

# The Pipeline

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Fall 2008

## Upcoming Events

GMHCN Board Meetings  
Macon, GA

January 8, 2009  
March 5, 2009  
July 9, 2009

Decatur, GA  
May 13, 2009

St. Simon's Island, GA  
August 17, 2009

Pine Mountain, GA  
November 12 & 13, 2009

GA Certified Peer Specialists'  
Continuing Education Assembly  
Macon, GA  
January 21 & 22, 2009

Mental Health Day  
at the Capital  
Atlanta, GA  
February 17, 2009

GA Certified Peer Specialist  
Training  
Norcross, GA  
February 23-27;  
March 2-5, 2009  
July 27-31;  
August 3-6, 2009

St. Simon's Island, GA  
October 19-23;  
October 26-29, 2009

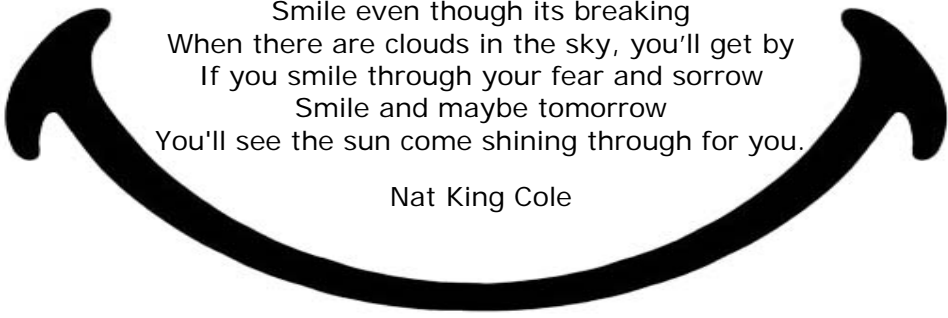
Georgia Peer Support Institute  
Unicoi State Park  
Helen, GA  
April 1-3, 2009

GMHCN  
Spring Fundraiser  
Decatur, GA  
May 12, 2009

USPRA  
34th Annual Conference  
Marriott Norfolk Waterside  
Norfolk, VA  
June 29-July 2, 2009

GMHCN  
18th Annual Conference  
Peers Supporting Peers:  
Head to Toe Wellness  
Epworth by the Sea  
St. Simon's Island, GA  
August 18-20, 2009

## Just Smile!



Smile though your heart is aching  
Smile even though its breaking  
When there are clouds in the sky, you'll get by  
If you smile through your fear and sorrow  
Smile and maybe tomorrow  
You'll see the sun come shining through for you.

Nat King Cole

**Smiling is a great way to change your attitude, connect with people and give benefit to your body.** I believe it is one of the strongest general wellness tools available. Like relaxation, smiling works to counteract the effects of stress. By forcing ourselves to smile, we encourage our body to believe that everything has potential for positive gain. This reduces stress. Smiling (just changing your facial muscles) can actually rapidly change your mood.

Just smiling, regardless of your mood or circumstances, can actually improve your mood and draw welcome attention from those around you. In psychology, there is increasing support for the "facial feedback" hypothesis. Certain facial movements appear to actually drive emotional experience. Recent FMRI (brain scan) studies confirmed that brain areas associated with depression and sadness shrink if a person smiles for as little as 20 minutes. You may actually be able to significantly improve your mood by simply smiling! Much research appears to support this hypothesis. One study found that involuntary physical changes (similar to those caused by emotions) were experienced by participants who were instructed to make certain faces. A person told to make an angry face will experience increased blood flow to the hands and feet, also seen in those who are experiencing anger. People report more favorable impressions of other people when *they* are asked to smile and find humor funnier. Mimicking the face of someone else usually causes you to feel empathy for the other person.

Genuine smiling appears to lead people to seek out others and be more venturesome, more open and more sensitive to other individuals. It starts with a commitment to make an effort to smile, and involves knowing when you are or are not smiling. I use an internal question to myself ("Am I smiling now?") and smile for ten or twenty minute periods at least twice a day. I do this while I work, and find nothing but benefits so far. Natural smiling takes time. I was a little embarrassed at first to be grinning at everything I experienced in public. So I started smiling at home until it became comfortable. Even if I didn't feel like it, I forced myself to smile. The change was quick. Now I catch myself smiling more often when I ask "Am I smiling now?" I believe I am happier. This is definitely something worth trying! -- Randy Tucker

# WORK AND RECOVERY by Linda Neiheisel, CPS

**Why?** This is our question at the Peer Support and Wellness Center in response to the recent statewide cuts in Supported Employment. The overall explanation given was that supported employment was not a *medical necessity* and therefore did not warrant continued funding.

