

Capital Connection I

1 PUBLICATION OF THE CONSUMER LEADERSHIP FORUM

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Inside this issue:

Galina's Reflections	2
Interview with Nathaniel Stanley	2-3
Beatniks' Corner	4
Jan. Meeting Report	4-5
Our Vision	6
Schedule of Events	7
Consumer Choice Awards Update	7
CLF Taskforces	8

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 if 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, Provider, Visionary: Interview with Nathaniel Stanley, Part I

Leah Harris interviewed Nathaniel Stanley, Best Health Project Manager at the McClendon Center. Look for Part II of this interview in the February-March 2007 issue.

LH: Can you tell me a little bit about your background and how you came to work in this field?

NS: I've been bipolar for the past 27 years. So I've gone from adolescence to young adulthood to my early forties managing the ups and downs that are associated with bipolar. I've had several hospitalizations. I have seen the devastation that a manic state can cause, and how crippling a major depressive episode can be. I've been blessed however, during many intervals of my life, to have had three different careers. My first major career was in elementary education, where I taught for about four years. After having taught, I went onto Green Door because I had had a setback following teaching. I was not managing my own mental health as efficiently I should have, and I paid the price for that. This was coupled with being placed with an inept organization prior to discovering the Green Door—an organization that was a part of the public health system, and was not clearly geared towards holistic wellness and recovery. It was geared towards the medicinal "kid gloves" treatment that is fueled by subjugation and oppression, really. But thank goodness I discovered Green Door, and their comprehensive approach to developing work skills as well as psychosocial skills. Many of them I had already had, but I had lost some of them after having a setback, and I can of course always learn so many more things. They helped me overcome my computer anxiety and many more things, (con't on p. 2)



Nathaniel Stanley is the Best Health Project Manager at the McClendon Center

Reflections on the CLF's One Year Anniversary

By Galina Sergen

Dear Friends,



Galina Sergen

It seems hard to believe that just one year ago a small team of us gathered for lunch to discuss how we might start to increase the strength of the consumer / survivor voice in Washington DC. As we reach the one year mark, it is good to take stock, rest on our laurels (briefly) and assess all that has been accomplished.

The CLF has grown to over 60 members and we have an active core of valiant volunteers who show up to meetings, write for the newsletter, testify before the council and represent the CLF at meetings with the Department of Mental Health and other agency meetings where our voices need to be heard, (con't on p. 2)

Nathaniel Stanley (con't)

And so I started to matriculate within the Green Door system. They helped me find a job at Pitney-Bowes, and I was there for about two years. I learned the kinds of things you would think you could never learn how to do. But I think one of the many themes of empowerment is overcoming so many obstacles, and also being able to overcome the obstacles that people try to place upon you through the cancer that is stigma. We talk about stigma so often, and I've been stigmatized a good part of my life - self-stigma, some of it, and stigma from outside forces. Now I perceive myself as a person living with an illness as opposed to someone who categorizes themselves. A person of value. A person who has loved, can love, and is capable of being loved. A person who is a professional individual, who deserves to be treated with respect and dignity, as anyone else has the right to be. So, going back — I left Pitney-Bowes because I did have a setback, and so I had to take care of getting well once again, and being willing to swallow my pride and to say, "Sure, I'm working right now, but there are going to be times when I am going to have to take care of my symptoms and manage those as an adult should too." I had to go through some work rehabilitation. I started volunteering at the Green Door, helping to facilitate groups. We had a day services program within the clinic at the time. That really led me into being gainfully employed within the mental health system, working as the Best Health Project Manager at the McClendon Center, which is what I currently do.

LH: Can you please tell me a little bit about what you do at McClendon?

NS: One thing that I do is facilitate groups. Each of them is geared towards holistic healing and recovery. Our Monday group called "Speakup" is to specifically discuss principles of McClendon's Consumer Rights Statement, and how they apply to us as individuals. Then we have a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) group, with emphasis on the creation of a Wellness (con't on p. 3)

Galina's Reflections (con't)


In our first year of advocacy, a group of CLFers and our allies in the Provider Leadership Forum (PLF) testified before the budget oversight committee on the need to have funds spent on peer-specialist training and to develop a long-term employment program. Next month, a group of us will travel out to Meta Services in Phoenix, Arizona, to review their training program and assess its suitability for a train-the-trainers program in DC.

In response to CLF advocacy efforts, the Department of Mental Health will also fund a train-the-trainers program to be conducted by the Copeland Center in Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP). This training will enable a core group of peers to be certified to train others in WRAP and to facilitate WRAP sessions throughout the District.

