



# The VOICE

Brought to you by the MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION in Niagara County, Inc.

Winter 2017

36 Pine Street | Lockport, NY 14094 | (716) 433-3780 | [www.mhanc.com](http://www.mhanc.com)

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## Our HELP Book is ONLINE!

Take our HELP Book with you everywhere you go! Computer & smart phone accessible. Our HELP Book can be found at: [www.helpbookniagara.wordpress.com](http://www.helpbookniagara.wordpress.com)

## Become a Member

Call us for a membership form at 433-3780 or submit online at [www.mhanc.com](http://www.mhanc.com).

From the Desk of the

## Executive Director

{ [cablacklock@mhanc.com](mailto:cablacklock@mhanc.com)  
Ext. 302

Hello and Happy New Year!

The MHA works extremely hard to provide the many services we offer for those residing in our community, but we need your help! We are currently looking for volunteers to be matched with the children and/or adults in our Compeer Program. We are also seeking paid, part-time staff to provide child care for children who have diagnosed mental illnesses and their siblings. We provide the necessary training and do so many fun things! Why not give the office a call to find out how you can help today?

As every New Year comes along, so do new obstacles for the MHA. Be it healthcare changes, a new President, or new rules and regulations, I'm sure there will be even more stumbling blocks set in front of us throughout 2017. However, I believe that we will climb over those stumbling blocks, beat those challenges, and come out bigger and better than ever. I am confident in that because we have such a great staff here at the MHA! Our staff is full of individuals who are energetic, determined, dedicated, and devoted to helping others. They help individuals set personal goals and work with them to achieve those goals. I listen as the staff talk amongst themselves trying to come up with ideas to help clients with things we've never encountered before. I've listened as they've laughed at their own out-of-the-box ideas and just a few weeks later, those ideas become reality. It's amazing what can be done when you work together.



Cheryl Blacklock

The MHA is extremely proud of its ability to collaborate with so many others in our community such as Family & Children's Services, the Dale Association, The United Way, the Grigg Lewis Foundation, ENH, NFMCC, Community Missions, the Niagara County Department of Mental Health and so many others.

We say: "Bring it on 2017....we're ready for you!"

*Cheryl*

**Book Review:*****Father Hunger, Fathers, Daughters, & Food***

Jackie Kenney, Program Assistant  
 jak47@mhanc.com  
 Ext. 301

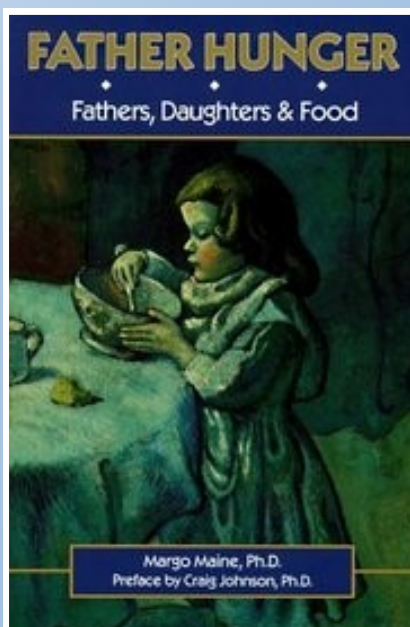
**COME EXPLORE THE MHA LIBRARY!**

Looking over the shelves in the MHA library for a book to highlight in this issue of the Voice, I realized there are more than 25 books dealing with food issues, weight issues and eating disorders. Clearly this is an area we feel compelled to explore!

The book I chose is *Father Hunger, Fathers, Daughters & Food* by Margo Maine, Ph.D.

Dr. Maine began treating young people with eating disorders in 1980, recognizing that this type of disorder was more than a fad, and sadly she has been proven correct. Anorexia nervosa, bulimia, compulsive eating, yo-yo dieting, and poor body image are all forms of eating disorders that have an effect across economic and social divides and are not limited to the young. Of course many of us have a love/hate relationship with food and these things are not limited to something serious enough to require medical treatment and a diagnosis.

The information presented in this book is quite thought-provoking and may be applied to one who may not have a specific eating disorder, but who has recognized that there may be issues relating to food and eating habits that need to be addressed. Exploring the relationship with a father or father figure might help explain some of the habits and difficulties associated with what food we put in our mouths. Whether the problem is eating too much, eating too little or making poor nutritional choices, a better understanding of ourselves and our unrecognized needs may help us improve the quality of our life.



## PROGRAM UPDATE:

## Compeer Niagara

Tara Porter, Director  
 tporter@mhanc.com  
 Ext. 307

It's a new year full of new experiences for Compeer Niagara! We have exciting activities taking place in 2017.

