



THE
MENTAL HEALTH
ASSOCIATION
IN CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY

Newsletter

Recovering Lives, Saving Families

www.mhachautauqua.org

Fall 2016

“Addiction is a Disease, Not a Moral Failing”

*An Interview with Dr. Lillian Vitanza Ney,
Chair of the Advisory Board of the Mental Health Association*

Dr. Lillian Ney didn't expect to learn so much when, as chair of Jamestown's Health Care Action Team, she went to a presentation by the Mental Health Association.

For the highly respected retired cardiologist and medical director of WCA Hospital, “It was a real eye opener.” Not only was the enormity of the problem a surprise, but at the time there was so little public discussion about the growing opioid epidemic.

What she learned eventually led her to chair the Advisory Board of the Mental Health Association (MHA). She now wants others to understand that this huge public health problem crosses all lines of age, sex, race, income, and education. No one is immune. In the past year, the average MHA client has been a 23 year old white middle class female.



“Drug addiction is a devastating, chronic disease for which there is no easy cure,” Dr. Ney stressed. In fact, recovery may take years. With dozens of recent heroin-related deaths in the region, “We face losing a generation to drug addiction.” Too many had young children. Every one had families and friends who cared about them.

How did these young people become addicted to heroin? Some had suffered injuries for which they were prescribed opioids -- pain relievers with the same addictive qualities as heroin. Some found medication in another's medicine cabinet. Some were at a party and decided to liven things up a bit. Others have suffered emotional trauma. When their prescriptions or their other supply ran out, their bodies couldn't go without the drugs. At a “street price” of upwards of \$70+ for a pill, they turned to the much cheaper option of heroin.

“People don't realize that even *one hit* of heroin for some individuals can lead to a downhill course for them,” said Dr. Ney, “Heroin and other opioids literally change the brain over time, impairing decision making and making recovery difficult and often long term.”

“It's important to understand that **this is not a moral failing**, it is actually a chronic disease of the brain. This is a medical problem and people need a huge amount of support to get well again,” said Dr. Ney. She humbly concluded, “I'm not an expert, but I've learned a lot in recent years. And I know that education and prevention are extremely important tools in fighting this epidemic.”

At the September 27, 2016, Recovery Walk, Dr. Ney receives an award for her dedication to bringing addiction information to the health care community, publicly advocating for agency collaboration, and improving our community as a whole.



Dr. Ney is featured in *Recover Jamestown*, the 60-minute video created by Sheridan Smith that tells stories of addiction, recovery, and loss, and explores what hope lies in new solutions and community efforts. It opens a conversation that includes the effects of drugs on the community from the inside out, and seeks to confront a growing issue plainly and uniquely. *Recover Jamestown* was released free online to be used in part or in whole, without manipulation of any section. Free copies of the DVD are also available at the Mental Health Association. See a preview at vimeo.com/130281100, the full movie at imdb.com/video/wab/vi4263228185.

A Mother's Story



The door to the Mental Health Association, where so many have found help.

"Our daughter just got her master's degree," said the retired teacher, who with her husband has a long history of leadership in their church and community groups.

Eight years ago her daughter had spent four months in jail as a result of setting their house on fire, causing the whole interior to have to be rebuilt -- an act that took more than six months of apartment living before she and her husband could return home.

"We were ready to give up and turn our backs on her," this mother said. Then they had friends whose daughter was brutally killed. "That terrible tragedy brought us to the realization that we were lucky enough to still have our daughter -- and we knew we had to do whatever we could to help her."

The hardest part was not knowing where to go for help for the mental illness and substance abuse that plagued their 22-year-old daughter. They will be forever grateful for finally finding Kia Briggs and Rick Huber at the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County.

"When our lives were turned upside down -- even before the fire -- we didn't know where to go, where to turn for help. It wasn't easy, but with the help we found, she put her life back together. After finishing at JCC (Jamestown Community College), she got her degree at Fredonia. Then as a single mom, she worked full-time while going to school, having an internship, writing a thesis, and now she has her master's degree in social work. And it all started here at MHA," this mother said.

She finished by stressing, "We want others to know that MHA is here. These wonderful people helped our daughter to make it through Treatment Court, and they helped her find housing. They helped her find employment and got her started at JCC. We are so thankful that eight years later MHA is still here and has grown to help many more people like her and their families, especially now that the need is greater than ever."



MHA Board Members

Carm Micciche, Co-President
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MHA Advisory Board Members

Dr. Lillian Vitanza Ney, Chair
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Hope and Healing for Chautauqua is an 11-minute video that describes the variety of services available in Chautauqua County to treat substance abuse. In addition to service providers, you can hear from heroin users, a veteran who suffered from alcoholism, and the wife of an addict. Produced by Kranky Plate Productions, this inspiring work debuted June 13, 2016, at the Hope & Healing for Chautauqua conference at Chautauqua Suites in Mayville, for which MHA was part of the planning committee. It can be seen at youtu.be/E231kLLMqh0.



