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...AND MORE!

WHY WE CARE

Robin William's death provided a jolt to our system; after all, he was a gifted comedian who brought laughter into our lives time and time again. And yet he struggled with the gripping clutch of despair and hopelessness known as depression. Sadly, it was in his life-ending act that the issue of mental illness took center stage, but only for a moment.

One in four individuals will experience a mental illness in any given year. That adds up to approximately 132,400 people in all of Lancaster County, and more specifically, 25 percent of your loved ones, neighbors or coworkers who are struggling with a potentially devastating illness that often goes unnoticed.

Mental illness is far from invisible, yet an absurd veil of silence serves as its constant companion. We all know individuals, some in our own family, who experience overwhelming fatigue, paralyzing anxiety, debilitating depression, extreme highs, crushing lows, suicidal ideation – it's a list that goes on. Each symptom is as significant and disabling as any other medical condition requiring care.

We all experience days that are tougher than others. However, individuals with mental illness have symptoms that go beyond the typical ebb and flow, and it is imperative that these people are able to access treatment without shame before it's too late. Living with untreated mental illness is as risky as deciding to just wait it out while having a heart attack; receiving quality

care and support is as lifesaving as preventative blood pressure medication or CPR in an emergency. The veil of silence around mental illness creates stigma, and that stigma keeps many individuals from accessing the help they need. **Stigma or indifference keeps us from growing and thriving – and sadly it can kill.**

The death of Robin Williams marked the tragic loss of a brilliant and generous man. It also casted a glaring national spotlight on the issue of mental illness and suicide. It was a loss that fed the news for days and weeks – and then it faded, as always. **Let us be reminded that Robin Williams and all others who take their lives by suicide do not kill themselves. Their illness does.**

Williams accomplished so much in both life and death—through it all, he showed us that even the most magnificent of human beings are still just that, human. And therein lies the moral of this story: all of us are susceptible to this world's universal struggles, and some more than others. **Our responsibility is to cross the divide that exists between “us” and “them” and meet all people with compassion, extending the hand and heart to show all people that WE CARE.**

In wellness and caring,

Jan Baily, Executive Director

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BIDDING A FOND ADIEU

“Some people come into our lives and leave footprints on our hearts and we are never the same.” (Flavia Weedn)

To those who know her, Deb Jones is one of those rare individuals who can leap tall buildings with a single bound. She can also digest complex information, synthesize it, and break it down into basic concepts with lightening speed. More importantly, Deb is the kind of person who gave of her heart and conviction to all who entered our doors. MHALC and Compeer Lancaster have thrived under her competent leadership as Director of Programs and Services.

It is with a sad heart that we say goodbye to Deb as she leaves MHALC to pursue the next chapter of her life — obtaining her Master’s Degree in Social Work. To know Deb is to appreciate that she gives 1000% to every endeavor, and her pursuit of her MSW is no different.

While there are no complete in life, we know this to be true — Deb is passionate about mental health and her community and is not leaving the area, which is to say that she will always find ways to be engaged with this work. We also know that she will always be remembered as an exceptional individual whose commitment, competence, drive, and compassion will leave a lasting impact on all who have known and worked with her.

Every exit is an entry somewhere, and as Deb embarks on her new life’s journey, she is wished abundant success, fulfillment, and in keeping with her drive — all “A’s.”



Sign up for MHALC’s e-news!

MHALC’s newsletter will be going digital! Please help us by scanning the QR code to the left using your smartphone and entering your email address when prompted.

Alternately, go to the sign-up portal at <http://qrs.ly/wr4dqoy> to enter your information.

CLIENT AND FAMILY ADVOCACY

MORE THAN JUST A STORY

GRETCHEN GAUDIOSO, CLIENT AND FAMILY ADVOCATE

Advocacy can take many forms: providing guidance in navigating the mental healthcare system and filling out paperwork; empowering individuals to seek care that meets their needs in a respectful way; connecting recently released inmates with services in the community; supporting families in accessing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for their children with mental illness. There is never a dull day in advocacy at MHALC.

