

OUTREACH



By: Millie Tomidy, Executive Director

Happy New Year!! We are excited for the year ahead and all the opportunities it will bring. A year ago at this time, the state and national budget crisis was fresh on the tongues of all Americans – a year later, it is no longer fresh, but a reality we have all had to accept. And this year, just like last, I continue to remain optimistic in spite of all the dim predictions. We will continue to live our mission of Promoting Mental Wellness, Improving Quality of Life and Instilling Hope as we move through these difficult and challenging economic times.

This year has already begun on a very positive note for the MHA. I am pleased to report that we were chosen by the Mental Health Association of New York State (MHANYS) to participate in the Healthcare Benefit Project. We are one of eleven MHA's across the state that will survey mental health providers about healthcare benefits they provide to their employees and to assist direct care workers and their employers in accessing health insurance and employment incentive programs. The Office of Mental Health contracted with MHANYS to conduct this survey and to establish a statewide mental health workers assistance program. Mental health workers have traditionally received low wages and little or no health care coverage. This initiative is the first of its kind in the U.S. that will aide in establishing equitable compensation/benefits for direct care mental health workers.

The MHA has also received notification that we were selected from 142 applicants to receive funding for Criminal Justice Day as well as other activities scheduled for Crime Victims Rights week. This marks the 12th year that the MHA has sponsored Criminal Justice day and the 5th year that we have collaborated with other community organizations including Genesee Justice, Genesee County Probation, Rape Crisis Center of PPRCS, Justice for Children Advocacy Center, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), YWCA Domestic Violence, Genesee County Court System, the District Attorneys Office, Genesee Community College, GCASA, and Batavia City Police in an effort to raise public awareness about the trauma inflicted upon crime victims and the ripple effect it has on the community as a whole. The funding for this project is supported by a 2010 National Crime Victims Right Week Community Awareness Project sub grant awarded by the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators under a Victim of Crime Act grant from the U.S, Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, and Office for Victims of Crime. This year Crime Victims Rights Week will be held April 18th – 24th. Details of scheduled events will follow. These two project grants are exciting for us as they will assist in expanding the scope of services we offer to the community.

In closing, I would like to extend warm congratulations to Mark Fuller, President of DePaul Community Services and all his staff on the beautiful new housing unit located on East Main Street in Batavia. DePaul is a private not-for-profit organization committed to providing quality services to the elderly, persons in recovery from a mental illness, persons with a developmental disability, persons with addictions, and those with a history of homelessness. DePaul assists individuals in achieving their optimum level of independence and success in the environment of their choice, while remaining sensitive to assessed community needs and available resources. All of us at the MHA look forward to working in partnership with DePaul to achieve our common mission of empowering those living with mental illness to lead a full and rewarding life.

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Starts March 2nd

Upcoming Training

Growing Beyond Survival

Growing beyond survival is a self-help tool kit for managing traumatic stress. This training will run four consecutive Tuesdays beginning March 2nd from 12-2pm. For more information or if you are interested in attending, please contact Ellen Plossl at (585) 344-2611.

Hearing Voices that are Distressing

The MHA offers a complete training/curriculum that simulates the experience of hearing voices. During the training, participants have the opportunity to use headphones to experience the hearing of voices while performing various tasks. A discussion period follows and allows participants to explore how they will change their interactions with individuals who are diagnosed with Schizophrenia.

WRAP Training

The WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) is a self-management recovery system developed by a group of people who had mental health difficulties and were struggling to incorporate wellness tools and strategies into their lives. Topics include: daily maintenance plans, how to recognize/deal with triggers, identify early warning signs, deal with symptoms, work on a crisis and post-crisis plan.

Wellness Self Management

WSM is a program of the NYS Office of Mental Health designed to offer opportunities to improve quality of life. WSM helps individuals learn about recovery and what it means, how to make the best use of mental and physical health services and how to stay well by decreasing symptoms of a mental health problem. WSM is about building on personal strength, making informed decisions, overcoming negative thinking and taking action steps. The program can be broken down into various workshop topics.

Below is an article by Glenn Leibman, CEO of the Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS) that was originally published in the Albany Times Union on October 14, 2009.

Spare Mentally Ill from State Budget Cuts

This year's budget deficit again brings us to uncharted territory. Even with Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke's assertion that the national economy is improving, there are still grave concerns that things have not dramatically changed in New York. This sets the state for another drama-filled budget battle.

The immediate need is to respond to the state's budget gap. As certain as the changing colors of the leaves, every special interest group will make its cause as to why its area of the budget should not be cut. I am sure these concerns are very legitimate.

However, the stark reality from the mental health spectrum is that more cuts would bring devastation to the community. Here are three reasons:

Difficult economic times bring greater need for mental health services: This is a very logical pattern that has been quantified by large increases in suicide hotline calls, visits to mental health professionals and emergency rooms, and enrollments in Medicaid for those no longer able to afford needed services and medications. Yet, the community mental health system is being cut and will be forced to serve fewer people.

Cuts to community mental health cost the state more money: When funding is cut, where will people with psychiatric disabilities go? In all likelihood, they will end up in the emergency room or homeless shelters, or incarcerated. All cost the state much more and, more importantly, have outcomes that don't benefit recipients of mental health services. Cuts make no sense humanely or fiscally.

