



Rooted In Recovery

NOTEWORTHY

News from the Metro Suburban Recovery Learning Community

460 Quincy Ave, 2nd floor, Quincy, MA 02169

617-472-3237

info@metrosubMSRLC.org



Growing In Community

April 2011

Breakfast At The Statehouse!!

It's not often the doors of the RLC close so if we're closed, it's something big-and the Legislative Breakfast was just that. Big!

On Tuesday, March 15th members of the MSRLC headed out to Boston for the Legislative Breakfast at the State House—and it wasn't just for the breakfast...However lovely.



Nicole McMahon (STEPS), Kim Anderson (CAUSE) & Alan Jensen (TRACS)

The annual DMH Citizens Legislative Breakfasts are a time for thanks and celebration! Open to the public, the breakfast is a forum for DMH service providers, programs, people and organizations (including the RLC) to express gratitude for the ongoing support of our legislators. This breakfast was specifically for the Northeast-Suburban area, of which we are a part.

It's also a time for us to celebrate our successes, both collectively and individually! During the breakfast we had the privilege of hearing 3 courageous speakers; Hilary Cook, Jifka Fitzpatrick, and Ronna Northrup; relay beautifully the impact DMH services had on their lives, and subsequently the lives of those around them.

Nicole McMahon, one of the founding members of STEPS in Arlington, was one of the two emcees for the event. She also spoke of her own experience of having been in a residential group home. The day was particularly meaningful for her as she has recently celebrated one year of living in her own apartment!!

Commissioner Barbara Leadholm gave the opening remarks. She also spoke about the support and efforts on behalf of mental health funding by the cosponsors of the breakfast - Senator James Eldridge and Representative Jonathan Hecht.

Susan Wing, the Northeast-Suburban Area Director, provided closing remarks.

The Mental Health System is transforming - People benefit from services, hard work and meaningful, mutually supportive relationships.



The Survivor Theatre Project

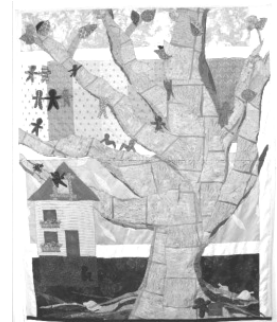
Recovery and Healing From Sexual Violence

“Our goal is, through art, to move, engage, and empower our communities to break the silence and end sexual violence.”

The Metro Suburban RLC is sponsoring two performances by the Survivor Theatre Project on April 19 and April 21. Their performances are not just the telling of recovery stories but a short play written, directed, and performed by members of the Project. While personal stories provide the foundation, the play itself incorporates mythology, music, and movement.

The name of the play they will be performing is ‘*Memories of Trees*,’ written in 2010. The Tree, at first, is as source of innocence and playfulness. But the Tree soon transitions into a symbol of childhood pain and chaos, as in the scene where the fruit is picked from the tree while it is still unripe. The multi-dimensionality of the Tree builds as it also serves as a source of strength, and ultimately liberation as adult survivors struggle for healing and change.

Both performances are open to everyone. We urge our members to pass the word to family, friends, and others about these events. There will also be an opportunity for dialogue between the artists and the audience following the performance.



Survivor Theatre Project Performances

Dates and Locations

April 19

12 pm – 1 pm
Metro Suburban RLC
460 Quincy Ave, Quincy

April 21

6pm – 7pm
MRLC – Framingham site
1881 Worcester Road, Framingham

Some Thoughts On Being A Community

A community is made up of individuals with different backgrounds, gifts, and experiences. At the RLC each individual has a say in how things are run and what is shared. Some are further along on the road to recovery; but all are important towards making a real community, striving towards better Understanding and health.

A community is a place where you can feel welcome. It is also a place where you are not afraid to be yourself. This will be a place where you can receive support and understanding from others. It is also where people can help each other by learning from one another. It should be a place where you take what you need. Then give back just as much if not more.

Sherrie Steen

There once was a person who didn't have a clue. Locked in a room away from me and you. Then it was out, finally free. Looking for help at the MSRLC. Speaking to Carol, Deb, Jen, Rhiannon, and all the volunteers. It became a very happy person full of laughter and cheers.

Ralph Marple –

Reality Check – The Link Between Mental Illness and Violence



The recent killings of a mental health counselor in Revere and a homeless shelter case worker in Lowell by individuals with a “mental illness” are tragic events. In direct response to these events, State Mental Health Commissioner Barbara Leadholm established a Task Force to assess current safety policies and practices.