There is no shortage of work to be done! This budget season we will be focusing on crisis-care services, St. Elizabeths Hospital, housing and stability of services in the city - so the work continues. Please remember to mark your calendars for March 3 - that is the date for the Consumer Choice Awards - our very own Oscar party! Pull out your party clothes and get ready to celebrate an evening dedicated to recovery and those who help to make it happen!

I look forward to seeing everyone at the next CLF meeting in February - if you haven't been for awhile we would love to welcome you back - if you have never been before there is always room for you at our table!

All the very best,
Galina



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

—Margaret Mead

Nathaniel Stanley (con't)

and Recovery Action Plan, and also emphasis on its implementation. The third group is the Pathways group, and deals with the journey that is holistic health and healing. We deal with the cognitive as well as the behavioral. We talked a lot about how what we call "motivational inertia" can cause people not to move towards wellness and recovery, and how our thoughts can hinder us. We spent time talking about self-direction and self-motivation. Pathways deals with the different life domains, whether they be education or nutrition, relationship-centered, or whatever. Then there is a group I sit in on called "The Journey of the Drum." We have some gentlemen who come in and do interpretive drumming. We are full participants and each play an instrument. These guys are so brilliant that they also provide a historical perspective to the instruments they bring. Our last group is Empowerment. That's the group that really ties everything together. I talk about the interrelationship of how each group relates to each other. For instance, with WRAP, the action plan that each consumer implements for themselves leads toward a certain path to empowerment. Your WRAP plan is implemented to gear you towards the pathways of your life, and subsequently, Pathways helps you to become more fully responsible for your life and to gain more control and power, hence the empowerment part. It's almost like there's this tapestry that exists - all the groups are interrelated within the same theme of wellness and recovery.

LH: Do you disclose about your own experiences, and how does that affect the dynamic between you and the folks you work with at McClendon?

NS: Yes I do. I think it helps them to see another perspective. My fellow consumers in the groups know they're not talking to a person who vicariously can understand what they're going through. They're talking to a person who goes through what they go through every day, and is not ashamed to admit it, and who doesn't walk around with a pseudo-persona. There's a lot of camaraderie, but at the same time, there's respect. As far as my co-workers - they respect me as a professional. And it's

even multiplied by the fact that I am a person who feels the pulse of what consumers go through, being one myself. So it definitely is an invaluable asset.

"The Poet Langston Hughes talks about what happens to a dream that's deferred. I envision a mental health system that helps people to actualize their dreams and to maximize their potential."

I —Nathaniel Stanley

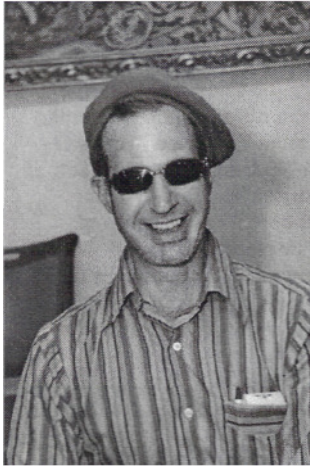
LH: What is your vision for the mental health system?

NS: My vision is to see the holistic approach fully maximized and fully actualized. It's almost like a consumer shopping center or supermarket, where there's not a disparity in quality. For instance, if a person wants to go for employment resources, they can do that. The clinical stuff would be on point, and customized to what the consumer needs. There need to be organizations also geared towards empowerment, and not just predicated on marginalization. The poet Langston Hughes talks about what happens to a dream that's deferred. I envision a mental health system that helps people to actualize what their dreams are and to maximize their potential. I think what many CSAs are doing better is that we're beginning to allow people to be more fully vested in their treatment plans. I remember those days when people basically just told you what the heck was supposed to be on those things. We sat there like statuettes and accepted it. But I knew I was on my way when I said, I'm not signing this —, and I didn't sign it. And I was belligerent, but so what? I said "No more of it. No more of it." And people need to be fully vested in their treatment plans. Active participants who also have a sense of ownership - it's almost like an entrepreneurial approach to mental health. I have seen some significant improvement, and a lot of the improvement has been clinical—although there's still a heck of a long way to go. I'm blessed to be part of an organization that is committed to holistic health and recovery, and supports me in my endeavors as I support them, since we're all on the same team.

(To be continued in the February/March 2007 issue...)

