

South Bay Mental Health Celebrates in Style Over Stigma

By Jennifer Bailey Hernandez, L.C.S.W.



In honor of May as Mental Health Month, South Bay Mental Health celebrated “Style over Stigma,” a Fashion-Loud and Stigma-Free Proud event created by staff and consumers to celebrate living life to the fullest.

This event premiered with a *Profiles of Hope* screening, focusing on overcoming stigma and moving towards recovery. Following the video, the main event started--a fashion runway showcase featuring eighteen superb models, comprised of consumers and staff, each wearing T-shirts with related stats and challenging “stigma” words.

To the side of the runway, a consumer created life-like cardboard drawings of paparazzi photographers taking pictures (there was even a cut out with a light for the camera) as members proudly walked the runway. Two workshops were held following



the fashion show, led by consumers, where participants crafted 'Pieces of Me' to express lived experiences and share their voices.

The event theme was "Recognize Myths, Redefine MI, and Reduce Stigma."

Here's what participants said:

JC: "I wish more people were there! It was such an awesome event and it was all about what we are! Very healthy South Bay Clinic. It was my first time being a part of something that I actually contributed to, and it helped my self-esteem. I was impressed with such cooperation and collaboration.

KB: "I really enjoyed the event. It was a party, my own social life I am a part of. The whole event was

so relevant to the topic and everyone cooperated!"

EG: "It was just wonderful to have clients and staff working together. I didn't feel any stigma. I had a good time! I felt the ONENESS, impressed with such strong support from all staff, all around support! And what brilliant ideas that got put together!"

MM: “it was an exciting venture! So touched by how clients participated the workshops, with their ideas, they were so creative, furthermore, they shared, expressed, verbalized, there were openness! We all felt safe to open our hearts! And creating a design on a T-shirt with group effort was exciting!”

TJ: “It was for the common cause, it all worked out well! I like the song ‘I am only human... it was like a healing process, there was openness for the souls that needed surgery. It certainly united the community.”

CL: “I felt like I am a part of South Bay family! I felt safe and I was brave enough to get out of my usual self and be a model! It was so good experience!”

TN: It was a new horizon for me, very inspiring, wonderful event! There was so much going on, with very powerful messages and we were indeed all superheroes.”



DMH e*News

June 16, 2016

The celebration provided an opportunity to recognize myths and learn facts, to re-define mental illness, to reduce stigma and, finally, to empower all. A special thank-you goes out to Aileen Malig, Deanna King and South Bay Staff for all their hard work to make this wonderful event happen.

