

MHA Receives \$500,000 ARC INSPIRE Grant

The Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County had an extraordinary cause for celebration during this year's National Recovery Month.

On September 20, a large group of enthusiastic supporters gathered at the Jamestown recovery center for an open house and news conference to announce a \$500,000 INSPIRE grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). The three-year federal grant is for workforce development supporting MHA's Occupational Peer Empowerment Network (OPEN) Recovery to Work project that includes its social enterprise program with St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Father Bernard's Blessed Biscuits (FBBB).

OPEN has peer specialists who help lift people out of poverty by overcoming barriers to gaining, maintaining, and thriving as employees. It provides recovery supports, pre-employment development, vocational training, and partnerships with local employers to assist the community in recovering from the tolls of addiction and provide participants an opportunity to succeed in the workforce.

MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb opened the program by introducing Board President Kimberly Lombard, who shared MHA's new mission and vision. Participant Paige Hankins described her journey to recovery. An oversized check was presented by Southern Tier West Regional Development Associate Dr. Fileve Palmer.

St. Luke's rector and FBBB founder Fr. Luke Fodor explained that Father Bernard's is a starting point for people in recovery who need additional resources on their way to employment. **(See INSPIRE GRANT page 6)**



Displaying the INSPIRE grant check are (from left) Fr. Luke Fodor, rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church and founder of Father Bernard's Blessed Biscuits, MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb, Program Director Michael Nordin, CFO Jenny Ibero, Director of Student Activities Ken Yergen, Finance Manager Jill Marsh, and OPEN Project Manager Sean Jones.

MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb Honored by County Chamber as Person of the Year



MHA board members and friends take part in the standing ovation for Executive Director Steven Cobb (seated) as he is announced as the Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce Person of the Year.

A dozen years ago, Steven Cobb was homeless and burdened with substance use. On October 6, 2022, as executive director of the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County, Steven was honored as Person of the Year and cheered by 200 people at the Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce annual banquet at SUNY Fredonia's Williams Center.

"Steven can talk about stigma, and the hurt it causes, in a way that makes us all want to love one another more," MHA Board President Kimberly Lombard said in her nomination. Endorsement letters from community members and MHA staff and board used words like collaborative, visionary, generous, honest, compassionate and more.

Under Steven's leadership, the MHA has expanded services, opened an office in Dunkirk, grown its annual budget by \$1 million, and now has 22 staff members, almost all in recovery themselves from mental health and substance abuse issues.

Accepting his award, Steven shared **(See CHAMBER AWARD Page 6)**

MHA Happenings



Because community, recovery, connections and support come through shared art and games, every Friday at 11 a.m. is **Fun Friday** at the MHA Jamestown recovery center. During the July recovery luncheon, MHA Program Director Michael Nordin (*left*) and Executive Director Steven Cobb displayed the artwork from a special Fun Friday when an outside facilitator guided participants in expressing anger in a helpful way. The art piece was also part of the Overdose Awareness service at St. Luke's Episcopal Church on August 28. All are welcome to Fun Fridays!

Father Bernard's Blessed Biscuits, a joint social enterprise of St. Luke's Episcopal Church and the MHA, was part of the downtown **Jamestown Public Market** every Saturday throughout the summer. In addition to dog biscuit sales, the experience was successful in connecting with the community by discussing the MHA and training people to use Narcan that was given away for free. The latter will be expanded in the summer of 2023.



Recovery Luncheons are back in Jamestown! After more than two years, July marked the return of monthly recovery luncheons. MHA community partners – St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Jamestown, Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Falconer and the Chautauqua County Sheriff's Department – rotate preparing and serving lunches on the third Tuesday of every month. Prevention Works Lead Prevention Coach Tracy Jespersen was the special guest at the August luncheon. She described the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) class she offers every Friday, 10 a.m. – noon, at the MHA.

The **Dunkirk recovery center open house** on September 28 was an opportunity for local community members and other organizations to become acquainted with the MHA and learn about the services being offered. MHA staff and participants, community residents and leaders, as well as staff from treatment court and other service-providing organizations were there and enjoyed refreshments. Pictured are some of the staff and officials who took part.



At the Law Enforcement Breakfast on October 11 members of the Jamestown Police Department, Chautauqua County Sheriff's office, Town of Ellicott police and a New York State trooper came to the MHA and enjoyed a breakfast spread with staff. Communication, understanding and collaboration are key to community success!

