

Nancy Lee Head: Recovery Warrior

Capital Connection

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By Mary Blake

How can anyone sum up the life and work of Nancy Lee Head? A tireless advocate on issues related to mental illness, she has had a profound impact on the DC mental health system and the lives of persons with an interest in mental health over many years. In recognition of her advocacy, Nancy Lee has received numerous awards for her work, including the prestigious John Park Lee Award by the Presbyterian Church USA in recognition of her advocacy on behalf of those with mental illness.

Diagnosed with schizophrenia in the early 1960s, she has spoken out locally, at conferences around the country, on television and radio—including the Voice of America and National Public Radio—telling her own story as part of her effort to improve treatment and bring greater understanding to the issues affecting mental health consumers like herself. Nancy Lee has been a beacon of light to other consumers through her compassion and her own recovery. When Nancy Lee speaks about her experiences, including as an inpatient at St. Elizabeths Hospital, she speaks humbly and with authenticity about the struggles consumers face. She also serves as a model for hope and consumers respond.

Nancy Lee received her B.A. with honors in Religion from the George Washington University and studied theology at the Columbia Theological Seminary. Unfortunately, Nancy Lee learned while at seminary that due to the stigma surrounding her mental illness at the time (it was 1978) she would be prevented from being ordained by the (con't on p.2)

is a lifetime leader in District of Columbia Consumer Movement

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Consumer Leadership Forum

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

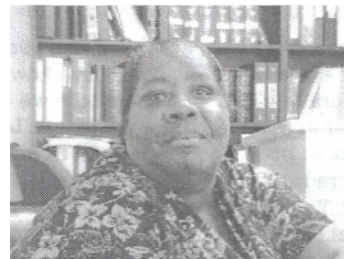
The purpose of this meeting is to unite our best efforts as mental health consumers to reshape/reform/reinvent the J.C. mental health system.

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

Consumer Choice Awards Just Around the Corner

With the Consumer Choice Awards just days away, Project Manager Dorothy Adams and the entire volunteer team are attending to all the last-minute details that go into making an event like this a success: shopping for the food and the decorations, looking at the final proofs of the program, answering last-minute questions, and finalizing the logistics with the speakers and other participants.



Dorothy Adams is the Project Manager for the Consumer Choice Awards.

This is the first time that such an event has been organized in the District of Columbia, but "I've had a really good time working on it," says Dorothy.

Thirteen awards will be given out to the staff who were nominated by consumers for supporting recovery and self-determination. Categories include "Case Manager of the Year," "Outstanding Recognition for Mentoring" and

Outstanding Support Plan for Independent Living. The Consumer Choice Awards will take place on April 28 from 5—9 pm at the McClendon Center. We look forward to seeing everyone there!!

Nancy Lee Head (con't from p. 1)

Church. Yet, Nancy Lee speaks and writes ardently about her faith and spirituality in her recovery. In her article "My Life As Ministry," originally published in the *JOURNAL* of NAMI CA, she writes:

"I would like to explain how I feel mental illness has helped my spirituality, just as I have explained how faith has helped my mental illness. This is all a "wonderment" to me because I am not a scientist and have not read anything in this field. However, it occurs to me that some of the symptoms of schizophrenia, for example, when carried to their extreme or when experienced in their extreme; are just that: symptoms of a brain disorder. But when these feelings are under control of the person experiencing them, I wonder if they perhaps enhance one's spirituality.

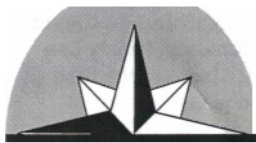
Let me give you an example. One of the difficulties that folks with schizophrenia often experience is that of personal boundaries; that is, where I as a person begin and end and where the rest of the world begins and ends. When this phenomenon is experienced in the extreme, it causes me to be afraid to go outside on a lovely May day because, since my body temperature and temperature outside are the same, I might disappear or lose my sense of self.

