



Georgia Peer Support
Institute is funded by
DBHDD

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My experience with the GPSI was magnificent. I enjoyed the training location, the food, and the motel room; my roommate and I had a wonderful time. The classes were all very informative and because I was accepted into this training, I have become more aware of my own personal recovery journey. I learned about how negative self-talk can have a big impact on how I treat myself and even how my day will turn out. I chose "5 Stages In Recovery" for my project, which I presented to Community Friendship Incorporated. At first I was shy, but as I continued speaking I became comfortable. Sharing my past has helped me get closer to my future, I am grateful to be chosen to attend the Institute. *Alexus Stewart, GPSI Graduate, Spring 2014*

There I was, sitting in the Fall 2012, GPSI training. Surrounded by beautiful and enchanting Epworth By The Sea. The energy that I felt from my peers was almost palpable. No one could have told me that in 3 months I would experience a relapse that would plunge me into the hopeless existence of addiction and severe depression. In the span of a few weeks I lost my apartment and thoughts of suicide had returned in force. In sharing my journey; it is not my intention to expound on the reasons or causes, but to say because of this training (and others through the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network) I am more aware of those warning signs. Today I am no longer hopeless nor homeless, but in fact my message is this: On the journey of recovery there really isn't a written-in-stone guarantee that we will not fail. But if we should fall we CAN chose to seek the treatment and support we need: we CAN choose life, we CAN chose to remember that not only is recovery possible; RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE AGAIN!

Darryl Gould, GPSI Graduate, Fall 2012

When I arrived for the GPSI, I was amazed by how warmly I was greeted by the Epworth staff and the GPSI facilitators. My entire life I have lived with my doctors words ringing in my ears as he told my mother that "the best you can hope for is your daughter will be institutionalized." Loss and failures were what I became familiar with. As the 3 day training began, I realized that I was no longer alone and the self-imposed prison and the utter misery I lived with could be changed. I listened to the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) and because of this session I developed my personal WRAP. The topic I chose for my project was "Combating Negative Self-Talk", as this was a personal topic for me. I shared my chosen project with 29 peers at the Atlanta Intercity Ministries, which was attended by people who live with dual diagnosis, mental illness and participants that didn't have either diagnosis. I have plans to continue sharing this project at any time and place that will allow me. I was encouraged to apply to the GPSI training and I went there looking for "HOPE" for myself and came away with a new purpose, a new life and new goals. I immediately attended the CPS training and I will forever share what I learned. *"Each One Reach One". Angela DesAutels, CPS, GPSI Graduate, Fall 2013*

I was very excited to receive a scholarship for the GPSI. The facilitators had the entire training very well organized. I was impressed with all of the information that I received. My chosen project was WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) and I invited the WRAP facilitator, Charles Willis, CPS to support me in presenting my project at the Decatur's Peer Support and Wellness Center. We focused on "triggers" as this is one of the things that begin the downward spiral. I learned that giving back to the community not only decreases the stigma surrounding mental illness, but enriches each life that we come into contact with. One part of my goal has been fulfilled (attending the GPSI) and my future goal is to become a CPS. *Tabitha Mitchell, GPSI Graduate, Spring 2014*

Our GPSI Experiences

by Donna T. Jones, CPS, GPSI Coordinator & GPSI Graduates

Upcoming Events

GMHCN Board Meeting
Macon, GA.
July 22, 2014

St. Simons Island, GA.
August 18, 2014

Macon
November 6 and 7, 2014

GMHCN Annual Conference
Epworth by the Sea
St. Simons Island, GA.
August 19~21, 2014

CPS Trainings
Albany, GA.
September 8~12, 2014
September 15~18, 2014

Savannah, GA.
October 20~24, 2014
October 27~30, 2014

Atlanta, GA
Dec. 1~5, 2014
Dec. 8~11 2014

International Association of Peer Supporters
2014 National Conference
Sheraton Airport Gateway Hotel
Atlanta, GA.
October 13~14, 2014

Alternatives 2014
Caribe Royale
Orlando, FL
October 22~26, 2014

Georgia Peer Support Institute
Epworth by the Sea
St. Simons Island, GA
November 11~13, 2014

Unicoi State Park
Helen, GA
April 21~23, 2015

Epworth by the Sea
St. Simons Island, GA
November 11~13, 2015

As I look back over the last year, I am so grateful for what I have learned. My recovery journey started during the Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) training. There have been many trainings since then and at each training I have learned more about myself and more about recovery. One of the best things that has happened to me is the privilege of being the Georgia Peer Support Institute (GPSI) Coordinator. I am so grateful for each participant that I have met because with each encounter I have learned and I have grown. I learn about recovery just by being around people who live their life to educate others and promote that, "Yes, Recovery Is Possible". As many of you know I was not able to coordinate the Spring 2014, GPSI session, due to major spinal surgery. Because I was unable to coordinate this session, I would like to thank Brent Hoskinson, CPS for coordinating this session. I don't think he believed me when I told him that each time there is a session, anytime you see a participant afterwards it is like a family reunion. Now, after he has completed coordinating a session, I know that he does indeed feel the same way. As we know, there is something so powerful in the words "Peer Support". The best way to explain it is to quote Lori Wade, CPS in a poem she wrote entitled "Light of Peers". In her poem she states that she believes that light is a symbol and recovery is centered around that light, with each encounter with a peer, she feels their light, their strength and she becomes stronger, giving her the strength to share her light with someone else. This is what has happened to me, everyone has shared their strength, knowledge and understanding with me. Assisting me in my recovery both physically and mentally. I just want to tell each of you thank you for supporting me during this time. Until we meet again, "Each One Reach One" and please continue to share your light. *Donna T. Jones, CPS, GPSI Project Coordinator :>}*

Organizing and facilitating the GPSI was really a special treat. At the start I had no idea how much it was going to mean to me and my own recovery. We received 140 applications and in reading through each one of those, I realized in a new and brighter light how important recovery is, and how necessary peer support is to building that recovery. There are no words to describe how incredible the class was. Those of us who facilitated the training watched in amazement as before our eyes recovery grew in the training room. Eyes were opened to new and innovative ways of thinking and helping others. Recovery builds and grows in rooms of people who share openly their experiences and are working toward common goals. My favorite saying is "forward and up because down and back is no good" and that is what I saw among everyone involved in the Spring 2014, GPSI class including the presenters and facilitators. "Forward and Up". *Brent Hoskinson, CPS, Spring 2014, GPSI Coordinator*

I first learned about the GPSI program through my mentor Donna Silvia, CPS. She believed that this would be my 1st step in achieving my long term goal of becoming a CPS and working with others as she had done with me. I applied 3 times before I was accepted. During the training I learned many things about recovery and a recovery tool called "Catch-It, Check-It and Change-It". I use this in my everyday life as well as sharing it with my peers at Grady Hospital's Peer Support Program where I am a volunteer. One of the requirements for attending the GPSI is doing a community based project from one of the sessions. I chose Self-Advocacy, sharing with my peers the importance of speaking up for yourself in a clear concise way. Immediately after completing the GPSI, I applied for and was accepted into the CPS training. I learned from Donna Silvia to never give up because there is always more to learn and share. There are many ways to move on in your recovery, but 'Never Giving Up' is a good place to start. *Ponce Ramsey, GPSI Graduate, Fall 2013*

This issue is dedicated to the honor and memory of

Maya Angelou

"We are more alike than we are unlike"

1928 - 2014