The work of the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County is made possible by funding from Appalachian Regional Commission ♡ Chautauqua County Departments of Mental Hygiene and Health & Human Services ♡ Chautauqua Region Community Foundation ♡ Hultquist Foundation ♡ Lenna Foundation ♡ NYS Office of Mental Health ♡ Northern Chautauqua Community Foundation ♡ Ralph C. Sheldon Foundation ♡ The Tower Foundation ♡ The United Ways of Northern and Southern Chautauqua County ♡ UPMC Chautauqua ♡ and others...

Timber Hawkeye at MHA



Best-selling Author
Timber Hawkeye at MHA

As part of the cross-country tour for his latest book, *The Opposite of Namaste*, best-selling author Timber Hawkeye visited the Mental Health Association Jamestown recovery center on September 27. His writing had already helped some of those present and the conversation inspired them and others. He also gifted MHA with a case of his book *Buddhist Boot Camp* to share with participants.

Allison Murphy on *The Latin Inspiration*

The Latin Inspiration is a WRFA-LP (107.9 FM) radio show for the community, hosted by Pastor Juan Perez, who provides an hour of inspirational Latin music along with news, interviews, and an encouraging message from the word of God. On October 2 he interviewed MHA Overdose Response Advocate Allison Murphy. After sharing her own journey, Allison



"The Latin Inspiration" host Pastor Juan Perez and MHA Overdose Advocate Allison Murphy

explained she comes to any location after someone has had a reported overdose, bringing Narcan – a medicine that reverses an opioid overdose – and support for whatever is needed that day or in the future: food, clothing, housing, safety, relationships. She can also train friends and family how to use Narcan, which is safe, quick and easy, Allison explained that all services are free and private. You can listen to the program at wrfalp.com/show/inspiraciones-latinas.



More MHA Happenings....



A program of the Mental Health Association, **Jamestown Pride** is a community organization that supports LGBTQIA+ activities. The enthusiasm at their second annual **Pride Festival** in June shows through in the photos and videos on their [Facebook page](#), like this one of Jamestown Mayor Eddie Sundquist on City Hall Plaza. The group is looking forward to next year's celebration on the weekend of June 10, 2023.

On October 8, in support of **Domestic Violence Awareness Month**, MHA staff joined the Chautauqua County Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Walk in downtown Jamestown. This marked the 20th annual Unity Day and 25th annual Walk Against Domestic Violence.



MHA Advisory Committee Members

- Dr. Elizabeth Kidder, Chair ♥ Chief Timothy Jackson
- Leanna Luka-Conley ♥ Fr. Luke Fodor ♥ Patricia McClennan
- Cecil Miller ♥ Dr. Lillian Ney ♥ Andrew O'Brien
- Sheriff James Quattrone ♥ Christine Schuyler

MHA Board Members

- Kimberly Lombard, President ♥ Sarah Tranum, Vice President
- Sharon Lawson, Treasurer ♥ Marie Anderson
- Julie Apperson ♥ Lindsey Isaac-Lopus
- Jake Kohler ♥ LeeAnn Lazarony ♥ Crystal Surdyk

Major Programs of the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County

Personal Coaching

Individual peer support, recovery coaching, access to care, referrals, advocacy, and community support for individuals and their families affected by mental health & substance use issues.

Peer Support Groups

A variety of groups take place at the MHA supporting multiple pathways of recovery.



A cooperative endeavor with a local network of organizations to provide peer support and connections to resources for moms and moms-to-be, dedicated

to building bright futures for Chautauqua County children and their families.

Better For Families Program

Offers guidance, encouragement, and resources for individuals engaging with the family court system in partnership with the Chautauqua County Department of Health and Human services.

Treatment Court Navigation

Support toward following the guidelines of and completing treatment court, as well as access to video conference court attendance.

Jail Outreach

A peer coach meets with individuals during their incarceration to help them plan for release with information and resources to avoid falling into the same habits that got them there.

Advocacy and Community Outreach

Offers groups at other locations in the community; holds events to educate, advocate, and connect the public; supports positive and healthy activities.

Student Activities

Internships and project support for students from JCC, Fredonia State, St. Bonaventure, Edenborough State and more.



