

The Pipeline

Published Quarterly by the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network

Summer 2007

Upcoming Events

GMHCN Board Meetings
Macon, GA
July 12, 2007
St. Simon's Island, GA
August 20, 2007
Pine Mountain, GA
November 1, 2007

Consumer Input Meeting
Adult Purchasing Plan
Decatur Library
215 Sycamore Street
Decatur, GA
2:00-3:00 pm
June 30, 2007

Consumer Council Meeting
Central State Hospital
Milledgeville, GA
July 17, 2007

CPS Training
Epworth by the Sea
St. Simon's Island, GA
Aug. 6-10 and 13-16, 2007;
Simpsonwood Conference Center
Norcross, GA
Oct. 22-26 and Oct. 29-Nov. 1, 2007

GMHCN 16th Annual Conference
Quest for Wellness:
The Recovery Journey
Epworth by the Sea
St. Simon's Island, GA
August 21, 22 & 23, 2007

USPRA-GA Conference
Jekyll Island, GA
October 10-12, 2007

Alternatives 2007
St. Louis, Missouri
October 10-14, 2007

GAPSE Conference
Supported Employment:
Choose Work!
Macon, GA
October 24-26, 2007



16th Annual GMHCN Summer Conference August 21-23, 2007

The time is nearly here again! Plan to be with us at Epworth by the Sea, St. Simons Island in August. Check in begins at 2pm on Tuesday, August 21. Keynote speakers are Peter Ashendon, Executive Director of the Mental Health Empowerment Project in Albany, New York, who will present on Recovery and Wellness; Gregory Fricchione, M.D. from the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind-Body Medicine, presenting on the Mind-Body Connection; Stuart Perry from the Tom Perry Wellness Center in Albany, GA, presenting on Exercise and Recovery; and Gwen Skinner, Division Director of MHDDAD, addressing the Division's Transformation to Recovery. Many excellent workshops will be offered and there will be a consumer art show and dance. For more information, call the GMHCN office at (404) 687-9487 or 1-800-297-6146 or fax us at 404-687-0772. Applications can be downloaded from www.gmhc.org. A limited number of scholarships may be available in each region.

Governor Vetoes Senate Resolution to Study Changes to Mental Health System

On May 30, Governor Sonny Perdue killed a legislative commission to address rampant problems within Georgia's mental health system. Senate Resolution 363 called for the appointment of legislators, judges and citizens to study current issues and possible changes to the mental health system. Governor Perdue vetoed this measure on the grounds that the proposed commission did not include officials from the executive branch. Instead, he proposes to create his own commission by executive order. This study panel will be partly comprised of officials from agencies which have drawn criticism for the way they have operated the state's psychiatric hospitals and other mental health services.

His commission could be constructive if it listens openly and non-defensively to all issues brought forward and is not aimed at preserving the status-quo. The issues are serious enough that the U.S. Justice Department is currently investigating whether conditions in the hospitals violate patients' civil rights. Chronic overcrowding and understaffing contributed to many deaths and abuse cases, according to articles in the AJC. Allegations also include covering up information to consumers and families that could be damaging to the State. Proponents of Resolution 363 worry that a commission picked by the Governor would squelch debate which could be damaging to consumers and the system.

We hope his commission will include adequate representation of consumers with direct experience within the mental health system and employees and citizens who have opinions contrary to those who currently manage these systems. By working honestly and constructively towards solutions there is hope.

I Get By With A Little Help From My Friends

By Linda Neiheisel

If the mental health system needs rebuilding, then why not start at its foundation—the consumer. The Surgeon General’s report on mental health cited the support of peers as one of the single most effective agents of change in people with mental health diagnoses.

“Those who are most successful in their recovery are the consumers who do not depend on services, but on natural supports or have those available,” according to Jennifer Lee, Social Services Day Coordinator of Polk County Peer Services.

Peer Support is giving and receiving help with mutuality and respect. It is understanding someone through the personal experience of having “been there”. It is a deliberate focus on a person’s strengths and encouraging each person’s uniqueness. Above all, it is sharing personal experiences of hope and recovery.

This differs from the past in which consumers were stigmatized by even their best caretakers. Operating from this inequitable baseline, relationships between staff and consumer were often stuck in a power differential that allowed no growth for either one. A codependent model was established.

This failing system embraced the Recovery model in the early 1990’s allowing for empowerment to take place in the lives of consumers as they reclaimed their adulthood and moved out of the parent/child relationship with the mental health system. They took responsibility for themselves and this enabled them to be responsible for each other. Peers became a community unto themselves. Such was the case of three Polk County Mental Health Day Treatment peers.

“I will never forget Trish. I love Trish,” declares Andre of Polk County Peer Support.

Trish, Patty and Andre were at the pool at Andre’s apartment complex when Andre started spitting up blood when she was in the swimming pool. Trish swam to her side and told Andre she needed to go the Emergency room. Trish coached Andre to the side of the pool where she was able to pull her out. Patty dialed 911 and they were advised that Andre was having a heart attack. When the ambulance arrived, Trish and Patty had been holding up Andre to avoid her choking. They took Andre to Piedmont Hospital.

