

On Our Own

of Frederick County, Inc.

December 2011

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Our Mission ... is to promote recovery, wellness and peer support in an environment of understanding, advocacy and education to past or present recipients of mental health services.

Tis the Season to Be Jolly and Aware...

Alan Feinberg, Executive Director

There are great changes and challenges afoot nationally in how the peer support movement is headed right now. Whether we like it or not, our funding will be much different within the context of affordable and effective health care and what the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration is advocating with their **Health, Home, Purpose and Community** concept.

The Pillars of Peer Support Services initiative has been designed to develop and foster the use of Medicaid funding to support Peer Support Services in state mental health systems of care. During 2009 and 2010, two important Summits on Pillars of Peer Support Services brought together nationally-recognized experts and stakeholders from across the U.S. to identify and create consensus around factors that greatly facilitate the use of Peer Support Services as a valuable tool to support recovery from mental illnesses among individuals served in state systems. Each Summit generated a report which is available for viewing on the following website: <http://www.pillarsofpeersupport.org/POPS2010-2.pdf>

The State of Maryland is gearing up to be one of the real leaders in the country on insurance exchanges, extended Medicaid, the navigator facilitation approach, mental health parity, and integrating substance abuse and mental health. Many lessons have been learned and heeded from the early experiences in Georgia, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, and our state has thoughtfully and carefully moving ahead as another early innovator. No matter what happens nationally, Maryland is going to be seriously addressing much better coverage for all its citizens. The fear is that we become co-opted into the same old system that has proven to be too dehumanizing.

We can become more important and central to how behavioral health issues are addressed using our successful **peer support approach**. Therefore, we must be strong and extremely vigilant in never abandoning our core beliefs and mission and patiently converting the ‘professionals’ and teaming with them to create a more person-centered, humane, smarter system of care, wellness and recovery for all. Frederick’s OOO is perfectly situated to be a leader in this movement.



Giving a New Holiday Story

You may notice that, this year, our newsletter does not contain the traditional list of *helpful suggestions for how to cope with the holidays* that is integral to so many mental health newsletters written for peer audiences. That's not an inadvertent oversight but an intentional challenge.

For many of us, the holidays have been reduced to something of a bad mental health habit. We have our usual big feelings, our usual sense of isolation or stress, our usual breakdowns.

On the one hand, there's a real opportunity with the holidays. They tend to generate a lot of personal reflection. With all the emphasis on family, gifts, & the start of a New Year, I find myself examining the state of my connections with people, my material well-being & where I am in my life in comparison to where I hoped I would be or dreamed about when I was 5, 15 or 35...

On the other hand, I never seem to measure up. The usual story I tell myself about my life at this time of year goes something like this: *I've lived on this planet for x number of years and all I have to show for it is this lousy [... fill in the blank with the major complaints about my life].*

I'm not sure how I got here, but I have to do better. I owe it to myself, and to our community, to challenge the habitual holiday story that I've learned to tell about the meaning of my life at this time of year.

So this holiday season, I'd like to hold myself accountable to a different type of reflection. For some of us, the Christmas story is fundamental to our hope & philosophy of life. For others, it's just nice

story, or, even worse, an intrusive myth belonging to a religion or dominant culture that we don't particularly connect with.

I won't weigh in on that debate here, but I do want to propose the Christmas story as a useful parable that can lead to new questions and a new story line for my life at this time of year:

The parable goes like this: I was a baby once & so were you. So, what if we each have our own Christmas story? What if each of us is a gift from the Universe to humankind?

What is the story that each of us would tell about the gift we are to each other? What is the gift of my life to you? What is the gift of your life to me? What is different about this world because we are here? What wouldn't have happened on this planet, in my life, your life, or the lives of people we care about if you, or I or anyone in our community hadn't been born?

This holiday season, I hope you will join me in asking these questions – and any others that you are inspired to invite us to consider. I also hope, during this holiday season, as we continue to learn and grow together, and as we continue to experience the

power of being genuinely 'peer', that we will begin to notice a different story emerging. A different story about ourselves, about our community, and about the meaning of the lives of hope and possibility we are creating together. For me, this is our Christmas story to the world. It is being born before our eyes. Thank you for being a part of it. - Sarah Knutson

Wellness & Recovery Primer

Activities & Outreach Team – Have a voice. Make things happen! Plan events, outings, activities & engagements for fun, service, support, promotion & profit.

DBSA – Depression Bipolar Support Alliance -- Peer support for moody brights, blues & those who love us.

Healing Arts – Creative, nurturing activities to heal the heart & soul.

Journaling – Learn to write from the heart & soul. E-mail Mike at: frzkafka@gmail.com.

Intentional Peer Support / Listening Circles - Deepen relationships, raise concerns, celebrate milestones, share hopes & dreams, give and receive support. Topics vary.

