



# The VOICE

by MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION in Niagara County, Inc.

716.433.3780    36 Pine St, Lockport, NY 14094    www.MHANC.com

## FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Spring is in the air — and so is the rain and dampness. Although I’m excited to see the fresh flowers pushing up out of the ground, the buds on the trees, and the green grass each day, I’m still waiting for the warmth to settle in. It seems as though we’ve had a very long winter... or maybe it feels that way because I’m getting older and feel the cold more. Regardless, I’m ready for some days with the temperatures in the 70’s!

MHA staff has been participating in quite a few trainings recently that are beneficial in our professional environment, and they have also proven to be beneficial for all of us in our day-to-day lives. Our staff has had “Active Shooter”, Sexual Harassment, and Fire Safety training during the past few months; Narcan and Corporate Compliance are next. We try to keep on top of things and like to learn all we can. It not only benefits us as a staff, but also allows us to use our education for helping others.

All of our programs have been very busy! Community Education has been booked heavily throughout these past few months with school presentations, but is now starting to slow down as the school year nears its end. If you or your agency would like to learn more about mental health and mental wellness, give us a call at (716) 433-3780. We would be more than happy to come in and provide you with some education on these topics. In case you didn’t know, our services are FREE!

With everything going on around you, don’t forget to take care of yourself. I’m usually really bad at this, but I have been trying to get better by paying attention to how my mind and body feel. I’m walking 3 miles a day again and although I’m walking slow and steady, I’m really beginning to enjoy myself. I walk at Golden Hill State Park every morning and see all kinds of wildlife. It’s quiet time for me where I can reflect on days past and think of what’s ahead. It’s very therapeutic and I strongly recommend it for anyone looking for a little quiet time to relax and unwind.

Don’t forget to enjoy the little things and let the bad things go. Breathe in, breathe out. See you next time!

*Cheryl*



Cheryl Blacklock



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### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- #4Mind4Body
- PMR
- Mental Health Awareness Month
- Mocktails & Making Friends—upcoming event



Mental Health Awareness Month takes place during the month of May each year and here at the MHA, we are always excited to see the increase in discussions regarding mental health in the media throughout Mental Health Awareness Month.

Our mission is to break down the barriers that keep people from talking about mental health and help end the stigma that is associated with mental illness. It is our hope that awareness of mental health won't only be a highlighted topic of discussion during one month each year, but that it would be discussed year-round as commonly as we discuss sports, the weather, and the flu.

We work hard to provide programs and events that help spread accurate information regarding mental illness and to provide programs, events, and information promoting mental wellness.

If you are interested in learning more about what the MHA has to offer, please give us a call today at 433-3780 or visit [www.MHANC.com](http://www.MHANC.com).

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*It's never too early or too late to make positive changes to your life.*

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## DO YOU FOCUS ON #4MIND4BODY?

Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable. So much of what we do physically impacts us mentally – it's important to pay attention to both your physical health and your mental health, which can help you achieve overall wellness and set you on a path to recovery.

Did you know that Mental Health America founded *May is Mental Health Month* back in 1949? That means this year marks MHA's 70th year celebrating Mental Health Month!

This *May is Mental Health Month*, MHA in Niagara County is expanding its focus from 2018 and raising awareness about the connection between physical health and mental health, through the theme #4Mind4Body. We are exploring the topics of animal companionship, spirituality and religion, humor, work-life balance, and recreation and social connections as ways to boost mental health and general wellness.

A healthy lifestyle can help to prevent the onset or worsening of mental health conditions, as well as chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. It can also help people recover from these conditions. For those dealing with a chronic health condition and the people who care for them, it can be especially important to focus on mental health. When dealing with dueling diagnoses, focusing on both physical and mental health concerns can be daunting – but critically important in achieving overall wellness.

There are things you can do that may help. Finding a reason to laugh, going for a walk with a friend, meditating, playing with a pet, or working from home once a week can go a long way in making you both physically and mentally healthy. The company of animals – whether as pets or service animals— can have a profound impact on a person's quality of life and ability to recover from illnesses. A pet can be a source of comfort and can help us to live mentally healthier lives. And whether you go to church, meditate daily, or simply find time to enjoy that cup of tea each morning while checking in with yourself – it can be important to connect with your spiritual side in order to find that mind-body connection.

MHA in Niagara County wants everyone to know that mental illnesses are real, and recovery is always the goal. Living a healthy lifestyle may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes. Finding the balance between work and play, the ups and downs of life, physical health and mental health, can help you on the path towards focusing both #4Mind4Body.

