

THE VOICE

Volume 1, Issue 5

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Moving Toward Extinction: Social Recreation and Drop-In Centers?

by Tom Johnson

Rachel has lived in an apartment in her community for a number of years. She has a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, but the symptoms have been under control. She sees her doctor as scheduled, meets with her psychologist on a regular basis, and practices activities in her life that she has found helpful in managing her illness.

One of the important activities that Rachel has pursued over the years is her participation in her local community support program (CSP) and its drop-in center. Before connecting to the drop-in center and participating in social recreational activities, Rachel isolated herself from others. When she became depressed, she would lie in bed for days at a time because nothing in her life provided any incentive to combat her depression.

Rachel had very limited contact with family and had few friends who stayed with her after she began to exhibit the symptoms of bipolar. Once Rachel became aware of the CSP drop-in center in her area, she began to visit and benefited from the social bridge it provided and the activities that she needed to supplement her medical and psychological care. Rachel knows the importance of working with her doctor and psychologist, but she also knows that the effectiveness of her mental health professionals is reduced if her life lacks structure and she becomes socially isolated.

Recently, Rachel has seen a reduction in social recreational opportunities. The CSP she has been visiting has had to reduce hours and activities. Social recreation and drop-in opportunities are poorly funded, if at all. Rachel has been speaking to the advocates at MHAM about the reduction of services to her and to the others who participate in the social recreation

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mham



MHAM Staff from l to r: Ed Eide, Tom Johnson, Anna Raudenbush, Nancy Paul, Ben Ashley-Wurtmann, Brett Dumke

MHAM Welcomes New Staff!

by Nancy Paul

MHAM is pleased to welcome two new staff members, Ben Ashley-Wurtmann and Anna Raudenbush. Ben is MHAM's new office manager, offering administrative support to all areas of the agency. Anna is our new client advocate, providing one-on-one advocacy for individuals living with mental illnesses.

Ben Ashley-Wurtmann

Ben comes to MHAM with a wide range of experience. He worked in Sen. Wellstone's St.

New Staff continued on page 7

The Impact of Cuts to Social Services

by Kim Lutes, MHAM Volunteer

Every year, services for people living with mental illnesses are cut, but this year, services were cut more than ever. As a person living with a serious mental illness and dependent on public assistance, I am afraid there will come a day when I will no longer be able to get the treatment I need, including the medications that stabilize my illness. After numerous psychiatric hospitalizations and medication trials, the symptoms of my illness have stabilized and my quality of life has greatly improved.

Our society is grossly under-educated about mental illnesses, and I believe that to be the impetus behind the decline in mental health services. The stigma surrounding mental illnesses has always existed, and I believe that until people understand more about them and get to know the people who live with them, the moral imperative of quality mental health care for all will not be met. My fear about the erosion of mental health services sometimes leaves me feeling powerless and apathetic. At other times, my fears act as a wake up call to action.

I like to share my story if I am in a safe situation. I have a sense of humor and enjoy volunteering, going to movies with friends, and participating in church activities. As people get to know me, they see me as a creative and interesting person who has a chronic illness. I encourage people to ask me questions about my illness. I find teachable moments are helpful for people to feel more okay about my illness. Then we can focus on our common interests. On a larger scale, teachable moments happen when I do public speaking. I tell my story, highlighting the symptoms of my illness. I explain how my skewed logic caused by a brain disorder influences my behaviors and decision-making. Hopefully, this helps diminish stigma.

Each time I hear about a cut to mental health services, I feel invisible, misunderstood, and ashamed. But, more than that, I feel hurt. This past spring was painful for me as each unallotment of a mental health service was announced. The message I heard over and over was that I am not worth investing in because I am “mentally ill.”

But, I know better. The decision behind each unallotment was based on archaic information and the stigmas that come with it. My hope is that understanding based on current research will dispel the cloud of darkness and fear hanging over mental illnesses, making dialogue more open and safe. What a relief it would be to feel understood and no longer afraid.

There are times when I find comfort in the services provided by MHAM. The agency is committed to advocate for people like me and to chip away at the wall built of ignorance that has been erected to keep people living with mental illnesses separated from the wider community and out of sight.



