



Advocate

Kenton Beachy, Executive Director

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MHAOhio's Year in Review

by Cassie Martindell, *Marketing & Communications Manager*

As we approach the two-year mark of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, MHAOhio has continued to be a leader on mental health. We've come alongside individuals and families when they need help, fostered growth and healing inside our communities, and advocated for improved access and affordability for mental health services.

To protect against COVID-19, many of our programs and services continued offering virtual options. This allowed many of our services to expand, including Peer Recovery Support services for professionals who use their lived experience to help others on their path to recovery. Our team held nine virtual trainings with more than 100 professionals completing the class.

POEM also expanded in 2021, serving more than 2,000 moms in need of support with maternal mental health complications and connecting them with a greater number of specialized clinical referrals due to increased access to telehealth services. POEM Rise – maternal mental health services exclusively for Black and African American moms on their path to recovery – saw a 25 percent increase with 500 Black moms reaching out for culturally responsive support and resources.

Support Groups continued mostly online in 2021 and served more than 1,000 individuals. One client from the Anxiety Support Group shared, "So many people could relate to each other and gave helpful advice to each other, which made it feel like a real safe space to talk about my anxiety, which I can't bring up with friends."

Statewide Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) efforts, in collaboration with MHA of Northern Kentucky and Southwest Ohio, resulted in over 6,000 individuals trained, exceeding the program goal of 4,000 set by the funder, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS). Our local MHFA team trained over 400 individuals.

Fairfield Client Navigator served 90 individuals and their families by providing information and referral and advocacy.



Telehealth options allowed Pro Bono Counseling to link 129 individuals with free services. Our team recruited 25 new licensed volunteer counselors, each of whom committed to offer at least 12 free counseling sessions each year. In total the program facilitated more than 750 hours of counseling.

Get Connected offered care navigation to nearly 1,000 callers. One client reported, "Through their help, I was able to find a therapist who could help me with my complex PTSD. My therapist retired, and I was very frightened that I could not find someone with the experience to help me. So, for me, this was a big thing." Family Advocate, which offers extended care navigation support to families of those with mental illness, worked with fifteen new families.

Occumetrics, MHAOhio's workplace wellbeing assessment, completed 12 assessments through the Osteopathic Heritage Foundations and nine assessments through OhioMHAS. The program increased OhioMHAS funding by 70 percent so that even more behavioral health agency leaders will learn how to retain their staff, increase staff job satisfaction, and more consistently meet their community's mental health needs in 2022.

In addition to our programmatic efforts, we advocated for many important pieces of legislation, including House Bill 281, a work in progress since 2016 that updates and revises the harmful and derogatory language in the Ohio Revised Code pertaining to individuals with disabilities and mental health conditions. With bipartisan leadership and the backing of mental health leaders, including MHAOhio, the bill passed the house and was introduced to the Senate Health Committee.

Cont. on Page 2

To Your Mental Health



Resilience

by Kenton Beachy
Executive Director

Earlier this year MHAOhio completed a cultural audit with Multiethnic Advocates for Cultural Competence (MACC) to better understand what we need to do to become a multicultural organization. Multicultural organizations have – in their vision,

mission, goals, values, and operating systems – explicit policies and practices that are intended to ensure that everyone involved feels fully included and has access to every opportunity to contribute to achieving the mission. At MHAOhio we aim to appreciate all forms of diversity and embrace the strengths and advantages that social and cultural diversity provide our staff and volunteers and those we serve.

MACC’s audit report highlights that the social environment of the pandemic and an increased focus on social justice have challenged many organizations. MHAOhio is learning that to best serve our staff (current and future) and our communities, we have to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) around multiple aspects of identity. That also means prioritizing an inclusive and equitable workplace culture that embeds cross-cultural strategies in our strategic plans.

We’re creating our 2022-24 strategic plans right now – with DEI at the center. Last year we created a board DEI Committee and this year are adding staff members to that trustee-led committee. The DEI Committee is prominent in our planning and will continue to be prominent in MHAOhio becoming a multicultural organization.