But sometimes our stories may sound like just that: stories. So try to imagine this... you become severely depressed and need to take extended time off from work. Under the care of a doctor, you realize you need to quit your job to seek treatment. Without income, you still have a mortgage and bills to pay. Without insurance, you still need to see your therapist and get medication. You feel alone, desperate for help, but don't know where to go, causing a further spiral in your depression and anxiety.

This is precisely where John*, age 50, found himself. He was referred to us through Lancaster County Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (BH/DS). John's brother, his only support, joined him at this first appointment. John was nervous throughout the meeting, tearing up as he told his story, and both he and his brother were frustrated by the system and by not knowing what to do.

*name has been changed

We worked together to create a plan of action, starting with completing online applications for Medical Assistance and Social Security Disability. This process can be difficult and frustrating, requiring information on employment and income from the past 15 years; when your mind is already full of negative and debilitating thoughts from your depression and anxiety, it can be even harder. We then found programs to help with therapy, medications, and financial assistance that could support him in the meantime.

Over the course of the next few months, John had MHALC's support with various applications, in attending meetings at the welfare office, and as a friendly ear to listen to his struggles. Eventually he was awarded Social Security Disability and soon will be on Medicare. His mental health has improved tremendously as and he is now involved with MHALC support groups and giving back as a volunteer with MHALC.

Everyone has a story, and MHALC is proud to be able to help people no matter where they are in their story. John is just one example of the many who can get help at MHALC. It's amazing how someone's outlook improves when they know that there is an agency of caring people that will help them and keep them involved after they receive the services.

If you or someone you know are in need of any Client or Family Advocacy Services please contact MHALC at 717-397-7461 or email gretchen@mh Lancaster.org.

MHALC FREE DROP-IN SUPPORT GROUPS

*Unless otherwise noted, groups meet at the Community Services Building
630 Janet Ave, Lancaster, PA 17601*

Bipolar Support Group
(Peer-led group for adults with Bipolar)
2nd, 4th & 5th Mondays, 7:00-8:30 pm, Blair Room

Bipolar Educational Group
(Peer-led group for adults with Bipolar and supportive people in their life.)
1st & 3rd Mondays, 7:00-8:30 pm, Blair Room

Bipolar Support Group
(Group for individuals with Bipolar led by MHALC)
2nd Thursday @12:00 pm (Lunch Provided)
Hempfield United Methodist Church
3050 Marietta Avenue, Lancaster PA

Women's Depression Support Group
(Peer-led group)
1st, 3rd, 5th Tuesdays, 7:00-8:30 pm, Room B-107

Men's Depression Support Group
(Peer-led group)
1st, 3rd, 5th Tuesdays, 7:00-8:30 pm, Room D-155

Anxiety, Panic & OCD Support Group
(Peer-led group for adults with an Anxiety or Panic disorder or Obsessive Compulsive disorder)
1st, 3rd, 5th Mondays, 7:00-8:30 pm, Room B-103

COMPEER AND COMPEERCORPS VET2VET

STORIES OF FRIENDSHIP

JOE MILLS, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Compeer Lancaster experienced a year of good growth and change in 2014. During the past twelve months, 29 new friendship matches (both one-to-one and calling) were facilitated. We trained 27 new volunteers. CompeerCORPS Vet2Vet was also launched as a new branch of Compeer that serves veterans.

What is remarkable is that over 60% of all of our active friendships have lasted over three years — and we only ask for one! Over 3,000 hours in one-to-one matches and calling activities were recorded. Valuing volunteer time at \$22.25 per hour, this represents over \$70,000 of donated time, a true gift of support and friendship in a time of decreased funding for mental health services.

These are just the numbers though. The true gift of human caring comes out in the stories of friendships, as when one friend underwent major surgery. Her Compeer friend was there with her, visiting, and giving support every step of the way from surgery to rehabilitation.

