



Advocate

Kenton Beachy, Executive Director

Maggie Hallett, Editor

Record Year for Moms helped by the POEM Program

by Maggie Hallett

People are always surprised when they learn that postpartum depression (PPD) and related disorders are the most common complication of childbirth, affecting one in seven mothers. In Ohio alone, over 28,000 new mothers deal with mental health complications. These disorders have risks for a multitude of adverse outcomes, including increased rates for pre-term birth, low-birth weight, less effective breastfeeding, and interrupted patterns of mother-infant communication. As the leading causes of infant mortality, pre-term and low-birth weight deliveries are associated with high levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms in pregnant and postpartum women.

MHAFC's maternal mental health program, POEM (Perinatal Outreach and Encouragement for Moms) has increased its outreach efforts with a focus on trying to reach some of our community's most vulnerable moms. Currently, about 50% of the women who receive help from the POEM program receive Medicaid, which is a significant increase over years past, meaning we're reaching more at-risk moms than ever before.

The increased outreach and awareness efforts have been paying off, evidenced by the number of moms POEM helped in 2016—a total of 529, up from 255 in 2015. And 2017 is already off to a busy start, in January clocking a record number of interventions in a single month with 82.

Inclusion of a HIPAA compliant fax line that can receive direct referrals from home visiting programs is one of the main reasons for the spike in interventions. Programs like My Baby and Me and Help Me Grow can send POEM confidential referrals, and we will reach out to the mother for an initial assessment and subsequent linkage with appropriate, specialized services such as in-home counseling, psychiatry, over-the-phone mentoring and support groups.

Because of the increased volume of referrals, we've also trained more volunteers than ever before. The program now holds two volunteer trainings annually and already has a waiting list of volunteers to be trained this spring.



As you can see, POEM is busier than ever—and we could use your support now more than ever. One way you can support the POEM program is by joining us for our annual **Give Mom the Mic** event, which is a “Moms’ Night Out” that includes hilarious and heartwarming stories of motherhood, drinks and desserts and a silent auction and raffle. The event is in its 6th year, and it's truly a special evening of connection for women.

This year we're featuring three hilariously talented women: Sara Given, comedian and author of *Parenting is Easy, You're Probably Just Doing it Wrong*, Sarah Bucher Greer of the local troupe, Hashtag Comedy, and Raquel D'Apice, comedian and author of *Welcome to the Club: 100 Parenting Milestones You Never Saw Coming*.

We'd love to see you there! You can find ticket information at mhafc.org or you can contact Maggie Hallett with questions: mhallett@mhafc.org.

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You can overcome life's hurdles. We can help. Visit www.mhafc.org.

To Your Mental Health

by Kenton Beachy



The ACA and Mental Health

While the American Health Care Act (AHCA) has recently been introduced in Congress to replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the process of replacing the

ACA will play out in the coming weeks and months through local, statewide and national discussions. At Mental Health America (national) and its many affiliates nationwide, including our own, we believe it essential for advocates in the behavioral health community to participate in this discussion.

Perhaps more than any other factor, access to health care coverage most affects the vulnerable population

we work with. Many of the people we serve who currently benefit from the ACA and Ohio's Medicaid expansion have shared with us their fears of potentially losing vital mental health services. We stand ready to work with advocates on all sides to advance our priorities. And we need your support to prevent people from falling through the cracks and instead have the security which our services offer. After all, we're here to make it easier for people to get the help they need to get better and stay better.

In a letter to Ohio Senators Brown and Portman, that I co-signed with MHA President, Paul Gionfriddo, and Elizabeth Atwell, Executive Director of Mental Health America of Northern Kentucky and Southwest Ohio, we shared with them our concerns and priorities regarding health care coverage, which are detailed in the box below.