Embracing DEI is essential to organizational success when it comes to staffing and providing services. Data collected in MACC’s audit through interviews, focus groups, and a cultural climate survey found that MHAOhio has been committed to recruiting diverse staff, leadership, board trustees, and external partners that are increasingly reflective of the communities we serve. Yet the need remains for more diverse representation in MHAOhio leadership.

MACC reported that staff is very open to engaging in DEI work and is hoping for increased opportunities to engage in meaningful intercultural exchange, to implement anti-racist practices into their work and personal lives, and to feel equipped to undertake conflict resolution. It’s suggested that the DEI Committee lead these initiatives. The need also remains to better serve non-English speaking program participants and increase cultural sensitivity in partner relationships to ensure equity when serving disenfranchised and often under-invested communities.

MHAOhio staff and leadership expressed the need for more urgency and faster change, with transformation otherwise appearing performative. MACC’s recommended strategies

toward cultural competence, structural accountability, and a culture of inclusivity in part include:

- Providing ongoing training that targets deepening understanding and developing skills and tools to mitigate bias
- Developing pathways to increase employee involvement in DEI initiatives
- Creating a rollout plan for DEI initiatives that lays out how to help employees progress from awareness to action in promoting diversity and inclusion
- Prioritizing diversity and inclusion work and ensuring it has its own resourcing, expertise, and full-time leadership (such as hiring a Chief Diversity Officer)
- Hiring an HR manager who is trained in conflict management and cultural competence
- Increasing representation of employees of color
- Creating clear pathways to report instances of discrimination or harassment and report in a transparent manner how instances of bias were handled
- Providing routine training related to DEI and opportunities for intercultural exchange

MACC concluded that MHAOhio is taking the necessary steps toward becoming a multicultural organization: “The commitment to increasing cultural competence at MHAOhio is evident. MACC is confident that through an ongoing commitment and the successful implementation of strategies recommended . . . MHAOhio will be well on its way to becoming a multicultural organization.”

Year in Review cont.

MHAOhio also hosted the Ohio Mental Health Caucus with co-chairs, Senators Bob D. Hackett (R-10) and Nickie J. Antonio (D-23) and Representatives Jay Edwards (R-94) and Dontavius L. Jarrells (D-25). Senators Hackett and Antonio also received recognition from MHA national as Legislative Champions.

The Franklin County Suicide Prevention Coalition (FCSPC) developed its first three-year strategic plan, laying the foundation for even greater impact in the years to come. Through its Speakers Bureau, the FCSPC also provided suicide prevention training and information to over 350 community members. MHAOhio received the Ohio Injury Prevention Partnership’s 2021 Promising Practice Award for the FCSPC.

Our work is only possible when a community that cares as much as ours comes together. To our donors, volunteers, sponsoring organizations and businesses, and funders – including the ADAMH Board of Franklin County, United Way of Central Ohio, and the Fairfield County ADAMH Board – thank you all. Our momentum in this work is truly a collective effort.

To read our in-depth Year in Review, please visit mhaohio.org/blog/year-in-review.

Recognizing the Achievements of Stephanie Pavol

Board President Stephanie Pavol has taken part in pivotal change at MHAOhio since she joined in 2016. The staff grew from 10 to 20, and the number of trustees increased from 17 to 25 – all vital to the organization's ability to begin expanding its mental health services statewide.



“We’ve done a lot of work to form a board that is engaged and enthusiastic about this work,” she says. “We’ve also made some strides with the diversity of our board, and that’s a work in progress. We’re trying to be thoughtful and mindful about our board makeup in the meantime.”

Stephanie leant strategic support in launching Mental Health First Aid, Family Advocate, Occumetrics, and new services for Peer Recovery Supporters. She also worked to grow POEM – the program that introduced her to MHAOhio when she experienced her own prenatal anxiety and depression. After receiving POEM’s support, she decided to become a peer volunteer and help other moms.

“With the right help and support, POEM being a big part of that, I was able to make a quick recovery,” she says. “Then I became really passionate about paying that forward.”

