

# The Pipeline

Published Quarterly by the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network

Summer 2008

## Upcoming Events

GMHCN Board Meetings

St. Simon's Island, GA  
August 18, 2008

Pine Mountain, GA  
November 6 and 7, 2008

GMHCN  
17th Annual Conference  
A Life of Our Own:  
Housing, Work, Transportation,  
Education & Wellness  
St. Simon's Island, GA  
August 19-21, 2008

DBSA  
2008 National Conference  
"The Power of Peers"  
Norfolk, VA  
September 10-14, 2008

CPS Training  
St. Simon's Island, GA  
Sept. 22-26, Sept. 29-Oct. 2,  
2008

Consumer Council  
Central State Hospital  
Milledgeville, GA  
Memorial Service  
October 5, 2008  
Holiday Celebration  
December 2, 2008

GAPSE Conference  
Jekyll Island, GA  
October 22-24, 2008

Alternatives 2008  
Adams Mark Hotel  
Buffalo, NY  
Oct. 29-Nov. 2, 2008

2008 National CIT Conference  
Atlanta, GA  
November 4-6, 2008

Georgia Peer Support Institute  
St. Simon's Island, GA  
November 12-14, 2008

USPRA Conference  
Navigating the Depths of  
Psychiatric Rehabilitation  
Norfolk, VA  
June 29-July 2, 2009

## GMHCN Conference August 19-21 A Life of Our Own - Housing, Work, Transportation, Education and Wellness

Get ready for the best conference ever! This year we have 21 workshops which will be presented at 3 different times. They include Social Security & Returning to Work (Sally Atwell), Spirituality (Mark Baker), Eating Healthy (Donna Silva), Double Trouble in Recovery (Gail Herrschaft and Gena Brock), Georgia Peer Support Institute Projects (Mary Shuman and GPSI Grads), Hands on Art Workshop (Charlotte Cameron), Healthy Lifestyles (Julie Spores), Supported Employment (Jean Cannon), The Relaxation Response (Larry Fricks & Charlene Powell), Recovery & Exercise (Stuart Perry), Advocacy (Yvette Sangster), Reframing Gaps with Strengths in your Resume (Carol Coussons de Reyes), Medications and Wellness (Nathaniel Abrahms), Supported Housing (Ron Pounds), HIV Awareness & Prevention (Carol Bass), How to get a Drivers License (Linda Welch), How to Build a Habitat for Humanity House (Gary Merritt), the Peer Support & Wellness Center (Jayme Lynch) and Project GREAT (Medical College of Georgia). Keynote Speakers will be Steven Pocklington, Executive Director Copeland Center (Wellness and Recovery), Jerome Lawrence, Artist/Entrepreneur (I'm in Recovery, What Now?) and Gwen Skinner, Director DHR-DMHDDAD (MHDDAD's Transformation to Recovery). A public comment forum to the Governor's Advisory Council, Dance, Consumer Art Show and Peer Support Suite will also be available.

## People First Language: Dignity, Not Semantics

contributed by **Yvette Sangster**

Language is power. Our words have the power to teach, inspire, motivate, and uplift people. Words also have the power to hurt, isolate and oppress individuals or entire segments of society. It is not about semantics, it is about dignity and a right for people to be treated with respect. Many labels used for people with disabilities in our society have negative connotations or are misleading. Using labels contributes to negative stereotypes and devalues the person they attempt to describe. It is only important to refer to the person's disability if it is relevant to the conversation or situation. Often times, throughout our history, it has become necessary to change our language and the way in which we refer to individuals and groups to avoid further oppressing those members of society. The time has come to reshape our language once again so that we may refer to people with disabilities and the disability community in a respectful and inclusive manner. When a stigmatized group of people, such as persons with mental illnesses, is struggling for increased understanding and acceptance, attention to the language used in talking and writing about people is particularly important.

Generic reference to "the mentally ill" conveys a lack of appreciation for the individuality of those referred to. It communicates and reinforces the discriminatory notion that "the mentally ill" are a special and separate group that is fundamentally unlike the rest of "us." It gives the idea that the most important thing about the individual is the illness.