“We showed up at the hospital in our bathing suits. We felt weird, but we were concerned,” said Trish.

Patty and Trish visited Andre in the hospital almost every day for the month that she was there. They even prayed for her when she was in a coma for four days.

This was a dramatic example, but it shows how far a true friend will go to support a peer. Trish and Patty did not act as children, but as empowered adults with strength and capability.

Not mental illness; spiritual warfare

When I look back at all that I’ve gone through
and realize that I survived
I know that it was because of you
that my faith was tested and tried.

The battle is fought in the mind I know
and that is why I’m trying to show
that my mental state has nothing to do
with where I’m going to go.

My faith in me has got to be as great as my faith in you
because you see, I’ve got dreams of things I’m going to do
So on wings of eagles I soar
As I go through that open door

What tried to destroy my faith in you
has only thickened the glue
and made me more determined to be
free to be in my destiny

Janet Reasons, CPS

Copyright ©2007 Janet Reasons

Peer Mentor Project Begins

The Peer Mentor project is a new and exciting peer-to-peer program to assist hospitalized consumers as they transition to their communities. Mentors who have direct experience with mental illness and/or substance abuse will work with consumers and Case Expeditors in each of the Regional Hospitals and various communities throughout the state. David Kanar, Project Coordinator, and the Peer Mentors are now helping people develop and implement recovery plans based on the needs and wishes of those concerned. By sharing their own experiences and providing support, they offer a unique perspective to aid with the often difficult road from hospitalization to full and meaningful lives in communities of the consumers’ choice. By doing meaningful activities with the peers transitioning out of the hospitals and offering encouragement, support, and understanding in a flexible, person-centered manner, they offer new hope for managing life’s challenges and reducing future hospitalizations.

Dear Consumer,

DHR-DMHDDAD wants your help in planning for adult substance abuse and mental health community services. *We need to hear your voice!* By July 15th, please fill out the form and follow return instructions that appear below.

Sincerely,

Carol Coussons de Reyes, CPS, MS
Director of Consumer Relations and Recovery Section

Adult Services Purchasing Plan: Consumer Input Form

The top 5 things that have helped me get better: (example: medication, talking to a peer, transportation)

- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____

Five things that have helped me the least:

- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____

If I could get anything from the mental health system that would help me more in my recovery that I'm not getting now, I wish they would give me:

Please return completed form by mail or fax to the Consumer Relations and Recovery Section

2 Peachtree St., NW Suite 23-437
Atlanta, GA 30303-3142
Phone: 404-657-2103 Fax: 404-657-4349

Georgia Mental Health

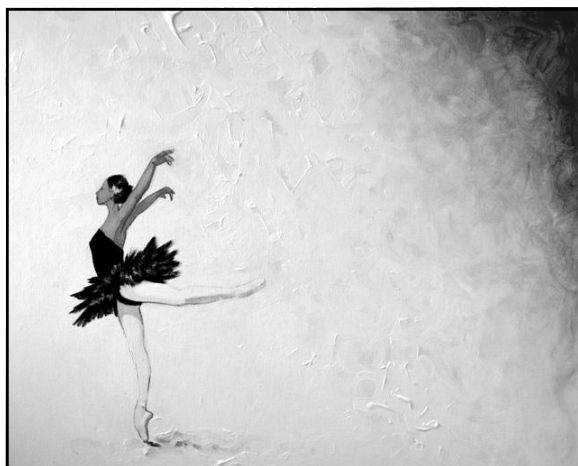
Consumer Network

246 Sycamore Street, Suite 260

Decatur, Georgia 30030

(Return Service Requested)

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



“Star” Art by Jerome Lawrence

PERMES project exceeds expectations AGAIN!

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the 68 team leaders and surveyors involved, this year’s PERMES (adult MH/AD peer-to-peer satisfaction survey) project collected 6165 (1588 AD) surveys and finished more than a month ahead of schedule. All parts of the state were covered, and almost all DHR funded provider sites were surveyed. Bernice Brooks’ teams (based in Columbus) collected the most surveys (over 700), and the husband/wife team of Lucille and Ben Harden deserve exceptional commendation for their efficiency and dependability in Region 1. We also would like to recognize the helpful and cooperative efforts by Worktec (Cobb and Spalding counties) for providing transportation and support to their teams this year. Many, if not most others performed with better than anticipated results, and the cost per survey (even with the higher mileage reimbursement of 48.5 cents/mile) was more than a dollar less than last year. If you would like to work as a team leader or surveyor next year, please notify the GMHCN PERMES Project Coordinator so we can assemble teams in your area before the actual surveying begins.

Single Point of Entry

Georgia Crisis & Access Line

1-800-715-4225

1-800-255-0056 TTY, 1-800-255-0135 Voice

Access mental health, addictive disease,
and crisis services 24/7



Sponsored by the Georgia Department
of Human Resources



The Pipeline 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@gmhcn.org
www.gmhcn.org
Julie Spores, President
Sharon Jenkins Tucker,
Executive Director
Randy Tucker, Pipeline Editor