For more information, visit [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may).

## Mocktails & Making Friends



Are **YOU** interested in making **FRIENDS** over mocktails? Compeer Niagara will be hosting an event for those interested in **volunteering**.

**When:** Tuesday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
6:00pm-7:30pm

**Where:** 50 Main St. Lockport NY  
(Corner of Main St. and Pine St.)

**Why:** There are people in your community that need a friend.

**Who:** Anyone interested in a fun and easy way to make an impact.



## COMPEER NIAGARA, PRORAM UPDATE

TARA PORTER, *COMPEER NIAGARA DIRECTOR*, TPORTER@MHANC.COM, EXT. 307

Howdy from Compeer Niagara! In the month of May we'll be enjoying a western themed event including line dancers and catered BBQ. After the performance, the line dancers will be teaching us some moves. Trying new things is an important part of life, but we understand sometimes it can be intimidating; that's why doing it with friends is so great! No matter what your Compeer Niagara role is, you are surrounded by a group of great friends cheering you on.

If you'd like to learn more about Compeer Niagara and how to become a part of it, tune into "Ask the Pro" on WLVL 1340 AM or 105.3 FM on Monday, May 20, 2019 at 10:15am. Compeer Niagara will be giving information and taking phone calls on-air. We will also be promoting our "Mocktails & Making Friends" event. Be sure to check out the information above. We hope to see you there!

Once you've joined Compeer Niagara, you'll be able to participate in more of our fun upcoming events. We have our annual Compeer Niagara Picnic in June, in which we will enjoy a catered dinner and views of the lake, followed by a gathering on the beach to roast marshmallows over a bonfire. In July, we'll be cruising down the Erie Canal and kayaking in the lagoon, and in August we'll tour Old Fort Niagara. These events are sure to be filled with fun, smiles, and laughter just like our events earlier this year such as attending the Defiant Monkey Improv Comedy Show and Lockport High School's musical, *Grease*.

Compeer Niagara is... making friends; having fun; being involved in your community; helping others; meeting more people; trying new things.

Please contact us at 433-3780 or visit our website, [www.MHANC.com](http://www.MHANC.com) to learn more.

## WELCOMING NEW FACES



My name is Gwen Neuman. I'm an occupational therapy student at Keuka College and a local Lockport resident. I will be spending a couple of weeks with Compeer Niagara in May for volunteer and observational experience in order to enhance my interpersonal skills and gain some insight on how Compeer impacts our community. I am excited to experience Compeer Niagara, meet new people, build upon my own personal skills, and hopefully bring some new insight and positivity to the program. I'll see you in May!



My name is Danielle Jaeger. I'm 16 years old and I am a sophomore at Lockport High School. I enjoy being involved in my community and getting to know others. I am interning this summer for my Girl Scouts Gold Award project. My project is based on spreading awareness of mental health in my community, and I'm be able to do that through my internship at the MHA in Niagara County.

## FEATURED ARTICLE: *HOW TO PRACTICE PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION*

FROM VERYWELLMIND.COM

How well do you know your body? Do you spend time with your body? How often do you talk with yourself to find out what is good and bad? Lastly, do you take time to work with and explore the sensations your body has, good or bad? For most of us, the answer is probably no. But have no shame because it is never too late to start!

Often, our body is the first to experience the effects of stress and with progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) we can start to understand our body and take preventive action. The idea behind PMR is very basic! If we have a clear understanding of what tension feels like and how to cope with it, then we can learn to relax much faster in times of stress. But having an understanding of what tension feels like in muscles besides our neck and shoulders proves to be much harder than it sounds.

That is why we choose to feature the article "How to Practice Progressive Muscle Relaxation" by Arlin Cuncic. Cuncic gives simple instructions for a short daily PMR practice. Alternating tension and relaxation in groups of muscles (the forehead, neck/shoulders, legs etc.) gives us the chance to better understand how stress effects each part of our body in a unique way. This practice can be as long or short as you like and you might be shocked by how well it works!



### **Featured Article: *How to Practice Progressive Muscle Relaxation* from verywellmind.com:**

"Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is an anxiety-reduction technique first introduced by American physician Edmund Jacobson in the 1930s. The technique involves alternating tension and relaxation in all of the body's major muscle groups."

"Progressive muscle relaxation is generally used along with behavioral therapy techniques such as systematic desensitization. However, practicing the technique alone will give you a greater sense of control over your body's anxiety response."