The use of people first language such as "a person with schizophrenia," "an individual with bipolar disorder," or "people with mental illnesses," on the other hand, recognizes and communicates that the people being referred to are first and foremost multidimensional human beings like everyone else but who, secondarily, have a disability with which they are dealing. Use of such language, although sometimes awkward, is important. Not only does it challenge the existing tendencies of the public to view and treat those individuals with psychiatric disabilities in dehumanizing ways, it also helps those individuals with mental illnesses feel respected as human beings rather than disparaged as diseased and dysfunctional.

Who are the people? When we begin to think that people with mental illness are human beings first, with hopes, dreams, goals and value, everything we do, and say after that reflection is more meaningful, and respectful to that person. As a result of our actions, and thoughts, we assist the public at large to remove the barriers of discrimination that devalue individuals with disabilities. Simultaneously we provide an environment in which people with mental illness are valued and motivated to gain hope for their future and reach their goals.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the National Advisory Council of the Center for Mental Health Services, support use of "people first" language within mental health research, policies, programs, and professions. The National Council on Disability made a similar resolution.

## *Sleep and Wellness*

Most people know that wellness depends on simple things like diet, exercise and relaxation. Getting a good night's sleep is much more than shutting off the brain and resting. Some sleep stages help us be well rested and more energetic. Other stages help us learn or make memories. If we wake frequently, or if we skimp on sleep for a period of time, we may not go through all the stages and will function less effectively or react less quickly. Creative problem solving can be severely impaired. We may be more prone to take risks and make bad decisions. Some of us only need a few hours of sleep; others need more. Most adults need seven or eight hours each night. A recent study concluded that people who slept seven hours lived longer than those who slept ten or more each night, but I'd guess some people benefit from the extra hours. Insufficient sleep has also been linked to irritability and relationship difficulties. It is linked to high blood pressure, heart disease, immunity related disorders and the inability to recover as quickly when sick or infected.

Regulating our sleep patterns may dramatically affect our recovery. Many have found this to be a major factor in improving their mental health and total quality of life.

### Here are some tips that may help:

1. Stick to a sleep schedule. Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time, even on weekends if possible.
2. Don't fall asleep on the couch. If you use a good bed for sleeping, the quality of sleep will be improved.
3. Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and chocolate for at least 4 hrs. before bedtime.
4. Avoid alcoholic drinks at night. They keep you in light stages of sleep and may encourage waking during the night.
5. Sleep in a very dark room, with as few distractions as possible. Even a little light may interfere with deep sleep. Getting at least 30 minutes of direct sunlight each day is important also.
6. Get comfortable and relax before bed. Reading or listening to music will help you feel more rested in the morning.
7. On nights you feel too restless to sleep, try taking a hot bath. And keep the sleeping room cool.
8. If you don't get to sleep after 25 minutes, get up, try some relaxing or boring activity (housecleaning tasks are good) and try again. Often the anxiety of not being able to go to sleep makes it harder to drift off.
9. Talk with your doctor if you consistently take more than 30 minutes to get to sleep or if you wake most nights and cannot get back to sleep. Snoring, choking or breathing problems or "restless leg" syndrome should also be reported. Sometimes the very medications we take to feel well may interfere, but often there are other alternatives. Rest Well.

Randy Tucker, Pipeline Editor

## **Mental Health Commission to outsource report to UGA Vinson Institute**

from ALAN JUDD and ANDY MILLER The Atlanta Journal-Constitution 06/25/08

A state mental health commission will outsource production of its final report after revelations that much of a previous document had been plagiarized from other sources, the commission's chairman announced.

The Mental Health Service Delivery Commission, created by Gov. Sonny Perdue, will hire staff members from the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia for the report's final version, due in December. The decision came two weeks after The Atlanta Journal-Constitution disclosed that the commission's initial report (much of it drafted by a Department of Human Resources employee) copied numerous passages verbatim without attribution.

