

SARATOGA COUNTY



CITIZENS COMMITTEE  
FOR MENTAL HEALTH

# Newsletter

## Citizens' Commitee News Spring 2007

### Message From The Chair of SCCCMH By Peggy Lounsbury

The SCCCMH Board of Directors has embraced with enthusiasm our 2006—2007 operating plan. So, far this fiscal year, we have co-sponsored an educational conference with the Saratoga County Mental Health Clinic Youth Services, we participated in the Inter-agency Awareness day, we distributed one grant, and we hosted two network meetings for providers of, and advocates for, mental health needs in Saratoga County.

An area we want to increase the SCCCMH visibility is advocacy. To this end, the SCCCMH has partnered with the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) - Saratoga, the Shelters of Saratoga and Transitional Services Association (TSA) to develop a position statement regarding criteria for the location of the Saratoga County Mental Health Clinic. This position statement will be shared with local and county public officials. We also lobbied for

improved funding of mental health services, for housing and transportation by meeting with representatives of Senator Farley and Assemblyman McDonald. And finally, we are busy planning our Annual dinner which is scheduled for May 9th this year at Longfellows. The more that is learned about all the great agencies, organizations, providers, consumers, and advocates; the more I appreciate how many people are impacted by mental illness in Saratoga County.

Gerri Rosebrook is a mental health activist. Gerri is this year's Citizen of the Year. She was one of the earlier founders and co-presidents of Saratoga NAMI when it started 20+ years ago. She spoke many times to church and other community groups advocating for the mentally ill and to help others understand mental illness. She also

### From the Newsletter Chair by Lorraine Gardephe, Chair, Newsletter Committee

So much has happened since we met last! We are happy about adding new members on the SCCCMH board. The SCCCMH is announcing that we are interested in knowing if agencies have volunteers or service providers that deserve recognition for their contributions towards the betterment of the mental health community. Every year the SCCCMH honors a "Citizen of the Year" during our annual dinner in May. This year the SCCCMH recognizes

As Newsletter Chair I need to take the time to thank everyone who shared their thoughts, hopes and accolades in the articles that were sent to be published in this spring edition. I believe that the community voice on issues, local happenings in your neighborhood that affect the mental health community need a forum.



# Citizens' Commitee News Page 2

## Spring 2007

### “My Choice is to take charge of my Life”

A Personal Testament by Jen Bosher

I am a hard worker because when I first started out on my journey, I didn't believe in myself, or that I could do anything right. Through the years I have learned how to take better care of myself, and to grow up into the grateful young woman I am today. I am more focused on everyday things, such as being able to come back to school, and relearn things that I learned years ago, and I've been able to be more patient with my learning styles, and ask for help when I need it, instead of letting things get me down. I am truly grateful for all the kind and wonderful people who have come into my life and helped me become a better, stronger person.

Years ago I would never have thought I would be living more independently, in the community. I thought that I would be like a revolving door, in and out of the hospital the rest of my life. I have worked hard these last few months to get where I am. I have a new perspective on life, because I am letting positive people into my life and allowing myself to be loved and cared about in a way that I never would have before [becoming involved with]

Transitional Services.

Some of the aspects of the program

are:

1. Helping me learn to cook.
2. Learning how to do everyday tasks, many of us take for granted.
3. Budgeting
4. Assertiveness skills
5. How to live with other people
6. Stress Management

Transitional Services is a voluntary program, one can leave whenever they want to.

This program has worked for me because without it I would have decompensated, and wound up on the streets. So I thank them for this wonderful opportunity.

Thank You.



Do You Want to Become More Involved?

***We Need you!***

**Come join the SCCCMH Board of Directors!**

If you are interested, please contact any board member or Peggy Lounsbury at [plounsbury@saratogacare.org](mailto:plounsbury@saratogacare.org) or 518.583.8371



# Citizens' Commitee News Page 3

## Spring 2007

### Shelters of Saratoga Awarded a Grant from SCCCMH



Shelters of Saratoga operates a 14 bed homeless shelter for adult men and women in Saratoga Springs. Our Mission is to provide shelter, advocacy and referral services for the homeless. As the emergency shelter for adults in Saratoga County, we also provide daily meals, case management services and housing placement assistance to over 240 individuals annually. Approximately 50% of those we serve have a mental disorder or illness.

