



Capital Connection

A PUBLICATION OF THE CONSUMER LEADERSHIP FORUM
 WWW.CLFOFDC.ORG

Made possible by a grant from the DC Department of Mental Health Office of Consumer and Family Affairs

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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.

Judith Johnson: Provider, Ally, Activist

By Leah Harris

This interview is part of our continuing series of provider profiles in the *Capital Connection*. Judith Johnson has been a friend and champion of the CLF since the beginning, and it was a pleasure to have a conversation with her about how providers can best be allies to the consumers they serve.

LH: How did you get involved in the work you do?

I started out back in 1976. I had read in the newspaper about the plight of homeless women in DC. I was shocked and couldn't believe it, so I went down to what turned out to be the Center for Creative Nonviolence (CCNV) on Euclid St. and I asked: "what can I do to help?" I started out volunteering there. I also volunteered at Luther Place and ran the night shelter as a volunteer. Then I moved over to the House of Ruth, and then got on the board. I've been involved with homeless people, many of them who have been diagnosed with mental illness. I was also working with mentally ill people in jail and working to get people out of jail. It's kind of a [vicious] circle, with people ending up back in the same place...it was kind of discouraging. Then I applied for the Green Door job. I thought: here is a place where maybe you could see a difference and make progress. I got the job and saw it was true. I've been here for 22 years now.



Judith Johnson
 President and CEO
 Green Door

LH: What motivated you to get involved? A lot of people would have read about homeless women in the newspaper, and said, "Aww, that's too bad," and then thrown the paper in the trash.

I've always been an activist, but not in this field. I was just so shocked, because it seemed so out of the realm [of justice], and I was motivated because I was so shocked about it.

LH: What continues to motivate you to do the work that you do?

The Green Door Clubhouse members/consumers keep me motivated. I see such progress, so many wonderful changes in them, that it is an inspiration to me. With all the challenges they face, they take two buses, come across the city, to the Clubhouse to run the clubhouse and get ready for work. I see people going back to school or work a year after they start and it is wonderful. The clubhouse means so much to them, that it moves me. We have a lot of humor and laughter and we have a good time together. I have some strong friendships with some members and I learn from the members every day. (con't on p. 2)

Apology from Leah Harris, Editor, Capital Connection

Happy New Year, everyone. Sorry that I was unable to get out a January 2008 issue of the Capital Connection. I had some pretty major health issues in December and underwent emergency surgery on January 8. I am doing much better now, getting stronger every day, and I continue to be committed to providing you with a quality newsletter each month! Thanks for understanding.

Judith Johnson (con't from p. 1)

LH: What is the Green Door philosophy of mental health treatment?

Treat people with respect, have a real relationship, focus on the person's strengths, listen to the person and help them achieve what they want to do.

LH: How can consumers and providers best work together as partners and allies to promote recovery and life in the community for people living with mental illness?

You have to be real partners, meaning both people get something out of the relationship. We have consumers on the Board of Directors and on the staff. As consumers and providers, we have to listen to each other. We have consumers on our QI committee and a consumer forum to reflect consumer issues back to the staff. Among other things, they are developing a training package for staff on how they would like their staff person to work with them. Consumer and provider organizations can work together as allies to improve things with DMH.

LH: What gives you hope in your work?

On an individual level, it is the progress of many members that gives me hope. On a system's level, it is the progress of DMH in the last year that gives me hope.

LH: What do you see as the priorities in mental health today

Housing and jobs!

LH: What are the specific things you've learned over the years?

How to approach life! If I had one of these god-awful illnesses, I don't know if I would be able to be as positive. I continue to be impressed and amazed at how people keep their sense of humor, their love, their determination, and continue to focus on those things. It's really amazing. It reminds me of how people are making progress, struggling, but overcoming. Those are some of the most important life lessons I've learned doing the work that I do.

LH: What some of the barriers you and the people you work with have encountered?

One of the main things is the lack of funding for CSAs. And one of the biggest problems is staff turnover. CSWs are staying only about a year. People keep having to start over with new CSWs. This is obviously terrible for the consumer. Our salaries are low and there's just not enough money to raise them. The combination of hard work and low salaries doesn't keep staff here.

LH: What changes would you like to see in the DC mental health system?

I would like to see us less dependent on Medicaid fee for service and have more flexibility for other services that are needed, such as homeless outreach. I'd like to see the Medicaid rate raised since our costs have gone up and the Medicaid rate has not kept up with it. That would allow us to pay staff more and keep them longer.

LH: Does Green Door hire consumers as staff or peer specialists?

One of our staff was a consumer who is in charge of outreach. When someone has not been seen for a while, it was turned over to him. He had a relationship with the shelters and he made the effort to find and re-engage people into services.

