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www.mhainde.org
A message from Jim Lafferty
Executive Director, Mental Health Association in Delaware

I’m writing this just after Thanksgiving and I’m mindful of the many people who we need to thank for supporting MHA and its work. As you read about our 75th Anniversary Celebration, you will see that we are honoring Jane P. Maroney with the Mental Health Association’s Lifetime Achievement Award. Jane’s life has been devoted to improving healthcare in Delaware, especially for children. She’s done this both as a private citizen and in her 20 years as a State Representative.

I first met Jane in 1998 as she championed Delaware’s Mental Health Parity Bill, which became law in January 1999. I had the pleasure of being with her in her office in legislative hall as she worked incredibly hard to get the bill to the floor for a vote and finally unanimous passage. This is how I came to know and admire Jane for her work as a legislator and as a person. Thank you, and congratulations Jane!

We had an extremely successful E-Racing the Blues 5K Run/Walk. Thanks to all of the organizations that sponsored the event. MHA would also like to thank all of the people who came out to walk or run, and those who made a donation. We owe special thanks to Jane Castle and the very dedicated committee who made the 5K such an overwhelming success.

Thank you to the 22 organizations that sponsored 35 screening sites throughout Delaware for National Depression Screening Day. Almost 600 people came out to be screened for depression. This would not have been possible without the support of our statewide collaborators.

The People of Color Mental Health Conference (POC) was expanded to a two-day event thanks to a partnership with the Attention Deficit Disorder Association. Both ADDA and MHA plan to build on this partnership next year. Once again this could only have been possible due to the tremendous support of the POC Planning Committee and Janet Kramer, M.D.

We have a wonderful and hardworking Board of Directors, staff, and group of volunteers here at MHA. As the Executive Director, I am grateful to them for their support and all the things they do collectively to make MHA a real contributor to a better understanding of the mind and body connection and the mental health of our friends and neighbors in the community.

Thanks to AstraZeneca for sponsoring this edition of our newsletter.

Finally, thanks to all of you who have so generously supported us financially over the years. Without your support, we would not be able to continue to grow as an agency.

Jim
Hon. Jane Maroney Q&A
By Pam George

When the Hon. Jane Maroney became a state representative in 1978, she made children’s issues a primary concern. “I found that child support was a major problem in Delaware,” she recalls. “It just started from there.”

She realized that many children’s issues stemmed from neglect, including mental health matters. Take, for instance, delinquency, which often stems from the child’s feelings of inadequacies and invalidation.

During her 20 years in the legislature, Maroney was a passionate advocate for children. That didn’t stop when she left in 1998. Currently she is chairman of the board of Connecting Generations, a mentoring organization formerly known as Creative Grandparenting.

At the 75th anniversary celebration of the Mental Health Association in Delaware on Dec. 20, Maroney will receive the Mental Health Association in Delaware’s Lifetime Achievement Award for her work on behalf of children and her efforts to secure insurance parity for mental health disorders.

Q: In Delaware, what are some common issues regarding mental health?
A: Perhaps adults are getting the services they need — never to the degree that the need reflects — but what we haven’t really looked into are services for children. It’s two different systems in Delaware and around the country overall. That’s what we want to target, and we want to do a lot of collaboration with both private and state — the whole panoply of groups that serve the mentally ill.

We need to focus more on our body, mind and spirit. Before, we focused on the neck down. The mind and body were treated as two separate systems. In recent years we’ve been much more connected between the mind and the body.

Q: Along with Rep. Pam Malier and Sen. Patricia Blevins, you introduced a parity amendment that ensures coverage for mental illness that is equal to that provided for physical disorders. What happened with that?
A: It took a couple of years to get a policy in place, but eventually the private insurance community began to realize its value, and it’s working pretty well. As you know, whenever there is a significant policy change, there are lots of reasons to do it and lots of support for not doing it. Change is difficult.

Q: Regardless of parity laws, insurance coverage is limited.
A: Right, even Medicaid doesn’t cover it adequately.

Q: Is there a shortage of providers?
A: There is a shortage for both adults and children, particularly children.

Q: Because many children are under the care of several caregivers during the day — school, daycare, after-school care — is it hard to spot mental health issues?
A: It isn’t hard to spot. They’re largely in school, and the school — in dealing with the behavior problem — just puts them in an alternative program. There isn’t a comprehensive system working for a child’s mental health, and I think that is what the Mental Health Association in Delaware will attempt to do.

Q: You’re actively involved with Connecting Generations. Why the name change from Creative Grandparenting?
A: We’re largely a mentoring organization, and when we’d go out to recruit, particularly among young workers, they’d say, “Well, I’m not a grandparent.” Bob Kasey started the organization in 1990, and it was an appropriate name at that time because he wanted to spend his retirement years becoming a better grandparent. That name persisted for 15 years. When Bob died, we felt it was time to make the transition.

