



vision

PENNSYLVANIA MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMERS' ASSOCIATION

Advocating for persons
with lived experience
for over 30 years

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From the Executive Director's Desk

Hello PMHCA Members and Friends,

I hope that all of you and your loved ones are doing well and staying healthy through these difficult times. It has been a long haul, and we surely did not expect this to be going on this long back in March when we cancelled our First Annual Rockin' Your Recovery event! We figured that we would reschedule the event for October of this year...and so here we are! We are planning to have Rockin' Your Recovery after all! We plan to have an all virtual event that will take place in honor of Mental Illness Awareness Week from October 4 through October 9. Please see our flyer and event information in this newsletter, as well as, on our website and Facebook page. We are planning a week of pretty awesome events and activities just for you!

We have created several social engagement groups called Virtual Drop-In calls. We decided to do this because we are all in our homes and currently experiencing all the stress and discomfort that goes along with the unknown

times we are all in. These groups are going well and are focused on providing positive socialization in this challenging and difficult time. We also added the Art In Recovery Virtual Drop-In on Thursday nights at 7 pm, which I am moderating, and Pat Madigan will be adding an additional Adult Virtual Drop-In on another weeknight very soon.

We have also continued to get the word out about Mental Health Advance Directives. PMHCA currently has 188 trainers in the state, who are working hard to let people know what, specifically, is in the law regarding directives as well as how people can complete one. The training has been adapted a bit to accommodate a virtual presentation, so if you have questions or want to schedule a training in your area, please let us know.

Several PMHCA employees are also working with a group of professionals from across the state who have established a curriculum to train certified peers in understanding trauma. The training is called Trauma-Sensitive Peer: First Steps. We

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In Memoriam

We are heartbroken at the passing of our Founding President and Grandmother Mark Davis. Mark was an active member of our board and committees, and his fiery passion, dedication, and charisma will be a constant gold standard in our ongoing quest for advocacy and equitable treatment for all. We love you Mark.



Vision

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Our Mission

PMHCA is a state-wide member organization dedicated to the support of all people who seek aid for recovery from a mental illness at any stage in their journey. We provide resources, referrals, and support to those receiving services or in recovery from a mental illness.

Our Purpose is to promote and support recovery through advocacy and education in order to eliminate stigma and discrimination.

While *Vision* is the official newsletter of PMHCA, it may contain articles and opinions from outside sources.

These materials do not necessarily represent the views of PMHCA, its officers, and Board of Directors. Medical information is of a general nature and does not constitute professional advice.

Check Your Vision Online!

PMHCA's Quarterly Newsletter, *Vision*, is now available online at <https://pmhca.wildapricot.org/Vision-Newsletter/>

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Keep up with the PMHCA family, our activities, and current issues



LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!

Let us know how you like *VISION* and how we can improve it.

Send comments and suggestions to pmhca@pmhca.org.

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have completed 6 of these trainings; 1 in-person and 5 virtually. We have two more scheduled in August, and we are planning to continue this work by offering a Community of Practice for anyone who has completed the training to continue their learning experiences and opportunities and to continue the conversation around trauma. Information and registration can be found on our website.

As always, PMHCA has been focused on advocating for you! Staff from both PMHCA and YMPA are active members of the Office of Mental Health Planning Council. We are also represented at so many groups across the state such as Forensic Interagency Task Force, CSP and Drop-In Groups, Pennsylvania Psychiatric Leadership Council, as well as representing all consumer advocacy groups in the OMHSAS Telehealth Steering Committee. We are working hard to ensure that our voices are heard in these critical issues and that realistic changes are part of those essential recommendations to our legislators. On that note, the HR 268 Committee regarding Hospital Boarding and ER Treatment has concluded. So many people came together in this committee and worked hard to create recommendations to the state House of Representatives to address this critical issue.

We would like to also designate October as our membership drive month! We NEED your support to continue to represent you effectively across the state. We do that most effectively when we have active membership, so please take a few moments with whatever you can afford and renew your membership or become a new member! There are multiple benefits of being a member, and one of them is that we are currently in the midst of creating several committees within PMHCA. One of those committees is designed to

create more inclusivity within our organization and membership, and another is designed to improve membership experience and engagement. More information on these committees can be found in all the usual places; this newsletter, our website, and our social media.

