



Newsletter

Fall 2019

Mental Health Association Services Now in Northern Chautauqua County *Office Opens in Dunkirk's Grace Lutheran Church*

October 7, 2019, marked a major milestone for the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County: It was the opening day of the MHA offices in Dunkirk, New York, that offer support groups and individual coaching for people looking to improve their lives in recovery.

The location inside Grace Lutheran Church at 601 Eagle Street is staffed by MHA Program Director Michael Nordin, Bilingual Certified Peer Specialist Luis Rosa, Certified Peer Specialist Joe Anderson, Peer Specialist Jennifer Diamond, volunteer Desirae Bradford, and Intern David Turner.

Initial hours are Mondays and Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Fridays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. As in Jamestown, all services are free.

Peer support groups that meet on Mondays include Habits of Mind, Mindfulness, PTSD Support, and Recovery Focus. Groups on Tuesday are Living Clean, RUS & Treatment Court Support, Anger Management and Relapse Prevention. Friday is Alcoholics Anonymous, Women's Group, and Narcotics Anonymous. Times and description details can be found at MHACHautauqua.org/Dunkirk.

As the MHA brochure testifies, mental health diagnoses and substance use disorders have nothing to do with one's ability or character. Mental illness is a real disease and can happen to anyone, regardless of age, gender, or race. MHA works to eliminate the stigma associated with mental illness and substance use while educating the community on what to do and where to go for help.



Celebrating the opening of the MHA's Dunkirk offices are (from left) volunteer Desirae Bradford, Program Director Michael Nordin, and Certified Peer Specialist Joe Anderson.

This expansion of services was made possible in part by a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration MAT - PDOA (Medication Assisted Treatment - Prescription Drug and Opioid Addiction) grant in partnership with UPMC Chautauqua.



At 601 Eagle Street in Dunkirk, Grace Lutheran Church is now also the home of services of the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County.

OPEN Getting People Employed

It's tough to get a job if you don't know how to write a resume or what to expect in an interview. It can be impossible to make it to work if your car breaks down or your babysitter doesn't show up. And it's not easy to focus on your work if you're dealing with food insecurity or a substance use disorder.

These and more also add to the challenges companies face in finding and keeping reliable employees.

MHA's Occupational Peer Empowerment Network (OPEN) has peer specialists who help individuals overcome employment obstacles and help companies with hiring and worker retention.

Local employers currently participating in OPEN include Blackstone Advanced Technologies, Cummins, Monofrax, UPMC Chautauqua, and Weber Knapp.

Whether you need a job or you need employees, to learn more, contact OPEN Team Leader Sheridan Smith at (716) 490-4438 or OPEN@MHACHautauqua.org, or visit MHACHautauqua.org/OPEN. Like all MHA services, OPEN resources are free.

MHA Happenings



MHA Certified Peer Specialists Justin Jimenez (*left*) and Joe Anderson were among the representatives of the MHA at the **Combat Addiction Dunkirk** community gathering in August. As Justin told the Dunkirk *Observer*, "Our goal here is to help people with addiction and recovering from trauma. We've had a lot of people come through and we've had lots of success." Justin explained that his specific duties at MHA center around helping people with employment. "I help people prepare for interviews, even give them rides to and from, anything that will help someone who truly wants to better themselves." (*Photo courtesy of the Observer.*)

The MHA benefits from the generous support of our community through the **United Way of Southern Chautauqua County**, whose 2019 campaign theme is "Change Doesn't Happen Alone." Pictured from left, MHA Spiritual Advisor Pastor Mark Hurst, Bilingual Certified Peer Specialist Luis Rosa, Prevention Works Associate Director Laurie Reynolds, and MHA Administrative and Technology Assistant Joseph Vaughn were among staff who volunteered to bag groceries at **Wegmans**, one of the campaign's Game Changers, giving customers the opportunity to learn more about United Way Partner Organizations.



In September, the MHA presented several activities for **Recovery Month**, that is designated to increase awareness and understanding of mental and substance use disorders, celebrate people who recover, and recognize the need for suicide prevention. The **Tie Dye for Hope** sponsored by the **Community Alliance for Suicide Prevention** at MHA was enhanced by the participation of **Jamestown High School Justice for All students** (*pictured left*). The **Talks Saves Lives** class was an introduction to how to talk with someone about the risks and warning signs of suicide. Alison Espin presented a free **Narcan training**, the opioid reversal drug that can be the

first step on the path to recovery. A **Recovery Jam and Dance** capped off Recovery Month. Taking a selfie there were MHA OD Response Team Peer Coach Allison Murphy (*front left*), former Intern Caylee Shelters, CFO Jenny Rowe, OPEN Team Leader Sheridan Smith, and (*in the rear*) Executive Director Steven Cobb.



Monthly **Recovery Luncheons** are an opportunity to come together to share a meal and to honor those in the MHA community who are working on their own recovery. The luncheons are free and all are welcome. With volunteer Jan Ball coordinating, hearty and delicious fare is presented by members of four local churches: Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Falconer and First Presbyterian, Kidder Memorial United Methodist and St. Luke's Episcopal Churches in Jamestown. Pictured from left are St. Luke's volunteers Linda McCallum, Cathy Smith, Marge Cooley Fiore, Luke Fodor, and Matt Smith.