Or, when someone across the room drops a glass of water, I jump and say, "I'm sorry," because I think I have done it and am responsible. It is as though I am both across the room and here in my seat at the same time - no natural boundaries.

That is the "bad" part. The "good" part is that, because I have a "thin membrane" as opposed (con't on p. 3)

Crisis Care: A Call to Action

To my peers in DC: consumers, survivors or people with lived experiences,



I'm requesting your support, thoughts and feedback on crisis care in the District of Columbia. Working on a task force with mostly providers has been challenging, and I have decided, with Leslie McIntire, to work directly with my peers to get feedback from you based on your own lived experiences. What are your thoughts about crisis or crisis services? For instance:

The people
with the
greatest
stake in
crisis care
are those
who use it...
us!

^-What do you find helps you when you are on the verge of crisis; or in crisis; or even after crisis? >-What has your experience been dealing with crisis services? >What does "crisis" mean to you? ^•What do you think needs to be in place to help us after we've gone into crisis or are coming out of crisis? >Do you have a crisis plan? If so, is it used the way you would like? Is it helpful to you? x If you have concerns or issues regarding substance abuse, how has that affected your ability to access services that are helpful to you when you're going into crisis?

The people with the greatest stake in crisis care are those who use it...us! Yet, we often are the last persons asked (if we are asked at all) to the table to improve how the system responds to crisis. Let's create our own table—either informally or formally—where we can talk openly and honestly amongst ourselves, support each other in thinking about the issues. Let's exchange ideas about our own lived experiences and what helps us prepare for, prevent, or deal with crises. Let's come up with our own action agenda when we're ready.

Please support us if you're up to it. You can contact me by phone at (202) 842-0001 or by e-mail at: mblake@can-dc.org You may contact Leslie by e-mail at: ljmci5@yahoo.com. Or, you can call us at (202) 661-5947. If you want to write of your experiences and mail it to us, you may do so at: Consumer Leadership Forum c/o The Legal Aid Society of DC 666 Eleventh St., NW, Suite 800 Washington DC 20001. All personal information will be held in strict confidence. Any feedback would be welcome...thanks!—Mary Blake

Nancy Lee Head (con't from p. 2)

to a "hard shell" around my person or personality, I feel unusually connected with other people, and this can be a positive and enhance my relationships with others. This can also be "tricky" because sometimes I over-identify with people, be they in real life or novels or movies, and tend to feel more responsible for them and their personal situations than I should.

It has been a learning experience for me, as I have struggled to "manage" my illness, to use the above phenomenon creatively and caringly and not to allow it to paralyze or panic me as it has in the past when it has become too extreme. I have learned as well that I have to have a place and time where, as the writer, May Sarton stated, "I come back into myself after periods of being available on a deep level to the many human beings I encounter along life's pilgrimage. By that I mean, I find ways - through silence or music or meditation - to remain centered in God, the Ground of my Being."

"I have learned as well that I have to have a place and time where,

as the writer, May Sarton stated, "I come back into myself..." — 

Nancy Lee Head

Nancy Lee was a founding member and President of the DC Mental Health Consumers League, the first consumer-led advocacy organization in the District. She consistently scouted for and encouraged other consumers to get involved and speak out about their experiences. A member of the Dixon Receiver's Advisory Board, she was an outspoken critic of unnecessary institutionalization and rights abuses that had plagued the DC mental health system for decades. She worked to educate consumers about their rights and the changes that resulted from the Dixon Exit Plan.

Just three years ago, she retired after serving for 13 years as the Program Manager of the D.C. Affiliate of the National Alliance for the Mentally 111 (NAMI). Nancy Lee has served as a powerful educator for families, providers, and others interested in mental health. For instance, she was a featured presenter at the July 2005 NAMI Convention symposium titled "The Healing Power of Faith" and coordinated the traditional interfaith closing service. In another example, Nancy Lee spoke about her concerns regarding forced treatment in an interview with Shankar Vedantam, a writer for the *Washington Post*. Although doctors may think forcing patients to take medicine is a form of compassion, Head said coercive treatment "only added to her feelings of paranoia and helplessness."

