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**Mental Health Matters Annual Benefit
 In Pictures - April 29, 2024
 Recognizing Jennifer Myers
 as the 2024 SCCCMH Citizen of the Year**



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Mental Health Matters 2024 Annual Benefit Continued...



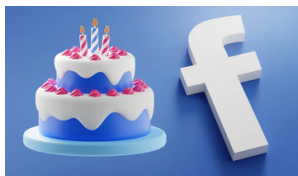
CHAIRPERSON'S NOTES

By Peggy Lounsbury

In 2022, the SCCCMH Board of Directors decided to have public forums called "Changing the Lens," to increase people's awareness of issues, conditions and problems impacting people living with mental health challenges. Over the past two years, we've focused on Changing the Lens on Homelessness and on Substance Use and how these challenges affect Mental Health. This year the focus will be on Changing the Lens on Mental Health itself with the hopes of creating an understanding of the challenges of living with mental health concerns and the resources available in our County.

Our major fundraiser is on April 26th. The Mental Health Matters Benefit is held in the Colonial Hall Banquet Room at the Saratoga-Wilton Elks Lodge. The food buffet is provided by Simply Food by Maura. Our DJ is Mike Rafferty and he plays great dance music. Join us for the fun, and help us raise funds to continue to advocate for those in need!

Using Facebook's fundraising tool, you can donate your birthday to a SCCCMH



To donate your birthday, simply click on the fundraising tab on your News Feed. From there, you can select SCCCMH as the charity you want to give to and set your fundraising goal as well as your fundraiser's end date. You can invite your friends directly to the fundraiser, so they can help you celebrate your birthday by helping the mental health community in Saratoga.

SCCCMH Grant Assists Charlton School to Build A Therapy Space in New Dorms

As The Charlton School is in the midst of an exciting expansion project that will benefit the mental health of the young women we serve, we are grateful for community partners, like SCCCMH, who are supporting our efforts.



The Charlton School expresses our utmost gratitude to the Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health for their \$2,000 contribution toward the purchase of furnishings for a therapy space in the new dorms we are constructing. This money will help toward the purchase of couches, chairs, a desk, lighting and a rug that will be used to make the therapeutic space safe and inviting for our students.

As one of the only therapeutic learning communities for young women in our region, we have become the leading recipient of referrals across the tri-state area. Our four new dorms will be instrumental in continuing our unique and effective approach to treating young women's mental health, and the therapeutic spaces around campus are crucial to fostering personal growth.

We are grateful to SCCCMH for believing in our mission and recognizing the importance of this project.

THE VIEW FROM HERE

Navigating the Complex Path of Supporting a Child With a Co-Occurring Disorder Amid an Opioid Epidemic: A Mothers Journey

By: Angela Wolfe, Recovery Coach, Parent Advocate, Recovery Advocate, Mental Health Advocate

Co-occurring Disorders

Co-occurring disorders refer to having a co-existing mental illness/mental health challenge/disorder and substance use or alcohol disorder. When a substance use disorder and psychiatric disorder co-occur, they may differ in severity, and the severity of each can change over time. Compared to individuals who have a single disorder, those with a combination of disorders may experience more severe medical and mental health challenges and may also require lengthier periods of treatment.

My son was diagnosed with a co-occurring disorder after trying to find ways to manage his mental health disorders and traumas through self-medication. My son received professional help for his mental health disorders throughout his life. There was never a discussion about the potential dangers of self-medication, the painful journey that would follow, and the torture that we would witness our son endure.

Co-occurring disorders and the opioid crisis have upended traditional family structures. Many parents have died from overdose poisoning, become incarcerated, or are otherwise unable to care for their children due to all of these factors. Our lived experience, as we have almost lost our son multiple times to overdose poisoning, lived

through incarceration, the detrimental effects of substance use, and are now raising our granddaughter. As a result, more and more families are raised primarily by their grandparents.

As grandparents, we face unique challenges contending with stigma, dwindling income, deficits in technological savvy, and health issues related to aging. Seeking support for children affected by these circumstances is also imperative to their well-being.

Navigating the System

My journey with my son has meant navigating a maze of medical, mental health, and addiction treatments along with legalities and societal shame and stigmas. It has been harrowing and enlightening while teaching me resilience, understanding, and the critical importance of informed advocacy. Most importantly, being informed, our voice as family members matters, and we have the power to make change.

We are led to believe in 12-step studies that we are powerless over our loved ones and are not. The more we speak up as a community with informed advocacy, the more our voice will help play a crucial role in changes needed in our system and a pathway towards recovery for our loved ones.

