



Affiliation Consumer Advisory Bulletin

Volume 1, Issue 3

Spring 2011

Your Consumer Advisory Council

The Vision and Values of the Advisory Council

- * The values and vision exist to ensure and promote involvement in shaping policies and practices
- * To improve the work of the Affiliation to meet the needs of Consumers, families and other stakeholders
- * To review and to evaluate the Affiliation's programs and services
- * Recognizing consumer needs and promoting opinions
- * A forum for broader community input
- * A voice for Consumers
- * To serve as Consumer advocates

Did you know that you are represented by an Advisory Council that is composed of consumers just like yourself? The Mid-Michigan Consumer and Stakeholder Advisory Council is composed of consumers from the eight-counties in the affiliation. These counties are Clinton-Eaton- Ingham (CEI), Gratiot, Ionia, and Manistee-Benzie and Newaygo. Members are selected by the CEO of each CMH.

We are your voice and try to represent your interests to the CMHs.

The Council meets once a month on the first Thursday at CEI in Lansing, MI in room G-11-A/B from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm. Some agencies attend by video conference.

If you have suggestions, comments, or concerns you may contact the Council by email at: www.AdvisoryCouncil@ceicmh.org.

If you would like to learn more about the Advisory Council or how you can become a member, please contact your agency's Customer Service Representative for more information. Contact information can be found on the back of this newsletter.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder: Signs, Symptoms, & Treatment

Courtesy of Channing Bete

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder or OCD, is a mental illness that can affect millions of people. OCD is characterized by unwanted thoughts, images, and impulses, as well as repeated behaviors. It is possible to find relief through treatment and regain control.

People with OCD often perform "rituals" created from troubling thoughts or irrational fears. These may include: spending hours washing and cleaning, constantly checking locks on doors and windows, or repeating certain actions in order to get "rid" of bad thoughts or avoid bad luck. Common patterns of behavior are hoarding, organizing, worrying, or "thought games" in which the individual mentally repeats prayers, sequences of words or numbers, and other thought patterns.

Research suggests that OCD may be caused or influenced by several factors such as genetics or biochemical imbalances, but there are many treatments available. Behavioral therapy gradually allows the individual to confront a fear or anxiety in turn decreasing the compulsive rituals. This treatment approach requires close cooperation, daily exercises, and patience. Medications are also available to treat OCD and may be used in combination with behavioral therapy.

In order to get the most out of treatment it is important to have flexibility with daily schedules, choose supportive people to help, and celebrate successes.

If you or someone you know shows signs of OCD you can help by seeking assistance, offering support, and learning more about the disorder.

For more information contact:

- * Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation (OCF) Inc. at (203) 401-2070 or www.ocfoundation.org
- * Anxiety Disorders Association of America (ADAA) at (240) 485-1001 or www.adaa.org
- * National Institute of Mental Health at (866) 615-6464 or www.nimh.nih.gov

Community Mental Health Saved Me; It Could Save You Too

Daniel Wrzesinski

Customer Service Representative, Manistee-Benzie CMH

I'm here to tell you how the mental health system saved my life and about how it is saving others too.

Whether you realize it or not, someone you know is in dire need of mental health services. The mental health system is a life changing, life saving force that exists in our communities with so many resources available. It's just a shame that most people don't know about it, or understand it. Perhaps they are in some way afraid of it because of the stigma that mental health implies.

"Oh, Mental Health? Isn't that only for *crazy* people? The criminally insane? The 'mentally challenged' or 'mentally ill.' " No, not necessarily. This is how I look at it: People should treat their brains like they treat their cars, and take them in for a tune up. Or like a computer that gets a virus scan from time to time. Everyone could benefit from some better mental health. The mind is what controls everything we do from our basic movements to our thoughts, emotions and our dreams. People need to take care of their brains. When you have a stomach ache you take something to remedy it. When you break a bone you get that taken care of. But a lot of people don't know what to do when the mind becomes sick or broken.

I was sick and broken by the winter of '08. I already knew I suffered seasonal affected disorder because the winters always made me depressed. What I didn't know, or didn't think about doing was getting professional help and getting on some medications.