Last, but absolutely not least, we are looking for YOUR recovery stories! We want to recognize your hard work by printing your recovery stories in our newsletters, as well as on our website and social media. We also want you to nominate your favorite mental health worker. Whether it's your therapist, peer support, psych nurse, psychiatrist, psychologist. Whoever has been important in your recovery journey! I know that I have my personal recovery story (that I will share during Rockin' Your Recovery week) and I have also spent 20 years of my career offering mental health treatment to individuals and families. It is often seemingly thankless work, but also incredibly rewarding work. We'd like to create space to showcase your personal growth and also to recognize and honor the hard work your mental health professionals do every day. Personal Recovery Stories and Mental Health Worker Nominations will be accepted on an ongoing basis. Please send your submissions to pmhca@pmhca.org

Thank you all so much for your support! We couldn't do our work without you! 🙌

Kathy Quick
Executive Director



Montco CSP Stays Connected During Pandemic

By: Kathie Mitchell, Advocate and Writer



It started with art. And it pulled the community together as COVID tried to tear it apart.

Every spring, the Montgomery County CSP Committee holds an annual art poster contest. It kicks off the May celebration of Mental Health Awareness Month and the winning poster is turned into a magnet that is distributed at the annual CSP Conference and County Mental Health Awards Reception, which is usually held in May and is attended by over 500 people.

But just as spring officially began the state and the country started shutting down. Social distancing had officially begun.

It didn't stop the members of the CSP Committee. Although the conference and awards reception were cancelled, the art poster contest was not. Instead of viewing the art works at the Norristown Public Library as in previous years, the show went virtual.

The CSP Virtual Art Poster Contest was set up through the CSP website where you can go today at www.montcopacsp.org and click on "Art Contest" in the menu at the top the home page, and view the wonderful pieces of art work submitted by contestants.

This year's theme was very telling of the times: "Life Isn't About Waiting for the Storm to Pass, It's About Learning to Dance in the Rain". There were 33 artists who entered photos of their pieces which they could upload through the website. Once the submission period was over, viewers had another week to cast votes for their favorite art work.

As the online voting period came to a close, there were 186 votes cast and a tie for first place! The third-place winner also had a high number of votes, clinching the third spot. Ameika Malcolm, who has organized the art contest for the last three years as the chair of the CSP Social Committee, was amazed and inspired by the response.

"We weren't sure how this was going to go, but we got so many beautiful entries – it was really inspiring during a difficult time," Malcolm said.

On the day that the committee announced the cancellation of the conference and awards reception, HopeWorx, as the fiduciary for Montco CSP, received a check from the Wawa Foundation to sponsor the conference. Sue Shannon, the Executive Director of HopeWorx, which provides technical assistance for the Montgomery County CSP Committee, reached out to the foundation to offer to return it. The foundation quickly responded that the money should be used to celebrate Mental Health Awareness month, in whatever way the CSP committee could do it.

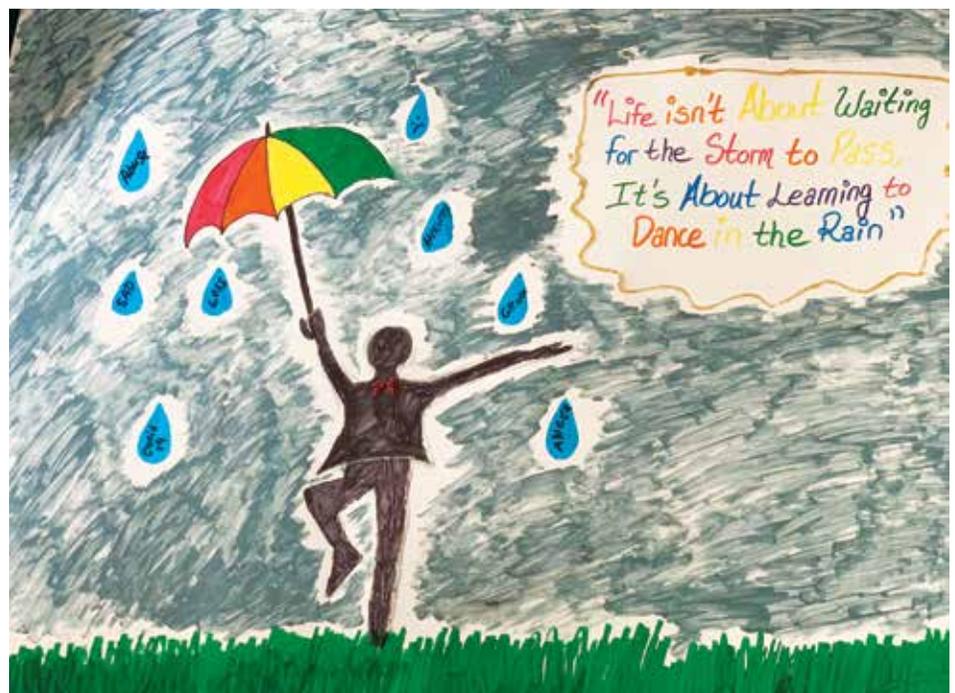
So, the Wawa Foundation funds were used to fund the art contest, and the committee was able to think about how to spend the CSP funds that were usually allocated to the conference.