If you practice this technique correctly, you may even end up falling asleep. If so, congratulate yourself on obtaining such a deep level of relaxation, and for the work that you did up until that point."

#### *"How to Practice Progressive Muscle Relaxation"*

Find a quiet place free from distractions. Lie on the floor or recline in a chair, loosen any tight clothing and remove glasses or contacts. Rest your hands in your lap or on the arms of the chair. Take a few slow even breaths. If you have not already, spend a few minutes practicing diaphragmatic breathing.

- ◇ Forehead. Focus attention on your forehead. Squeeze the muscles in your forehead, holding for 15 seconds. Be careful only to tense the muscles of your forehead and to leave the rest of your body relaxed. Feel the muscles becoming tighter and tenser. Then, slowly release the tension in your forehead while counting for 30 seconds. Notice the difference in how your muscles feel and the sensation of relaxation. Continue to release the tension in your forehead until it feels completely relaxed. Continue breathing slowly and evenly.
- ◇ Jaw. Now, shift attention to your jaw. Tense the muscles in your jaw holding for 15 seconds. Then, release the tension slowly while counting for 30 seconds. Notice the feeling of relaxation and continue to breathe slowly and evenly.
- ◇ Neck and Shoulders. Now, shift attention to your neck and shoulders. Increase tension in your neck and shoulders by raising your shoulders up towards your ears and hold for 15 seconds. Slowly release the tension as you count for 30 seconds. Notice the tension melting away.
- ◇ Arms and Hands. Slowly draw both hands into fists. Pull your fists into your chest and hold for 15 seconds, squeezing as tight as you can. Then, slowly release while you count for 30 seconds. Notice the feeling of relaxation.
- ◇ Buttocks. Slowly increase tension in your buttocks over 15 seconds. Then, slowly release the tension over 30 seconds. Notice the tension melting away. Continue to breathe slowly and evenly.
- ◇ Legs. Slowly, increase the tension in your quadriceps and calves over 15 seconds. Squeeze the muscles as hard as you can. Then, gently release the tension over 30 seconds. Notice the tension melting away and the feeling of relaxation that is left.
- ◇ Feet. Slowly, increase the tension in your feet and toes. Tighten the muscles as much as you can. Then, slowly release the tension while you count for 30 seconds. Notice all the tension melting away. Continue breathing slowly and evenly.

Enjoy the feeling of relaxation sweeping through your body. Continue to breathe slowly and evenly."

*For those who suffer with medical conditions, be sure to consult with your doctor prior to beginning any type of relaxation training exercise.*

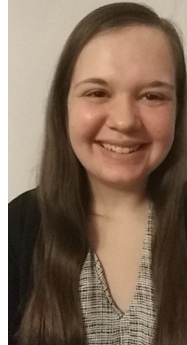
View the full article at: <https://www.verywellmind.com/how-do-i-practice-progressive-muscle-relaxation-3024400>

## A WARM “WELCOME” TO OUR SUMMER INTERNS

Each summer, we welcome interns to join our staff. Our interns are able to have hands-on experience within our agency, helping with events, day-to-day operations, and various other tasks and projects throughout the summer. Meet our new summer interns below!



My name is Sierra Halstead. I am from Lockport and I am currently in my second year at SUNY Canton, majoring in Criminal Investigation and minoring in Forensics. I play D-3 lacrosse for my school, too! I enjoyed my experience last summer working with the Mental Health Association and, even more specifically, Compeer Niagara. I am looking forward to seeing everyone again this summer and can't wait to see what's in store for me this summer!  
\*Sierra's internship is funded by the Grigg Lewis Foundation, Inc.



My name is Ashton Hasenstab. I'm a current student at Niagara County Community College, I'm majoring in Human Service and getting my Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) certificate as well. I hope to obtain hands on experience in the field. I also want to see how a mental health diagnosis can affect people and how they can get assistance in all aspects.