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of Minnesota **mham**

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Letter from the Executive Director



Ed Eide

As this newsletter goes to print, we are finalizing plans for our 70th Anniversary Party. Founded in 1939, MHAM has been helping people with mental illnesses live independent lives for 70 years. We have seen significant changes over the years. From “mental hygiene institutions” to evidence based practice of recovery. From individuals being incarcerated for a mental illness to individuals working a full time job with a mental illness.

Even with major changes in delivering mental health services, improvements in medication, and new methods of therapy, stigma still plays a huge role in how people are treated. MHAM is an outreach partner with NIMH, and they, along with other major partners, are supporting a new anti-stigma campaign. Go to BringChange2Mind.org to see Glenn Close and others share stories of recovery.

Many people who have a mental illness are doing fine. They are employed, in recovery from their illness, and living independently. But many others are hoarding medications in order to make them last longer, in fear of GAMC cuts. They are wondering if they will be safe due to the upcoming un-allotment of GAMC by the Governor.

There are many legislators and advocacy groups, such as MHAM, who are working on alternative benefits sets to replace GAMC. We will find an alternative so people with mental illnesses and other disabilities can maintain their health.

Funding is getting tougher to come by. I'm sure you are hearing that from many people and organizations right now. **We need your help.** People are living paycheck to paycheck. Many people are without paychecks. It is a difficult economic time.

You can help us continue to help people on the edge. **For \$50 you can make our advocates available to help people keep their benefits, maintain an adequate supply of medications, or see their doctor when needed.**

As the economy strengthens, our clients are the last to see the positive changes. It takes at least a year after an economic turnaround for people on the edge to see an improvement. Please help us keep people as independent as possible.

It costs less for preventive care than emergency response, yet many decision makers don't understand that. Often times they look for immediate cuts instead of long-term impact. Don't let your invisible neighbors be hurt. We must maintain a safety net of services for everyone, not just for some.

Your contribution of \$50 can make a big difference in someone's life. Or you can send us a birthday gift of \$70 in recognition of our 70 years of service to Minnesotans.

Be kind to one another.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed". The signature is stylized and appears to be written in a cursive or semi-cursive font.

Please consider giving your gift to MHAM through GiveMN.org. You'll find an article about this innovative program on page seven of this newsletter.

Tis the season...

by Brett Dumke

This time of year fills our calendar with many festivities and obligations. With the busy holiday season upon us, it is easy for us to overlook our mental health. However, there are some steps we can take to reduce some of the stress that occurs during the holidays.

Be aware of situations that caused stress in the past. If you found a situation stressful before, it will probably cause problems again. Knowing that a situation has been stressful will allow you to think of different ways to handle it so it won't be as stressful.



Schedule time for relaxation. It's important to take time to relax each day, to refresh your mind and body from the tensions of the day. Some people find exercise relaxing, while others find relaxation through reading or doing a puzzle. Identify the activities that are relaxing to you and engage in them to reduce stress.

Have balance in your daily life. Being active and involved is important to keeping stress low. However, too much activity can lead to stress. It's important to leave time for sleep and for restful, relaxing activities.

Develop a support system. Seek out people who are encouraging and supportive, rather than critical and pressuring. It's very helpful to have relationships with people you feel comfortable with.

Take care of your health. Eating well, getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, and avoiding alcohol can help prevent stress. These healthy habits are not easy to maintain, but they really pay off.

Avoid being hard on yourself. Some people increase their stress by being critical of themselves and what they are accomplishing. Try to be reasonable about what you expect from yourself and give yourself credit for your talents and strengths. It can be helpful to identify some positive features about yourself and remind yourself of these features when you are feeling negatively.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services / Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

16th Annual Tom Murphy Memorial Golf Tournament is a Success!

The Tom Murphy Memorial Golf Tournament was held on Saturday, September 19, 2009, at the Theodore Wirth Golf Course in Minneapolis, with dinner following at Majors Sports Café in Golden Valley. The tournament was a great success, raising over \$6,000 for the advocacy and education programs at MHAM. Thank you to Tim Murphy, the golfers, and the donors who came together to support improved lives for people with mental illnesses!