Q: What kind of programs does Connecting Generations offer?
A: We do a Seasons of Respect program [which focuses on in-school, peer-to-peer relationships. It is presented to fifth-grade students in cooperation with the University of Delaware, the Delaware Department of Education’s Positive Behavior Support program and the Delaware State Attorney General Office’s Bully Prevention Program]. We do workshops on transitions for the baby boomer generation who are working less and looking for ways to serve the communities.

Q: What age groups do you focus on?
A: Elementary and middle school. We haven’t tried high school yet. Each of those age groups is so different in their needs and how you work with them. We felt the earlier the start the child gets, the better. My real passion is those babies age 0-5. There is so much going on in those big brains that we haven’t really appreciated.

Q: How do you feel about receiving MHA’s Lifetime Achievement Award?
A: I always feel somewhat embarrassed about being cited for whatever work that’s being recognized. You need leadership and all kinds of support to make the issue in the community. It’s something that always be shared.

Child Mental Health Matters in Delaware

On the occasion of the agency’s 75th anniversary, the Mental Health Association in Delaware announces the “Child Mental Health Matters in Delaware” campaign.

Mental health is vital to a child’s healthy development so they can learn, grow and lead productive lives. Yet, it is clear that children’s mental health problems are widespread. One in ten youth have mental health problems that impair how they function at home, school, and in the community (1). Unfortunately, 75% to 80% of children and youth in need of mental health services do not receive them (2). It is time for a community-wide commitment to address these needs.

Starting in 2008, MHA will partner with local organizations, public and private providers of child mental health services, families, schools, the media, as well as the business community to launch a statewide, grassroots initiative focusing on children’s emotional and mental health well-being. Campaign objectives will be to increase public awareness of children’s mental illnesses, combat the stigma and myths that surround these disorders, and improve the detection and treatment of children’s mental disorders. Key campaign messages include:

• Mental health is essential to children’s overall health and well-being.
• Mental disorders in children are real, common and treatable.
• Early identification, diagnosis and treatment help children and families reach their full potential.
• Left untreated, children’s mental health disorders can lead to problems at home, trouble in school, substance abuse, and even suicide.

Children’s mental health matters!

Be a part of our children’s future. Join us in support of this important statewide campaign.

In 1908, a small group of people led by Yale graduate Clifford W. Beers decided that the mental health system in America was in serious need of reform. Less than a decade earlier, Beers himself had entered a mental hospital following a nervous breakdown. His experiences there left him determined to change conditions faced by psychiatric patients throughout the country so, with the help of a few like-minded citizens, he founded the National Committee for Mental Hygiene (NCMH).

In 1932, Delawareans joined the movement for the mentally ill, removing the stigma associated with mental health. In that year, Beers established the Delaware Mental Health Association (MHA) as an affiliate of Beers’s National Association in Delaware (MHA).

Over the next few decades, MHA added many projects to fulfill its original mission. Staff members and volunteers worked closely with communities and the mentally ill to provide them entertainment and understanding and treatments, this cruel practice eventually stopped.

In the early 1960s, the agency established a halfway house for the mentally ill and a preschool for emotionally disturbed children. During the 1970s, MHA assumed management of mental health services from the State of Delaware and opened a Children’s Mental Health receiving center. In 1988, MHA took over a Delaware Diocesan Substance Abuse and Mental Health and other state and nonprofit agencies to form the Suicide Prevention Coalition. The primary focus of this program is to develop a comprehensive Suicide Prevention Plan to be implemented statewide. In the fall of 2003, MHA was awarded the Martin S. Gilman Superstars in Business Award for Excellence for a Nonprofit Organization, presented by the Delaware-Wayne Chamber of Commerce’s Nitty-Gritty Business Alliance. In 2007, MHA received the United Way Community Impact Award for its after-school program.

Now in its 75th year, MHA continues to uphold the legacy established by Clifford Beers and the dedicated citizens who took the lead, educating the public about the causes, symptoms, and prevention of mental disorders.

A History of the Mental Health Association in Delaware

The story of our symbol — The Mental Health Bell

Cost from suicide article issued there, this bell shall ring out for the mentally ill and victory over mental illness.

During the early days of mental health treatment, asylum patients and mental hospitals were used for their discarded chains and shackles. On April 13, 1936, at the McShane Bell Foundry in Baltimore, Md., Mental Health America melted down these inhumane bindings and recast them into a sign of hope: the Mental Health Bell.

