

Fall 2008

www.mhaac.net



MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA - ALLEGHENY COUNTY

Breaking the Silence

MHAAC'S 4th Annual Legislative Breakfast October 3 at Westin

For the fourth consecutive year, Mental Health America—Allegheny County will be sponsoring a Legislative Breakfast and Educational Workshop for service consumers, agency staff, volunteers and Board Members and members of the community. The Legislative Breakfast will begin at 8:30 a.m. on October 3, 2008 in the Ballroom at the Westin Hotel, located at 1000 Penn Avenue, in Pittsburgh.

The Breakfast is hosted by Mental Health America – Allegheny County's Let Our Voices Be Heard Coalition. Last year's event was attended by more than 150 people. Given the importance of the issues being discussed as we approach this year's elections, we expect a large audience once again.

We have invited many of our region's most influential elected officials. They will be speaking on a variety of issues, including the fate of funding services for people with mental and physical disabilities and the continuing struggle to provide adequate and affordable public transportation. These are services upon which so many consumers depend.

The Let Our Voices Be Heard Coalition is a program of Mental Health America - Allegheny County and is comprised of

individuals with physical and/or mental disabilities from across Allegheny County. The Coalition has been in existence for over six years. During that time, members have learned that positive contact with their legislators helps them feel more informed as they make a decision on how to vote on critical issues that matter to them including housing, transportation, and healthcare.

After lunch, attendees will be able to attend a series of Educational Workshops including sessions on Wellness and Self Advocacy.



It is the goal of the Legislative Breakfast to energize voters with disabilities and provide an opportunity to meet with representatives and hear from them about important issues. For the first time in the past six years, we have expanded the Coalition to reach out to college and university students

(Continued on page 5)

Inside this issue:		Myths About Mental Illness: Myth: There's no hope for people with mental illnesses. Fact: There are more treatments, services, and community support systems than ever before, and more are in the works. People with mental illnesses lead active, productive lives.
Voter Registration Deadline Fast Approaching	2	
United Way Campaign Launched	3	
MHAAC Welcomes New Staff	3	
Presidential Candidates Take Positions on MH	4	
SAMHSA Launches Anti Stigma Campaign	6	
GVE TO MHAAC	7	

Staff

Brenda E. Lee,
CEO and President

Beatena M. Nance
Vice President

Frank Cecchetti
Attorney—MHALS

Lyndsey Cowan
Education Advocate

Sequoia Green
Receptionist

Dan Hawkins
Mental Health Advocate

Cornell Jones
Youth Advocate

Marge Kerns
Mental Health Advocate

Dominique Lewis
Mental Health Advocate

Vanessa Mayers
*Co-Coordinator
Peer Educator Project*

Breon Powell
Mental Health Advocate

Sarah Rosso
*Director of Public
Education*

Albert Schubert
Director of Development

Donovan Thorne
*Director Education
Advocacy and Training*

Debra Watts
Assistant to the President

Professional Consultants

Nicholas Callas
Information Technology

Joyce Redmerski
Accountant

Voter Registration Deadline is Fast Approaching !

Are you registered to vote? If not, and **if you intend to vote in this year's election, you need to register by the deadline which is OCTOBER 6.**

ELECTION DAY IS NOVEMBER 4.

This year's election is, potentially, the most important that you will vote in during your lifetime. Just think of the issues that our country will be facing in the next few years:

- **War in Iraq**
- **War in Afghanistan**
- **Potential war in Iran ?**
- **The future of the American Healthcare System (and the possibility of Universal Healthcare)**
- **Healthcare coverage for people with Disabilities**
- **Tax and Economic Justice**
- **Global Warming and Environmental Change**
- **Your Future**

So, if you want to vote, you **MUST** register.

YOU CAN REGISTER TO VOTE THROUGH THE MAIL. You can obtain a Voter Registration Mail Application from the state or federal government. (The Secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and all County registration commissions supply Voter Registration Mail Applications to all persons and organizations who request them. This includes candidates, political parties and political bodies and other federal, state and municipal offices.)

Just, go to <http://www.dos.state.pa.us/voting/lib/>

[voting/02_voter_registration_applications/onlinevoterregformblank.pdf](#) to download the Voter Registration Form. Fill it out and mail it in.