Beatniks' Corner

By Peter R. "Beatnik Pete" Warner



The next major Bethesda Beatniks Dinner Club event happens Wednesday night, February 14th's Valentine's Day, back at Alfio's in Friendship Heights. One of the Beatniks' most popular speakers, Dr. Adam Hedaya, returns to discuss holistic psychiatry: how attention to diet, nutrition, individual gastrointestinal quirks, supplements, exercise, allergies, hormones, etc., can all play a role in custom-tailoring a mental health treatment regimen with the intention of cutting back substantially on toxic psychotropic meds. Anyone associated with the Beatniks wins a discounted initial consultation fee, as Hedaya the younger son of famous holistic psychiatrist Robert Hedaya, kicks off his own practice.

Also that night, the popular and rapidly growing "NoLongerLonely.com" national and international dating service for adult consumers is offering three months' free membership for anyone who signs up that night at Alfio's.

"Musical Showcase" night last month at Alfio's went well, with about 50 people rocking to the sounds of singer/songwriter/guitarist Steve Gellman, teenage rock/blues sensation "The Dice," soul/R&B group "Twisted Goddess," and hard-to-describe fusion band "Special Ed and the Slow Learners." Pete anticipated correctly that there would be a high level of media interest, especially for the teenagers. Not only did the Montgomery Gazette run a prominent half-page

feature about "The Dice," but the Beatniks' excellent local radio friends Bob Madigan of WTOP Radio, Gloria Minott of WPFW Radio, Thomas Grooms of WJZW Radio, and a new friend, Greg Roche of DC-101, all repeatedly plugged the show in advance.

In April, on the night of the 25th, back at Alfio's, look for the first-ever "Rite of Spring" open-mic consumer poetry marathon in a coffeehouse atmosphere, which half a dozen volunteers are already working on. Not only do we need to identify both amateur and advanced poets to read their original material, but we need more poetry coordinators in both Maryland and the District. Looks like there's a good chance we'll have a professional percussionist accompanying the poets with the sounds of bongo drums, conga drums, cymbals, tambourines, bells, etc; and a professional banjo and guitar player. Pete once again anticipates strong media interest in this unusual event.

Want to participate? Call Pete at (301) 279-2578 and check out the web site at www.bethesdabeatniks.org.

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January 5 CLF Meeting Report

The January CLF meeting was another lively and uplifting gathering. For the first part the meeting, Steve Baron and Alexis Haynes from DMH returned to engage in a productive dialogue with CLF members. Steve began with an update on Saint E's. He said that the recent groundbreaking ceremony for the new hospital was a very uplifting afternoon. There has been a change of leadership at the hospital, with Dr. Patrick Canavan to replace Joyce Holland as CEO. Frances Priester of the Office of Consumer and Family Affairs has helped to start a consumer advocacy group at John Howard Pavilion.

Steve mentioned that DMH is starting an initiative to make the stays at St. Elizabeths more appropriate. There are a lot of people who are in there way too long and with the right amount of support should be out in the community. There is some concern as to how to go about making those changes, and there's plenty of time to have input. Dr. Canavan is going to be looking at a lot of the immediate things about the environment and the conditions there. Mr. Baron reiterated that the new administration is taking the system of care in the hospital very seriously. DMH is also looking at increasing the acute care capacity in the city. The idea is to have front-door diversion, and crisis residential beds to provide stable places for people in the community so they wouldn't have to enter the hospital.

There ensued a lively discussion about how to best structure services so as to help people avoid repeated hospitalization. CLF members agreed that there must be much more emphasis on crisis intervention, early intervention, and peer support

as an essential component of any crisis program.

January 5 CLF Meeting Report, (con't)

Others noted that we don't have systems that are supporting people in recovery. When people have reached a point in their recovery - where they are going back to school, etc., the day treatment model doesn't work. We need to focus on building capacity within Core Service Agencies (CSAs) to suit people who are in recovery.

There was also a discussion about discharge planning and the lack of choices facing people when they get out of the hospital. Housing was discussed as a major challenge, and all agreed that there was a need to think creatively and to come up with more innovative financing options to meet the needs of people re-entering the community.

Another issue that was raised was the importance of day programs to help people deal with substance abuse issues. Steve agreed that most public systems are not set up to deal with co-occurring disorders. He mentioned that there is an infrastructure grant to work on this issue, but that the issue of day programs and support needs more work. Time-limited services are often of limited efficacy. Alexis Haynes noted that we're probably going to see more day services in this fiscal year. N Street Village was mentioned as a model program, where they have built a community who addresses substance abuse, the homeless, and issues affecting elderly people. Mr. Baron noted that he was very impressed with N Street Village, and thinks that they can be a very positive influence in what we do.

Effie Smith and Mary Blake of CAN reported that they went to the first meeting of the Consumer Council at John Howard Pavilion, and expressed their appreciation to Frances Priester for setting it up. The chair has invited Leah Harris, Editor of the CLF newsletter, to report on the council's activities for next month's newsletter. There is great hope that the CLF St. Elizabeths task force can work in cooperation with this exciting new group.