At the May CSP meeting, on Zoom, attended by over 35 people, the Committee discussed how to spend the money. Everyone agreed that they wanted to support the most vulnerable members of the Montgomery County CSP community and so they decided to donate the money to the local Street Outreach team to provide whatever is needed to help people who are homeless to connect to the community and to resources.

The Committee meets monthly by Zoom and has guest speakers who attend and provide updates and information. The subcommittees also meet by phone or Zoom.

The CSP Advocacy Subcommittee raised concerns in March and April about Norristown State Hospital and the county inpatient psychiatric hospitals and how the hospitals were protecting patients from getting COVID-19. The committee, chaired by Community Advocates Director Kim Renninger, wrote letters to the state and county officials requesting information about testing and protections in place to prevent the spread of the virus.

The letters were published in the May 2020 Community Support Journal. The newsletter can be found on the CSP website or one can be mailed to you by contacting amalcolm@hopeworxinc.org. 🍷



The Northampton County Drop-In Center 3/29/20

By: Kristen Bertucci, CPS, CPSS

The Northampton County Drop-In Center is a social rehabilitation program where Northampton county residents 18 years or older who self-identify with a current mental health or dual diagnosis can come to socialize and participate in recreational activities in a safe, non-judgmental environment. Run by Recovery Partnership, the Northampton County Drop-In Center is located in downtown Bethlehem at 70 W. North Street. As part of Recovery Partnership, the Northampton County Drop-In Center is a peer run, peer directed program that supports its participants to increase meaningful community and peer relationships, provide access to recovery support resources, and provide a space where individuals of different abilities can engage in both meaningful activities as well as take a self-directed approach to wellness and recovery. Within the last 18 months, the Friends who attend the Northampton County Drop-In Center created a self-generated petition for the County that outlined their need for and benefits of increasing our hours of operations.

In 2017, the Northampton County Drop-In Center hours of operations were Monday,

Wednesday, and Friday 3pm-8pm and Tuesday and Thursday 12pm-8pm. By the spring of 2018, the Friends' self-advocacy resulted in our hours of operation being expanded to 12pm-8pm Monday-Friday. By the beginning of the 2019 fiscal year, the Northampton County Drop-In Center hours were again expanded to increase access to the individuals we serve to 9am-8pm Monday-Friday.

To promote continued Friend directed programming, the Northampton County Drop-In Center offers monthly activity, newsletter and community meetings where Friends come together to discuss what they feel are beneficial activities, guest speakers, and areas they feel can be adjusted or improved to meet the needs and supports identified as important to our Friends. In addition to a recovery oriented and self-directed approach to programming, the Northampton County Drop-In Center promotes and celebrates our individual Friend's accomplishments such as gaining meaningful employment, perfect program attendance, recovery anniversaries, securing housing, accessing new services, and learning new skills.

In celebrating these individual successes, the Northampton County

Drop-In Center staff and Friends have built a supportive peer to peer environment where our Friends can also band together in times of crisis and loss. In times that, for any one individual, it may seem an impossible feat to face the challenges of life while living with a mental illness, the Friends at the Northampton County Drop-In Center support each other as a community. Through mutually trusting and respectful day to day interactions, the Friends have built and foster an atmosphere of non-judgmental support that welcomes others and is truly a place that exists where no one has to be alone.

In my two plus years as the Northampton County Drop-In Center coordinator, I have witnessed an unconditional love from our Friends and a level of devotion to both our program as well as to each other that is truly unique. Our Friends often refer to both the Drop-In Center staff and other participating Friends as "Family." So what is the Northampton County Drop-In Center? To me, it is hope. A place that exists where one does not have to be alone, that celebrates an individual's expression of their authentic self, and can provide any individual willing to participate the opportunity to belong. 🙌



ROCKIN'

YOUR

RECOVERY

VIRTUAL EDITION



Join us as PMHCA hosts Rockin' Your Recovery for 2020's Festival. It will be a celebration of how all forms of art and music have helped people walk the road of recovery.

Schedule of Events:

Monday, October 5th

CPS Virtual Drop-in

11:30 am

Event Week Kickoff!

1:00 p.m.

