

Saying Farewell to the Original Ombudsman

By Brandi Allen and Maggie Hallett

It seems that one of the hardest parts of the retirement process for Neal Edgar is the recognition he is receiving. You see, Neal is the kind of guy who does life-changing work everyday, but if asked about it will downplay his impact and focus instead on the strength of the clients he works with. He takes close to 2,000 phone calls each year from people who don't know where else to turn. He listens to them, advocates on their behalf, and links them with the appropriate services.

From the minute he picks up the phone, the clients know that Neal is on their side—and every single one of them receives a follow-up call from him to make sure things are on the right track. After 15 years in the position, it still baffles him when he hears the immense gratitude for that simple follow-up call. That gratitude, Neal says, feeds him—it's kept him thriving in a job where the stories are often very difficult to hear.

Although he joined MHAFC with decades of clinical experience under his belt, Neal hadn't worked as directly with people with severe mental illness as he has as Ombudsman—an experience that he says has been eye-opening and humbling. He often finds himself in awe of what the callers face and wonders if he would have similar strength if faced with the same persistent adversity. Working as Ombudsman has given Neal immense respect for the callers' struggles and has also instilled deep gratitude for his own mental health. He says some of the best teachers in his life have been the people using his services.

Even during this introspective period, Neal is consistently focused on others. In interviewing him for this article, we were struck by the value he placed on partnerships with other mental health providers and advocates. He shared stories of providers stepping up during times of crisis—funding cuts, for example—where exceptions would be made for clients simply because it was the right thing to do, the human thing to do. Being witness to those types



of compassionate decisions has given Neal hope for a mental health system that still leaves much to be desired.

When asked about his plans for retirement, Neal smiled slowly and shared, “Well, I've been offered some contract work already. But you know what I really want to do? Train dogs.”

With Neal's compassion, drive to help, and overall “cool guy” qualities, we know those will be some lucky dogs.

Neal says that “empathy is magic.” Though we at MHAFC will miss him dearly, we wish a very happy retirement to our favorite magician.

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To Your Mental Health

by Kenton Beachy



How is the mental health of your workplace?

How much is employee turnover costing your business? Needless to say, it costs to recruit, train, and get new

employees up to speed. It also costs in employee morale and production. Your people are the lifeblood of your organization and are a prominent priority when it comes to planning for the future. So wouldn't every organization like to increase employee retention and job satisfaction—which greatly impacts an employee's desire to stay?

Sure, but how do you even begin to get a handle on why employees are leaving and what to do about it? At Mental Health America of Franklin County, we're creating a method to do just that. Let me tell you about the expertise we're developing in employee psychological wellbeing.

A great deal of research has been done about workplaces. The research shows that a number of key indicators have a huge impact on employee wellbeing, that in turn corresponds with retention and job satisfaction. Burnout is the leading cause of turnover, and studies show that burnout is even contagious in an organization. It affects employee health, personal relationships, absenteeism, productivity, interpersonal conflict, job satisfaction, engagement level, and ultimately turnover. Burnout involves emotional exhaustion and disengagement from work and is even considered a work-related mental health impairment.

What else affects employee wellbeing and turnover intention? The support employees receive from managers and colleagues, for one thing. Other factors include the extent of work demands, employee control/autonomy, and employee understanding of duties and responsibilities; the nature of workplace relationships; how an organization manages change; and the extent to which employees perceive fairness in organizational decision-making and distribution of pay and praise.

So we've created a way to assess these factors in any workplace and then analyze the effect they have on the turnover intention and job satisfaction of employees. After gathering this information through a comprehensive questionnaire, we follow up with focus groups, key staff interviews, and a review of absenteeism, turnover, and exit interview records. Then we're able to present an organization with a profile of its employees' psychological wellbeing and the impact that has on their turnover and job satisfaction.

But it can't stop there. Using the assessment and working with senior management to identify areas of strength and weakness, we then develop products that will increase their employees' wellbeing. Those products might be manager and employee training through workshops, seminars or even one-on-one. Or, they may be other workplace programs that augment the protective factors or minimize the risk factors that go into psychological wellbeing.

