

**Highlights:**

Citizen of the Year	1
Chairperson's Notes	2
Membership Drive	2
Grants Available	2
The View From Here	4
Golden Social Club	5
Susan M. Serino Memorial Gifts	5
Mental Health Walk	6

Collette Fox will be honored as the 2013 SCCCMH Citizen of the Year at our Annual Dinner and Fundraiser on Thursday, May 9, 2013 at Longfellows Restaurant. Collette is being recognized for her significant contributions as a volunteer for Friendship House, as a staff member of the Saratoga County Mental Health Clinic Day Treatment Program, and as a long-term board member of the SCCCMH.



**2013  
 CITIZEN OF THE YEAR:  
 COLLETTE FOX**

**SCCCMH Board of Directors**

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Since moving to the area, Collette Fox has been a quiet and humble, yet strong and articulate, advocate for people living with mental illness. Shortly before moving to Saratoga in 1976, Collette graduated from the University of Iowa with a degree in psychology. She soon began volunteering at the Friendship House, and leading senior citizen discussion groups at Stonequist Apartments. She also organized a variety of social events such as holiday parties and "Homecoming Picnics" with clients from the State Hospital in Utica. Eventually, in 1980, Collette accepted a

**(Continued, Page 3, Collette Fox)**

**SCCCMH Addresses Stigma at  
 Saratoga Springs Planning Board Meetings**

During the summer, the SCCCMH had met with county legislator, Dick Rowland, Chair of the Building and Grounds Committee, to provide our criteria for the location of the SCMHC. Once the announcement was made regarding the County's selection of the Topper dealership property, and after determining that the Topper property met all the criteria, the SCCCMH Board of Directors assumed the Committee's work was done related to the clinic move.

However, the following shocking statement appeared in the *Saratogian* on February 26<sup>th</sup>, "...In addition to reviewing plans to renovate the old car dealership into office space, the board's discussion is set to center on whether the Mental Health Department and its patients are welcome on

**(Continued, Page 3, Board)**

## **CHAIRPERSON'S NOTES**

By Peggy Lounsbury

I attended the Saratoga Springs Planning Board meetings on February 27<sup>th</sup> and March 13<sup>th</sup>. Originally, I thought I would just point out a very poor choice of words on the part of the *Saratogian* newspaper regarding the Planning Board agenda concerning the relocation of the Saratoga County Mental Health Center. During my remarks at the February 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, I implied that people dealing with mental illness needed a spokesperson. Well, I have to tell you, after the March 13<sup>th</sup> planning board meeting, I stand corrected. People dealing with mental illness not only can speak for themselves, but they can do so in a respectful and genuine manner as they provide accurate and honest information about living with mental illness.

I was moved and impressed with the presentations of consumers, family members and others who spoke with the purpose of stopping stigma with good information rather than calling others names or negatively stereotyping them. The presentations were so overwhelming that even the Planning Board members were moved.

Throughout this issue, please read the excerpts from the presentations made by supporters during public hearing regarding the location of the Saratoga County Mental Health Center to 135 South Broadway (the old Topper dealership). I am confident you will agree: people dealing with mental illness CAN stand up for themselves and "replace public fear with empathy and personal shame with courage." (Amber Christian Osterhout). We have to work together to help everyone gain insight, and erase stigma! By making positive public comments and supporting positive public efforts like the Mental Health Awareness Walk on April 27<sup>th</sup> at Saratoga Spa Park we can and must make a dent in the eliminating inaccurate and harmful, negative stereotypes about mental illness.

## **WANTED: Members**

Join the SCCCMH now during our Spring Membership Drive. SCCCMH has a "pay what you will" approach to membership So you can join even if you are unable to provide financial support. You will find a membership form in this newsletter. You can also go to the SCCCMH website to join. Help give voice to the mental health needs of our community.

## **SCCCMH Grants Available to Organizations**

The SCCCMH awards monetary grants to not-for-profit organizations that provide services to people with mental illness.

Awards are generally up to \$1,000 and are distributed in December, March and June. For an application and more information, go to our website [www.scccmh-saratoga.org](http://www.scccmh-saratoga.org). **June 1<sup>st</sup>** is the next deadline for grant proposals to be reviewed at the March SCCCMH Board meeting. Grant recipients and unsuccessful applicants will be notified in April.