PMHCA Executive Director Kathy Quick will start this weeklong recovery celebration that recognizes Mental Illness Awareness Week by providing her personal recovery story. Kathy's journey starts with childhood trauma and covers a lifetime of learning about her mental illness and the discovery of wellness tools that she uses every day. Joining her will be Tristan Schnoke from Youth MOVE PA, who is also her daughter. Tristan will also share her recovery story, and the two will discuss how their journeys complemented and sometimes collided, and how we can effectively support and encourage each other as we travel our recovery roads. Kathy will also share how her winding path led her to PMHCA.

Kathy and Tristan's recovery stories will lead into an exploration of PMHCA: Past, Present, Future. This lively discussion will include stories from founding members, past employees, and present employees who will all describe the impact PMHCA has had on their lives and the purpose the agency fulfills.

This kick-off event will go out with a bang by concluding with a Virtual Drum Circle! So grab your pots, pans and wooden spoons and get set to *Rock Your Recovery!*

Tuesday, October 6

Coffeehouse

3:30 – 5:00 p.m.

This coffeehouse will be hosted by Zach King of Kingfish & Friends and Tyler Eppley, PMHCA. Kingfish & Friends is a homegrown brand cultivating connections by procuring and presenting artists that are dedicated to supporting, building and promoting our scene through community engagement and fellowship.

Our theme is *Rockin' Your Recovery*. This session will give individuals the opportunity to be able to showcase their singing, dancing, poetry or other amazing talents. Please sign up beforehand, as there are only a limited amount of five minute blocks of time available on a first come, first serve basis. Email entries to tyler@pmhca.org.

Wednesday, October 7

Chair Yoga

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Mental Health Advance Directive Training

1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

What is a Mental Health Advanced Directive (MHAD)? It is a document that allows you to make choices about your mental health treatment in times of wellness for times that you are not in wellness. You are making choices and decisions about your treatment before the time you will need it. PA passed a new law effective January 29, 2005 that makes it possible for you to use a MHAD. We will explore what MHAD is and why it is important to have.

Thursday, October 8

Adult Drop-In

1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Art & Recovery (Rock Painting)

7:00 p.m.

Pick out a rock, your favorite paint colors, and brush then join Aaron and Zack to explore your artistic side while we relax, and we paint rocks. Brought to you by Youth M.O.V.E. PA.

Friday, October 9

Podcast Episode

10:00 a.m.

The team here at Youth M.O.V.E. PA has started a podcast where we will be discussing mental health, substance abuse, other topics related to mental health and mental wellness. This podcast isn't about professionals telling you how to live your life. It's more based on our lived experience and how us and guests on the cast have handled our personal struggles.

Quarterly Membership Meeting

1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

PMHCA will conclude this weeklong celebration with a quarterly membership meeting where you, our members and allies can learn about what PMHCA has been doing, projects we are working on, and how you can get more involved! We will be showing off all of YOUR artwork in a virtual display, show the Community Canvas that we created all week long, and finally draw our raffle winners!

Other activities taking place during the week:

Keynote Speaker: Tracy Carney is a Senior Recovery/ Resiliency Specialist focusing on Peer Support and Member involvement at Community Care Behavioral Health. She has a strong background in recovery and wellness initiatives, providing peer support services and serving as director of Recovery Central Clubhouse at CMSU Behavioral Health for ten years. She was a Co-investigator with Dr. James Schuster and Dr. Charles Reynolds on a PCORI Grant "Optimizing Behavioral Health Homes by Focusing on Outcomes that Matter Most for Adults with Serious Mental Illness. In addition to her certifications as a Certified Peer Specialist, Certified Peer Supervisor, and Certified Psychiatric Rehabilitation Practitioner, Tracy has experience as a Trainer – in Wellness Coaching, Wellness Recovery Action Planning, and the Hearing Distressing Voices Simulcast. She has served on the Board of the Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers' Association, the Pennsylvania Peer Support Coalition and works with an anti-stigma drama group called The Go M.A.D. Players to educate communities about mental health issues.

Lottery Tree and 50/50 Raffle: Throughout the week, PMHCA will be selling tickets to win a "Lottery Tree", worth \$200, and also tickets for a 50/50 raffle to be drawn and winners announced on the last day of the event!