This explanation implies that mental health recovery is a product of pharmacology. It ignores, once again, the recovery process of the whole person. This assumption of medical necessity alone is at best, a stigma-based notion. Stigma is simply the objectification of a person and it allows lawmakers to make such decisions.

What is the alternative? How do we burst through the stigma dictating these cuts in services? Perhaps the alternative is experiencing the value of employment in the recovery process. Consider the story of the Director of the Peer Support and Wellness Center, Jayme Lynch. "I thought I was in recovery before but when I became employed I realized what recovery really is." Jayme emphasizes the growth that she is experiencing, and the possibilities for growth in all those who follow their passions. "It is worth the stress that accompanies this growth," she said. "It is far better than staying in a comfort zone."

Jessica Long, who facilitates Wellness Activities with other peers, assisted in developing strength-based classes on employment and mastering financial independence. Far from discouraging peers from taking risks these classes encourage self-exploration by asking soul-searching questions to stimulate the kind of thinking that creates work identity and showcases our abilities.

This emphasis on following our talents and developing the job searching skills to back up this awareness has manifested in peers deciding to pursue grants and even go into business for themselves. Some peers have even started their own non-profits so that others can benefit from their lived experience.

What does this mean in the face of dissolution of supported employment programs statewide? It offers us the challenge of *crisis as opportunity* in that we will become more self-directed in our employment seeking. We must eliminate our internalized stigma and risk fulfilling our potentials in whole new ways.

We at the Peer Support and Wellness Center support each other in finding our strengths and making our dreams come true. Come with us as we shine our light on our abilities and venture into the community as the great contributors that we are.

## GMHCN Statement at DHR Budget Hearing

The State Mental Hospital System is in Crisis, although improvements are being made. If we put the whole mental health budget into maintaining the current hospital-based system, we will not have the resources to build effective supports **in the communities** where they are needed.

**Psychiatric hospitals are insufficient** to fill the needs of all the people who require them. For sure, improvements can be made without a great deal of additional funding. The hospitals are poorly utilized, not terribly effective, expensive and unsafe. Hospitals could take a larger role assuring that services and supports are set up as people are discharged back to their communities. Regional hospitals could be used **only** for individuals who are an **immanent danger** to themselves or others (and very few consumers of mental health services are really dangerous, despite media reports.)

**There are very few service or support components of our current system that cannot be replicated in the communities.** Services in the community are more likely to be appropriate to the level of care needed, less expensive and (because these are provided in the natural environment) more durable.

Recently the Governor announced the signing of the **Olmstead Agreement**, which the DHR Commissioner publicly endorsed. **We cannot move people from mental health beds unless we develop community-based supports and services aggressively!**

Realizing that the effort of this committee is to reduce expenditures, I humbly offer that we need to **increase funding to community services.** It would be short-sighted to simply fix the current system and not develop cheaper, more effective and more durable community-based alternatives to hospitalization. These include **respite and support services and centers, peer mentors working in the communities, community crisis centers, supported employment and supported housing programs, "double-trouble" and other group supports, adequate treatment and crisis services, peer-run and group-directed peer centers, and greatly improved transportation services** so that people can get to these supports and choose to have more meaningful, self-directed lives. Without transportation services mental health consumers have severely limited access to day-to-day supports.

**We must shift funds to community supports and services, not away from them. This is not the time to reduce community mental health or peer supports. It is time to look for new solutions close to home. It is time to build!** --Randy Tucker

# Top Ten Reasons to Smile

From Mark Stibich, PhD.