### **Excerpt from Planning Board Public Hearing:**

*"I still remember the day my brother was brought home from the hospital. Never in my wildest dreams did I expect for that sweet, baby boy to be labeled a paranoid schizophrenic, just prior to accepting his college diploma... It was his shame that kept him from getting well. He turned down a volunteer position, worried what others would say if a college graduate was working as a volunteer. But I witnessed my brother work silently and courageously for six straight years to keep his illness under control... What I do fear is having to explain to my son that Uncle Josh has an illness which will cause others to treat him differently, call him names and not welcome him on the gateway streets of Saratoga Springs..."*

*Amber Christian Osterhout*



**Continued from page 1 – Collette Fox**

position with the Saratoga County Mental Health Center. She worked for the Day Treatment Program at Friendship House. Among other things, she was responsible for the lunch program. Around the same time, Collette joined the Board of Directors for the SCCCMH. She has held various positions for the SCCCMH including Co-chairperson, treasurer, fall conference liaison, and chairperson of the annual dinner and fundraiser. In fact, she has been involved with the SCCCMH so long, it is not clear if she has ever been off the Board! Collette retired from her position with the Mental Health Clinic in 2006. However, Collette remains an active SCCCMH Board Member today, and in fact, she is Co-Chair of the Annual Dinner and Fundraiser again this year!

Throughout all the years in volunteer activities and her contributions at work, Collette has quietly, unobtrusively helped people dealing with mental illness. Understanding that kind gestures mean a great deal to people, Collette has given Christmas gifts to clients, remembered birthdays, assisted with client personal affairs when needed and even cleaned apartments after the passing of a client.

During her service to the mental health community, Collette recognized the importance of direct and respectful one-on-one interaction with the consumer. However, she also recognized the importance of advocating for needs of consumers living with mental illness through an organization like SCCCMH.

Through her worthwhile work and her

volunteering, Collette has made a difference in the lives of many people living with mental illness in Saratoga County. For this reason, the SCCCMH is awarding her the 2013 Citizen of the Year.

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**Gaining Insight & Fighting Stigma**

Visit: <http://www.gaining-insight.com/> and take a look at Amber Christian Osterhout's "Gaining Insight" artwork and "Fighting Stigma" posters.

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**Continued Page 1 – Planning Board**

South Broadway, which is often referred to as the gateway to the Spa City." Peggy Lounsbury, Chairperson of the SCCCMH attended the Planning Board meeting on February 27<sup>th</sup> with the hope of finding out that the statement was a misrepresentation and misinterpretation of the Planning Board's agenda for the evening.

What was not expected were the public comments that inaccurately and offensively characterized people living with mental illness as violent people, loiterers, smokers, and methadone users who are bad for business. The Planning Board deferred it's decision on the special use permit for the Topper building to the next meeting, March 13<sup>th</sup>. At that meeting, people living with mental illness were also characterized in public comments as sexual predators and pedophiles. Fortunately, during the public hearing, consumers, family members, advocates and others provided accurate and informative presentations about mental illness to dispel the offensive public comments. Thankfully, members of the Planning Board did not support the inappropriate comments and approved the special use permit unanimously.

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

[www.SCCCMH-Saratoga.org](http://www.SCCCMH-Saratoga.org)

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 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 can the right medicine do for a person living with a Mental Illness?**

**By Amanda Blodgett**

Now having the right medicine is a very personal and private thing so my informants choose to remain anonymous. However, through their stories you will hear how having the right medicine can mean all the difference in the world to a person living with a mental illness. I, myself, also live with a mental illness so I will weave my own opinions into this piece. I interviewed two of my friends, one is a thirty something year old man and the other is a fifty something year old woman.

First, we discussed what having the right medicine means. This is because when you are living with a mental illness, it's not like your psychiatrist can just give you a blood test and tell you what medicine would be right for you. In my opinion, I would support making this breakthrough in mental health (a blood test to determine meds.) My female friend said, "The right medicine gives a person hope, makes the brain work like it was meant too, and helps her manage symptoms." She also went so far as to say, "It's a miracle." My guy friend had similar thoughts, he said, "It stabilizes my moods, keeps me focused, and helps with social anxiety." I have to agree with my fifty something friend, it is like a miracle, but is also takes time to get the right combination of medication.

Mental Health medications have come a long way. In the 50's there was only a handful of medications specifically for mental illness. However, as a result of medical advances, there are now many more options. Although, it does take time to find which medicine works. And only way a psychiatrist can find that is by giving it to you and seeing how you react because everyone's brain chemistry is a little different. I know for myself, it took five years for my treatment team to figure out what medicine would do the trick. My thirty something friend believes that they got it

right within a month; whereas my female friend was not so blessed. It took her doctors from 1979 to 2012 to finally get it. So it is a matter of chance to how soon the doctors can find what works for a particular patient. It is a benefit to the patient when the right medicine is finally found, though.