Community Canvas: Rockin' Your Recovery has become completely virtual and we still want to be able to capture everyone's attendance by making a Virtual Community Canvas! We will be doing so by taking screenshots during the events on Zoom and Facebook Live to make one large picture of all who attended throughout the week. Please feel free to show your face or draw/write up a cool sign that answers the question: What does art in recovery mean to you? Sponsored by Youth M.O.V.E. PA

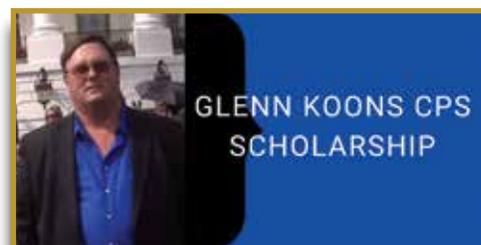
Virtual Art Show: Submissions for art and videos of performances will be accepted and will also have a featured gallery on our web page. To participate, please send your art to pmhca@pmhca.org with your name, the name of your piece, and a brief description of the art and what inspired you.

Glenn Koons

Certified Peer Specialist Scholarship

We continue to honor Glenn's memory and commitment to providing guidance to others through their mental health recovery journeys with this scholarship. The \$1000 scholarship is awarded annually to individuals who exemplify what Glenn stood for. The ability to engage others, the willingness to share life experiences in recovery, provide leadership and guidance, and pass on these skills to others.

Glenn also was one of four NAMI National men who was recognized by President Obama at a reception celebrating the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) 20th anniversary. Glenn brought hope and smiles to everyone around him regardless of where he was. For more information on the scholarship, Glenn, or how you can donate and help the scholarship, please visit <https://pmhca.wildapricot.org/Glenn-Koons-CPS-Scholarship/> 🍷



Rita Cisneros

Health and Wellness Fund



IT'S ALL GOOD! These uplifting words exemplified Rita's passion, fortitude and advocacy for uplifting all persons she came in contact with and the furthering of the mission of PMHCA. She served our PMHCA membership for at least twelve years. She was instrumental with creating the KEYSTONE PRIDE RECOVERY INITIATIVE (KPRI) and helped secure federal funding to provide statewide KPRI trainings. KPRI training provides a framework for service providers and individuals to understand and provide a welcoming and supportive services for the LGBTQ community and stimulate community discussions regarding LGBTQI rights. This project continues to this day.

Rita championed knowledge and opportunities for trainings for all individuals no matter what. It is in honor of Rita's passion and fortitude that PMHCA awards a training scholarship to individuals to further their knowledge and advocacy in her name. For more information how you can donate and help the scholarship, please visit <https://pmhca.wildapricot.org/Rita-Cisneros-Scholarship/> 🍷

Lynn Keltz

Scholarship

The Lynn Keltz Scholarship has been established to assist people age 30 and under to access training and educational opportunities that will contribute to their mental health advocacy skills. We use the term 'advocacy' to include advocacy on public policy affecting mental health and wellness whether at local, state or federal policy levels. Advocacy has long been in the mission of Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers' Association (PMHCA). Through this scholarship, we intend to engage members who will continue this legacy.

We envision the leadership of young advocates who will help to articulate and shape recovery oriented public mental health policy that better meets the needs of children, young adults and families. A component of this leadership is the expectation that all recipients will further the education and awareness gained through acquired training to shape the future of mental health policy, supports and services within these communities and beyond. For more information how you can donate and help the scholarship, please visit <https://pmhca.wildapricot.org/Lynn-Keltz> 🍷



COVID Can't Stop, Won't Stop Youth MOVE PA

Here at Youth MOVE PA we were sad to have to cancel events, trips, and plans due to COVID-19. We adjusted to our new reality of a more online experience and we began to run virtual youth drop-in centers to give young adults a place to still feel welcome and connect with each other. We began to brainstorm how we can host trainings and events



virtually, which we did with Mental Health Awareness Week in May and Trauma Sensitive Peer Support: First Steps.

Going forward Youth MOVE Pa will have some exciting things to offer to youth, young adults, allies, and system partners. Starting off we will be offering a pod cast that will focus on youth with topics such as mental health, youth organizations, wellness, coping, addiction, and many more themes. Youth MOVE PA also created its own website, which can be found here: <https://youthmovepa.wildapricot.org/>. We are looking forward to keep growing and building the youth movement in PA.

We've also started a podcast! We decided to create this podcast to talk about mental health, coping skills and other things involving mental health. This isn't always going to be professionals telling youth and young adults what to do, rather its people with lived experience with mental health and substance abuse struggles telling you our stories to help provide hope in dark times. Listen on Castbox at <https://castbox.fm/channel/Our-Story-Isn't-Over-id3170030?country=us>. 🎧

Here at the Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers' Association (PMHCA), Youth MOVE PA, and the Pennsylvania Peer Support Coalition (PaPSC) we understand the toll social isolation can take on our mental health. Connecting online can be a good way to alleviate this issue. Our agencies have collaborated in hosting a series of **"Virtual Drop-In"** zoom meetings to help reduce the sense of social isolation we can experience during this difficult time. These are NOT clinical or therapeutic groups!