"After the [copying] incident, we wanted to make sure it didn't happen again," said Abel Ortiz, the commission's chairman. Ortiz said that engaging the Vinson Institute reflects the desire of commission members to produce a report independent of DHR, the agency that runs the public mental health system. Ortiz blamed the plagiarism on a former DHR employee. He said the commission asked the Vinson Institute for "people who have good writing skills and can do research". Ortiz said the former employee wrote the questionable sections of the report lifted extensively from a 2004 mental health study from Michigan and from documents published by the American Psychiatric Association and the University of Texas. The former employee, a project manager who left the state agency for reasons unrelated to the report, did not respond to AJC requests for an interview.

"The plagiarism was a "blemish not only on consumers, but on this commission," panel member Julie Spores (also Board President of GMHCN) said at a hearing following the incident.

## **DBSA Conference Announced**

September 10-14, in Norfolk, Virginia, The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance will be hosting its national conference, delivering five days of education and inspiration for consumers, family members and mental health providers. I am asking for your support in spreading the word about this educational conference so that everyone involved with mental health issues has the opportunity to participate in this affordable, information-packed conference. This consumer led and consumer focused conference will feature presentations from some of the nation's leading experts on mental health as well as inspiring messages of hope from our distinguished keynote speakers; Time magazine's "Hero of Medicine" Kay Redfield Jamison, internationally recognized consumer leader Pat Deegan, distinguished journalist Richard M. Cohen and mental health pioneer and VOICE Award winner Larry Fricks. [www.DBSAlliance.org/conference2008](http://www.DBSAlliance.org/conference2008) lists all of the exciting events happening at the conference.

# Peer Support and Wellness Center

## Reclaiming 25 Years of Our Lives

By Linda Neiheisel, CPS

At the Peer Support and Wellness Center we *are not* going to become a statistic that claims our lives will end twenty-five years earlier than the average population. This is our response to the 2006 study which reports that people with mental health diagnoses have twenty-five years less to live due to related illnesses which include diabetes, high blood pressure, heart problems, and hypertension.

We have not struggled for years in recovery only to be informed that at our emergence into wellness our lives would be cut short by twenty-five years. This is unacceptable.

Wellness education is the key to deliverance from this doomsday prediction. Health embodies the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of our many-faceted lives, and as the coal becomes the radiant diamond— so we transform our lives.

How do we begin when we are overweight, diabetic, and tired as a result of too much smoking, medication side effects, bad diet and lack of exercise? Together we begin by embracing the community resources available in the residential neighborhood of Decatur. We toss, slam-dunk and pass the ball as we shoot hoops at Decatur Recreation Parks. We have made plans to work out doing water aerobics through a partnership with the YMCA scholarship program, to help our hearts and get our endorphin levels rising.

We educate ourselves on the financial realities of our lives with classes on money management given by Jessica Long. We ex-



ploring our identities as workers and discover our occupational passions in a class on employment called Pathfinders held on Saturdays. Pathfinders is an alternative to the stigma-based notion that we have to accept underemployment because we can't take stress.

We are relearning how to nourish ourselves in our Cooking/Nutrition class as we study, follow recipes, and cook foods that strengthen our bodies and help us conquer obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes. Peers also use breathing techniques to reduce stress and combat fatigue in the Aromatherapy group. We address our spiritual needs with a group called Sacred Space where we can talk about the miracles we experience as we venture out in relationship with our higher purposes and with each other.

All things considered, we at the Peer Support and Wellness Center discover that with the help of each other we can reclaim our power over our own longevity. Come with us as we journey into recovering our wholeness.

