



Advocate

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MHAFC Hopes to Grow Peer Recovery Support Services in Franklin County

by Maureen Traverse

Karen Ezirim is a trauma survivor in long-term recovery from substance use disorder. She is also the mother of ten and recalls, years ago, searching for another parent who was staying sober while raising children, someone who could model recovery and help guide her through the challenges. “Then someone said to me, ‘sometimes God makes you the first,’ and it was such a powerful, ah-ha moment for me.” Karen took that message to heart and has become a fierce advocate for parents who are seeking to regain custody of their children, instrumental in the development of birth parent support groups in nine counties in Ohio. She is also a certified Peer Recovery Supporter (PRS) and a facilitator who trains those with lived experience with a mental health or substance use disorder how to provide support to others in recovery.

Jiibay Dakotah is a human trafficking and torture survivor and lives with post-traumatic stress disorder. Like Karen, she has passionately sought out ways to use her lived experience to improve the lives of others. Jiibay is from the Ojibwe/Aniishinaabe band of Native Americans from the Mille Lacs Band, White Earth reservations of Minnesota and Turtle Mountain reservation in North Dakota. She works as a “fire starter” for Native American communities throughout the United States and is a partner with Native Hope, an organization that uses storytelling to bring healing to Native American communities. It is Jiibay’s experience of human trafficking that leads her to tell her story in hopes of educating people on the outside of Native American reservations: “While I was trafficked by a non-Native,” she says, “He was not prosecuted for the crimes he committed against me because the crimes were happening on Tribal land, where the laws are significantly different.” Through the process of becoming a certified PRS and facilitator, Jiibay saw a change in herself. “I learned of my strength and resilience along with letting go of self-defeating behaviors which blossomed into self-inspiring ones.”

In 2016, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) began certifying Peer Recovery Supporters to create a standard of care and enable Medicaid reimbursement for services. Utilized in various settings, from crisis services to the criminal justice system,

peer support provides clients with a guide on the road to recovery, someone whose role it is to share their lived experience, model recovery, help navigate complex treatment systems, encourage self-care, help create and maintain recovery plans, and instill hope. Emerging research suggests that the benefits of peer support may include increased self-esteem and sense of control, decreased substance use and depression, reduced hospital admission rates and longer community tenure.



Peer support changes lives.

Recognizing the value of peer services, the Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Board of Franklin County partnered with MHAFC to begin looking at ways to help grow peer support services in the county and support certified PRS and those agencies who employ them. Among our first efforts was sponsoring the forty-hour PRS training designed and delivered by OhioMHAS, a required part of the certification process for peers who are new to the field. To date, we have sponsored four trainings, the most recent co-facilitated by Jiibay and Karen, and served 79 peers on their way to becoming certified.

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To Your Mental Health

by Kenton Beachy **2018: A Look Back**



At MHAFC our purpose is to make it easier to get help and give people the support they need to get better and stay better. In 2018 we strengthened and expanded our programming to advance this mission. And we hope we've had at least a small part to play in the recent improvement in

Ohio's mental illness statistics.

Mental Health America's 2019 State of Mental Health in America report indicates an improved nationwide ranking for Ohio's adults from 37th two years ago to 20th today. The ranking considers 15 different measures of mental illness and substance use disorder: rankings closer to 1 mean a lower prevalence of mental illness and a higher rate of access to care. Ohio's youth also saw an improved ranking from 21st two years ago to 13th today. While Ohio's overall prevalence of reported mental illness increased slightly over this time, access to care improved dramatically from a ranking of 29th two years ago to 9th nationally today.

In July MHAFC became host agency of the reinvigorated **Franklin County Suicide Prevention Coalition**. The Coalition hired Michelle Vargas as Director and re-launched itself on World Suicide Prevention Day with a screening of *The S Word* followed by a panel discussion with the film's director. The Coalition is collaborating with local and state partners to compile and study suicide data that will inform the Coalition's priorities, programming, campaigns, and recommendations.

Our **Pro Bono Counseling Program (PBCP)** added Cate Petrowski, who serves Delaware County as Program Coordinator/Clients Rights Advocate and Fairfield County as MH/AOD system Navigator. The PBCP recruited an additional 33 volunteer licensed clinicians while retaining 53 volunteers from the previous year, began new community partnerships to support volunteer recruitment, and obtained funding to support a contract with the Hispanic Coalition to provide language support to non-English speaking clients.