- ⇒ Compeer has teamed up with an Environmental Educator from the New York State Parks Department to provide awesome events throughout the year. The Compeer Kids program will be trying everything from snowshoeing to kayaking! Not only will we be exploring new interests, but exploring new locations and learning all about what the State Parks in our county have to offer.
- ⇒ The Adult Compeer program has exciting things ahead, too! We've teamed up with a variety of local resources, expanding our presence in different areas throughout the county. We will be experiencing everything from live musical entertainment to fishing.
- ⇒ This year we are focusing on networking and building relationships within our program along with volunteer recruitment. Our first volunteer recruitment event is an exciting one! Please be sure to check out the information below.

Compeer Niagara Presents...

## BREAKFAST WITH THE BEATLES



[www.facebook.com/pastmastersband](http://www.facebook.com/pastmastersband)

**Looking to be part of something awesome? Here is your chance!**

**Learn about becoming a Compeer Volunteer AND enjoy an entertaining night out.**

On February 15<sup>th</sup> from 6:00–8:00pm, Compeer is hosting Breakfast with the Beatles! \$5.00 gets you a meal (breakfast for dinner), live music by the Past Masters, and the chance to learn about Compeer! Past Masters is made up of award winning Buffalo area musicians that celebrate the music of the Beatles. Compeer provides a fun, flexible volunteer opportunity that fits into your current lifestyle.

The event is taking place at the Town of Wheatfield Community Center (2790 Church Road, North Tonawanda). RSVP to Tara Porter at 433-3780 by February 10th.

As you can see, Compeer Niagara has great things ahead and we would love for you to be a part of them! I look forward to hearing from you!

I get by with a little help from my  
 Friends

PROGRAM UPDATE:  
Community Education

Pamela Szalay, Director  
pszalay@mhanc.com  
Ext. 304

In 2016, Community Education staff reached over 2,500 individuals and much of that was a result of a big increase in demand from schools this past fall. Since September, Pamela Szalay, the Director of Community Education, and Kimberly Kennedy, the Youth Education Coordinator, worked hard to keep up with the requests.

Community Education Highlights for Fall 2016:

- ◇ Presented to over 500 youth in schools on important mental health topics such as depression, anxiety, suicide prevention, grief and conflict resolution
- ◇ Provided Support Group Facilitator Trainings in both Niagara and Erie County
- ◇ Offered Mental Health Screenings and educational materials to the public on National Depression Screening Day, which took place October 6th at the Lockport Public Library
- ◇ Provided training to over 200 teachers and school staff on youth suicide prevention and mental health awareness
- ◇ Received nearly 20 hours of training on youth suicide prevention

Coming up in the months ahead:

- ◇ There are many more school presentations already booked for grades K-12 – and schools continue to call and schedule presentations!
- ◇ Plans are being made to provide the “Hearing Distressing Voices” training this spring.

**Call us if you would like to have a presentation at your school or organization!**

PROGRAM UPDATE:  
Respite

Margaret Lewis, Coordinator  
mlewis@mhanc.com  
Ext. 312

The Respite Program is expanding and currently servicing 9 families throughout Niagara County!

The Respite Program provides free, short-term, in-home child care for families in Niagara County who have a child or children under the age of 18 with a current mental health diagnosis that requires ongoing treatment. Childcare is given by screened and trained respite staff. Please call and ask to speak with the Respite Coordinator to schedule an intake visit!

Did you know that the Respite Program also offers free group respite? We meet the first and third Thursdays of every month from 6:00pm till 8:00pm at the Mental Health Association on 36 Pine St in Lockport. Please call for more information.



**PROGRAM UPDATE:****Peer Services**

Steve Ferguson, Coordinator  
sferguson@mhanc.com  
Ext. 311

Happy New Year everyone! This past year was a very exciting time for us at the Mental Health Association. We have introduced some new staff who are advocating for those in the community and our support groups at HOPE House (344 Walnut Street) in Lockport have been going well.

Our current groups are focused on:

- ⇒ entering or re-entering the workforce for individuals with a mental health concern (Monday at 11am)
- ⇒ expressing ourselves creatively (Monday and Wednesday at 5pm)
- ⇒ improving self-esteem and understanding self-acceptance (Friday at 6pm).

These groups are not only available to guests at HOPE House, but to adults in the community as well. If you have any questions or suggestions for the peer services at HOPE House please contact me at the MHA office, either by phone or via email (see above).

I want to say thank you to all of the great Peer Specialists the Mental Health Association employs in our various programs. Whether it's at HOPE House, Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center, Peers in Niagara County, or our Hospital Diversion program they all do excellent work and I am personally extremely grateful for all their hard work.

