

## Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County Holds Its First Job Fair

While May 14, 2025, was the date of the first Job Fair presented by the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County, don't expect it to be the last.

"This was a great first-time experience," said MHA Executive Director Michael Nordin. "We look forward to it growing in the future!"

Assisted by MHA Peer Specialist Gordy Frederes, OPEN Program Peer Justin Jimenez coordinated the event. The two had a table to answer job questions, and bilingual Spanish Outreach Peer Danny Rosario was available to help participants.

OPEN (Occupational Peer Empowerment Network) is the MHA program focused on workforce development, helping lift people out of poverty by overcoming barriers to gaining, maintaining, and thriving as employees.



*Molina Healthcare's Jacquelyn Sasso explained affordable insurance possibilities to visitors.*

Organizations represented at the event included Blackstone Advanced Technologies, Goodwill of Western New York, Manpower, Molina Healthcare, and The Resource Center.

Molina Healthcare Facilitated Enroller Jacquelyn Sasso is a familiar face at the MHA. As she does on her frequent Wednesday visits, she explained the low-cost and even free health insurance possibilities to Job Fair attendees.

Jackie Greene described Goodwill of Western New York's Goodskills Career Builder program on the Jamestown Community College campus. Through a combination of classroom and hands-on experience, Goodskills prepares workers for careers in advanced manufacturing at no cost to residents of Chautauqua County. The four weeks of training is provided at no cost to residents of Chautauqua County.

Justin is planning for Job Fairs to be held quarterly at the MHA, with the next one in mid-August. Any business or organization interested in participating is invited to contact him at [OPEN@MHACHautauqua.org](mailto:OPEN@MHACHautauqua.org) or (716) 490-4428.



*The work of Job Fair planners Peer Specialist Gordy Frederes (left) and OPEN Program Peer Justin Jimenez paid off with a successful event!*



*Goodwill of Western New York Community Outreach Liaison Jackie Greene described the Goodskills Career Builder program on Jamestown Community College's campus.*

**The work of the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County is made possible by support from**  
Appalachian Regional Commission ♥ Chautauqua County Departments of Mental Hygiene and Health & Human Services  
Chautauqua Region Community Foundation ♥ Garman Family Foundation ♥ Hultquist Foundation ♥ Lenna Foundation  
NYS Office of Mental Health ♥ Northern Chautauqua Community Foundation ♥ Ralph C. Sheldon Foundation  
United Arts Appeal of Chautauqua County ♥ United Way of Chautauqua County  
Western New York Integrated Care Collaborative ♥ and others, like you....

## Monthly Recovery Luncheons at the Jamestown Recovery Center



At the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County's **March recovery luncheon**, Brandon Griggs was recognized for his volunteer work and completing his GED. He is pictured (left) with Student Activities Director Ken Yergens, who congratulated him on his accomplishments. As Brandon said later, "Without the MHA, I wouldn't have been able to do it: The MHA gave me courage and hope."



*The delicious meal featuring pulled pork sandwiches was prepared and served by Jamestown's St. Luke's Episcopal Church members: from left, Brian and Sandra Kearney, Sandy Harle, and Linda McCallum.*



At the MHA's **April recovery luncheon**, Afroula Snell, Chautauqua County coordinator for NY Connects, described the services her organization provides, helping people of all ages, any disability, and caregivers to find care, support, and transportation, remain independent, and get help with Medicare, Medicaid and other benefits by three-way calls to these services.

Certificates were awarded to three participants who achieved employment and another for three years of sobriety.



*Marty Carcione (left) baked a delicious carrot cake for the event in appreciation for all the help the MHA has given her family. She and Activities/PR Coordinator Dianne Valvo served the spaghetti dinner that was prepared by St. Susan Center.*

Fostering **A**cceptance **C**onnection **E**quality & **S**upport



**MHA**

**MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION  
IN CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY  
HOPE, ADVOCACY, RECOVERY**

*Because celebrating positive milestones increases long term recovery, the Mental Health Association has monthly recovery luncheons that provide positive reinforcement to those in addiction and mental health recovery.*



Participants enjoyed hearty picnic fare prepared by, from left, Pam Lucas and Betsy Trusel of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Jamestown, with serving assistance by MHA Activities/PR Coordinator Dianne Valvo.