IPS Study Group/ Co-Supervision – Take an active role in building a peer community that works for all of us. Learn & apply the Principles of Intentional Peer Support to build connecting, mutual relationships that explore diverse worldviews and co-create authentic, meaningful, rewarding possibilities for living.

Open Social – Enjoy good company, a cup of coffee, lite fare, board games, cards, computers, the internet and more!

Participatory Potluck – Pitch in to make it a meal. Bring a dish to pass or come early & help set up.

Men's/ Women's Space – Designated time for Mars & Venus space free of the battle of the sexes.

Recovery-Friendly Movie – Tired of reality? Try a cinema vacation 000-style – Good company, munchies & films -- (*May include mature themes, but not violence, sex or profanity for their own sake*)

WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Planning) Change your life! Learn to act *for* your recovery rather than react *to* your symptoms. Classes run 8-10 weeks. Call First - Mary 301-785-0283!

WRAP Grads Group – A peer group *just for* WRAP Graduates.

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Mental Health Wellness & Recovery
'The Power of Peer'

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Sundays	Mondays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Thursdays	Fridays	Saturdays
1:30–5 PM Open Social*	1:30-3:30 PM Healing Arts	<i>New: 1:30-3 PM</i> WELLNESS RECOVERY ACTION PLANNING: HOLIDAY WRAP INTRO	1:30–5 PM Open Social*	12-1 PM IPS 'BROWN BAG' STUDY GROUP	<i>3rd Friday only:</i> 12-1 PM 'BROWN BAG' FRIDAYS GROUP	1:30-5 PM Open Social
<i>New:</i> 2-4 PM Listening Circle: Free Spirit	4-5 PM ACTIVITIES/ OUTREACH TEAM	3:30-5 PM IPS CO-SUPERVISION	2-4 PM Listening Circle: Addictions/ Recovery Focus	1:30–5 PM Open Social <i>3rd Thurs. only:</i> WOMEN'S SPACE/ MEN'S SPACE	1:30–5 PM Open Social*	2 PM RECOVERY-FRIENDLY MOVIE
	<i>NEW TIME:</i> 6-7 PM WRAP GRADS GROUP		4-5 PM JOURNALING/ CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP	5:30-6:30 PM RECOVERY PARTNERS Co-Supervision	2-4 PM Listening Circle: Relationships Focus	
				7:30-8:30 PM DBSA <i>2nd Thurs only:</i> PARTICIPATORY POTLUCK	<i>4th Friday Only:</i> 6:30-9 PM Holiday Kick-Off Coffee House December 23 rd	

Special Events

Dec. 3rd, 6:30-9 PM – **First Saturdays Holiday Walk-Around** - No sign up required. Meet at the Center between 6:15-6:30 to walk around town together & check out the downtown festivities.

Dec. 5th, 1:30-3:30 PM Holiday Decorating during Healing Artz. Should be fun!

Dec. 7th – **Center Closed for Core/ Rosc training.**

Dec. 14th, 8-9:30 **MHA Annual Legislative Breakfast.** \$20, advanced registration required.

Dec. 20th, 6:30-9 PM **Great Seneca Holiday Lights Field Trip** in Gaithersburg. Advance Sign-Up Required.

Dec. 23rd, 6:30-9 PM **Holiday Kick-Off Coffee House.** Holiday Tunes, Cheer, & Conversation.

Dec. 31, 1:30 PM-Midnight -**New Years Eve Party.** Peer support, energy, activities & refreshments to bring in the New Year!

Dec. 23-Jan. 1 – *Relaxed holiday schedule:*

- Center open 1:30-5 PM Daily.
- Movies every day, 2 PM
- Holiday peer support, daily 4 PM & by request.
- Special events & outings as noted.
- Regular schedule resumes Monday, Jan. 2nd

***An Orientation to Intentional Peer Support (IPS)** is required... for *full* member privileges, including access to phones, computers & other resources. Orientations are available on a drop-in basis during most Center Hours.
Attendance at groups is welcome with or without an orientation.

Day in Harpers Ferry – Our Fall Foliage Excursion

By Mary Buckley

The fall colors were vivid and the weather exceptional for the December 2nd trip. Kim, Jimmy, Justin, Mary, Deb, Stuart and Robert toured Harpers Ferry while Bonnie and Kathy enjoyed the foliage closer to home at Baker Park. While several toured the museums and shops observing a movie being filmed for the History Channel. The more adventuresome focused more on the great outdoors with Justin taking on the most challenging of trails, an



almost 90 degree incline to John Brown's lookout point. At the day's end, we took in a spectacular view from an old vacant hotel frequented by many famous presidents. The day was colorful, varied and full of fun.

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