



Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2016 

Highlights:

- Mental Health Matters Day 1
- Our Citizen of the Year! 2
- SCCCMH Joins the Chamber 2
- SCCCMH Annual Meeting 4
- The View From Here 4
- Grant for TSA 5
- Chairperson Notes 6
- Assemblywoman Woerner 6



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Mental Health Matters in Saratoga County!

A group from Saratoga made their presence known at the Mental Health Association of NYS (MHANY) Mental Health Matters Legislative Day at the Capitol in Albany on March 9th. Consumers, family members, and advocates were transported to Albany via a charter bus rented by the Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health (SCCCMH).

SCCCMH Chairperson, Peggy Lounsbury, briefed the Saratoga group on SCCCMH's 2016 legislative agenda, encouraged the group to express their own needs, concerns and stories, and provided instruction on how to effectively communicate their message to legislators.

At the MHANY Mental Health Matters Legislative Day, participants listened to legislators, mental health professionals, and other guest speakers discuss important mental health issues during the morning agenda. At noon, nearly 100 people gathered on the Capitol building steps for the Mental Health Matters Rally. Participants took turns sharing why mental health matters to them individually. Then the group marched around the plaza chanting, "mental health matters" and "teach mental health in our schools," which is one the issues on MHANY's 2016 Legislative Agenda. The group of sixteen participants from Saratoga also held signs paid for by the SCCCMH which said "Mental Health Matters in Saratoga".

(Lobby, page 3)

SCCCMH
2016 Citizen of the Year
Laurie Nelson



Laurie Nelson, recently resigned as the Deputy Director of Transitional Services Association (TSA) after more than 30 years in a career dedicated to people living with disabilities and mental illness. It is no wonder that she was nominated for, and selected as, the SCCCMH 2016 Citizen of the Year.

Laurie began her career working for NYS OMRDD which is now OPWDD (Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities) right out of college. After accepting a position with TSA, she began her long tenure with this organization. She worked for TSA in several capacities. She also was the Director and started Edgewood House. She worked in the community residences as a Program Supervisor for Hammond House and as a Program Director. She was the Program Director when Edgewood House was established. She was then promoted to Program Coordinator and eventually as the Deputy Director of the agency.

Laurie has dedicated her work to creating and improving services in the Saratoga mental health community including housing and care management services. She is known for promoting a client-centered approach to the services provided by TSA. Clients, in particular, were impressed that, as an administrator, she knew their names. That is because she felt it was a priority to familiarize herself with the individual clients in as many programs as she could. As a leader, she modeled and encouraged staff to be empathetic regarding the needs people living with mental illness.

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Laurie has supported the SCCCMH dinners and Mental Health Matters fundraisers for several years. She also encouraged and supported the attendance of TSA clients to this annual SCCCMH event as well as other events like Mental Health Walk and Mental Health Matters Lobby Day at the Capitol in Albany. She also supported events such as client picnics and client holiday gatherings because she knows how important socialization is in preventing isolation. Laurie is also an active volunteer for her church.

Laurie Nelson will be honored at the SCCCMH Mental Health Matters Benefit at Longfellows Restaurant on **Wednesday, May 4, 2016, 6 to 9 pm**. The registration form for the event is included in the newsletter. Or, contact: **Leslie Ives at 518-932-7398**.

SCCCMH Joined the Chamber

The SCCCMH Board of Directors approved the membership fee for the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce. It is anticipated that the additional exposure and support that the Chamber offers to non-profit organizations will assist the SCCCMH carry out our mission and gain more visibility. Along with a link to the SCCCMH website, networking opportunities and the ability to use the Leadership Saratoga Volunteer Match program, the Chamber membership also brings with it a free membership to the NY Council of Non-Profits.

Newsletter Submissions

Thanks everyone for sharing the news, viewpoints, and your opinions that contribute to our success! Submissions for the next issue are in the spring and need to be mailed or emailed by **October 15th**.

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: lorigards199@gmail.com



(Lobby, Continued from Page 1)

Later in the afternoon, Saratoga group met with the legislative aides for Senator Kathleen Marchione and Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner. The legislative aides were very receptive to supporting these important mental health issues. The representatives seemed genuinely moved by the struggles told by the people who are living with mental illnesses, The SCCCMH group urged the legislators to:

- Restore state aid to sheltered workshops like Unlimited Potential in Saratoga Springs and prevent a misguided approach for the severely and persistent mentally ill.
- Understand the unique housing issues for people living with mental illness and increase access to affordable housing.
- Understand how the proposed CDTA bus route changes and decreased services in Saratoga will adversely affect people living with mental illness.
- Support reinvestment of any funds saved by psychiatric bed closures back into services and support for the mental health community.