Frances Priester discussed the initiative to create a transparent hiring process for consumers to work at DMH on a time-limited, contract basis. The need is for people with computer skills. Leah Harris and other CLF members will be working with Frances to create a recruitment process. The WRAP training application process is also moving forward.

The second part of the meeting was led by Katherine Green, leadership and organizational development consultant, who led a discussion on relationship building.

We discussed how people in leadership positions build relationships. When you meet someone for the first time and you're representing yourself or have a certain issue - you first introduce yourself. Tell them your name, affiliation, etc. to put boundaries around the conversation and put the focus on you. It's also nice to include an expression of appreciation that they're taking the time to talk to you. It's nice to shake hands and to look people in the eye when you meet them—just a few seconds if it's within your comfort level.

The one-on-one relationships that you make with people are a key component of leadership. Relationship building is all about confidence building. Katherine suggested practicing in the mirror, trying things on, seeing how they sound.

Every conversation must be based on a common bond between two people — the thread that connects the two of you in the conversation. Look at whatever information someone gives you as a starting point for the conversation. Listen to what they say and look for a piece that you can respond to. Other tips include: Ask questions, and express an interest in the other person. If you want to keep the conversation going, people love nothing more than to be asked about themselves.

Most importantly, listen! Really good leaders say that they spend more time listening than talking.

When it's clear that someone wants to end a conversation, perhaps by using their body language, you can make a choice as to how to end the conversation. What you need to learn to do is rumba, waltz, tango, or salsa according to the context of the conversation. Good leaders learn how to "dance" with the people they talk to.

Finally, we discussed strategies to get what we need from a conversation, whether it's time, resources, or money.

- 1) Find the right person to ask; sometimes it may take two or three people.
- 2) Be very clear about what your needs are.
- 3) Response : when you ask for what you want you also have to include the conditions for your needs.

It's important to remember that when someone says no to you, there's usually a reason for saying no. Keep conversation in problem-solving mode; that's how conflict gets resolved. Don't get upset and keep the emotions in check, keep it all in problem-solving mode. Asking questions in a civil tone in order to look for options can help you to get what you want.



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.

| Next Consumer Leadership Forum Meeting |

**Friday, February 2, 12-3 pm
The McClendon Center
1313 New York Avenue, NW**

Budget season is upon us and we have the power to make a difference! We will have a major brainstorming session to discuss the best ways to influence the City Council's budget process. The discussion will focus on crafting our message and staying on-message. We will also focus on the process of preparing testimony. Please come ready to think creatively on how we can make an impact this year!

Upcoming Events

**March 3
Consumer Choice Awards
5 pm — 9 pm
The McClendon Center**

The Consumer Choice Award is based on consumer choices from throughout the city on mental health program/providers and staff. We want consumers to choose people and programs/providers that have helped them on the road to recovery. People can choose both a person and program/provider if they wish. Our overall goal is to get consumers to write a statement about how they have grown in their recovery from the help of that person or provider/program. It must state exactly what they have accomplished and how it has helped them in their everyday life.

CONSUMER CHOICE AWARDS UPDATE



Dorothy Adams

Dorothy Adams, Consumer Choice Awards Coordinator and CLF Advocate, has been busy visiting providers across the city to let consumers know about the Consumer Choice Awards and to assist them with filling out their nomination forms, if necessary. So far, Dorothy has visited Green door, Washington Hospital behavior center, Anchor Mental Health, Community Connections, The McClendon Center, and will be visiting many others. To date over 100 nomination forms have been submitted by DC Consumers. "It's been great so far," said Dorothy.

If you would like to fill out a nomination form, please contact Dorothy at (202) 661-5947 or (202) 652-0605.

Leadership Forum

of the District of Columbia
Suite 800
11

Phone: 202-661-5947
Fax: 202-727-2132
Email: gsergen@legalaidde.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 Regular meeting time: 12:00
pm—2:00 pm 3rd Thursday
of each month Legal Aid
Conference Room

Crisis-Care Regular meeting time: 1:00-
3:00 pm 3rd Tuesday of
each month Legal Aid
Conference Room

Peer-Specialist Regular meeting time: 3:00-
5:00 pm 2nd Thursday of
each month Legal Aid
Conference Room

St. Elizabeths Regular Meeting time:
To be determined
Legal Aid Conference Room

Consumer Leadership Forum
Monthly meeting - 1st Friday of each month.
12-3 pm at the McClendon Center

