



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.

Provider of the Month: Miriam's Kitchen

In a new feature, we will be highlighting providers who embrace the spirit of recovery. This month Leah Harris interviewed Catherine Crum, Director of Social Services and Adam Rocap, Senior Case Manager, from Miriam's Kitchen. CLF members do outreach to guests at Miriam's Kitchen once a month.



Catherine Crum, Director of Social Services, and Adam Rocap, Senior Case Manager, at Miriam's Kitchen

LH: What is the guiding philosophy at Miriam's Kitchen?

At Miriam's Kitchen we try to create an open, safe, welcoming space where guests can enjoy a great breakfast in an atmosphere of dignity and respect. Breakfast, art and writing opportunities, social services, and relationship-building helps develop a sense of community where guests can pursue their goals and get connected to community resources.

LH: What motivates you personally to work at Miriam's Kitchen?

Adam: Every guest has a unique story. I really enjoy getting to know our guests, watching their talents come out through their art or poetry, and witnessing the ways that each person finds to persevere through challenges and help others as well.

Catherine: Well, everyone knows I love the coffee here. But mostly, I am drawn to the community created at Miriam's Kitchen. I always feel lucky that I get to be with guests as they make goals and plans, to help where I can, and to celebrate with them when they succeed and be present when they have difficulty.

LH: Can you please give a brief overview of the programs Miriam's Kitchen offers?

Miriam's Kitchen offers breakfast from 6:30-8:00 AM Monday through Friday. A variety of art and writing groups are held every morning during the After-Breakfast Program from 8:15-9:45. Case managers are available throughout the mornings to help guests with their goals, including connecting to services, finding shelter, seeking employment, or finding housing. Miriam's Kitchen also has a Café on Wednesday afternoons from 12-2, offering a light lunch, hair cuts, door prizes, case management, spa day once a month, and other opportunities.

For more information, please see www.miriamskitchen.org or contact 202-492-8926.

CLF Updates

CLF Co-Executive Director

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

The conference was focus on trauma. They talked about all the different ways that people can become traumatized and how they are working with the prison system and jails to teach the staff how to deal with people who come through their systems. Women shared their stories about how they over come and deal with trauma issues.

Smoke free conference at Howard University

Darryl Green was at the conference to talk about how his family died from smoking. We had several workshops on how smoking can affect your whole body and it can cause cancer all over your body. The staff at the conference can come out to your organization and give a smoke free workshop that is tailor made for your organization free and bring all the materials with them. They gave out door prizes and other items to people attending the conference. I won a musical monkey for letting them know that I was willing to let them come out the CLF and give a smoke free workshop.



Dorothy Adams

Crisis Care update:

For the crisis's care meeting next month we will focus on helping consumers deal with medical issues that they have and think that it is a part of their illness. We are going to have a doctor come and answer questions that the consumers may have about illness that they think may be linked to mental illness. Consumers are not going to get medical treatment because for some reason they associate their sickness with their mental illness. We are also hoping to compile a list of clinics and dentists so consumers can make a better choice for their medical care.

Outreach update:

The outreach money is supposed to be in this month and we can start doing outreach through out the community. I did an outreach meeting at Green Door with families and we had a great time talking to them. They were very impress with what we had to say. The families wanted to stay in touch with us and we are invited to come back. The staff said that they would send members to our group. We were able to find out about some of the different types of programs that they are offering to consumers. At Miriam's Kitchen, we had a lovely time and the staff agreed to do an interview for our newsletter. They are very much interested in what we do and support our ideas.

Other news:

The essay contest has been extended to next Friday. So if anyone wants to get in on the prize money now is the time.

The consumers that were chosen to go on the Alternatives conference are: Dorothy Adams, Roy Turner, Charlesette Ransom, and Laureen Jackson. I am going a day early because I was chosen to participate in the first pre-conference in St Louis. The other members will leave on October 10th and we will all return on October 13th.

We are still in the process of trying to find a building for CLF. We may be using office space in 51 N Street NE for about eight weeks until we can find a place to call home. I am working at the McClendon Center right now for a couple of hours per day.

Next month our meeting will be a get to know you meeting. We are going to just eat and hang out with our peers having fun and listening to music and dancing if they like. We hope to prepare a Thanksgiving dinner. We are to asking members to bring food so they don't have to worry about bringing something to eat.

The month of December will be a month to celebrate the end of our first year for CLF members doing a first of many things to come.