Reaching Out

by Ben Ashley-Wurtmann

Many years ago, I was an intern at Sen. Wellstone's office in Saint Paul, working on immigration issues. Toward the end of my time there, I began to experience significant issues with anxiety and depression.



Due to difficulties in treatment, my doctor decided that I needed to be hospitalized. I called the office to tell Leah, my supervisor, that I was unable to come in that day for the going away lunch we had planned and went straight to the hospital instead.

This sudden shift was a rude shock to me. Most of the kids in the hospital were in much more distress than I was, and I became very scared at being cut off from all of my normal support systems. While my family visited regularly, I still felt very isolated. One very bright spot was when Leah came to visit. She wanted to give me the book she had gotten as a present, and to make up for the lunch we had to cancel. I suspect that the visit was difficult for her. Even when modern and well-intentioned, a juvenile psychiatric ward is a place of profound struggles. That she was willing visit me meant so much, a priceless connection back to a time when I was feeling better.

A few days after I left the hospital, a call came to my house. Paul Wellstone was on the line, and he wanted to talk to me. His concern for the those with mental illnesses was no secret; he had been championing these issues his entire political career.

But I certainly didn't expect a personal call. We spoke briefly, but he reassured me that there were a lot of good people rooting for me and urged me to stay hopeful even when things were tough.

Working at the office, I knew exactly what went into one of those calls: they were far from spontaneous. Leah and her supervisors took the time to make sure that the Washington D.C. office was notified and put the call on Paul's calendar. In my work there, I wrote letters expressing Wellstone's concern, I answered the phones. I knew exactly the kind of organization and teamwork it takes to make such moments of connection possible. Far from taking anything away from my surprise and gratitude, it only deepened it. He meant it all, and he encouraged us to mean it too.

I think there is a lesson in this. Individual kindness has a role to play in assisting those with mental illnesses. But it also takes a broader culture as well: one where people know that their concerns are not small to those around them. Think about the places where you work and find community: what would it take for them to be more supportive of those with mental health issues? With the right attitude, a small act of care can go a long way.

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program at their CSP. She worries about what will happen to her if medical services are the only mental health services available. People with mental illnesses need medical care, but many of the problems they experience take place in their social worlds. Rachel clearly states that she expects that her mental health problems will become worse if she loses her social supports.

Rachel's CSP is not the only one where social recreation activities are being reduced. In some communities, the drop-in center has been closed and the social recreation programs eliminated. In other communities, the programs have sustained significant reductions to their hours and fewer activities are scheduled.

Minnesota has made strides to better serve individuals with a serious mental illness. However, not all challenges posed by a mental illness can be resolved in a clinical office. Social recreation offers the opportunity to share time and make a connection to others, providing structure to a day. It also reduces stress and the destitution of loneliness that too often accompanies a diagnosis of mental illness.

For Rachel and for many others like her, Minnesota and its communities must find a way to preserve programs that complement and support clinical treatments.

2009 Memorial and Honor Gifts to MHAM

In Memory

Mel Braun
Ellen Joseph

Steve Cannon
Ellen Joseph

Paul DeNuccio
Susan DeNuccio

Leona Franke
Wayne and Marilyn Zarnott

Betty Greenberg
Ellen Joseph

Leslie Carole Johnson
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Wendy Machmer
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Bobby Nemer
Gerald and Eileen Siegel

Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy. If you note an error or omission, please accept our apologies. You can notify us of changes by calling Nancy Paul at 612-843-4863, ext. 9.

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Paul office as an immigration intern and with the Minnesota Civil Liberties Union as a lobbying intern. As a student, Ben lead a project to recognize mental health issues at Macalester college. He worked with fellow students and staff to organize programming and ensure that it would continue after his graduation. Most recently, Ben was a management coordinator with New Standard Institute. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Macalester College and a Master of Arts in Religion from Yale Divinity School.

Anna Raudenbush

Anna arrived in Minnesota this summer after going to school and working in Olympia, WA. Anna worked with the Crisis Clinic of Thurston and Mason Counties in Olympia as a phone volunteer. There she provided direct service and support to callers suffering from mental illnesses and helped callers find community resources. She has also been an assistant pre-school teacher for the YMCA and a wetland biologist with the Environmental Services Office at the Washington State Department of Transportation. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from The Evergreen State College in Olympia.