ACA/AHCA

As the private health care financing and insurance systems are changed, we favor:

- minimizing barriers to care
- providing multiple referral and service pathways
- redesigning services that are more culturally and linguistically competent and evidence-based
- integrating behavioral health services with medical care
- maintaining continuous and affordable coverage for people with pre-existing and chronic conditions
- maintaining behavioral health benefits at parity with other benefits

Medicaid

No matter what the structure for Medicaid is in the future, we favor:

- not shifting Medicaid costs to the states, understanding that Medicaid, the single largest payer for mental health services, is the backbone of the public mental health system on which seniors and people with disabilities heavily rely
- protecting current Medicaid expansion and allowing other states to expand should they so choose
- increasing flexibility within the Medicaid program to cover earlier interventions and non-medical services, such as supported housing and supported employment

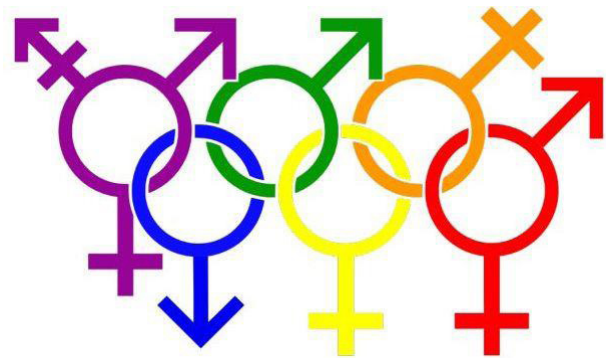
MHAFC Working to Better Serve the LGBTQ Community

by Brandi Allen

Most of us are familiar with this chain of events: stigma and discrimination lead to chronic and acute stress, which then affect mental and physical health and one's access to care—especially competent care—and all of this culminates into health disparities for the people facing the initial stigma and discrimination. For decades, MHAFC has been fighting to interrupt this chain of events for people living with mental illness by reducing stigma and providing support that connects them to quality care. Recently, we decided to take another look at how well we were doing this for people who also identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ).

Last October, Equitas Health hosted its Transforming Care conference. I attended on behalf of our agency and learned of the numerous health disparities affecting sexual and gender minorities (SGMs), often as a result of discrimination. One study showed that 60% of transgender people have been physically attacked. Eleven percent of LGBTQ patients reported that providers had used excessive precautions or refused to touch them, and 19% of transgender people reported being denied medical care. The Institute of Medicine reports that the LGBTQ population experiences higher rates of anxiety and depression, suicidal ideation and attempts, substance use, smoking and homelessness. Although the majority of LGBTQ individuals are resilient and leading healthy lives, the research makes it clear that medical and social service providers often fail to properly address, acknowledge and respect the needs and desires of this population. And just as stigma and discrimination so often do, this creates a barrier to help. People don't want to experience the pain and discomfort that can result from interacting with service providers who are working from a mindset that ranges anywhere from ignorant to aggressive.

We called upon Dana White, Columbus Public Health's LGBTQ Health Initiative Program Manager, for an in-depth look at our agency's services, communications and policies. Notably we were one of the first nonprofits to take advantage of CPH's free consultation services. Fortunately, Dana needed to recommend only small changes in the way MHAFC presents itself and operates. But everything she so insightfully recommended clearly contributed to



better acknowledgement and validation of people who identify as LGBT or Q. For example, our Pro Bono Counseling Program intake form now includes “non-binary” among its gender options, and there is a space for clients to indicate the pronouns they use. We've made changes to our agency's Guiding Principles and are working to make our employee manual as explicit as possible about non-discrimination and inclusivity. We've also asked our support group facilitators to review a best-practice presentation created by the Fenway Institute, a leading provider of health care for people of the LGBTQ community. These are just some of the changes we've made. Fundamentally, we've been reminded how critical it is to not make assumptions about a person's sexual or gender identity. We know, for example, that it's okay to say, “I would like to be respectful—what name and pronouns would you like me to use?”