With funding from OhioMHAS, our **Occumetrics** team conducted 13 workplace wellbeing assessments involving close to 2,200 behavioral health employees across Ohio. Occumetrics also conducted its first

large-scale fee-for-service assessment with a local 1,200 employee agency and opened up several new avenues for possible contracts. Our parent organization, Mental Health America, also awarded Occumetrics its nationally competitive 2018 Innovation in Programming Award

In 2018 **POEM** added staff time due to ever-expanding requests for more services. POEM also added 2BNurtured, focused on maternal mental health support by and for African-American women. New POEM support groups were added in Delaware County and Cleveland, and our staff presented on POEM at two national conferences.

Our **education** efforts grew with Maureen Traverse becoming our first Education Manager and taking on new programming with Youth Mental Health First Aid and Peer Recovery Supporter training and support. We completed another six Adult Mental Health First Aid sessions, all in high demand and wait-listed.

Our **Support Groups** expanded to add both Anxiety and Bipolar Disorder groups. We also trained over 20 people on the new trauma-informed, inclusive group facilitation model we created.

The **Ombudsman Program**, an anchor in MHAFC programming over the last seven years, took on a major challenge of identifying a more understandable program name in order to speak to a broader audience and create a wider foundation for program growth. Early in 2019 we look forward to introducing the program's new name, the Mental Health First Call program.

Regarding our **fundraising and development** efforts, *Laughing Away the Blues* and *Give Mom the Mic* were both hugely successful, raising a combined total of close to \$120,000. POEM's Golf Outing added another \$10,000. We also conducted a development audit and look forward to implementing changes based on the findings and recommendations.

Our **Board of Trustees** expanded in number and diversity, solidly supporting fundraising efforts and guiding MHAFC in terms of policy, program growth, finance, and investments of our strong financial footprint.

I believe it's safe to say that in 2018 our vibrant trustees, supporters, staff, and programming had a hand in increasing Central Ohio's access to behavioral health services and improving Ohio's mental health statistics.

Board Spotlight

Allison Mitsui works as a business consultant at Nationwide in their Digital Run organization, working on several customer-facing websites. She also operates as the financial coordinator for her team's Central Ohio Hunger Relief campaign.



Allison joined Nationwide in 2012 after graduating from The Ohio State University with a degree in Computer and Information Science.

Her involvement in mental health advocacy began several years ago when she started participating in The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Community Walks to honor the memory of several friends she had lost over the years. She became involved with MHAFC when a colleague at Nationwide found out about Allison's passion surrounding mental health and her desire to get involved and make a positive impact. This is her first time serving on the board of a non-profit organization, and she hopes that this will be the start of a lifelong involvement with the mental health community in Ohio and beyond.

In her free time, she enjoys indoor rock climbing, cooking, and knitting.

New Programs and New Faces at MHAFC

by Maureen Traverse

The exciting growth of MHAFC's programs means we warmly welcomed new staff members Cate Petrowski, Michelle Vargas, DeAnna Hall, Keisa Lee, Robert Johnson, and intern, Jenna Dyer.

Cate Petrowski splits her time between Delaware County, where she is the Client Rights Advocate and Pro Bono Counseling Coordinator, and Fairfield County, where she is a Client Advocate. Cate has worked in a variety of settings, always with a particular focus on psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery-oriented care. She is currently completing her Ph.D. dissertation in Clinical Psychology.



Michelle Vargas directs the Franklin County Suicide Prevention Coalition. She has more than five years of experience in public health and has worked in public health policy and evaluation at United Way of Greater Cincinnati and the Ohio Department of Health.



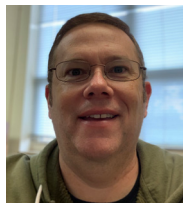
DeAnna Hall brings a wealth of mental health knowledge to the Administrative Assistant role from her previous experience as a Recovery Manager with Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging, a Case Manager with Concord Counseling, and an Intake Specialist with Disability Rights Ohio.



Keisa Lee was an active POEM volunteer and joins the staff as a POEM Coordinator to support the enormous growth of the program through client outreach and referrals.



Robert Johnson is the new COVA Ombudsman, providing system navigation and conflict intervention exclusively for COVA clients. A social worker with fourteen years of experience and an instructor at Central Ohio Technical College, Rob has worked with the Ryan White HIV/AIDS program, in health care, dual disorders counseling, outpatient counseling, and managed care settings.



Jenna Dyer is a Capital University BSW student and will support MHAFC as an intern through the end of the school year. A veteran and mother of three, Jenna is passionate about maternal mental health and veterans' health care and will primarily support POEM.