One of our younger volunteers, whose friendship began in February, had this to say: *“I am so happy I have met ‘K’, she has opened my eyes to new things. By meeting her, I have been inspired to work with more people who have disabilities. I have also been looking into possibly minoring in Special Education. I even talked to her about it and she gave me some great advice. This will definitely be a lasting friendship.”*

So thank you, volunteers and friends for making the past year so successful. We look forward to training more volunteers, facilitating many new friendships, and seeing CompeerCORPS Vet2Vet come to life. Your caring keeps these invaluable friendships and programs alive.

“I am so happy I have met ‘K.’ She has opened my eyes to new things. By meeting her, I have been inspired to work with more people who have disabilities.”

Compeer Volunteer about her Compeer Friend



With the generous support of the Berks-Lancaster-Lebanon Link to Aging and Disability Resources, Compeer Lancaster has launched a new extension of the same great program. CompeerCORPS Vet2Vet follows the same guidelines and procedures of the Compeer program but matches veterans to other veterans in need of supportive friendships.

If you or someone you know is interested in CompeerCORPS Vet2Vet, call our office today at 717-397-7461.



Save the Date for these Upcoming Compeer Lancaster Events:

- Annual Holiday Party—Tuesday, Dec. 2
- Bowling Night—Saturday, Feb. 14
- Friendship Luncheon—Coming in April



LANCASTER COUNTY SUICIDE PREVENTION COALITION



Walkers braved a rainy day to raise funds for suicide prevention in Lancaster County. See more pictures on page 6.



LANCASTER COUNTY
**SUICIDE
PREVENTION
COALITION**

Walk for D.E.S.
DeTect. EaRly. SiGns.



3RD ANNUAL WALK FOR D.E.S. MAKES A SPLASH

While the day was overcast and rainy, nothing could dampen the spirits of the close to 400 individuals who came together to raise funds for suicide prevention and awareness at the 3rd Annual Walk for D.E.S. (Detect Early Signs) held on September 13, 2014.

In all, the effort raised over \$21,000 to support suicide awareness and prevention activities in Lancaster County.

Monies raised from the walk will be used to support and sustain the work of the Lancaster County Suicide Prevention Coalition, provide funding support for projects and initiatives that lead to the prevention of suicide, and support the development and dissemination of community-wide awareness and education tools and resources. In addition, funds raised will be used to provide financial assistance through the Desmond Marcus Schantzer Memorial Fund – a fund created to help families offset expenses associated with unplanned death and the resulting grief that occurs.

Since the walk's inception three years ago, tremendous progress has been made in creating a solid foundation from which to tackle the issue of suicide and provide assistance to those in need. During the month of November, the Stop Suicide Lancaster web site (www.stopsuicidelancaster.org) will launch, providing another vital tool to combat suicide and to provide hope, help and resources.

Looking ahead, we will be back again next year on **Saturday, September 12, 2015** at our same location – Neffsville (Manheim Township) Community Park – so please mark your calendar now!

With your caring support, we can make even greater strides in eliminating suicide and creating pathways that lead to wellness.

**A very special thank you
to the Walk for D.E.S.
leading sponsors:**

Philhaven

Lancaster General Health

Lancaster Regional Medical Center

PerformCare

Auntie Anne's Pretzels

Pathways Center for Grief and Loss

Survivors of Suicide Support Group
Lancaster Chapter

*Thank you to all others who
graciously donated their time
and resources to making
this year's Walk for D.E.S. a
continued success.*

WHAT HAS MHALC BEEN UP TO?



The 3rd Annual **Walk for D.E.S.** happened on September 13, 2014. (1-2) Participants released balloons in honor of loved ones during a memorial service. (3-4) Read more on Page 9.

We've attended a number of **community awareness events** at schools, etc.

