



Comm-UNITY

For MHAOhio, our statewide expansion must be intentional. This means understanding the historical, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers that may have previously prevented a community from investing in mental health. It also means working alongside families who've been impacted by mental illness and the advocates and leaders who want to create change.

In our 60-year history, MHAOhio has found what works when it comes to making mental health services more accessible in our home in Central Ohio. Now, it's up to us to learn from other communities about what will work for them. Some of our programs have already begun this process, including the **Fairfield County Client Navigator**.

Tori Ivan, who manages the program in Fairfield County, says the past few years have been a challenge in finding ways to reach folks in rural Ohio. They may not have previously expressed interest in mental health services due to stigma, a lack of providers in their area, and a lack of insurance coverage for mental health care. She finds that the best way to overcome these barriers is to work with members of the community who are willing to have tough conversations with their families, friends, and neighbors.

Tori has recently had success with schools, saying, "Teachers and school staff are a great resource in ensuring families can access this free resource. Many families have already been referred to us, and we've connected them to mental health care that they may not otherwise have known about."

In addition to our work in Fairfield County, our work with Peer Recovery Supporters (PRS) is also expanding. Having become a local host for the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services about five years ago, our **PRS Services** are still a fairly new program. In this short amount of time, MHAOhio has grown to be a source of information and support for PRS and their employers, and our team has built a community of nearly 800 certified PRS. Now, we are exploring funding and partnerships that would allow us to expand our services beyond Franklin County, specifically to



counties often requesting certification training, including Southeast Ohio.

"There is a continued increase in the need for PRS in all settings of behavioral health care," says Jon Bommarito, PRS Coordinator. "We are looking forward to building a list of partners who we can collaborate with to develop opportunities for this growing workforce."

Like our PRS Services, **Occumetrics** is also expanding its efforts in Southeast Ohio to create healthy work environments. We're working with the 317 Board (Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Board of Athens, Hocking, and Vinton Counties) to conduct assessments with four of its member agencies.

"Like many other behavioral health organizations across the state, agencies in Southeast Ohio are experiencing significant strain when it comes to recruitment and retention," says Maggie Hallett, Senior Director of Workplace Health and Education. "MHAOhio is eager to help more organizations improve retention strategies by explaining how they can better meet their employees' workplace needs."

This work will take significant support from those near and far. Your donations are more important than ever. Give today and help us create communities without barriers to achieving mental health – where no one feels alone on their road to recovery.

CASSIE MARTINDELL, Marketing & Communications Manager



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Need peer support?
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MHFA Saves Lives

Since its inception, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) has sought to equip as many individuals as possible with the tools they need to recognize and respond to someone who may be experiencing a mental health crisis and/or substance use disorder. Now, in its second year in Ohio, the Statewide MHFA Collaborative has trained more than 9,000 individuals and is expanding across the state to meet the needs of underserved populations.

Bailey Fullwiler, our statewide program manager, has been working to recruit instructors from minority backgrounds, including multilingual instructors, who can train their communities in a culturally responsive way. So far, the team has welcomed two Spanish-speaking instructors and is hoping to add two more.

"We're about halfway through our second project with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, training individuals from first responders, to school staff and educators, to faith-based communities

and marginalized communities," Bailey shares. "We're also focused on peer supporters, older adults, and college students. It's about getting the training to those with the most need and the least access."

Many of those who receive the training report back with positive encounters after using their training in real-life situations. One host said, "A staff member shared that there was an individual who came to a homeless shelter who was contemplating suicide, and the staff member felt confident and equipped after the MHFA training to bring up the conversation, encourage the individual that help was available, and reached out with her to a local crisis team where she received the support she desperately needed. The individual told the staff the way they responded saved her life and gave her a new sense of hope!"

We are eager to bring this training to more people in the months ahead. If you are interested in signing up for a class, visit mhaohio.org/MHFA.

CASSIE MARTINDELL, Marketing & Communications Manager



MHAOhio and the Franklin County Suicide Prevention Foundation are honored to be a part of the Life Side Ohio launch: an initiative to impactfully educate firearm owners about their role in preventing suicide. Thank you to the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation for building this wonderful partnership!

Building Resilience

Earlier this year, MHAOhio hosted “Building Resilience in the Midst of Trauma” for Peer Recovery Supporters (PRS). Developed and delivered by the Building Better Lives Initiative at the Franklin County Family and Children First Council, this training provides a foundation on the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on brain development, and skills for emotional regulation and building resilience. More than 60 Central Ohio PRS turned out for the trainings, representing a variety of professional settings where they serve those living with mental health and substance use disorders, including veterans and those experiencing homelessness, exiting the criminal justice system, or receiving inpatient or outpatient treatment.

