



**MHA**  
 MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION IN CHAUTAUGUA COUNTY  
 HOPE, ADVOCACY, RECOVERY

# Newsletter

## Spring 2017

### MHA's Jenny Rowe: Her Road from Participant to CFO

*Having Bob Tomb, now MHA Board Treasurer, as her predecessor made the transition from peer recovery specialist easy – but that was the only easy part of her journey. “For the first time in my life, the MHA gave me hope.”*

When Bob Tomb returned to his hometown after retiring first from a 25-year career in AT&T's financial arena then as a paralegal, he brought his talents to the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County (MHA), volunteering to run the computer lab before becoming its first Chief Fiscal Officer early last year.

Prepping for his third retirement, Bob knew his perfect replacement was one of MHA's certified recovery specialists. With a bachelor's in business administration and half-way to a master's degree in finance, Jenny Rowe was ready to go. The changeover was completed in February. In March, Bob joined the MHA Board where he is now its treasurer.

“Bob is fantastic – he made the transition into CFO easy,” Jenny said. She added, “Six years ago I wouldn't have believed I could come so far.” Six years ago Jenny was in the Chautauqua County Jail.

Jenny's mother was a teacher, her father, an engineer. After their divorce, her mother locked Jenny out of the house, leaving her homeless at the age of 15. Working part-time and living on her own from then on, Jenny was five months pregnant when she graduated from Jamestown High School.

Jenny was regularly abused during the six years she spent with her son's father. The details aren't pretty – including his trying to suffocate her with a pillow and thankfully being too incoherent to remember to put bullets in the gun he was pointing at her before he pulled the trigger. She didn't escape from him until he was finally arrested and went to jail.

The years that followed brought their own traumas. Addicted to cocaine, she tried running away from her problems, existing for brief periods in numerous locations around the

From the brochure describing the many services of the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County:

***We're here because we've been there!***



*Bob Tomb, board treasurer, and Jenny Rowe, CFO, in the office they share at the Mental Health Association.*

country, eating at soup kitchens, losing custody of her now three children, and ultimately going to jail for stealing from her mother.

On March 6, 2011, Jenny was released from jail – and immediately relapsed into drug use. Under direction from Treatment Court, the next day she made her first of daily visits to the MHA.

Here she discovered, “I always thought I was worthless, but they treated me like I was worth something.” Suffering from PTSD, she learned she was using drugs to cope with her mother's rejection and years of abuse. “For the first time in my life, they gave me hope and helped me realize my true potential.”

Jenny stretched days into weeks, then months, and now years of being drug-free. It was a student intern who drove her to Jamestown Business College to apply, then the MHA helped her get transportation to class. She volunteered at this place she calls “my refuge, my home” for a year before she was hired as a peer recovery specialist and now its CFO. “The MHA made me who I am today,” she said.

Paraphrasing the words from the MHA's brochure, Bob Tomb said to her, “You are where you are because of where you've been.”

## What's Been Happening at MHA

The Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County's board recently approved a **new logo** for the organization. Created by Sara Corsi Staley of Wax Lily Design, it incorporates a bell, the historic symbol of the mental health movement and freedom from the stigma of mental health diagnosis. Another version of the design is on the front of this newsletter.



In March Kathleen Colby, Director of Training Services at the **Chautauqua Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Council**, presented "**First Five Years.**" This four-session multicultural video and discussion program addresses basic parenting skills and is designed for the new parent. Thanks to the **Chautauqua Region Community Foundation**, the program was offered free of charge.

A relatively recent addition to the groups that meet weekly at the Mental Health Association (see "MHA's Many Groups Meet Diverse Needs" on page 3) is **Refuge Recovery**, based on Buddhist principles. MHA's is the first of this fellowship in New York State outside of New York City. Meeting 9:30-10:30 a.m. on Tuesdays, the group is led by Sheridan Smith, a Buddhist, and includes meditation at each meeting. Sheridan produced *Recover Jamestown*, described on page 4.



Knowing that celebrating positive milestones increases long term recovery, **United Christian Advocacy Network (UCAN)** sponsors **Recovery Luncheons** at the MHA, usually on the third Thursday of the month. MHA Associate Director Steven Cobb has the happy task of presenting certificates for advancements through and completion of Treatment Court, receiving a GED, starting college, getting a job, and more. Recipients are applauded, then everyone enjoys a delicious meal prepared by UCAN. As many as two dozen and more participants have been recognized at every recent luncheon, to which all are welcome.