YOU CAN REGISTER TO VOTE AT YOUR LOCAL PENNDOT OFFICE OR AT A NUMBER OF OTHER PENNSYLVANIA GOVERNMENT AGENCIES including:

- State offices that provide public assistance and services to persons with disabilities
- Armed Forces Recruitment Centers
- County Clerk of Orphans' Court offices, including each Marriage License Bureau
- Area Agencies on Aging
- Centers for Independent Living
- County Mental Health and Mental Retardation offices
- Student disability services offices of the State System of Higher Education

YOU CAN REGISTER TO VOTE IN PERSON. In Allegheny County, visit the County Board of Elections at:

604 County Office Bldg.
542 Forbes Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15219-2953
(412) 350-4500

There are also two different ways to vote.

YOU CAN VOTE, IN PERSON, AT YOUR LOCAL POLLING PLACE which is in your neighborhood, where you go to vote. It is open from 7am to 8pm.

If you vote this way, be prepared to identify yourself. Bring along a photo ID, such as:

- a Pennsylvania driver's license or PENNDOT ID card
- ID issued by any Commonwealth

(Continued on page 5)

YOU CAN ALSO OBTAIN VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS AT MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA'S OFFICE AT 1945 FIFTH AVENUE IN PITTSBURGH

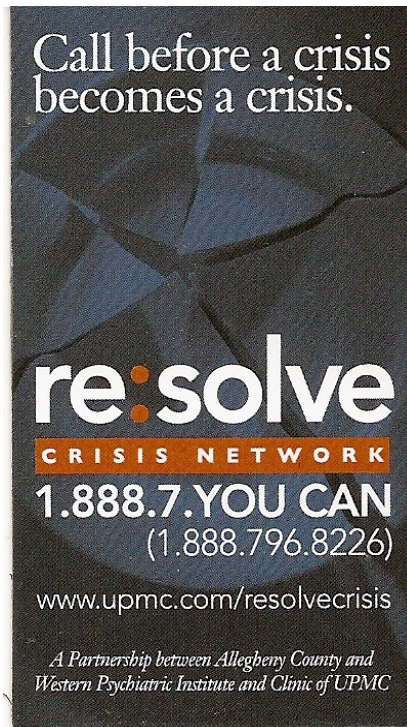
Mental Health America—Allegheny County is a tax exempt organization, declared tax exempt by the federal government (under Section 501 c 3) of the IRS Code) and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. A copy of our official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling (toll free from within Pennsylvania) 800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement. All donations to Mental Health America —Allegheny County are tax exempt to the full extent of the law.

Allegheny County Inaugurates New Crisis Network

Through a partnership with the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic of UPMC, Allegheny County now has a new County-wide crisis intervention service. One phone call to **re:solve**, the new 24 hour a day, 365 days per year crisis intervention line, will set the system in motion.

By calling **888-7YOU CAN (888-896-8226)**, a person in crisis can access an on-phone crisis counselor, who is ready to help work through the difficult situation. For those who require additional support, a phone call to the same number can trigger a visit from a trained crisis counselor, anywhere in Allegheny County. Additional services will become available as the system continues to develop.

Re:solve services are available to all citizens of Allegheny County, regardless of age or the ability to pay.



Board of Directors

Kristin DeAngelis, J.D.,
Chairperson
The Pittsburgh Foundation

Claudia Roth, Ph.D.,
Vice Chairperson
*UPMC / Western
Psychiatric Institute
and Clinic*

Michael Jasper
Treasurer
PNC Bank

Janet Warrick
Secretary

**The Honorable
Kelly Bigley**
*Family Division
of the Court of Common Pleas*

Chris Fletcher
W. PA School for the Deaf

Amy L. Berecek, Esq.
Thorpe, Reed and Armstrong

Phillip Joyce
Satira Associates

Curtis Upsher, Jr., M.S.
*Community Care
Behavioral Health
Organization*

MHAAC Welcomes 2 New Staff

Mental Health America—Allegheny County is pleased to welcome two new staff members to its staff. We hope that you will have the chance to meet them in the near future.

Sequoia Green is our new receptionist. That makes her the first smiling face you will see when you enter our office. She has worked in a variety of settings, ranging from retail (at Macy's) to working in the office of a title company. Her broad experience should serve her well at MHAAC.

Sequoia is one of those many Pittsburghers who left the area and has now returned. She spent a number of years living in South Bend, Indiana. Now, she lives in Swissvale with her 6 year old son, Cliff. She has a second son, Milton, who attends Indiana State University. As Sequoia said about her return to Pittsburgh, "There's no place like home."

With a six year old son, Sequoia says that she is always looking for an opportunity to relax. Having been there ourselves, we certainly understand.

Al Schubert is MHAAC's new Director of Development. He comes to our organization with many years of experience in Fundraising and Communications, having worked with non-profit organizations for his entire career.