Associate Director Tonya Fulwider advocated for Stephanie’s joining the board, explaining that having a client who had utilized MHAOhio’s services would be extremely valuable to the organization. “Stephanie’s service to MHAOhio is a beautiful and inspiring example of the breadth of incredible contributions of those who’ve experienced mental health complications,” Tonya says. “She’s gifted her passion and talents to make a tremendous impact on the board, the staff, our partners, and ultimately the thousands of people that this organization serves each year.”

As Stephanie begins to think of her work and career beyond her presidency on the MHAOhio Board, she leaves some parting wisdom: “In the past 10 years since I started becoming a vocal advocate about my experience, I’ve seen it become a lot less stigmatized. But the need is not going away. If anything, it’s getting greater. When we see these increased numbers, we shouldn’t see tragedy. We should see them as all the more reason to work on access and quality of care.”

Stephanie’s guidance and support throughout her tenure with the organization have been invaluable. She will serve as Past President in the coming year as MHAOhio continues to transition into statewide work.

“Not everyone has that depth of empathy and understanding for the work we do,” Tonya says. “We’re all grateful to have benefitted from Stephanie’s caring and dedicated leadership.”

Moms Matter! Ohio Moms in Great Hands

by Cass Stewart, *POEM Program Coordinator*



Moms matter! This phrase has become a highly followed hashtag on social media in recent years due to a rise in maternal mental health awareness and shows no signs of slowing down. POEM is energized by this growing conversation and continues to lead the way in finding and filling gaps in access to mental health care for pregnant and parenting people in Ohio.

The number of moms asking for help and discussing options for care is rising in Ohio. By year’s end, the program is expecting to have received 2,000 requests for support, a 47% increase in the last two years alone. Through this dramatic increase the POEM team has maintained strong program outcomes with over 90 percent of participants verified to have connected to peer support and/or care navigation services.

Resilient through the pandemic, POEM has remained steady in providing specialized clinical referrals to telehealth services statewide. “Moms in areas in Ohio with limited behavioral health resources have been able to connect with specialized counseling at a much higher rate than pre-pandemic due to an increase in telehealth access,” says POEM Program Operations Manager Becca Alexander.

Providing equitable, accessible, and culturally responsive peer support is the driving force behind POEM’s equity initiative, Rise. POEM Rise witnessed a 40 percent increase in Black mothers participating in our maternal mental health services this year.

“I am honestly thrilled to witness the increase in mamas of color connecting with our program,” shares POEM Program Manager Hailee Childs. “In my mind, this increase means that there are fewer moms of color navigating the perinatal space all alone and without support.”

Hailee adds that this boost in participation shows the deep trust Rise has gained in the community and also presents numerous opportunities for the team to meet those moms’ needs. To meet the increase in demand, POEM Rise tripled its volunteer base and increased support group offerings to include weekend meetings.

Cont. on Page 5

MHAOhio Welcomes New Staff



Bailey Fullwiler, MSSA, LSA, Mental Health First Aid Program Manager

Bailey has served as a community social worker and trauma-informed yoga and meditation instructor for the past five years. She is a licensed social worker with a Masters of Science in Social Administration in community practice for social change from Case Western Reserve University. Bailey's background is in working with people in transition from incarceration, inpatient care, and homelessness in a variety of settings locally. She has also served as DEIAJ educator creating curriculum, facilitating conversations, and creating space for dialogues on diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and justice. She is passionate about providing tools, supports, and building communities that allow all people to be healthy, connected, and healing. In her spare time, Bailey enjoys hiking in Ohio's beautiful public lands and parks, volunteering, and teaching and practicing yoga and meditation.

Celebrating the Achievements of Denise Meine-Graham

by Cassie Martindell, *Marketing & Communications Manager*

Every year MHAOhio awards one exceptional individual the prestigious Norman Guitry Award, named after our founder and first executive director. The award recognizes an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the community in the area of mental health. This year we're thrilled to honor Denise Meine-Graham, the Founder and Executive Director of LOSS Community Services.

