



Capital Connection

A PUBLICATION OF THE CONSUMER LEADERSHIP FORUM
WWW.CLF OF DC.ORG

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Consumer Leadership Forum

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this meeting is to unite our best efforts as mental health consumers to reshape/reform/reinvent the D.C. mental health system.

We will not expect the meeting to be a place where we resolve our personal issues but will support each other and network as desirable / possible outside the meeting.

While gathered as a group, we will focus on the vision of the type of mental health system we want to create and the process for getting there.

Tracy Leak: Mother, Advocate, Survivor

I was so thrilled to get this opportunity to interview Tracy Leak, a dedicated CLF advocate. She is such a gentle yet courageous soul. We need more advocates out there like her who are willing to tell their stories with such strength and wisdom. Tracy and I found out that we had some things in common. One of them is that both of us had mothers who were diagnosed with schizophrenia. The other is that we are both trauma survivors. We talked about how important it is for mental health services to be trauma-informed, or responsive to that fact that people are survivors of traumatic experiences. We also talked about the challenges of balancing work and motherhood, which are many! Especially finding quality, affordable child care. I was also very excited to meet her sweet little toddler, "Tee-tee." We both agreed that it is especially important for mothers in recovery to tell their stories in order to give hope to other mothers who are mental health consumers. – Leah Harris



Tracy with her one year-old daughter "Tee-tee"

LH: How did you get involved with the CLF?

TL: The way I got involved with CLF is that I am a consumer of Anchor Mental Health CSA. I met Dorothy at Anchor and she was talking about CLF and she invited me and a few other consumers to come to a meeting. I went to my first monthly Friday meeting and ever since then I've been involved with CLF. That was about 10 months ago now.

LH: How has the experience of being a CLF advocate so far been? What have you learned?

TL: I learned a whole lot of things that probably wouldn't have learned without being involved in CLF. The first thing I learned is how to advocate for myself, and how to interact with other people who are involved with CLF or affiliated with CLF through agencies and services. I also learned how to run CLF on my own when there's no one else around. I also help others to advocate for themselves. (con't on p. 2)

Tracy Leak (con't from p. 1)

LH: Can you talk a little bit about your experience with mental illness?

TL: The first time I dealt with mental illness was through my mom and younger brother. They both are diagnosed with schizophrenia. For a while I didn't know what it was about or what schizophrenia was, but once I had my first child...I saw depression in my child, and because of a flashback of my life, I started to remember things that happened to me in my childhood that I had blocked out. The first remembrance was during my childhood when I was violated at nine years old. Once I started to have those memories, it contributed to me having some mental health issues. Then it got to the point when I couldn't cope with a lot of the things that happened to me in my childhood – from abuse to sexual abuse to abandonment, and I just went down the wrong road. When I had my first child, I had ended up doing some things that I didn't like as a mother, and I didn't want my child to go through the same things I went through. So I decided to change my life. The first step was to admit that something was wrong. I went to a mental health professional and that's how I got into recovery.

LH: Can you describe what your recovery process has been like?

TL: My recovery started with getting me and my daughter into a program for parents and children, because my daughter was diagnosed with ADHD and disability. I started to advocate for her because I noticed that when you ask someone in the system to help you – and a first time parent doesn't know much about anything – no one wanted to help. So I started researching and looking up programs and talking to various therapists and programs, and I used the information I gathered for my daughter's advantage. In terms of my own individual recovery, it's been going pretty good. This year I've noticed that I've coped with many things that I probably wouldn't have in the past. It's made me a better person, a better mother, a better friend, and a better advocate for those who can't advocate for themselves. Advocating for my daughter and other people has helped my recovery. It helps me to realize that the things I think are the most horrible things in my life could be something that is really small and minor compared to what other people have gone through in their lives.

LH: What gives you hope on a daily basis?

TL: Me waking up the next day, seeing my children happy. Knowing that I want to live another day, not to have the bad thoughts and feelings that I used to have in the past. Coming to Anchor and CLF and helping those who are not where I'm at today, and hoping to help them to get there.

LH: Can you name one positive thing about public mental health services in DC and one thing that needs to be improved?

TL: What's good about mental health services in DC is that anyone can get help, whether they are rich, poor, or middle class. Somewhere, someone is willing to give them some help. We need more of Congress and the politicians and the Mayor and everyone to get involved, because we see more young people with these illnesses, and people and families are not recognizing it. It's causing more children to be in the system, or to go to jail, and then later on in their life people find out that it is due to an illness.

