

MHA The Mental Health Association of Westchester

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Peer Staff: Rebuilding Lives; Transforming Services

By Cindy Peterson-Dana, Director, Sterling Community Center



Cindy Peterson-Dana

Many of us in the mental health field recognize the phrase Work is Recovery. Here at MHA, we know this to be true. Work often empowers people with mental health conditions to move from a life of lost dreams and dependency toward a bright future, one with renewed hope, self-determination and lasting recovery.

One exciting and growing professional path for recipients of mental health services is a career

working as a peer specialist. MHA's Sterling Community Center in White Plains offers a comprehensive peer training for interested participants. Our training includes 13 weeks of in class training followed by a 3 month internship which is designed to prepare participants for the new New York State peer-specialist certification which is on the horizon. This credential will provide professional standards and open new funding opportunities for peer-delivered services. Graduates of our program can utilize MHA's Employment Services for help finding and keeping paid employment as a peer specialist. Many individuals have successfully graduated from our training and are now working in the field.

As an agency, MHA highly values the perspective of peer staff, people who both have firsthand experiences with their own mental health conditions and recovery and who provide professional mental health services. In fact, we hire peer professionals at

all levels, from entry level peer specialists to supervisors and administrators. Hiring peer-staff has many advantages. While many of us agree that work is central to a full and meaningful life for peers themselves, peer staff is often uniquely able to gain trust and build positive connections with recipients, who may still be struggling with many challenges. Beyond this, working peers walk the walk of robust recovery and often remind other mental health service providers of the potential for independence in the people they serve.

Indeed, SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration considers peer services to be an Evidence Based Practice. Finally, peer-staff challenges professionals' and researchers' estimates of the true potential for recovery across all diagnostic categories. Peer-professionals continue to transform mental health services toward a vision of enduring recovery for all. ■

Mission Statement

The Mental Health Association of Westchester County, Inc.'s mission is to promote mental health in Westchester County, New York, through advocacy, community education and direct services.

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NEWS

2014 SPRING

"We are human beings and we can speak for ourselves. We have a voice and can learn to use it. We have the right to be heard and listened to. We can become self determining. We can take a stand toward what is distressing to us and need not be passive victims of an illness. We can become experts in our own journey of recovery."

–Pat Deegan, PhD

A message from our CEO



Dr. Amy Kohn, CEO

Dear Friends,

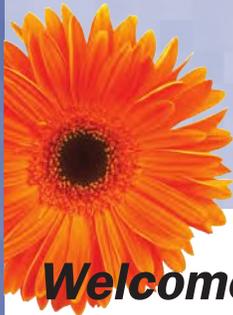
These are the words of Pat Deegan, PhD, who some consider to be the “mother” of the peer movement. At MHA, our staff now includes many eloquent peer voices. I’m so pleased that our cover story is shining a well-deserved light on a model that has proven to be an effective pathway to recovery for many.

MHA has a long history of hiring people with the lived experience of mental health conditions and recovery. While we have two flagship initiatives that are peer staffed and run, The Sterling Community Center and the Northern Westchester Recovery Network, MHA peer services are not siloed. Staff, working as peer specialists, are integrated throughout the agency in many departments and sites, including Care Management, Employment, Housing and Clinics. We find that clients easily engage with people who have shared experiences or who have been there, done that. We value employees who are able to use their experience effectively in their work. In fact, this model has been so powerful in promoting recovery, that we soon

expect that insurance companies will be reimbursing for peer services—another reason training and state certification is so important.

Our Peer Specialist Training is flourishing. We have just celebrated the graduation of our seventh cohort and the next one has already begun. The curriculum was created wholly by MHA staff members Bob Litwak and coordinator, Jeff Zitofsky. From this very unique incubator, internships in community based mental health settings continue to expand and often lead to paid employment.

I’m happy to share that you’ll have an opportunity to hear more from Pat Deegan, who will be the keynote speaker at this year’s Ira S. Stevens Conference on June 9. Also, please do join us this spring at our feel-good run/walk and yoga events. I look forward to meeting you.



Welcome to our newest Board members

We are so glad to welcome Larry Elkin and Sharon Krieger, MD, to our Board of Directors. Commented CEO, Dr. Amy Kohn, “Each of these exceptional individuals has deep roots in the community and will provide us with a unique perspective as well as experienced leadership.”

Larry Elkin is the President of Palisades Hudson Financial Group, LLC and Palisades Hudson Asset Management, L.P., which has its Westchester offices in Scarsdale. The firm provides financial and tax counseling. Its investment advisory business serves clients who reside in more than 30 states as well as abroad. A prolific writer, Mr. Elkin is an author as well as the editor and publisher of Sentinel, a



Larry Elkin

quarterly newsletter and the lead author of the firm’s daily column, Current Commentary. About MHA, Mr. Elkin says: “I see my role as supporting the mission as well as the management of the agency. My goal is to help marshal and develop the organization’s resources so it grows its services and brings even more to those who so desperately need them.”



