

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



## Felton PREP and BEAM San Mateo Graduates Celebrate!

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**SAN MATEO, CA** (January 19, 2017) — Graduates of Felton Institute's PREP (Prevention and Recovery in Early Psychosis) and BEAM (Bipolar Disorder Early Assessment and Management) programs, that serve youth between the ages of 14 and 35, enjoyed a heart-warming evening of celebration at Felton's San Mateo site this evening. Graduation ceremonies are held several times throughout the year at sites in Alameda, Monterey, San Francisco, and San Mateo counties.

"You've done a lot in my life," said Ernest Li, a successful BEAM graduate, radiated joy as he spoke with PREP and BEAM Program Director Adriana Furuzawa, before receiving his graduation certificate.

"Tonight celebrates phenomenal milestones for both students and their families," Felton President and CEO Al Gilbert noted with enthusiasm. Bruce Adams, San Mateo PREP and BEAM Program Manager, began the ceremony by commending the brave students who, despite the odds, completed the programs.

One graduate shared that before PREP, he was "heading into darkness." Another said Felton's programs and staff "guided with direction and purpose." A majority of the graduates completed high school, and now work part-time jobs, while attending college—something one student "didn't expect would ever happen."

The presentation of certificates and one-word plaques describing the graduates was heartfelt and revealing. "Courage," "Gracious," and "Determination," were just a few of the attributes written. Family members shed tears of joy as they expressed appreciation for the life-transformative impact of the programs to Felton staff members, who dabbed away their own joyful tears.

Data indicates that approximately one in five adults in the U.S. experiences mental illness in a given year. One in 25 adults in the U.S. experiences a serious mental illness in a given year that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities.<sup>1</sup>

Although rare, the spectrum of mental illness can set in as early as 12 years old. One half of all mental illness begins by age 14 and 75% of those who suffer with the disease experience symptoms by age 24. The most common forms of mental illness include: anxiety and panic disorders, bipolar disorder, depression, eating disorders, schizophrenia, substance abuse and addiction. More than half of the adults in the U.S. suffering from mental illness are living undiagnosed.

Overwhelming evidence indicates that early intervention during the first signs of mental illness offers huge benefits. When caught early, it may be possible to delay or prevent the onset of chronic and disabling forms of psychosis and reduce the likelihood of hospitalization.

"It is exciting to see our graduates take this important next step toward their dreams and into lives filled with happiness and health," noted San Mateo PREP/BEAM Program Manager Bruce Adams. Felton's PREP program is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

One graduate shared, "The people at PREP have been the light through a dark time in my life. PREP has been to my life and mind what a sanctuary is in a conflict zone. It has literally opened the walls around me and given me access to not only the emotion of hope, but seeing hope in action. Prior to joining PREP, I was extremely depressed, suffered from low self-esteem, was in isolation at home and had social anxiety. As soon as I became acquainted with the PREP team, I knew there was hope, and I had found the source of healing."

Felton PREP is a Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funded Early Intervention Program that works with residents of San Mateo County, between the ages of 14 and 35 who are experiencing the onset of psychosis and Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders for the first time within the last two years. Additionally, PREP works with boys and girls as young as 12 years old who are identified as being at risk for developing psychosis. Felton BEAM is a Measure A funded Early Intervention Program for San Mateo County residents between the ages of 14 and 35 who are diagnosed with bipolar disorder and have had fewer than three manic episodes or who have experienced affective psychoses, such as major depression with psychotic features for the first time within the past two years.

All Felton Institute PREP and BEAM program participants receive a thorough diagnostic assessment and specialized individual therapy. They have access to medication management,

case management, occupational and educational support, peer support, and family support, as desired, for up to two years. The goal is to achieve lasting recovery and to foster skills to manage potential residual symptoms. For more information about our programs, please visit [felton.org](http://felton.org).

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Felton Institute was founded in 1889 with the mandate that children and families in crisis must have access to social services and resources in order to help them build upon their inherent strengths and develop self-sufficiency. Its name honors executive director Dr. Katharine “Kitty” Felton whose innovation at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century greatly expanded social services throughout San Francisco and garnered national acclaim. For 128 years, Felton Institute has been a leader in innovative mental health and social service programs for all. [felton.org](http://felton.org)

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