

## The Mental Health Association: A Growing Resource



MHA Human Resources Director  
Billy Hernandez

The Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County provides support to those in recovery from mental health and substance use disorders. The COVID epidemic and the proliferation of addictive and deadly substances increased our fellow citizens' suffering—and dying—and the need for services grew exponentially.

With increased funding from Chautauqua County, New York State and local foundations, the MHA provided services during COVID, opened a full time recovery center in Dunkirk, with St. Luke's Episcopal Church founded [Father Bernard's Blessed Biscuits](#), created [OPEN](#) (Occupational Peer Empowerment Network) and so much more.

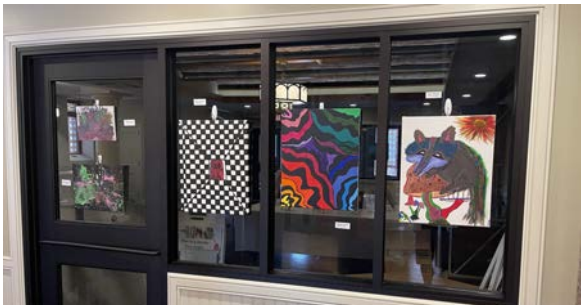


MHA Administrative Manager  
Michelle Colaiacovo

“Our staff is our greatest asset,” says Executive Director Steven Cobb, “and they have a huge responsibility. Asking staff to bring their own recovery experience to work to help others makes them more vulnerable. Especially since COVID, our participants have greater housing insecurity and homelessness, and many more are coming to us with pretty serious mental health needs. These can take a toll on staff, leading to burnout and their own triggering. We have been fortunate in developing more awareness of supporting our staff’s needs.”

Steven notes that the Lenna and Sheldon Foundations recognized the importance of supporting the MHA in its growth and awarded grants to safeguard it. In recent months the MHA welcomed Human (*continued on page 6*)

## Art In Recovery Shows in Jamestown and Dunkirk



Included among the dozens of groups and classes at the MHA recovery centers, Art in Recovery classes are an opportunity for an artistic expression of the participant's own personal recovery through painting and drawing. Jamestown's August Art in Recovery Show was at St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

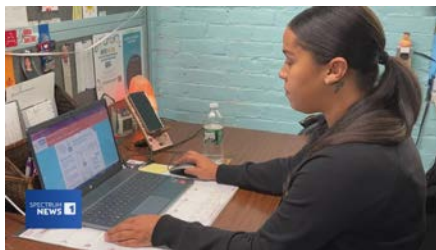


MHA Peer Specialists Rose Crocker (left) and Carrie Clarke facilitate the weekly Art in Recovery groups, Rose in Dunkirk and Carrie in Jamestown.



The inaugural North County MHA Art in Recovery Group Annual Show was held the last work day of National Recovery Month (September) at MHA's North County Recovery Center, Grace Lutheran Church in Dunkirk.

## Look What's Happening at the MHA!!



In May, MHA **Strong Starts Navigator** Jessica Crooks shared her story with **Spectrum News** at [buff.ly/3pcTWcc](https://buff.ly/3pcTWcc), demonstrating how medications for opioid use disorder are effective for treatment of opioid addictions. Find local providers of this and other treatment and help for addiction at [CombatAddictionCHQ.com/find-help](https://CombatAddictionCHQ.com/find-help).



MHA received 64,281 votes during our **Target Circle campaign**, awarding us \$2,555.85. We could not have done it without the continued support of our community. Thank you to everyone who voted!

MHA Finance Director **Jill Marsh** (left) welcomed **Carri Raynor**, program coordinator of the [Suicide Prevention Alliance of Chautauqua County](#), to the July recovery luncheon. Carri offered a mindfulness activity after the meal.



MHA Executive Director **Steven Cobb** (left) and artist **Mike Cain** share a laugh in front of the wall mural "Lost in My Rainbow" that Mike created. A longtime MHA volunteer, he has painted the floors in the sensory room, the large common area and the offices. Mike suggests the common area, where participants gather, be called the "Loneliness Room," as so many people, especially MHA's participants, suffer from loneliness. "It's not so much that people want to be heard," Mike says, "as they want to be understood."

