



Capital Connection

A PUBLICATION OF THE CONSUMER LEADERSHIP FORUM

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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.

Fredrica Gonzales: Activist, Poet, Survivor

Fredrica Gonzales is a living testament of the potential of every human being to recover, given the proper support and encouragement. She is an activist, a poet, a mother, and a survivor. As she herself testified before City Council last spring:

I have been hospitalized many times - subjected to the rough warehousing and locked wards of St. Elizabeths, struggling each time with the huge disruption it caused to my life. Re-entry into the community was always so hard. Every time I went to the hospital I was forcibly injected with Haldol - over my objections. It would stay in my system for months afterwards - turning me from someone who can live independently and go to school into a zombie who could hardly brush her own hair. No one ever told me I had choices, no one ever talked to me about recovery.



Fredrica Gonzales is a core member of the CLF, a student, a poet, and survivor.

How did you get started on your road to recovery?

Crossing Place. When I went to Crossing Place they treated me like a human being. There were open doors, I could come and go, I could take my meds, I could smoke. I could look at TV, and eat. I would like to make a few changes there if I could but they would be very small ones. I would like to see mental health care in any form just realize that we are adults. At Crossing Place, I found a haven that really helped with my recovery...they said I am OK, if I take medications, and look out for myself, and recognize that if I'm at a cracking point and I need to take a break, there's somewhere I can go. There's also a new family now, there's CLF, I can call them up and say, "this is the way I'm feeling, this is what I need."

What have been some of the fruits of your recovery?

I have found that I've been in touch with a little more of my braver side. I'm in college now at Trinity, studying English. So I have to write, I have to create. We had to take words and turn them into poems for a grade. We had to read to an assembly. I found out that I could do it. I could take 10 or 15 words and make a whole poem. I can get an A or a B - I have a B plus average.

Where do you see yourself going in the future?

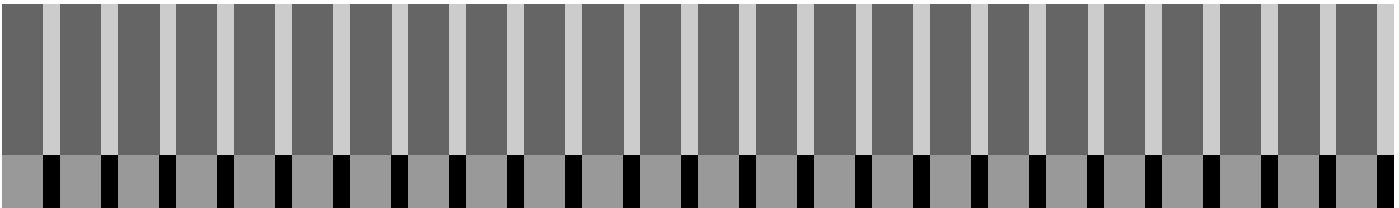
I see myself in full recovery. I see myself speaking to others about the fact that they can do it. If I can do it, you can do it. I would like to encourage (con't on p.2)

Fredrica Gonzales (con't from p. 1)

everybody to finish or further their education. If you don't do anything but get into a program that will give you some kind of a certification, that is something. Realize that you do have talents. I find that the "stripping" from the mental health treatment I received was to tell me I was nobody. I could never return to society and be normal. I'd be lucky if I got a job, but I'd better keep it well hidden that I had been in mental health treatment or I would not be hired. St. E's has posted that they hire their own patients first. Well they did, when I was there, they hired people to clean the grounds. I think that we are multitalented people and that we can do more than clean a ground. Now if we choose to clean a ground, that's a good job. Some of us are lawyers, doctors, teachers, educators—why not run for Congress?

"I see myself in full recovery. I see myself speaking to others about the fact that they can do it. If I can do it, you can do it."

—Fredrica Gonzales



Consumers of America

(Written in honor of the First Annual Consumer Choice Awards)

If you are CLF, you know me by yourself
 If you are not, welcome as a quest.
 If you are a consumer, you know me well.
 All other, life has brought us here.

Now and forever I think of my good fortune,
 That "mental illness" brought us all together.

Look around at the colorful faces, the rainbow
 Decorations, the talent provided.
 But most of all, if you are not one of us, remember the
 "mentally" ill cooked and entertained
 You this day and prepared this program.
 So next time you feel the urge to judge, just look
 Around wherever you are as mental is
 Mandatory.

By Fredrica F. Gonzales

CLF Updates

By Dorothy Adams

Dixon Court Monitor Review: The outcome of the review was that adult services have improved this year and they feel that the providers are going in the right direction, but they should strive for 100% overall for treatment. The court monitor feels that if consumers can get other consumers to participate more in the process, then they would have a better outcome. The children were the worst of all. They are not getting the type of treatment that they should and really need some improvement. I personally feel that they did not interview enough people to get the information that they really needed.

CLF members had a meeting with Samuel Allen, PAIMI Outreach Advocate, at University Legal Services today. We discussed ideas for collaboration on how to build better services for consumers. We also hope to share information more closely on what each of our organizations is doing and to look for ways to support each others' work. We hope to have a meeting with providers and several other groups and let them know what we are all about.