I also didn't know that I have an "autism spectrum disorder" called Asperger's Syndrome. While I haven't been officially tested, I was given this diagnosis while staying at a mental hospital after a near death incident involving alcohol and pills. The woman who gave me this clinical opinion was not only an expert in the mental health field, on Asperger's Syndrome in particular, but she was also my aunt who has known me my entire life and remembers all the odd quirks I had as a child.

She was also the first person to tell me straight to my face "Dan, you are an alcoholic. You need to get off the booze and get yourself to AA."

My life has never been the same since and the AA program has changed my life, as it continues to do so each week. I admit I probably work the program at half the pace some others do, but as I am getting more involved, more educated, and active in listening to their stories, and sharing mine with them, the more I see the effect it has had on my life. Even on a spiritual level, because it is a spiritual program. It's a terrific program. And don't let anybody tell you that AA doesn't work because if you're sincere about working, it will work for you. It just does.

AA is only a part of the mental health puzzle that fell into place when I finally sought professional treatment. I spent 4 weeks between two psychiatric hospitals in early '09 and came out with a rigorous mental health regimen lined up for me. This was fantastic because I wouldn't have known what to do with myself had they just let me wander out those hospital doors. Community Mental Health was there for me in the many, many months that followed. During that time I really had the chance to get to know, well, me. To know why I am the way I am, how my brain works and what I can do to live a more fulfilling, and healthier life both mentally and physically.

When I was growing up, no one told me anything about Asperger's Syndrome. I was clueless. But it made perfect sense, as I read about what Asperger's is. I have come to understand myself and why I am so complex and how alcohol was messing with the circuitry of my mind.

You see, if you're an "Aspie" it's very difficult to read other people. Aspies, and all autistics, are likely to have terrible social skills. However, unlike a person with straight-on autism, a person with a high-functioning autism spectrum disorder like Asperger's can learn to develop social skills. I had learned to do this later in life, by around college age, and with the help of – you guessed it – alcohol.

But inside I did not feel a connection with people. The human race always seemed like one big fun super secret club that I never felt I was allowed to be a part of. No one seemed to understand me.

GRATIOT CMH PARTICIPATES IN CHILD ADVOCACY'S 2011 FAMILY EXPO

HEATHER BELL, GRATIOT CMH CSR

On Saturday January 29, 2011 Gratiot CMH along with a variety of community organizations participated in the 2011 Family Expo sponsored by Child Advocacy. The goal of the Expo was to give families the opportunity to learn about the different resources that are available within the community while focusing on the health and wellness of families. Informational brochures and flyers, free children's books, make your own first aid kits, as well as games and prizes for children were available to all who attended. The local Lions Club provided hot dogs, popcorn, veggie trays, and bottled water for the event.



Even I don't always understand me so how could I expect anyone else to? What I have always expected when meeting people and attending social functions is for people to relay back to me some sense of what I am like. As terrifying as it can be sometimes for me to be around people, I do get a kick out of the ones who try to get to know me, who respond to me, and who will have the humanity and courage to tell me what they think of me. That is how I've had to learn to understand myself, or at least learn how to understand perceptions. It has taken me years, really my entire life, to learn that other people have their own personal-perceptions of things. Whether it's me, something I've said, or something I'm showing somebody, like a movie, I never really understood that everyone perceives differently than me. When I finally understood that, it was like a huge light bulb went off in my head and I realized how much empathy I had lacked my entire life.

This was a big step for me in my recovery thanks to the mental health system. It was there for me with counselors, caseworkers, self-help groups, programs and supports that I didn't even know existed before. The Community Mental Health system works and it is such a great asset. The things they do for everyone from grade school age on up to seniors are vast. These people are angels walking among us but they can only help you if you take the chance and steps necessary to seek treatment.

Gratiot CMH Develops A Support Service Group

Anne Swan-Vanegas

Megan Duffy

~Spring Folklore~



This was the first month of the year until 1752. Scotland changed the month to January in 1599, but the rest of the world was slow in following. March was once called "Marius" by the Romans from their god Mars.

The Native Americans called March "Worm Moon", because as the temperatures began to warm and the ground began to thaw, earthworm casts appeared, heralding the return of the robins, and the last moon of winter.

