



Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health Newsletter



2010

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Celebrate the Citizen of the Year!

By Lorraine Gardephe, Newsletter Chair



2010 Citizen of the Year Betsy Gibbs
Director of Vocational Rehabilitation, Unlimited Potential, Inc.

The SCCCMH has selected Betsy Gibbs as our Citizen of the Year for 2010. Betsy is the Director of Vocational Rehabilitation at Unlimited Potential. Betsy Gibbs began her journey at Unlimited Potential on August 30th 1989 when she was hired as a Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator at Unlimited Potential. As Betsy said, "I've seen the agency grow with the needs of our clients from being located on Broadway to Exit 15 and now to our new building in the Grande Industrial park next to Quad Graphics. Our services have expanded beyond the sheltered work center and now provide competitive employment opportunities as well as Senior Citizen day programming through our Golden Club for our Mental Health population."

Betsy was selected because of her long history of commitment to supporting and meeting the needs of people with mental illness. Not only has she done this through her work, but she has also done so through her volunteer activities, which included being on the SCCCMH Board of Directors.

Betsy will be honored at our Annual Dinner and Silent Auction Fundraiser to be held at Longfellows Restaurant on May 5, 2010 at 6 pm. Look for the flyer in this newsletter to sign-up to attend. This is a great event to have during "Mental Health Awareness Month". Also, there will be a silent auction, great food, and knock-knock jokes. Last year, the SCCCMH decided last year to implement our own "Economic Stimulus Plan" and provide a donation to a worthy organization. Find out who will be the 2010 recipient of a donation.

SCCCMH Board of Directors

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Carol Van Gundy

CHAIRPERSON'S NOTES

By Peggy Lounsbury

The SCCCMH Board of Directors has engaged the services of Shannon-Rose Design to bring our vision of a website to fruition. We also applied for and were accepted for their "Passion Project". As a result, the SCCCMH received a generous donation towards the cost of developing and launching our new website. The target date for launching the SCCCMH website is May 5, 2010, the day of our annual dinner and fundraiser. Because we will not be publishing another newsletter until the fall, starting May 5, be on the lookout for our website.

The address of our new website will be: www.SCCCMH-Saratoga.org. Our vision for the website is a Saratoga County specific, user friendly website that is a resource to consumers, families and friends, the general public and mental health professionals. With this vision in mind, please contact me at plounsbury@saratogacare.org or 583-8371 and tell me what you would like to see on the SCCCMH website. What would help you? What might be interesting?

At press time, we are still trying to firm up the "Town Hall" focus group meetings with representatives of the NYS Office of Mental Health Services and Saratoga County Mental Health Clinic in the spring. The SCCCMH was asked to host the "Town Hall" meetings to find out from the citizens of Saratoga County how well the County is meeting the needs of people with mental illness, and what might the county and state do to better meet the needs of people with mental

Budget cuts in Albany are likely to trickle down to Saratoga County and eventually mental health services. I met with elected officials of the state and county to lobby against any effort to cut services. We cannot rest. Write or visit your legislators. The following websites may be helpful:

<http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/>
<http://www.nysenate.gov/senators>



SCCCMH Grants Available

The Saratoga County Citizens' Committee for Mental Health is looking to award monetary grants to not-for-profit organizations that work towards the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of 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 May 15th.



New Support Group

Depression Bipolar Support Alliance Has Arrived In Saratoga County

The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) of Chicago, Illinois is pleased to announce the opening of an affiliate DBSA support group located at the Saratoga YMCA on West Avenue in Saratoga Springs, NY on Fridays from 7:30 to 9 pm.

DBSA Saratoga Springs reaches out to people 18 years of age or older that have experienced or are experiencing depression and/or bipolar disorders. The groups are peer run, meaning that its facilitators are peers who have experienced depression and/or bipolar symptoms and therefore can easily relate to those people in the group. The group provides support, resources, experiences and coping skills, all which provide hope to one another. All meetings are confidential and what's said in the group stays in the group. While the meetings are free, a small donation is appreciated. All other donations can be made to DBSA Saratoga County. Please call or e-mail

Chris Jasikoff at 518-580-1064 or cmj24@aol.com to let us know when you are coming to the DBSA support group. All new members are welcomed and encouraged to attend. For more information, go to www.DBSA.org/SaratogaSprings.

Newsletter Submissions

This is a plea at large for anyone interested in sharing news, viewpoints, and opinions to not be shy and send them to my attention. Submissions for the next issue are in the fall and need to be mailed or emailed by September 15, 2010.

Please send your articles to:

Lorraine Gardephe
Unlimited Potential
P.O. Box 4656
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
(518) 587-2851
(518) 587-4367 FAX

or email them to me at lgardephe@upsaratoga.com

Thank you!!