In a February 8 press release she said ***“With the support of the mental health community, we hope to learn how we can ensure the safety of our staff and clients, while continuing to provide opportunities for individuals with serious mental illness to live safely, productively and as independently as possible in the community.”***

The Task Force will be focusing on ***“specific aspects of the Department’s community system, including risk management practices, appropriate access to and utilization of criminal history information (CORI), safety training and safety provision for provider staff, the guardianship process and the issue of mandated community treatment.”*** (Feb 8 press release).

Unfortunately a violent act by an individual identified as being “mentally ill” is big news and further adds to the social stigma we already face. Being considered dangerous has a devastating effect on our prospects for relationships, acceptance by the communities we live in, becoming involved in our communities, employment, and housing. Even our expressions of different emotions can be carefully watched and often misinterpreted: Are we happy or manic?, sad or depressed?, legitimately angry or about to “explode”?

So how serious is the link between mental illness and violence? Several studies have been done, both in the United States and in Europe. Dr. Richard Friedman, MD in an article published in the New England Journal of Medicine describing the results of these studies, stated:

“The challenge for medical practitioners is to remain aware that some of their psychiatric patients do in fact pose a small risk of violence, while not losing sight of the larger perspective – that most people who are violent are not mentally ill, and most people who are mentally ill are not violent.”

Several studies also identified some key risk factors for violence. Individuals prone to violence usually have a combination of factors including substance abuse, a history of having been a victim of violence, and homelessness, as well as “increased” symptoms such as strong paranoid thoughts.

Other studies and reports demonstrate that individuals with mental illness are far more likely to be the victims of violence. In fact, according to the Bureau of Justice statistics – Americans with any type of disability (physical, emotional, mental, intellectual) are victims of violence nearly 2 times as often. These acts of violence include robbery, physical assault, rape, and even being killed.

To All Our Readers - Please provide us with your feedback – your thoughts, opinions, and suggestions on these two important topics – ‘ Violence & Mental Illness and the impact of the Budget Cuts on the next page. Now that are website is up and functioning – we hope to start a blog. In the meantime please email or snailmail your comments to the RLC office. We will be printing as many responses as possible in our next newsletter!!!

Budget Cuts Forcing Hard Choices

Massachusetts, like other states all over the country, is struggling with financial issues and budget cuts. In MA the funding to DMH has been cut by almost \$85 million dollars since the year 2009 and more cuts are coming.

The proposed budget for 2012 would further decrease DMH funding by \$21.4 million. The cuts would affect mental health services for both children & adolescents and adults. It would also eliminate another 160 hospital beds.

An alternative being explored by several states is creating programs and services more focused on wellness and prevention. These services are community based and include using trained peers in the workforce as Peer Counselors, Peer Wellness Coaches, and Peer Bridgers. (Peer Bridgers work with individuals who are transitioning back into the community after long or frequent hospital stays.)

Peer Crisis Respite Services are also being successfully utilized to reduce the need for emergency room services and hospital admissions. Their goal is to support individuals in learning how to better manage crises through self- advocacy education, self- help training, and recovery and relapse prevention skills.

While Massachusetts is already moving towards a more recovery oriented model – we can do more! In a time when we need to learn “to do more with less”, we need to make different choices. We need to significantly increase the numbers of paid peer staff. We need to create and support a wide range of community based services that will help individuals recover and maintain their recovery. Services need to include working with individuals in further developing and utilizing a wide range of skills – helping them develop and maintain their physical and emotional health, personal development, interpersonal skills, and job related skills.

“Recovery Is Real”. Let’s work together to make it possible for everyone!!

ADVOCACY ALERT - UPCOMING & RELATED EVENTS

Department of Mental Health Task Force on Staff and Client Safety

April 14 6pm – 8 pm

Solomon Carter Fuller Mental Health Center Auditorium
85 East Newton Street
Boston

Save Mental Health Funding Rally

April 7 at 11:30 am

State House Steps, Boston

Following the rally and petition about the proposed cuts to Clubhouses will be delivered to the House and Senate Leadership. There is also a plan to visit with different legislators to discuss the issue of cuts.

(Advocacy Alert cont)

**Brain Storming Session With Rob Walker
From the DMH Wellness Initiative Subcommittee**

The focus of this brainstorming will be ways of improving our physical health, through nutrition and physical activity. Individuals with mental health issues often have serious physical health problems as well and end up dying **25** years earlier.