We are extremely grateful for Dana's time and excellent suggestions. But does this mean we are now “culturally competent” in serving people of the LGBTQ community? Not exactly. The other concept I took away from the Transforming Care conference was that of “cultural humility.” Competence implies a sense of learning that is complete because some sort of minimum expectations have been met—yet people and communities are dynamic and always changing. From a stance of cultural humility, MHAFC has two tasks to attend to for the rest of its existence: to stay self-aware of its strengths and flaws and to stay educated about the needs of the people it serves. If you have constructive feedback for us as recipients of our services or partners in the process, please know that we would like to hear it.

Please visit fenwayhealth.org for more information about the research and resources referenced above.

Next Steps with Step Therapy

by Kenton Beachy



OHIOANS FOR STEP THERAPY REFORM

Imagine that your car won't start, and your mechanic diagnoses a faulty alternator. But when you go to the auto parts store to buy your alternator the manager tells you that first you have to buy a battery and have that fail to fix the problem before the alternator can be approved. Sounds pretty silly, doesn't it? Isn't the mechanic the expert, and what right does the auto parts store have to deny you the part you need?

That's exactly what happens when insurance companies apply step therapy—or fail first—procedures to authorize your doctor-prescribed medication at the pharmacy. Your insurance company can require you to fail on one or two or even three other cheaper medications before approving what your doctor prescribed. The insurance company uses step therapy as a cost control measure.

Ohio step therapy reform bills have been re-introduced in 2017 with bipartisan sponsorship in the Senate (SB56) and House (HB72) which would 1) require more transparency on the part of insurance companies, 2) create exceptions to allow doctors to bypass the process, 3) use review criteria that are based on clinical practice guidelines developed by a multidisciplinary panel of experts, and 4) offer a process for patient exemption from step therapy. In March I was able to testify in support of SB56 in front of the Senates' Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee. Ohio is one of 13 states currently working on step therapy legislation. We hope to join the 10 other states that have already passed similar legislation. Visit our website at reformsteptherapy.com to learn more about reforming step therapy and to contact your legislators about these important bills.

Volunteer Spotlight

by Sheronda Palmore



Russell Simmons said, "Don't ask for a blessing—be a blessing," and every day over 60 Pro Bono Counseling Program (PBCP) volunteers do just that. They find time in their busy lives to give people who need but cannot afford counseling an opportunity to receive services.

Krista Predragovich is one of these volunteers. She sought out the PBCP recently with the desire to provide clinical supervision to volunteers within the program. As a current doctoral candidate and counselor, Krista knows the value of strong and inspiring mentors and supervisors.

Krista's supervision services have allowed the volunteer team to expand and accommodate a number of professionals who are not independently licensed. This has helped address the ever-growing list of clients. So why Mental Health America of Franklin County and the PBCP? Krista says, "The Pro Bono Counseling Program is the antidote to counseling being for the privileged and the very, very ill." Our advocacy work and stigma reduction efforts further fuel her desire to be linked to MHAFC.

Early in her career, Krista volunteered as a therapist under the free clinics model. It is this foundation that reminds her why the program is so important for a community and why she is so grateful to have an opportunity to give back in this manner. In addition to being the mother of two active boys, serving as the president elect of Central Ohio Counseling Association, and being on the parent board for the neighborhood swim league, Krista is committed to sharing her work as a Pro Bono volunteer with others and bringing attention to the services offered at MHAFC. This is a contribution for which we are all grateful.

For more information about becoming a Pro Bono Counseling volunteer please call or email Sheronda Palmore: 614-884-7227; spalmore@mhafc.org.