Denise founded LOSS (Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors) in 2014 after losing her teenage son, Drey, to suicide in 2012. Through Denise's leadership, LOSS has supported nearly 5,000 suicide loss survivors over the past seven years. She has also served on the executive and advisory committees of the Franklin County Suicide Prevention Coalition (FCSPC).

"I've so appreciated working with Denise," says Kenton Beachy, MHAOhio's Executive Director. "I admire her journey, commitment, and drive to have accomplished so much. And I hope this award in small measure encourages her to bravely continue on her heart's path as she remembers Drey and translates her love for him in helping others. I'm thrilled that she's been selected to receive the award."

Denise initially launched LOSS as a volunteer-driven organization of other suicide loss survivors supporting one another. LOSS Teams of two or more volunteers proactively go to the scene of a suicide to provide immediate support to those left behind.

They learned early on the need for a long-term component. "We found that people started coming back to us, and they wanted to start things like support groups, newsletters, and fundraisers," Denise says. "We didn't have aftercare infrastructure in place, but it became obvious that long-term peer support – not just in the immediate aftermath – was incredibly important."

In the past seven years since founding LOSS, Denise has launched several programs, including support groups and trainings. Remembrance Bear Workshops, one of her favorites, offer an opportunity for loss survivors to come together in a more creative and engaging way. A loved one drops off their



Denise (center) accepts the award from MHAOhio.

special person's favorite shirt, blanket, or even pillowcase, and one of their volunteers turns those items into bears. Later everyone comes together for a party to stuff their bear.

LOSS also hosts a butterfly release at Whetstone Park for hundreds of people to release butterflies symbolizing change, transformation, and beauty.

Denise truly embodies her work and has transformed her pain into a community of loss survivors in hope that all may one day live in a world where suicide is prevented, and no one else has to experience such a loss.

"I always tell people that the joy and the pain can coexist," she says. "I'm always going to miss Drey. That will never go away. There will never be closure. But I've made room for joy. It's not instead of the pain, but it's in addition to it. And there's a peace that comes with that. I'm grateful for the recovery of some joy."

If you would like to learn more about LOSS visit losscs.org.



MHAOhio's Youth Mental Health Conference

by Maureen Traverse, *Education Manager*

In September more than 300 mental health professionals from around the state joined MHAOhio's virtual Youth Mental Health Conference on Understanding the Impact of Racial Trauma on Youth and Emerging Adults. In the morning Dr. Adrienne Kennedy and La Shanda Sugg (LPC) created a "brave space" where they provided historical context for white body supremacy, described the impact of racial trauma on the body, and helped providers explore how to be more trauma responsive when working with BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) clients.

The day's second session was led by Debbie Holycross Jones, Joanna Malachowsky, and Jesse Schroeder of the Building Better Lives Initiative at the Franklin County Family and Children First Council. Attendees learned an expanded definition of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) through the results of the Philadelphia ACEs study as well as how culture and race shape our understanding of resilience.

After lunch, Erin Upchurch (MSSA, LISW-S) emphasized how important it is for clinicians to understand the impact of oppression and marginalization as trauma on both individuals and communities in order to reduce the potential for re-traumatization when engaging in treatment.

Marian Stuckey (LISW-S), Muna Abdi-Harroud (LSW), Monique Sneed (LSW), and Bailey Fullwiler (MSSA, LSW) of the Columbus CARE Coalition closed out the day with



a presentation on how they address racial trauma through community programming that acknowledges trauma, builds awareness, offers coping and collective healing, and shares resources.

Attendees expressed gratitude for the opportunity to hear from expert presenters on this valuable topic, including one who shared, "This is one of the best conferences that I have ever attended in my 43 years as an educator/counselor!"

More than one presenter referred to Dr. Omolara Uwemedimo's quote, "I don't need you to praise me for my resilience. I need you to stop creating spaces of trauma, where being resilient is all I'm allowed to be." Understanding the impact of racial trauma and learning how to better serve BIPOC clients is a critical step in creating a more just society, making this one of our most impactful conferences ever. We're truly grateful to this year's presenters for sharing their talent and wisdom.