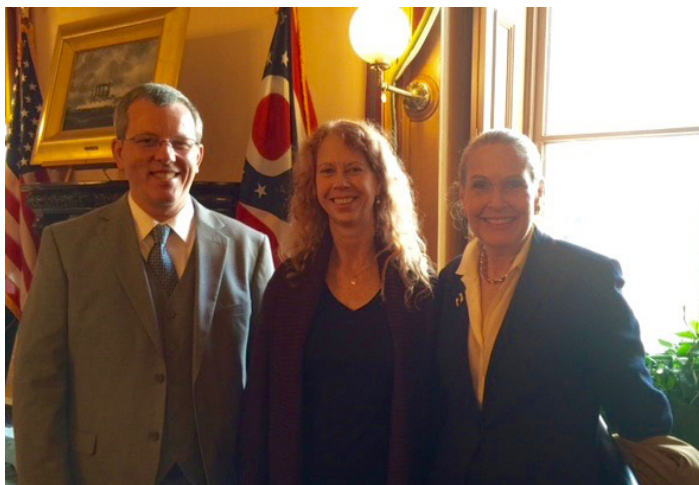
Community behavioral health providers are seeing 25-50% turnover rates compared to national averages of 19% across all occupations and 18% among occupations in healthcare and social assistance.

One particular area of concern we have is for community behavioral health care providers, who right now in Ohio are battling extremely high turnover rates as front line staff look for related jobs in the private sector with higher pay, better benefits, and expectedly lower stress. Even though the grass does not always turn out to be greener on the other side, community behavioral health providers are seeing 25-50% and even higher annual turnover rates, compared to national averages of 19% across all occupations and 18% among occupations in healthcare and social assistance. It's a daunting problem that providers need to get a handle on in order to keep the staff they need to provide services.

Our goal is to provide the assistance ALL employers need to get a handle on turnover problems by bolstering their employees' psychological wellbeing. We're developing the expertise to do that and looking forward to the opportunity to help make a difference.

Community Matters

Mental Health Caucus



Kenton Beachy with Betsy Johnson, Midwest Representative, Treatment Advocacy Center (on behalf of NAMI Ohio at the time of photo), and Justice Evelyn Stratton.

On November 18, 2015 the Ohio Mental Health Caucus met with 26 state legislators to discuss the over representation of mental illness in the criminal justice system. Speaking at the event were Terry Russell, Executive Director of NAMI Ohio, Gary Mohr, Executive Director of The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, and Justice Evelyn Stratton.

MHAFC Announces New Family Support Group Offering

In partnership with OhioHealth, MHAFC is pleased to offer a new Families In Touch group. The group will be held at The Dempsey Family Education and Resource Center at Riverside Hospital. Starting March 8, the group will meet every Tuesday from 4:30-5:30 pm.

- For families and friends of adults with mental illness
- Meetings will be facilitated by a mental health professional
- A safe place to share challenges and difficulties in dealing with a loved one with mental illness
- Receive support and resources, and information about how to navigate the mental health system
- Group is limited to adults only
- No registration is needed
- A snack will be provided

For general questions, please call 614-788-6115 or email: DempseyCenter@ohiohealth.com. For specific questions, please call Heather Donnelly, LISW-S at 614-566-2638 or email: Heather.Donnelly@ohiohealth.com.



LeeAnn Mattes named next MHAFC Ombudsman

MHAFC is pleased to announce that LeeAnn Mattes, LISW-S has been hired as the Ombudsman. LeeAnn has been

serving as the MHAFC Pro Bono Counseling Director for the last year and a half, and has successfully implemented new strategies to obtain and retain volunteer therapists. She's also helped it expand into Fairfield and Delaware counties. LeeAnn has over 15 years of inpatient, emergency services, and community mental health experience. LeeAnn will begin the position effective May 1. Neal Edgar said about the decision, "I feel really good about passing the torch to LeeAnn. I'm excited to watch her take the program, water it, and let it grow."

United Way Awards MHAFC Educational Scholarship



United Way of Central Ohio selected MHAFC as a scholarship recipient for the Tony Wells Foundation Executive Education Program on Social Impact Investing from February 16-18. Kenton attended the program designed to help nonprofit leaders expand their thinking beyond their own resource constraints as they work to solve social problems. The training focused on several topics, including social enterprise, impact investing, strategic collaboration, sustainability, and creative problem solving to help expand impact. Thank you to United Way for this great opportunity and the Tony Wells Foundation for creating such an in-depth and informative program! It will certainly help guide our endeavor to create mentally healthier workplaces.



Glennon Doyle Melton Inspires Women to Embrace Themselves and Each Other

We are so excited to spend the evening with Glennon Doyle Melton at *Give Mom the Mic* on April 1! We are expecting 380 attendees at the **sold out event** and have a waiting list of over 50 more.

Glennon is the author of the inspiring and hilarious *New York Times* bestselling memoir, *Carry On, Warrior* and will be releasing her next book, *Love Warrior*, in August, 2016. She is the founder of Momastery.com, an on-line community where hundreds of thousands of readers meet daily to experience her shameless and laugh-out-loud funny essays about marriage, motherhood, faith, mental health and addiction, recovery, and serving the marginalized. She is also the creator and president of Together Rising, a non-profit organization that has revolutionized on-line giving through “Love Flash Mobs” and has connected countless families in need with hundreds of thousands of dollars in critical resources.