Meet Our Intern

by Brandi Allen

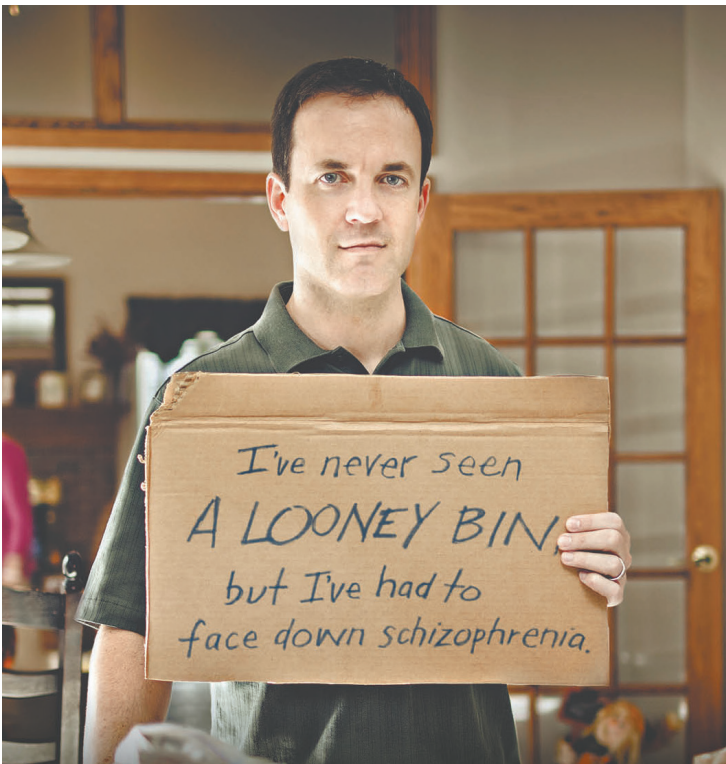
MHAFC has been fortunate to secure another excellent intern from the master's student cohort at OSU's College of Social Work. Hoping to effect social change at the macro



level, Ashley Bennett would like to be involved in program and policy development that advocates for people who are incarcerated or are reintegrating into the community. She's aware of the tendency to narrowly view this population as a threat, a danger, and even as though they're worthless. Ashley recognizes that not everyone grows up with a supportive family system like the one she had and says she's regularly humbled by the realization that under certain circumstances she could just as easily have made a mistake that led her to be found guilty of a serious crime.

I asked Ashley what has been most useful during her internship so far. She said it's been fascinating to go back and forth between macro- and micro-level experiences that vary all the time. One day she can be found attending coalition meetings with the Ombudsman where she meets seasoned clinical directors and gets a front-row seat to the process of policy change. And the next, she may be making calls to assess the eligibility of callers seeking help from the Pro Bono Counseling program where she has the pleasure of informing them—sometimes for the first time—that their Medicaid benefits include mental health care.

We've noticed that Ashley has a deep and sincere compassion for the depth and extent of vulnerabilities that some people are living with in Central Ohio. It has been a joy to listen to her process her experiences and watch how she wrestles with new levels of awareness. We have no doubt that she will have a profound impact on the work of social justice here in our community and look forward to seeing where the journey takes her.



End The Stigma
#StopTheCrazyTalk



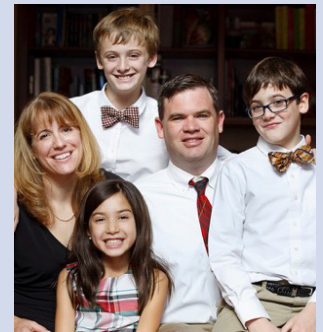
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Board Spotlight

Dave Speas leads the Supply Chain Procurement team at NiSource and until recently, was with two-year Laughing Away the Blues sponsor, Columbia Pipeline Group. New to the challenge of Supply Chain, Dave's talents and background lie in various financial disciplines that range from Accounting to Corporate FP&A to Treasury Management. This experience provides a solid foundation for his role as MHAFC's Board Secretary/Treasurer. This is Dave's first year in a leadership role after joining the organization in summer 2015.



Dave was drawn to MHAFC because mental health is an issue that affects his family directly. He understands the importance of mental health care and the crucial role of family support. Dave challenges everyone to share the gifts they can; the need may not be obvious, but oftentimes, those are the gifts most treasured. In addition to working with MHAFC, Dave is also active at Covenant Presbyterian Church on the Stewardship committee and wherever his gifts are needed. Dave lives in Upper Arlington with his wife, Jenny, and 3 kids (Donald—13, Taylor—11, and Shelby—9). Being from the South, you'll find him wearing his Tennessee orange on game day and proudly flying the UT flag.

