

## Upcoming Events

GMHCN Board Meeting  
Conference Call  
July 8, 2010;  
St. Simon's Island, GA  
August 23, 2010  
Pine Mountain, GA  
November 10-12, 2010

CPS Training  
The Lodge at Simpsonwood  
Norcross, GA  
August 2-6 & 9-12, 2010;  
Epworth by the Sea  
St. Simon's Island, GA  
October 25-29 & November 1-4,  
2010

GMHCN 19th Annual  
Conference  
Resiliency: Moving Forward with  
Recovery and Wellness  
Epworth by the Sea  
St. Simon's Island, GA  
August 24-26, 2010

NARPA 2010 Annual Rights  
Conference  
"Choice, Not Force"  
Hilton Atlanta  
Atlanta, GA  
September 8-11, 2010

Alternatives 2010  
Promoting Wellness through Social  
Justice  
Hyatt Regency Anaheim  
Anaheim, CA  
September 29-October 3, 2010

National Federation of Families for  
Children's Mental Health  
21st Annual Conference  
The Diversity and Resilience of  
Families  
Hyatt Regency Atlanta  
Atlanta, GA  
November 5-7, 2010

Georgia Peer Support Institute  
Epworth by the Sea  
St. Simon's Island, GA  
November 16-18, 2010

For more information go to  
[www.gmhc.org](http://www.gmhc.org)

# PEER INSTITUTE NEWS

2009-2010  
Edition

## My GPSI Experience (April 2010) by Danton Sealy

The April 28–30, 2010 Georgia Peer Support Institute was the largest GPSI to date! Forty-one participants filled the Unicoi State Park Lodge Conference room so completely that another table for participants had to be added to the conference room. So we arrived—just like any big corporation such as Coca-Cola, Cox Enterprises, or Georgia Pacific. On April 28 -30, 2010, consumers of mental health services at the GPSI in Helen, Georgia hit the big time!

**PHEW!** There are a lot of details to keep up with when coordinating an event such as the GPSI. There are tough decisions to be made, such as who would be chosen to participate. Then there are the not so tough decisions, such as what color the GPSI tote bags would be! There are rooming assignments, travel arrangements, food preferences, and coordinating with Unicoi State Park directly to attend to. Then sometimes, unexpected medical emergencies or details like spoiled mini moos for our group's coffee which demanded immediate attention.

With the help of Linda Haney, Tayron Kendall, and Kaytha Barton, the experience of all the facilitators and support from the steady hand of Sherry Jenkins Tucker, Executive Director of the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network, we had a well-appreciated three-day training. A highlight for many was the *Recovered Dignity* presentation by Charles Willis. Another well-received presentation was *Person-Centered Planning* by Linda Buckner. I attended *Mutual Support Groups* and *DTR*, facilitated by Gena Brock and Linda Buckner. The group fully participated and obviously enjoyed this unit. Closing our three days of learning, sharing, relaxing and eating good food (I loved that trout), one of our participants, Marqueta Garvin blessed us with her beautiful rendition of Mariah Carey's "Hero."

The highlight of the April 2010 GPSI arrived for me personally with the handing out of the Graduates' Certificate of Attendance. Many graduates went to great lengths to attend, so there was great joy when the certificates were handed out. Remember graduates: There are still projects to complete; and the best reports on your projects may result in choosing you to present your report at the Summer Conference in St. Simon's Island, as guests of the GMHCN!

I wish to thank all the graduates for helping me by their participation and cooperation in making the April 28 -30, 2010 GPSI a huge success. I will not be coordinating the next GPSI, as I have been given the privilege and opportunity to serve as the Administrative Assistant to the Georgia Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council. This Council advises the state on how to utilize the Mental Health Block Money it receives from the federal government. May the Fall GPSI, on November 16 -18, 2010 at St. Simons Island be even bigger and better!