The housing meeting went well. We came up with some housing issues and made an action plan on how we feel that the system can help with each of these issues. (See Housing Task Force Report on p. 4)

We also did outreach at Miriam's Kitchen this month. IWe met a lot of very interesting people and they are getting familiar with us. They tell us about what they want to do in life, read some poetry and talk about their painting. Every month someone tells me that they will bring something to share with me that they have done when I come back next month. Miriam's Kitchen has some talented and gifted people coming into their program, and we hope to do an upcoming feature on some of these folks in a future issue of the *Capital Connection*.

The crisis care meeting went well. We are looking at ways to help mothers with children get better treatment. We would like consumers to be trained in crisis care. Those who are trained will do a tour of the different facilities and will give other consumers first hand testimony on how they felt in the crisis care facility.

I suggested that we have a day care for the mothers who have children and have the children spend the time child in the day care while the mother goes into the hospital for treatment. That way the mothers will feel comfortable knowing that they don't have to go through the courts to get their children back when they leave the treatment program.



Housing Task Force Update

By Dorothy Adams

Below is an outline of the issues we discussed at the July Housing Task Force Meeting:

Independent Living:

- Alternative Funding Solution
- Housing First
- Section 8

Assisted Living:

- Consumer Income Maintenance
- Ratio of Beds

Crisis Beds:

- Capacity Number of Beds
- Flexibility
- Funding

Saint Elizabeth:

- Discharge Planning
- Staff
- End of Punitive Medication

We talked about a better way for people to find out when their names have come up for housing. We suggested that maybe the housing authority can send a list of peoples' case numbers to shelters and to case managers so people can look on the list and see if they recognized their case numbers and to contact the person that they need to speak to. We also found out that it is cheaper for people to be in housing than in shelter. Housing partnership helps people that have been on the street or homeless for a year or have been homeless four times a year. We also talked about how assisted living keeps people depending on the system because they don't get money to do anything with and can't go anywhere because the housing system gets all their money. For the money that they pay for the room they should have a bathroom in their own rooms. We suggested that they have something like a one bed room apartment. As for as crisis care we want more houses and want the staff to get paid for working and not by the number of clients that are in the beds in any given time. Overall we have a working action plan, so we can have a better way to track what we want to do with the housing meeting.

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CAN Corner

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By Patrick Lynch

It is hard to believe it is August. Time is flying!

CAN has continued to work with DMH on its PUSH program. We have been talking to consumers in St. Elizabeth's Hospital and John Howard about their feelings about discharge planning and outplacement options. Common issues that we have encountered include insufficient housing options and choices. Some of the consumers on the PUSH list have also been working with us on their own advocacy issues.

We are pleased to report on work that Mary Blake, formerly C0-Director at CAN and now Public Health Advisor at SAMHSA, has been involved with. Mary participated in a live webcast on July 31 called "Promoting Independence and Recovery through Work: Employment for People with Psychiatric Disabilities." Other participants included Dr. Paul Gorman, CEO of West Central and Behavioral Health and Professor at Dartmouth Medical School, and Robert Burns, Director of Rehabilitation Services of the Maryland Department of Education. More information and webcast archives are available at www.nga.org/center/health. (con't on p. 5)

CAN Corner (con't from p. 4)

On July 31, CAN attended a workshop by a consumer, Dr. Jean Campbell, at DMH headquarters and sponsored by the DC State Mental Health Council. Dr. Campbell talked about entrepreneurship and peer-run programs. This was a very informative workshop and more information about her Program in Consumer Studies and Training at the Missouri Institute of Mental Health is available for anyone who is interested. Dr. Campbell's e-mail is jean.campbell@mimh.edu.

Through a grant from the Bureau of Justice Administration (BJA), CAN has been coordinating focus groups on jail diversion issues for consumers in the criminal justice system. On August 8 at One Judiciary Square, a workshop will be held on D.C.'s Draft Strategic Plan for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, sponsored by the Criminal Justice Committee Council and DMH. This forum will consist of two sessions, one from 9:30-11:30am for consumers and their families, and Noon-2pm for stakeholders (advocates) and providers. We encourage everyone to attend both and to offer their views on this important issue.

Finally, CAN will be participating in the 7th Annual Judge Aubrey E. Robinson, Jr. Memorial Mental Health Conference on Wednesday, September 26, at the Renaissance Hotel (999 9th St NW), from 8:30am to 4:30pm, and sponsored by the DC State Mental Health Planning Council and DMH. Three panels will include the Trauma Knowledge Utilization Project on Intergenerational Issues, Specific Services on Gender Issues, and Service Integration on Cross-Agency Issues. Registration is due September 15.

As always, if you or anyone you know needs help or needs to talk about recovery, rights, dealing with grievances or concerns about treatment, call CAN at (202) 842-0001 or e-mail dlewis@can-dc.org. CAN's mission is to empower mental health consumers and their families by promoting recovery and self-advocacy. We are a vehicle for people to have their voices heard at the individual and systems levels. We look forward to our continued collaboration with all of you in the community to improve services and open doors for consumers in recovery.