MHA Executive Director Mike Nordin welcomed all who participated in the May Recovery Luncheon and thanked those who prepared and served the meal. He had certificates for five participants who have begun employment at local businesses, from a fast food restaurant to a manufacturer. Dan Graham was recognized for volunteering to assemble 150 xylazine wound care kits. Diana Bloom was acknowledged as MHA's new "Head Volunteer." Denver, the service dog owned by Sonny Burns received a certificate for his "Service to Others in Crisis." MHA's Medicaid Navigator/Screeners and Peer Specialist Jennifer Trusso for the WNYICC (Western New York Integrated Care Collaborative) program was introduced (see p. 7). Finance Director Jill Marsh announced the winner of the backpack of personal supplies.



Sonny Burns and his service dog, Denver, who was recognized for his Service to Others in Crisis.



### Can Your Business, Church, or Group Support Recovery Luncheons?

Recognizing positive milestones is widely accepted as significant to long-term success in mental health and substance use disorder recovery. MHA's monthly luncheons celebrate these milestones and, like all MHA services, are free for guests. The MHA is seeking help in providing these lunches to upwards of 80 visitors.

If you are part of an organization that has the capacity to make a meal or share in its cost – or could do this on your own – please contact Activities/PR Coordinator Dianne Valvo at (716) 720-8098 or [Dianne.Valvo@MHACHautauqua.org](mailto:Dianne.Valvo@MHACHautauqua.org). In addition to the good feeling you'll get, you will be recognized in a newsletter and a widely-distributed news release.



#### MHA Holidays

MHA's Jamestown and North County recovery centers close in observance of these holidays:

- |                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| New Year's Day             | Independence Day (July 4th) |
| Martin Luther King Jr. Day | Labor Day                   |
| President's Day            | Indigenous Peoples' Day     |
| Good Friday                | Veterans Day                |
| Memorial Day               | Thanksgiving                |
| Juneteenth                 | Christmas                   |

#### Everyone is Welcome at MHA's Annual BBQ Tuesday, July 15, 1 pm

All we need is **you** and good weather for this fun summertime celebration. Join us for grilled hot dogs, outdoor games and other events. See you then!

Newsletter Staff:  
Editor: Pat Brininger Layout: Joseph Vaughn

## 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 and support.

### Treatment Court Navigation

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

### Family Support

A peer coach meets with parents and guardians to help them navigate issues with CPS and meet goals to keep or return their children.



A cooperative endeavor with a local network of organizations to provide peer support and connections to resources for moms, moms-to-be, & all new parents dedicated to building bright futures for Chautauqua County children and their families.

### Peer Training

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

### Transportation

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

### Student Activities

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



### OCCUPATIONAL PEER EMPOWERMENT NETWORK

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

### 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.

### 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 Connections

Peer advocacy in the hospital Inpatient, Outpatient, and Emergency Departments, as well as rehab centers, to 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 Recovery Support

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 responders.



### 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.

Scan here to get



trained for Narcan

Scan here for



the MHA website

Scan here for our



current schedule

## MHA Support Groups

### Anger Management

Working to develop skills for dealing with anger.

### Art in Recovery

An artistic expression of your personal recovery.

### CRAFT Community Reinforcement And Family Training

Support for families and friends of those in recovery.

### Depression & Anxiety Support

For those facing depression & anxiety in their daily lives

### Grief Support \*

Discussion for those that have experienced loss of any kind.

### Knitting for Well-being

Use knitting to improve your wellbeing.

### Meditation & Wellness

Take a moment for yourself to learn to slow down, breathe deeply, and reconnect with your inner peace.

### OPEN for Work

Collaborative group to share work experiences and help each other overcome challenges we have already faced.

### Positive Parenting Program from

Free discussion workshops for parents of kids & teens.

### 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.

### SMART Recovery

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

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

For up-to-date info, find our calendars at

[MHACHautauqua.org/groups](http://MHACHautauqua.org/groups).

**Trauma Support Groups** - Men, Women, Co-ed, & faith-based Skills to heal trauma for people in recovery.

**Unwind Your Mind** by 

For those facing depression & anxiety in their daily lives. **Veterans Group**

Open support group for veterans and their families **We Believe**

12-Step recovery group based on biblical principles

**Women's Group \***

Open topic support group for women.

### 12-Step Groups

**AA Living Sober**  

12-step alcohol recovery group based on the book.

**AA Look to This Day**  

Open meeting of the 12-step recovery group.

**AA Starting Over**  

Open meeting of the 12-step recovery group.