All Saratoga participants in the Mental Health Matters Legislative Day felt this grassroots lobbying was a worthwhile advocacy experience that empowered people living with mental illness.

(Continued...)

SCCCMH's participation in this event was made possible through a grant received from The Saratoga Casino and Raceway Foundation. Each year the foundation awards grants to not-for-profit organizations that carry out services and activities that benefit the residents of Saratoga County. Activities funded through the grant address problem gambling, support youth, senior citizens, recreation, arts and community benefit. The award was requested by the SCCCMH to empower mental health clients to speak for themselves and overcome the stigma and therefore the helplessness often associated with mental illness. Ultimately, it is hoped that the participants will be able to generalize the lessons learned on advocating, and therefore to better advocate for their needs when addressing their individual care or support needs.

Although lobbying does not guarantee that funding will be restored or provided for programs that were advanced on Mental Health Matters Day in Albany, for those that participated, it was powerful to participate in this democratic process and have our voices heard!



SCCCMH Newsletter is the official publication of the Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health,
P.O. Box 820, Saratoga Springs, New York 12866
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 Editor's e-mail address. Articles not submitted electronically can be mailed to the address above.

THE VIEW FROM HERE

COMMON GROUND

by Mark Porteus

We are all human. We are all born of mothers, and, sooner or later, are sure to die. Even mental health professionals and clients, with as much as puts them apart, are all part of the same human "soup." For therapy to succeed, it is important that the professional and the client find some common ground between them as people. This common ground could be almost anything, and does not have to be in plain sight. But, it can prove to be the main basis for working toward the common goal in therapy, the return of better health for the client and recovery.

In my own long history with mental health treatment, I met two professionals (both men) along the way, separated by thirty years, with whom I shared a strong common bond (common ground), and with whom I made great progress. There was a lot of not so good or harmful therapy in the years between them.

One professional was a psychiatrist, a Ukrainian who fled Ukraine at the end of World War Two to "escape physical extermination (death)," as he put it. He had been a psychiatrist in his homeland, and after several years as a refugee in Europe, he came to the U.S. After much additional study, he became licensed to practice here. I knew him in the early 1970s in Binghamton. When I said I had been in Europe for four years, including Eastern Europe, he said he had been in some of the same cities and places I had, and we began talking about pre-World War Two and then modern-day Poland and the Ukraine. Mixed in with counseling and advice over the four years I saw him, were long talks about the history of Eastern Europe and our individual experiences there, the people and places we knew. Our meeting each other, even if it was as doctor and patient, was a Godsend, and thanks to him, I made it through that part of the trip through the swamp of mental illness.

The second professional was a therapist, now
(Continued...)

retired, who I saw in Saratoga for ten years. He was a native Upstate New Yorker, and he and I were both very familiar with the same geographic area in central New York State where we had both lived most of our lives, and we both spoke the same way people there speak. There was no difference in meaning or understanding, we spoke the same language, we shared a common culture, common beliefs, and common values.

For years, I had laughed off or shrugged off some of my experiences, especially those as a young soldier, but, as I got older those experiences became more and more grim as they played over and over in my mind. By the time I first saw the therapist, I had long become haunted. Very gently and very carefully, without ever once bringing anything to the surface, he somehow began to indirectly guide me in my letting go of those experiences, or rather my burying them deep underground where they remain. The proof is in the pudding, I am no longer haunted by ugly memories.

The common bond of a common way of speaking where there were no misunderstandings or doubts as to meaning, was our common ground.

SCCCMH Annual Meeting June 2, 2016

The SCCCMH, Inc. Annual Meeting will be June 2, 2016, 5:30 pm at the TSA Administrative Building, 127 Union St, Saratoga Springs.

The Fiscal year 2015-2016 report will be presented and voted on. If you are planning on attending, please RSVP by contacting Chairperson, Peggy Lounsbury.

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

Join SCCCMH Today!

SCCCMH Grant for TSA
By Megan Welch

Transitional Services Association (TSA) offers several different housing programs, along with adult community residences, Hammond House and Stonebridge and Kaydeross House, an adolescent group home as well as care management. All programs work primarily with the mentally ill.

In recent years, because of the closing of the Saratoga County Mental Health Services social club as well as system changes; TSA clients have lacked options and opportunities to socialize.

Therefore, TSA started an Activities Committee to try to create social groups. One of the groups we started was an art group which is run through the Care Management Office.

The grant obtained from the SCCCMMH was used to purchase materials for the art group. We have already been using some of the material purchased and the clients are enjoying the projects and benefiting from the purposeful activity and socialization.