March's flowers are violets for the English, daffodils for the Canadians, and hyacinths for the Irish.



The name is derived from the Greek word for "opening". April is the month from the Celtic background of a rebirth of the soul.

The Native Americans called this month "Pink Moon" from the herb moss pink or wild ground phlox which is one of the earliest widespread flowers of spring.

April's flowers are daisies for the English, sweet peas for the Canadians, and tulips for the Irish.



The Old Dutch called this month "Bloumaand" (Blossoming month)

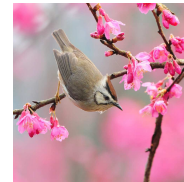
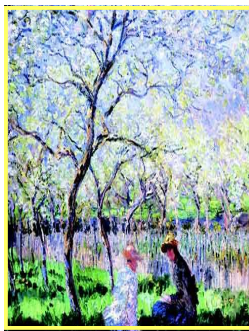
May Day is the name given to the first day of the month in England, when in the old days the people went out at dawn to welcome the advent of spring.

May's flowers are Lily of the Valley for the English and Canada, but peonies for the Irish.

Staff at Gratiot County Community Mental Health (GCCMH) has piloted a barrier-free Support Group to help meet the additional needs of their customers this year. The vision for this group was to provide skills and support to applicants and open consumers who are waiting for CMH services, who are Crisis referred, or simply in need of additional resources to support and assist their recovery process.

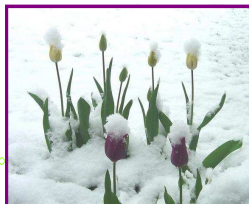
The first pilot group met from November 17, 2010 through February 4, 2011. Sessions were held Wednesdays and Fridays at 10am and 1pm respectively to accommodate variability in members' schedules. The groups were welcoming, with no attendance requirements. Workers provided skill building materials aimed to improve overall symptom management and quality of life. Groups were two hours in length and consisted of two to eight attendees per session. Topics included mindfulness and communication, mood disorders and suicidal risks, trauma, grief and loss, stress management, relationships, self-esteem and self care.

Although the group was structured to accommodate drop-ins, in which participants could come in at any time during the session or skip sessions, most participants attended sessions from start to finish. At the conclusion of this first group, surveys were mailed to each participant to learn more about how this group could be improved upon. The response thus far has been unanimous, that a barrier-free support group was helpful, and there is a desire to see more in the future.



Spring

Spring is life
Spring is hope
So is love and
happiness.
Spring renews.
Without spring,
life is forlorn.
Spring is nostalgia
after bitter storm.



IN THE SPRING I HAVE COUNTED
136 DIFFERENT KINDS OF
WEATHER INSIDE OF 24 HOURS.
- MARK TWAIN

Put spring in your heart
Archie Greenidge
PoemHunter.com

Mental Health Emergency Services
Brandan Snook, Crisis Worker
Gratiot County Community Mental Health



What is an emergency? We can all agree that a tornado tearing through a populated area is an emergency. An indiscriminate shooter running through a packed school building qualifies. But would we find the same kind of consensus about a “mental health emergency”? For instance, is someone making statements about wanting to die an emergency? What if that person is holding a sharp knife? Or how about your friend whose spouse left them a month ago and who hasn’t left the house or spoken to anyone since; are they having a mental health emergency? Even if we can agree on a definition, what resources are available to help?

Mental health emergencies, like medical emergencies, encompass a wide range of symptoms; some of which are obvious and some are not. For our purposes, let me summarize by saying that an individual who can reasonably be expected to physically injure themselves or someone else in the near future due to mental illness, developmental issues or emotional disturbance is having a “mental health emergency”. More subtle, a formally independent individual who is no longer able to care for or advocate on their own behalf due to a mental health disorder might well be considered in urgent need of care. With those parameters of what might be a mental health emergency, what can be done if we find ourselves or someone close to us (family, friend, co-worker, neighbor) experiencing one?

