

# The Pipeline

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Fall 2006

## Upcoming Events

GMHCN Board Meetings  
Macon, GA  
Jan. 11, Mar. 1, July 12, 2007  
Decatur, GA  
May 9, 2007  
St. Simon's Island, GA  
August 20, 2007  
Pine Mountain, GA  
November 8, 2007

1st Day  
of Georgia Legislative Session  
January 8, 2007

Peer Support  
and Older Adult Training  
Wesley Woods Health Center  
Atlanta, GA  
February 5, 6 & 7, 2007

Mental Health Day at the Capital  
The Georgia Railroad Freight Depot  
Atlanta, GA  
February 15, 2007

GMHCN  
Walking in Recovery Fundraiser  
Decatur, GA  
May 8, 2007

US Psychiatric Rehabilitation  
Association  
32nd Annual Conference  
Recovery-The Magic is in Us  
Orlando, FL  
May 21-24, 2007

GMHCN 16th Annual Conference  
Epworth by the Sea  
St. Simon's Island, GA  
August 21, 22 & 23, 2007

GAPSRS Conference  
Jekyll Island, GA  
October 3-5, 2007

## Self Directed Recovery Project Director Goes To Prison !

The Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network's (GMHCN) Self Directed Recovery Project (SDRP) will start its newest initiative this fall by presenting the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) Workshop at Correctional Facilities here in the State of Georgia. Dr. James DeGroot, Ph.D., State Mental Health/Mental Retardation Director for the Department of Corrections has invited the SDRP into the State correctional facilities to facilitate WRAP groups. He has chosen the Metro Correctional Facility as the first site for the WRAP Workshops, which will be presented by Charles Willis, SDRP Director for GMHCN.

On Tuesday, May 23, 2006, Ms. Eleanor L. Brown, LPC, State Mental Health/Mental Retardation Assistant Director, Georgia Department of Corrections organized a group of Correctional Counselors at the Georgia Public Training Center in Forsyth, Georgia to introduce the WRAP as a tool to be used with inmates living with mental health diagnoses. Charles has had great success presenting his popular workshops to consumers and providers of mental health services in every part of the State. Self Directed Recovery enables each individual to identify personal strengths and goals and suggests the use of personal responsibility to advocate for recovery and wellness. The Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network encourages consumers to take a "Holistic Approach" (Mind/Body/Spirit) as each person journeys to recovery. Georgia leads the nation in using Peer Support to help consumers optimize choices about recovery goals and identify supports needed to maintain wellness for long periods of time.

## 15th Annual GMHCN Summer Conference "Wellness and Recovery: Mind, Body, Spirit" a Huge Success



Response from consumers was overwhelmingly positive, with many saying that this was the best conference ever. It seemed to run very smoothly, with more workshop opportunities than in previous years. We're already enthusiastically looking forward to next year's event, and planning ways to make the 2007 conference even better. Your suggestions are always welcome.

## STATE WORKS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMERS TO ENSURE THEIR VOICES ARE HEARD – PARTICULARLY IN TIMES OF ILLNESS

ATLANTA – The Georgia Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases (MHDDAD) is working with the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network (GMHCN), one of the nation's largest consumer organizations, to support Advanced Directives for Mental Health Care for thousands of Georgians who seek services each year. Similar to a Living Will, Advanced Directives for Mental Health Care is to be used when people with mental illness become so ill that they need others to take over responsibility for their care.

“Consumers want and deserve to make choices about their own lives – even when they are ill,” said Gwen Skinner, Director MHDDAD. “In many regards, this is a paradigm shift – a shift in thinking that is critical as Georgia moves towards a recovery oriented behavioral health care system.” MHDDAD and GMHCN have been holding statewide training for service delivery providers and consumers on Advanced Directives for Mental Health Care and Wellness Recovery Action Plans - encouraging both groups to honor these directives. Through a three year federal grant amounting to \$200,000, GMHCN has already trained more than 1,300 consumers.

Historically, in the U.S. and Georgia, people with mental illness have not been active decision makers in their care. Particularly, in times of severe illness, decisions regarding forms of medications, choice of treatment and facilities including details surrounding how medical information is shared with family members, have largely been determined by medical staff. Georgia consumers have argued that this approach incorrectly assumes that a person with mental illness can not make decisions for themselves and that the medical community always knows what is best.

“Anyone who has ever experienced mental illness can benefit from developing a crisis plan,” said Sherry Jenkins Tucker, Executive Director of GMHCN. “By doing so, they can help to ensure that what they believe is best will be heard and respected.

### Statewide Crisis and Access Line: 1-800-715-4225

Many people are unaware about this FREE service to all people in Georgia. There is never a charge and trained professionals will answer your calls 24 hours a day, 365 days a

year. By calling the 1-800-715-4225 number, you can get detailed assistance accessing mental health or addictive disease services and immediate, empathetic crisis response. Callers' information is held confidential and will not be reported except in danger of imminent harm to self or others. Help is now also widely available for non-English speakers.

### The Irrational Mind Speaks By Michele Feder

As consumers we have all experienced the stigma of mental illness, and perhaps even on a daily basis. In order to make progress and one day eliminate the stigma associated with mental illness it is important to educate ourselves, as well as others as to the many obstacles we face. I believe there are three fundamental obstacles we must all address in order to achieve better mental health and eventually end the stigma associated with mental illness. (1) It is important to learn of our own patterns of processing information and thoughts (2) mainstream ourselves into the world around, and (3) find trust through a healthy balance of medication and professional therapy. Many of us have been successful personally and professionally because we have committed ourselves to these main building blocks to achieve better health.

