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The Mental Health Association in Niagara County, Inc. is funded by the New York State Office of Mental Health, the Niagara County Department of Mental Health, the United Way of Greater Niagara, the Grigg Lewis Foundation, grants, and voluntary contributions.

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U.S. Postage
PAID
Lockport, NY 14094
Permit NO. 453**

Summer Edition: July 2022

The Voice

A letter from our Executive Director



Hello Friends of the MHA,

Don't you love when a good idea comes to fruition? Yeah, I do too. That's why...

The MHA, in collaboration with the Niagara Falls Housing Authority (NFHA), is pleased to announce that they will be offering Mental Health Support Services to residents of the NFHA.

Over the course of the past few months, the two agencies have been working together to develop a plan to make this idea come to fruition. So, starting August 1st, this dream will be realized.

The agencies will be working together to support the behavioral health recovery, as well as physical health and wellness efforts of the residents, by providing experienced mental health staff who will work one-on-one with residents who may need, or want, additional support to help them better identify, manage, and recover from mental health issues they may be dealing with.

We are really excited to be working with the NFHA on this new programming for their residents. I applaud the foresight and progressive thinking of their Executive Director, Clifford Scott, as well as the Authority's Board of Commissioners, for their commitment to addressing the needs of their residents.

"We are excited to be working with MHA on this very important initiative," says Clifford Scott, NFHA Executive Director.

Daniel Colpoys
Executive Director

The MHA Conducts Training for Lockport Police Department

By: Crystal Hites

The best way to describe what happened between the Peer Specialists of the Mental Health Association in Niagara County and the Lockport Police at their Mental Health training on 6/1/22 was a sincere, deep, heart-to-heart. There was a ton of education on topics such as Kendra's Law and how police and Crisis Services work together, of course, but it became a very real, deep, and emotional event for everyone when Jean and Melissa, Peer Specialists, opened up about their experiences with police. Both these Peers found the courage to speak up about the good and the bad, and its lasting impacts on their lives. The ultimate intention of this was to help overcome stigma of mental illness, addiction, domestic violence, and criminal backgrounds; to help police understand what its like to have a mental health breakdown and go through a mental health, drug, or domestic violence arrest; and to help police understand the long-term impact of their actions with people. The Lockport Police were admirably receptive and compassionate, and likewise opened up about their own challenges of keeping themselves safe and handling the trauma of dealing with horrific calls earlier that day and still being expected to perform. It was meant to be a training for the police, but I suspect that everyone present learned something that day and saw themselves as being in a room with fellow humans at the end, not in a room with Police and Peers. This was a wonderful outcome.

We hope to continue working with the Niagara County Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and Crisis Services to provide more of these trainings that break down stigma and barriers both ways, and make our community a safer and more welcoming place for all.

The MHA would like to thank the following individuals and groups for their financial support to the MHA during the past 3 months:

- Terri Arendas
- Niagara Wheatfield High School Softball Team
- Lockport High School Softball Team
- Niagara's Choice Federal Credit Union
- Grigg Lewis Foundation
- Carol Spedding
- The Zonta Club of Lockport

Your support allows us to provide better service and supports to the individuals and families that we work with.

Here's something we know you want to hear about!

The Mental Health Association in Niagara County creates and distributes the "Directory of Community Services," affectionately know as the "Pocket-sized Help Book." This is a collection of just about EVERY resource for ANY need in the entire county!

These Help Books are available for pick-up in office, or for local delivery. We can complete orders of up to 10 books for FREE.

Give us a call and get your Help Book today!

716-433-3780

Directory of Community Services

HELP

31th Edition



Brought to you by the Mental Health Association in Niagara County, Inc.

"The Information and Referral Specialists"

PHONE: (716) 433-3780

WEB: WWW.MHANC.COM

COUNTY-WIDE HELP LINE: (716) 433-5432

Planting Seeds of Hope

By: Rhiannon O'Shea

In May, the Mental Health Association in Niagara County organized a suicide prevention event in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month, called "Planting Seeds of Hope." This event was hosted by the gracious members of the Colonial Heights Free Methodist Church.



This event featured a presentation by Community Education Coordinator, Rhiannon O'Shea, on suicide awareness and prevention. Along with this, the most impactful moments came during the panel discussion. See pictured panelists from left to right Almon Porter, Kevin Swift, founder of Save the Michaels, Julie Israel, and a staff member of the Veteran's One-Stop Center of WNY, Ignatius "Iggy" Golombek. Panelists had personal experience with suicide, either their own ideation or that of their loved ones.

We are grateful to our collaborators, including the Niagara County Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, the New York State Office of Mental Health, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and the Suicide Prevention Center of New York State.

