

# MHA & DLBA Partner to Keep Long Beach Clean With Alley Busters

The DLBA's long relationship with Mental Health America (MHA) and the MHA Village is taking another step with the implementation of Alley Busters. Alley Busters is a pilot program designed to help those who have experienced mental illness get on the path to full-time employment.

By focusing on the whole person, MHA assists members as they journey toward recovery from mental illness. As a pioneer of the recovery movement they have been serving the community of Long Beach since 1990. A paying job is a major indicator of self-reliance and a measure of worth, to self and to society. Employment programs like these challenge members to emphasize their strengths and build their skills.

Alley Busters began in mid-April, starting with the alleys in the Willmore area. It's been a great success with three or four MHA members working each week to improve DTLB's alleys by cleaning up garbage, weeds, and removing obstructions. So far the team has removed five mattresses, four chairs, a car fender, TVs, and more. The DLBA's Clean Team works in conjunction with the City of Long Beach's Public Works department to dispose of these bulk items properly each week.

While the alleys of DTLB are being brightened, the hard-working MHA members on the Alley Busters team have the rewarding experience of bringing home a paycheck and can proudly see themselves as productive workers instead of patients. MHA also encourages businesses to offer internships as part of its employment program for members, where they can work up to 16 hours a week paid by MHA.

"When it comes to homelessness and mental health, the focus

always seems to be on the illness, on the detriment—and not on what’s being done to strengthen mental health and highlight the effort being made,” said Steve BeCotte, Community Outreach Manager at DLBA. “With Alley Busters, we hope to give these MHA members an opportunity to join DLBA’s Clean Team as they progress to full-time employment.”