CLF September Meeting Update

By Leah Harris

The September meeting was a lively and well-attended session where CLF members shared their stories of recovery. It was an incredibly inspiring experience to hear people tell their stories of struggle and survival in the face of incredible odds. We all come from different walks of life and have a wide variety of life experiences, but what we have in common today is hope. For me, one of the most interesting parts of the meeting was when we shared the things that help us most in our day-to-day recovery. Some of the things people mentioned included:

- Plenty of sleep
- Good food
- Listening to audio books
- Giving ourselves permission to treat ourselves well
- Making a decision to be a person not a patient
- Reaching for positive thoughts to get back in balance
- Spending time outdoors in nature
- Sticking post-it notes on the wall with positive sayings
- Creating a list of people to call if feeling blue or heading into crisis
- Getting up against your own comfort zone
- Staying calm; keep smiling
- Trying to help others

Gretchen Rohr from University Legal Services dropped by to introduce herself. She will be back in November to talk more about the DC Jail Advocacy Project. She also encouraged consumers to get involved with the PAIMI Advisory Council. University Legal Services will do everything possible to ensure that the meetings are accessible to people relying on public transportation.

Poetry Corner

What Does Mental Health Recovery Mean to Me? By Leah Harris

It means the freedom to be myself, creatively
 To dream big, to reclaim grandiosity
 Recovery is the awesome discovery of my inner divinity
 Tempered with a deep humility
 A simple faith, a quiet spirituality
 That nourishes and sustains me through any difficulty.

Recovery means letting go of the myth of
 Self-sufficiency and relentless efficiency.
 I don't want to go it alone –
 I have to be part of a living loving community
 That uplifts me and reflects back to me
 An inspiring vision of what we can all be,
 Individually and collectively --
 When we support one another, our potential is vast, extending to infinity.

Recovery is about living positively, to the best of my ability.
 Cultivating an attitude of gratitude for the beauty and the majesty
 Of this life -- a gift precious beyond measure.
 In recovery, I find there's far more pleasure
 Than pain. Now I may still be insane--
 But the difference is today, I'm not ashamed.
 I love my brain and all that it contains.

Recovery is dwelling not in the problem but in the
 solution
 Cutting through mental conditioning and cultural
 pollution
 I once was suicidal but today, staying alive--
 Not just to survive, but learning to thrive--
 Is my greatest contribution to the revolution.
 See – I think we're at a new stage in our human
 evolution...

And recovery is part of that journey
 It all started with faith in the possibility
 Of our release from mental and physical slavery.
 We made our healing a priority and it became
 Our reality. This wellness mentality became an
 actuality.
 We are the evidence and we are the truth.
 We are the living, breathing proof
 That recovery is no illusion, no delusion of grandeur.

Here is the secret to recovery, here is the key:
 If you can conceive it
 Then you can achieve it.
 Believe it!

CAN Corner

Fall is here and cooler, drier weather is near.

On September 26, the D.C. State Mental Health Planning Council held its seventh annual Judge Aubrey E. Robinson Memorial Mental Health Conference at the Renaissance Hotel. We were pleased by the attendance and particularly of so many familiar faces. We were also pleased to see so many consumers from St. Elizabeth's Hospital and John Howard Pavilion. Presentations came from panelists who have devoted much of their careers to the growing issue of trauma. Opening remarks came from council members Effie Smith, Mary Blake and Bertha Holliday. The keynote speaker was Dr. Joan Gillece of the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors. The three moderators were DC Council Chair Vincent Gray, Dr. Raymond Brown of the DMH Homeless Outreach Program and who filled in for DC Councilmember Jim Graham, and DC Councilmember Phil Mendelson. Panelists discussed trauma from domestic violence, mental illness, incarceration and poverty. They examined differences by gender and found that women and men express their suffering differently. Much of their research was based on current trauma programs such as those at Community Connections, a DC Core Service Agency. The panel on the Trauma Knowledge Utilization Project emphasized the importance of trauma-informed care and various types of trauma (brain and body, emotions, and sexual). Mary Blake concluded the conference with an emphasis on a community-based approach to trauma and crisis.



On September 6, we had an outreach meeting with University Legal Services where we talked about the FAIR grievance process through the Department of Mental Health and the outcome of the BJA Forum on August 8. They introduced a new Jail Advocacy Project through their Protection and Advocacy Program. We were pleased to hear about this new project given the increasing role mental health is having with the criminal justice system. We hope that projects like this and the BJA jail diversion plan will provide more resources to consumers in crisis, dealing with co-occurrence of substance abuse and when dealing with police and incarceration.

We attended several other events in September. One was the Heroes in the Fight conference on September 5 and sponsored by NAMI, Washington Psychiatric Society and Eli Lilly. Among the heroes celebrated was Dr. Bob Keisling of Pathways to Housing (formerly with Unity Healthcare). We also made site visits to the Allegheny County's Justice-Related offices and facilities (in Pittsburgh) in late September. These included the Mercy Behavioral Health Central Recovery Center, the county jail and the mental health court. We were pleased with the county's emphasis on Best Practices and on jail diversion issues now gaining national attention in the mental health community. CAN continues to engage in more outreach into the community with events at various Core Service Agencies and day programs where we train consumers on rights and the grievance process.