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### PEER SPECIALIST, PROGRAM UPDATE

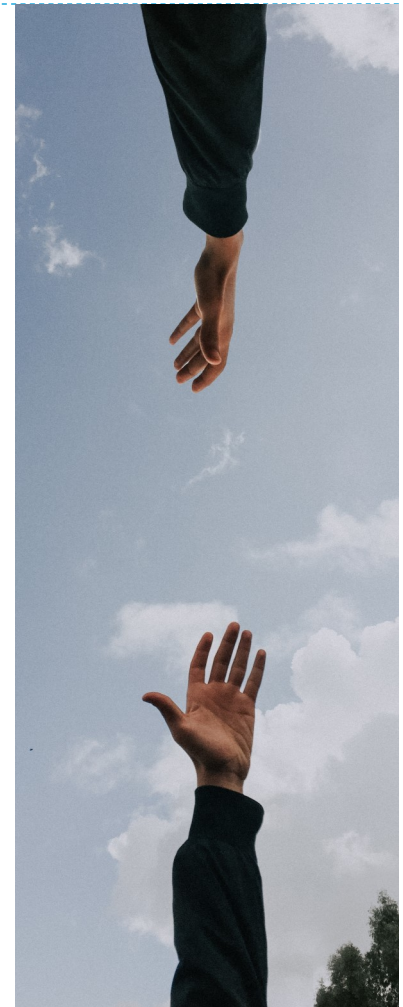
CRYSTAL HITES, CONSUMER ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR, CHITES@MHANC.COM, EXT. 311

The biggest recent change in the Peer Specialist Program in Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center Inpatient Mental Health is a joyful one — we are growing!

I recently advertised two job openings for Peer Specialists to work in NFMHC's Inpatient Units and received a high number of quality responses. I thoroughly enjoyed the many people I interviewed. Each candidate had a wonderful spirit about them, and it was encouraging to see just how many people there are in this world who care about others and want to make a difference. It's refreshing to see that kind of attitude so alive within Niagara County.

Our new Peer Specialists are wonderful examples of what we look for in our "peers." There is a distinct, but easily missed, difference between remission and recovery, and our new peers needed to be well into their journey in recovery. Our new Peer Specialists are individuals who have mental illness or addiction in their past, but took control of their lives by learning deeply about their illnesses and old coping skills, and now fight actively every day with therapy, treatment plan management, and new coping skills in order to keep themselves well. Those fighters are the ones in recovery, not simply remission — and it's those fighters that I need here at the hospital to inspire others to fight to take control of their own lives.

As Peers at the hospital, we teach coping skills to carry people through life and illness beyond the stages of remission and into true recovery from mental illness and addiction, and there is no one better to teach coping skills than those who use them daily. Our two new Peer Specialists are both exceptionally bright. I was impressed with how committed they both are to helping others, as well as improving themselves. It is through successful self-improvement that peers are role models to others, and I am truly excited to see the difference these two individuals make in Niagara County and beyond. I feel honored to be working with them.





## ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS

If you need help, but are feeling a little scared of the unknown...you are not alone! Many of us know we need the help of a professional, but do not understand what it is that they do. For Mental Health Awareness Month, we have decided to feature some information on mental health counselors in an attempt shed some stigma and fear about seeking professional help.

### *What do they do?*

A mental health counselor is simply someone who helps individuals achieve emotional/mental wellness. Mental health counseling is a partnership in which the counselor provides information and paths to recovery and the client provides thoughtful feedback. Treatment plans are often created alongside the client, rather than for them. This helps to maintain flexibility as the client changes through treatment.

The benefits of mental health counseling are different for every person. Some of the common gains are personal empowerment, wellness, positivity, hope, and acceptance. Mental health counseling is not cold and dispassionate or scary, but the opposite! If you are still feeling a bit scared, call us for more information and encouragement! We don't provide counseling services at our office, but we'd be happy to refer you to some counselors. Call us at (716) 433-3780.

**Sources:** <https://www.healthypace.com/other-info/mental-illness-overview/mental-health-counseling-how-it-works-benefits>  
**AND** <https://counselor-license.com/careers/mental-health-counselor/>

*Mental health counseling is not cold and dispassionate or scary, but the opposite!*

### NEW SUPPORT GROUPS OFFERED

#### **Anxiety & Depression Support Group**

1st & 3rd Thursday of each month  
4:30-5:30pm

MHA in Niagara County—36 Pine St in Lockport

#### **Grief Support Group**

1st & 3rd Tuesday of each month  
4:30-5:30pm

MHA in Niagara County—36 Pine St in Lockport

New members are always welcome. No need to call or sign up ahead of time. Stop in for our next meeting. We would love to meet you.

Email [dconlan@mhanc.com](mailto:dconlan@mhanc.com) or call 433-3780 with any questions.

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION, PROGRAM UPDATE

**DANIELLE CONLAN, CE&R COORDINATOR, [dconlan@mhanc.com](mailto:dconlan@mhanc.com), EXT. 303**

Happy Spring! Community Education & Referral has had a busy season!