Sharon Krieger, MD

Sharon Krieger, MD, is a physician at the Mount Kisco Medical Group. She has practiced internal medicine for nineteen years. After receiving her Masters in Human Genetics at Louisiana State University in New Orleans, Dr. Krieger went on to complete her MD there as well. In her work as a physician, Dr. Krieger has found that patients increasingly look to her for help managing their mental health and that many physical complaints may mask an underlying psychological issue. In her new role on the MHA Board, Dr. Krieger hopes to open up conduits for other physicians and connect them to MHA so they may access quality mental health care as well as to bring a medical viewpoint to Board discussions. ■

Ira S. Stevens 34th Memorial Conference

June 9, 2014
8:30am to 4:00pm
DoubleTree by Hilton,
Tarrytown, NY



Patricia E. Deegan, PhD

Join us at this full day educational conference for a very special opportunity to hear Patricia E. Deegan, PhD, internationally renowned as a thought leader and disruptive innovator in the field of behavioral health. Informed by the experience of her own recovery, Dr. Deegan speaks about the “conspiracy of hope” and the essential humanity of all people.

Dr. Deegan will be both the keynote speaker as well as a workshop presenter. She will discuss balancing the “Duty of Care” with the “Dignity of Risk”—supporting people to make decisions about their lives and expand their horizons. Dr. Deegan will also present “Shared Decision Making” a set of tools that help people, in collaboration with their health care providers, make decisions about their own health care based upon their personal priorities.

For a full conference schedule and registration information, visit www.mhawestchester.org. ■



MHA on the move: 10 Years of Moving for Mental Health

Sunday, May 4, 2014, 8am to noon



Our 5K Run/Walk & 1 Mile Kids' Race offers the unique opportunity to come together as a community and take a stand for mental health. Whether you run or walk, your participation helps raise the money that makes our work possible. With the data now showing that 1 in 5 live with a mental health condition, more effective help and better resources are essential. Join us and go the extra kilometer for mental health services. Give where you live!

This year, the event is Sunday, May 4th at the scenic and beautiful FDR State Park in Yorktown Heights, NY. Our 10th Anniversary co-chairs, Amy Collins, Ann Mandel Laitman, MD, and Randi Silverman will

kick off the celebration and then it's off to the race. The event will be timed by the Taconic Runners' Club with medals awarded to top male/female in each age category, as well as overall male/female.

Soon afterwards, walkers set out for a 5K walk in the park. Kids get their own rousing warm-up and a 1-mile race (ages 4-10) with ribbons for each participant and medals for the top boys and girls.

With your participation, we will change hearts and minds about mental health issues and erase stigma. Sign up to run or walk or to become a fundraiser. Online registration is a snap at www.mhawestchester.org. For more info, call our race director at 914-265-7511. ■



This Year's Get On Your Mat for Mental Health is a “Don't Miss!”

Wednesday, June 18, 2014, 5:30 pm

Come take your first stretch of summer under the open sky.

It's a giant yoga class. It's a music festival. It's hundreds of people rolling out their mats in the middle of White Plains on the summer solstice.

Named one of the seven most inspiring mega-yoga events in the world by well + GOOD.



Slated to teach at this year's third annual mega-yoga event on Wednesday, June 18th is Matthew Sanford. Sanford's inspirational story begins at age 13 when he survived a devastating car accident that killed his father and sister and left him permanently paralyzed from the chest down. Now 45, Sanford is a public speaker, award-winning author, and nationally recognized yoga teacher who has inspired the lives of thousands.

Sanford's 18 years as a paralyzed yoga practitioner have given him an unprecedented perspective,

challenging what yoga looks like and what it can be. He shares his philosophy on the importance of the mind-body relationship and our inner capacity for strength, growth and transformation in his critically acclaimed book, *WAKING: A Memoir of Trauma and Transcendence*.

Sanford teaches at studios, yoga conferences, universities and institutions all over the country and we are so fortunate that he will be joining us.

Sign up today and come take your first stretch of summer under the open sky at the biggest yoga class in Westchester. For more information, visit www.mhawestchester.org/onyourmat. ■

A Conversation with MHA Volunteer Isolde Motley



Even during her years working as an editor for publications as diverse as *Art and Antiques* and *Martha Stewart Living*, *Time*, *Inc's This Old House* and *Real Simple*, Isolde knew that when she retired, she would choose a brand new area to explore.

To that end, she had kept files of interesting possibilities. The one that captured her heart most fully was an article about an ad Litum program in Florida. As the mother of an adopted child who had spent time in two foster homes before finding a permanent home with the Motley's, Isolde knew well the importance of shepherding children during the foster process. So when the

time came, she remembered the article she'd tucked away 15 years earlier. The question was: Did such a program exist in Westchester? It wasn't long before she discovered



CASA at MHA. CASA volunteers (Court Appointed Special Advocates) advocate for children by reporting to the Court on the child's status and any barriers that impede delivery of court-ordered services, and also make recommendations regarding needed services. The program provided exactly the kind of hands-on contact Isolde sought.