April 14 12 pm – 1:30 pm

Metro Suburban RLC office
460 Quincy Ave, Quincy

RLC and the YMCA - Helping Us Help Ourselves

by Richard Caruso

For several weeks now, I have been part of the RLC group that works out Tuesday and Thursday mornings at the Quincy YMCA. Working out has helped me not only physically, but also when dealing with anxiety and depression. It is good to be doing something that is making me a stronger person. It has also been fun!

The people at the YMCA have been really nice to us, and the team leaders of our group, Mike McNeice and Jay Crossen, help new members to learn the nautilus machines and get used to where everything is. Everyone works out at their own pace and there is no pressure. Overall, the group has been so helpful that I now have my own membership, but continue going with the RLC group because they are my friends and **exceptionally cool** people. I would like to encourage other RLC members to join the Quincy YMCA.

Our motto? “Whatever shape you’re in, it can only get better!”

The RLC Collaborative Training Series:

Advancing Organizations and Peer Support!

The six Recovery Learning Communities are combining their talents to produce a continuing education curriculum. It is very exciting and by the end of the project, we will have produced 10-15 training curriculum as well as a number of DVDS for members of peer community and general public to share.

There are a number of beneficial outcomes which will result from the project. First, the planning of the project has unified the six uniquely different RLC’s in the state. Secondly, the project will build leadership capacity and create a knowledge base within our peer community. Finally, the materials developed through the project will educate the general public about the work being done in the peer community. The money to fund this project comes from a block grant (federal dollars) dispersed through the Department of Mental Health.

Noteworthy April 2011

(training series cont)

Some of the topics which will be offered as trainings include: Supporting and Supervising Peer Facilitators, the Peer Facilitator Training Project, Conversations that Matter (dialogue skills and practice), “How to Make and Keep Friends”, Video on Compassionate Listening Phone Services, Building a POWERFUL Professional Workforce, Financial “Peace”, Perspectives on Mental Health, and Creating Alternatives to Suicide Groups just to name a few.

The Metro Suburban RLC will focus on Financial Peace, the Peer Facilitator’s Project and Conversations that Matter and we would love for you to be a part of creating these materials and our DVD! So keep on the lookout for workgroups regarding the Peer Facilitator Project, Conversations that Matter and Financial Peace. In the meantime, don’t be surprised to see a videographer at some of our events as he gathers background footage which will showcase highlights of our Metro Suburban Recovery Learning Community.

RECOVERY FORUMS AND CONFERENCES

“The Wellness Path To Recovery: Integrating Physical and Mental Health”

These forums are sponsored by MBHP (the Massachusetts Behavioral health Partnership)

There is **no** registration **fee** for these forums – the events are free! However, **registration is required.**

If enough people register from the Quincy area we will try to organize carpooling for the forum in **Waltham on April 27.**

April 27 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm

- **Integrating “whole health” in our approach: the evidence**
- **Justice, trauma, recovery and health**

Hilton Garden Inn, 420 Totten Pond Road, **Waltham,**

April 29 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm

- **Wellness coaching and the social determinants of health**
- **Wellness, culture, and being seen in a hearing world**

Sturbridge Host Hotel, 366 Main Street, Sturbridge

May 5 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm

- **New Organizational Cultures: integrating health & mental health**
- **Access, engagement and culture in health and mental health care**

The Fuller Craft Museum, 455 Oak Street, Brockton

The [Registration](#) form can be downloaded from the Transformation website at

www.transformation-center.org

You may also register by calling the Transformation Center
at 1-877-769-7693 TTY: 617-442-9042

“Creating Connections through Dialogue”

A Weekend to Learn Together, Deepen Connections, and Expand Our Vision of a Healthy World

During this weekend, cosponsored by all 6 RLC's and the National Empowerment Center; we will come together to learn, to share our knowledge, to join in interactive discussions and brainstorming sessions, and to explore how our individual and collective connections promote wellbeing and social change.

Health and mental health providers, people with the lived experience of mental health recovery, family members and others are invited in special sessions that will be offered to dialogue together so that we become more effective in our lives and in our work.

We will be meeting at

Endicott College (on the ocean), Beverly, MA

June 10-12

For more information visit the National Empowerment center website at www.power2u.org

USPRA Conference To Be Held In Boston This Year

The United States Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (**USPRA**) is a national organization whose members include *“psychosocial rehabilitation agencies, practitioners, and interested organizations and individuals dedicated to promoting, supporting and strengthening community-oriented rehabilitation services and resources for persons with psychiatric disabilities”*.