LH: Thanks so much, Tracy, for sharing your stories of hope and inspiration with *Capital Connections*!

SUPPORT GROUP FOR CONSUMERS IN THE DC AREA

The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance National Capital Area (DBSA NCA) invites you to come share your story and listen to others at our weekly patient peer run support group. Participants include individuals from Virginia, Maryland and the District. This group is for patients only. The group is held at George Washington University Hospital. Please join us if you are in the mood.

Meeting Details

George Washington University Hospital
 (Located next to the Foggy Bottom Metro Station)
 900 23rd Street, NW, Washington DC
 Parking Garage: 22nd + I (Eye) Street NW
 The group meets every Thursday from 7:30pm-9pm.
 Join the informal meet + greet from 7pm-7:30pm.

Note* There has been a change in our room number for 2008, please call for details.

Maryland 301.279.0831 DC 202.689.1250 Virginia 703.474.7717

or hello@dbsanca.org.

If you have a comment or concern about the support group, please email comment@dbsanca.org.

CLF News

By Denise McNeal and Dorothy Adams

MARCH CLF MEETING

The March CLF meeting on testifying in public was led by Dick Davis. He suggested that we target something that is important to us and work on that. He helped us figure out what to testify on and how to go about doing it. We talked about several different issues that consumers were having. One is people not visiting the homes and making sure that the consumers are getting what they are supposed to get while they are in there. The other one was creating a position for a staff person to work with consumers informing them about the system and what it is supposed to do for them. For example, this person could explain how much money they should receive; who is responsibility for giving it to them; what you are supposed to do with the money, etc. The staff person should provide ongoing trainings so consumers can receive this information over and over again. The last issue is trying to see if they can get a bigger building for the pharmacy on 35 K Street so they can hire more staff.

REGULAR MEETINGS

Peer Support: We talked about ways we can get consumers more involved in helping out. We suggested the following things that they could do: call consumers on a regular basis and tell them about meetings, make phone calls to sick consumers, mail out newsletters to those who don't have an email addresses, make get well cards for consumers, visit consumers in the hospital. The CLF members who have these responsibilities will have the same group of people that they will call every month so that they can become familiar with that person. They will also help plan events and special occasions.

OUTREACH MEETINGS

At Washington Hospital Behavior Center, we went and talked to consumers about the Economic Stimulus Check and how they can receive it this year. The group asked all types of questions and wanted to know where to go; we gave them information on the package and places where they can get the forms filled out for free. At the McClendon Center, we also talked to consumers about the Economic Stimulus Check; they were very interested in what we had to say about the taxes. We passed out information to the group as well. At Mary Claire House, we prepared a package for the group. They wanted to talk about triggers and how to deal with them. We went over the information that we prepared and the group participated by answering questions and telling us how they were able to deal with some of their triggers. They were given an assignment to do for next month on triggers. We also talked about the Black History Dinner Celebration and the Economic Stimulus Check. We talked about one of the members leaving the home, working, and getting them more involved in advocating for themselves by coming to CLF meetings. The staff made a suggestion about sending us something by email if the group wanted a special topic to discuss.

ACT MEETING

We went to the ACT meeting and they were discussing topics of interest to our group. We talked about consumers being given a chance to come off of medication; and providers visiting consumers more when they are have problems in their home, on the job, or with a family member. We made several suggestions on how to get consumers involved in filling out surveys and more involved in making decision for what they want and need. The facilitator suggested that we work on making a survey that is based on the type of services and questions we want. We were asked how they can get consumers to fill out the survey. CLF was asked to sit on a special committee to help with planning of the ACT. I can't give all the details as of yet because this is our first meeting. (con't on p. 4)

WE WANT YOU... TO CONTRIBUTE TO *CAPITAL CONNECTIONS*

The *Capital Connections* newsletter belongs to all people in the DC Metro area who care about human rights, recovery and mental health. We welcome contributions, especially from DC consumer/survivors, and story ideas about the issues that matter to you. We would love to receive:

Poetry Editorials/Op-ed Interviews Stories of recovery
Events and conferences of interest to DC consumers and their allies

Please submit all story ideas or articles to Leah Harris, Editor, by the 18th of each month for publication the following month.

You can email them to consumerleadershipforum@gmail.com or send them via regular mail to:

CLF Newsletter c/o Dorothy Adams, 1023 FAIRMONT STREET, NW #101, WASHINGTON, DC 20001

CLF News (Con't)

University Legal Services have a position open and have asked CLF members to apply for the position.