Thank you to everyone who participated. September is National Suicide Prevention Month. The MHA will be participating in several events focused on suicide prevention and education.



Meet our new hires!

Mia Forney, Summer Intern

My name is Mia and I am the MHA's summer intern this year. Although I will only be in this role for a short while, I have been connected with the MHA since December 2020 as a volunteer through the Compeer Niagara program. I have enjoyed being a volunteer and offering support and friendship to my match so much that when given the opportunity to intern at MHA and take on an even more involved role, I immediately jumped at the chance. Being a volunteer with Compeer Niagara has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my life and having the opportunity to meet and build relationships with the other program participants has been wonderful.



As an intern at the MHA, I have assisted with monthly event planning for both the adult and youth programs, including our drop-in youth programming, small crafting groups, and the annual Compeer Niagara picnic. Additionally, I have created a pilot, month-long wellness challenge for the Adult Compeer Niagara program consisting of weekly, attainable goals such as spending time outside, stretching, or drinking enough water. So far, we have had multiple clients actively participating and have challenges planned for the months of August and September as well!

Outside of my roles as intern and volunteer, I am a graduate student at the University at Buffalo in both the School of Social Work and the School of Law. I am pursuing a Master's degree in Social Work as well as a Juris Doctorate. My goal is to utilize my skill set from these two disciplines to improve mental health treatment access for criminal legal populations through advocacy, policy reforms, and legislation.

April Vaughn, Hope House Peer Specialist

Hi, I'm April Vaughn and I'm a Peer Specialist at the Hope House. I worked in Pennsylvania as a Child Protective Services case worker and then I was promoted to supervisor. I moved back to New York to be closer to my family. In my spare time I rescue animals and help others as much as I can.

Why Mental Health Association Groups Helped Me

By: Jean Bonet

When I used to be a client of the Mental Health Association in Niagara County (MHANC), I learned many new coping skills and techniques in how to handle every day struggles. Attending groups gave me an opportunity to socialize, which satisfied my extroversion. The groups taught me how to live a more fulfilling life. I attended the Peer Support Group, in which we would talk about our everyday struggles and support each other in any way we can. Sometimes a person just needs to express concerns or problems and get a little feedback from someone who lives with the same struggles. This group is nice for that. There is a Grief Support Group. When I attended them, I was able to learn coping skills to help calm me and grow from the loss of my loved ones. Grief is a hard thing to deal with, and attending groups with someone who can relate is beneficial to how you grow as a person after the loss. The Depression and Anxiety Group was beneficial to me because I personally struggle with chronic depression and general anxiety. In this group, I learned how to manage my feelings and actions when I am depressed or anxious. I can now make the most of the time I would normally waste. In all of the groups, the most important thing for me was having someone to lean on when I was struggling with something. That's one of the best things about going to groups at the MHANC. It also afforded me the opportunity to live my life to the fullest. I now have coping skills to help me in any situation that life throws at me.

New location starting June 2nd, 2022
St. Peter's Episcopal Church
140 Rainbow Blvd., Niagara Falls, NY 14303



Support Groups (18+)

Depression & Anxiety Support Group
Every 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month
3:30pm – 4:30pm

Grief Support Group
Every 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month
4:30pm-5:30pm

Dissociative Identity Disorder Social Hour
Every 2nd and 4th Thursday of every month
3:30pm – 4:30pm

Peer Support Group
Every 2nd and 4th Thursday of every month
4:30pm – 5:30pm

Crystal Hites: (716) 425-1458 or email chites@mhanc.com to register

Cancellations are posted on Facebook.

Support Groups are held using proper COVID-19 safety measures.

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

By: Daniel Colpoys



Beginning July 16, 2022, 988

became the new three-digit dialing code connecting people to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, where compassionate, accessible care and support is available for anyone experiencing mental health-related distress—whether that is thoughts of suicide, mental health or substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress. People can also dial 988 if they are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support.

Text (English only) is also available for those who prefer to text. When someone texts to 988, they will be responded to by a group of Lifeline crisis centers that respond to chat and text. Once connected, a crisis counselor will listen to you, work to understand how your problem is affecting you, provide support, and share resources that may be helpful.

Dan Colpoys
Executive Director
ext. 310

Mary Ann Bucolo
Finance/HR Director
ext. 302

Crystal Hites
Peer Activities Director
ext. 311

Tara Porter
Compeer Niagara
Director
ext. 307

Sara Arndt
In-Home Respite
Coordinator
ext. 313

Rhiannon O'Shea
Community Education &
Referral Coordinator
ext. 309

Rosemary Marvin
Hope House Director
716-439-8086

Program Assistants
MHA Main Desk
ext. 301