**CMA Crystal Clear**  

12-step support for crystal meth.

**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)

Meditation and Wellness  
Thursdays at 10:00am-11:00am  
*beginning 05/08/2025*

Take a moment for yourself. In our guided meditation sessions, you'll learn to slow down, breathe deeply, and reconnect with your inner peace. Whether you're new to meditation or returning to your practice, this is a safe, welcoming space to release stress, quiet the mind, and restore balance.



## Anxiety & Depression Group

### Monday 2:30 - 3:30 PM

Join us in our Anxiety and Depression Group led by Peer Coach Blaine (Buddy) Carlson.

In this group, we discuss both the symptoms and solutions in dealing with these two mental health conditions which often go hand-in-hand. While we do not prescribe, we can provide referrals to mental health professionals, if needed. We discuss events in our lives that have triggered feelings of despair, loneliness, fear, and panic - which often causes self-isolation. This is a safe and confident group in which you will meet others who have shared similar experiences and symptoms.

New participants are warmly welcomed.

## Trauma Support Groups

Tuesday 11:00 AM Women's Trauma Support  
2:15 PM Co-ed Trauma Support  
Thursday 6:00 PM Co-ed Trauma Support

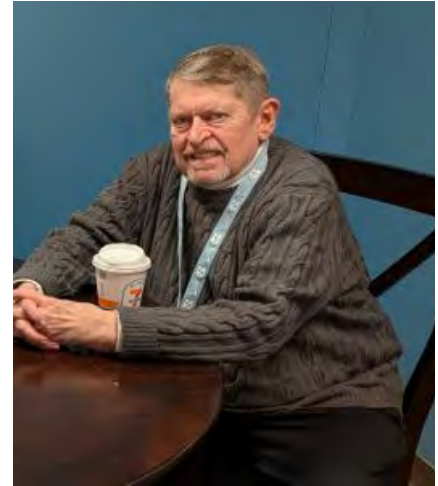
Have you experienced trauma of any kind? If you have suffered any type of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, you may be experiencing depression, anxiety, substance abuse, self-harm, self-isolation, anger issues, and physical or medical conditions directly or indirectly related to trauma.

In our trauma support groups, you will meet others who have suffered trauma in their lives. Safe and confidential, the co-ed groups are led by Ken Yergens, who has successfully guided participants in trauma resolution. In the women's group with Dianne Valvo, you will also gain understanding of the ways trauma impacts our lives and learn strategies to overcome behaviors and thoughts that negatively impact your life.

### Welcoming New Staff



A year ago, **Blaine “Buddy” Carlson** (left) and **Gordy Frederes** were honored at the United Way of Southern Chautauqua County’s volunteer recognition event for their work as a team, running the reception area at the Jamestown recovery center. As they greeted participants, answered phone calls and completed registration materials with participants, they shared hope, love, and inspiration—what MHA calls “radical acceptance.” With staff and participants grateful for their joy, humor, and graciousness, they were identified as the right choices when two staff positions opened.



Now Buddy is transportation and peer specialist under the Western New York Integrated Care Collaborative (WNYICC, see p. 7) and Gordy is a peer specialist with MHA’s OPEN program (see p. 1).

While his background was primarily in business, finance and real estate, Buddy always wanted to help people. He feels like he waited his whole life for this opportunity, for which he is so grateful. As a recovering alcoholic, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and other support groups have been a big help to him in the nearly 15 years he’s been associated with the MHA. He has facilitated the Anxiety & Depression and Anger Management groups and had extensive training for his new responsibilities.

Gordy became interested in the MHA when peers visited him while he was in UPMC’s in-patient program in Jamestown. Knowing he would need structure to prevent his return to alcohol, when he finished that 28-day program, he came to the MHA, where he participated in groups and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and connected with staff. Deciding to volunteer, he feels good being a productive member of society again. He played a significant role in the Job Fair and recently started an AA group in Dunkirk.



**Danny Rosario**, MHA’s new bilingual Spanish outreach peer specialist, divides his time between the Jamestown and North County recovery centers. Born in Puerto Rico, Danny came to downstate New York when he was three. Now a Dunkirk resident, he has also lived in other Western New York towns as an adult. Family trauma led to his eventual dependence on drugs, and physical problems left him unable to use his degree in auto mechanics. Now in recovery, he “loves” his new job and is excited to finally be able to realize his lifelong passion of being able to help others. Danny especially likes working with the Hispanic population and looks forward to starting a group for English as a Second Language.