Please let us know if you ever hear of an opportunity where we might be able to offer our knowledge and expertise! (5)

Check out these photos from some recent MHA happenings to see where we've been and what's been going on!



It's been a busy year of events for **Compeer Lancaster**. Ten-year matches were honored at April's Friendship Luncheon. (6) The Annual Art Auction was held in May. (7) We had a great time, as always, at the Annual Compeer Picnic in August. Compeer is thankful for volunteers from the Lancaster Young Professionals (8) who offered their time and effort to make the evening a success.



MHALC supported the launch of Aavidum's "Let's Talk, Pennsylvania!" campaign on Oct. 29 and hosted almost 200 students and educators at a press conference at Lancaster's Penn Square. (9)

Do you have photos to share?

If you attend an MHA or Compeer event and take photos, we'd love to see them! Email Sara at SMohler@mhalancaster.org with any and all of your favorite shots.

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR VOICES

LABELING AND THE LIGHT

ANONYMOUS

I am a 30-year-old resident of Lancaster County. I grew up here with a loving family, financial resources and a quality education. I went to college in Washington, DC, and completed six internships. I have held the same human services position for seven years, and I will graduate with my master's degree in Social Work (MSW) in May. I lead a fulfilling, meaningful life.

I also happen to have spent most of my life with mental illness. I've lost count of how many medications I've tried, and have been in the hospital a number of times. There is much more to the story, but it doesn't really matter—it's just one piece of me, much like the other health conditions that have a small place in my life.

"I hope that someday everyone will feel free to shout their story from the rooftops."

I am affected by my migraines, but they do not define me. I have never been marginalized because of having thyroid disease. I did not have to defend my decision to miss work because I broke my foot, nor was I shamed for accessing necessary treatment at a podiatrist. Nobody questions why I take medication prescribed by a gynecologist or neurologist.

But because of brain functions largely out of my control, I have been directly and indirectly stigmatized by the people and systems in my life more times than I could count. It feels just as terrible as you would imagine. I've lost close friends because they were afraid of what they didn't understand. **If there ever was a time in my life that I needed support, it was then—and that is why awareness is so important.**

Through my experiences, I have learned that each mental illness has a spectrum of severity, again similar to many physical health issues. I am high-functioning on one end, and my friend's daughter, who shares the same diagnosis and has been hospitalized for years, is at the other. Without my education, solid support system or financial support from my family, I could have easily been in the same situation, or worse. Recovery is not solely a matter of fortitude or strength of character. I understand that labels are required for insurance billing purposes; however, the generalizations should go no further.

When I first became ill, certain people treated me like being hospitalized was all I would ever accomplish in life. I eventually started to believe the same, and felt like I was inherently inferior. It has taken many years and a lot of work to regain some of my sense of self-worth, and only with the love and unwavering grace offered by my support system.

If I am speaking out against stigma, then it's a fair question to wonder why I didn't attach my name to this piece. I agree that it feels a bit like a hypocritical cop out. Please know that I am in no way ashamed of these experiences, and I am open in every moment that feels like a safe opportunity to educate. However, my gut feeling with this newsletter is scared. I'm terrified to have my vulnerability in your pile of mail, because maybe I have class with you or perhaps I will want you to hire me in six months. I hope that someday everyone will feel free to shout their story from the rooftops, and when we all contribute our collective stories, we begin to lessen stigma and move society closer to that place.

If I have learned anything through my experiences, it is that human beings are infinitely complex and malleable. **So, if you love someone who is struggling, you have an amazing opportunity to help guide them back to the light. To be clear, that doesn't mean that you are the light. They are the light, and your mission is a trust walk.** Point them in the right direction until they can take off the blindfold and see the light on their own. It's beautiful, especially in comparison.

Each of us has a voice when it comes to our mental health.

To share yours, reach out to MHALC by phone at 717-397-7461 or email Sara at SMohler@mhalancaster.org.

