



Saratoga County Citizens' Committee for Mental Health Newsletter



Fall 2008

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State Budget Cuts Threaten Saratoga County Mental Health Services

By Lorraine Gardephe

A figure like \$117,000 is a very small amount when compared with most budget items that make up NY State expenditures. However, the loss of \$117,000 to Saratoga County for mental health services resulted in a loss that cannot be measured in monetary terms.

This past August Friendship Connection, a social club serving the mentally ill, permanently closed its doors after three decades of service in Saratoga Springs. The "Connection", as it was fondly referred to by its members, served as a place to meet for those who enjoyed the benefits of making friends and developing a healthy network of supportive peers who live with a mental illness. Any stigma disappeared behind its doors. At the Friendship Connection, everyone contributed to planning and carrying-out of the various activities and outings offered each month. Also, members shared in planning, preparing and cleanup for one noon meal each week. Friendship Connection members were active in for advocating for themselves and others, especially in terms of issues that affect the mentally ill and their families.

Earlier this year, the state cut of \$117,000 from Saratoga County which ultimately resulted in forcing Unlimited Potential, LLC to close Friendship Connection. This decision by the state budget office and county officials negatively affects those who struggle with the stigma that surrounds mental illness. Feelings of isolation for former members of the Connection and others who could have been serviced will predictably increase. From this, a downward slide into feelings of loneliness, depression and paranoia may contribute to an increased number of inpatient admissions. This likely occurrence seems counterproductive in saving state money, doesn't it?

CHAIRPERSON'S NOTES

By Peggy Lounsbury

This summer we were saddened because of the closing of the Friendship Connection. For the people this program served, this was a devastating loss. I had the opportunity to talk to Jerry Nunez (the Program Coordinator), and to Brien Hollowood, Executive Director of Unlimited Potential, about the events leading up to the closure of its program. The Governor's 3% budget cut in the spring was the "straw that broke the camel's back". The Friendship Connection previously relocated from Broadway to Wells Street location, as a cost saving measure which resulted in drastically decreasing the participation. The reason for this move was the cost of rent in the downtown area.

Now there is talk that at the state level support for sheltered workshops and other supportive work offerings is dwindling. Therefore, any further budget cuts aimed at mental health services in Saratoga County may result in the loss of some or all of the services provided by Unlimited Potential. The SCCCMH will be working with local agencies and advocates to develop a lobbying strategy to implement before the next NYS legislative session. This is serious. We need to work together to make sure that the people with mental illness in Saratoga County have the services they need to be able to work so that they have the quality of life everyone deserves.

You can help by joining the SCCCMH, if you have not already done so. You can contact me at 583-8371 or plounsbury@saratogacares.org for a membership registration form. The SCCCMH has more lobbying power by

having as many members as possible.

You can also greatly help by writing your town supervisor, your Assemblyman and Senator in the NYS Legislature to explain the importance of maintaining access to vital mental health services, including the services provided by Unlimited Potential in Saratoga County. Tell them we will not tolerate cuts to program and services for people with mental illness. Try to get your letters to your elected officials by December 15th. Contact me if you do this so the SCCCMH will know about any grassroots activity.

Working together, we can and MUST be successful.

Apply for Grants from SCCCMH

The Saratoga County Citizens' Committee for Mental Health awards monetary grants to not-for-profit organizations that provide services to people with mental illness in Saratoga County.

Awards are generally up to one thousand dollars and are distributed in December, March and June.

Contact Caroline Russell Smith at 857-9361 for more information and an application. Applications for the next award cycle are due November 15th.



MEET THE AGENCY



Saratoga Bridges is committed to working with individuals with developmental disabilities. Many of the people we serve are diagnosed with a mental illness in addition to their intellectual disability. In an effort to provide our staff with as much information as possible, the Positive Behavior Support Committee used the grant money from the Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health to purchase training materials.

The members of the psychology department each took one of the items we purchased to review and write a short synopsis of its content. Now, before our staff members view the materials, they will have an idea of what it contains. Also we have started a small reference library and plan to use DVDs and videos in training sessions, at staff meetings, at our residences and at our day programs. Our intention is to encourage staff to borrow materials that interest them or to obtain information for training purposes. The items below include the list of valuable, pertinent information we purchased:

Coping: Helping People with Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health Issues Better Cope with Their Daily Problems (DVD)

The Critical Crossroad: Addressing Mental Health Problems in People with Developmental Disabilities (DVD)

DM-ID Diagnostic Manual – Intellectual Disability of Mental Disorders in Persons with Intellectual Disability

Dual Diagnosis: Mood Disorders and Developmental Disabilities (VHS)

Dual Diagnosis: Schizophrenia and Other Psychotic Disorders and Developmental Disabilities (VHS)

Practical Strategies for Working with Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Alzheimer's Disease (DVD)

Unforgotten: Twenty Five Years After Willowbrook (VHS)

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Newsletter Submissions

If you are interested in contributing to the SCCCMH Newsletter by sharing news, viewpoints, and opinions do not be shy. Consumers, professionals, advocates and family members can send articles for publication consideration to the address below:

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Submissions for the next issue are in the spring and need to be mailed or emailed by March 15, 2009.