A career-focused support system providing education, resources, advocacy, and encouragement to attain, retain, and maintain stable employment.

Transportation

Provides participants with free transportation to medical, court, employment, or treatment-related appointments.

UPMC Connection

A peer presence in the hospital Inpatient, Outpatient, and Emergency Departments to advocate for and provide guidance to individuals with mental health and chemical dependence issues in stressful situations, as well as educate staff on resources and techniques available for treatment.

Overdose Response

Connect with individuals and their families shortly after an overdose event to provide comfort, support, education, guidance, resources, and encouragement toward safer habits and practices with cooperation from area law enforcement and critical response and a connection to the



Narcan Training

Individual and group training for identifying an overdose in progress and the proper steps for administering Narcan and getting help, as well as free Narcan doses to keep on hand.

Peer Training

Training, support, and resources to help people use their experiences to help others and join the growing professional peer community.



A social enterprise to help participants learn skills and habits important to retaining employment and gain experience that can help them in their search for future self sustainability.

Scan here to get



trained for Narcan

Scan here for



the MHA website

Scan here for our



current schedule

MHA Support Groups

Alternatives to Suicide *

For people who have struggled with suicidal thoughts.

Anger Management ☺

Working to develop skills for dealing with anger.

Art in Recovery

An artistic expression of your personal recovery.

Depression & Anxiety Support by

For those facing depression & anxiety in their daily lives.

Family & Friends Support

Support for families and friends of those in recovery.

Food Relationship Support

Having a healthy relationship with food and body image.

Fun Friday

Open group using activities to socialize and unwind.

Grounding

Self-check-in from the weekend to refocus on recovery.

Knitting for Well-being

Use knitting to improve your wellbeing.

Living After Incarceration

Finding self-sufficiency and avoiding going back to jail.

Mom Tribe *

Education and support for expecting & new mothers

Movement is Medicine

Exercise for healthy recovery. *Low-mobility accessible*

Music Therapy

Discussion on our favorite songs & how they make us feel.

12-Step Groups

AA Living Sober ⑫○

12-step alcohol recovery group based on the book.

AA Look to This Day ⑫○

12-step alcohol recovery focused on living each day

CMA Crystal Clear ⑫○

12-step support for crystal meth.

NA Our Choice ⑫○

International 12 step narcotics recovery program.

Staying Sober Your Way ⑫

A secular 12-step approach to recovery.

We Believe ⑫

12 Step recovery group based on biblical principles.

For up-to-date info, find our calendars at <http://www.MHACHautauqua.org/groups>

- * **Restricted** - Access for only for certain people.
- ☺ **Classes** - Full attendance required for completion.
- ⑫ **12-Step** - Structured format
- **Unaffiliated** - Hosted at MHA by other organizations

Open Topic

An open discussion group for any topic.

PTSD Groups

Skills to heal trauma for people in recovery.

Men*, Women*, Co-ed, and faith based.

Recovery Dharma

Based on principles of mindfulness and meditation.

Recovery Through Photography

Photography for personal healing and growth

Recovery Yoga by Jen Raines

Yoga techniques to support a healthy body and mind.

Self-Worth and Confidence

Recognizing your value and that you are worthy of love.

Setting Boundaries

Developing healthy boundaries for those in recovery.

SMART Recovery ☺

Self-Management And Recovery Training with secular and scientific motivational recovery methods.

Sober Planning

Various ways for staying sober during the weekend.

Suicide Prevention And Continued Encouragement

For people who have struggled with suicidal thoughts.

Truth Talks *

Discussion for those that have experienced sexual trauma.

Veterans Group

Open support group for veterans and their families

Women's Group *

Open topic support group for women.

Women in Sobriety *

For women who struggle with substance use & self-image.

Writing Through Recovery

Writing to empower recovery and personal growth.

Grupos de Apoyo en Español

Alcohólicos Anónimos ⑫

Recuperación del alcoholismo en 12 pasos.

Metanfetamina Cristalina Anónimo ⑫

Recuperación del metanfetamina cristalina en 12 pasos.

Recuperación del TEPT

Técnicas para tratar el trastorno de estrés postraumático.