MHA and [Father Bernard's Blessed Biscuits](#) were at the downtown Jamestown Public Market this past summer. Father Bernard's is a social enterprise of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in partnership with the MHA. It celebrates connection — with dogs and their human families — while providing employment opportunities for those who have dropped out of the workforce due to mental health concerns or addiction.



The MHA was the first of five [United Way of Southern Chautauqua County](#) (UWSCC) partner agencies **Wegmans** staff visited on a morning-long "Business Meets Community" Impact Tour in early August. Participants are pictured in MHA's sensory room with executive director Steven Cobb (upper right). Wegmans staff heard several stories of individuals impacted at each of the sites visited. UWSCC funds 42 local programs at 29 agencies in the community. To book a Business Meets Community event for your team, call the United Way at (716)483-1561.

### MHA Board Members

Kimberly Lombard, President ♡ Sarah Trantum, Vice President ♡ Jake Kohler, Treasurer ♡ Julie Apperson, Secretary  
Marie Anderson ♡ Lindsey Isaac-Lopus ♡ Sherry Lawson ♡ Sara Luther ♡ Crystal Surdyk

## MHA's First North County Participant Celebration is Huge Success

Upwards of 100 people came to the first MHA North County Participant Celebration in August at Dunkirk's Point Gratiot Park. Human Resources Director Billy Hernandez roasted 25 pounds of hot dogs served with Texas hot sauce and macaroni salad made by Jodi Scanlan. French Creek Recovery Center alumni donated sodas.

Participants Emma Kubica, Megann Panek, Joseph Wicks and Wing Wills shared stories of their pathways to recovery and the important role of MHA. Ten participants received certificates for their recovery progress.

Organizations sharing information about their programs included Combat Addiction CHQ, Chautauqua Suicide Awareness, ROME (Recovery Options Made Easy), STRAWW (Southern Tier Recovery Activities Without Walls), Chautauqua Opportunities' DADS Program, Dunkirk Treatment Court, GoodSkills Career Builder and Chautauqua County Mental Hygiene.

North County Recovery Center Manager Ken Kendall reported, "It more than exceeded our expectations!" and thanked all who came.



*MHA Peer Specialist Morgan Rowley (left), North County Recovery Center Manager Ken Kendall, and Peer Specialist Rose Crocker at the August Participant Celebration at Dunkirk's Point Gratiot Park.*



### Jamestown LGBTQ+ Pride Events in June

Jamestown Mayor Eddie Sundquist (at left in picture to left) applauded as the Progress Pride Flag was raised on City Hall's Tracy Plaza to fly for all of June, LGBTQ Pride Month, and proclaimed June as Pride Month Jamestown. The event featured authentic Colombian food and voter registration.

St. Luke's Episcopal Church hosted legendary LGBTQ+ civil rights champion B. Proud (above right). The award-winning photographer shared images from her book *First Comes Love: Portraits of Enduring LGBTQ Relationships*. Her career highlights include photographing Lady Gaga and President Obama on the same day.



### Justin Jimenez Moves to OPEN Project Manager

After more than five years as the peer for OPEN, the Occupational Peer Empowerment Network, Justin Jimenez became its Project Manager this fall.

With funding from the United Way of Southern Chautauqua County and the Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI), MHA created [OPEN](#), a program focused on workforce development and now fully funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission. OPEN peer specialists help lift people out of poverty by overcoming barriers to gaining, maintaining, and thriving as employees. OPEN staff work with employees to help tackle challenges that are keeping them from being happy, healthy, and eager to succeed.

MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb says, "Justin has a passion for helping people find employment and is eager to engage with employers to pave the way for them supporting employees in recovery."

Local employers who want to learn more can contact Justin at [open@mhachautauqua.org](mailto:open@mhachautauqua.org) or (716) 490-4428.



## MHA Support Groups

### Anger Management

Working to develop skills for dealing with anger.