**Meet one of our Peer Specialists**

My name is Tamara and I am a Peer Specialist at the HOPE House. My duties at the house are to aid house guests and provide them with linkages to assist them in getting through whatever they have going on. At the HOPE House, we provide many different services to our guests and help set them up with assistance outside of the house, all while allowing them to enjoy a peaceful home-like setting instead of a chaotic hospital setting. We have amazing support groups that guests can attend while staying at the house, or even after they go back home. There is also a 24-hour phone line people can call to talk to us if they need someone to talk to and need help de-escalating a situation before more serious intervention becomes needed.

As someone who has been to a psychiatric hospital myself, and someone who suffers with multiple mental illnesses, I think the HOPE House is an amazing service to be offered to the people who need it. I feel every day we save people from needing emergency hospitalization by allowing them to have a person to talk to and a place to stay when things get tough, and to me, that is an amazing service.



**Did you know...**

The MHA has a **Legal Advocacy Program** that offers free legal assistance to individuals with diagnosed mental illnesses?



**The goal of the Legal Advocacy program is to help consumers of the community mental health system in Niagara County:**

- Maintain continuity of care
- Protect their legal rights
- Help obtain essential public benefits & necessary services

Both administrative and judicial services are offered.

(Please note: This program does not address criminal matters or civil law suits).

All investigations, reports, recommendations and services are confidential and provided without fee to eligible clients.



**Legal Advocacy can be provided for:**

- Supplemental Security/Social Security Disability
- Divorce, Custody, Visitation, Orders of Protection, Support
- Landlord/Tenant Problems
- Utility Shut-off Notices
- Complaints regarding out-patient mental health services
- Temporary assistance or food stamps cut-off or denial

Individuals with a mental health diagnosis can take advantage of legal advocacy services offered by MHA through a contract with Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc.

CSS eligible clients can receive legal assistance with SSI/SSD, Medicaid and food stamps, public assistance, landlord/tenant problems, divorce, child support, custody and visitation, and orders of protection.

**For more information or to see if you qualify for Legal Advocacy services, please call the MHA at (716) 433-3780.**

**What to Watch:*****The Many Faces of Mental Health***

Jackie Kenney, Program Assistant  
 jak47@mhanc.com  
 Ext. 301

*The Many Faces of Mental Health* is our own television show, presented with the help and support of LCTV. Local access television gives a voice to many in the community to raise awareness and educate those who may not always have a clear understanding about every issue.

Mental illness can be an invisible disability –and we attempt with our T.V. show to educate and inform as well as support those who may be dealing with those issues and may need your understanding and patience.

A recent presentation on *The Many Faces of Mental Health* is a perfect example of reaching out as well as supporting those who have a mental health diagnosis. Maggie Campbell, grief support group facilitator, and Kim Kennedy, MHA Youth Programs Coordinator, appeared on the show to talk about the emotional difficulties that the holidays can bring, and to suggest some ways to cope. The holidays are a time of happiness and cheer – or a difficult time of year to endure. If you have a chronic illness, if you have lost a job, if you are far from friends and family, or you have suffered the loss of a loved one, you may find the cheery attitudes of those around you difficult to bear. Both women have extensive training in helping to lead those who are suffering in ways to help themselves and make life more bearable. They had an in-depth discussion that offered understanding as well as tools for self-help. This show is available on a DVD at our office and can be watched at any time.

Our next show will include some members of the Healthy Minds group who would like to share with all of us the objectives of their organization and the goals they have set for the future of their group. Tune into *The Many Faces of Mental Health* on Tuesdays at 5:00pm and 10:00pm, Wednesday at 7:00am and Friday at 6:30am. You can also watch the show live online through the link on the LCTV.net. LCTV Channel 20, thank you for your contribution to mental health!



Watch *The Many Faces of  
Mental Health*

Channel 20

Tuesdays at 8 am and 10pm

Wednesdays at 7am Fridays at 6:30am

All programs are produced by MHA in Niag-  
ara County, Inc.

**LCTV**



**MHA**  
 MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION  
 in Niagara County, Inc.

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## Upcoming Events

Compeer Niagara Presents...

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#### Mission Statement

The Mental Health Association 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

Executive Director: Cheryl Blacklock  
 Board President: Rebecca Wydysz  
 Vice President: Stacy Passino  
 Secretary: Ryan Parisi  
 Treasurer: Emily Shield

#### Board Members

Chris Aiken	Isaiah Jordan
Rhonda Bivins-	Chris Roche
Talley	Dr. David Skiba
Lawrence Eggert	Michael H. White Jr.
Alix Hutchison	

*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 United Way of the Tonawandas, grants, memberships and voluntary contributions.*