.

For over 50 years, Caminar’s compassionate and skilled staff has been providing an array of services to support individuals with mental illness, regardless of where they are on their journey from crisis to independence. Still, too many people simply don’t have access to the help they need. Stigma or fear of discrimination may prevent them from reaching out, and misinformation abounds, even as knowledge of effective treatments and programs expands. In particular, let’s correct the mistaken belief that mental illness causes violent behavior. In reality, a complex variety of factors can lead to violence, and people with mental health conditions are more likely to be victimized by violence than to perpetrate it.

Caminar is committed to increasing understanding and acceptance of this vulnerable population, breaking down barriers to treatment, and creating more opportunities for people with disabilities to live in our communities with dignity and independence.

We are grateful for your support of Caminar and its commitments, which have a direct or indirect impact on our entire society.

Charles “Chip” Huggins
Chief Executive Officer
Planting Seeds

Avenida Apartments in Chico, California is dedicated to helping people with mental illness who experience homelessness. Housing and employment are key components of recovery from mental illness, but the importance of healthy social interaction is often underestimated. In an effort to build a supportive community that gives back to society, Avenida’s Property Manager Debra Matthews partnered with a local non-profit, From the Ground Up, to plant a community garden. Crew members from Caminar’s vocational programs, Sensible Cyclery and Pro-Touch; Avenida residents; and Caminar staff all worked together to build raised garden beds and create individual spaces for Avenida residents to grow their own produce. The garden will become an opportunity for social interaction and for residents to learn healthful eating and self-reliance.

“It keeps my mind positive and it helps me be positive,” said Andrew, an Avenida tenant.

From the Ground Up will offer cooking classes on how to cook with produce from their garden, seminars on nutrition, and yoga classes.

“It is amazing how a shared garden space can bring a community together,” Debra said. “For some of our tenants, it gives them a place to go every day and something to look forward to.”

There’s No Business Like Food Business

Thomas was born in Oregon and came to the Bay Area at the age of thirteen. He frequently moved throughout the country during his childhood because of his stepfather’s job. The constant upheaval made it difficult for him to make friends and graduate high school on time. At the age of 20, Thomas was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, and several years later, after being hospitalized, Thomas was introduced to Caminar. His Caminar case manager educated him about his diagnosis and he learned to manage his health. Thomas’ case manager connected him with a Job Coach in Caminar’s vocational program, Jobs Plus, who helped him find a steady kitchen position at a neighborhood café where he worked for 15 years. He was laid off from that job when the economy took a turn and was again referred to Jobs Plus. As an experienced restaurant employee, he quickly found a job at a local Mediterranean restaurant called Cobani. In his free time, Thomas loves to go to the movie theater, draw, and play his guitar. His artwork was featured in Caminar’s annual calendar! He says that engaging in these types of activities helps with his recovery. Thomas is very appreciative that Caminar has been able to help him with housing, managing his mental health, and even employment in the food business.
HELP US SPREAD THE WORD

about Caminar! We are actively adding fans, friends, followers, and fundraisers and we want you to join us.

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Caminar acknowledges with gratitude the generous Tribute Fund donations which the following donors recently made to honor or remember their relatives and friends.

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