Moms Matter Cont.

The team is also currently working on a pilot project of respite support, such as temporarily covering the high cost of child care that may alleviate stressors impacting moms' mental health.

Having a reliable referral list of trained providers of color reduces the barriers that prevent moms of color from connecting with appropriate support services and specialized care. To help meet this need, POEM Rise awarded eight providers of color with scholarships to obtain Perinatal Mental Health specialized training through Postpartum Support International.

POEM Rise also hosted three virtual "Pathways to Wellness" events, which provided dozens of Black mothers an interactive

space to engage with Black mental health/maternal health professionals and learn about accessing better care for themselves.

POEM is actively preparing for the future. A recent program reorganization created an operations manager role to recruit more volunteers and leverage current resources in more efficient ways. With such great needs, POEM will remain resilient in helping moms in their mental health journey.

A recent POEM social media post encouraged moms, saying, "You are a great mama, not because you always win, but because you stay in the ring ... #Resilience."

Ohio moms are in great hands. To support MHAOhio's programs, including POEM and POEM Rise, please donate to mhaohio.org/donate.

Thank You!

To Our Members and Donors (July 1, 2021 - October 30, 2021)

MHAOhio is grateful to the many donors and supporters throughout Ohio whose financial contributions help to make possible the wide variety of programs we offer. We make every attempt to accurately acknowledge our donors. To report an error or omission, please contact Lauren Greenberg at 614-221-1441 or lgreenberg@mhaohio.org.

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Donor Spotlight: Mind Mission Comes to MHAOhio's Aid

by Maureen Traverse, *Education Manager*

After making the difficult decision to cancel our Give Mom the Mic fundraiser for the second year in a row, we reached out to our community of donors for help. We were touched and honored by the many donations we received, including a very generous gift of \$5,000 from Mind Mission, a local non-profit organization that raises mental health awareness and builds community through fitness and adventure.

Mental health advocate and fundraiser Derek Davis founded Mind Mission with the help of friends and coworkers who all share a passion for mental health and physical fitness.

“The people involved are what make this so fun,” Derek says. “They’re what make it possible to reach the goals we’ve set.”

His team of board members – each with a personal connection to mental health – includes psychiatric nurse practitioners, social workers, and counselors from Nationwide Children’s Hospital; the Ohio Area Director for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention; and even a CrossFit champion.

Derek’s own mental health journey started when he began experiencing severe depression and panic attacks. After he found help through MHAOhio’s Pro Bono Counseling Program, he wanted to give back. Because exercise was one important component of his recovery, he decided to create a fitness fundraiser.

“Therapy, medication, exercise, and mindfulness meditation – those are the four big pillars of my mental health,” Derek shares. So in 2016 he biked and kayaked over 175 miles and raised \$5,100 for MHAOhio to help other people who face mental illness and have difficulty accessing treatment.

Over the last few years, Derek and Mind Mission have carved out a unique space in the mental health world, raising awareness and funds for mental wellness while building community through physical fitness adventures. Mind Mission has held three fundraisers so far. Derek



The Mind Mission team on a ride across the Scioto River.

and his team biked from Cleveland to Columbus, completed a 200-mile loop around Central Ohio, and more recently made their way across the state from Cleveland to Cincinnati. In May of 2022 they hope to host a larger event through which any participant can sign up, raise money, and join in the challenge.

For Derek, the experience of riding with his team is an apt metaphor for how we should approach mental illness. Central to Mind Mission’s vision is that no one is meant to fight alone.

“Community is what it’s all about,” Derek says. “The ride from Cleveland to Cincinnati was physically and mentally demanding. But once you finish you have this sense that you did something special, this feeling of accomplishment. And when you can do it with other people that you really love and care about – it’s probably the closest I’ve felt to complete peace, being on that bike, riding with people with one mission in mind.”

The work we do at MHAOhio is all about community. Without the help of donors like Mind Mission, we could not provide the help and support that we do in Central Ohio and beyond.

Join Mind Mission in supporting MHAOhio and give a donation of any amount at mhaohio.org/donate.



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