

Our GPSI Experiences

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

Upcoming Events

Georgia Peer Support Institute
Epworth by the Sea
November 12 - 14, 2013

Unicoi State Park
April 22 - 24, 2014

Epworth by the Sea
November 11 - 13, 2014

GMHCN Board Meetings

Conference Call
July 11, 2013

Epworth by the Sea
August 19, 2013

CPS Trainings

Tifton, GA
July 15 - 19, 2013;
July 22 - 25, 2013

Macon, GA
September 16 -20, 2013;
September 23 - 26, 2013

Decatur, GA
December 2 -6, 2013;
December 9 - 12, 2013

Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network 22nd Annual Conference

St. Simons Island, GA
August 20 - 22, 2013

7th Annual Georgia School of Addiction Studies

Hyatt Regency
Savannah, GA
August 26 - 30, 2013

Georgia Consumer Council Memorial Service

Milledgeville, GA
October 6, 2013

Alternatives

Hyatt Regency Austin
Austin, TX
December 4 - 7, 2013

Well here we are again; another year has come and gone. It seems that each year brings pleasure and pain. We have lost another great person, one who truly believed in the words "RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE FOR EVERYONE"! Her name was Donna Silva and she was a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS). I first meet Donna as the new Georgia Peer Support Institute (GPSI) Coordinator, September 2010. As I sit here and reflect back to that first GPSI Session that I coordinated, I remember talking to several CPS's as they would call and inquire about the application process. That first session I made some lifelong friends and of course Donna was one of them. I remember her as a strong support person for many people. She always believed that "Anyone Can Recover" and this was very evident in everything she did. I know that I will never forget her nor will I forget the many phone conversations we shared. The last time I called her, it was late one night before Christmas, 2012 (one of the peers I work with had car trouble in the Decatur area). I called several people that night looking for physical support; she did not receive my call until the next morning when she got up to go to work. At 7:00AM the next morning she called saying "I did not hear the phone, what can I do to help"? For me, I will always remember Donna was the kind of person who no matter what or when she was willing, with a genuine kind heart. to provide assistance. I will forever miss her.

I now have completed six GPSI Trainings and I always feel like I am at a family reunion when I see the prior GPSI participants. I have learned so much from each session and from the participants themselves. People who have completed the training have stepped up to the plate (as a very wise person said) to "Suit up and Show up". They have become active members of the Georgia Consumer Council (GCC), completed the Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) Training, passed their test and are now working in their communities, sharing their recovery stories and more importantly sharing the hope and belief that yes, WE CAN AND DO RECOVER!!!

I look forward to continuing to learn, grow and share my recovery with other people in my path; never forgetting the past and looking with hope towards the future. Until next time we met keep walking your path of recovery, never forget to tell people that you care and please continue to "Suit up and Show Up". Donna T. Jones, CPS, GPSI Project Coordinator :>}

April 22, 2012, was one year ago that I "made myself go to GPSI". I was just coming out of a major depression cycle and my counselor and my roommate kept encouraging me to go, so to satisfy them, I waited to the very last minute possible to FAX my application, just knowing I would not be chosen. Then I received the call "saying you have been chosen to attend". I was literally speechless. Now, I had to go. So, I went...and my WHOLE LIFE CHANGED!!!! The acceptance, love, knowledge, education, information and the "evidence" I saw gave me the encouragement, hope, strength and passion I needed to take the next step in moving toward what I want. I left GPSI and I haven't stopped since. A year doesn't seem that long, but I have accomplished so much in the last year, moving toward a vision that I

This issue is dedicated to the memory of

Donna Silva, CPS



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DBHDD

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“You have the power to change the world, but first you
must change your mind.”

--- Author Unknown

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am passionate about. I have completed CPS Training, passed the test and now I am working as a CPS in the Peer Support, Wellness and Respite Center of White County in Cleveland. One year ago to the day, April 22, 2013, I started Certified Addiction Recovery Empowerment Specialist (CARES) Training and I am certified in it as well. I just want people to know that attending the GPSI saved my life and gave me the courage to continue moving forward on my Recovery Journey. Brenda Mims, CPS, CARES, GPSI Graduate, Spring 2012

Attending the GPSI was an experience that I have never had before. I applied to attend in the hope to learn something that I could bring back to my community, but in those three days I came back with a better outlook on life. I learned that I could share my chosen project, Zentangle®, with my community and the response I received has been a blessing to me and given me the courage to continue to share, remembering the motto of the Coordinator: “Each One Reach One”. Renee Byrd, GPSI Graduate, Spring 2013

I was so pleased to be selected to attend the GPSI training, provided by the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network (GMHCN). What a great opportunity to learn skills that will help me to help others when I become a CPS. Since I do not hesitate on Self-Advocating, our class “Advocacy” was especially engaging. I learned that Advocacy begins with SELF and that without our own health you cannot accomplish your mission of making a better future of success and know that to take care of one’s self is the first and most important part of Advocacy. What a beautiful thing! Another interesting session was “Problem Solving with Individuals”. In this session we learned that it is paramount to state the problem clearly, collaborate and think out of the box. We also learned that “A problem clearly stated is a problem half solved”. The time I spent with the people at the GPSI was a blessing. With very well organized blocks of instructions, I learned a great deal that truly enhanced my knowledge of Peer Support. Making new friends is always fun! An awesome time, I recommend this training to anyone pursuing a rewarding career as a Peer Support Specialist. Douglas Sawyer, GPSI Graduate, Spring 2013

The GPSI is an experience that I will always remember. I did not see black or white, what I did see was people coming together for one cause....Mental Health. The time I spent there I was with family. I learned so much about Advocacy, coping skills; such as Zentangle® (and the freedom that it brings), but I must say that the most moving thing that I learned was about The Recovered Dignity Campaign and the Cemetery Restoration Project in Milledgeville, GA. All of the facilitators were very knowledgeable and answered questions freely. If anyone were to ask me if I would like to attend the GPSI again...I would say...YES!! If any new comers ask should I apply and attend if selected I would say...YES!! Regina Holloway, GPSI Graduate, Fall 2012

I am very grateful for all that the GPSI and the GMHCN has done for me. I feel that the training and support which was provided has given me the open mindedness and the willingness to help other people who are just like me. Due to attending the GPSI, I have volunteered to work side by side with professional members of the Mental Health Department at the Carl Vinson Veteran’s Hospital in Dublin, GA. I chose the Wellness Recovery Action Plan, better known as WRAP as my project and I am proud to say that it was a huge success with the Veterans and the Professional Staff. I am planning to continue my studies, working in the Mental Health field and would like to thank the GPSI and the GMHCN for all that you are doing to support individuals in their recovery. Harold Albritton, GPSI Graduate, Fall 2012