#### MHA Board of Directors

- Sarah Trantum, President 📍 Kimberly Lombard, Vice President 📍 Jake Kohler, Treasurer 📍 Julie Apperson, Secretary
- Judy Anderson 📍 Jennifer Howe 📍 Lindsey Isaac-Lopus 📍 Sherry Lawson 📍 Tom Lebeau 📍 Sara Luther

*It has been exciting to add new staff members to the MHA in recent months...*

**Kelli Rogalski** (left) and **Jennifer Trusso** are Medicaid Navigator/Screeners as well as Peer Specialists who, along with Buddy Carlson (see p. 6), have been hired under the Western New York Integrated Care Collaborative. WNYICC is a regional organization that brings together various community-based organizations (CBOs) and social service providers across Western New York to deliver integrated, value-based care focused on improving health outcomes—especially for Medicaid recipients and underserved populations.



Kelli has facilitated the Anxiety & Depression Group and is celebrating two years of sobriety since coming to Alcoholics Anonymous at the MHA. With mental health issues from a young age, Jennifer was an MHA Occupational Therapy Assistant intern while at JCC and participated in groups. With previous relevant work experience and their personal histories, both women are happy to be assisting participants directly along with their Medicaid billing responsibilities.



For the past couple years **Brandon Griggs** has co-facilitated the Art in Recovery Group with Activities/PR Coordinator Dianne Valvo and assisted in cleaning the Jamestown recovery center, all while going to classes and recently earning his GED. The March recovery luncheon was an opportunity to thank him and celebrate his accomplishments (see p. 2). He is pictured here at the 2024 Art in Recovery Annual Exhibit and is working on his goal to become an art teacher. Brandon joined the staff recently as MHA's part-time cleaner.

### Dunkirk Recovery Center Reopened

MHA Executive Director Michael Nordin was happy to announce that, with the completion of building remediation, the MHA's North County recovery center reopened on Tuesday, May 6. Hours are Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Grace Lutheran Church, 601 Eagle Street in Dunkirk. Mike said, "We appreciate everyone's patience during this time and look forward to having everyone back."



During the closing, an MHA recovery coach was available weekly at Chautauqua County Rural Ministry's Friendly Kitchen in Dunkirk and coaches could come to the north county as needed.

Staffing in Dunkirk includes Bilingual Spanish Outreach Peer Specialist Danny Rosario, Peer Specialist Gordy Frederes, Grant Manager Michelle Colaiacovo and other peers.

#### MHA Mission Statement

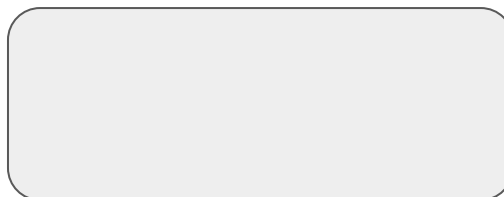
The Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County commits to radical acceptance, empowerment, and advocacy for our community members who struggle with mental health and substance use.

#### 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 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.



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Call or Text: (716) 661-9044



**The MHA Needs YOU:  
Thursday, June 12, 2025!!**

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## **The MHA Has a *BIG* Goal for Give Big CHQ - Thursday, June 12, 2025**

With a ***\$10,000 goal***, the Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County is reaching high this year for Give Big CHQ, the 24-hour online fundraising event hosted by the Chautauqua Region and Northern Chautauqua Community Foundations.

**Money raised for the MHA goes into our Donation Fund that directly assists the participants MHA serves** – for diapers, bus passes, clothing for work, drivers licenses and non-drivers ID, emergency housing, food...and more!

MHA will be eligible for cash prize incentives throughout the day.

**On Thursday, June 12, go to [MHACHautauqua.org/GiveBigCHQ](http://MHACHautauqua.org/GiveBigCHQ) and GIVE BIG! *Thank you!!!***

### **Give 716 Day**

starts July 15, 2025 at 7:16 p.m.  
and culminates on  
July 16, 2025 at 11:59 p.m.

Support MHA by visiting  
[MHACHautauqua.org/Give716](http://MHACHautauqua.org/Give716)

Sign up now and donate on 7-16!



Give 716 is a collaborative effort between the Buffalo Bills Foundation and the Buffalo Sabres Foundation. The goal of Give 716 is simple, to unite Bills and Sabres fans with the Western New York community in an epic giving event!