



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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"Telling My Story" at Valley Vista

Bradford, VT - Valley Vista, the 99-bed inpatient alcohol and chemical dependency treatment center, will once again host what has now become a regular performance of "*Telling My Story*." The event will take place on Thursday, November 2nd and Friday, November 3rd beginning at 7pm both nights. *Telling My Story* is a means by which patients at the residential drug and alcohol treatment facility use theater as a medium for self reflection and relationship building. The 10-week program is a part of the Dartmouth College English Department and Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies curriculum where students participate alongside Valley Vista Patients. *Telling My Story* is a non-profit organization that breaks down visible and invisible walls such as those created by addiction as well as incarceration and poverty, all of which affect many patients at the treatment center. For reservations, which are required for the performance in Bradford, contact John Caceres at Valley Vista. It is recommended that guests arrive at 6:30, photo identification is required.

Telling My Story started in 1995 by Pati Hernandez on Manhattan's Lower Eastside at the University Settlement. The project began as an effort to teach literacy to Latin American women through theater. In a journey that took Pati to Chiapas, Mexico and ultimately to Vermont in 1999, Pati uses the *Telling My Story* approach to self-empower populations such as prisoners, people on parole, patients at addiction rehabilitation facilities and survivors of domestic violence to claim their voice in a world wrought with social stigmatization.

"Whether in addiction or via trauma, people can create real or self-created walls isolating themselves from the world around them," said Dawn Taylor, Clinical Director at Valley Vista. "In recovery, we often say, 'we're only as sick as our secrets.' *Telling My Story* is an incredibly powerful means for women in our inpatient program to undergo a transformation where they tell their story, which often has never been shared with anyone. By telling their story, our patients experience an unbelievably freeing effect. We're so thankful to *Telling My Story* for bringing this powerful program to our facility. It's one of the many unique programming initiatives we're able to offer our patients seeking enduring recovery."

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News Release

Since becoming a 501c3 non-profit entity, *Telling My Story* has evolved from one working with prisoners, addicts and those impacted by poverty to encompassing a greater breadth of social issues such as domestic violence, sexual abuse and objectification, and trauma-based depression. Often times the walls that are created are real, such as those within prisons, institutions and recovery-focused treatment facilities. But quite often they are the invisible walls created by societal stratification and stigmatization. *Telling My Story* helps participants create a voice in challenging and breaking down these barriers. The dichotomy that often exists between the Dartmouth students and Valley Vista patients is emblematic of such stratification. When 20 ivy-league students work alongside 23 female patients, the outcome can be very eye opening for both students and patients. 15 performances have taken place at the treatment facility over the past 10 years.

"Most of the students are used to being the best and brightest in their lives, attending one of the most prestigious Ivy League schools in the world," said Pati Hernandez, Founder, Facilitator and Executive Director of *Telling My Story*. "In many ways, it's a mirror of the stratification experienced by both student and patient, many of whom are less fortunate than their student counterparts. From the very first 'Platform Preparation' experience, the walls begin to crumble as both learn about the others reality. It's very powerful right from the get-go."

To attend the performance of *Telling My Story*, please contact John Caceres at john.caceres@vvista.net. More information about Valley Vista can be found by visiting www.vvista.net. To find out more about and to support *Telling My Story*, visit www.tellingmystory.org.

About Valley Vista

Valley Vista is a 99-bed inpatient addiction treatment program for men, women and adolescents suffering from substance use disorder often complicated by co-occurring mental health conditions. Each gender-specific program is rooted in a 12-Step abstinence-based philosophy where humility, acceptance and accountability underscore the work that is done and service provided to those seeking a life of enduring recovery. Substance use disorder does not discriminate and neither does Valley Vista; each patient is treated with respect, dignity, anonymity and validation in an intimate, safe and therapeutic environment. With two beautiful locations, in Bradford and Vergennes, Vermont, Valley Vista offers recovery from addiction in humble and tranquil settings. For more information about Valley Vista inpatient services or to begin the admission process for you, a friend, co-worker or a loved one, visit www.vvista.net or call 802.222.5201. Valley Vista can also be found on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

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News Release

About Telling My Story

In 1995, Pati Hernandez began developing the program that would become *Telling My Story*. It started as a project at the University Settlement on the Lower East Side of Manhattan to teach literacy to Latin American women through theater.

Pati then took the program to Chiapas, Mexico, where she worked with Fortaleza de la Mujer or Strength of the Mayan Woman (FOMMA) over a five-year period, using the program to empower Mayan women.

In 1999, Pati relocated to Vermont and began using the *Telling My Story* approach to empower populations behind visible and invisible social walls - inmates, people on parole, patients at a rehabilitation facility, and survivors of domestic violence.

In 2008, *Telling My Story* became a nonprofit organization (a 501c3) and established a dedicated and talented Board of Directors.

In the beginning, Pati worked on particular issues with specific populations, such as welfare, literacy, or incarceration. Today, the organization has grown to encompass a broader analysis that includes people behind all sorts of social walls and the ways in which linear, authoritative power structures are reified by these walls.

Over a decade of work the program has also come to believe in the centrality of **voice** in challenging and overcoming social stratification. Voice begins with the telling of personal life experience and builds an understanding of issues based on personal experience rather than statistics and stereotypes.



Source: Telling My Story

Valley Vista patients and Dartmouth College students collaborate during the summer performance of *Telling My Story* held at the Bradford alcohol and drug treatment center. The next performance of *Telling My Story* will take place November 2nd & 3rd.