Room for More

If you would like to see a group focused on a particular topic or for more information on our groups and other services, contact our Program Director at programs@mhachautauqua.org

INSPIRE Grant (From p. 1)

The MHA and St. Luke's are each matching the \$500,000 grant with \$250,000 of in-kind services, for a total program value of \$1 million.

Steven thanked those most instrumental in the grant application process: MHA CFO Jenny Ibero, OPEN Project Manager Sean Jones, Department of Mental Hygiene Grant Projects Director Steve Kilburn and



Accompanied by his handler, Tammara Card-Hodges, UPMC Chautauqua's certified therapy dog Artimus assisted Fr. Luke Fodor in demonstrating the tastiness of Father Bernard's Blessed Biscuits.

Chautauqua County for its immediate help, and former MHA Peer Specialist Sheridan Smith, now in a masters degree program in Philadelphia. Steven stressed that the OPEN program will be in rural areas of Chautauqua County as well as its urban centers.

A number of elected officials or their surrogates participated or sent best wishes, and local foundations were well represented. Steven noted that the foundations "have supported the MHA when we needed help and we needed to grow." He cited the Community Foundation, the United Way of Southern Chautauqua County, and the Sheldon, Lenna and Hultquist Foundations, saying, "I thank you.... We have never in our history charged anyone for our services; we wouldn't have been able to do that without all this support."

The program ended with a blessing by The Rt. Rev. Sean Rowe, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Western New York, who gave "thanks for this place and the people in it."

All present received gift bags that included MHA pens and wristbands, samples of Blessed Biscuits, Narcan – a safe, easily administered medication that reverses overdoses and has saved hundreds of lives in Chautauqua County – and more.

MHA is the only ARC INSPIRE grant recipient in New York State this year. If you couldn't be at this event, you can find a [video on MHA's Facebook page](#).

Chamber Award (From p. 1)

the MHA's new mission and vision statements, both adopted by the MHA board last spring with input and enthusiasm from the staff. The mission statement is: "The Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County commits to radical acceptance, empowerment, and advocacy for our community members who struggle with mental health and substance use."

Of the vision statement, Steven declared, "Our vision tells all of you – and all of you should hold us accountable for this – that "The Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County envisions a time when the peer recovery model is widely relied upon as a foundation of support and advocacy to address the total needs of all individuals and their families challenged by the effects of mental health and/or substance use disorders. We will persevere in changing our local culture to one of hope, kindness, and justice, redefining and expanding the possibilities for a rich and satisfying life for people in recovery."

Concluding his brief remarks, Steven said, "A lot of people who know me personally have said to me that 'your mom and dad would be very proud of you.' My parents passed away within the past few years and when I think back 12 years ago when my brother picked me up at the airport at Buffalo and brought me back to my parents in my early 40s to stay on their couch, I don't know that there was a lot of hope at that point. But you know," he said, looking upward, "you guys did the right thing. So thanks for believing in me and thanks for believing, Mom and Dad, that recovery is always possible." Then to his audience, "I encourage all of you to know that recovery is always possible and it's probable. So, thank you." A [video of Steven's remarks](#) can be found on MHA's Facebook.



MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb addresses the large gathering at SUNY Fredonia after he is honored as Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce Person of the Year. Chamber President and CEO Daniel Heitzenrater is on stage with him.

St. Luke's/MHA Overdose Awareness Weekend Events



The Overdose Awareness prayer flag public art installation extended from the bell tower of St. Luke's Episcopal Church to street level.

August 31 is International Overdose Awareness Day, a time to pause and honor those who have died from an overdose, to reflect on the grief of those they left behind and to reduce the stigma of drug-related deaths

Partnering to create meaningful overdose awareness is becoming an annual tradition of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Jamestown and the Mental Health Association.

The Undercroft of St. Luke's was the venue for the Art In Recovery exhibit on Saturday evening, August 27. The artworks showcased were by participants under the leadership of MHA staffers Sean Jones in Jamestown and Roseann Crocker in Dunkirk. Artists who shared how they celebrate their own creativity and recovery included Diana Bloom, Jessica Boutelle, Carrie Clark, Randal Hallett, Becky Hemmis and Bev Michaels, as well as volunteer Diane Valvo and interns Melita Lyon, Megann Panek and David Wolcott.

The art show was coordinated by Jones and The Rev. Jessica Frederick, Minister of Children, Youth, and Families at St. Luke's. They were also responsible for the distinctive prayer flag public art installation outside the church.