Finally, looking at the right medicine and seeing what would happen to a person living with a mental illness we can further see the benefits. I also asked my informants if the right medicine was worth going through the side effects. My female friend said that if she didn't take her medicine her greatest concern would be, "that I would never sleep." As we sat in the coffee shop drinking water, after having big mugs of coffee, because dry mouth is a side effect. She said, "Definitely the benefits of medicine outweigh the side effects." My male friend said if he didn't take his medicine his greatest concern was, "I would relapse be manic, and would isolate." And his take side effects are rather encouraging.

My thirty something friend said, "If I don't exercise or I am laying bed all day that's my fault," so he takes the side effects of weight gain as something he has to work on as with sleepiness. I know for myself, I always tell people if your medicine makes you hungry than put fruits and veggies in the fridge! And my greatest concern is that if I didn't take my medication, I would be homeless as I wouldn't function the way I do, to lead a normal life.

So in closing, I will leave you with two comments from my informants. My female friend said, "Sometimes less is more." And my male friend had this to say, "If medicine is prescribed to you it's important to stick with it."

#### **Excerpt from Planning Board Public Hearing:**

*"...the SCCCMH has a dream we hope everyone shares...that all people are judged by the content of their character and not by their disability, their color or anything else, for that matter. We trust that the Planning Board and the officials and residents of the Saratoga Springs feel this way, too."*

*Peggy Lounsbury*

## Golden Social Club Benefits from SCCCMH Grant

**By Vickie Strohmeier**

The Golden Social Club is a division of Unlimited Potential Vocational Rehabilitation Center, located in Saratoga Springs, New York. Our Social Club offers Saratoga County mental health consumers (50 and older) an alternative to work.

The purpose of the program is to offer socialization and integration into the community. Activities include: word puzzles, board games, exercise, gardening, movies, bingo and community outings.

Since its inception in 1999, costs to run the program have increased. However, our grant funding has remained the same. This has led to a limited budget so community trips were discontinued last year. This has prevented social club members from socializing within their local communities and stymied community integration.

Luckily, the Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health recognized this need and provided a grant to fund community outings and encourage more social interaction for our members. We have enjoyed the grant for only two months and already we see a tremendous benefit from it.

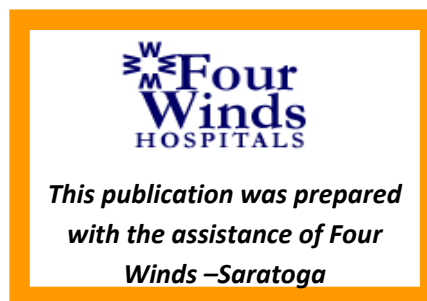
Some of the community activities that have been introduced due to the grant include: familiarization with the CDTA bus system, introduction and participation in the local senior citizen center, and attending movies at the local cinema.

In January our members attended a CDTA information session which educated them on the local bus system. They were introduced to the half-fare program which makes it more affordable for them to use the bus system (since they are on limited incomes). The Trainer offered to ride with the group to familiarize them with the bus routes.

This was helpful because many members have a fear of riding buses because they feel they  
**(Continued on page 6, see Club)**

## Gifts to Memorialize Susan M. Serino

The SCCCMH received donations in memory of Susan M. Serino who died in May 2012. To date, a total of \$1485 was donated for the purpose of enhancing services and programs at the Friendship House, Saratoga County's Mental Health Day Treatment Program. Already, books and educational materials were purchased for use at the Friendship House and the staff and clients of Friendship House are very appreciative of the new materials. What a loving way to remember Susan.



## Honor or Memorialize Someone in a Very Special Way

A wonderful tribute is to make a donation to the SCCCMH in honor of, or to memorialize, a special person. Visit our website:

[www.SCCCMH-Saratoga.org](http://www.SCCCMH-Saratoga.org)

and click on "Make a Donation" to donate on-line, or to download a donation form. Remember contributions to SCCCMH are tax deductible.