Dorothy met with Eve Hill, Director of Office of Disability Rights and she was very interested in what the group does. She talked about the services that their department provides for consumers. She asked what could they help us with and we suggested employment for consumers because they want to go back to work. She will come to the meeting in May and talk to the group about the services they provide. One of her staff members, Matthew McCollough, will come to the meeting we are having in April to observe the group.

RACHEL'S WOMEN'S CENTER

CLF had their first connection with Rachel's Women's Center and had a great respect for what their staff is doing for the women who attend the center. Both Dorothy Adams and Denise McNeal answered questions about CLF and what to expect from the groups, including sharing experiences and strengths, as well as helping others to step out on faith and try new things, which gives them a better outlook on life. CLF will revisit Rachel's Women's Center again in April and meet those women. CLFers will bring information and best wishes to these women on their journey to recovery and wellness.

STAKEHOLDERS MTG

This meeting was dealing with consumer quality service and the lack of being treated with respect and dignity. Consumers had a chance to voice their concern about treatment tactics. Mr. Steve Baron, DMH Director, was not aware that the consumers were not pleased with the department staff and the core service CSW's. CONSUMER ACTION NETWORK's, Effie Smith stated if they (the consumers) are not satisfied they can feel free to call that office for help. The number is 202-842-0001. The quality of care is important to all consumers. We all want to be treated with respect and that is what we hope to receive.

Exciting New Opportunity for DC Consumer-Survivors with ODL

I am writing to invite you and your colleagues to participate in the District of Columbia Olmstead Planning Council. This Council will help to shape the course of the District's efforts to serve people with disabilities in their communities, rather than in institutions. In 1999, the United States Supreme Court issued its decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.* indicating states could not legally require people with disabilities to remain institutionalized in order to receive health care services. The Court ruled that this unjustified isolation is discrimination based on disability. Following that ruling, each state must address the issue of assuring home and community-based care for individuals.

The District of Columbia Office of Disability Rights (ODR) is responsible for the development of the Districts Olmstead Plan and is in the process of developing a framework that will ensure a successful and comprehensive planning process. Our initial task is to convene an Olmstead Planning Council comprised of consumers, parents, guardians and other caregivers, government officials, advocates and representatives from the provider community. We are looking for people who understand the need for, and the value of, a system of self-directed, individualized supports for people with disabilities. The Olmstead Planning Council will develop a plan that embraces the following guiding principles for people with disabilities:

- The right to live in the most integrated community setting appropriate to the needs of people with disabilities;
- The right of people to leave institutions and receive home and community-based services;
- An individual, client directed support plan written and updated regularly;
- Access to, and purchase of, self-directed care providers and selection of community supports;
- Identification, assessment and prioritization of the need for services from the spectrum of people with disabilities presently residing in institutions;
- Training for consumers, families, advocates, community support networks and other identified stakeholders.

To that end, the Office of Disability Rights is extending this invitation for participation on the Olmstead Planning Council, and your assistance in the recruitment of Council members (i.e., posting this invitation on an agency/group website, bulletin board or newsletter; announcement and discussion at local organization meetings; etc.). Our initial meeting is scheduled for:

Wednesday, May 7th 2008, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
441 4th Street NE
Judiciary Square, Conference Room 1117 (11th Floor North)

Participation on the Olmstead Planning Council will be voluntary and require attendance at regularly scheduled meetings and events. Interested candidates should contact Derek K. Orr, Deputy Director - Office of Disability Rights @ 202-727-8005 or email derek.orr@dc.gov. To learn more about the Office of Disability rights please visit our website at <http://odr.dc.gov>.

Poetry Corner

Intentional Peer Support

If I could write a poem about hope
I'd call it Intentional Peer Support.
It would be about connection, worldview, mutual responsibility, and
moving towards not away from.

If I could write a poem about social justice,
I'd call it Intentional Peer Support.
It would be about inclusion of vast and different personal stories, our views, cultures,
values, experiences, knowledge, uncommon and common sense, our ideas.

If I could write a poem about relationships,
I'd call it Intentional Peer Support.
It would be about challenging ourselves to see and think differently
to learn and grow together.

If I could write a poem about compassion,
I'd call it Intentional Peer Support.
It would be about acknowledging and sharing our power
while still daring to be powerful.
It would be about sensitivity, self definitions and self determination.

If I could write a poem about listening differently,
I'd call it Intentional Peer Support.
It would be about tuning into one another,
suspending what we think we know
in order to discover what we didn't
It would be about a commitment to be patient
with the process of relating and each other.

