What’s New at MHA?

Check out this latest edition of the Update to find out more about our new and continued programs, including our E-Racing the Blues South Walk that happened social distance style, our Peer trainings that have gone virtual, and some of our new Wellness Groups that are all available via Zoom.

Since news of the novel coronavirus hit our country and Governor Carney’s State of Emergency first went into effect in Delaware on March 13, 2020, the Mental Health Association in Delaware has been working diligently to get our services and programs up and running virtually. It has been a huge learning curve for us all as a majority of our programs involve face-to-face interactions and gatherings. But thanks to our hardworking staff, support from our Board, flexibility from our volunteers, generous donations from sponsors and individual donors, and patience from our clients and program participants, we have successfully moved online and continue to provide mental health support in safe and healthy ways. This has been a tough time for our entire community, state, nation and world. While this pandemic has shaken economies and created many challenges and hardships, it has also developed a sense of connection and unity. We are all in this together, and individuals have stepped up to help our hurting communities. Our deepest gratitude goes out to our frontline workers, including our law enforcement, healthcare providers, grocery store personnel, letter and delivery carriers, and anyone and everyone who is working and keeping us safe. Thank you!

As we continue to navigate these uncharted waters together, MHA commits to continue to fulfill its mission of education, support and advocacy however it can. Mental health awareness has always been important, but it seems even more imperative this year. While mental health is still a stigmatized topic, there is a deeper sense of compassion and empathy as more people are collectively experiencing the stresses of COVID-19 and its ripple effects, anxiety, depression and co-occurring disorders. We are here now and will continue to be here once we overcome this!

-Jennifer Seo, Deputy Director
MHA held its first Paint Away the Blues FUNdraiser on March 12, 2020 from 6:30-8:30PM at Painting with a Twist in Wilmington. Fifty percent of each registration fee was donated to MHA. We had 15 budding artists who not only enjoyed the painting, but each other’s company and comparisons of our novice artwork. Paint Away the Blues was a wonderful way to unleash creativity and reduce stress.

Did you realize that art, whether simply observed as beauty or creating it yourself, is a relaxing and inspiring activity that has many benefits for your mental health? We humans are more creative than we give ourselves credit for, and no special talent is needed to paint away those blues. Once you unleash that creativity, your inner artist will awaken, bringing you many unexpected benefits.

Creating art stimulates the release of dopamine, the feel-good neurotransmitter, which can help if you are battling anxiety or depression. It’s a wonderful form of self-expression which can make you feel focused, in control of your work, and give you a sense of mastery and self-accomplishment once your project is completed. Painting puts you in touch with your inner child. Do you remember him/her?

While engaged in painting, you open the gate to the palette of awareness, where you can be focused, concentrating, and fully present in this moment, just like when you were a child. Back then, nothing mattered more than simply having fun.

Hope to see more budding artists at our annual Paint Away the Blues next year. Until then, brush up (no pun intended) on your skills and keep connecting to that inner child of yours!!

-Roberta Fishgold, Development Manager
Check Out Our Virtual Wellness Groups

While we have had to temporarily hold off on holding our regular wellness groups for the time being due to COVID-19, we recognize the importance of staying connected, especially during this unusual time of social distancing and physical isolation.

Especially for those struggling with depression, anxiety and grief, being able to share experiences, ideas, and mutual support can be a lifeline, and we want to continue to ensure that those who need it have access to Peer Support.

We are currently offering virtual support groups via Zoom, which can be accessed through an online link or phone call. Email Rochelle Balan at rbalan@mhainde.org, or call Shynia Baldwin at (302) 597-8130 in order to register and receive the link and/or number. We have included a schedule of our current offerings.

Remember, social distancing doesn’t mean social isolation!

-Rochelle Balan, Community Educator

Group Schedule

Depression and Anxiety
Mondays 1-2 PM
Wednesdays 6-7 PM

Game Night and Karaoke
Mondays 7-8PM
Fridays 7-8PM

Recovery 1st Support
Tuesdays 6-7PM

Parents Helping Parents
Wednesdays 7-8PM

Seeking Safety
2nd & 4th Thursdays 12:30-2PM

Stress Relief Workshop
Thursdays 5-6PM

Apps to Cope with Stress
Thursdays 6-7PM

Survivors of Suicide (for Greif and Healing)
Thursdays 7-8 PM

Self-Care with Meditation
Fridays 6-7PM

Please visit www.mhainde.org for descriptions and additional information regarding each group. We hope to virtually see you at one of our meetings!
E-Racing the Blues South, Social Distance Style

E-Racing The Blues for Mental Health South was supposed to take place on Saturday (4/4) and while we couldn't all get together in Rehoboth Beach, we were able to get outside and spread awareness!

We asked our MHA supporters to put on an E-Racing The Blues t-shirt and walk (6 feet apart!) in their neighborhoods in memory of whomever they were planning to walk for at the race.

Not only does this benefit our own health, but it supports MHA and the entire community, as we join together in spirit (and sneakers) to put forth our annual E-Racing the Blues For Mental Health South! It was a way to show commitment and connection at a time in history when we need it most!!

These are a few of the pictures that we received from our staff, board and other supporters in the community. Thank you to all who participated!