Among her many roles, Nancy Lee serves on the Board of Directors of the McClendon Center, Cornerstone (which provides housing for people with mental illness) and SHARE, as well as being a member of the Department of Mental Health's Partnership Council. She was an early participant and continues to be a member of the DC Consumer Leadership Forum. Her other volunteer efforts have included ministry to consumers and work with the Chaplains Office at St. Elizabeths Hospital, and outreach and ministry at homeless shelters such as Sarah House, to name just a few.

Unfortunately, in July of 2006, Nancy Lee was in a terrible car accident that has removed her for now from her day-to-day engagement with consumers in the community. She is sorely missed but we are with her—and she with us—in spirit as we go about our work. Fondly referred to as the "grandmother of the DC consumer movement," Nancy Lee reminds us always of the beauty of grace in adversity. Her message transcends the realm of mental health, teaching us that in any human interaction, what matters most is faith...faith in possibility, love and respect.

The objectives are to:

- Develop relationships with Business Management and Community Development Programs at local universities.
- Educate DC consumers on business development models from other parts of the country.

CAN Corner: CAN Launches Entrepreneurship Initiative

I 4 By Mary Blake and Effie Smith

Hi to everyone from Consumer Action Network (CAN)... here's the news from our neck of the woods. In March, CAN was awarded, for the second year, the Timothy Coakley Leadership Award from the American College of Mental Health Administration (ACMHA). The award is in support of CAN's early planning work on an entrepreneurship initiative we launched in March 2006.

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The primary goal of the initiative is to develop a plan for educating mental health consumers in the District of Columbia (DC) on the role of entrepreneurship as a recovery tool. Fundamental to our work is collaboration with key stakeholders including consumers, business leaders, leaders from academic institutions, mental health policy/program developers, and other stakeholders.

- Promote entrepreneurial mindset for consumers interested in working.
- Develop a relationship with the District of Columbia Chamber of Commerce.
- Work with key stakeholders and other program supporters to identify potential funders and promote the program goals.

The result of the planning stage will be a national review of other recovery-oriented entrepreneurship efforts, working relationships with one or more local schools, connections with the business community and proposals for program support.

Among our accomplishments in our first award year, we:

- > Identified three key partners to serve as advisors in connecting with the DC business community and academic institutions.
- > Researched literature showing key elements for creating successful consumer-run support organizations.
- > Received support and funding from the a private foundation to promote further planning and research for the program.
- > Identified five emerging entrepreneurs who may have interest in the program.
- > Hired a part-time research assistant on a short-term basis for the project.

This year, CAN will move the project forward in some key ways to bring visibility and partnership to the planning process. For instance, we will release, in late May 2007, our research white paper on entrepreneurship and persons with mental health issues. In June 2007, we will convene a brown bag event featuring a panel of emerging entrepreneurs/consumers to discuss issues related to entrepreneurship and their own recovery processes. We will send out announcements once the date and venue are set.

Stay tuned for future alerts on the project, as we begin collaborating with key partners. In closing, we'd like to send special thanks to Samuel Awosika for recommending us to the Coakley Fund Trustees and ACMHA, as well as to Richard Warsh for his strong recommendation for our project concept.



April CLF Meeting Report

By Leslie McIntyre

Our April meeting started off with congratulations to all consumer/survivors who testified before the City Council DMH Budget hearing on the fifth of April. This testimony included a panel representing the CLF that requested \$300,000 to be specifically designated for peer run services in the FY 2008 budget. The testimony also made clear that we wanted the Request For Proposal to specify that only peer run organizations could apply for the contract. Councilmember David Catania thanked the CLF task force for all the work they have done to make peer run services a reality in DC and let us know that he fully supported this finally happening in 2008. In the testimony of the Director of DMH, Mr. Stephen Baron, he also gave his full support to the \$300,000 request and to the idea of offering the contract to only peer run organizations. He assured the Council that these funds would be available in 2008.