Al is a transplant to Pittsburgh, having moved here from New York in 1992. Since then, he has worked with a number of major area non-profit organizations, including serving as Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity's Pittsburgh affiliate. During his tenure, PHfH expanded into a number of new communities.

Al lives in Verona with his wife, Carol, and their two cats, Bill and Hillary. They also have two sons and a granddaughter.

Myths About Mental Illness:

Myth: Mental illnesses don't affect me.

Fact: Mental illnesses are surprisingly common; they affect almost every family in America. Mental illnesses do not discriminate—they can affect anyone.

Candidates Take Positions on Mental Health and Disability Issues

As we move closer to November 4, and this year's presidential election, we should all be taking a close look at the candidates and their positions on the issues that are

important to us. As Mental Health America of Allegheny County, we concern ourselves with issues related to Mental Health and other disabilities. The following is a

compilation of the two major party candidates positions on these issues, based on excerpts from the Democratic and Republican Party platforms.

From the Democratic Platform

Health Care—(from the section entitled "Affordable, Quality Health Care Coverage for All Americans") - Health insurance plans should accept all applicants and be prohibited from charging different prices based on pre-existing conditions. Chronic-care and Behavioral health management should be assured for all Americans care coordination. This includes assistance for those recovering from traumatic, life-altering injuries and illnesses as well as those with mental health and substance use disorders. ...We should...lower drug costs by allowing Medicare to negotiate for lower prices, permitting importation of safe medicines from other developed countries, creating a generic pathway for biologic drugs, and increasing use of generics in public programs.



Long-Term Care (from the section entitled "Affordable, Quality Health Care Coverage for All Americans") - Seniors and people with disabilities should have access to quality affordable long-term care services, and those services should be readily available at home and in the community.
(from the section entitled "Americans with Disabilities") - We will restore dignity for Americans with disabilities by signing the Community Choice Act into law, which will allow them the choice of living in their communities rather than being warehoused in nursing homes or other institutions.

Education (from the section entitled "A World Class Education for Every Child") - We will also meet our commitment to special education and to students who are English Language Learners. We support full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
(from the section entitled "Americans with Disabilities") - We will ensure there is sufficient funding to empower Americans with disabilities to succeed in school and beyond.
(from the section entitled "A World Class Education for Every Child") - We support education delivery that makes it possible for non-traditional students to receive support and encouragement to obtain a college education, including Internet, distance education, and night and weekend programs.

Voting (from the section entitled "Voting Rights") - We will fully fund the Help America Vote Act and work to fulfill the promise of election reform, including fighting to end long lines at voting booths and ensuring that all registration materials, voting materials, polling places, and voting machines are truly accessible to ... Americans with disabilities. We oppose laws that require identification in order to vote or register to vote, which create discriminatory barriers to the right to vote and disenfranchise many eligible voters...

From the Republican Platform

Health Care - (from the section entitled "Health Care Reform: Putting Patients First" and Subsection "Patient Control and Portability") - Individuals with pre-existing conditions must be protected; we will help these individuals by building on the experiences of innovative states rather than by creating a new unmanageable federal entitlement (from the subsection "Patient Control and Portability") - Because the family is our basic unit of society, we fully support parental rights to consent to medical treatment for their children including mental health treatment. (from the subsection "Improving Quality of Care and Lowering Cost") - A culture of wellness needs to include the treatment of mental health conditions. We believe all Americans should have access to affordable, quality health care, including individuals struggling with mental illness. For this reason, we believe it is important that mental health care be treated equally with physical health care.



Long-Term Care (from the subsection entitled "Modernize Long-Term Care Options for All") - The financial burdens and emotional challenges of ensuring adequate care for elderly family members affect every American, especially with today's aging population. We must develop new ways to support individuals, not just institutions, so that older Americans can have a real choice whether to stay in their homes.

Education (from the section "Education Means a More Competitive America" and subsection "Maintaining Our Commitment to IDEA") - Because a federal mandate on the states must include the promised federal funding, we will fulfill the promise of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to cover 40 percent of the costs incurred because of that legislation. We urge preventive efforts in early childhood, especially assistance in gaining pre-reading skills, to help many youngsters move beyond the need for IDEA's protections.

Voting (from the section "Reforming Government to Serve the People" and subsection "Protecting the Right to Vote in Fair Elections") - We support the right of states to require an official government-issued photo identification for voting...

As tax exempt organizations, Mental Health America and Mental Health America of Allegheny County do not take positions in favor or opposed to any political candidate or on the outcome of any election. However, we encourage those who read this newsletter to maximize their knowledge of the positions of all candidates of all political parties and then to vote.

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!