Incarceration, while sometimes a necessary intervention, also is not the solution for an individual with a mental health disorder where treatment is needed. 1 in 5 New Yorkers have a mental health diagnosis, and less than 20% of those incarcerated receive mental health treatment only to be released; many are homeless, with a high rate of recidivism, and, worse, the increased possibility of death by overdose poisoning in the two weeks following release.

Continued on Page 5

Navigating the Complex Path Continued...

Even one year after release, those incarcerated were ten times more likely to die of an overdose.

Navigating the medical system is equally challenging as healthcare professionals are not adequately educated to understand addiction /co-occurring disorders. They are, instead, dehumanizing and degrading individuals for their illness and their families, inducing significant trauma on an already painful, traumatic, and potentially terminal disease. A few years ago, individuals with co-occurring disorders were denied mental health treatment; thankfully, laws have passed stating one can no longer be denied; unfortunately, not all have implemented this law, and we were still repeatedly rejected treatment.

So please understand many ill, homeless individuals have not been able to receive proper treatment for their illness.

Family Recovery

When your child or loved one is suffering from an addiction/alcohol/substance use disorder, their illness affects the entire family unit. Substance use/misuse is a problem that radiates outward, becoming a “family disorder” involving the family as a whole through relationship/marital troubles, financial problems, health issues, emotional trauma, and as parents, we carry pain, guilt, shame induced by society, helplessness, confusion, and why it is so important to seek help and recovery for yourself and your family.

Conversely, by submerging yourself into family recovery through education, learning everything you can about addiction, mental illness, and recovery, attending support groups, therapy, group therapy, and finding support in safe spaces with like-minded people, you can return to peace,

clarity, unity, wellness, and you can influence a pathway to recovery for your child/loved one by leading the way.

Starting Your Journey

You can start your journey in family recovery by contacting your local recovery center and asking for family support through their family navigator and outreach coordinators. They offer many educational programs, classes, and support groups.

Join NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Health) to also find support and understanding for your child's /loved one's mental health challenges /illness. You are not alone in this.

If the system is failing to meet your child's/loved one's substance use and mental healthcare needs, reach out to CHAMP (Community Access to Addiction and Mental Healthcare Project). They educate and assist New Yorkers in accessing treatment and insurance coverage for substance use and mental health treatment.

Become trained in Narcan. Carrying Naloxone (Narcan) and knowing how to use it can be life-saving in the event of an overdose. Addiction is not one's choosing, but we can choose to save a life until they find recovery. Dead people can't recover.

End the stigma and reach out for help. Statistics show people with addiction/co-occurring disorders are most successful when their loved ones lead the way. Recovery is possible for you and your family.

Be the change you wish to see!

Citizen of the Year Nominations

The Saratoga County Citizen's Committee for Mental Health is currently accepting nominations for the 2025 Citizen of the Year award. The Citizen of the Year is granted to an individual in the community who has made a significant positive impact on the mental health community in this region.

Please visit the SCCMHC website to submit your nominations. The 2025 Citizen of the Year will be recognized at our annual Mental Health Matters benefit this Spring at the Saratoga-Wilton Elks Lodge. Please see save the date below for more information.

Submit Mental Health News and Views Articles

Consider submitting an article for the "View From Here" column. This is a powerful way to share your experience as a consumer, family member, professional, or advocate.

Also, appreciated are mental health-related news and stories. Articles can be around 150 to 250 words. Submit your articles via e-mail to info@SCCCMH-Saratoga.org.

SCCCMH Grants Available Now

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 download an application.

Mental Health First Aid Training

MHANY provides free Mental Health First Aid training to individuals who work with or support the General Public within Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties. Mental Health First Aid is often referred to as CPR for the mind; it is an evidence-based training that introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental illness along with a 3-year certification from the National Council for Behavioral Health.

You are more likely to encounter someone — friend, family member, coworker, neighbor, or member of the community — in an emotional or mental crisis than someone having a heart attack.

Mental Health First Aid is a 5-step action plan that offers initial help to people with the signs and symptoms of a mental illness or in a crisis, and connect them with the appropriate professional, peer, social, or self-help care.

Anyone can take the 8-hour Mental Health First Aid course — first responders, students, teachers, leaders of faith communities, human resources professionals, and caring citizens.

For more information, visit the MHANYS website: <https://mhanys.org/products/mhfa/>



MHANYS
Mental Health Association
in New York State

What I Would Tell My 20 Year Old Self

What I would tell myself as a twenty-year-old first experiencing living with a mental illness.

