

Recovering Together, June 2005

*A joint publication of the Peer-to-Peer Resource Center
and the STAR (Support, Technical Assistance, and Resource) Center*

Welcome to the second issue of **Recovering Together**, a newsletter focused on self-help and recovery for people with mental illness! The newsletter is published electronically four times per year.

The Peer-to-Peer Resource Center at DBSA

The Peer-to-Peer Resource Center was established in 2003 to promote peer support as essential to wellness and recovery for people with mental illnesses. The Center has a particular focus on training and advancing the position of Peer Specialist as a viable employment option for consumers. Our major activity is to train consumers as Peer Specialists using our nationally-developed model training curriculum.

The Center operates under the auspices of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) and serves all people with mental illnesses.

NAMI STAR Center

STAR CENTER stands for Support Technical Assistance and Resource Center. The Center promotes recovery by providing support, technical assistance, and resources to enhance self-help in diverse communities. STAR Center provides support, technical assistance and resources to help improve and increase the capacity of consumer operated programs. Self-help is recognized a major element of recovery, as well as peer provided services and supports opportunities. The Star Center collects, disseminates a wide range of culturally appropriate materials and resources. You can access the web site at www.consumerstar.org a National toll-free telephone line 1-866-537-7827

The STAR Center is funded by the Center for Mental Health Services, Of SAMSHA of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Focus on Peer Support and Cultural Competency

An Interview with Ramiro (Ray) Guevara, Director, STAR Center

Raised a second generation Mexican-American in a one-parent home, Ray Guevara and his family found themselves homeless when he was seven years old. Dealing with abuse and ongoing poverty, Ray began abusing drugs and alcohol and became part of a gang by the time he was 11 years old. With a lack of services and attention to mental health issues in his community, no one singled him out as needing help.

Ray first heard the term "recovery" in jail when he became a part of 12-step groups there and began to realize the problems caused by his drug and alcohol use. "Something stuck," says Ray, as he reflects on the importance of peer support even then. After marrying and starting a family, Ray had an even stronger desire to recover and improve his life. But despite successful participation and leadership in support groups, Ray still was unaware of his bipolar disorder and struggling with alternating depression and high energy. He was sober but still miserable, with low self-esteem and little prospect of success.

Six years after becoming clean and sober, Ray read an article on bipolar disorder written by a peer and remembers thinking, "This is the problem." When he went to the behavioral health center for assistance, he was diagnosed and then immediately hospitalized. He remembers thinking, "Now my life's over." In the hospital his peers again proved to be the biggest help to him. He connected with another person with bipolar disorder, got treatment, and began to improve. He fought against staff that focused on his diagnosis and limitations. However, the scars and stigma were still there, and he struggled to find ongoing support for his recovery.

Two years later, Ray says that he recognized that his major success to date was staying clean and sober with the help of his peers. He recalls thinking, "What if I applied these same principles to my mental health?" He decided to take charge of his own recovery.

Always interested in being of service, Ray kept busy volunteering, assisting with groups and talking to other Spanish-speaking consumers. As a result of his work, he became known in the service delivery community which led to a job interview. Many people warned him that going to work might threaten his disability benefits. But Ray realized that he viewed the world differently and

decided to try for the job. Wearing his first suit, from the Salvation Army, Ray was interviewed by a company named Telecare and was hired on the spot.

As an employee, Ray now changed roles and began to walk into facilities where he had once been a patient to help his peers. He contributed his extensive knowledge of community resources and trained staff on what's helpful and not helpful for consumers. Some professionals rejected his presence, but he was welcomed by others. "I never saw myself as a worker or staff," says Ray, "just a peer."

Ray credits his success at Telecare to the fact that everyone there was recovery-oriented. In his view, having consumers as a part of service delivery affects an organization's culture. He continued to move up in the organization, and two years ago he was approached by NAMI and asked to head up their "In Our Own Voice" program which provides consumers with opportunities to share their stories with others. When he left that position earlier this year to take the helm of the STAR Center, IOOV had grown into the largest anti-stigma program in the country, operating in 35 states.