### Art in Recovery

An artistic expression of your personal recovery.

### 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.

### Grief Support \*

Discussion for those that have experienced sexual trauma.

### Knitting for Well-being

Use knitting to improve your wellbeing.

### Movement is Medicine

Exercise for healthy recovery. *Low-mobility accessible*

### Positive Parenting Program from

Free discussion workshops for parents of kids & teens.

### PTSD Groups - Men\*, Women\*, Co-ed, and faith based

Skills to heal trauma for people in recovery.

### Recovery Dharma

Based on principles of mindfulness and meditation.

### Recovery Yoga by Jen Raines

Yoga techniques to support a healthy body and mind.

### Rockin' Recovery

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

### Setting Boundaries

Developing healthy boundaries for those in recovery.

### SMART Recovery

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

### Unwind Your Mind by

For those facing depression & anxiety in their daily lives.

### 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.

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

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

## Featured Groups

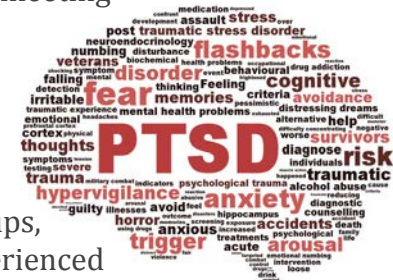
### Knitting for Well-being

Activities Director Dianne Valvo facilitates this fun group on Thursdays, 10-11 a.m. If you love to knit, crochet, or want to learn, you are welcome, no matter your current skills. Participants make blankets for the maternity ward at UPMC, scarves for the homeless, or items for themselves. Supplies are provided or feel free to bring your own and work on projects you love.

Donations of yarn are appreciated.

### Coed PTSD

The MHA holds a coed PTSD meeting every Thursday, 6-7 p.m., facilitated by Director of Student Activities Ken Yergens. Great for those who work and can't make the daytime PTSD groups, it is for anyone who has experienced trauma or who is currently facing trauma and, like all MHA groups, is confidential.



### 12-Step Groups

#### AA Living Sober

12-step alcohol recovery group based on the book.

#### AA Look to This Day

12-step alcohol recovery focused on living each day

#### CMA Crystal Clear

12-step support for crystal meth.

#### Staying Sober Your Way

A secular 12-step approach to recovery.

#### We Believe

12 Step recovery group based on biblical principles.

### 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](mailto:programs@mhachautauqua.org)

# 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 & 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 & moms-to-be, dedicated to building bright futures for Chautauqua County children and their families.

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## 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 & 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, & 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 national:



## 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.





### Recovery Luncheons

On the third Tuesday of every month the MHA has up to 100 visitors at a luncheon where participants are recognized for their progress.

If your business or organization would like to take part by providing the meal, contact Administrative Manager Michelle Colaiacovo at [admin@mhachautauqua.org](mailto:admin@mhachautauqua.org) or (716)490-4160.

We would love for the community to get involved!

### French Creek Recovery Center Visits MHA

The Business Development team of French Creek Recovery Center, Meadville, Pa., kicked off their first Thankful Thursday of November with a stop at the MHA. French Creek provides addiction treatment where it is needed.



This picture is on their Facebook page (from left: MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb, FCRC Clinical Outreach Coordinator Michelle Szczukowski, MHA Program Director Michael Nordin and Peer Specialist Ed Lloyd) with: "We are so thankful for MHA and all that they do for our community and for welcoming French Creek so warmly."

### The Mental Health Association: A Growing Resource (continued from page 1)....

Resources Director Billy Hernandez and Administrative Manager Michelle Colaiacovo.

Having begun her journey in recovery from alcoholism 20 years ago, Michelle’s initial connection with MHA goes back to when she was coming out of a relapse. "This was my safe place...I could breathe here," she says. When she later worked as a nurse at UPMC Chautauqua, Michelle used what she learned about CRAFT (Community Reinforcement and Family Training)—an approach for families who have a loved one struggling with substances—to facilitate MHA Mom Tribe groups for new and expectant mothers.