MHAM Joins GiveMN.org

Minnesotans have a long tradition of giving and civic innovation. In fact, Minnesotans lead the nation in charitable giving – individuals in Minnesota gave \$4 billion to charity last year. GiveMN.org, an innovative new online resource, is giving Minnesotans a new way to give and helping create a stronger nonprofit community for Minnesota, and MHAM is pleased to be a part of it.



Donors can go to GiveMN at any time to support their favorite causes or to learn about organizations that match their charitable giving goals. They can also use the site to manage all of their charitable giving by recording online and offline contributions and storing receipts. Through GiveMN, Minnesota nonprofits can showcase their work and introduce their organizations to new donors. Customized profiles of Minnesota charities detail their individual missions, programs, and events.

Please consider making a donation to MHAM through GiveMN.org. You can find us at <http://givemn.razoo.com/story/Mental-Health-Association-Of-Minnesota>.

The History of MHAM: Celebrating 70 Years of Mental Health Advocacy and Education in Minnesota

by Nancy Paul

The History of MHAM



CELEBRATING 70 YEARS OF MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION IN MINNESOTA

Throughout the year, we have highlighted our 70th anniversary in funding appeals, at a gala event, and with the Gloria Segal Education Forum. As part of the celebration, we have also created a booklet on the history of MHAM. Paula Seeger, a MHAM volunteer, offered her research skills and knowledge of archiving materials to help us write a comprehensive history of the agency. Paula did a great job of pulling out details about MHAM’s past and wrote a strong narrative about the obstacles and successes MHAM has had over time. You can find the full history on our website by clicking on MHAM History under the About Us button on the home page. You can also request a hard copy of the history by calling 612-331-6840 or 800-862-1799.

Support Groups

DULUTH SUPPORT GROUP FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESSES

1st and 3rd Thursday of each month, 5 – 7 pm, Miller Dwan Medical Center, Meeting Room 1 – 3, Lobby Level, East Side, *For more information, call MHAM at 1-800-862-1799.*

REACH FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS (ALL IN GREATER MINNESOTA)

Albert Lea	4th Thursday, 7 pm	Nancy Heidal	507-373-8090
Alexandria	3rd Monday, 7 pm	Darlene Ernst	320-846-4522
Bemidji	2nd Tuesday, 7 pm	Robin Wold	218-444-6748
Milaca	1st Tuesday, 6:30 pm	Mary Fehring	320-983-6724
St. Cloud	1st Tuesday, 6 pm	Dale Anderson	320-240-3327



DBSA SUPPORT GROUPS

For people living with depression or bipolar disorder and their family members and friends

TWIN CITIES

Dakota County/Eagan <i>(formerly Apple Valley)</i>	1st and 3rd Tuesday, 7pm	Audrey Weiner	651-454-8329
Eden Prairie	1st, 3rd, and 5th Monday, 7pm	Jonathan Moerschall	612-210-1704
Golden Valley	2nd and 4th Monday, 7 pm	Beth Bell	612-722-4185
Maple Grove	1st and 3rd Monday, 7 pm	Steve Morris	952-239-4693
Minneapolis	3rd Monday, 3 pm	Steve	763-425-6505, ext. 515
Mounds View	2nd and 4th Tuesday, 7 pm	Lana	612-331-3972
St. Louis Park	2nd and 4th Thursday, 7 pm	Ken Thomas	651-484-9577
St. Paul	1st, 3rd and 5th Wednesday, 7 pm	Bobby Nemer	952-938-8941
Woodbury	2nd and 4th Wednesday, 7 pm	Marjorie Sigel	651-698-0767
		Tim Witt	651-491-0133
		Carol Treague	651-735-2345

GREATER MINNESOTA

Albany	Every Monday, 6:30pm		320-845-6104
Crosby	Every Thursday	John Pappas	218-546-6520
Rochester	1st and 3rd Monday, 5:30 pm	Sandy (daytime)	507-282-8372
	2nd, 4th and 5th Monday, 7 pm	Jonathan (evenings)	507-292-9679
St. Cloud	Every Thursday, 6 pm	Lynn Keller	320-240-3324
Walker	Every Friday, 7 pm	Beverly Brown	218-547-3905