4th Annual Legislative Breakfast Scheduled for Friday, October 3 at Westin Convention Center

(Continued from page 1)

with physical and mental disabilities in an effort to encourage them to participate in the political process. Affecting public policy has a powerful impact on fostering independence, inclusion and empowerment for people with disabilities.

Those who seek additional information about this event should contact Sarah Rosso at 412-391-3820 Ext. 25 or by email at rosso@mhaac.net.

The event is free and open to the public.



Voter Registration Deadline Fast Approaching !

(Continued from page 2)

agency

- ID issued by the U.S. Government
- U.S. passport
- U.S. Armed Forces ID
- Student ID
- Employee ID

If you don't have a photo ID, bring along one of these (but be sure that it has your address on it):

- Voter's ID card issued by voter registration commission
- Non-photo ID issued by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- Non-photo ID issued by the U.S. Government
- Firearm permit
- Current utility bill
- Current bank statement
- Current paycheck
- Government check

Your local polling place should be listed on your voter identification card. You received that card in

WHY SHOULD I VOTE?

To speak your mind

To make politicians listen

For your children

For your community

For yourself

To honor history

To control your future

To stop something

To start something

the mail after you registered to vote.

Or, you can go to:

www.pavoterservices.state.pa.us/Pages/PollingPlaceInfo.aspx to find the address of your local polling place.

YOU CAN VOTE VIA AN ABSENTEE BALLOT.

You can go to [http://www.dos.state.pa.us/voting/lib/voting/02_voter_registration_applications/absentee_ballot/absentee_ballot_application_\(08-13-04\).pdf](http://www.dos.state.pa.us/voting/lib/voting/02_voter_registration_applications/absentee_ballot/absentee_ballot_application_(08-13-04).pdf)

In order to download the form that will allow you to request an absentee ballot. Fill it out and mail it to your local Board of Elections (in Allegheny County, the address is listed earlier in this article). Absentee Voters may apply for an absentee ballot either through an application form or through letter. An application by letter or other document must be signed by the voter and must include the same information as required on forms provided by the Secretary of the Commonwealth. The County Board of Elections must receive letter applications no later than 5 p.m. on the Tuesday before Election Day.

Of course, the most important part of this article is the following:

VOTE !

It really doesn't matter which party you vote for. What really matters is that you make sure that both parties hear you.

OUR MISSION: Mental Health America - Allegheny County provides programs and services that support the health of mind and body and work to eliminate the stigma of mental illness and addiction for all.

SAMHSA and Ad Council Launch Anti-Stigma Campaign

Only One in Four Americans Believe That People are Sympathetic Towards Those with Mental Illnesses.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), in partnership with the Ad Council, has launched a national public awareness campaign designed to decrease the negative attitudes that surround mental illness and encourage young adults to support their friends who are living with mental health problems.

"We took a new approach to destigmatizing mental illness with this campaign," said Assistant Surgeon General Eric B. Broderick, SAMHSA Acting Deputy Administrator. "Instead of telling people why they shouldn't discriminate against people with mental illnesses, we are showing how friends can be supportive of those who have disclosed they are having a mental health problem and the critical role that friendship plays in recovery."

According to a new HealthStyles survey, in spite of the fact that 85% of Americans believe that people with mental illnesses are not to blame for their conditions, only about one person in four agrees that people are generally caring and sympathetic toward individuals with mental illnesses. The survey data also found that only one-quarter of young adults believe that a person with a mental illness can eventually recover. Just over one-half, who know someone with a mental illness believe that treatment can help people with mental illnesses lead normal lives.

Acting Surgeon General Dr. Kenneth Moritsugu, M.D., M.P.H., who helped to kick off the campaign said, "Mental illness is not something to be ashamed of. It is an illness that should be

treated with the same urgency and compassion as any other illness. And just like any other illness, the support of friends and family members is key to recovery."

According to SAMHSA, in 2005 there were an estimated 24.6 million adults aged 18 or older who experienced serious psychological distress (SPD), which is highly correlated with serious mental illness. Among 18 to 25 year olds, the prevalence of SPD is high (18.6 percent for 18-25, vs. 11.3 percent for all adults 18 years of age and older). But this age group shows the lowest rate of help-seeking behaviors. Additionally, those with mental health conditions in this segment have a high potential to minimize future disability if social acceptance is broadened and they receive the right support and services early on.

The campaign aims to reach 18- to 25-year-old adults who have friends living with mental illnesses. It highlights the importance of their providing support. The television and radio spots illustrate how friendship is a key to recovery. The campaign also includes print and interactive advertising that directs audiences to visit a new Web site, www.whatadifference.samhsa.gov to learn more about mental health and what they can do to

play a role in their friend's recovery.