MENTAL HEALTH: IT TAKES A VILLAGE

BARBARA PERRY, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

We are all bombarded daily with pleas to support a myriad of causes. Often one’s experiences in life play a role in how they give their time and energy to a certain cause. We can think of pet lovers who devote their time to animal rights because they can’t bear to see animals abused or abandoned, or of those who have lost a loved one to cancer who support the efforts to find a cure.

At MHALC, we are dedicated to supporting those with mental illness and promoting the mental wellness of all. We look at mental health as a continuum, with untreated illness and disability at one end, and recovery and complete wellness at the other, with most of us falling somewhere in the middle.

But why should you care about our cause?

One in four people are diagnosed with a mental illness at some point in their life. Mental illness does not discriminate against any age group, gender, or lifestyle. With that in mind, there is a good chance that you know of someone touched by mental illness during your lifetime. It could be you or someone you love.

MHALC wants to aid every person who reaches out for help and support, but we need your help to stop the stigma that is attached to mental illness. **We believe it takes a village to support those with mental illness, and we invite you to join us in building a village of advocates to positively impact the larger community.**



*“I’ve embraced the term “recovery” and I’ve found that by starting with a willingness and building “staying power,” we **can** and **do** recover.”*

Marty Mohn, Peer Educator

CLAIMING A VICTORY

MARTY MOHN, PEER EDUCATOR

MHALC continues to be busy in the community offering peer education in various places.

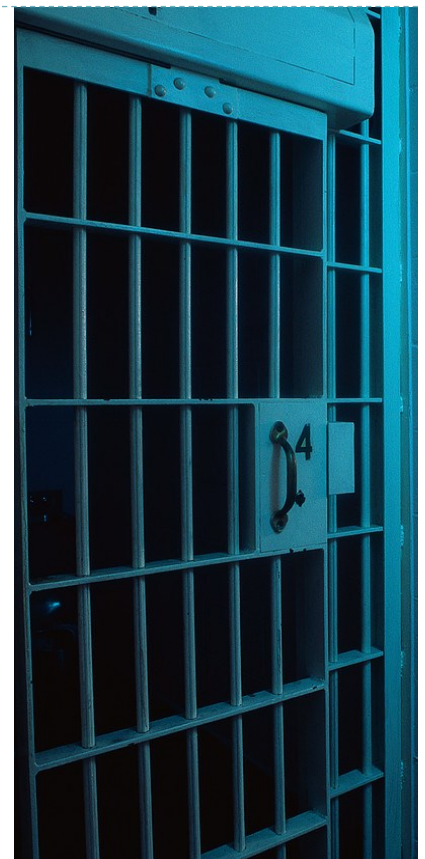
In addition to our existing support groups in mental health units at local hospitals and the prison, we are further expanding services at Lancaster County Prison by meeting with new inmates as they face incarceration. By doing this, we offer support and hope for getting through this difficult challenge.

Mental illness is challenging enough, but sitting in a cell alone for sometimes 23 hours in a day, behind a locked metal door can silence a fighting spirit and drown one’s toolbox of coping skills. I know. Years ago, I sat in a cell at LCP.

Whether pleading for our freedom from a cell, struggling for wellness in a hospital mental health unit, or trying to live a daily routine while battling racing thoughts in our mind, mental illness can be a horrific challenge in one’s life.

Every day as I offer peer education in the community, I look in the rear view mirror at the challenging places mental illness has taken me. And, as I look, I marvel at the distance I’ve traveled in these last ten years. I’ve embraced the term “recovery” and I’ve found that by starting with a willingness and building “staying power,” we *can* and *do* recover.

There is a victory to claim in every challenge.



IN OTHER NEWS...