Holiday Magic Gift Drive

MHAFC is pleased to once again collect holiday gifts for as many as 400 patients at Twin Valley. Items may be dropped off at our offices during normal business hours (Monday - Friday, 8:30 - 5:00) now through Friday, December 7. You may also make a donation for Twin Valley staff to purchase items on your behalf. Simply make your checks payable to "Volunteer Service Council of TVBH" and include Holiday Magic on the memo line. For a full wish list, please visit our website: www.mhafc.org/holidaymagic.

MHAFC News



Our tenth anniversary of *Laughing Away the Blues* was a huge success! Thanks to our generous bidders and donors, we once again raised over \$76,000 to help support the life-saving services

we offer Central Ohioans. Guests enjoyed delicious food, drinks and another impressive collection of auction packages to battle over online through our new mobile bidding system.

We'd like to thank Board President, Matt Endress, for his wonderful job as emcee, the excellent staff of Auction Ohio, Jon Bommarito for sharing his story of recovery, and the talented Clayton Raithel for helping us create another meaningful and fun-filled evening. We're looking forward to even more fun next year, so please plan to join us in 2019!



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Holiday Health and Giving Guide

Make this season bright with MHAFC!

When making your holiday gift list, please consider including MHAFC in your plans. With numerous avenues to give, your support is not only tax deductible—it also helps us to continue our life-saving mission to transform how people think about mental illness, make it easier to get help, and give people the support they need to get better and stay better.

Membership: Consider a sustaining gift of \$10/month. It will make a meaningful and immediate difference! You can also make a one-time donation or a tribute gift in honor or in memory of someone special in your life.

Planned Giving: By including MHAFC in your estate planning, you can ensure your legacy gift will have a direct and meaningful impact on mental health in our community.

Volunteer: MHAFC's award-winning Pro Bono Counseling Program relies entirely on mental health professionals to meet the needs of uninsured and under-insured residents of Franklin County. Or join our behind-the-scenes team and help us with a variety of projects. Your gifts of talent and time will be much appreciated.

Get Social: Like us on Facebook, or follow us on Twitter and Instagram. Share information about our programs and services with your social networks.

Thank You!

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Programs

2018 Children's Mental Health Conference: Complex Trauma & Grief

by Brandi Allen

Local therapist and trauma expert Kristen Santel, LISW-S will tell you unequivocally: time does not heal all wounds. Traumatic loss and its associated grief have a profound way of embedding into our bodies and minds, impacting our health, our relationships, and our work. Effective treatment requires a set of knowledge and tools that often remain beyond the standard education mental health professionals receive before licensure.

We are excited to offer two educational tracks at this year's children's mental health conference addressing trauma and grief. Track One, led by Santel who

is joined by Dawn Gross, LPCC-S, will provide advanced theory and interventions for those serving children, teens, and entire family systems. Track Two, led by Tamar Gur, MD, PhD and Holly Kozee, PhD, will address pregnancy and infant loss, the subsequent grief, and maternal mental health complications. This track is in partnership with local nonprofit *Alive in My Heart* (AIMH). AIMH serves families who have experienced pregnancy and infant loss.

For more information on this year's conference, visit the registration page, mhafc.org/trauma or call our office.

Peer cont'd

Participants in the week-long training learn how to use their own experience to inspire hope and guide clients through challenging circumstances. They practice telling their recovery stories, discuss ethics and boundaries, and role-play strategies for supporting clients. Jiibay says she notices a monumental change in the participants from the start of the class to the end. "They can open up without the fear of being judged or stigmatized. It may be their first opportunity to show who they are. They have a lot to offer but don't realize it until they see what they can do." As Jiibay and Karen describe, the value of peer services is reciprocal: PRS help support clients and ratify their own recovery at the same time while recognizing the dynamic ways that people recover. "Maybe suboxone works for you," Karen says. "Maybe AA works for you. Or maybe it doesn't. Peers understand that because they've lived it. We all recover in our own ways."

Jennifer Belemu, a participant in the most recent training, says it was valuable to have two trainers with lived experience. "They helped connect us all," she says. "Everyone is staying in touch and supporting each other." Jennifer is seeking certification as Student Engagement Coordinator for Heartland High School, Ohio's first recovery high school. She has been a sponsor and a case worker, but recognizes that peer support is a different role and credits the certification training with helping to clarify that role so she can do her job well.

MHAFC will continue to sponsor OhioMHAS certification trainings in 2019 and is actively seeking to find other ways to support the PRS community. We hosted two PRS discussion groups to identify challenges and unmet needs, formed a Peer Employer Learning Collaborative to connect agencies that employ or hope to employ peers, and plan to start a PRS support group in the coming year.

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