### **Excerpt from Planning Board Public Hearing:**

*"... I am a tax paying citizen of Saratoga Springs, currently living in an apartment near Saratoga Hospital...I earned my bachelor's degree from SUNY Empire State in Cultural Studies with a concentration in Literature...Now this may seem like a mundane, ordinary life about a nice person who likes to help others by volunteering at our local hospital. But there is more, I live with paranoid schizophrenia...I wouldn't be able to lead my ordinary, mundane life if I didn't receive the services provided by SCMHC. I don't understand why people are making inaccurate and generalized characterizations about people living with mental illness...If I was a cancer patient, would you say I was not welcomed on South Broadway?"*  
*Amanda Blodgett*

**(Club, Continued from page 5)**

may become stranded. This familiarity will allow members to independently access more community activities by breaking down transportation barriers.

In February, five of our members went on a tour of the Saratoga Senior Center and stayed for lunch at the meal site. Later in the month several of them attended "cooking class" at the Senior Center. We are currently encouraging all Golden Club Members to join the Senior Center so that they can interact with other members of the community and enjoy new opportunities.

Since receiving the grant our members have become more outgoing and independent. We continue to encourage them to participate in new opportunities by incorporating more community events into our monthly activities schedule. Now that we have the grant we are able to pay fees (such as membership into the Senior Citizen Center) or costs they may incur when participating in community events (art classes, museums, shows, day trips etc). We feel this offers a vital link to our members since they may someday need to rely on community based organizations for support.

The Golden Club Members and Staff are truly thankful for the SCCCMH grant. It has opened doors into the community and allowed our members to explore new opportunities. We praise SCCCMH for their insight in recognizing the importance of community inclusion for our GC members.

**Excerpt from Planning Board Public Hearing:**

*"...As a person who has fought with severe depression and social anxiety, I look to our community for compassion and support. Where do we get compassion and support if we can't get it from the people of our community? Enough already with the stigma! We need to move ahead and get beyond the stigma."*

*Christine Jasikoff*



**Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance**  
DBSA Saratoga County

**3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Walk for Mental Health Awareness**

**Saturday, April 27, 2013 @ 11AM**

**Saratoga Spa State Park**

Registration, raffles and silent auction start at 9AM at Carlsbad Pavilion

Support the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) of Saratoga County by walking for mental health awareness. All proceeds of the walk will go to funding the DBSA activities, including support group meetings, special events, training, & advocacy efforts.

For more information about registration or to donate

Go to: [www.DBASaratogacounty.com](http://www.DBASaratogacounty.com)

or call Chris at (518)580-1064

**Excerpt from Planning Board Public Hearing:**

*"...He is and always has been a loving and attentive son... He now has a beautiful twp-year old son of his own ...What I want to also tell you about my son: He is a client of the Saratoga County Mental Health Clinic and has been for over 15 years...this is why my son is leading a happy, healthy and productive life, and a concerned and contributory citizen...Saratoga Springs residents should be proud of the progressive and innovative treatment and programs that the Saratoga County Mental Health Services offers to our community and in fact, the Mental Health Services should be a shining example for the entire state. As a community, we should embrace the privilege to serve as a beacon of hope for clients and their families."*

*Susan Moseley*

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

**Join SCCCMH Today!**



For more information, contact:

Chairperson: Peggy Lounsbury  
E-mail: [plounsbury@saratogacare.org](mailto:plounsbury@saratogacare.org)  
Phone: 518-583-8371

Or visit our website: [www.SCCCMH-Saratoga.org](http://www.SCCCMH-Saratoga.org)

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM FOR YEAR: April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014**

**SCCCMH Mission:** The SCCCMH is a non-profit, charitable organization [501(c)3] whose mission it is to:

**Program Development and Enrichment:** Award grants of approximately \$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.**

\*\*\*\*\*

**PLEASE CHECK ONE:**

New Member     Membership Renewal     Remove my information from the SCCCMH mailing list.

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last \_\_\_\_\_ Prefix/Suffix: \_\_\_\_\_

Address  Home  Work \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

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):**

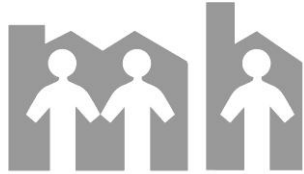
- I want to be a member, but I am unable provide financial support.
- I want to be a member. I will consider a contribution at a later date.
- I want to be a member, enclosed is my tax deductible donation of: \_\_\_\$10 \_\_\_\$25 \_\_\_\$35 Other.

**MAKE CHECKS OUT TO:** SCCCMH. Do not send cash in the mail. Appreciated if submitted before **April 30<sup>th</sup>**.

**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

[www.scccmh-saratoga.org](http://www.scccmh-saratoga.org)

*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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