

***Be the Light Campaign is the First Widespread Initiative to Destigmatize Addiction and Mental Health Disorders Linked to a Full Treatment Scholarship***

*Boca Raton, FL 2/25/19*— The co-occurrence of substance use disorders and mental illness is prevalent in America. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, (NAMI.org) among the 20.2 million adults in the U.S. who struggle with chronic addiction, more than half also have a co-occurring mental illness. Just last year our country lost more than 72,000 lives to drug overdose, and far too many to suicide. Stars including Mac Miller, Kate Spade, and Anthony Bourdain tragically passed, showing that no one is immune to addiction or struggles with mental health. Celebrity Brandon Novak, who struggled with addiction himself for more than twenty years, is joining Banyan’s fight to help end the stigma with the new campaign #BeTheLight. Brandon starred in the MTV Jackass movie series and traveled the world as a professional skateboarder with Tony Hawk before losing everything to addiction. Now in long term recovery, he is giving back and helping others to find sobriety.

Sadly, many who are struggling do not know where to turn or how to ask for help. They feel ashamed due to the stigma that still surrounds these conditions today. Just as a candle brings light and warmth to a dark room, opening a discussion on mental health and addiction recovery can bring hope to those who are struggling. Brandon seeks to help break this stigma by bringing national attention to these important topics.

“It’s important for people to feel comfortable asking for help, and not be shamed for it. We encourage people to seek counseling and we remind them that it’s okay to come forward,” says Allison Seriani, National Public Relations Director for Banyan Treatment Center. “Our hope is to spread awareness, educate, and encourage those in need to seek treatment.”

The campaign is simple. All that is necessary is for social media users to upload a photo or video of their lit candle with the hashtag #BeTheLight, and encourage their friends to do the same. Candles can be purchased on Banyan's website at [www.BanyanTreatmentCenter.com](http://www.BanyanTreatmentCenter.com) and 100% of sale proceeds go towards the Banyan Treatment Center Roots to Recovery Scholarship. The scholarship brings individuals medically monitored detoxification and 30 days of treatment services, including room and board, at absolutely no cost.

Brandon travels the country speaking to at risk populations and large audiences, advocating for people to "be a light in a sea of darkness," as he stresses the importance of reaching out for help. His efforts working with Banyan Treatment Center and the Roots to Recovery Scholarship have paved the way for many people to start new lives in recovery. Brandon's inspirational story has touched the lives of countless individuals; he even provides a personal phone number so that anyone who is struggling can reach out to him for help directly. His hope is that others come forward and share their stories so that they may #BeTheLight for those in need.

#### About Banyan:

Banyan Treatment Center is Joint Commissioned Accredited and stands as a leader in the treatment industry providing quality drug addiction and mental health services. With eleven locations across the country including Philadelphia, PA, Laurel Run, PA, Boston, MA, Chicago, IL, Gilman, IL, Boca Raton, FL, Pompano Beach, FL and Stuart, FL, Lake Worth, FL, Tampa, FL, and Palm Beach Shores, FL. Banyan provides a full continuum of care including medically managed detox, residential, partial hospitalization, outpatient and alumni services. For more information visit [www.BanyanTreatmentCenter.com](http://www.BanyanTreatmentCenter.com).