-Roberta Fishgold, Development Manager
Peer Training is Now Online!

The Peer Training and Outreach Services Team has been able to make a smooth transition to working in a remote environment during the pandemic. Prior to March 16, 2020, we provided all training services in a classroom environment. In addition to training services, other members of the team are responsible for conducting “The Consumer Satisfaction Surveys” on behalf of the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH). We also provide oversight and supervision for the Peer Internship Program with DSAMH providers. In light of emergency orders established to combat the public health crisis, the “world” as we knew it needed to quickly change and we began our new approach with how we provide our services.

One of our long-term initiatives has been to offer Peer trainings in an online environment. Due to the health crisis, we’ve been able to begin this process and enter into a new reality! Director of Technology & Development, Kyneta Lee, worked with MHA administrators and identified a platform to do just this: Talent Learning Management System (Talent LMS).

Talent LMS is a software program which will enable MHA to provide Education and Training programs electronically, enable us to manage the process (create, assign, grade, make changes, etc.) in an organized fashion. Better yet, we have seen potential for enhancements in evaluations and data management. The silver lining throughout these difficult times has been our ability to grow and expand in our use of technology. To date, we are already seeing an increase in attendance to the trainings we are now performing. Thanks to the efforts made by the Peer Training & Outreach staff, we were able to go live with three separate continuing education unit classes (CEUS) in late March and April. We did so by incorporating the use of ZOOM Conferencing and Talent LMS. We provided classes on COVID19, a class on the use of Sensory, and Informed Consent.

Perhaps the biggest hurdle, our Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS) Training, is thankfully well on its way to the Talent LMS platform to become a virtual training. We are taking an “all hands-on deck” approach to making this happen. The Peer Educators are working on re-writing and updating each module and associated activities/quizzes of a 500+ page manual. Meanwhile, the Outreach staff are doing their part by editing, making and editing videos, and providing technical support.

Our new class for CPRS Training begins on May 18th. It’s important to put this all into perspective, however, as CPRS Training has traditionally been held in-classroom & consists of five full days. Because of social distancing and restrictions, effective May 18th, approved participants will commit to four weeks of self-paced study & assignments, along with weekly one hour live ZOOM sessions with a facilitator. Our goal for the future is to streamline all trainings and to offer both independent study and/or in-classroom trainings for all.

Interested in taking one of our Peer trainings? Please visit our online registration link: mha-in-de.corsizio.com

-Karen A. DiNardo, Director of MHA Peer Training & Outreach Services
The Mental Health Court (MHC) Peer Team has been successfully interacting with our clients and working hard to provide much needed resources despite the COVID-19 pandemic. A special shout out goes to Peer Mentor, Miguel Pozo, who has been a beacon of hope and an inspiration in his tireless effort to ensure that each of our Mental Health Court participants have the basic necessities they need. We also want to recognize Peer Mentor, Gina Atencia, who was given a Commendation by Superior Court Judge Rocanelli for her help and insight with a client who needed inpatient treatment. The MHC Peer Team worked together to identify a program and provide safe transportation for this individual. We are grateful to those who make it possible for our team to continue to serve in safe ways and save lives during this difficult time, including the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health. We will continue to be available to our clients and thank them for their patience as we navigate these waters together.

-James Cephas, Director of Mental Health Court Peer Team

New to MHA

MHA’s Empowering Community Wellness Council Presents: Candid Covid-19 Conversations:

As our communities face an unprecedented pandemic in the form of Covid-19, we have all been left with questions, concerns and even a general uncertainty about what the future holds. The planning council behind the previously titled Community Mental Health Conference invites you to join us for a series of conversations examining mental health, treatment and how various organizations are adapting to provide much needed support and resources to those in need. Engage with our speakers in real time or just listen in as they share new perspectives and timely information to empower our community and promote wellness across the mental and physical health spectrum. If you would like more information, please contact our Community Educator, Jason Coleman, via email at jcoleman@mhainde.org.
Nicotine & Mental Health

The Mental Health Association in Delaware offers free resources and information to individuals struggling with nicotine addiction. This information is provided in English and Spanish to educate our communities about nicotine and mental health while also giving Delawareans access to quit lines and other local resources.

Communities and individuals struggling with mental health illnesses are among the largest group of tobacco users. Commonly, this population uses smoking and vaping as a way to cope with everyday barriers, which may prolong their mental conditions and lead to physical ailments (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Studies show that those diagnosed with schizophrenia and anxiety related disorders had higher prevalent rates of tobacco use.

Tobacco and nicotine are increasingly more addictive as e-cigarettes and vape products become more popular among younger populations. This could lead to early stages of addiction and early onset of a plethora of health concerns (Templeton, 2019). In addition to the negative effects that smoking can have on an individual’s mental well-being, smoking is dangerous to overall health and places individuals at increased risk for heart disease, cancer, and many other life-threatening illnesses.

For information about quitting, please contact the Delaware Quitline at 1-866-409-1858 or visit Quitnow.net for information in Spanish and about online support.

For information about mental health and nicotine or any other related brochures, please contact information@mhainde.org.

-Rochelle Balan, Community Educator