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 upcoming E-Racing the Blues South, happening May 1st and 2nd, and our monthly “Homestretch” webinar series providing timely information to our service members, veterans, military families, and those that serve them.

Flyers posted in the following pages link to virtual peer training opportunities and provide zoom information for new groups developed during this time of social distancing. We also have information about evidence based training that is now being offered virtually to help us continue to educate our community about mental health and suicide prevention.

Make sure to save the date for our upcoming Empowering Community Health Symposium (formerly the Community Mental Health Conference) which will take place on May 6th, from 9AM to noon, on zoom, the first of two events this year that celebrate the 20th year of this important conference.

As always, we want to say thank you to our hardworking and dedicated staff, our caring and supportive board members, our faithful and helpful volunteers, our generous sponsors and funders, and all of our friends and supporters in the community who have allowed us to continue to serve Delaware during this time, by executing our mission of advocacy, education and support!

We are especially thankful to our sponsors of this year’s E-Racing the Blues south, listed below:

- Tanglewood Total Wealth Management - Presenting Sponsor
- Stephan & Cyndi Lehm - Silver Sponsor
- VanDemark & Lynch - Silver Sponsor
- All Saints Episcopal Church - Silver Sponsor
- Claire & Ray Boston - Silver Sponsor

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!
Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we have reached a year of living in a pandemic, the role that connection plays in our daily lives continues to be apparent. While many of us have lost a lot of face-to-face contact with our peers, we’ve also gained a lot of in-your-face contact with those in our households, and this can feel both lonely, and stressful. Unfortunately, loneliness and stress can be detrimental to our mental health. One study which came out of Harvard and followed graduates for 75 years looking at all aspects of their health and wellbeing, found that those with strong relationships were happier and healthier overall. So how do we build strong relationships, especially during a pandemic? What stood out to me most in my research on the topic was intentional communication and service. We might set aside time to have dates with our partner or have a meal with our children (which are really good things to do) but still miss the communication that would improve our relationships. We do need to give of our time generously, because multi-tasking is not actually something humans can do well, so when we communicate we also need to focus on the other person without the distractions of our phone, tv, etc. We also need to listen, not so that we can formulate a response, but so that we can actually understand the other person’s thoughts and feelings and better meet their needs. Conversely, we need to speak clearly and openly about our own thoughts, feelings and needs even if it feels hard, rather than expecting someone else to predict or understand them automatically.

If you are alone in your household (and even if you aren’t), it is especially important to make the effort to connect with other people on a daily basis. Make a list and call or text one person a day. Chat with your neighbors outside. Find an online community – MHA has wellness groups that can be accessed through zoom via your phone or a computer. Be intentional about building relationships with others and fostering those relationships over time. Interestingly, when we focus too much on being positive or happy, it can actually lead to disconnection, isolation, and having the sense of time slipping away. Instead, we should consider how we can be of service to others. When that becomes the goal, connection and happiness naturally follow. Especially during this time of social distancing, this could include finding ways to connect with those who are isolated. Happiness research tells us that it’s not just pleasure that bring us happiness, but connecting to a deeper sense of purpose, which is why focusing on service is more likely to bring happiness than focusing on happiness itself. Our work may not always be pleasurable (i.e. the current endless cycle of laundry, dishes, email and zoom), but when it is meaningful, it can be one of the major contributors to our wellbeing. The kind of work we do is less important than the meaning we attach to it – it is serving others? Is it earning success for ourselves and protection for our families? Is it the work of parenting our beloved children or mentoring our grandchildren? Is it the work of serving our communities? These are the things that lead to fulfillment much more than the possessions our work allows us to buy, or even the experiences it allows us to have. So as we journey down what we all hope is the homestretch of this pandemic, make sure you continue to focus on connection for your own health, and the health of those around you. And thank you so much for reading, and connecting with us here at MHA!

Gratefully,
Emily Vera
Stressed out? Check out this infographic from the National Institute of Mental Health:

I'M SO STRESSED OUT!

Is it stress or anxiety?

**Stress**
- Generally is a response to an external cause, such as taking a big test or arguing with a friend.
- Goes away once the situation is resolved.
- Can be positive or negative. For example, it may inspire you to meet a deadline, or it may cause you to lose sleep.

**Both Stress and Anxiety**
- Both stress and anxiety can affect your mind and body. You may experience symptoms such as:
  - Excessive worry
  - Uneasiness
  - Tension
  - Headaches or body pain
  - High blood pressure
  - Loss of sleep

**Anxiety**
- Generally is internal, meaning it's your reaction to stress.
  - Usually involves a persistent feeling of apprehension or dread that doesn't go away, and that interferes with how you live your life.
  - Is constant, even if there is no immediate threat.

Ways to Cope
- Keep a journal.
- Download an app with relaxation exercises.
- Exercise and eat healthy.
- Get regular sleep.
- Avoid excess caffeine.
- Identify and challenge your negative thoughts.
- Reach out to your friends or family.

Find Help
If you are struggling to cope, or the symptoms of your stress or anxiety begin to interfere with your everyday life, it may be time to talk to a professional. Find more information about getting help on the National Institute of Mental Health website at www.nimh.nih.gov/findhelp.

www.nimh.nih.gov/stressandanxiety
Join us for a
VIRTUAL WALK FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION
“REHOBOTH BEACH STYLE”
Saturday, May 1st and/or Sunday, May 2nd

In honor of May being Mental Health Month, we are walking to raise awareness! Put on your sneakers and sunscreen and head outdoors to show your support for suicide prevention awareness and/or to remember a loved one!

No participant fee. Registration is required. Visit www.eracingtheblues.org to sign up create a team, and/or make a donation.

PRICES AND CONTESTS
All participants and donors will be entered to win gift cards from participating Rehoboth restaurants.