By Amanda Blodgett



First, I would say let's thank our higher power for saving us that night on October 30 into the morning of October 31. It may have seemed like one of the most horrific nights of our life, but so many miracles occurred to let us live long enough to even know what our twenties would be like!

Next, I would say don't be afraid to go to the ER when you need to. Sometimes, four hours spent in a safe place, and figuring out a safety plan was all we needed. And someday you would become the forty-year-old me and be able to just talk to someone without feeling like harming ourselves. Then, as the brave soul we became, we could wait until the clinic opened to talk it out with our therapist.

Third, I would say isolating might not be the best thing, but it is the best thing at time.

You remember, a therapist told us that our society doesn't value self-care. Just like the quote from Eat, Pray, Love, "The art of doing nothing." However, we aren't doing nothing, we are healing.

Finally, I would say yes medicine is important. However, it takes time. If we had been born in another century or even a different decade, there would have only been a handful of drugs. Now, there is so many different ones and different combinations. **YOU WILL FIND WHAT WORKS.** Remember patience is virtue.

Love from a middle-age woman living with a mental illness, because Amanda you are about to go through the fight of your life and come through the other side happy, stronger, and more pleased with who we are.

Donate to SCCCMH and be entered into a drawing for local gift cards in The Love Our Locals 2024 Campaign



The Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce is presenting the Love Our Locals \$20.24 campaign, which runs from now through December 31, 2024.

After spending or donating \$20.24 or more in support of a Saratoga County business or nonprofit – like SCCCMH, all you have to do is take a photo of your receipt and upload it using the form found at saratoga.org/love-our-locals to be entered in the weekly gift card drawing

The Saratoga County Citizens Committee
for Mental Health

PRESENTS:

CHANGING THE LENS ON MENTAL HEALTH

A public discussion on
mental health in Saratoga County

DATE:
February 27 , 2025

TIME:
6 pm - 8 pm

LOCATION:
Saratoga Library
Harry Dutcher Community Room



Local and Community Resources are Vital to Good Mental Health

By: Steve Bault

Mental Illness impacts the lives of 1 in 5 people in the United States. From the many physical, mental or emotional traumas each of us have experienced or will face at varying degrees, it's how our mind and body deal with it.

Chemical imbalance, drug use, death, alcohol, head injuries...etc, the human mind is the most complex thing in existence. I believe those living with a mental illness deserve to be treated as much as we treat physical illnesses.

Life explosions can and will happen. I've learned that personally and through friends, coworkers, the community and of course the news cycle...

it's the resources available for people who need it the most that counts.

In 2022 nearly 50,000 Americans committed suicide. 90% of people who died from suicide had a diagnosable mental health condition.

Support systems; access to affordable healthcare, medicine, and insurance; stable housing, transportation and job opportunities are vital.

I find myself fortunate and grateful to live in Saratoga County and the Capital Region, for it's myriad of nonprofit agencies, businesses and so many resources that help with the mental well-being of the community.

To everyone who does such work to help others, keep up the good work. For we know that life explosions hurt but they can be healed as well.



SAVE THE DATE



**Mental Health Matters Annual Benefit
Saturday, April 26, 2025
Saratoga-Wilton Elks Lodge**

JOIN SCCCMH!

Please join SCCCMH now for the new year. As a member of SCCCMH, you will receive our newsletter, and more important, you will help SCCCMH carry-out our mission to be the voice of people living with mental health diagnoses in Saratoga County. The more members we have, the more power we have to influence local and state government.

Please consider a charitable gift to SCCCMH. You can honor or memorialize someone while making a difference in the mental health community.



**Give power and support
to the mental health
community...join today!**

**Help SCCCMH Increase Awareness:
Follow our Facebook Page!**

Please share the SCCCMH Facebook Page with your family and friends and ask them to follow our page!



**Thank You for
Your Support!**

We need the continued support of people like you to help in our advocacy efforts toward improving Mental Health Services in our county and to remove the stigma associated with those who live with Mental Health issues. We provide grant money to agencies that want to start up services or initiatives that improves the lives of those they serve in Saratoga County! Please follow and share our Facebook page to spread the news!

The 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 SCCCMH unless specifically stated.

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



For more information, contact:

Chairperson: Peggy Lounsbury

Phone: 518-583-8371 Email: plounsbury@saratogacare.org-

Or visit our website: SCCCMH-Saratoga.org and check out our Facebook Page!

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM

Revolving Membership for one year from the date you join SCCCMH

SCCCMH Mission: 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 SCCCMH mailing

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____ Prefix/Suffix: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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

Email 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. Please 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!!