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Scooter Haase
Executive Director

Dear friends,

We recently finished up a successful **May is Mental Health Month**. As part of this, we were honored to receive a Mental Health Month proclamation from the Lancaster County Commissioners.

If you've been following our social media, you will have seen that the theme for **May is Mental Health Month** this year was *Risky Business: Sex, Drugs and Rock & Roll*. I commend our national association for taking on such an important and potentially controversial subject. Sometimes people—especially young people—engage in potentially risky behaviors to manage, avoid, or cover up symptoms of a mental health problem. It is often hard to distinguish these behaviors from normal teenage growing up and, as a result, the people who care about engaging in these struggles are at a loss as to how to engage. One of the goals of *Risky Business* was to help families and friends determine if particular behaviors are risky for me or for someone I love. And if it is, what can be done about it before it harms someone? We were trying shed light on issues by talking about things that are often left unsaid. I think overall efforts were very successful.

We continue to work on becoming more efficient and getting more done with less. To that end, we've recently upgraded some very old office computers, and we're getting up to speed with our new database. To those of you who've ever struggled to reach us by phone: Take heart! We have installed a new phone system that will allow us to better manage and direct calls so that you can easily get to the person you need right away.

Many of you are familiar with our December Gifts of Joy program. This program provides gifts to mental health consumers that would otherwise have none. Last year this program reached close to 600 people in Lancaster County. In order to maintain funding for this program we are starting a **Christmas in July** campaign. Please help us by donating to this program during a season not traditionally associated with giving. See page 6 for details.

Thank you so much for your continued partnership with us,

Sincerely,

Scooter Haase
Executive Director

Questions or comments about the newsletter?

Contact us at:

Mental Health America of
Lancaster County
630 Janet Avenue, Suite B
-110 | Lancaster, PA 17601
Phone: 717-397-7461
Website:
www.mhalancaster.org

Follow us on social media!



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UPCOMING MHALC EVENTS

Walk for DES | Saturday, September 9 | 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Walk/Run 5k for suicide awareness and prevention in Lancaster County, sponsored by the DES Foundation. For more information, please visit: www.walkfordes.org.

QPR Suicide Prevention Training | Friday, Sept. 8 & Nov. 3 | 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

This training will teach you how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) someone to help. This course costs \$15; some scholarships may be available. To register, please call the office at 717-397-7461.

Gifts of Joy—A Holiday Gift Project | November—December 2017

A program that provides gifts to mental health consumers in particular need, as well as to persons in local mental health units and state hospitals. For more information, please contact Kaitlin Specht at kspecht@mhalancaster.org or by calling 717-397-7461.

(For more events, please visit tinyurl.com/mhalcevents)

UPCOMING COMPEER EVENTS

Game Nights | Thursday, June 8th & July 13th | 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Annual Compeer Picnic | Thursday, August 3 | 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. | Long's Park | US-30 & Harrisburg Pike, Lancaster, PA 17601

FREE DROP-IN SUPPORT GROUPS

*Unless otherwise noted, groups meet at
630 Janet Avenue, Lancaster, PA 17601*

Most support groups are peer-facilitated, which means that the individual leading the group has walked in your shoes. These groups are a great place to begin your journey through recovery. We hope you'll find that by hearing others' stories, you'll feel less alone in your experiences.

Anxiety, Panic & Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Support Group
1st, 3rd, 5th Mondays | 7-8:30 p.m. | Room B-103

Bipolar Educational Group
1st & 3rd Mondays | 7-8:30 p.m. | Blair Room

Bipolar Discussion Group
2nd, 4th & 5th Mondays | 7-8:30 p.m. | Blair Room

Bipolar Support Group
2nd Thursday | NOON (lunch provided)
Hempfield United Methodist Church | 3050 Marietta Avenue, Lancaster PA

Depressed Anonymous
Every Monday | 6-7 p.m. | Room D-155

Depression Awareness and Men's Needs
* On hold until further notice.