- 1. Smiling is Contagious** When someone is smiling they lighten up the room, change the moods of others, and make things happier. A smiling person brings happiness with them. Smile lots and you will draw people to you.
- 2. Smiling Changes Our Mood** Next time you are feeling down, try putting on a smile. There's a good chance your mood will change for the better. Smiling can trick the body into helping you change your mood.
- 3. Smiling Relieves Stress** Stress can really show up in our faces. Smiling helps to prevent us from looking tired, worn down, and overwhelmed. When you are stressed, take time to put on a smile. The stress should be reduced and you'll be better able to take action.
- 4. Smiling Boosts Your Immune System** Smiling helps the immune system to work better. When you smile, immune function improves possibly because you are more relaxed. Prevent the flu and colds by smiling.
- 5. Smiling Lowers Your Blood Pressure** When you smile, there is a measurable reduction in your blood pressure. Give it a try if you have a blood pressure monitor at home. Sit for a few minutes, take a reading. Then smile for a minute and take another reading while still smiling. Do you notice a difference?
- 6. Smiling Releases Endorphins, Natural Pain Killers and Serotonin** Studies have shown that smiling releases endorphins, natural pain killers, and serotonin. Together these three make us feel good. Smiling is a natural drug.
- 7. Smiling Helps You Stay Positive** Try this test: Smile. Now try to think of something negative without losing the smile. It's hard. When we smile our body is sending the rest of us a message that "Life is Good!" Stay away from depression, stress and worry by smiling.
- 8. Smiling makes us attractive** We are drawn to people who smile. There is an attraction factor. We want to know a smiling person and figure out what is so good. Frowns, scowls and grimaces all push people away -- but a smile draws them in.
- 9. Smiling Lifts the Face and Makes You Look Younger** The muscles we use to smile lift the face, making a person appear younger. Don't go for a face lift, just try smiling your way through the day -- you'll look younger and feel better.
- 10. Smiling Makes You Seem Successful** Smiling people appear more confident, are more likely to be promoted, and more likely to be approached. Put on a smile at meetings and appointments and people will react to you differently.

## Jail Diversion and Trauma Recovery Funded

I am pleased to announce that Georgia has been awarded \$409,447 with up to five years of funding, for Georgia Jail Diversion and Trauma Recovery, with a Priority to Veterans. The first year pilot will be in DeKalb County and be replicated in six other communities throughout the state in subsequent years.

Persons who identify as veterans will be screened for PTSD and substance abuse disorders along the justice continuum (first contact with law enforcement, initial detention, court hearings and community corrections.) Non veterans are eligible for screening upon request of the court.

Our objectives are to--

- 1) Implement an infrastructure at the State level to develop jail diversion and trauma recovery knowledge dissemination and applications for the state.
  - 2) Increase the proportion of Georgia's military veterans and other adults with PTSD involved in the criminal justice system that receives screening, treatment and recovery services and
  - 3) Develop an expanded and trained workforce with trauma-informed care competencies.
- Gwendolyn B. Skinner, Director, Division of GMHDDAD

## Peer Mentor Positions Available: THOMASVILLE & SAVANNAH

The Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network is seeking self-identified consumers of mental health services to fill two part-time positions in the state of Georgia as Peer Mentors. This is an excellent opportunity to assist consumers who are transitioning from a Georgia Regional Hospital to living self-directed lives of hope and purpose in communities of their choice. Currently, we have one position available in each of the following locations: Savannah and Thomasville. Potential candidates will need to work flexible schedules, work independently, have a reliable form of personal transportation, and pass a criminal background check. The Peer Mentor position is part-time (20 hours/week) at \$10/hour. Preference will be given to Certified Peer Specialists. If interested, please submit letters of interest and resumes to David Kanar at the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network, 246 Sycamore Street, Suite 260, Decatur, GA 30030, or email to [peermentoring@gmhcncn.org](mailto:peermentoring@gmhcncn.org), or fax to 404-687-0772. For further information please contact David Kanar at 1-800-297-6146 or 404-271-2208.

## Georgia Mental Health

### Consumer Network

246 Sycamore Street, Suite 260

Decatur, Georgia 30030

*(Return Service Requested)*

# Fall 2008

Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Decatur, GA  
Permit No. 344

**2008 - 2009**

# TOP 5 PRIORITIES

1. Affordable, Accessible Housing.
2. Transportation
3. Jobs/Employment/  
Supported Employment.
4. Educational  
Opportunities/Supported  
Education/Job Training.
5. Higher Wages for  
Peer Staff.



## First Annual Run/Walk for Wellness and Recovery

In honor of his birthday, on November 15, 2008 Dr. Bob Climko (and team) ran 55 laps at the Avondale Stadium and kindly offered to match fundraiser contributions to GMHCN. Many other consumers and supporters joined in the run/walk as well. We thank Dr. Climko and all who contributed for supporting us in our Mission of promoting recovery through advocacy, education, employment, peer support and self-help.

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