THE VIEW FROM HERE

By Brien Hollowood, CEO Unlimited Potential

Unlimited Potential is a vocational rehabilitation center working with mentally disabled adults from throughout Saratoga County. The goal of Unlimited Potential is to find work in the community for our clients and in the past 10 years UP has found jobs for nearly 200 people.

Once a person is referred to UP, staff completes an individualized assessment so that a personalized program can be designed based on that person's needs that must be addressed in order for them to overcome any barriers to employment. As people progress through the vocational rehabilitation program at UP and learn how to apply their new job skills, they are given the opportunity to perfect these skills in our workshop. Our workshop consists of a woodworking operation, mailing center, and an assembly area. As our clients improve in learning the necessary soft skills and in their overall performance, counselors begin to work with them toward the goal of finding a job in the community. This job search phase includes searching for openings, filling out the application, the interview process and working with the employer. Once a position is secured, the counselor will continue to monitor the situation and provide job coaching support for as long as the employer and / or

employee wishes.

For some reason, the Office of Mental Health believes that the sheltered workshops serve no useful purpose and have begun to defund them. Without the sheltered workshop at UP, nearly 200 people would not be employed in the community now. One wonders when the last time decision makers at OMH were in a sheltered workshop. **OMH claims that only 15% of the working age adults receiving services in New York State's mental health system are employed.** Can you imagine how low that percentage would be without sheltered workshops? Many of our referrals have little neither social nor work skills. Without sheltered workshops, where will they learn and apply these skills before entering the competitive workforce? **OMH further posits that participation in a work center infrequently results in ultimate placement in the competitive workforce.** Again, when was the last time the decision makers at OMH were in a work center? UP has a track record of putting people to work. **OMH claims that work centers are contrary to the concept of community integration.** Over 90% of UP's clients meet the criteria for Severely and Persistently Mentally Ill and many have been hospitalized at CDPC. Work centers are a place where these people can learn or relearn the appropriate and necessary social skills that enable them to become a more valuable community member both at work and in their personal lives. UP believes that work centers offer a starting point to transition into eventual community involvement. Work centers are stepping stones, not an end, but a beginning. Work centers build on the concept of community integration.

We understand the state's need to reduce spending. However, to cut successful programs that have a history of putting people to work, especially when the Office of Mental Health has provided no alternative programming for the affected population seems shortsighted, at best.

***Become a part of
the Voice of
Saratoga County
Mental Health
Community.***

***Join SCCMH
Today!***



IN THE NEWS...



The 2008 Presidential Election

Mental Health: The Candidates & Party Platforms

Information provided by the National Alliance on Mental Illness @2008 www.nami.org

Did You Explore The Candidates?

In early 2008, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) sent a questionnaire to all presidential candidates in each party. We encouraged candidates to provide us with other relevant materials or explanations of their positions on issues involving mental health even if they did not have time to respond to the questionnaire.

NAMI offers these responses and excerpts from party platforms for educational purposes only. NAMI is a non-profit, non-partisan organization. Non-profit charitable organizations, including NAMI state and local affiliates, are prohibited by law from endorsing specific candidates. This information should not be used by any NAMI affiliate to endorse any candidate.

The responses from the Democratic Presidential Nominees Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois and Republican John McCain of Arizona can be found at [www.NAMI.org/Section=2008 Primarys and Elections](http://www.NAMI.org/Section=2008_Primarys_and_Elections).

Official Presidential Candidate Sites

www.johnmccain.com

www.barackobama.com

Why You Should Support SCCCMH

By Susann Getsch

Open any local paper and you will likely notice numerous community events and fundraisers, intended to help further the agenda of the sponsoring organization. Most are relatively inexpensive, many offering fun activities in exchange for your participation and support. So, why should you choose to support SCCCMH?

My own reasons are clear and, like many of you, form from personal experiences. Maybe you or one of your loved ones or friends has experienced a mental illness and found services in Saratoga County to be helpful or lacking. My experiences have been both, depending on the time and circumstances surrounding each need. I suspect that if I had possessed the knowledge then that I have since acquired, the experiences would have had better outcomes overall. Likely, that is true for most of you.