Community Foundation Grant

Recovery coaches are certified peer specialists who have lived the experience of mental health and drug addiction recovery. A grant from the Chautauqua Region Community Foundation provided funds to hire an additional full-time recovery coach for the MHA for 2016. Pictured here, Kia Narraway-Briggs, MHA executive director and recovery coach trainer, provided a brief lesson in recovery coach training to (seated, from left) Lillian Ney, MHA Advisory Board chair; Rick Huber, MHA chief executive officer; Randy Sweeney, Chautauqua Region Community Foundation executive director; and Dale Robbins, MHA Advisory Board vice chair.



The MHA is *committed* to:

Providing a *comprehensive and holistic* approach to help support existing treatment in the area to help our participants discover who they truly are and access their *natural gifts*.

To provide a needed *Peer Recovery Support Center* to help men, women and families overcome the effects of mental illness and drug addiction.

To gain *life skills* educationally, vocationally, emotionally and relationally through collaboration with mental health and addiction therapy providers, schools, self-help programs such as AA and other needed agencies, guided by *certified peer recovery coaches/peer specialists through NY State certification board*, so that those suffering may become the people they were created to be.

The MHA is a non-profit 501c3 peer run organization.



Peer Recovery Support Groups

Every week more than two dozen peer recovery support groups for those recovering from mental illness, alcoholism, and/or drug abuse meet at the Mental Health Association. These include groups for veterans, LGBT, PTSD sufferers – both men and women, family members, Spanish speakers, and more. For information on all the days and times, including Monday and Thursday evenings, call the MHA at (716) 661-9044.



Find us on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/MHACHautauqua

Mental Health Association Hours:

Monday - Wednesday: 9 am – 4 pm

Thursday: 9 am – 8 pm

Friday - Saturday: 9 am – 2 pm



Recovery Luncheons

Celebrating positive milestones has been shown to increase long term recovery. The MHA regularly holds “Recovery Luncheons” where awards are given for attending support groups, receiving recovery coaching services, gaining employment, advancing through treatment court, and starting college. Delicious meals are prepared and served by the United Christian Advocacy Network, usually on the third Thursday of the month.



“I’m so grateful for MHA! All of the staff go above and beyond to meet individuals where they are at. Jamestown and the surrounding area is lucky to have such a phenomenal resource for individuals and family members. I highly recommended MHA!”

– MHA participant in her early 20s

A Message from MHA’s CEO

by Rick Huber



When I came back from Vietnam, I was hooked on drugs.

If I have surgery or dental work, I have to remind my doctor or dentist not to prescribe an opiate for my pain, or I could be back in the throes of my addiction.

Just like everyone else who works at the Mental Health Association, I know what it means to have to deal with mental health issues, alcoholism, and drug addiction. And just like everyone else here, that’s what gets me up in the morning, eager for the possibility of bringing hope to a young mother or a frightened teen or a family in distress.

Recovery is not easy; it is a lifelong challenge. The alternative is pain, misery, and – too often – death. Those suffering include the individual’s entire network of friends and family. Frequently that means young children...too many left without a mother or father.

If you or someone you care about needs understanding, support, and encouragement from someone who’s “been there,” please let us know. Call (716) 661-9044, email chautauquamha@gmail.com or just stop in at Door 14 at the Gateway Center, 31 Water Street in Jamestown.



Redeem Your Cans & Bottles for the MHA

You can also help the work of the MHA by taking your cans and bottles to a redemption center and telling them you want your proceeds to go to the MHA account. Participating redemption centers include Southside at 1752 Foote Avenue Ext. in Jamestown, Don’t Trash It at 147 South Work Street in Falconer, and Don’s Car Wash, 184 East Fairmount Avenue in Lakewood.



“When our son came to us to say his wife was using heroin, we were totally lost. At MHA we found help for our family. They provided support to our son’s wife and our son, who had his own issues. They taught us as parents how to support each other, take care of ourselves, and empower but not enable our children. They even provided education support services to our other children who were feeling anger and guilt. Addiction is a Family Disease, and MHA deals with the whole family.”

– A Couple from Jamestown, NY



Would you like a speaker from MHA for your group?

Contact us at (716) 661-9044 or chautauquamha@gmail.com.



Membership

Becoming a member is one of the ways you can support the Mental Health Association in its work “Recovering Lives, Saving Families.” Board co-presidents Carm Micciche (at left) and Mary Keeney work with CFO Bob Tomb in spearheading the membership drive. Send a check in the amount of your choosing to: MHA Membership, 31 Water Street, Suite 7, Jamestown, NY 14701



“I’m going to have to keep it simple, MHA saved my life! This is place of opportunity, recovery atmosphere, and a safe haven. Thank you for all the love and support!!!!!!”

– MHA participant in his late 20s