- The **"Adult Virtual Drop-In"**, is a topic-driven, social gathering hour that is scheduled twice a week. While we are all house bound during this health crisis, let's take some time for some good old socialization and conversation. We would love to discuss many different topics such as our "favorite things" and our "go to coping skills" with whoever wants to join us. One topic that is off limits is the COVID-19 virus! Meetings will take place using Zoom on Tuesday and Thursday from 1 pm to 2 pm. Meetings will be moderated by Kathy Quick, Jason Riligio, and Samantha Harkins.
Meeting ID: 131-337-859, Meeting Link: <https://zoom.us/j/131337859>

- Youth MOVE PA is excited to host a **"Youth Virtual Drop-In"** that is all about getting some social interaction, even if we can't go out and do our normal things like school, sports, going to the game store, or hanging with our friends. We know how stressful it can be when our routine is messed up and it is just as frustrating when everyone is talking about Coronavirus as if there might be impending doom!! We would like to help you feel better about the outside world and the stress it may bring by meeting new people who join this group. We will be talking about ourselves, what we like, and be discussing a specific topic with each other during each meeting. This gives us some

distraction from the anxiety that can arise from being stuck inside all the time. Our meetings will be hosted every Monday and Friday from 3:30pm to 4:30pm on Zoom. Meetings will be moderated by Zack Karenchak, Tristan Schnoke and Aaron Zimmerman.

Meeting ID: 410-999-098, Meeting Link: <https://zoom.us/j/410999098>

- The **"CPS Virtual Drop-In"** is designed specifically for Certified Peer Specialists. As Certified Peer Specialists, we are familiar with taking care of others needs over our own, as well as our paychecks depending on our billable hours. In this time of uncertainty, we must take care of our personal wellness, so we can continue to be an inspiration to those we serve, whether by phone or through other technology. This is a statewide support group that can be molded to fit the needs of those attending. We are resilient, we're Peer Specialists, we are living breathing examples of recovery, and we will get through this together. Join us Mondays from 11:30am – 12:30pm. This meeting will be moderated by Jason Riligio, Dave Measel, and Keith Elders.
Meeting ID: 305-863-445, Meeting Link: <https://zoom.us/j/305863445>

- PMHCA invites you to join us in our **"ART IN RECOVERY GROUP."** We envision a safe space where we can share our artwork as part of our recovery – whatever that is for you – and grow and develop our artwork, friendship, and community together. Let's share our artwork, in whatever form your art takes, such as painting, photography, sculpture, coloring, diamond art, crocheting, crafting, or whatever you enjoy! This is a virtual meeting in order to accommodate everyone's schedule and maintain everyone's safety. Every Thursday at 7:00 P.M. The Zoom link will stay the same for every meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/93997640863> 🎨

National Coalition of Mental Health Activists Calls for Ending Police Role in Mental Health Crises

WASHINGTON (June 20, 2020)—In light of the repeated senseless killings by police officers of African Americans—many of whom are in a mental health crisis—the National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery (NCMHR) strongly supports the call by racial justice groups to “unbundle the police” and transfer a significant portion of police funding to health and human services—especially voluntary, community-based services.

“A report by the Ruderman Family Foundation indicates that up to 50 percent of individuals killed by police in the U.S. had disabilities, and a large percentage of those were people with mental health conditions,” said NCMHR founder Daniel B. Fisher, MD, PhD, who himself has lived experience of a mental health condition. “And African Americans are at higher risk than other individuals.”

In addition to their demand to increase funding for housing, job training, and health care, advocates representing a variety of human rights organizations have called for increased funding of mental health and substance use disorder services. “This would protect community members from the intrusion of police into situations involving mental health issues, for which they are insufficiently trained,” Dr. Fisher continued.

“However, there is the risk of replacing police force with mental health coercion,” Dr. Fisher noted. Rather than expanding forced mental health treatment and the number of beds in psychiatric institutions, NCMHR calls for using the increased mental health funding to expand voluntary, trauma-informed, community-based care. These services—such as peer-run crisis respites, warmlines,

crisis stabilization units, and crisis outreach services—need to be delivered by ‘peers’—people with lived experience of a mental health condition—as alternatives to institutions.

“These services, which are evidence-based, could greatly reduce the killing by police of people with mental health conditions—especially African Americans, indigenous persons, and other people of color, who are most at risk,” Dr. Fisher said.