During their regular Tuesday get-together, MHA's **Southern Tier Queer Peers (STQP)** group hosted a community-building event in the spirit of Halloween and **#lgbtq** and allies. The costume party featured snacks and a spooky stories open mic when MHA Certified Peer Specialist Justin Jimenez really got in the zone!



Writing Your Life

Since September, peers at the MHA have been telling personal stories in a group called Writing Your Life.

Participants read and discuss articles and essays that demonstrate various aspects of good writing. Students are encouraged to keep a daily journal.

Each class covers aspects of creative nonfiction, including scenes, summary, dialogue, narrative arc, images and more.

In-class exercises have produced some surprising and wonderful writing. Facilitator Beth Peyton said, "We have used exercises about images, about food, about the language of fire and other things to draw our stories to us. Sometimes we cry, but we know to pay attention to what stirs us. As Robert Frost said, 'Poetry begins with a lump in the throat.'"

The language of fire inspired one student to write, "It was the day of her funeral... Indian summer... as I walked into

Walking in the door, I smell peppers, onions, tomato sauce, garlic. Something good is cooking. I walk up the stairs and the smell fades. I hope the neighbors enjoy their dinner. I set down my bag and pull open the freezer. It's been a busy day, so nothing that takes more than three steps looks appealing. I pull out the last of a bag of pizza rolls, dump them onto a tray and put them in the toaster oven. I miss cooking creative meals, putting things together and watching them become one meal, but I don't miss staring at the leftovers that remind me that I'm the only one eating them.

A Writing Your Life student, on "Food"

the woods the flames became quieter until I was left with the smoldering embers of sadness and grief, branded by molten memories."

The course wraps up after Thanksgiving. It may be offered again in the spring.



Mental Health Association Key in CSARP Events

The Chautauqua Substance Abuse Response Partnership (CSARP) is a consortium of 11 organizations across Chautauqua County that deal with multiple aspects of substance use disorder.

CSARP sponsored three community events in late October. County statistics were presented at the **Combat Addiction CHQ** Community Engagement and Education Event at the Chautauqua Harbor Hotel in Celoron. It is estimated that 8,500 to 9,000 residents has a substance use disorder, including 1,200 to 1,550 with an opioid use disorder. An estimated 2,800 want or are receiving help. MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb (*left*) and featured speaker **Kennebunk, Maine, Chief of Police Robert MacKenzie** were on the panel that closed the event.



MacKenzie spoke later at the JCC North Training and Conference Center in Dunkirk.

The next day MHA's **Mom Tribe** group and CSARP co-hosted **Moms' Time** at the MHA. The luncheon included a gift for each participant. Volunteer Desirae Bradford (*left*) and Karen Weis, fieldwork coordinator for the Jamestown Community College Occupational Therapy Assistant program, facilitate Mom Tribe meetings that provide education and support for expecting and new mothers. Other professionals and mothers who have been through a pregnancy with a substance use disorder also spoke at the event.

These were all free and open to anyone interested.



December 3 is Giving Tuesday 2019
A Great Time to Support the MHA!

Perhaps the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County has brought someone you love back to you. Perhaps it has helped you find yourself. Perhaps you're just thankful for all the good it does in our community.

Whatever makes you grateful that the MHA is here, if you would like to say "thank you," Tuesday, December 3, is a great opportunity to show your appreciation.

After the feasting that happens on Thanksgiving and the shopping on Black Friday and Cyber Monday, the next Tuesday has been designated **Giving Tuesday, an international day of charitable giving**. You can show your thanks for the MHA and help continue its important work with a donation at mhachautauqua.org/donate or on the MHA Facebook page.



Mental Health Association the Focus of Chautauqua Institution Roundtable



The MHA figured prominently when **Chautauqua Institution** held a roundtable with **author Beth Macy**. Macy's "journalistic masterpiece," *Dopesick: Dealers, Doctors, and the Drug Company That Addicted America*, was an official selection of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle.

Jessica Bruder, author, journalist and teacher of narrative writing at Columbia Journalism School, moderated a very passionate conversation about the joy of recovery and the need for harm reduction. The roundtable was held in the Cafe of Community

Hands at the Gateway Center in Jamestown. The panel included (*pictured from left*) MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb, Prevention Works Associate Director Laurie Reynolds, Macy, MHA participant (person in recovery) Desirea Bradford, Bruner, MHA Recovery Coach Dan Carson, and participant Jessie John.

Cobb observed, "Beth was really impressed by the work of the MHA that we described. She felt we were far ahead of many areas in the way we support people in recovery. It was wonderful for the MHA to be recognized by her as an innovator in the field of recovery supports." Chautauqua's goal was to produce an educational video resource of particular value to Western New Yorkers.



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i love love love MHA. Their support with my recovery is something i will always be grateful for. Always open arms and helping hands. Wonderful group of people

from MHA's Facebook page