The mental health community did not receive a 3 percent cost-of-living adjustment promised as part of a three-year state commitment.

We recognized that we were in bad financial times and the pain had to be spread. However, in a budget propped up by stimulus dollars and tax increases, our community ended up with another cut that greatly impacted agencies on the front lines.

Hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers are served by community mental health providers. Our 31 New York affiliates work with more than 100,000 people.

We do have some support from the executive branch and the legislation. Gov. David Paterson has shown his empathy for people with psychiatric disabilities through his strong support of Timothy's Law. The Office of Mental Health and the Division of Budget have been responsive to our issues. Our friends in the Legislature have shown that they are strong advocates on our behalf.

That said, we need additional support from others who must realize that psychiatric disability affects everyone's life, directly or indirectly. Our hope is that through our advocacy and the support of our state leaders, we will change the discussion about budget cuts to mental health. We hope common sense will prevail and we will not have to face more budget cuts to New York's precarious mental health system.

Please call the MHA at (585) 344-2611 for more information or to schedule one of our trainings/workshops for your staff or small group.

The New MHA Social Club Kitchen and other Club Happenings

The MHA was selected to be the recipient of the 2009 Selective Group Foundation Matching Grant Program. Due to the generous donation from Tompkins Insurance and the Selective Group Foundation, we were able to remodel the MHA Social Club kitchen. The project began in early November and was completed in time for the annual Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinners. Thanks to Tompkins Insurance, local contractors, staff and social club members, the kitchen now has a much "homier" feel.

The Place to Be Players, a puppet theatre group, debuted their show "A Life For Larry" at the MHA's Annual Open House. The group's mission is to dispel the harmful myths regarding mental illness and break down the stigma attached. Through the main character, Larry, the audience is educated about depression, self-esteem issues, as well as the MHA's Social Club. Following

the play, the puppeteers are introduced and the audience is welcome to ask questions. The group has already begun working on their next project.

Wii-habilitation comes to the MHA! Social Club members now have the opportunity to play games like virtual bowling or tennis with the popular Nintendo game. Although research has proved the many physical benefits of playing the Wii, we have seen first hand the emotional benefits of playing games together. Club members who previously isolated themselves at Social Club, have learned to play as team members and cheer each other on. The great thing about the Wii is that it is a game that combats a sedentary lifestyle, something that can be harmful to the health of our folks.

Mission Statement:

The Mental Health Association in Genesee County promotes mental wellness through education, advocacy, and support for our community thereby improving quality of life and instilling hope.

WHAT WE DO!

For a full description of services, call the MHA at (585)344-2611 or visit us on the web at: gcmha.org

Transportation Services: (813-0026) The MHA provides transportation to and from various appointments for our members as well as provides a link to the community which reduces the isolation that can lead to depression.

The Warm Line: (813-0072) The Warm Line is a peer-to-peer run phone service available 7 days a week from 5:30pm to 8:30pm to provide emotional support, encouragement and referrals.

Trauma/MICA Program: Developing and implementing services for trauma survivors and MICA (Mental Illness/Chemical Abuse) clients through education, prevention, training and coordination based on the needs survivors and providers have identified. Crisis intervention and advocacy services are also provided.

Life Bridges Support Group: Life Bridges is a weekly support group for individuals 18 and over that provides education, information, mutual support and encouragement to individuals with ALL types of trauma histories.

MICA Support Group: A weekly peer run support group for individuals 18 and over where recovery discussions take place surrounding mental illness and chemical addictions. Group meets from 2:30-3:30pm on Fridays in Unit 4 of the MHA.

The Place to Be Social Club: A safe drop-in center for individuals 18 and over who have a diagnosed mental illness to gain social and vocational skills through a variety of daily, weekly and monthly activities.

Survivors of Suicide Support Group: SOS is a monthly support group designed to help those who have lost a loved one to suicide resolve their grief and pain in their own personal way. Call the MHA at 344-2611 for more info.

Where do I start?

Most families are not prepared to cope with learning their loved one has a mental illness. It's typical for a family member to call the MHA and ask....*Where do I start?* The Mental Health Association is a great place to start!

One of the many services offered by the MHA is *Family Consultation*. Although Family Consultation sounds like family therapy, it's not. The purpose of Family Consultation is to focus on the "here and now" concerns and needs of both the individual and family members. The emphasis is on providing basic information, education and guidance to families to help support their loved one's treatment and recovery.

The *Family Consultation* program was developed by The Family Institute, a partnership between the NYS Office of Mental Health and the University of Rochester, in collaboration with the NYS National Alliance on Mental Illness. Research and experience have shown that providing information, guidance and support to members of a person's family or social network can play a significant role in supporting the consumer's treatment goals and recovery.

***With *Family Consultation*, family members are not simply "close relatives." Rather, this term applies to anyone the individual identifies as being helpful in supporting treatment and recovery. This can include close relatives, friends, clergy, employees and others.

For more info on Family Consultation, call the MHA at (585) 344-2611.



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Mental Health Association in Genesee County
25 Liberty Street
Batavia, NY 14020
On the Web: www.gcmha.org