Depression Awareness and Women's Needs
1st, 3rd, 5th Tuesdays | 7-8:30 p.m. | Room B-107

Divorce/Separation Support Group for Women
1st & 3rd Thursdays | 6:30-7:30 p.m. | Room B-103

Moms Supporting Moms Group

* This is an online group only. Contact: 717-397-8722 or lancastermsmgroup@gmail.com

ADVOCACY UPDATES

MENTAL HEALTH IS RELEVANT IN TODAY'S YOUTH

GRETCHEN GAUDIOSO, CLIENT AND FAMILY ADVOCATE



Since I started at MHALC 19 years ago, a team of people and myself went into local high schools to educate students about mental health and wellness. In the presentations we provided, we covered topics like depression, suicide, anxiety, bullying, the stigma surrounding mental health, and much more. We educated more than 1,500 students from seven different schools a year about these issues.

We found out during our efforts that the teachers appreciated the information just as much as the students. There are many teachers over the years that I have grown to know really well (and even ended up playing against them on a dodgeball court). Because of this, they explained how they felt more comfortable with us coming in to educate them about these issues.

Positive feedback was also given from the students. We would hear comments like, "I didn't realize mental illness was a disease. I always thought people just wanted attention and could fix themselves," or, "Thank you for coming and teaching my peers about what I deal with. I feel more accepted!"

Over the years, I learned that students pay more attention to things if it affects them directly. For instance, they will listen more if they are personally dealing with mental health problems or if their friends or family are

dealing with mental health issues. If someone in their inner circle struggles in relation to a specific topic we present, then they are able to relate to it more.

Recently, I gave a presentation where I compared my loss of Kurt Cobain who died by suicide, to my parent's loss of Elvis Presley. My example didn't resonate well with the students because they didn't even know who Kurt Cobain or Nirvana was. This made me think, "Am I getting too old for this? Is my information even still relevant or relatable to them?" Shortly after that presentation, I received an email from a student I spoke with two months prior:

"A while back, you came to my school to speak. I thought nothing really of it as if it was a really easy day in health. I looked over the sheet you gave me. Then I read about some of the same symptoms I experience a lot of the time in the anxiety section. I went to the doctor a couple weeks ago for a physical and asked her about it. She asked me a ton of questions and told me that I had generalized anxiety disorder and prescribed me medicine. It is now a couple weeks from the start of the medication and I feel so much better. The overwhelming fear and the feelings of doom are all but gone. I feel set free! If you did not come to speak I would have never thought of anxiety or would have never got help because I thought it was just my personality. So thank you very much! Thanks for your incredible help."

After reading this message, you can imagine how delighted I was when I received this email. This is the reason why we help; if only 1 out of 1,500 students is touched by our message and chooses to seek and receive help, then that is what is truly important.

The education we provide, I realized, is still important to the students and to the schools. We need to keep educating our youth because they are living lives with a tremendous amount of stress and pressure. On top of that, some are also being cyberbullied from home, which no longer serves as a retreat away from it compared to traditional forms of bullying.

Information about mental health is still prevalent in today's society just as much as it was 19 years ago. It does not discriminate against your age, race/ethnicity, gender, income, social status, sexual orientation or other aspects of your cultural identity. The examples I give for students may not be relevant to today's pop culture, but the information I provide to our youth about mental health will always be relevant.

If you or someone you know are in need of Client & Family Advocacy Services, education for your school, or a community group, please contact MHALC at 717-397-7461 or email gretchen@mh Lancaster.org.

PEER EDUCATION UPDATE & FEATURED COMMUNITY PARTNER

RE-CONNECTING WITH YOUR INNER CHILD

SUE TUSHINGHAM, PEER EDUCATOR



I met a new consumer during the month of April. She was really struggling with traumas from the past, trying to navigate the human services system, and grappling with having just been laid off from her job. We always met in Lancaster County Park. The first two times I met her she was visibly depressed, self-doubting, and confused about how to get help from the human service system. She described to me some of the traumas she experienced as a child and cried. She stated she knew her mother never loved her and that when she was 11-years-old, she spent a lot of time alone and contemplated her own death.

During our meetings, she would talk about her feelings, issues, traumas of the past, and her current life situation. As a peer educator, I informed her of various community resources she could tap into, validated her feelings and thoughts, read some self-help literature with her, and also discussed the concept of the *inner child, our child-like aspect, which includes all we learned as children*. To quote Louise Hay, motivational teacher and author, “No matter how old you are, there is a little child within you who needs love and reassurance.” There is much self-help literature that addresses the positive correlation between re-connecting with your lost inner child and positive self-healing.