Thank You!

To Our Recent Members & Donors (November 1 - February 28)

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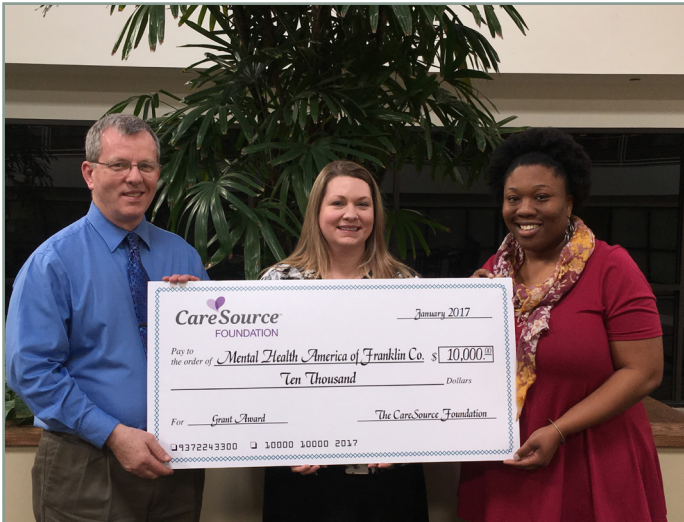
In Memory of Penny Myers
Rob Myers

We make every attempt to accurately acknowledge our donors. To report an error or omission, please contact Maggie Hallett: 614-221-1441 x105 or mhallett@mhafc.org.

Programs

CareSource Awards MHAFC Pro Bono Counseling Program

by Maggie Hallett



Keri Smith (center) from CareSource presents Kenton Beachy and Pro Bono Counseling Program Director, Sheronda Palmore, with the grant check.

MHAFC's Pro Bono Counseling Program (PBCP) was recently awarded a \$10,000 grant from The CareSource Foundation, which has helped fund the PBCP since its inception in 2011. To date, CareSource has generously granted the program a total of \$38,000.

The Pro Bono Counseling Program continues to provide free counseling to people who are uninsured or under-insured in Franklin, Fairfiled and Delaware Counties. In 2016, 190 people received free counseling through the program, and 66 clinicians volunteered over 1,400 hours of their time to help people who would otherwise not receive counseling.

The program currently has a waitlist, meaning we could use even more clinical volunteers. If you're interested in learning more, contact Sheronda Palmore at spalmore@mhafc.org.

Closing 2016 with Holiday Magic

by Maggie Hallett

In early December, the Holiday Magic awards banquet and gift drive for Twin Valley Behavioral Healthcare (TVBH) celebrated its 60th year. It was a lovely night with a room full of supporters, mental health care providers and consumers and other partners in the MHAFC mission to promote mental wellness.

It was an amazingly generous year, with over \$2,000 in gifts and monetary donations raised for patients at TVBH with severe mental illness who had to spend their holidays in the hospital. These gifts help to make a difficult situation a bit brighter, so a giant thank you to all who contributed!

Holiday Magic is also a night devoted to thanking and awarding our most outstanding partners and any departing board members. This year we said goodbye and thank you to past board president, Dave Schoettmer, who was with MHAFC for seven years and six-year board member and past Secretary/Treasurer, Sharon Parker. We are forever grateful for their invaluable perspectives and leadership.



Kenton Beachy with Norman Guitry Award winner, Julie Erwin Rinaldi, and Syntero staff members, Soley Hernandez and Kimberly Reynolds

Norman Guitry Award

Julie Erwin Rinaldi

Corporate Partner Award

IGS Energy

Community Partner Award

The Legal Aid Society of Columbus

Pro Bono Counseling Program Volunteer of the Year

Seth Evans, LPCC

POEM Volunteer of the Year

Becca Alexander

Support Group Volunteer of the Year

Dr. Beth McCreary



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Friday, April 21, 2017

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Doors open @ 7 pm
Showtime @ 8 pm