My husband of ten years, friends and family members are baffled at times when I'm swept away by an episode - but they continue to be supportive during difficult and trying times - when my thoughts go awry. It is a difficult part of our selves to comprehend, but through therapy and medication we begin to see the pattern of unrelated thoughts that we instinctively associate with one another; ending in a depressive and/or psychotic state. Sometimes I wonder how all those unrelated thoughts and ideas come together and make sense to the ill. It is important to learn of our own patterns of processing information and thoughts; know our personalities as well as recognize the root or origin to an episode. It is hard to wrap our arms around the blemished circuitry of the brain, but we can begin to understand through research findings and other resources such as our doctors and other consumers. I find it important to recognize what takes place from the first seedling - of an irrational thought - to a full blown episode which eventually leads back to stability. Feeling terrified is one aspect we face during an episode, but we can learn to wane through harsh times if we remember it is a matter of time and our own ability to find a rational conclusion to what has taken place. With introspection episodes can be handled in a safer and healthier manner, eventually beginning the healing process.

Integrating ourselves into the world around us leads to many challenges. When I was first diagnosed, my life was at its lowest. I found it difficult to work, make friends and establish healthy relations with family members. I didn't leave the house much; thinking home was a safer place to be. Over the years of being dysfunctional I eventually decided to try medications combined with therapy. This was a turning point in my mental health and it helped me to jump-start my desire to become integrated with the world around me. Though there is no such thing as a cure, I felt I had turned over a new leaf and was on my way to a functional life. I was partly on track and my previous obstacles weren't so far out of reach.

Living in a disillusioned world makes many issues challenging, mainly the crucial bond of trust between two people. Our rational and irrational worlds waiver making it at times difficult to establish relationships with: spouse, family, friends or doctor's. Though the challenge is exhausting and seems nearly unobtainable, through much work we can develop healthy, fulfilling relationships. Through my struggles with psychotic episodes and severe depression I was continually reminded of the necessity to establish a trusting relationship with a psychiatrist, - (many doctors, as well, agree that both therapy and medications are crucial for healing; going hand in hand). I struggled through months of therapy with very little trust in my Dr.; eager to leave sessions early or at most cancel. But, somewhere deep within I saw a glimpse of hope. Slowly and gradually, through many years of therapy, I became more productive and functional. But I remind myself everyday that an illness needs constant maintenance and though tiresome and frustrating it can lead to many personal rewards.

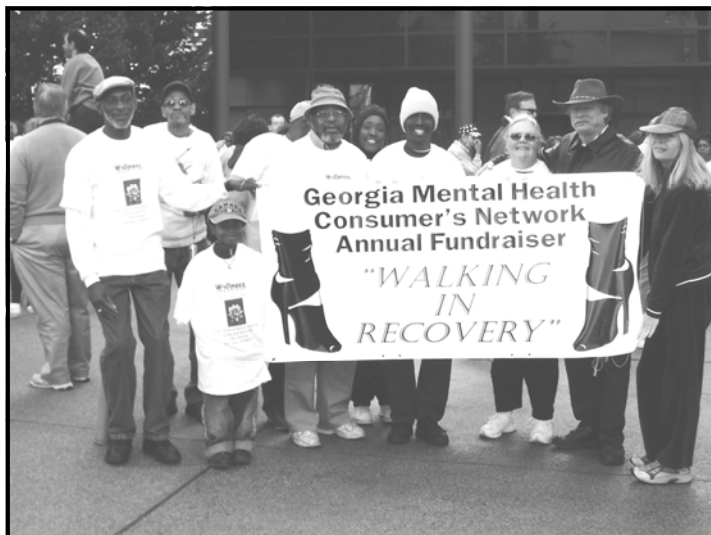
Irrationality exists in the finest of nature and humanity. My career as a visual artist has taught me that irrationality is in beauty at moments, but when the scale tips to the extreme; therein begins the process of mental disturbances and possibly mental illness.

I continue to consider myself enormously lucky to have a wonderful and dedicated husband, a knowledgeable and deeply committed therapist, as well as modern medications. I hope with the advances in brain and DNA research we will one day be able to live simpler lives. Future generations will most definitely benefit from early diagnosis and advanced medications; hopefully to avoid the unnecessary pain and stigma we faced. I look at ourselves as the crusaders for the next generation and individuals who still suffer.

Good luck to all. I hope to return and share more experiences and findings for a better and healthier lifestyle. I live with my husband in San Francisco and continue my art career. It has been a long road to good health although the episodes come and go during stressful times.

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GMHCN Consumers Support NAMI Walks

## **PERMES 2007 Announced**

Do you know someone who would be a good surveyor or Team Leader? GMHCN anticipates participating again in the annual PERMES consumer satisfaction survey beginning February 1, 2007. This is good, temporary work for individuals to act as independent contractors earning \$50 or \$60 per day plus mileage reimbursement. Consumers interested in being Team Leaders or Surveyors may contact GMHCN (404-687-6487 or 1-800-297-6146) for applications and information. Candidates should be comfortable working flexible hours as needed and approaching other consumers at various mental health and substance abuse programs. They should be friendly and reliable and have access to dependable transportation. Team Leader candidates are encouraged to try to identify compatible team members and urge them to apply before the anticipated January 16, 2007 training.

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## **Top 5 Priorities**

- 1. Jobs/Employment Supported Employment**
- 2. Housing**
- 3. Transportation**
- 4. Increased Wages for Peer Workers**
- 5. Open Access to Affordable Medications**