Now the symbol of Mental Health America, the 300-pound Bell serves as a powerful reminder that the invisible chains of misunderstanding and discrimination continue to bind people with mental illness. Today, the Mental Health Bell rings outhope for improving mental health and achieving victory over mental illness.

Over the years, national mental health leaders and other prominent individuals have rung the Bell to mark the continued progress in the fight for victory over mental illnesses.

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People of Color Mental Health Conference

Some people recall middle school as a time of fun, laughter, and exciting changes as they navigated hallways crowded with old friends and unfamiliar faces. Not Keisha Zollar. For her, middle school was bleak, treacherous, and very nearly fatal. Memories of childhood sexual abuse propelled her into a deep depression and, in the 8th grade, she attempted to take her own life. Now Keisha is a graduate of the University of California, San Diego, and a member of the National Mental Health Awareness Campaign’s Speakers’ Bureau.

On Saturday, November 3, she delivered the Keynote Presentation at the Mental Health Association in Delaware’s 6th Annual People of Color Mental Health Conference at Delaware Technical & Community College. In her presentation, “Stigmas of the Stigmatized,” she shared her experiences with abuse, depression, and the stigma she faced as an African-American woman with a mental disorder. Moved by her courage and the ease with which she approached such a difficult topic, the crowd gave her a heartfelt standing ovation.

Following Keisha’s successful presentation, conference attendees, many of whom were local high school students, participated in workshops, discussion forums, and a youth-oriented play about substance abuse. Other topics included community youth development, sexuality, and cancer. During these educational sessions and discussions, participants gained a greater understanding of mental health as it relates to people of color. Conference attendees also visited the many exhibits which provided information on several topics related to mental health.

In addition to Saturday’s event, this year marks the first time MHA has collaborated with another agency to coordinate this conference. On Friday, November 2, the Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA) hosted a similar event at Del Tech aimed at educating participants about the causes, symptoms, and treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. MHA would like to thank ADDA and its committed staff for all its hard work, and Del Tech for providing us with great facilities and service.

National Depression Screening Day

On October 11, 2007, the Mental Health Association in Delaware participated in the 17th Annual National Depression Screening Day coordinated by Screening for Mental Health, Inc., as part of its Stop A Suicide Today! campaign. In addition to screening for common mental health conditions such as depression, the event was also designed to educate the public about suicide in order to empower them to recognize its warning signs and find local resources for treatment and prevention.

This year MHA was able to recruit 35 screening sites throughout the state of Delaware, breaking last year’s record of 31. Due to the efforts of the agency and its collaborators, nearly 600 individuals were screened for depression, 140 of whom were referred to a mental health professional for further evaluation and treatment.

The Mental Health Association in Delaware would like to thank the dedicated volunteers at each screening site for making this year’s National Depression Screening Day a statewide success!

A pharmaceutical company saving you money on the medicines it makes.

If you take any AstraZeneca medicines, you may be surprised that there’s someone you can turn to for help if you can’t afford them: us. A family of four without prescription coverage making up to $60,000 per year may qualify for patient assistance. The AstraZeneca Personal Assistants can assist you in signing up for programs that can provide you free medicines or significant savings if you qualify.

We’ll be the first to admit we don’t have all the answers. But, as a pharmaceutical company, we recognize that when you trust us to help you, we feel we owe you the same trust in return. That’s what AZ&Me is all about. A place we’re creating to put the personal touch back into healthcare.

Please visit AZandMe.com, or call 1-800-AZandMe.

AstraZeneca is proud to be a supporter of the Mental Health Association in Delaware.
What a day to remember!
361 people crossed the finish line.
Personal race records were broken.
Teams of runners and walkers, as well as families and friends, shared a day of sun, exercise, music and camaraderie.

Congratulations to our special prize winners:
Team captain with the most team members - Jack Akester
Individual who raised the most donations - Jane Gibson
Mental Health Association in Delaware Support Groups Winter 2007

Please call to register. (302) 654-6833 in New Castle County, or in Kent or Sussex (800) 287-6423

To maintain the privacy of our members, MHA does not publish support group locations; locations are provided with registration. Support groups sponsored by MHA are not intended to replace professional mental health treatment.

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If so, the Mental Health Association in Delaware and the Division of Child Mental Health Services would like to invite you to join a support group for family members and/or caregivers of children with special needs related to emotional, behavioral, and mental health challenges.

Support groups will meet monthly in Wilmington and Milford

During these sessions, participants will talk about issues related to caring for children with emotional difficulties including services currently available and the need for additional services. Because these meetings are designed to support caregivers, we ask that children not attend. Families who need babysitting services to attend the meetings will be able to request limited funds to pay for them.

For more information or to sign up for a group near you, call
Paul Galonsky at (302) 654-6833, or in Kent or Sussex (800) 287-6423.