The NCMHR consists of member organizations in 27 states and the District of Columbia, and proudly joined 14 other disability rights groups run by persons with disabilities as a founding member of the National Disability Leadership Alliance.

Contact: Daniel Fisher, MD, PhD, info@ncmhr.org, 202-642-4480. 🗣️

LEADERSHIP IN RECOVERY (LIR)

What is Leadership in Recovery (LIR)?

PMHCA has had and continues to uphold LIR as one of its major programs. LIR has fostered individual and group advocacy and leadership in local communities and statewide service systems.

LIR provides the platform for enhancing and strengthening individual leadership skills such as individual advocacy, communication skills and understanding the statewide service system and the county local arena.

What does LIR offer:

- Recovery Chats
- Consumer Grassroots training and peer networking
- Involvement with Community Support Program (CSP) at regional and local level
- Discussion about the Call for Change
- I AM THE EVIDENCE (ITE) discussions and trainings

What is LIR? From Mahatma Gandhi: “You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”

For more information contact Pat Madigan, PMHCA Special Projects at pat@pmhca.org 🗣️





Corona Virus Resources for Pennsylvanians

Hello Friends and Members,

We wanted to take this time to reach out and make you aware of resources that continue to be available. Please follow the links below for detailed, up-to-date information about COVID-19, the Governor’s response and helpful links.

- Responding to COVID-19 in Pennsylvania Governor Wolf’s Website for up-to-date resources and information: <https://www.pa.gov/guides/responding-to-covid-19>
- Link for School Guidance FAQ for School Closures and Other Information: <https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/Pages/AnswersToFAQs.aspx>
- Link for Emergency Food Assistance Available During Coronavirus Mitigation: https://www.media.pa.gov/pages/Agriculture_details.aspx?newsid=900
- The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commissions Decision to Prohibit Utility Terminations During Public Health Emergency; Evictions, Foreclosures Delayed: http://www.puc.pa.gov/about_puc/press_releases.aspx?ShowPR=4326
- The United Way Resource Hotline: <https://www.uwp.org/programs/2-1-1/>
- CDC Guide to Managing Anxiety & Stress: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2F coping.html 🙌



Crushing Stigma

By: Lauren Marshall

We were talking about using art as a coping tool during a Virtual Adult Drop-In Meeting. We had a good laugh about my mother’s recent find during one of her pandemic-organizing-sprees. I told the group, “I don’t have my art supplies, I’m staying with my mother. Oh wait, she gave me a ‘How to Draw Monster Trucks’ book.”

As someone that lives with a serious mental illness, I greatly appreciate the safe, welcoming environment these meetings offer. I dedicate this picture to PMHCA. Thank you for your continued grassroots advocacy and for being one of the first advocacy organizations to open your ‘virtual doors’ to those seeking connection. 🙌



‘You’ve Got to Do Something’: PA Rehabs Buckle, Begin to Close Under COVID-19 Strain

By: Aneri Pattani of Spotlight PA and Ed Mahon of Spotlight PA | Aug. 26, 2020

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HARRISBURG — Faced with the financial burdens of COVID-19 and a lack of state support, drug and alcohol treatment facilities in Pennsylvania could begin closing at an alarming rate, even as overdose deaths rise and the need for treatment is expected to grow.

In a hearing before lawmakers Tuesday, treatment providers, advocates, and state officials warned that the industry has not received dedicated coronavirus relief funding, nor has it been prioritized for state-provided protective gear or testing supplies.

Facility operators said they have had to increase pay to employees facing risky conditions, while cutting down on the number of patients they can accept to maintain social distancing.

The result is a historically underfunded system buckling under the weight of dual pandemics: addiction and the coronavirus. Since March, 10 facilities have closed, though it’s unclear if the coronavirus was to blame, according to the state Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs.

Without more funding, that trend will continue, those at the hearing said. “In my 30-plus years of doing this work, I have never seen programs closing at the rate that they are right now,” said Bill Stauffer, executive director of the Pennsylvania Recovery Organizations Alliance, a nonprofit advocacy group. “And we’re going to be in dire straits without the kind of care that we need.”

Stauffer called on lawmakers to increase funding, not just during the COVID-19 crisis but over the long-term. With the increased isolation of the pandemic, he said, a growing number of people are suffering from substance use and mental illness. Public health experts are predicting rises in overdose deaths and suicide over the coming months.

The addiction treatment system needs to be ready to help, Stauffer said.

As of August, no state or federal coronavirus funds have been allocated specifically for drug and alcohol facilities.