Grants through the Saratoga County Citizens' Committee for Mental Health over the past few years have enabled us to purchase several security measures for our homeless shelter. Recently the SCCCMH board members provided us with a \$950 grant to purchase three cigarette smoke detectors. These detectors will keep all individuals in the shelter safe from smoke and potential fire hazards by alerting staff to illegal smokers in the building. We value our partnership with the SCCCMH.

### Come join the SCCCMH Board of Directors!

Consumers or professionals who are interested in carrying out the mission of the SCCCMH are needed to join the Board of Directors. This group of dedicated people meets the first Thursday of every month from September through June. The Board of Directors meet at 5:30 to about 6:30pm at the TSA building located on Union Street in Saratoga Springs. Board members help with reviewing grant applications, assisting with educational events, and other activities. The right person is passionate about improving mental health services in Saratoga County. If you are interested, please contact any board member or Peggy Lounsbury at [plounsbury@saratogacare.org](mailto:plounsbury@saratogacare.org) or 518.583.8371.

**W W M** **Four**  
**Winds**  
SARATOGA

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# Citizens' Commitee News Page 4

## Spring 2007

### **Location, Location , Location!**

By Peggy Lounsbury

The SCCCMH has partnered with the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) of Saratoga, the Shelters of Saratoga and Transitional Services Association to develop a position statement detailing criteria for the location of the Saratoga County Mental Health Clinic. The main criteria described in the Position Statement are that in order for the County Mental Health Clinic to maintain quality, integrated and coordinated mental health services in Saratoga County, the Clinic must be:

1) **Accessible** especially for consumers who walk to services or are dependent on public transportation.

2) In close **proximity** to an inpatient mental health unit and hospital setting, like Saratoga Hospital.

3) Provide in the most **fiscally reasonable** way so as not to increase the taxpayers' burden.

If you would like a copy of the Position Statement, or your organization is interested in signing on as a supporter, please do not hesitate to contact me at 583-8371.

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(continued from page 1 ...from the Chair) did a great deal of advocacy work on behalf of the mentally ill in Saratoga County and in New York state for many years.

Please come to our Annual May 9th dinner and meet Geri. Join us in recognizing her life's efforts, dedication and passion in educating anyone who would listen about what is mental illness and what can be accomplished to remove its stigma. Geri Rosebrook's advocacy efforts have made a great difference in the lives she has touched.

Don't forget! Please mark on your calendar the date of May 9th, Wednesday. The evenings festivities begin at 6 pm with a social hour followed by a buffet dinner at Longfellow's Inn & Restaurant. See you there!

### **Current SCCCMH Board**

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**518.583.8371**

*Jerry Nunez*      *Vice Chairperson*  
**518.587.3631**

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### **(continued from Newsletter Chair page 1)**

I feel privileged in sharing your writings and thoughts on the many topics that touch the lives of consumers, families, providers and friends who are a part of the mental health community in Saratoga County. Please keep your articles coming! You may email them to me at lgardephe@upsaratoga.com or mail your submissions to SCCCMH Newsletter, P.O. Box 820, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. Anyone can also drop off or mail articles to my attention, Lorraine Gardephe, at Unlimited Potential, P. O. Box 4656, 36 Cady Hill Boulevard, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. I thank everyone who contributed to this edition.



# Citizens' Commitee News Page 5

## Spring 2007

### The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill Saratoga Springs, NY

Through Saratoga NAMI (a self-help support group) local families come together to support one another in a caring and kind of environment. Our meetings feature time for Caring and Sharing as well as frequent discussions with experts in the mental health field.

Our members include parents, siblings, spouses, and friends of clients with mental illness. Ages and diagnoses vary but our situations have much in common. The support and camaraderie are amazing.

Our goal is to better understand and care for our mentally ill loved ones. At our meetings, we are able to share our concerns and frustrations and learn from one another what experience has taught us. We discuss treatment options, financial assistance, medications, latest research, therapies, and housing; including residential treatment that range from group homes and apartment living arrangements. By doing this we learn from others how to cope with similar circumstances and take strength from them.