JOIN MHALC AND PHILHAVEN FOR MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING *PREPARING YOU TO HELP OTHERS EXPERIENCING MENTAL DISTRESS*

Mental Health America of Lancaster County has partnered with Philhaven to offer **Mental Health First Aid Training**, with additional funding support from the Lancaster-Lebanon-Berks Link to Aging and Disability Resources. This training helps participants identify, understand, and respond to the signs and symptoms of addiction and mental illness and teaches how to apply the 5-step action plan to assess a situation and provide help.

Sign up for one of the three remaining dates today!

Saturday, January 17, 2015 • 8:00am–4:30pm

Saturday, March 14, 2015 • 8:00am–4:30pm

Friday, May 8, 2015 • 8:00am–4:30pm

Training will be held at the Community Services Building at 630 Janet Avenue in Lancaster.

Cost: \$25 per person, which includes:

- Mental Health First Aid course manual
- Course certificate of completion
- Certification as a Mental Health First Aid Responder
- Continental breakfast and light lunch

Seating is limited. Sign up now by calling 717-397-7461.



MHALC'S LIBRARY GETS A FACELIFT

SARA MOHLER, PROGRAM ASSISTANT

In line with Mental Health America of Lancaster County's mission of promoting optimal mental health through access, awareness, advocacy, and education, we provide a free community lending library featuring titles on a variety of mental health topics and issues. Over the past few months, the library has been going through a number of changes to get up-to-date and become more user-friendly.

With the support of Peer Education funding, the library has been expanded to include a number of new and updated titles on topics from bipolar disorder to resiliency. In addition, funding from the Youth Outreach Project has allowed us to build a mindfulness library of over 40 books and guided meditation CDs.

As outdated books were removed from the shelves, these new titles filled their place and went into a new digital catalog system that allows interested readers to check out MHALC's collection online so they can find what they're looking for before coming in. In addition, better electronic tracking will help us keep tabs on our books and CDs to ensure that we keep the best titles available to the public.

Providing education is a key part of helping all people better understand their mental health and removing the stigma that sometimes goes along with some mental illnesses. At MHALC, we are happy to be able to provide this important service to Lancaster, and hope that you'll pay us a visit to check out a new book. Your mental health will thank you!



WAYS TO GIVE

Wondering how you can support mental health in the Lancaster community? You could:

⇒ **DONATE**

There is no contribution too modest. Every gift of financial support is utilized to support the work of MHALC and to further our efforts to support mental health in our community.

⇒ **VOLUNTEER**

There is no effort too small. Whether you'd like to contribute a few hours to help with an event or project, or commit to a friendship with Compeer Lancaster, we are always happy to accept volunteers.

⇒ **PROVIDE**

There is no recognition too insignificant. Gift cards to area restaurants and grocery stores go a long way in expressing gratitude to volunteers and recognizing significant dates.

Reach out to MHALC today at **717-397-7461** to find out more about these opportunities to give.

Show us you care on November 21!

THE EXTRAORDINARY GIVE

NOVEMBER 21, 2014

EXTRAGIVE.ORG

LANCASTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Rodgers & Associates
"THE RETIREMENT SPECIALISTS"

MARTIN H. BAER CHARITABLE TRUST

At MHALC, we're dedicated to helping individuals lead mentally healthy lives.

We invite you to join us on our journey to promote mental wellness by eliminating stigma and helping individuals access the services, resources, education, and support they need to live full and productive lives.

Your generous gift during the Extraordinary Give will be stretched by \$250,000 from the Lancaster County Community Foundation and Rogers & Associates. Plus, just by donating, you could help us win EXTRA money from the \$50,000 pool.

Mark your calendars, tell your friends, and **GIVE EXTRAORDINARY!**

Gifts of Joy Holiday Gift Drive is looking for Joy Givers!

You can make a difference in the life of someone with mental illness this holiday season by providing a small gift of joy that they might otherwise do without this winter.

Contact Gretchen at 717-397-7461 to become a gift of joy giver!

Sign up as an individual or take a group of names for your community group or office.





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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Mental Health America of Lancaster County

Our mission is to promote optimal mental health through access, 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.