SCCCMH Newsletter is the official publication of the Saratoga County Citizens' Committee for Mental Health, P.O. Box 820, Saratoga Springs, New York.

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

The SCCCMMH 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 address above.

THE VIEW FROM HERE

What is a mental illness? Defined by a person living with one.

I have had a mental illness now for ten years and four months, but what does that mean? I remember a great therapist, Lynn Williams, once said to the Friendship House clients as she was retiring, "Remember you are not mentally ill people, but people who just happen to have a mental illness." I will never forget that. It means that my mental illness does not define me or is a part of who I am. It is just something that I must struggle with. Of course, I thank God everyday that I am able to learn my limitations. I see so many people in treatment that don't know how far they can go. They either do too much and end up right back on the unit or don't do enough. Those people have so much potential.

I have also heard mental illness described clinically as emotional problems that interrupt one's daily life so much that they are not able to function without treatment. Sometimes I have sat in groups and people have said things like how do we really know we have a mentally illness. And I think of the movie "Girl Interrupted" where Angelia Jolie's character says that mental illness is a gift. It's not a gift, but at the same time it's not a curse. It's just another disability. I know that I have a mental illness because if I get too stressed out and don't deal with my feelings then my mind plays tricks on me. I will hear things and see things that aren't there. The first time one looks at the wall and sees eyeballs just staring straight at a person, it's kind of freaky. At the same time, the first time I had conversations with people I knew weren't in the room,

made me so scared that I signed up for Friendship House. Now it's normal to me. I know when this happens that I have to stop and think, "What the heck am I doing that is making me stress out so much? What is on my mind that I am worrying?" Now that doesn't mean I still don't get scared, but I have coping skills to stop myself from being in an "emotion mind" state.

Mental illness in our society is not generally accepted. You may think it is because of all the advancements we have made. I truly count my blessing when thinking of all the great programs and opportunities I have been given. However, where it counts the most, in polite society it is not accepted. No one has an idea of what it is outside of the mental health community. I get a lot of "Does Schizophrenia mean you have split personality disorder?" "Oh that's too bad?" And the ever popular, "I will pray that God lifts this burden from you." Not that I don't appreciate people's concern and I do pray every day that humans will find a cure for this disability, but it's more about knowing what I can and can't do, following my treatment, and taking care of myself.

Can a person live a normal life with a mental illness? Certainly! In fact, I think a person can live a more productive life. Another really awesome therapist told me while I was in a day treatment facility known as the Friendship House, Leslie Grossman Brown, "The difference, Amanda, between the people in here and the people out there is that you guys are dealing with your issues." I mean really there are a lot of angry, scared, and misguided people out there.

(Continued on page 5- see THE VIEW)

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

Join SCCCMH Today!

SCCCMH Needs You!

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE FOR 2010-2011:

Please join or renew your membership in the SCCCMMH now. We have changed our membership drive to coincide more closely with our fiscal year. To join, just complete the membership form in this newsletter and mail to the SCCCMMH. The more members the SCCCMMH has, the more we can do for the agencies that provide services to people with mental illness and the more attention we will get from our elected officials.

Members receive our newsletter, and soon will be able to use our new website, too. **Please return your membership form by May 1st.** Even if you are unable to provide financial support, by returning the form it will allow us to update our mailing list.

Saratoga County Network of Mental Health Professionals and Advocates Spring Meeting



The next meeting of the Saratoga County Network of Mental Health Professionals and Advocates (SCN-MHPA) is **Thursday, April 22, 2010** from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm in the Saratoga Hospital Cafeteria. Agenda items can include anything people are interested in. This is an open meeting and all organizations and advocates are welcome. Some examples, lobbying initiatives related to NYS budget cuts, transportation and housing access in Saratoga and ideas for the SCCCMMH website. If you are planning on attending or would like more information, contact Peggy Lounsbury at plounsbury@saratogacare.org or 583-8371.

Dr. Ivan Engel is Retiring

By Sandy Smith



Dr. Ivan Engel, known to his friends and colleagues as "Van", will be retiring from the Saratoga County Mental Health Clinic (SCMHC) in May 2010 after 22 busy years.

He will be greatly missed by his colleagues at the clinic and Friendship House, as well as his patients. A retirement party is planned to send him off in mid-May.

A memory book in his honor is being prepared. Anyone who would like to contribute to the memory book should contact Sherry Reeves at the SCMHC by May 1st. In his retirement, Van will continue his international travels and plans on relocating to Mexico.

THE VIEW

(Continued from "What is Mental Illness" on page 4)

For the last ten years and four months I have always had, at least every three weeks, an hour where I get to let out all my feelings to a person who doesn't get to unload their junk on me!