CAN looks forward to future events such as the Trauma and Eating Disorders Presentation at Psychiatric Institute of Washington on October 19, and likely another rally in October on public housing at the Wilson Building. We are also preparing for the next Community Services Review in January which CAN will be coordinating. We encourage you, if you are selected, to participate actively in sharing your views and perspective on services you have been receiving from your Core Service Agency and through DMH.

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 Beatniks have seven events scheduled this month--a record--and have been all over local newspapers and radio stations with National Mental Illness Awareness Week-related items. Don't miss the kick-off dinner, discussion and film screening for the new Rockville/Gaithersburg chapter on Tuesday night, October 9th; Fontina Grille is a two-minute King Farm shuttle bus ride away from Shady Grove Metro. See ya' there!!

Wednesday, October 3rd: "Art Studio Night--the Sequel" featuring Joyce Muis-Lowery from the District-based "Art Enables" program, Tamar Hendel from Silver Spring-based CREATE Arts Center, and Tamar's colleague Sally Brucker, director of the "Studio Downstairs" project, which meets twice a week at CREATE Arts Center. Come learn about these two local arts programs for mental health consumers and/or the developmentally disabled, and what a licensed art therapist does. Membership applications for both organizations will be distributed.

Friday, October 5th, at Silver Spring Drop-in Center from 3:30pm until at least 6:00pm: a sequel Roundtable discussion co-moderated by Dr. Bob Litman and SSDIC Director Miriam Yarmolinsky, with the title, "What Does 'National Mental Illness Awareness Week' Mean in the Wake of the Virginia Tech Tragedy?" Invited guests include directors and staff psychologists from half a dozen regional colleges and universities, staff from NAMI National and NAMI/

Montgomery County, prominent social workers, other drop-in center directors, local government officials, and of course, consumers. This event will be taped for the Beatniks Web site, and for possible airplay on local radio public affairs programs. All consumers are welcome to attend, and refreshments will be served.

Tuesday, October 9th, at Fontina Grille directly off of King Farm Blvd. in King Farm in Rockville, starting at 6:15pm: The kick-off dinner for the new Rockville/Gaithersburg chapter of the Beatniks, featuring Dr. Bob Litman reporting on highlights from the Roundtable discussion (above) and leading a talk on the personal significance of National Mental Illness Awareness Week, and continuing social stigma, to consumers. Call Pete for further information at (240)449-5988.

Wednesday, October 10th: Back at Alfio's, Dr. Allan Z. Schwartzberg--one of the top dual diagnosis/addictions psychiatrists in the Eastern U.S.--talks about the challenges of overcoming addictions for psych patients, and very promising new treatments. v
Wednesday, October 17th: "NAMI National Gala Night." The first ten Beatniks who telephone Pete well in advance can gain entry for free to the cocktail reception preceding the gala dinner, taking place that night at a venue in the District. We'll convene at Alfio's at 6:15pm--dressed up in suits, ties, and cocktail dresses--and take the Metro together downtown. Note: You must call Pete well in advance, because NAMI National must have your name on file in order for you to gain entry to the reception. First ten Beatniks to RSVP by phone only!! (240)449-5988.

Wednesday, October 24th: Popular speaker Dr. Josh Rosenthal, from Capital Clinical Research Associates, returns to talk about promising treatments for Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Dr. Josh and his father, Dr. Norman Rosenthal, have been pioneers in diagnosing and treating SAD, and also run numerous clinical drug trials.

Wednesday, October 31st: Dr. William B. Lawson, MD, PhD, chief of the Howard University Hospital psych program, describes the entire program at Howard University with an emphasis on clinical drug trials. Dr. Lawson has been a champion for promoting better mental health treatment for minorities, and will discuss an upcoming trial for African-Americans suffering from chronic depression in depth. Clinical trial recruitment personnel will also be on hand.

For more information, please visit www.bethesdabeatniks.org ###



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, November 2, 12 – 3 pm

**The McClendon Center
1313 New York Avenue, NW
Lunch will be provided.**

Getting to Know You and DC Jails Advocacy Project Briefing

We are going to just eat and hang out with our peers having fun and listening to music and dancing if they like. We hope to prepare a Thanksgiving dinner. Gretchen Rohr from University Legal Services will also be on hand to talk more about the DC Jails Advocacy Project and how consumers can get involved in this important project.

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

DEADLINE: October 12, 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