We also discuss how to keep ourselves and the rest of our family well so that we are better able to live as normal a life as we can. All will be welcome as a member of our support group and they can be certain that their rights to privacy and confidentiality will be respected at all times.

When: The first and third Monday of each month.

Time: 7:30 pm.

Place: Transitional Services located on 127 Union Street, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.

For any information please call Marge at 583-0169 or Jean at 885-2098.



## Friendship Connection Announces New Improvements!

By Jerry Nunez, Program Coordinator

The members and staff of the Friendship Connection, UP Inc. would like to express our thanks to the Saratoga County Citizens' Committee for Mental Health for the generous grant award. The quality of life of the social club has increased greatly with the purchase of an automatic dishwasher and ping pong table. The membership of the "Connection" is enjoying use of both items. We wish to show our appreciations and great thanks to the SCCCMH's thoughtful consideration. Come and check out the place! We are located at 5 Wells Street, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. If you need directions please contact Jerry Nunez at 587-3631.

The SCCCMH has grant monies available to deserving agencies and this quarter's deadline for grant requests is at our May 9th Annual Dinner. The SCCCMH will vote on any grants received at our regularly scheduled monthly meeting on the first Thursday of June at 5:30 pm. Our next deadline submission for any grant requests will be at the first Thursday of our November meeting held at TSA's conference room located on 127 Union Street, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.



# Citizens' Commitee News Page 6

## Spring 2007

### Guest Editorial Submitted

By Mark Porteus

A major failing of the state-wide mental health system is that there are few provisions available for job or occupational training as part of the treatment process except through VESID. This program is a cumbersome, bureaucratic agency with a limited budget, restrictive rules, and the capacity to serve only a relative handful of potential consumers.

The following is my proposal for a local Saratoga County training program to serve mental health consumers. It is to be administered by an appropriate local agency. Perhaps this proposal, if successful, could serve as a model for similar projects in other Upstate counties. Certainly a project of this nature would, at least in part, address how mental health consumers can gain employment despite possibly having spotty work histories, having difficulty obtaining gainful work, or references and valuable occupational training that offers experience.

A major thrust of the mental health treatment system should be geared toward meeting these type of needs for those up to approximately 40 years of age. This type of opportunity can offer another choice from the mainstream of conventional mental health treatment system. I strongly feel the traditional treatment model has an inefficient approach that moves at a glacial pace. A more practical method that can expeditiously return consumers to their ordinary, workaday life is long overdue. I observe firsthand how this traditional approach can encourage many to become habituated to the 'soft socialism' of this conventional mental health system. I feel it is seen as primarily as a maintenance system that has inadvertently created a thoroughly unmotivated climate within our treatment system. My proposal is directed to the consumer who has not entirely lost her/his work ethic. This proposal is intended for those who can, potentially, help themselves if provided with the means to do so.

OMH policy is, to my knowledge, set along the lines of eventually returning mental

health consumers to the least restrictive living setting. My proposal should be in keeping with the overall direction of State policy that addresses these needs of this population. While full self support may be beyond the ability and reach of most now receiving disability support assistance, partial self support is not an unrealistic goal. This proposal recognizes that, to some extent, the long term mentally ill and disabled live in a unique sub culture. It is only within this sub-culture and in the presence of one another that consumers feel free to voice concerns, take social risks, make mistakes and learn from them.

Productive work activity, if it is not exploitive or the sweatshop variety to which the mentally ill are too often relegated to in some communities, fulfills three needs. These are a sense of self-worth, a sense of community and purpose and an income above the subsistence level. Psychiatrists, for all their skill, can enlighten what an individual may do to help themselves. In other words, consumers need to practice a degree of self-determination to advocate against the stigma of mental illness or social isolation.