Participants in St. Luke's special Sunday service on August 28 could write the name of a friend or family member suffering from addiction on a piece of fabric that was added to the flag. Jones was guest preacher at the service, during which candles were lit and bells tolled to honor the 53 people who lost their lives to drug overdose in Chautauqua County during the past year.

MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb shared that if Jamestown's City Hall were the center of a circle that extended a mile in all directions, 80% of those deaths were within that circle – and people within that circle who overdosed were twice as likely to die as those who overdosed in the rest of Chautauqua County.

Other MHA staff and participants had roles in the service, including CFO Jenny Rowe, who closed the service playing a duet of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" on violin with St. Luke's Minister of Music Ron McEntire on piano.

Like the night before, refreshments were served in the Undercroft after the service, where the art was appreciated and

Steven offered training in administering Narcan, a medicine that reverses an opioid overdose.



The Undercroft of St. Luke's came alive with the Art in Recovery exhibit in August.

Free Narcan was available as well as fentanyl test strips and Detera drug deactivation bags. The test strips can identify the presence of fentanyl in unregulated drugs and are recommended in this area even for occasional users. The deactivation bags are a simple, environmentally safe, at-home method to destroy leftover prescription drugs so they cannot be misused.

These products are available at no cost from the MHA.

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

No matter where you live in the U.S.,
you can easily access 24/7 emotional support.

Call or text 988 or visit 988lifeline.org/chat to
chat with a caring counselor.

We're here for you.



A Message From MHA's Executive Director: : Recovery for All of Us

...by Steven Cobb



Being honored as the Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce Person of the Year brought so much to my mind. I was filled with surprise, gratitude, love, questions, grace, and a certain amount of discomfort – then eventually a true and right-sized sense of accomplishment.

The time between the great surprise of the announcement and holding the award in my hand was an unexpected period of reflection. I thought about my own chaotic substance use, the struggle to accept that I grapple daily with mental health challenges, the two overdoses I survived, arrests, lost employment, broken relationships, homelessness, lost friends to HIV, feeling unqualified to lead a community-based recovery center.

As time went on, I received many reminders of the positives: long-term sustained abstinence, accepting that it's OK to take mental health meds, repairing relationships, helping so many in our community, learning from so many how to lead the MHA, the return to my biological family, the creation of my recovery family.

I was struck by how almost all the negatives happened in some degree of isolation, and the positives were almost always done in the embrace of community and loved ones.

We have come to a time when, in some ways, it feels like all of us, all of society is struggling to find a new positive way forward...looking for recovery!

Politics, economic challenges, societal changes, lack of connection, loneliness. How do we move forward?

I hope these truths will stay with you: 1) Recovery is always possible, and we should expect it. 2) If you struggle with substance use disorder or mental health challenges, know there is help and love for you, too. 3) As our society goes forward, we all need to find ways to better connect with each other, especially those we feel different from.

To move forward in a positive way I did not need more inner strength. I needed the embrace, love and connection with all those around me. All of us need that lesson of "recovery" to find our better selves and then to better our community.

In the Spirit of the Season: Giving Tuesday, November 29, 2022

If you're living on the edge financially, it doesn't take much to fall off the cliff. If you can't afford transportation, you could lose that new job. If you don't have money for food, you could go hungry. If you can't make a rent payment, you could find yourself living on the street.

For many, Thanksgiving is a day of feasting, followed by holiday shopping on Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Since 2012, the Tuesday that follows Thanksgiving has been designated GivingTuesday, an international day of charitable giving. The Mental Health Association uses donations received on GivingTuesday to directly assist the participants it serves – to provide emergency housing, food, transportation, and sometimes even a small treat to celebrate achievements or provide a needed lift.

Have you been looking for a way to make a difference in a person's life? Maybe the MHA brought someone you love back to you or helped you find yourself? Perhaps you're just thankful for all the good the MHA does in our community? Whatever makes you grateful that the MHA is here and that you have the resources – however modest – to help others, Tuesday, November 29, is an opportunity to show your gratitude and extend a helping hand.

Please reach out, show your thanks, and make a donation at MHACHAUTAUQUA.ORG/Donate, on the MHA Facebook page, or by mailing a check to MHA, 31 Water Street, Jamestown, NY 14701.