Unable to continue nursing after a work injury during COVID, Michelle was excited when she saw the administrative manager opening at MHA and, with her earlier business degree credentials, thrilled when she was hired. Key among her responsibilities are working closely on grants and compliance.

Originally from the Bronx and Long Island, Billy moved on from his position as the human resources officer for the city of Salamanca to join the Mental Health Association as human resources director. Billy's education includes obtaining his Bachelors of Science from SUNY Oneonta, a Masters of Science from Binghamton University in Student Affairs Administration as well as a Master's of Science in Human Resources Management from Stony Brook University.

Most of Billy’s prior experience focuses on customer service and providing guidance, such as being a Hall Director at SUNY Cortland and SUNY Fredonia and working at two different Job Corps in various capacities. He also worked in accounting for the Cattaraugus County Department of Social Services. Billy's goal in coming to MHA is to answer "Is what we're doing working? If not, what can we do to fix it?" In addition to his own, he works with others on their self-care, inspired by his social worker mother’s likening it to airline instructions: "Before helping someone else, put on your own mask first."

#### MHA Mission Statement:

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.

#### MHA Vision Statement:

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.

## More MHA Happenings!



MHA Program Director Michael Nordin (left) congratulated participant **Bev Michel** for completing the **Goodskills Career Builder** program. Located on the Jamestown Community College campus, Goodskills provides free targeted skills training and job placement services into higher wage careers. The luncheon was prepared and served by the Chautauqua County Sheriff’s Office.

Responding to Cummins’ invitation, **Peer Specialist Morgan Rowley** visited **Cummins Jamestown Engine Plant** to speak with their employees about the good news that not only is recovery possible, we expect it!

Mental health and substance use challenges have a solution, and it starts with hope. MHA has great conversations about the services we offer all over Chautauqua County. To schedule a visit, contact Program Director Michael Nordin at [mike.nordin@mhachautauqua.org](mailto:mike.nordin@mhachautauqua.org) or (716) 490-4028.



At the September Recovery Luncheon, **Activities Director Dianne Valvo** (left) and participants **Mike Norberg** and **Deanna Johnson** displayed some of the knitting and crafts produced by the Thursday morning **Knitting for Well-Being** group. **Donations of yarn are appreciated** to make baby items for Strong Starts Chautauqua and scarves for warming center participants. The meal was prepared and served by members of Jamestown’s St. Luke’s Episcopal Church.

In September, **Peer Specialist Allison Murphy** (center, with lanyard) was part of the Q&A after **Jamestown Community College’s screening of *Suicide The Ripple Effect***. The documentary follows Kevin Hines, who attempted to take his own life by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge, his miraculous survival, and tremendous advocacy after his recovery.



At the October Recovery Luncheon on the day after Boss’s Day, MHA Executive Director Steven Cobb was surprised with a Great Boss certificate and gift card. The roasted chicken dinner was prepared by St. Susan Center. Other luncheon hosts this year have been Chautauqua County Department of Mental Hygiene, Chautauqua County Sheriff’s Office, St. Susan Center, and St. Luke’s Episcopal Church several times.

The MHA was the setting for a Sober Halloween Party the Saturday before the holiday. Everyone looked “spook-tacular” in their costumes, and a bonfire added to the festivities! Sponsored by the Living Sober group of AA, the evening included a DJ, dancing, costume contest, games and food.



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Call or Text: (716) 661-9044



## GivingTuesday, November 28, 2023 — In the Spirit of the Season

Would you like to make a difference in someone’s life?

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

The Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County uses donations received on GivingTuesday, the international day of charitable giving, to directly assist the participants it serves – to provide emergency housing, food, transportation,

or even a small treat to celebrate achievements or provide a needed lift.

Please reach out and make a difference with your donation at [MHACHautauqua.org/Donate](http://MHACHautauqua.org/Donate), on the [MHA Facebook page](#), in person, or by mailing a check to:

Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County  
31 Water Street, Suite 7  
Jamestown NY 14701



**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 United Ways of Northern and Southern Chautauqua County ♡ UPMC Chautauqua ♡ and others...