“A lot of people we work with in these populations have some type of trauma experience in their lives,” says training attendee Patrice Palmer, a Reentry Support Specialist with the Office of Justice Policy and Programs. “Having some awareness of de-escalation...being aware of how to approach [a person] is necessary.”

But remaining regulated in a stressful moment is difficult, especially for a PRS who may also have lived experience of trauma. Training facilitator, Jesse Schroeder, explains how the training builds competence: “Practicing self-regulation and leaning on Resilience Factors moves us from just being ‘trauma aware’ to ‘trauma competent,’ which means we intentionally practice a healthy response to stress.”

ACEs are very common—two-thirds or more adults have at least one ACE—and the more ACEs a person has, the more likely they are to become dependent on alcohol, to use IV drugs, or to have attempted suicide. But the training emphasizes that “ACEs are not destiny.” Understanding what builds resilience is a valuable skill for anyone, but particularly for PRS who support peers through traumatic experiences.

Tom MacDonald, a PRS at Lighthouse Behavioral Health Solutions, found the training very relevant to the work he does and said that it helped him feel prepared “to better assess a peer and their resilience to trauma, like whether they are a risk-taker, an introvert or extrovert. Any trait could be positive or negative depending on the situation.”

PRS are on the front lines of behavioral health care, guiding peers through all stages of recovery. This training not only provided background research on ACEs and skills for building resilience, but also explored these concepts in the context of the fight for racial equity and the COVID-19 pandemic. Current clinical and cultural perspectives are crucial for PRS, who take on the complicated task of applying their own lived experience to stressful, dynamic situations. MHAOhio will continue to provide and promote training opportunities like this one for PRS because we believe in the power of peer support.

MAUREEN TRAVERSE, Education Manager



BOARD SPOTLIGHT

**Tiffany Nobles,
MPA, GPC**

A grant professional for more than 10 years, Tiffany is the sole proprietor of T. Nobles Grant Consulting, LLC, providing grants services to nonprofits and small businesses. Tiffany is an active member of the Grant Professionals Association (since 2012) and the Association of Fundraising Professionals (since 2018). Tiffany holds a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from Washington & Jefferson College and a Master’s of Arts in Public Administration from the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public & International Affairs. She serves as a Trustee because she believes in the intentional work the agency is doing to remove the stigma of mental health and disparities in accessing quality care, particularly within the African American community.

Out of the Office and onto the Farm

LINDSAY BARBER, Marketing & Development Director

MHAOhio's Occumetrics program evaluates workplace health by conducting research-based assessments of employee wellbeing, but how do we live these values for the benefit of our own workforce?

On Friday, May 20th MHAOhio's staff stepped out of the office and onto the farm at PBJ Connections in Pataskala, Ohio. This full-day retreat included team-building activities with horses, a meditation walk, a group art project, and quality time with a potbelly pig named Cupcake.

Our staff comes to work every day committed to helping people get connected to mental health care. Some start their day in our Grandview office, answering calls from over 1,000 people a year in need of help finding appropriate mental health services, often for the very first time. Other staffers lead support groups virtually for pregnant and parenting people. Some work in Lancaster, providing locally focused resource navigation to Fairfield County residents. Others teach Mental Health First Aid to help equip the general public with the skills needed to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. Some work from home, others commute. As community support continues to widen MHAOhio's geographic reach, our efforts to be together as a team must be intentional. Our staff retreat was not a day off of work but rather a day of work spent intentionally together.

Individuals who provide support to others need support too. Burnout is not unique to care providers, however. The 2021 "Mind The Workplace" report from Mental Health America national surveyed over 5,000 workers across 17 industries. They found:

- 9 in 10 employees report that workplace stress affects their mental health.
- 3 in 5 employees are not receiving the support they need to manage stress.
- 1 in 4 employees are experiencing severe signs of burnout.

Even in a pre-pandemic world, fostering feelings of community in a workplace was challenging. Today, it can feel impossible. But it has never been more important. PBJ Connections is a nonprofit organization that provides professional behavioral health therapy for children, adults, and families through horses, counseling, and nature. Learn more about how your team can schedule a retreat here.



Reflections from the MHAOhio Team:

"Our staff retreat at PBJ was a much-needed respite. As healers and helpers, our teams are always doing, going, working to be of service. Our retreat was a beautiful opportunity to slow down and just "be" in community to reconnect as a team with a shared mission."

"I saw more vulnerability from coworkers than I have ever seen in the years that I have worked. I learned more about my coworkers in 8 hours than in 2 years."

"As a new staff member, the retreat gave an invaluable opportunity to meet my coworkers face to face. I was able to just be human and connect with the team in a meaningful way, a priority that too often falls to the wayside when there's an infinity queue of emails to return, meetings to schedule, and fires to put out."





Celebrating Where We Are

TONYA FULWIDER, Interim Executive Director

We all love a story of triumph. For the last decade, I've been lucky to work for this organization – that continues to serve beautifully and grow strategically – and be a part of the moments of celebration along the way.