First things first, make sure that you are safe. If a person is an eminent danger, such as making threats with a loaded gun, remove yourself from the situation and call 911 immediately. Similarly, if the person has already ingested an overdose of pills or seriously cut themselves, call 911. In most cases, an individual who is actively symptomatic (e.g., having hallucinations) will not willingly go to the emergency room. In this case, it is best to contact emergency services who will generally respond by sending both a police officer and emergency medical personnel. They will then determine if the individual needs to be hospitalized and will transport the individual. Even if you aren’t sure how serious the person is about their intentions or if you are afraid that they may become angry with you, it is better to err on the side of caution to protect yourself and others.

When the situation is less dire you have more options. If the person is willing to go with you, you may choose to seek help at your local hospital emergency room. You might also go to the Community Mental Health (CMH) agency in your county during normal business hours. Each County’s CMH agency also provides 24-hour emergency services available to anyone.

Recipe Corner

**Low-Fat Lemon Souffle
Cheesecake**

Courtesy of Kraft Foods

What You Need:

- 1 HONEY MAID Honey Grahams, crushed (about 3 Tbsp.), divided
- 2/3 cup boiling water
- 1 pkg. (4-serving size) JELL-O Lemon Flavor Sugar Free Gelatin
- 1 cup BREAKSTONE'S or KNUDSEN 2% Milkfat Low Fat Cottage Cheese
- 1 container (8 oz.) PHILADELPHIA Fat Free Cream Cheese
- 2 cups thawed COOL WHIP FREE Whipped Topping

Make It:

- SPRINKLE** half of the crumbs onto side of 8- or 9-inch spring-form pan or 9-inch pie plate sprayed with cooking spray.
- STIR** boiling water into gelatin in large bowl at least 2 minutes until completely dissolved. Cool 5 minutes. Pour into blender container. Add cheeses; cover. Blend on medium speed until smooth, occasionally scraping down side of blender container. Pour into large bowl. Gently stir in whipped topping.
- POUR** into prepared pan; smooth top. Sprinkle remaining crumbs around outside edge. Refrigerate 4 hours or until set. Remove side of pan just before serving. Store leftover cheesecake in refrigerator.



Interested in submitting your work for the Affiliation Council Bulletin? Submissions for the Summer 2011 bulletin are currently being accepted now through 5/27/11. Contact Becki West or Heather Bell at the contact number on the back of the newsletter for more information



The 2011 Walk A Mile Rally will take place at the Capital in Lansing on Wednesday, May 11th 2011 from 1:30pm to 3pm.

Consumers from around the state rally together to advocate about mental health issues and how important it is for our lawmakers to support the mental health community.

Unless you "walk a mile in their shoes", many will never know the struggles and barriers that mental health consumers and those who advocate for them face.

Please join us! If you are interested in attending, you may contact your CMH's Customer Service Representative for more information.

Look Closer,
See Me For Who I Am.....

Nick Lawson, Gratiot CMH



- We are Friends
- We are Caregivers
- We are Problem Solvers
- We are Advocates
- We are Mothers & Fathers
- We are Sons & Daughters
- We are Dreamers
- We are Nurturers
- We are People with Feelings
- We are Intelligent
- We are Voters
- We are Singers & Dancers
- We are Writers
- We are Artists
- We are Mental Health Consumers



Community Mental Health Affiliation of Mid-Michigan

If you would like to learn more about the Advisory Council or how you can become a member, please contact your CMH for more information.

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Message from the Director of Affiliation Operations for Mid-Michigan Community Mental Health

In our Affiliation's never ending effort to become as efficient as possible so that more resources may be used to provide quality services, I ask that anyone with an idea of how CMH can operate more efficiently to contact me, Director of Affiliation Operations, Toby Bayless, with your suggestion. I may be reached by phone at 517-346-9555 or by email at bayless@ceicmh.org.

Advisory Council Meetings for 2011



January 6, 2011



February 3, 2011



March 3, 2011



April 7, 2011– no meeting



May 5, 2011:



Affiliation Recognition Dinner– no meeting



June 2, 2011



July: Council does not meet



August 4, 2011



September 1, 2011



October 6, 2011



November 3, 2011



December 1, 2011



Visit us on the web at:

www.AdvisoryCouncil@ceicmh.org

“The Advisory Council provides a voice for the voiceless and are advocates for ourselves, the consumers we represent, and the Affiliation as a whole.”