So, why have I decided to support and assist the Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health? I sincerely believe that my admittedly limited financial support of this and other organizations is essential when one considers the impact even this small organization can and does have on our community. The mission of the SCCCMH is to: to directly advocate for better supports and services for individuals with mental disorders, to provide grants to local organizations that provide services for these individuals, to sponsor educational opportunities for professionals and others, and to increase awareness of the needs of people with mental illness. The mission is admirably filled by the activities of SCCCMH and SCCCMH must continue to carry-out its

(continued on page 7, Why?)

CLINICAL CORNER

By Andrea DeGeoraio, LCSW-R

Building and Setting Healthy Boundaries

Individuals and families dealing with mental health issues have probably heard the term "boundaries" used by counselors and psychiatrists. You may have been reminded that "It is important to set healthy boundaries regarding yourself or a loved one". So what does it mean to set healthy boundaries?

Some definitions may help.

A boundary is the:

- Emotional and physical space between you and another person. It is healthy emotional and physical distance you can maintain between you and another person so that you do not become overly enmeshed or dependent.
- Knowing where you begin and another person ends and where you end and another person begins. It is a limit or line – physical, emotional or sexual – over which you will not let anyone cross because of the negative impact of its being crossed in the past.
- Emotional and physical space you need in order to be the real you without the pressure from others or to be something that you are not.

Individuals who have endured childhood abuse often struggle with setting boundaries because their own boundaries have been violated from such a young age. However, others who have grown up in families affected by alcoholism or where there is either too much emotional distance or over protection may also struggle with boundary issues. Even those who have grown up in a generally healthy home environment may struggle with boundaries.

For example, one of my clients is the mother of a young man who suffers from depression. He lives on his own and is receiving help through medication and counseling, but his mother struggles at times with allowing him to be independent and wanting to make decisions for him. "He wants to go back to work but I find myself being less supportive because I am so afraid he will become depressed again. I am scared for him, but I am realizing I also need to let go of some control".

We can all benefit from taking a good look at the boundaries we set for ourselves and others. Healthy boundaries allow us to experience a comfortable interdependence with other people. This results in generally functional relationships and positive self regard.

Signs of Healthy Boundaries:

- Appropriate trust
- Revealing a little of yourself at a time, then checking to see how the other person responds to your sharing
- Staying focused on your own growth and recovery

(continued on page 7, Boundaries)



*This publication was prepared with
the assistance of Four Winds –
Saratoga
www.fourwindshospital.com*

(continued from page 6, Boundaries)

- Maintaining personal values despite what others want
- Self Respect – not giving too much in hopes that someone will like you
- Respect for others – not taking advantage of someone else's generosity or trying to impose your wishes and beliefs on them
- Trusting you own decisions
- Defining your own truth, as you see it
- Knowing who you are and what you want. Clearly communicating your wants and needs – you may be turned down, but you can ask

(continued from page 5, Why?)

mission if we are to attain and retain improvements in the delivery of services to individuals with mental disorders in Saratoga County.

Your voice, expressed by membership in and financial support of SCCCMH, can be added to mine and the many other members of this fine organization. And that, after all, is the purpose of community. – to assess and address the needs of its members. Let's do it together!



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The views expressed in this newsletter represent the opinions of the authors and do not represent the official position or opinions of the SCCCMH unless specifically stated.

The SCCCMH Board of Trustees reserves the right to decide the content of the newsletter, and also reserves the right to review, revise, shorten or deny articles for publication. Articles submitted for publication consideration should not be longer than 250 words unless the author is specifically invited to do so. Also, submitting the copy as a Microsoft Word document, or typed within the body of an e-mail message is preferred. Send articles to the Newsletter Editors e-mail address. Articles not submitted electronically can be mailed to the Editor or the address above.

SARATOGA COUNTY



CITIZENS COMMITTEE
FOR MENTAL HEALTH

*For more information
about the SCCCMH,
contact Peggy Lounsbury,
Chairperson,
at 518-583-8371*

Return Requested

*The Saratoga County Citizens' Committee for Mental Health (SCCCMH) is a non-profit, charitable organization that **distributes grant money** to agencies and programs in Saratoga County so they can enrich existing programs or expand services for people with mental illness. The SCCCMH also provides affordable **educational opportunities** for professionals and consumers, **advocates** for improved mental health care and services; and is committed to **increasing public awareness** of the needs of people with mental illness.*

**Saratoga County Citizens
Committee for Mental Health**

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