On April 28-29 and May 5-6, Winged Ox Players, the theatre ministry of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, presented **Least Resistance**, a new original play of hope and recovery that tells the stories of some of the people dealing with addiction and recovery in Jamestown. As part of their preparation, all the cast – including several former MHA participants – went to the free **Narcan training** presented at MHA in April by Alison Epsin, Public Health Nurse at **Chautauqua County Health Department**. *Least Resistance* was directed by MHA's Steven Cobb.



Missed in our last newsletter was the report that in October MHA's **Rick Huber**, whose title has been upgraded to **Director of New Program Development**, was named the recipient of the **Community Service Award** from the **Jamestown Community Chamber of Commerce**. The annual Chamber awards banquet at the Williams Center on the beautiful SUNY Fredonia campus pays tribute to individuals and organizations for their accomplishments and service and says "thank you" to those who have made our county a better place.

Also last fall, the MHA was recognized as a **Chautauqua Bright Spot**. Chautauqua Bright Spots is an initiative of the HOPE Chautauqua Coalition, which promotes substance abuse prevention in the county. Designated Bright Spots embody the mission to "empower neighborhoods, groups and individuals to create positive community change, build community connectedness to make Chautauqua a healthier place to live work and play, and highlight positive alternatives to harmful behaviors."



**Brand New: 7 pm!**  
**Monday Night Open Mic at the MHA**

**1st Monday: Sing-Along**  
**2nd Monday: Family Comedy**  
**3rd Monday: Open Poetry**  
**4th Monday: Live Music**  
**5th Monday: Wildcard Monday**  
 Coordinated by Joseph Vaughn



*ALGEE is the Mental Health First Aid mascot and mnemonic for the 5-step action plan: Assess for risk of suicide or harm, Listen nonjudgmentally, Give reassurance and information, Encourage appropriate professional help, and Encourage self-help and other support strategies.*

### MHA Staff Teach Mental Health First Aid

Mental Health First Aid teaches you how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders in your community.

Just as CPR training helps a person with no clinical training assist an individual following a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid training helps a person assist someone experiencing a mental health crisis such as contemplating suicide. In both situations, the goal is to help support an individual until appropriate professional help arrives.

Mental Health First Aiders learn a single 5-step strategy, and role playing makes it easier to apply these skills in a real-life situation. They are also introduced to risk factors and warning signs. You can learn more at [www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org).

The MHA has three certified trainers of Mental Health First Aid and can offer the training to interested parties, including workplaces. Just contact us at (716) 661-9044 or [chautauquamha@gmail.com](mailto:chautauquamha@gmail.com) for details.



#### MHA Board Members

Mary Keeney, Co-President  
 Carm Micciche, Co-President  
 Marie Anderson, Co-Secretary  
 Kimberly Smith, Co-Secretary  
 Robert Tomb, Treasurer  
 Ian Eastman  
 Lindsey Isaac-Lopus  
 Sharon Lawson  
 Heather Panczykowski  
 Michelle Pekarski

#### MHA Advisory Board

Dr. Lillian Vitanza Ney, Chair  
 Dale Robbins, Vice Chair  
 Leanna Luka-Conley  
 Roberta Keller  
 Jim McElrath Jr.  
 Andy O'Brien  
 Christine Schuyler  
 Harry Snellings  
 Todd Trantum  
 Michelle Hammond Turner

### MHA's Many Groups Meet Diverse Needs



*The image for MHA's newest group, Parents of Angels*

You don't have enough fingers and toes to count all the groups that meet at the Mental Health Association every week!

Topics covered in the hour-long sessions are as varied as the individuals who participate. Because the MHA strives to have a full mix of different support systems to help expose people to the multiple pathways to recovery, some groups are hosted by other human service organizations.

MHA's newest group, **Parents of Angels**, is exclusively for grieving parents who have experienced the tragic death of a child, especially by addiction or suicide. As a peer support agency, MHA is distinguished by appropriate use of our own experience to engage people in the process of recovery and utilize the MHA as a great source of support. Tina Glenn and Sharon Lawson, who facilitate Parents of Angels, use their own stories to help others. Tina lost her 21-year-old daughter, Brittany, last year, and Sharon lost her son, Steven Carter, in 2014. Following the first meeting on April 27, 2017, Parents of Angels meets at 6 p.m. on Thursdays.