Start a team and you’ll win a prize if your team receives the most donations!

Create a sign for mental health to walk with and send pictures to rfishgold@mhainde.org The participant with the best sign will win a prize!

Please share photos from your walk on social media and tag us (@mhadelaware) or send to rfishgold@mhainde.org so we can share!
Join us for a monthly webinar aimed at improving mental health and suicide prevention in the military community—among current and former service members and their families, and those who serve them, especially in the field of behavioral health care.

Webinars typically take place the third Tuesday of the month from 12 to 1. Prior topics have included Spirituality During and After a Pandemic, Resources for Caregivers and SAVE Suicide Prevention training.

Upcoming topics include the following: SKY Breathing, Women’s Mental Health, Trauma, Cognitive Therapy, Substance Use Disorders, and Military Sexual Trauma.

To register, visit our homepage at mhainde.org and click the link. If you have questions or would like more information about the program, please contact our Director for Suicide Prevention, Jennifer Smolowitz, MPH at jsmolowitz@mhainde.org.
Empowering Community Wellness Symposium (Formerly the Community Mental Health Conference)

Event Details:
Thursday May 6, 2021.
Time: 9am-12noon.
Registration Link:
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_l8OLkJUETwSaqfNhVCAk-Qg

We are very excited to announce the rebranded 2021 Community Mental Health Conference as the Empowering Community Wellness Symposium. Marking the 20th anniversary of the conference, this small shift in name highlights what has always been the core goal of the event: Empowering and improving our community by providing access to resources, timely information and an opportunity to connect with the leading pioneers in mental health. We remain committed to this goal and energized at the opportunity to see this event evolve and expand as we celebrate this important milestone.

The 2021 Empowering Community Wellness Symposium will be held virtually on Thursday May 6th, 2021 from 9am till 12Noon. We are also planning a second related event later this year as part of the 20th year anniversary and details of that will follow. For now we are very excited to open registration via the link above and share some more details about the agenda!

Keynote: Lisa R. Savage LCSW - Disrupting Systems that Reinforce Trauma and Racism. Owner of the Center for Child Development and Delaware Center for Counseling and Wellness & President of the Association of Black Social Workers in the State of Delaware. Lisa Savage will be our Keynote presenter for the day as we look at trauma, racism and the interconnection with mental health in our community.

Panel Discussion: This interactive dialogue will focus on the impact of the Coronavirus Health Pandemic on a number of supportive services industries that directly relate to mental health. Each panel member is bringing a wealth of experience and insight into the areas of Health care, Therapeutic Services, and Higher Education. Shea Marriott, LMSW, MSW, Dr. LaKeetra Josey, and John E. Roland, PhD will be comprising our panel.
At MHA, we provide several evidence based courses including two that can now be provided virtually: Mental Health First Aid and QPR.

**Mental Health First Aid** is a day-long skills-based training course that teaches participants about mental health and substance-use issues. Just as CPR helps you assist an individual having a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid helps you assist someone experiencing a mental health or substance use-related crisis. In the Mental Health First Aid course, you learn risk factors and warning signs for mental health and addiction concerns, strategies for how to help someone in both crisis and non-crisis situations, and where to turn for help. Topics covered include depression and mood disorders, anxiety disorders, trauma, psychosis, and substance use disorders. Mental Health First Aid teaches about recovery and resiliency—the belief that individuals experiencing these challenges can and do get better, and use their strengths to stay well.

**QPR** stands for Question, Persuade, and Refer — the 3 simple steps anyone can learn to help save a life from suicide. QPR can be learned in as little as one hour. As a QPR-trained Gatekeeper you will learn to:

- Recognize the warning signs of suicide
- Know how to offer hope
- Know how to get help and save a life

QPR is an emergency mental health intervention intended to identify and interrupt the crisis and direct that person to the proper care.

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For more information, including how to register, contact Jennifer Smolowitz at jsmolowitz@mhainde.org
A Peer Recovery Specialist is an individual who has lived experience with mental illness, addiction, co-occurring conditions, AND recovery. Peer Recovery Specialists are specially trained professionals who support others going through similar life challenges they once experienced. They assist individuals in developing the skills and resources they need to live an independent and productive life in the community.

MHA regularly offers a variety of free peer education trainings. We offer Peer 101, an introductory training explaining the role of a peer specialists and the skills needed to succeed in this challenging and rewarding career.

We also regularly offer Peer Certification Training, the required, 40 hour training needed to earn peer certification in the state of Delaware.

Finally, we offer a variety of CEU trainings on special topics, such as Ethics and Boundaries, Supervision, and more.

You can find our class schedule and registration here:
mha-in-de.corsizio.com

You can also find more information about peer services on our website, under the info tab:
https://www.mhainde.org/peer-services/

Interested in Becoming a Peer Specialist? Virtual Training is Available
Check Out Our Virtual Wellness Groups—Email rbalan@mhainde.org for more information

Women's Support Group

Thursdays: 5pm-6pm

Zoom Meeting ID: 873 1630 2914

Callers Welcome: 1 646 876 9923

Mental Health Association of Delaware
Advocate. Educate. Support.
Visit mhainde.org/about/support-group-schedule for the current schedule
Mission:
The Mental Health Association in Delaware promotes improved mental well being for all individuals and families in Delaware through education, support and advocacy.

In pursuit of our Mission, we strive to:
• Improve the community’s understanding of mental health and the mind-body connection between mental and physical health.
• Provide education and opportunities for individuals to identify early warning signs of mental illness and subsequently provide programs and an environment that supports recovery and improved resilience for these individuals.
• Assure that those who request information and need mental health care referral have confidential access to the appropriate information and know how to obtain care.
• Advocate for improved support and treatment particularly at the state and federal levels, especially where reform is needed.