Instead, they’re often competing with other industries for limited funds. That includes the \$1.6 billion in federal funds that went to county governments to spend as they wish. The money was often split between many pressing needs, including small business grants and emergency response services for the pandemic.

Drug and alcohol facilities also competed with grocery stores and security companies, among others, for \$50 million in state grants to give frontline workers hazard pay. And they are able to request protective equipment from the state stockpile, but the Department of Health has said nursing homes generally receive top priority.

The lack of support, previous Spotlight PA reporting found, has left well-meaning facilities that want to protect clients from COVID-19 without the resources to do so.

The Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs said it can’t help monetarily, as it doesn’t fund facilities directly. Instead, the department has provided a list of COVID-19 resources on its website and tries to connect facilities with suppliers to acquire protective equipment.

Some companies that manage benefits for Medicaid patients have temporarily increased the amounts they pay rehabs, or agreed to continue paying for the number of patients who were enrolled before COVID-19. But facilities say these stopgap measures are not nearly enough.

Jonathan Wolf, CEO of Pyramid Healthcare — which owns dozens of facilities across Pennsylvania — said that since March, his company has spent nearly \$1.5 million on protective equipment and hazard pay for employees, cleaning of facilities, and setting up telehealth services so fewer patients had to visit in person.

They’ve also created isolation pods within facilities for patients who get sick or those who are awaiting COVID-19 test results, sometimes for weeks. Since other patients can’t be housed with those individuals, the company has had fewer clients. Many people are also reluctant to seek treatment right now, fearing they’ll contract COVID-19.

Pyramid has lost about \$13 million in revenue this year, Wolf said.

“It’s been a double whammy of hugely increased costs and hugely decreased revenue,” he said.

The company has closed seven treatment facilities over the past year, including one of the few remaining adolescent rehabs in the state.

Providers who treat patients on Medicaid have been hit particularly hard, Wolf and other speakers at the hearing said. COVID-19 has exacerbated long-standing issues with the low rates that Medicaid pays for patients in rehab.

Mark Schor, division president for Acadia Healthcare — which owns 25 facilities in Pennsylvania — said the average daily amount Medicaid pays for rehab has only increased about \$50 over 30 years. That hardly keeps up with inflation, let alone increased costs during the pandemic, he said.

Over the past six months, Acadia has closed eight programs. As someone in recovery from heroin use himself, Schor said that scares him.

“[If this continues], one by one, we’re going to be closing these places and people like me aren’t going to have the opportunity to get care,” he said.

“You’ve got to do something,” he implored legislators.

Schor and others who testified asked lawmakers to allocate some COVID-19 funds specifically to addiction treatment, to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates, and to maintain relaxed regulations to allow widespread use of telehealth.

Drug and Alcohol Secretary Jennifer Smith echoed those calls, explaining that rehab facilities are facing many of the same challenges as hospitals and nursing homes: acquiring masks, gloves, and cleaning supplies; accessing testing with quick results amid a national backlog; and having enough staff even when people call out sick or take care of family members.

It’s crucial to address these challenges, Smith said, so treatment facilities will be around to handle the ongoing addiction epidemic once COVID-19 has passed.

“We are seeing increased overdoses. We are seeing recurrence of use for individuals who are in recovery,” she said. “We will need these programs.” 🙏



PA Parent and Family Alliance

Unique Journeys | Powerful Voices

The PA Parent and Family Alliance has compiled useful resources for families and providers across the state.

Currently the list has over 200 resources in areas such as education, mental wellness, work, necessary services, art, relaxation, and much more. The list will continue to grow.

Check it out and feel free to share the link with anyone you think would find it useful.

www.paparentandfamilyalliance.org/hometogether-resources

Visit their recent blog post:

**We're Going to Get Through This and We'll Be With You
Every Step of the Way**

www.paparentandfamilyalliance.org/blog

Learn more about the PA Parent and Family Alliance:

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Member Information

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ County _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (Home) _____ (Work) _____

Email _____ Fax _____

Membership Levels

Member — \$20 (or as much as you can afford)

Donation — \$ _____

Corporate — \$250

Consumer Run Organizations — Based on budget

\$30 — Under \$25,000 per year

\$50 — \$25,000-\$49,999 per year

\$75 — \$50,000-\$100,000 per year

\$100 — Over \$100,000 per year

Donations in excess of the \$0-\$20.00 membership fee are tax-deductible. PMHCA confirms that no good or services are provided to you in exchange for this contribution.

Or Sign Up and Contribute Online: www.pmhca.wildapricot.org — click on Membership

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