In March, we were able to serve over 800 community members! This is a great step towards educating Niagara County about mental health and eliminating the stigma surrounding mental health/illness.

Since the warm weather has been approaching, there is an increase in health fair requests and a decrease in school presentations, which is expected.

In April, we had a guest from Roswell speak on smoking cessation. It was great and very educational!

On May 20th myself and Tara Porter, Director of Compeer Niagara are going to be on *WLVL: Ask the Pro* radio show. Tune in at 10:15am to hear! Tune into station 1340AM or 105.3FM.

In June, we are teaming with Compeer Niagara, Inc, to host *Mocktails & Making Friends*. See page 3 more information. We would love to see you there!

This summer we will continue to host *12 Months of Wellness*, which is a program that offers monthly events featuring creative ways to maintain mental wellness.

Enjoy the warm weather and remember to take care of YOU!

## IN-HOME RESPITE, PRORAM UPDATE

SARA CARLSON, *COORDINATOR*, SCARLSON@MHANC.COM, EXT. 312

We are in the process of adding some new staff members! This will not only increase the number of respite episodes we can provide per month, but will allow us to add even more families to our roster! We are excited for the continued growth of the program and for the opportunity to support more Niagara County families.

Some of the benefits families gain from IHR include:

- ◇ Reduced stress level.
- ◇ Caregivers get some time for themselves.
- ◇ Allow siblings some one-on-one time with their parents/guardians.
- ◇ Helps the family renew optimism and patience with the child/children.
- ◇ May prevent child (and parent) abuse or neglect.
- ◇ In combination with other services, may help to prevent or delay out-of-home placement of the child.

### ***What is Respite?***

The Respite Program through the Mental Health Association provides free childcare to families with a child (or children) with a current mental health diagnosis and their siblings. Respite can reduce the family's overall stress level and increase the caregiver's ability to provide childcare that best suits the needs of their children.

### ***Our program provides:***

#### **In-Home Respite**

- ◇ FREE Childcare provided in your own home for children with a mental health diagnosis and their siblings

#### **Group Respite**

- ◇ FREE Group Respite held at the MHA, 36 Pine St., Lockport
- ◇ Transportation is NOT provided. Please be prompt when picking your child/children up.
- ◇ Activities are geared toward 5 to 12 year old interests

### ***How does the In-Home Respite Program help families?***

The Respite Program gives the primary caregiver a reliable and planned break from parenting. Whether the caregiver needs time to relax or just clean up around the house, the In-Home Respite Program is here to help.

The caregiver may use the respite time to:

- ◇ Run errands
- ◇ Attend professional or personal appointments
- ◇ Spend time with family and friends
- ◇ Take a class
- ◇ Renew old hobbies
- ◇ Enjoy quiet time
- ◇ To spend valuable one-on-one time with their other children

### ***Eligibility Requirements***

To determine if your child is eligible for respite services, call (716) 433-3780. General guidelines are below:

- ◇ Be a resident of Niagara County
- ◇ Have at least one child who has a current mental health diagnosis that requires ongoing treatment (for example: ADHD, ODD, CD, Bipolar Disorder, Depression, Anxiety, Schizophrenia, etc.)
- ◇ Undergo an intake assessment by the Program Coordinator

***Any form of caregiving without a break can cause strain on the caregiver's health, both physically and mentally. A well-rested and replenished caregiver has the ability to cope more effectively with the stress of parenting.***


## WANT TO STAY IN-THE-KNOW?

You can follow us on Twitter, "like" us on Facebook, and follow or subscribe to our blog, *The Belfry*, in order to keep up with us!

We offer information on upcoming events throughout the community, information about our own programs here at the MHA, and educational and encouraging articles and resources regarding mental health.

 [Facebook.com/MHANIagara](https://www.facebook.com/MHANIagara)

 [@MHANIagara](https://twitter.com/MHANIagara)

 Subscribe to our blog at:  
[mhaniagara.wordpress.com](http://mhaniagara.wordpress.com)

Our *HELP Book – Directory of Community Services* is also available online and is smartphone compatible!

Find it at:  
[Helpbookniagara.wordpress.com](http://Helpbookniagara.wordpress.com)



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#### MISSION STATEMENT

MHA in Niagara County, Inc. will offer programs and services aimed at promoting mental health while advocating for individuals with mental illnesses and working toward dispelling commonly held misunderstandings regarding mental illnesses.

#### EXECUTIVE BOARD

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