On our third meeting at the park, she brought her dog along and was very attentive to her, and also engaged with others at the park when they commented on her dog. I noticed she was more upbeat during this meeting and more confident. She shared she had successfully met with Lancaster County Behavioral Health and Developmental Services in order to get a case manager, and had attended some support groups. I thought she was definitely taking some positive steps to improve her life.

On our fourth meeting, she was even more upbeat. She shared she had gone to some meet-up groups, went on Career Link, and had been reading some positive self-help literature. She said she had a meeting that week to discuss an ongoing volunteer opportunity, and that she had gotten some needed work done to her car. I told her she had really taken some positive steps in her healing during the past week and that I could tell she was in a better state emotionally. I asked what she attributed the positive changes to. She stated she had a positive experience connecting to her inner child. She stated after this experience, “*things felt easier in some way*”, and that she had felt more self-confident and more willing to try new opportunities ever since that experience.

At the end of our meeting, she said to me, “Meeting with you means so much. If you have any doubt that you are making a difference at your job, don’t doubt it. You are making a positive difference.”

THE CAMPAIGN TO CHANGE DIRECTION

BY NICOLE HAGEN

The Let’s Talk, Lancaster Coalition was formed in 2014 to improve the mental health and well-being of Lancaster County inhabitants. We envision a vibrant Lancaster community that promotes and supports an environment where people live mentally healthy lives. Let’s Talk is working to increase awareness of the connection between mental health and physical health by partnering with the Campaign to Change Direction.

The goal of the Campaign to Change Direction is to change the culture of mental health in America so that all of those in need receive the care and support they deserve. The campaign encourages all Americans to pay attention to their emotional well-being – and it reminds us that our emotional well-being is just as important as our physical well-being.

Let’s Talk, Lancaster has set a goal to share the 5 Signs of Emotional Suffering with 275,000 people in Lancaster County.

Join the movement and learn the 5 Signs: personality change, agitation, withdrawal, poor self-care and hopelessness, so you can recognize them in yourself and/or help a friend or loved one in need. If you recognize someone in your life is suffering, you connect, you reach out, you inspire hope and you offer help.

There are many resources in our community such as 2-1-1, Crisis Intervention, the Suicide Prevention Lifeline and 911 in the case of an emergency. If everyone is more open and honest about mental health, those in need will get the help they deserve.

Please visit <http://www.changedirection.org/lancaster-county/> to learn more.



COMPEER UPDATES

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR FRIENDS

JOE MILLS, COMPEER PROGRAM MANAGER



Gene and Joe

Meet our most recent CompeerCORPS Connection. Both guys are veterans with Gene serving in the Marine Corps while Joe was in the Army. Gene looks out for veterans while working at the Weavers, Bird-in-Hand Market, and likes to say to the veterans using the market: “Thanks for your service”, he enjoys photography, and doing some



traveling. Joe served in Vietnam and is a very creative and artistic as a wood sculpture, drawing, and painting. He’s also an avid Star Wars fan. Both guys enjoy good conversation, getting out or just sitting on the deck “solving the world issues”! They enjoy their families and grandchildren. They also have a wicked, subtle sense of humor!!! Be on the lookout for these guys!



The Three Amiga's

Meet Kim, Tammy and Donna! They have formed a multiple friendship. Tammy has been a Compeer volunteer since October 2007 when she became a friend to Melissa S.! They were connected for six years and unfortunately ended when Melissa passed away in November 2013. Kim connected with her first friend, Monica, in September 2014. They were together, just over a year and ended when Monica moved away. Tammy and Kim just celebrated their one year anniversary in May. Tammy and Kim share interests in going to Long’s Park and both have little dogs, Kim’s Chihuahua is Blanco and Tammy’s miniature dachshund is Chloe. Additionally, Kim often volunteers for the Organization for Responsible Care of Animals (ORCA)! Kim’s artistic hobby is creating chalk drawings!

Tammy and Kim requested adding another friend and just this week connected with Donna. These ladies all like to play board and card games and going out for fun! They share a wonderful sense of humor too! One of the really cool things about this friendship is that Kim has

progressed in her recovery that she also becomes a volunteer. They can all go out together or separately! Congratulations to Tammy and Kim for expanding their friendship. Donna—welcome to a wonderful friendship!



COMPEERCORPS SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

Compeer’s program CompeerCORPS (formerly Compeer Vet2Vet) continues to seek veteran volunteers and referrals. We’ve had minimum success, however, currently there are several friendships. In order to move CompeerCORPS further along, we will look for a part-time veteran to coordinate this part of our program.