Beatniks' Corner

By Peter R. "Beatnik Pete" Warner:

The dinner club has been very busy, prepping the delayed summer 2007 edition of our print magazine for the printer. We're meeting every single Wednesday night throughout the summer...Why not make our usual hangout, Alfio's Trattoria in Friendship Heights, your regular Wednesday night hangout?!

The outstanding dinner highlight during August will be Jim Rosack on August 8th. From his commanding perch at "Psychiatric News," the domestic and international pharma companies confide in him regarding new drugs even before they brief the doctors or their own sales staffs.

- ♦ Wednesday, August 8th: *Psychiatric News* pharmacology columnist Jim Rosack, one of the Beatniks' most popular speakers, returns for an update on what new drugs to expect to hit the market to treat schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder over the next several years.
- ♦ Wednesday, August 15th: Dr. Larry Adler from Glen Burnie-based clinical drug trials firm Clinical Insights gives an overview of the international pharma industry, describes the drug discovery process in detail, and talks about his firm and its drug trials.
- ♦ Wednesday, August 22nd: The crew from CBH Health's Life Skills day treatment program, based in Rockville, discuss their comprehensive program approach. CBH staff will also be on hand to discuss this firm's many clinical drug trials.
- ♦ Wednesday, August 29th: A team from CORE Service Agency/Montgomery County, consisting of Director Arlene Rogan and/or colleague Oliver Brown and/or colleague Kim Allen, discuss new directions the county mental health agency will be taking under the Ike Leggett administration, and which agencies and programs will be funded with the new fiscal year.

All of the above will take place at Alfio's Trattoria, 4515 Willard Avenue in Friendship Heights, three blocks west of Wisconsin Avenue and the Friendship Heights Metro stop. Free valet parking. Dinners start 6:30pm; lecture/discussions start 7:15pm.

DISTRICT RESIDENTS: WE MISS YOU!! ALL FIRST-TIME ATTENDEES DURING THE MONTH OF AUGUST WHO RESIDE IN THE DISTRICT WILL GET A FREE "SPUMONI" ICE CREAM DESERT, COMPLIMENTS OF THE BEATNIKS!!
 QUESTIONS? Call Pete at (240)449-5988.

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

Next Consumer Leadership Forum Meeting

Friday, September 7, 12 – 3 pm
The McClendon Center
1313 New York Avenue, NW
Lunch will be provided.

USE YOUR PERSONAL STORY AS AN ADVOCACY TOOL

Our personal stories of struggle, survival, and recovery can be powerful forces for positive change. Dorothy Adams will facilitate a discussion on how to utilize your personal story as a tool to advocate for change.

Upcoming Meetings

BJA Grant Community Forums

August 8, 2007

9:30- 11:30 am: Consumer-Family member forum

12:00- 2:00 pm: Provider/Advocate forum
 441 4th St. NW 1st fl. conference room
 southside (One Judiciary Square).

These forums will give persons served, their families, and other stakeholders involved in their care the opportunity to provide some direct feedback in planning the focus of collaboration between mental health and the criminal justice system.

For more information, please call Danielle Lewis at CAN: (202) 842-0001.

7th Annual Judge Aubrey E. Robinson, Jr. Memorial Mental Health Conference

Sept. 26, 2007 8:30 am—4:30 pm
 Renaissance Hotel: 999 9th St. NW
 Washington, DC 20001

Recovery Through the Ages:
 Trauma Informed Care

(See flier insert for details)

ESSAY/POETRY CONTEST: WHAT DOES DIGNITY MEAN TO YOU?

DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 15, 2007

First prizes: \$50.00 voucher from Giant
 Two runner-up prizes of \$25 each.

Webster's Dictionary defines Dignity as: - 1. the quality or state of being worthy, honored, or esteemed. 2.a. high rank, office, or position, b. a legal title of nobility or honor. 3. formal reserve of language or manner.

What does dignity mean to you?

Please submit an essay or a poem answering this question in less than 300 words.

Only entries that are legible will be considered — can be typed or handwritten. Must have name, address, telephone number on the entries, pages must be numbered and must be the original work of the person submitting the essay or poem.

Please mail entries to:

The Consumer Leadership Forum
 c/o Galina Sergen
 The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia
1331 H Street, N.W., Suite 350
Washington, D.C. 20005

Or email as an attachment to:
consumerleadershipforum@gmail.com

Consumer Leadership Forum

c/o Galina Sergen
New Address (Phone remains the same):
The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia
1331 H Street, N.W., Suite 350
Washington, D.C. 20005

Phone: 202-661-5947
Fax: 202-727-2132
Email: gsergen@legalaiddc.org,
consumerleadershipforum@gmail.com



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 Regular meeting time:
12:00 pm—2:00 pm
3rd Thursday of each month
Legal Aid Conference Room

Crisis-Care Regular meeting time:
To Be Determined

Peer-Specialist Regular meeting time:
To be determined

St. Elizabeths Regular meeting time:
To be determined

Consumer Leadership Forum

Monthly meeting – 1st Friday of each month.
12-3 pm at the McClendon Center
1313 New York Avenue, NW