(**MassPRA** is the state chapter of **USPRA**.)

USPRA holds a yearly conference of its own, in addition to the yearly conferences held by the different state chapters of USPRA. This year's conference will be held in Boston June 13-16.

One of the keynote speakers at this year's conference will be **Representative Patrick Kennedy** (Rhode Island). His first hand experience with bipolar disorder and alcoholism has contributed to his understanding of the need for improvements in our mental health system and the need to “break the stigma” that attaches to mental illness.

While in Congress he worked with others to include mental health parity in health insurance coverage. He also introduced legislation to help states respond to the psychological effects of terrorism, to address crisis shortages of children's mental health providers, and to keep families with severely mentally ill children from being broken up.

“I knew what it was to suffer, so I knew that this was real. There was no doubt in my mind that this was a physical illness that people were suffering from because I was suffering from it. It was very concrete in my mind that this needed to be worked on. That's why I've always worked on it—and through my own personal suffering.” (Patrick Kennedy)

Another keynote speaker will be **Patricia Deegan**. “Pat is an activist in the disability rights movement and has lived her own journey of recovery after being diagnosed with schizophrenia as a teenager..., Pat Deegan will discuss the power of the human voice to disrupt and transform the behavioral health system. Using examples from her own work, Pat will discuss how technology can be emancipator

Noteworthy April 2011

(USPRA conference cont)

when it is designed to amplify the voice of people with psychiatric disabilities. She will reflect on how our practice can be transformed when we allow ourselves to be led by the people we serve. “

More than 70 workshops, covering 8 key areas, will be offered during the conference. The large number of workshops allow participants to focus on a deeper understanding of one area or to sample workshops from several areas.- depending on their interest.

The different areas the workshops will be addressing are: Integration of Health Care; Vocational Engagement; Children and Youth In Transition; Evidence Based Practices; Cultivating Wellness; Effective Strategies for Administration, Management, and System Change, and Effective Strategies for Practice.

If You Would Like To Attend the Conference:

The Transformation Center is offering scholarships for the registration costs. Contact Dennis Torres by phone at the centers toll free number 877-769-7693, by email at dennist@transformation-center.org or by fax, 617-442-4005.

USPRA is looking for volunteers to help out at the conference. For one day of work the volunteer will receive a free pass to the next day

visit www.masspra.org for more information and “ links of interest” about the key note speakers as well as information on workshop topics

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Peer Workers Support Meetings --

Open To All Individuals Who Provide Peer Support –

Certified Peer Specialists, Peer Facilitators, Peers working as volunteers and other Peer Workers are encouraged to attend

April 15 12:30 pm – 2 pm at Advocates, 1881 Worcester Ave, Framingham

April 20 1 pm – 2:20 pm at Quincy office, 460 Quincy Ave, Quincy

COMING IN MAY

**** exact dates, times, and locations to be determined ****

We will be posting more details on our website as events are scheduled!

Tai Chi workshop

Living Into Wholeness workshop

Film Series

- ***Take These Broken Wings***
- ***Healing Homes***

Notice From DMH

MRC & DMH are jointly putting on a series of regional events around the state to highlight existing, and build new, collaborative efforts between the agencies and our respective providers. The date and location for the event in the Northeast-Suburban Area are not yet set, though we are actively looking for 1 clubhouse member (who is working) and 1 CBFS consumer (who is working) who would be willing to sit on a 3 person panel to discuss their employment story and share their thoughts on the value of employment in their lives. In addition to the panel, the day will include comments from Commissioners of both agencies, DMH- and MRC-specific breakout sessions RE: eligibility and services, lunch, and presentation on specific examples of collaboration. A stipend (\$30) is available for each consumer; transportation assistance may also be provided.

(This is all the information we have right now! We will post information on our website as we receive it.)

Calling All Volunteers!

There's lots of work to be done at the MSRLC and lots of people are eager to help. Do it together!

**Every Friday
Between 10:30 am – 2:30 pm
people just like you are joining forces for
Volunteer Collaboration Day.**

Have fun, meet people, and work hard to contribute to the continued growth and development of the MSRLC. Coffee and beverages will be provided. You're encouraged to bring in snacks/baked goods to share!

Reminder – we show a movie every Friday afternoon starting at 2:30 pm. So you can come in to work and stay for a free movie!!!!

See you soon!