My three suggested examples of work training projects in Saratoga county are: a greenhouse, a restaurant, and a hostel or inn. Someone more familiar with Saratoga county and more financially acute might envision other opportunities. These three projects are suggested because the skill levels required the skill levels required are within the reach of many consumers. The skills learned will be transferable throughout the US. This type of training provides a basis for future work advancement. Insofar as funding is concerned, Saratoga county is represented by State Senator Joseph Bruno, who allocated a 'member item' of one hundred thousand dollars toward the new Unlimited Potential facility. Senator Bruno has been liberal in his sponsorship of many local projects. US Senator Hillary Clinton has an interest in mental health legislation in the US Senate. She might be prevailed upon for a 'member item' for a specific project. (cont. p. 7)





# Citizens' Commitee News Page 7

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**(Guest Editorial continued from p. 7)**

Price Chopper food chain has its hands in many local good works and its management might be persuaded to be of assistance in purchasing local produce if a greenhouse project was initiated. Some other successful efforts by Catholic Charities of Broome county operates a restaurant called Portfolios located in Binghamton, NY. For the last 25+ years. It is staffed by mental health consumers who learn all the jobs in the restaurant over a stipulated period and then move onto regular employment elsewhere.

These suggested projects give evidence that this type of 'apprenticeship' might be organized as a co-operative. This group will experience working as a team. The earlier history of mental health treatment in this state offers an example of relative self-sufficiency among the mentally ill. In the days of the old state psychiatric hospitals people entered it and often stayed a lifetime. However some of the state hospitals operated like self-sufficient communities with patients assigned regular work and some even mastering skilled trades or crafts. Everyone, except the very sick and infirmed, contributed. It was a refuge from a world that did not accept and would not tolerate the presence of those who suffered from mental health issues. It became home for many. For some it was an unbearable exile to hellish experience. Those hospitals were their own universes. De-institutionalization and least restrictive setting became the buzz words. The hospitals have long emptied out, for the most part. No one today seriously advocates for the institutional re-segregation of the mentally ill, any more than seriously proposing re-instituting racial segregation. That said, it sill is a long march for the mentally ill and the mentally disabled toward the mainstream of American life. I feel with productive efforts we have moved from near complete isolation to various degrees of acceptance and tolerance. I, respectfully ask that those with the competence and the

Authority to decide such things, make it possible for this population in Saratoga county to march onward toward becoming first class citizens. Please give us realistic opportunities to achieve a measure of economic self-sufficiency and economic independence.

### **OMH Announces Assertive Community Treatment Data Now Available On-line Albany, NY 12/27/06**

New York State Mental Health Commissioner Sharon E. Carpinello, RN, PhD, announces that a new website (<http://act.omh.state.ny.us>.) provides a wide range of Statewide, regional, county and program-specific information. This new website includes program goals, features, how to access ACT services, statistics, recipient characteristics, outcome measures, and other information about ACT programs.

ACT is an evidence-based model of mental health care designed to provide treatment, rehabilitation and support services to individuals to monitor the use and outcomes of ACT in their home communities. Those local results can be easily compared to other areas of New York State. "[This] new website is user-friendly, easy to navigate, and an outstanding example of OMH's efforts toward an open transparent government," according to Commissioner Carpinello.

Care is provided directly by multidisciplinary teams, and the teams provide services directly to an individual. ACT teams include substance abuse and vocational rehabilitation. With team members bringing their respective areas of expertise to the table, they collaborate to deliver integrated services of the recipients' choice, assist in making progress towards goals, and adjust services over time to meet recipients' changing needs. The new site explains the method of data collection, and provides the viewer with other ACT related informational website links. A directory of all ACT teams in NYS, organized by region and county is also included.



**Grant Submission Date is October 4th** so proposals can be considered at the November SCCCMH Board meeting. Applications must be POST MARKED on or prior to the deadline date to be considered at the following Board meeting.

**NAMI** (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) is a support and advocacy group for families and friends affected by mental illness - Meetings are held at Transitional Services, 127 Union St., Saratoga Springs, 7:30 1st and 3rd Mon every month. Albany office is located at 260 Washington Avenue. Phone: 800.950.3228 [www.naminy.org](http://www.naminy.org)

**FYI**

**Saratoga County Citizens' Committee For Mental Health** Chair: Peggy Lounsbury - for any questions please call 583 .8371 or

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Vice Chair: Jerry Nunez - 587 .3631

Treasurer: Collette Fox - 587.7190

Secretary: Caroline Russell Smith - 857 .9361

**SCCCMH Newsletter Committee . .**

Lorraine Gardephe

and Missy Williams

*All Community Agencies are invited to send in articles. Local consumers, family members and professionals are invited to submit articles on an experience that may help others. Deadline for the next edition: 9/30/07. Thank you for your support!*