Drawing from her own personal story of addiction and recovery, Glennon inspires mental health and addiction/recovery audiences with her authentic, empowering, hopeful, and fresh perspective on healing. Speaking with parents’ groups and community organizations, Glennon employs her trademark wit and candor to encourage us all to step out from behind masks of perfection and start connecting with one another by showing up as our real, messy and beautiful selves.

She is known for her unique ability to inspire women to embrace unity and each other. The fact that her events sell out across the county is testament that her authenticity, power and humor translate easily from the page to the stage.

Glennon expresses universal truth through storytelling, giving voice to our shared experiences. She invites us to believe in ourselves, to be brave and kind, to let go of the idea of perfection and to stop making life harder by pretending it’s not hard—which is a particularly important message for the moms seeking help from the POEM (Perinatal Outreach and Encouragement for Moms) program. Women often have high expectations of what new motherhood “should” be. When their experience doesn’t match their expectations, feelings of inadequacy and failure can become pervasive.

Glennon easily expresses what so many of us think, about both motherhood and life in general, but would not dare say aloud. Glennon is a courageous truth-teller and hope-spreader, who emboldens us to believe in ourselves and reminds us that the journey is the reward. She shows us that by shedding our weapons and armor, we can stop hiding, competing and striving for the mirage of perfection, to build lives, relationships, homes, businesses, and communities.

We are counting the days until she gets to town and are thrilled so many of you are joining us.



End The Stigma
#StopTheCrazyTalk
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Expertise from our Board: Mindfulness as Exercise By Daron Larson

The scientific research into mindfulness (the practice of intentional, non-judgmental awareness of the present moment) and its benefits has exploded in recent years. It has been shown to help manage stress, anxiety, and insomnia. As the enthusiasm for mindfulness grows, however, much of the emphasis in the popular press focuses on the positive outcomes rather than on what is required to experience them. This can result in a lot of confusion about the exercises themselves.

Comparing mindfulness practice to what we already understand about physical fitness can help adjust expectations and increase the chances that we will stick with the exploration long enough to experience the touted benefits.

Not Weird Anymore

Not so long ago, running and lifting weights were activities considered to be only for specific groups of people such as athletes and soldiers. When ordinary people started to run around their neighborhoods in shorts and tube socks, neighbors peered out from behind their curtains with confusion and alarm.

Mindfulness is a form of meditation associated with monastic practices from various traditions, but neuroscientists have discovered that concentration and related exercises strengthen capacities that can improve the well-being of even those living outside the monastery. If the thought of meditation evokes the kind of self-consciousness early adopters of jogging must have experienced, take heart in knowing that mindfulness practices can be tailored to fit naturally into way we live now (and without conflicting with our personal beliefs).

Not Always Comfortable

We now understand that in order to have stronger bodies, we have to regularly engage in exercises that can be physically uncomfortable. We learn through experience that changes in heart rate, breathing, and perspiration are to be expected.

When we begin to exercise our attention with, say, a one-minute mindful walk focusing on the feel of our heel hitting the ground with each step, we quickly discover how frequently it wanders away from what we are trying to notice. This is the point at which so many people misinterpret their experience and give up, even though their experience is completely normal and to be expected! It's like deciding that tired biceps mean you aren't cut out for push ups. Clarifying expectations and gaining understanding about how the exercises are changing the brain will lead to more people navigating the common obstacles all the way to the outcomes they're hoping to experience.

Not a Replacement for Expert Care

Physical exercise increases strength, flexibility, and endurance to support the regular activities of our lives, while mindfulness exercises develop attentional fitness to improve our ability to focus, relax, and observe thoughts and feelings more objectively.

But just because you go to the gym regularly doesn't mean you never have to go to the doctor. Consistent mindfulness practice doesn't replace the need for other mental health interventions. It complements them by improving self-awareness and emotional regulation. Over time, it can help you get better at detecting the symptoms that indicate it's time to get help.

Already Training

How we habitually move and eat directly impacts our bodies in observable ways. Similarly, the ways we habitually respond to uncomfortable emotions reinforces existing pathways in the brain. It took time to hone our current default responses to emotional triggers. It takes time to cultivate new ones.

Mindfulness is not a quick fix, but through consistent exercise, based on your individual needs, it develops natural abilities that can gradually transform the way you relate to physical, mental, and emotional discomforts over time.