Asked why a focus on cultural competence is so important in the mental health arena, Ray points to the ongoing disparity in care and resources between different cultural groups. For recovery to be a reality, he maintains, it is essential for techniques and services to be responsive to the people to whom they are offered: "One size doesn't fit all." When he thinks about what has been helpful to him personally, he thinks of his one-time therapist, of Cambodian descent, who really believed in him. "She was not from the same culture as me," he notes, "but she respected my values and my culture."

For 2005, the STAR Center is concentrating its focus in several areas relating to cultural competency, including offering resources on culturally-competent mental health service delivery and sponsoring a series of teleconferences. The next teleconference is scheduled for July 7 and will focus on housing and recovery. The Center is also funding a number of consumer scholarships to the October 2005 Alternatives Conference in Phoenix, AZ. Ray invites all consumers to use the resources on STAR Center web site, and to contact the center for technical assistance on cultural competence, which he believes is applicable to all. "The themes of recovery and hope are universal," Ray says.

STAR Center National Toll-free Teleconference Series: On Housing and Recovery

When: Thursday July 7 p.m.

What: We will discuss frankly some of the difficulties in finding and keeping decent safe, and affordable housing

To Participate: Send an email to HousingAndRecovery@nami.org or telephone the STAR Center at (866) 537-STAR. We will retain your contact information and inform you of the toll-free dial-in number for the call by July 6th.

Teleconference Speakers:

Wayne Cochran is director of the Naugatuck Housing Authority in Connecticut. He has worked for the National Resource Center on Homelessness and Mental Illness as its housing specialist, and for the Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation on a contract from the Dep. Of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals to finance housing for Community Support Program consumers. He also served for six years as chair of Mental Health Consumers Advocates of Rhode Island.

Bryan Greene is the director of policy and program evaluation in HUD's office of fair housing. Mr. Greene is the chief policy advisor to the Assistant Secretary on all civil rights matters. His office oversees legislative and budget matters and the development of policy on lending, insurance and emerging fair housing issues. Mr. Greene also represents the Office of Fair Housing On Capitol Hill, before other agencies, and at the White House.

Anne O'Hara is co-founder and Associate Director of the Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc. (TAC). She is a National Expert on Policies and practices to expand affordable housing opportunities for people with disabilities and in implementing supportive housing approaches for people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. Recently Ms. O'Hara provided consultation and technical assistance on supported housing to the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health and co-authored the housing issue paper for the Commission's Subcommittee on Housing and Homelessness. Prior to joining TAC, she served as Assistant Secretary for Housing and Director of Rental Assistance for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Andrew Sperling directs NAMI's legislative advocacy program in Congress and before federal agencies. Since 1994, he has also served as Co-Chair of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Housing Task Force a coalition of national disability organizations working to promote access to affordable housing opportunities and community supports for people with disabilities. Mr. Sperling is also involved in an emerging coalition led by the National Alliance to End Homelessness and the Corporation for Supportive Housing to promote federal policies to address the issue of chronic homelessness.

CMHS Teleconference is June 23

Free Teleconference Training: Decreasing Stigma Associated with Mental Illness in the American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

You are invited to participate in our free teleconference training, "Decreasing Stigma Associated with Mental Illness in the American Indian and Alaska Native Communities." The SAMHSA Resource Center to Address Discrimination and Stigma (ADS Center), a project of the Center sponsors this teleconference training for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The session is free to participants.

Date: Thursday, June 23, 2005

Time: 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Eastern Time)

To register for this teleconference, please complete the form located at Stopstigma.samhsa.gov/regpage.htm. Also, feel free to pass on this invitation to others who might be interested. For more information, please contact America Doria-Medina by email (stopstigma@samhsa.hhs.gov) or by Telephone at 1-800-540-0320. Please note: Registration for this teleconference will close at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 22, 2005.