If I could write a poem about community,
I'd call it Intentional Peer Support.
It would be about prioritizing our relationships
in the family and in our communities
as we define our families, as we remain apart of community.

If I could write a poem about vision,
I'd call it Intentional Peer Support.
It would be about a new vision of interacting with peers
forgetting what we don't want, envisioning what we do,
living well in the present, and creating a better tomorrow

If I could write a poem about Intentional Peer Support,
It would be about social change
I'd call it social change.

Selina Welborn

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Consumer Leadership Forum



Our Vision



1. We seek an end to our isolation and we refuse to have our existence limited;
2. We seek a community that looks after the health and well-being of each individual, that respects the choices we make about our lives and our care;
3. We seek an improved system of crisis care and continuous care, where holistic healing, progress, and recovery are the key components. We need services that are individualized and self-directed as well as community supports such as consumer-driven respite and wellness centers;
4. We seek to engage with one another and to create a grassroots movement where we can support one another and keep our morale high. To forge our own identity as individuals and as a movement, separate and distinct from the provider community, but working in partnership with those who support use;
5. We seek a system that is driven by the needs, choices, and voices of consumers, not large pharmaceutical companies, providers and others in positions of power;
6. We seek a system of natural supports, where we can recognize that it is ok to fail, to make mistakes, to test new ground for ourselves in all that we do and in safety move beyond the system;
7. We seek an end to homelessness among persons with mental illness, and the creation of a network of affordable housing;
8. We seek to support and encourage consumer-run businesses and enterprises and to foster job opportunities;
9. We seek a community that respects the diversity within our movement and protects our traditions through a culture of competency and understanding. We seek to support families, youth and individuals to prevent isolation from one another and to provide training and information so that our community is empowered to cope with the unique challenges we face;
10. We will seek support from communities that are willing to partner with us and respect our choices and goals.

If you come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound with mine, then let us work together. - Lilla Watson, Aboriginal elder

Do you have a mental illness??

University Legal Services provides advocacy services for people with mental illness who have returned from jail or prison. We need participants for a confidential focus group.

Topics will include:

Are your needs being met in the community?
How can the criminal justice system improve?
How can the healthcare system improve?
What help do you want from advocates?

WHAT ARE YOUR CONCERNS?

DATE: Monday, April 28, 2008

TIME: 6:00 pm

If you want to participate, contact Angela Agnew @ 202.547.0198 x130.
Directions to the location will be provided over the phone.

OF INTEREST...

The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) DC is looking for consumers to speak about their recovery experience through their "In Our Own Voice" program. Training will be provided. Please call 202-546-0646 if you wish to be considered for this program. You will be contacted later on for an interview. NAMI DC is looking for consumers from a wide variety of experiences to be a part of this program including youth. In Our OWN VOICE is a national program that has been recognized for reducing stigma in communities. This will be the first time the program will be introduced in Washington DC.

Requirements?

You must be willing to go out and speak openly about your experience as a person with a mental illness.

Attend a 2 day training over a weekend

Also agree to be available to speak 2 times during the next year once trained.

Call 202-546-0646 with your contact information.

UPCOMING EVENTS/ MEETINGS

Get involved with the CLF!

Unless otherwise specified, all meetings take place at the McClendon Center
1313 New York Avenue, NW
For more information, call 202-609-4751

April 10th, 12-1:30 pm
Peer Support meeting

April 14th, 12—1:30 pm
Outreach meeting

April 15th, 12-3 pm
Crisis Care Meeting

April 17th, 12-1:30 pm
Housing Meeting

April 24th, 3- 5 pm
Partnership Meeting @ DMH

Consumer Leadership Forum

c/o Dorothy Adams
Co-Executive Director
1023 FAIRMONT STREET, NW #101
WASHINGTON, DC 20001

Phone: 202-609-7451
Email: dorothyadams@clfofdc.org

Visit us on the web at www.clfofdc.org



Consumers Uniting for Freedom and Choice

Taskforces Under the Consumer Leadership Forum

**If you're not on one – you should be –
Great things are happening!**

Housing	<u>Regular meeting time:</u> To be determined
Crisis-Care	<u>Regular meeting time:</u> To be determined
Peer-Specialist	<u>Regular meeting time:</u> To be determined
St. Elizabeths	<u>Regular meeting time:</u> To be determined
Consumer Leadership Forum	<u>Monthly meeting</u> – 1 st Friday of each month. 12-3 pm at the McClendon Center 1313 New York Avenue, NW



You're only
given a little
spark of
madness. You
mustn't lose it.

– Robin Williams