If you know how to be a friend, you can be a Compeer Volunteer.
 To find out more, visit www.compeerlancaster.org or contact Joe Mills at jmills@compeerlancaster.org.

CHRISTMAS IN JULY CAMPAIGN

GIFT OF JOY PROJECT

CHRISTMAS IN JULY CAMPAIGN TO RAISE \$5,000

Every year, MHALC celebrates the holiday season by having staff and volunteers work together to provide gifts to adults and children diagnosed with a mental illness in Lancaster County. These gifts mean so much to the individuals receiving them since they will not receive any other gifts during the holidays. This year, we are planning ahead by kick-starting the Holiday Gift Project by running an online campaign called Christmas in July with a goal to raise \$5,000.

The Gifts of Joy Project serves over 600 mental health consumers each year and continues to grow. We receive referrals from case managers of individuals in need of a holiday gift. We then keep track of the names of the individuals and reach out to local churches, community groups, businesses, case managers and volunteers to help take names and purchase gifts, each worth \$25. Last year, MHALC covered the cost of the remaining individuals whose names weren't taken to receive gifts. The purpose of the Christmas in July fundraiser is to help cover the costs of the gifts to mental health consumers.

The type of gifts that are most requested are simple necessities like soap, deodorant and even toilet paper. These are items that individuals appreciate the most since some struggle with having to afford some of the basics.

Every year, Gifts of Joy reminds us all of the importance of working in mental health: that individuals deserve to be recognized to have their needs and requests validated, and that small acts of kindness and giving can make a huge impact on someone's life.

To support the Gifts of Joy Project, make an online gift to our GoFundMe page at: <http://www.gofundme.com/MHALC-Christmas-in-July>.

If you would rather send us your tax-deductible donation, then please send it to: Mental Health America of Lancaster County, 630 Janet Avenue Suite B-110, Lancaster, PA 17601.

Your gift will be paid forward in the form of a special, personal holiday gift to a member of our community who has mental illness. For more information or questions, please contact MHALC with any questions by emailing mha@mhalancaaster.org or by calling 717-397-7461.



WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

RUN FOR THE HEALTH OF IT

By SHANE KARGO

"My name is Shane Kargo, and I teach the Mind & Body course at Elizabethtown Area High School. I wrote the curriculum for the course four years ago, and it was finally approved to be offered to our high school students last school year (2015-2016)! The course is designed to bring awareness to many of the mental health issues affecting students/adults, and to offer these students many strategies/activities to strengthen their own mental health. The students train to run a 5k on Mondays, have classroom sessions targeting mindfulness/mental health/nutrition on Tuesdays and Thursdays, participate in various types of strength workouts on Wednesdays, and participate in fun/non-competitive games/sports on Fridays.

One of the major assessments in the course is for the students to come up with a semester-long project. They choose it, they make the rubric for grading them, they assign/vote on board positions, and they run the event. I assist where needed, and supervise throughout, but allow the students to succeed or fail without much interference.

This semester's M&B class chose to create, plan, and organize the "Run For The Health Of It 5k". They also chose to make it a fundraiser for a non-profit that we could begin a relationship with. The students came up with a handful of non-profits, but ultimately voted for Mental Health America of Lancaster County to be that organization.

On May 20th, we had approximately 120 participants run in our 5k. The students also secured sponsorship from some local companies and residents. We spent this past week finishing up the financials from the race, and the class will be donating \$2,171.42 to your organization.

I just wanted to say thank you before this week ended! Thank you to Kaitlin for the early communications with Ellie (class CEO of the 5k project), and the offering of MHALC materials that we were able to provide our participants. I also wanted to thank Gretchen for delivering those materials to the school in a timely fashion. The students had a blast stuffing our racer "swag bags" with your pamphlets, cards, etc. They got out of a workout that day, so they were pretty happy!

This event will definitely continue, and will either be run by next year's class, or the newly formed Mind & Body Club (offered to students next Fall). These students would love to see the race continue to grow, all while promoting mental wellness. We'd also love to be a partner with your organization, and cordially invite you into our classroom/school anytime!"

Thank You,

Shane Kargo & the M&B students





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Our mission is to promote optimal mental health through awareness, advocacy and education. **We envision** a society where mental wellness is the foundation of a healthy community. **We invite you** to join us in our journey toward building that community **today**.