We don't call our people peer specialists. We do have consumers working in housing, medical records, etc. But we don't have someone called peer specialist. I'm not sure how would the funding for that work out.

We [at Green Door] were founded on the principles of peer support, with consumers working with staff on the issues. For example, we have policy meetings on Tuesday mornings at the clubhouse, and anyone can raise any issues. We talk about DMH and pending proposals. We have everyone talking about policies that affect them. One of the issues we recently discussed is the raise in the metro fare, and having to get a smart pass to retain the fare. We are also involved in advocacy and writing letters to the Council.

LH: Thanks, Judith, for taking the time to share your thoughts with us!

"You [consumers and providers] have to be real partners, meaning both people get something out of the relationship."

—Judith Johnson

CLF News

By Denise McNeal

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES:

Dorothy Adams attended a Memorial Vigil for the homeless in Dec.21, 2007 which took place at the McPherson Square Park. People gathered to honor the homeless men, women, and children that died in the District of Columbia this year. Each year more than 125 cities across the nation host memorial services to recognize the death of those who are often forgotten.

During the month of January CLF members went out and shared their stories with several groups and they were welcomed back again to bring information and enlighten other consumers with fresh ideas and strength to find THE ROAD TO RECOVERY.

*Crisis meeting was held. Kelly Myers came from Jordan House to explain more about the crisis housing. This program is voluntary and they do not accept everyone that would like to enter.

*CLF visited with MARY CLAIRE HOUSE and spoke about their struggles and what it took to begin to move forward. Some of the consumers stated how they were afraid of failure. But aren't we all? We will be returning to discuss triggers and how to avoid them.

*A trip to Miriam's Kitchen is much different. Even though we have the same goals to help, some people are reluctant to share. But we were able to help one person, which makes it all worth it.

NCSTAC CONFERENCE : ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

NCSTAC stands for the National Consumers Support Technical Assistance Center.

The participants came from all over the US. This was not any ordinary conference. It was a workshop that really made you wish your brain was 150%. We did hands-on budgeting, and believe me some of us like to spend money. If you never had to be accountable for your pennies, this workshop would open your eyes to unnecessary spending.

DECEMBER CONSUMER LEADERSHIP FORUM: HOW DO YOU HANDLE/COPE WITH THE HOLIDAYS?

Several members shared and here are a few examples:

- I missed my family members that have passed away. I have new friends here at CLF and by listening to you in the group, has helped me change my ways.
- Take my medications, so I won't become depressed or have a relapse.
- I may have a mental illness but that's not who I am. I take my medication, PRAY, and exercise. The fresh air does me good.
- Around the New Year, I reminisce about people who aren't around anymore. Then I think of how lucky I am to still be alive. I learned through WRAP to go out and not stay locked in my house.
- I have learned to TRUST MORE IN GOD. I know HE has a better plan for me.
- I attend church. I have hope and my spirits are lifted. I believe that my depression won't last forever.
- For me, helping here at CLF, volunteering gives me a purpose. At the Christmas Party I had a lot of fun. Just doing the simplest job has been like 'being back to work'.
- I am becoming stronger, learning from my experiences.

What are your goals for 2008?

- To get more involved in CLF.
- To work on my tardiness. I am always late. I need some sort of action plan.
- Value Every Hour...before I used to take them for granted.
- To better my relationship with GOD.
- Go to work. I have begun the process. NOW, I have to follow through with it.
- Lose weight and stop smoking. When I get mad I eat. This year I will do something different and save money. Cigarettes are so expensive.
- Get a job that will pay me what I am worth and continue to follow my dream. I want to get some of my writing published.
- To see CLF become number one in everything that the organization does.

Beatniks' Corner



By Peter R. "Beatnik Pete" Warner

The CLF is holding an online poetry contest!! Get out your pencils and writing pads, 'cause the top five finalists--as judged by our very own Leah Harris--will be invited to read their best stuff live, in front of an audience, at the Beatniks' Big poetry/music/visual arts event back at Alfio's on Sunday night, April 27th, 2008, back at Alfio's!!

Here's what to do: Shoot the final draft(s) of your best poem(s) back to Leah at leah_ida@hotmail.com, and she'll blast them out to the whole group!!

The Club is also in the midst of a membership drive...Now through April 27th, get \$10 off of the "Beatniks New Member Initiation Fee" for lifetime membership. Call Pete for details at (240)449-5988.