Isolde has now been a CASA for two and a half years. "I had such preconceived ideas about bureaucrats before I began this work. Happily, I have found the opposite to be true. Without exception, the social workers, child protection workers, doctors and nurses and teachers I've worked with are dedicated, passionate, smart and strong who go far beyond their job descriptions to help children. They spend their own money, they put themselves in danger, they work unpaid on their own time if necessary. This has just blown me away." Another notion that persists is that children

are in foster care because their parents don't care about them. In Isolde's experience, the families care deeply about their children, but because of mental health or social issues may not have the ability to provide sufficient or sustained care.

"What makes the program so effective," Isolde feels, "is that CASAs are able to create a bridge to not-so-usual services such as enriching summer experiences and tutorial programs as well as other kinds of early intervention. When

children have access to the right services, the long term savings to society are enormous. ■



Isolde Motley and her family.

Announcing The Sterling Legacy Circle of MHA Westchester

This year, join us as a Founding Member

For donors dedicated to supporting mental health services in the community, there is now a new way to help ensure that MHA services remain available for many years to come—The Sterling Legacy Circle. In this inaugural year, supporters who have chosen to leave charitable bequests to MHA, will have the unique opportunity to be named Founding Members. There is no minimum financial commitment; no dues or fees. All that's needed is to inform us that you have made a bequest to MHA.

Founding Members will receive a special honorary designation on the new plaque which is being created for display at our headquarters. In addition,

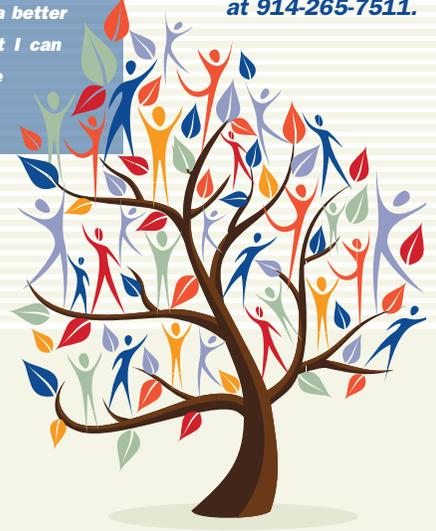
Legacy Circle members will be invited to an annual members-only event. This unique opportunity is available through the end of the year. We invite you to join

this very special group of MHA donors, our critically important partners in helping to care for our community's most vulnerable.

"Ever since I started coming to MHA I feel more alive. My relationship with my parents is exceptional, my relationship with myself is exceptional, and I love the fact that I'm becoming a better person so that I can properly raise my daughter."

**To learn more, call
Constance Moustakas
at 914-265-7511.**

"MHA came to my rescue when I was homeless and helped me by recommending me to work at several positions (which resulted in offers). Staff has helped me tremendously by helping me obtain a great place to live and helping me to gain employment to contribute to my own goals and to society."



Yes!

I will help MHA provide critical mental health services in the community.

How will your gift be used?

Some of the impactful possibilities include:

- Funding evidence-based trauma treatment for a child (\$150 for one session; \$1500 for ten)
- Providing books and materials for Peer Specialist Training (\$160)
- Giving children and adolescents with emotional difficulties a safe, staff led trip, allowing families needed respite (\$300)
- Training a class of Long Term Care Ombudsmen volunteers who will protect the rights of residents in nursing facilities (\$700)
- Providing a dozen therapy sessions for those who come to us without insurance (\$1500)

And much, much more. Thank you.

Your gift is tax deductible to the full extent provided by law.

Enclosed is my tax deductible gift of \$ _____.

Please charge my:

AMEX Visa MasterCard

NAME _____

EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____

CARD # _____

EXP DATE _____

Please make checks payable to:
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of Westchester
580 White Plains Road
Tarrytown, New York 10591

Thank you so much for your support of mental health in Westchester.



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Save the Dates!



MHA on the move
The Mental Health Association of Westchester 5K Run/Walk



**5K Run/Walk and
1 Mile Kids' Race**

10th Anniversary Celebration

Sunday, May 4, 2014

8 am to noon

FDR State Park, Yorktown Heights, NY



**Get on Your Mat
for Mental Health!**

The Mental Health Association of Westchester County, Inc.

**Mega Outdoor
Yoga Event**

**With yoga teacher, Matthew Sanford
and spiritually-inspired performance
ensemble, Answer the Muse**

Wednesday,
June 18, 2014
5:30 pm

Court Street,
White Plains, NY



Register at www.mhawestchester.org

Visit us at www.mhawestchester.org