Learn more about Daron at athomeinyourlife.com

Board Spotlight

Daron Larson helps people feel more at home in their lives by training their attention through mindfulness practice.

As a parent, mental health case manager, information specialist, and librarian, he has developed a reputation for identifying relevant resources to help people more effectively navigate personal and professional challenges. As a speaker and mindful awareness trainer, he inspires and encourages people to exercise natural capacities for self-awareness, resilience, and compassion.



Daron thinks it's possible to get better at having difficult conversations about our mental and emotional experiences. He is excited to be a part of MHAFC's efforts to identify and improve the way we talk about mental health and improve well-being in our community. Daron's daughter Alex is completing a graduate degree in audiology, his spouse Matt helps improve access to permanent housing in communities around the country, and their dog Baxter has an enthusiastic following on Instagram ([#BaxterLarsonWhite](https://www.instagram.com/BaxterLarsonWhite)).

Thank You!

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Programs

Volunteer Spotlight: Dr. Beth McCreary, OCD Support Group Leader

By Brandi Allen



Three years ago, psychologist Beth McCreary was at a crossroads. Her private practice was thriving, offering behavioral-based solutions to anxiety, but a few pieces were missing from her professional life. For one, among her clients there was consistent demand for a group for those with OCD (Obsessive

Compulsive Disorder), but Columbus did not have one. She researched the possibility of offering her own therapeutic group but concluded that this option was not ideal for many reasons. At the same time, she was becoming aware of her own need for more connectedness to something bigger professionally and of her desire to serve the community at-large a little differently.

Through a connection with Tonya Fulwider, MHAFC Program Director, Dr. McCreary became aware of our free support groups and saw a way to meet Columbus's need for an OCD group along with her needs for participation in community service. In little time, using Dr. Jonathan Grayson's "G.O.A.L." (Giving those with Obsessive compulsive disorder Another Lifestyle) support group curriculum, Dr. McCreary launched what has become one of MHAFC's most successful support groups.

Dr. McCreary has had to make very few changes to Dr. Grayson's curriculum, but the couple of modifications she has made have been highly successful. And one of them is particularly valuable to Dr. McCreary herself.

Since adolescence, she has personally battled the symptoms of Major Depressive Disorder. Although some of the many treatment methods she tried had positive effects, it wasn't until around 2007 that she found a consistent approach for coping with the illness. It was then that she happened upon the practice of mindfulness in the book *The Mindful Way through Depression* (Williams, Teasdale, Segal, Kabat-Zinn, 2007). Over time, mindfulness has woven its way through her work too. In the G.O.A.L. group, and in her individual therapy practice, Dr. McCreary also incorporates the principles of Acceptance & Commitment Therapy, an approach that teaches people to mindfully accept the uncomfortable feelings and thoughts they're experiencing, but to also keep

committing to the behaviors that reflect their values and life goals, despite the discomfort.

Group members now have a chance to put that into action every month. This year, Dr. McCreary has implemented an "exposure" night at the second meetings. This means members are offered a chance to voluntarily experience a fear of their choice in a safe, supportive environment. For some, it is a direct experience; for others, a vicarious exposure. And sometimes it means Dr. McCreary takes things into her own hands. That's no figure of speech. Let me explain.

Among folks with OCD, it is very common to feel anxiety around the fear of contamination. So for some of the group's members it would be extremely uncomfortable to touch, say, their shoes and refrain from washing their hands right away. And for many it would be uncomfortable to watch someone touch a shoe and sit with an unwashed hand. Recently, at a group member's request, Dr. McCreary did just that—she rubbed her hands on the visibly salt-stained sides of someone else's shoe and sat with the group. It was tough for some of the members to watch, and that was processed in discussion. Then Dr. McCreary decided to take the experience up a notch. She licked her hands. Needless to say, that too was a learning experience for each of them, resulting in even more lively discussion.

If that was hard for her, it's nothing compared to the grit she has witnessed among so many of her group members. When she sees members voluntarily pushing themselves into and through these experiences, sometimes in tears, but then coming out on the other side with renewed hope and pride in their achievement, she knows change is happening. And when she hears a member eagerly passing on the tools and information she's taught them in an earlier meeting, she finds reassurance that starting the group was the right choice. And what can be more rewarding than to be able to share the life-saving tools she's found in mindfulness?

Three years ago, Dr. McCreary was at a crossroads. MHAFC and all the people who have come and gone through her G.O.A.L. group have benefitted richly from the choice she made at that time. If you, or someone you know, is suffering from the anxiety of OCD, please give her a call at 614-436-5030 to talk more about the wonderful options for support.



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