Danton Sealy

## "CHANGE is Possible"

I am NOT an illness.  
I am first and foremost a human being.  
I will not be reduced to being an illness or thing.  
I will keep my power and save a part of myself that will,  
in time, be able to take a stand toward my distress and  
begin the process of recovery and healing.  
--- Patricia E. Deegan, Ph.D.



Georgia Peer Support  
Institute is funded by  
DBHDD

246 Sycamore Street  
Suite 260

Phone: 404-687-9487

Email: [gpsi@gmhc.org](mailto:gpsi@gmhc.org)

*"In you I found me."*

--- Charlene Reeves, CPS

## SHARING GPSI WITH OTHERS

All GPSI graduates are encouraged to present a project to their home communities. Here are some of the projects GPSI graduates have chosen. See if any of

their plans will inspire you to come up with an idea of how to present your project.

Terri Green (Fall, 2009 GPSI) for her Mutual Support Group presentation, used the Internet and a series of pictures from various magazines to "show persons who set goals for themselves; and asked her peers how they envision themselves; what is important to them; and what are achievable goals?" Selena Houston used a stunning visual aid presentation for her Peer Wellness Initiative featuring the Components of Recovery. Selena used a simple three-part poster board and used pages from her GPSI workbook to complete the presentation. Colleen Stephens, for her Walking Miracle presentation, asked everyone to answer the questions from the handout, "Telling Your Recovery Story". Then she divided the audience into small groups where all participants shared their stories. Afterward, peers affirmed, "When I see how much you have overcome to get where you are today, I know you are a walking miracle," and presented a Walking Miracle button. Finally, Charlotte Spivey, in her Self-Advocacy presentation, gave approximately 34 peers a copy of "Know Your Rights" along with the contact information for the Georgia Advocacy Office. Charlotte says she immediately had several responses from peers who although being in the system a long time exclaimed, "I never knew I had any rights!" William Smith, (April, 2010 GPSI) chose WRAP as his project. William plans to help consumers "overcome learning disabilities" by using a wellness tool box filled with gardening tools with labels on them to describe how they feel. Natalie Wilder another graduate of April, 2010 plans a skit to demonstrate how easily negative judgments are placed on a person in her Self-Advocacy presentation. Reginald Wooten of the April, 2010 class plans to sing his WRAP and Recovery presentation—now that I'd like to hear! Anthony Mainini and Gregory Campbell decided to work together as a team. They plan to present Recovered Dignity by creating banners and then go to such places as churches, Wal-Mart, and the Spaulding Day Center to bring attention to the plight of those who were buried in mental hospital cemeteries "unknown to anyone but God." Sherry Evans plans to make a resource list of government agencies for assistance along with government officials that peers can contact or write to advocate for MH consumers in her Advocacy project. Havalyn Cantrell-Bailey in her Walking Miracle project plans to gather old pictures of herself to present "when I thought I was well; after being in diagnosis; in a wheelchair and overweight; and an up-to-date picture;" to demonstrate the walking miracle that she is. Carol Holmes plans to present a series of classes for her Person-Centered Planning project. These are only some of the creative ideas the Class of 2010 came up with. What will others do to make their presentations come alive? We are looking forward to reading your reports and looking for the best reports of your presentations. Enjoy working on your projects!

### The Fall 2009 GPSI

John Rutowski coordinated the October 16-18, 2009 Fall GPSI, held on St. Simons Island at Epworth by the Sea. John related a few thoughts to me about the class of 2009: "This was a very good group; they interacted very well together. The class was very excited about presenting their projects in their own various communities. They also seemed very excited about continuing their own recovery process. A few went on to become actively involved within the mental health and substance abuse recovery communities. 2009 fall graduate, Yakee Malone, recently participated in PERMES, a state-authorized, consumer-to-consumer survey of Mental Health and Addictive Diseases treatment recipients. Charlotte Spivey, from Dalton, GA went on to become a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) and facilitates a recovery group at the Highland Rivers Community Service Board (CSB). I recommend any who wish to learn more about empowering themselves and supporting others in recovery, apply to the GPSI."