By Amanda R. Blodgett, Secretary of the Citizen's Committee and a person diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia.

CLINICAL CORNER

By Caroline Russell Smith, LCSW-R

Taking Out The Trash Can Relieve Stress?

By now most of us know we are supposed to take time every day to just be. Decade's worth of research on stress has confirmed that we need to slow down and step out of doing, accomplishing, and striving. Or else. We all know how stress wreaks havoc in our lives. For some it is worsening of chronic pain, for others it is insomnia, still others depression and disease.

There are many, many ways to combat stress. Some people swear by dancing. Some retreat to their meditation cushion. Others find prayer, painting or Pilates their ticket to greater ease. It is my understanding that it is not so much what we are doing but how we are doing it. If we are taking a yoga class to relieve stress but the entire time we are on our mat our mind is racing ahead, planning for what's coming next, the full-benefit of the yoga session will have been forfeited.

Stress is all about trying to control the uncontrollable. When we are locked in a stress reactivity pattern we are focused on anything but what we can actually control in the present moment. The key phrase is, "the present moment."



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

When we walk into a yoga class or head out for a walk and really focus our attention on our bodies, on our breath, on what is actually happening inside and outside of us as it is happening, the mind begins to still and the body begins to relax. Paradoxically, relaxing the body frees up more energy (which is needed to deal with stressful situations) and offers us greater clarity and mental flexibility.

So finding activities we can do on a daily basis that invite joy and ease is critical. Even more critical is paying attention while we are doing them to actually doing them! In addition, I encourage myself to drop into the present moment as much as I can when I am just going about my day. Do I feel my hands on the steering wheel? What does the sky look like when I walk outside first thing in the morning? Can I smell my soap in the shower? What is my breathing like at various points during the day? Is my jaw clenched unnecessarily? Sometimes I make taking out the trash a mini-meditation. I feel my feet on the pavement, the brisk air in my nose, feel my arm muscles working and I bring my attention back to the sensations in my body each time my mind wanders off. I am always impressed by how refreshing this two minute journey is!

We all have dozens and dozens of chores we must accomplish to get through the day. We can use those activities as mini-meditations, as opportunities to step out of auto-pilot and focus on the present moment. Then, when we return to thinking about or coping with whatever challenges confront us, we might notice greater clarity and ease.

If this article speaks to you, consider reading "Full Catastrophe Living" by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990) and published by Dell Publishing. It is a clear, inviting introduction to mindfulness and mindfulness meditation.



For more information, contact:

Chairperson: Peggy Lounsbury
E-mail: plounsbury@saratogacare.org
Phone: 518-583-8371

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM FOR YEAR: April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011

SCCCMH Mission:

Program Development and Enrichment: Awarding grants usually up to \$1000 to agencies and programs in Saratoga County that provide services to people with mental illness or have mental & emotional needs so they can enrich existing programs or expand services.

Education: Provide affordable educational opportunities for mental health professionals and consumers of mental health services.

Advocacy: Advocate for improved mental health care and services by lobbying government and elected officials.

Increase Awareness: Increase public awareness of the needs of individuals with mental illness. E.g., increase access to public transportation, decrease stigmas or stereotypes.

Member Benefits: Membership fees support the development of mental health services in Saratoga County through grants, educational opportunities, and lobbying, as well as the publication of the biannual SCCCMH Newsletter.

More members = More power = More Benefits.

Last Name _____ First _____

Prefix/suffix: _____ I am a new member I am renewing my

Address: Home Work _____

I do NOT want to be a member, remove my information from the SCCCMH mailing list.

Phone Number: Home Work _____

If you want to receive the newsletter and other notices from the SCCCMH via e-mail, please provide your e-mail address:

If you are a provider of mental health services and would like to be included in the Saratoga County Network for Mental Health Professionals, then check here:

If you would like to participate in a mental health consumer workshop that is organized by consumers, then check here:

Membership fee is based on a "pay what you will" basis (Check One):

- I want to be a member, but I am unable provide financial support.
- I want to be a member. I will consider a contribution at a later date.
- I want to be a member, enclosed is my tax deductible donation of: __\$10 __\$25 __\$35 Other.

MAKE CHECKS OUT TO: SCCCMH. Do not send cash in the mail. Appreciated if submitted before **May 1, 2010.**

MAIL TO: SCCCMH, P.O. Box 820, Saratoga Springs, New York 12866

MAKE SURE THE VOICE OF THE SARATOGA COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY IS HEARD.....JOIN SCCCMH TODAY!!

SARATOGA COUNTY



CITIZENS COMMITTEE
FOR MENTAL HEALTH

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

*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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Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

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