This peer run services contract will represent a major accomplishment for the CLF. The Peer Recovery Specialist Task Force was the first one we formed over a year and a half ago and many consumers have worked on it over that time. Everyone's work has been invaluable in making this happen. Special thanks go to Jeanne Locher, Galina Sergen, and Dorothy Adams for their excellent diplomatic skills. And on the provider staff side of the task force a big thank you goes to Dennis Hobbs of the of the McClendon Center for his work and support on this issue.

The meeting then moved on to a discussion of our Outreach Project. A 9 point Outline for Outreach prepared by Angela Frank and Dorothy Adams served as a framework for the discussion. We all made the commitment to get our newsletter out to not only consumer/survivors, but also to DC government officials such as the Mayor, Deputy Mayors, and Council members. We decided to use both e-mail and snail mail/hand delivery because other organizations have reported getting more responses with e-mails to these particular people. We discussed producing a color brochure about the CLF and its mission, as well as cards listing each of the different task forces with a brief description of their goals. While these are tools we want to use, they are not substitutes for really talking with consumers and explaining the specifics of what we are doing at the time and getting feedback from them. A suggestion was made to change the name of the Peer Recovery Task Force to the Peer Services Task Force before anything is printed up.

We agreed that it is good policy to ask providers before we post things or leave information at CSA's, but that we should be the ones to actually do that and that we should talk to as many consumers as we can while doing it. We don't want to have provider staff be the ones who post or place our literature. And ultimately the way the literature is going to be most effective is by being handed to consumers in the course of a discussion. And we need to broaden out in terms of where we have these discussions. Consumers are everywhere. We run into them in the CVS and Giant, and hanging out on the corners near CSAs, CRFs, and the homeless shelters. Let's talk to them there too.

Ultimately our goal is to build the mental health recovery movement in DC. And to do that we want to develop our professional community activist skills. We want to be advocates for this movement in our whole community. We never know who is listening or how they can be affected by the idea of recovering wellness instead of living with debilitating illness and the stigma attached to it. Realizing that there is an effective international movement that is achieving this goal, and that there are activists in DC who are themselves the evidence that proves recovery is possible can have a powerful affect on society and on individuals.

Talking about our role in community outreach as a whole led us into talking about the fact that we need to do different outreach for different people. Yes, we want to build the CLF. We are a consumer run organization and all of our work is done by consumers, for consumers. But not everyone is going to want to be involved in everything we do and attend our meetings, etc. We want to identify the people who want to be activists and work with them to develop their skills the same as we are doing ourselves. And we need to allow-that there are others who may only want to be involved around a particular project or task force. There are others who may only want to attend functions that we sponsor. There will be others who want to read the newsletter to keep up with what we are doing, and that is all they want to do right now. There are many consumers who will only want to tell us of their experiences in the hopes that these stories will better enable us to work in their best interest on the issues that most affect them. And that is exactly what their stories do! We need to do outreach to all of these people and encourage everyone to become involved in our work to the extent they are comfortable with. Yes, we need more people involved in our actual advocacy efforts. We need their ideas, their energy, their stories, their skills. By doing outreach that also builds the recovery movement as a whole we are creating the atmosphere that will enable people to empower themselves to become activists

In closing the meeting we all re-committed to getting the invitational flyers to the April 28th Consumer Choice Awards out to as many consumers as possible. The event has come together nicely after a lot of very hard work by Dorothy Adams and her team. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Dorothy at 202/652-0605.



Poets



"I'M GOING TO SHOUT IT OUT"

By Sharon D. Wise

Ain't no words for what I go through when I am going through changes.
The changes have so many faces that I do not recognize if one is mines or your,
I don't know how to say so, I SHOUT IT OUT!