Training Summary

Access to mental health services within the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities is hampered both by internal stigma-the reluctance of members of these communities to seek mental health services; and external stigma-prejudice, and misinformation about AI/AN traditional healing practices held by outside providers.

The speakers for this teleconference training will:

Discuss the unique factors in the AI/AN communities that may contribute to stigma associated with mental illnesses. Describe efforts to address stigma in AI/AN populations. Discuss efforts to address stigma directed toward AI/AN persons with mental illnesses by providers. Share effective models or approaches to address stigma toward AI/AN persons With mental illnesses by providers. The training will be provided by:

Donna Grandbois, MS, RN, Clinical Instructor in Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing and The Family in the Community Case Management course at the University of North Dakota, and a member of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribe;

Daniel Bill, Clinical Manager of Outpatient Services for the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation in Bethel, Alaska, and a Yupik Alaska Native; and

Commander R. Andrew Hunt, MSW, LICSW, Community Development Specialist, Indian Health Service, National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), Portland, Oregon, and a member of the Lumbee Tribe.

Speaker presentations will take approximately 60 minutes and will be followed by a 30-minute question-and-answer period. Anyone who responds to this invitation will receive confirmation by e-mail. Prior to the teleconference, participants will receive an online link to presentation materials and log-in instructions for the call.

To subscribe or unsubscribe to this list, please visit the Consumer Survivor page of the Center for Mental Health Services Web site at: <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/consumersurvivor/>

The Center for Mental Health Services is a component of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Peer Specialist Training

During 2005, the Peer-to-Peer Resource Center is conducting Peer Specialist training events in collaboration with these partners:

- Veterans Administration VISN 17/South, Central, and North Texas facilities, Center for Health Care Services, Heart of Texas MHMR, MHMR of Tarrant County, DBSA Texas
- Illinois Department of Human Services/Division of Mental Health and Division of Rehabilitation Services
- Access Behavioral Health, Inc., ABH Consumer Advisory Council, and Lakeview Center, Inc. (Florida)

Trainees are being recruited by the Center's training partners and must meet specific criteria. For more information on training, contact Lisa Goodale, Peer Services Director, at (800) 826-3632, x155 or via e-mail at peersupport@DBSAlliance.org.

Organizations Promoting Mental Health with Diverse Populations

Cultural competence is key to the delivery of mental health services that meet the needs of the diverse U.S. population. Here are several resources to assist you and your organization:

- National Asian-American /Pacific Islander Mental Health Association (NAAPIMHA)
Steven Shon, M.D., President steven.shon@mhmr.state.tx.us
D. J. Ida, Ph.D., Executive Director djida@naapimha.org
- National Latino Behavioral Health Association
Ruby J. Martinez, President ruby.martinez@uchsc.edu
Marie Sanchez, Executive Director marie.sanchez@prodigy.net
- National Leadership Council on African-American Behavioral Health (NLC)
King Davis, Ph.D., President DrKingDav@aol.com

- Native American mental health organization
Jeff King, Ph.D., representative, jeffjking@earthlink.net
- NAMI Multicultural Action Center
Contact MACenter@nami.org

Alternatives 2005

Alternatives 2005 is the annual consumer conference sponsored under the auspices of the Center for Mental Health Services. Each Alternatives Conference offers in-depth training and technical assistance on consumer-delivered services and self-help recovery methods. This year's 20th anniversary conference takes place October 26-30, 2005 in Phoenix, AZ and is being coordinated by the National Empowerment Center.

"Like the mythological phoenix bird that rises from its own ashes in new power, many of us find new ways of being, functioning and making a difference," according to conference coordinator Judene Shelley. "We rise from extreme emotional distress and use our experiences of personal recovery to transform our systems of care into caring systems."

For complete information on conference schedule, registration, and scholarships, see the conference web site at www.power2u.org/alternatives2005.html or contact NEC toll-free at (800) 769-3728.