Other groups include Changing Behavior, Life Recovery, PTSD/Poetry, Mindfulness, Veterans, Jobs for Life, Living Clean, Spanish Language, AA Living Sober, Mental Health 101, Parents in Recovery, and more. The full schedule is on the MHA website, [mhachautauqua.org](http://mhachautauqua.org).

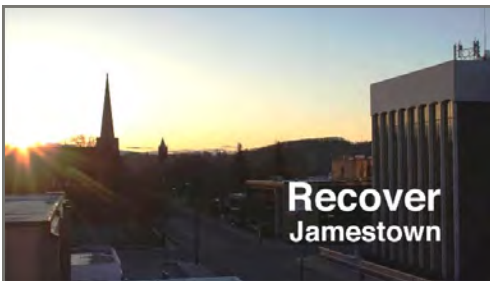


5<sup>th</sup> Annual  
**Jamestown Out of Darkness Community Walk**  
**Saturday, September 23, 2017**

**8:30 am Registration, 10 am Walk**  
**Northwest Arena, 319 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street**  
**Special guest speaker Kevin Hines**  
**Contact Victoria Patti: (716) 753-4519**

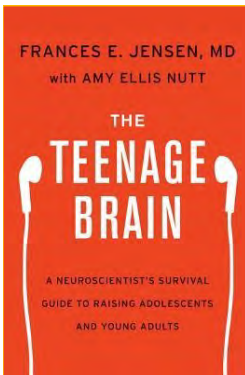
**Chautauqua County Crisis Hotline:**  
**1-800-724-0461**  
**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:**  
**1-800-273-8255**

## Videos Worth Watching, Books Worth Reading



Sheridan A. Smith created *Recover Jamestown*, the 60-minute video 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](https://vimeo.com/130281100), the full movie at [imdb.com/video/wab/vi4263228185](https://imdb.com/video/wab/vi4263228185).

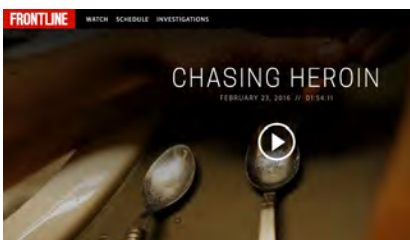
In *All Fall Down* by Jennifer Weiner, Allison Weiss has it all. But as she struggles to hold it all together, she becomes addicted to the pain pills prescribed for a back injury. When she gets to the point she can no longer hide or control her addiction, she enters rehab. "With a sparkling comedic touch and tender true-to-life characterizations, *All Fall Down* is a tale of empowerment and redemption." Available at a number of Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Library System members.



MHA Advisory Board Chair Dr. Lillian Vitanza Ney recommends *The Teenage Brain: A Neuroscientist's Survival Guide To Raising Adolescents And Young Adults* by Frances E. Jensen with Amy Ellis Nutt. Renowned neurologist Dr.

Frances E. Jensen offers a revolutionary look at the brains of teenagers, dispelling myths and offering practical advice for teens, parents, and teachers. Interweaving clear summary and analysis of research data with anecdotes drawn from her years as a parent, clinician, and public speaker, Dr. Jensen explores adolescent brain functioning and development in the contexts of learning and multitasking, stress and memory, sleep, addiction, and decision-making. Available at a number of Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Library System members.

*Hope & 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 forum with its message: "Prevention works, Help is available, Recovery is possible." MHA was part of the planning committee for both that and the most recent Hope & Healing event at Chautauqua Suites in Mayville on May 16, 2017. *Hope & Healing for Chautauqua* can be seen at [youtu.be/E231kLLMqh0](https://youtu.be/E231kLLMqh0).



*Chasing Heroin* is a searing, two-hour *Frontline* investigation that places America's heroin crisis in a fresh and provocative light -- telling the stories of individual addicts, but also illuminating the epidemic's years-in-the-making social context, deeply examining shifts in U.S. drug policy, and exploring what happens when addiction is treated like a public health issue, not a crime. Watch a trailer or the full program or listen to an audiocast at [pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/chasing-heroin](https://pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/chasing-heroin).

### Mental Health Association Hours:

Monday - Wednesday: 9 am - 4 pm  
Thursday: 9 am - 8 pm  
Friday - Saturday: 9 am - 2 pm

### Interested in a Speaker or Mental Health First Aid Trainer?

Contact us at (716) 661-9044 or [chautauquamha@gmail.com](mailto:chautauquamha@gmail.com).