The National Mental Health Anti-Stigma Campaign has partnered with other federal agencies, including the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), State mental health agencies, leading researchers on stigma, and a broad coalition of stakeholders, including organizations that represent provider organizations and consumer and family member groups. The Campaign held a series of regional meetings to develop a grassroots network to support the Campaign and provide assistance with anti-stigma efforts to States and local communities.

A newly released resource guide entitled, "Developing a Stigma Reduction Initiative," provides information on how to mount an anti-stigma campaign, gives examples of outreach materials, reports on the best practices for stigma reduction, and lists important resources for technical assistance. Copies of the guide can be obtained by calling SAMHSA's National Mental Health Information Clearinghouse at 1-800-789-2647.

The ads were distributed to more than 28,000 media outlets nationwide earlier this month. They will air in advertising time that will be donated by the media. To view the ads, please visit www.whatadifference.samhsa.gov.



Give to Mental Health America—Allegheny County

Your generous gift to Mental Health America—Allegheny County will enable us to help some of our region's most vulnerable citizens change their lives.

You can give to us in many different ways. Perhaps the easiest is to simply cut out the form below, fill it out, attach your check and put it in the mail.

To the right is a list of just some of the things your gift will support.

Regardless of the size of your gift, or the way that it is delivered, those of us who work and volunteer at MHAAC, and those who are served by this organization are deeply appreciative.

- \$ 100 — 3 hours of training for people interested in learning volunteer leadership skills
- \$ 50 — 1 hour of free legal services for a person with mental illness
- \$ 25 — 1 Educational Advocacy Toolkit for a family with a child with emotional / behavioral disorders. The toolkit is designed to help families learn to obtain the services needed by their child.
- \$ 10 — 5 Community Resource Packages for individuals who are leaving Mayview State Hospital

MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA—ALLEGHENY COUNTY DONATION FORM

Please accept my donation in support of services for people and families affected by mental illness

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City / State / Zip Code: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail Address: _____

Please accept my donation of () \$ 1,000 () \$ 500 () \$ 250 () \$ 100 () \$ 50
() \$ 25 OTHER: \$ _____

() Please do not publish my name.

() I would prefer to receive correspondence from MHAAC via e-mail

Please accept my donation in () HONOR / () MEMORY of:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

() My EMPLOYER offers a matching gift program _____

THANK YOU !!

Please make your check payable to
Mental Health America—Allegheny County
1945 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Your gift is greatly appreciated and is tax deductible to the full extent of the law.
You can also donate to Mental Health America—Allegheny County at: www.mhaac.net

OUR VISION: Mental Health America - Allegheny County, in partnership with people affected by a mental illness and/or substance-use disorder, envision a just, human and health society in which all people are accorded the respect, dignity and the opportunity to achieve their full potential free from stigma and prejudice.

United Way Campaign Launched !

As we move into the fall of the year, we are hearing those commercials on radio and TV that tell us that it is, once again, time for the annual United Way Campaign. ***If you are one of those people who makes an annual United Way gift, who "gives at the office", we hope that you will choose to support Mental Health America – Allegheny County.***

It is the generosity of people like you; people who are committed to MHAAC's mission and services – to our efforts *to provide programs and services that support the health of mind and body and our work to eliminate the stigma of mental illness and stigma for all*, who make our work possible. Simply put, without your generosity, those who work or volunteer at Mental Health America – Allegheny County would not be able to work with thousands of our local citizens each year to help them improve their lives.

Fortunately, the United Way, it's Annual Campaign and the Contributor Choice Option make giving an easy and relatively painless process. You can have your contribution deducted directly from your paycheck each week; and if you're like most people, giving is much easier when it's from money that you never see.

Just think, your contribution of just a few dollars each week turns into an annual gift of hundreds of dollars to support services for some of our region's most vulnerable citizens. Together, by working in partnership, we will improve lives.

A Very Important Number

Lets discuss a number that is very important to Mental Health America— Allegheny County.

101

No, that is not the temperature, the price of oil or the jersey number of an unnamed member of the Steelers. Nevertheless, it is a very important number.

101 IS MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA— ALLEGHENY COUNTY'S UNITED WAY CONTRIBUTOR CHOICE NUMBER. *In order for your United Way Campaign gift to come to us, you must include that number on your United Way form.*

(Call our office at 412-391-3820 if you run into a problem).

Mental Health America—Allegheny County provides programs and services that support the health of mind and body and works to eliminate the stigma of mental illness and



WWW.MHAAC.NET

1945 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15219



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Pittsburgh, PA
Permit No. 2230