## Supported Employment Conference Announced

The GAPSE board of directors and our collaborative partners invite you to attend the 15th annual GAPSE Conference to be held October 22 - 24 on Jekyll Island. The popular Jekyll Oceanfront Resort ([www.jekyllinn.com](http://www.jekyllinn.com)) will be our conference headquarters. With a focus on *real work for real pay* in integrated settings, the conference theme is **JOBS!** Each year our planning group attempts to improve on the previous conference. If you attended the last several conferences, you know that the bar has been set extremely high. Don't miss this event! Do whatever you have to do to attend the 15th Annual GAPSE Conference! By very popular demand, *Mindy Oppenheim* returns and will continue where she left off last year. Mindy will facilitate two workshops during the concurrent sessions on Thursday and she will be the closing keynote speaker on Friday. *Denise Bissonette* will be the Thursday morning keynote speaker. Denise is one of North America's most sought-after trainers/speakers on career development, job development, workforce development, and "true livelihood." The Thursday afternoon concurrent sessions are shaping up to be an outstanding opportunity to develop new skills. In addition to Mindy's workshops, we anticipate having sessions about Social Security's work-related programs, the fidelity scale, person-centered supported employment, and much more. As this notice is being prepared, conference planners are in final negotiations for the opening day session. If we are successful, GAPSE will be offering the most meaningful opening day session in its' history. The GAPSE conference is open to all people with disabilities, family members, service providers, educators, employers, and interested others. Attached please find the GAPSE 2008 conference registration form. We kept the registration fees the same as the 2007 conference fees while offering you more. Join us on Jekyll Island for an event filled with new ideas and a lot of fun!

Phil Chase, GAPSE President

**Georgia Mental Health  
Consumer Network**  
246 Sycamore Street, Suite 260  
Decatur, Georgia 30030  
(Return Service Requested)

**Summer 2008**

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

The Pipeline is funded by  
DHR - MHDDAD and is  
published quarterly by the  
Georgia Mental Health  
Consumer Network  
246 Sycamore St., Suite 260  
Decatur, Georgia 30030  
404-687-9487 or 800-297-6146  
office@gmhc.org  
www.gmhc.org  
Julie Spores, President  
Sharon Jenkins Tucker,  
Executive Director  
Randy Tucker, Pipeline Editor

## **Governor Perdue Announces Signing of Olmstead Agreement**

On July 1, 2008 Governor Sonny Perdue announced that state officials signed a voluntary compliance agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights (OCR) that formalizes an effort to transition Georgians with mental illness and/or developmentally disabilities out of state hospitals and into communities.

### **Key provisions of the agreement include:**

- An Olmstead Coordinator who reports to the Governor, charged with developing and implementing Georgia's Olmstead Plan objectives, will be created.
- The Olmstead Coordinator, DHR and the Department of Community Health (DCH) making annual estimates of the need for community services for mentally and developmentally disabled Georgians who are institutionalized or at risk of institutionalization.
- Mental health and developmental disabilities "Olmstead lists" and "transition lists" will be kept which identify all institutionalized individuals who do not actively oppose receiving services in the community, as well as specific individuals DHR is planning to discharge into the community in a given fiscal year.
  - Proper notification of discharge plans for individuals.
  - Proper notification and explanation of denial of discharge based on determination of state treatment professionals, as well as methods of recourse available to individuals who wish to contest these decisions.

"Every Georgian who faces mental illness or developmental disabilities has the right to be treated in a way that not only ensures the best outcome, but allows for the highest quality of life," said Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue. "We've worked hard to make this agreement work, and the state of Georgia is committed to completing this effort."

Under the Olmstead Strategic Plan, Georgia continues to advocate for making quality community services more available to those with mental and developmental disabilities. The Olmstead Plan was created after a 1999 U.S. Supreme Court ruling (L.C. & E.W. vs. Olmstead) that interpreted the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to mean that states must provide appropriate services for the disabled in the most integrated setting (i.e., where individuals can interact with non-disabled people to the fullest extent possible).

Georgia Department of Human Resources Commissioner B.J. Walker welcomed the agreement. "We know community-based treatment solutions work, and that for many patients it's best to treat them outside of a state hospital," she said. "The Olmstead Plan is more than a standard we have to live by; it embodies our philosophy of strengthening families by doing everything we can to keep people with disabilities connected to their homes, their loved ones and their lives."