The SCCCMMH grant enabled TSA to offer a variety of project resources and activities to the clients that would not be possible due to limited funding. Thank you, SCCCMMH!

Apply for Grants from SCCCMMH

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

Awards are generally up to one thousand dollars and are distributed three times a year. Contact Peggy Lounsbury or visit our website for more information and an application. Applications for the next award cycle are due February 1st.



JOIN NOW!

Consumers, family and friends, mental health professionals and others, please join the SCCCMMH now for the new year. As a member of SCCCMMH, you will get our newsletter, and more important, you will help SCCCMMH carry-out our mission to be the voice of people living with mental illness in Saratoga County. The more members we have, the more power we have to influence local and state government.

Also, consider a charitable gift to SCCCMMH. You can honor or memorize someone and help make a difference in the mental health community, too.

Give power to the mental health community...join today!

BOARD MEMBERS WANTED!

The SCCCMMH Board of Directors meets once a month, generally the first or second Thursday of the month, 5:30 to 7 pm at the TSA Administrative Offices at 127 Union Street, Saratoga Springs.

The board does conduct some business using e-mail, and board members are typically on one committee (e.g., grants, newsletter, public relations, conference, and annual benefit).

If you are interested, it is suggested that you attend a board meeting as a guest to observe. You will be contacted after the meeting to find out if you are interested.

The SCCCMMH Board of Directors, although small, gets big things done! Contact Peggy Lounsbury for more information.



This publication was prepared with the assistance of Four Winds –Saratoga

Chairperson Notes

By Peggy Lounsbury

The focus of the SCCCMH since the Fall newsletter has been advocacy. The Board adopted a 2016 Legislative Agenda, met with Assemblywoman Woerner, secured a grant from the Saratoga Casino and Raceway Foundation to subsidize a bus rental for lobby day, and participated in the Mental Health Association of NYS Mental Health Matters Legislative Day on March 9th in Albany.

The SCCCMH next major effort is our Mental Health Matters Benefit on May 4, 2016. We are soliciting donations to raffle off or to include in our silent auction. If you have something to donate, please contact: Leslie Ives at 518-932-7398. Also, we have added an Honorary Committee level of support, in addition to Friend and Advocate. We also added a discounted fee to ensure that our benefit is affordable to anyone who wants to attend.

If you are able, consider a higher level of support to SCCCMH. This benefit is an important (and fun) event because it is a primary fundraiser for the SCCCMH. Also, please note that all donations are tax deductible.

Even if you are not able to come, please consider making a gift. You can even make a gift in memory or honor of an individual.

Bon-Ton Community Days

The SCCCMH raised \$452.20 through our participation in the Fall 2015 Bon-Ton Community Days. Board members sold coupon books for \$5.00 which Bon-Ton allows non-profits to keep. Board members Amanda Blodgett and Chrissy Hechemy lead the way with in-store sales! Watch for the Bon-Ton Community Days every Spring and Fall. If you see the SCCCMH table, please buy the coupon book from us! Also, please thank Bon-Ton for this wonderful program that benefits our community in many ways.



SCCCMH Board Members meet with Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner

Peggy Lounsbury, SCCCMH Chair, and Melodie Masterson, SCCCMH Legislative and Public Relations Chair, met with Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner in her District Office in the old Spring Street School in Saratoga Springs on December 18, 2015. Peggy and Melodie presented Assemblywoman Woerner with the SCCCMH 2016 Legislative Agenda. The meeting was about an hour and the Assemblywoman asked many questions in order to better understand the needs of people living with mental illness in Saratoga County.

As part of the conversation, Assemblywoman Woerner wanted to know more about Unlimited Potential. Peggy and Melodie suggested she take a tour and within a couple of weeks of the meeting, she did.

Clearly, Assemblywoman Woerner is making a genuine effort to effectively represent her constituents, especially those living with mental illness!

The SCCCMH Legislative Agenda includes:

- Funding for home and community skill building services including sheltered workshops and social day programs.
- Funding for more supportive housing.
- Improved public transportation.
- Reauthorize Kendra's Law.
- Requiring mental health education and training in schools.
- Funding for mental health first aid training.
- Increased funding for Child Advocacy Centers.
- Expand Prescriber Prevails legislation to include all medications in a plans formulary.

Member of:





For more information, contact:

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

Or visit our website: www.SCCCMH-Saratoga.org

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM FOR YEAR: April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017

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 and 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. For example, 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(s): 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 and Advocates (SCN-MHPA), then check here:

If you would like to participate in a mental health consumer workshop, 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.

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!!



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 **increases public awareness** of the needs of people living with mental illness.*

**Saratoga County Citizens
Committee for Mental Health**

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