We have a strong after-dinner speaker calendar for February and the first Wednesday in March:

Wednesday, February 6th: Big Beatniks Booster and clinical social worker/private therapist Diana Seasonwein & Friends from the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work present our first "GWSCSW Night": an hour and a half Q&A session about the many different types of psychotherapy available, to achieve specific therapeutic goals. Learn why thousands of local folks are turning to clinical social workers for talk therapy, many of whom accept Medicare and/or Medicaid. You'll also learn about GWSCSW's nifty online "Find a Therapist" service, which is free and can match you up with the right therapist in your neighborhood.

Wednesday, February 13th: Renowned psychiatrist/author/lecturer E. Fuller Torrey, who's written numerous clinical and popular psychiatric books and articles in a long and very distinguished career, will give an overview of the latest clinical findings and research in both schizophrenia and bipolar disorders, and field questions for as long as there are questions. He's a much sought-after speaker both nationally and internationally, so you won't want to miss this one!!

Wednesday, February 20th: Big Beatniks Booster and Springfield Hospital senior social worker Claire Gilbert, and some of her social work students, return to give a history of Springfield Hospital and the public sector mental health system in general, with an eye towards what works in transitioning from the hospital back to the community, a subject in which Claire's an expert. Learn how the massive de-institutionalization of the mentally ill population over the past 40 years has fared, from a veteran social worker's perspective.

Wednesday, February 27th: Back by popular demand, St. Luke's House top employment honcho Larry Abramson presents "Employment for the High-Functioning Disabled--The Sequel." He may be joined by a representative from Montgomery Station, the employment arm of Family Services Agency. Learn how Larry and his staff strive to match the client to the job, to achieve the best "fit" and maximize the chances of long-term employment success. Larry has been one of our most popular speakers in the past, so anyone currently looking for a job, or anticipating looking for one, on just about any level, won't want to miss this one!!

Wednesday, March 5th: Back by popular demand comes licensed acupuncturist Ed Strozier, in "Acupuncture for Mental Health--The Sequel," which will also include an extensive discussion of "Chinese Herbal Medicine for Mental Health." Learn what ancient Eastern medicine has to contribute to notions of mental stability and overall health, in a completely non-toxic way.

Beatnik Pete/"Bethesda Beatniks Dinner Club"/www.bethesdabeatniks.org ###

Poetry Corner

How Words Changed My Life By Dorothy Adams

The words out of your mouth called me everything
 Except, that I was a child of God
 Yet you don't really know me
 But God does and love me in His heart,
 Labels are just a bunch of words
 Words that can play with your emotions or change your mood
 I don't let words keep me down, or permanently change my groove
 When someone calls me out of my name
 I know who I am, inside and outside,
 To them words is just a game
 So I don't play their game the same,
 I make them eat their words,
 By the things I do, and what they see,
 I let them see what their words have done
 When they see the new and improve me,
 My trials and tribulation were hard for me to go through
 But they too, did pass
 So when I am having a bad day,
 I know that God is still with me and it won't last,
 My hurt and pain, May seems to me, to last forever
 But I begin to realize that its like, sunshine and rain
 It comes and goes, from day to day, and never feels or look the same,
 Though all my discomfort and pain
 My life really did change, In more ways than I ever knew, and it shows,
 I am able to do things now with pride
 And in my life I continued to learn and grow,
 Feel your heart beat, Does it beat and sound the same?
 It is different because of your illness?
 Or by the labels you were given or even the names,
YOUR WORDS ARE NOT MY WORDS
 So what did I do?
WELL, no matter how you write or say them,
 They will eventually make or break you,
 These are the words that I practice
 Patience, Kindness, Thankfulness and Love,
 I thank God that I think before I speak
 And try everyday to live by these words above,
 So when someone uses words that don't represent the person I am
 Or call me out of my name
 I realize that it's not me, who has the problem,
 But because of who I am now,
 Their life will never be the same.

November 17, 2007

Written for NARPA conference talent show, Los Angeles, CA

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

Our guest is Dennis Hobb from the McClendon Center, who will be talking to us about strategies for testifying for the upcoming budget hearings. 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

Fri. 2/15th @ McClendon Center,
 12—3 pm
 (Soul food lunch provided)
 We will celebrate 'BLACK HISTORY MONTH' and have dinner. We are asking if the consumers would like to share 'Which BLACK person STANDS out in there mind and why?'

Tuesday, 2/19, 1—3 pm
 Crisis Care Meeting @ McClendon Center- we will have a doctor to come back and answer some of the questions from the meeting before.

Thursday, 2/21, 12—2 pm: Housing Meeting @ McClendon Center
 Hoping that all who wanted their name on the waiting list for housing have sent their applications back on time, by February 11, 2008.

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

The Capitol 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, as well as story ideas about the issues that matter to you. We would love to receive:

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

Please be sure to submit all story ideas or articles to Leah Harris, Editor, by the 20th of each month for publication the following month. You can email your submissions 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



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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