I don't know how to feel, I don't know if what I am feeling is real,
I want to shop till I drop; I want to love until it's all gone,
Pretending to know the words to explain it, but I don't know what to call it, so
I SHOUT IT OUT.

Have you ever wanted to live in a world with tears, when we can all live in a world with fears?

Well, now you feeling me, because there are many things that I aspire to be,
But when I have to run after myself, trying to find myself, it's more than self-love, I can't explain it so, I
SHOUT IT OUT.

I don't know HOW TO SAY, OR what to call it, so I SHOUT IT OUT!

Sharon is blessed to be an artist and always depended on her talents and artistic abilities to survive. She has taught art through healing for over fifteen years and is the artist-in-residence at the D.C. Department of Mental Health, St. Elizabeths State Hospital. Sharon recently achieved one of her goals of becoming a Certified Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) Facilitator. She also has a certification as a Peer and Enrollment Specialist. Sharon's mottos are, "Don't make anyone a priority that makes you an Option" and "To Fail is not an Option". Sharon presently lives alone in Southeast DC and has one grandson, what she calls "her prize in the cracker jack box," sixteen month old Desmond Jules.

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, May 4, 12-3 pm
The McClendon Center
1313 New York Avenue, NW
Lunch will be provided.

Spring Celebration!

It's time to party down like we mean it! After a busy spring advocating for recovery-oriented services in the DC budget, and our first major event, the Consumer Choice Awards, we are going to get our groove on, eat some delicious food, enjoy one another's company, and celebrate life. Of course about any upcoming ideas for activism and advocacy will be welcome, but there will be no formal items for discussion on the agenda. Please feel free to bring your favorite dance music and be ready to have a good time. Bring a friend — this might be a good, low-key way to introduce someone to the CLF.

Upcoming Events

1st Annual Consumer Choice Awards

Over 100 DC consumers have voted for the providers who helped them most in their recovery process. Let's come together to honor our provider friends, to have a good time, and to celebrate the spirit of recovery, healing, and empowerment.

PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE!
Saturday, April 28, 2001
5:00 to 9:00pm

The New York Presbyterian Church
Marshall Hall Room, Fifth Floor
1313 New York Avenue, NW

Please **come dressed in** your finest attire!! **Food, drinks and entertainment will be provided.**

Contact: Dorothy Adams, Project Coordinator (h)
 202/652-0605 (o) 202/661-5947 or
 emaildorotheadams2007@yahoo.com

Coffee Klatsch

Join CLFers and their friends for conversation and socializing on Saturday afternoons from 3-4:30 pm at the Potter's House. The Potter's House is located at 1658 Columbia Road, NW. For more information, please contact Sherry McMahan at slmcmahan@msn.com or 202-328-7426. We hope to see you there!!

CALLING CRAFTY CLIENTS

We are a group of clients of public mental health services getting together to collectively market our own art and craft projects through the local flea markets, consignment shops and on the Internet. By working together we hope to sharpen our art and craft skills, and support each other in creating our own income by learning marketing and small business skills. If this is something you are interested in, please join us! We meet every Wednesday afternoon, from 1-3 pm. The location is 1001 Lawrence Street, NE, room B53. This is two short blocks from the Brookland Metro Station and well served by several major bus lines.

For additional information, please contact:
 Rosemary, rperticari94@comcast.net
 Sherry, slmcmahan@msn.com or 202-328-7426

**Consumer
Leadership
Forum**

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Consumers Uniting for

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> 12:00 pm—2:00 pm 3 rd Thursday of each month Legal Aid Conference Room
Crisis-Care	<u>Regular meeting time:</u> 1:00- 3:00 pm 3 rd Tuesday of each month Legal Aid Conference Room
Peer-Specialist	<u>Regular meeting time:</u> To be determined
St. Elizabeths	<u>Regular meeting time:</u> To be determined Legal Aid Conference Room
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