But how about we celebrate being right smack in the middle of things? For MHAOhio, we're continuing to serve and grow while experiencing a big change in our agency's leadership. Kenton Beachy, our Executive Director for the past seven years, took on a new role at the Woodstock School in India.

We hope to introduce you – in the next *Advocate* – to our new Executive Director. But during this time of change, there's an important and marvelous tie-in here to our everyday work in mental health: we show up and celebrate each other no matter what. We show up and live out our mission by celebrating those who connect with us for help, ensuring they feel cared for and seen.

And we've all, especially over these last couple of years, faced fear and uncertainty. Heartbreak and unspeakable tragedies.

How do you keep standing up when the ground beneath you keeps shaking?

You lean on someone.

For those we passionately serve, we invite you to lean on us:

*to help you find the right treatment,
to connect to a peer who understands like no one else,
to drop into a caring support group,
to provide your employer tools for a healthy place to work,
to assist you finding a counselor, no matter your ability to pay,
to link you to vital, collective suicide prevention efforts,
to educate and support you in caring for a loved one.*

As a mental health community, we have immense gratitude and perpetual resolve from other advocates, our funding partners, and human service organizations. We know we're working together to build resources, community, leadership, and creative solutions.

For our team, it's about leaning on each other. Through our willingness to truly hear each other, we build trust through good communication. We recognize that meaningful accomplishments include every single experience of enduring difficulty and overcoming a barrier.

We're each a leader, lifting up hope and morale by carrying out our organizational values alongside a large dose of humor and fun (and a fantastic group Spotify playlist).

After all – leadership is a behavior, not a person.

THANK YOU

To Our Members and Donors November 1, 2021 - June 1, 2022)

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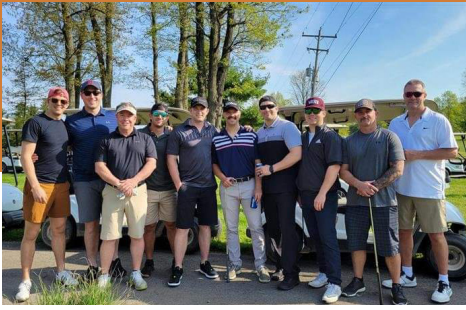
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Donor Spotlight: Dave Burt

Dave Burt, a Columbus firefighter, is a true MHAOhio Advocate. He organized the first Firefighters Scramble for Postpartum Depression Golf Outing in 2010 to raise donations for MHAOhio's POEM program. Now, 12 years on, Dave is still running the annual event and has raised \$100,000. It all started from one moment of inspiration.

"In the past, I participated in outings but never ran one," Dave says. "To get started, I just kind of began picking brains, then I started running."

Despite never having led a fundraising event before, Dave felt called to raise funds for POEM because he understood the need firsthand. His wife Amy, cofounder of POEM, experienced postpartum depression after the birth of their second child.

"Seeing what she went through caused me to try to figure out as a husband and a dad how I could help. Several spouses of firefighters have sought out POEM. Talking about mental health is huge in our department now."

Being a first-time fundraiser is not without a learning curve. "The first year we used a catering business. Then, we got the bill," Dave says. "It was expensive just because somebody else was doing the work." To maximize his impact, Dave took matters into his own hands. "I said, 'Let's smoke some pork for the outing next time.' The second year, it was midnight and we were still smoking pork the night before."

Dave's hard work has paid off. "The first year I had 60 golfers. This year there were 108. That's the max the course can have." Dave emphasizes the fact that he couldn't do it alone.

"I can't take credit for anything. I always find firefighters who are willing to help. They are critical to the outing's success. Sometimes I get emotional thanking them, just seeing all of the people who have shown up."

Columbus firefighters have a long-standing tradition of philanthropy. "I've got sponsors that have been with me since day one, including The Columbus Firefighters Foundation."

Dave currently serves as the foundation's secretary. "To thank our sponsors the first year after COVID, I called all of them and said, 'I'm running the outing this year. I'm going to put your sign out on the course to acknowledge you, but I'm not asking for any money this time because I don't know where everybody is at financially.'" Dave's gratitude was rewarded. This year, the golf outing broke its own record, raising \$13,000 for POEM.

We are humbled by Dave's advocacy. Thanks to our donors and fundraisers, POEM served more than 2,000 moms and birthing people in 2021.

If you're interested in hosting your own fundraising event, reach out to Marketing and Development Director Lindsay Barber at lbarber@mhaohio.org or 614-905-2852.

LINDSAY BARBER, Marketing & Development Director

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MHAOhio wishes Kenton Beachy all the best on his
next adventure!



Thank you for seven years of your service to the mental health
community in Central Ohio and beyond.