

Breaking the Silence

UPDATES FROM MHAAC

WINTER 2011-2012

Letter From the President

In July 2011, Michelle McMurray succeeded Brenda Lee as the President and CEO of Mental Health America Allegheny County



In June of 2007, the National Mental Health Association was renamed Mental Health America reflecting an intention to develop and implement new strategies to engage the general public in a holistic approach to health, which fully embraces the centrality of mental health to overall health. Embracing this direction, we changed our name as well, becoming Mental Health America Allegheny County (MHAAC) in July 2007. Since that time, we have been using the tagline “There is no health without **mental** health” but what exactly does that mean?

“There is no health without mental health” represents MHAAC’s belief that mental health is as important as physical health to the overall well-being of every individual and every community. More than just a belief, this statement is supported by decades of research that illustrates the various intersections of mental and physical health. For instance, chronic stress is a commonly cited complication in the treatment of chronic health conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. Additionally, individuals who are identified as having a serious mental illness have a life span that is 25 years less than Americans overall, mostly from preventable diseases.

As an organization, we want to be engaged in the full spectrum of mental health, from wellness to recovery. We seek to be an organization that enables individuals to lead mentally healthier lives and sparks a dialogue about recovery and wellness among all community members.

Most of all, we hope that you are inspired to join us as we pursue our mission which is to provide programs and services that support the health of mind and body and work to eliminate the stigma of mental illness and addiction for all. We are looking forward to collaborating with you, your organization, and/or your community!

Warm Regards,

Michelle McMurray

MHAAC Partners with Miss PA 2011



"It is my hope to break the stereotypes by showing that I, too, am the face of mental illness."
-Juliann Sheldon,
Miss PA 2011

MHAAC is proud to support Pittsburgh-native Juliann Sheldon in her quest for the Miss America crown. Juliann is the first in the competition's 90 year history to choose "Mental Health Awareness" as her platform. As a child, Juliann struggled with debilitating anxiety, and as a teenager, she experienced the death of a close friend to suicide. By telling her story and promoting

mental wellness through her platform, Juliann hopes to eliminate some of the stigma that surrounds mental illness and support the recovery of others. Her campaign emphasizes four steps she believes to be essential for mental wellness: exercising regularly, having good sleep habits, taking time to relax and communicating effectively.

Read Juliann's full story of recovery at www.mhaac.net.

Watch her compete for the title of Miss America on January 14, 2011, at 9:00 pm ET on ABC.

Education Advocacy Program Focuses on Transition-Age Youth



The Education Advocacy program at MHAAC provides individual assistance to families who need support navigating the special education system.

During the transition period from high school, all youth face decisions about their future (career, new social situations/responsibilities, self-management of behavior, etc). For youth ages 14 to 21 with mental health needs, this transition period appears to be particularly challenging. When compared with their peers without disabilities, these youth have higher secondary school dropout rates, higher rates of arrest, higher rates of unemployment and lower rates of independent living. Difficulties in accessing appropriate supports and services continue to plague young people, their parents, and

providers. Schools often have a poor understanding of how mental illness impacts youth and their families, and navigating the mental health system can be perplexing for even the most educated and resourceful individuals. Compounding this problem is the fact that youth often lack knowledge about their disability, their rights, or how to become involved in the decision-making process. This year, MHAAC is taking an active role in addressing these important issues. Through funding from the Cleveland Foundation and new partnerships with

Wesley Spectrum Services and Unbreakable Drive, our Education Advocacy program has reached more than 100 youth in the 9th to 12th grades who have a mental or emotional health need. We conducted workshops during regular school hours to introduce them to the skills of self-advocacy and the concept of disability pride. By teaching youth to understand their disability, their rights in the education system and their responsibilities, we believe they are better equipped to take an active role in making decisions about their future.

Food and Mood

It's generally accepted that how we feel can influence what we choose to eat or drink—think “comfort food.” However, there is growing interest in how food and nutrition can affect emotional and mental health. Some people seek better control of their mental health using self-help approaches alongside their formal treatments. One strategy is to make changes to what we eat. Below are some quick facts about how certain foods can affect our mood.

Note: When making dietary changes, it is important to consult with an experienced health care professional who can recommend the appropriate nutritional changes for your particular needs.

Don't Skip Meals

Eating consistently throughout the day provides your brain with a steady supply of fuel. It prevents your blood sugar from dropping which can cause nervousness, irritability and other problems

Work on Balance

Your brain needs a healthy supply of carbohydrates, fats and proteins or it can't perform functions that affect your mood and thinking.

Cut Back on Caffeine

Caffeine is a stimulant, so it can make you nervous and restless. A cup of coffee can wreck your sleep, and caffeine may worsen depression. If you've been consuming a lot, cut back slowly or you'll risk withdrawal.

Reduce Saturated Fat and Cholesterol

Your brain needs a strong blood supply to function well. Saturated fats and cholesterol can narrow your blood vessels, so watch out for too much red meat, egg yolks, butter and whole milk.

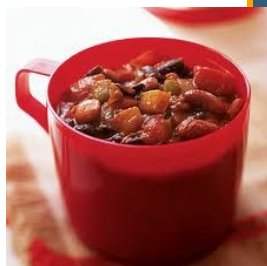
Chunky Vegetarian Chili

Ingredients

1 TBS vegetable oil	1 (15 oz) can kidney beans, rinsed & drained
2 cups chopped onion	1 (15 oz) can pinto beans, rinsed & drained
1 cup chopped bell pepper	2 garlic cloves, minced
2 (16 oz) cans stewed tomatoes, un-drained	1 TBS brown sugar
2 (15 oz) cans black beans, rinsed & drained	1.5 TBS chili powder
	1 tsp ground cumin
	1 tsp dried oregano
	1/2 tsp salt
	1/2 tsp black pepper

Directions

1. Heat oil in deep skillet or soup pot over med-high heat
2. Add onion, bell pepper, garlic and sauté for 5 minutes, or until tender
3. Add remaining ingredients and bring to a boil
4. Reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes.



When the weather gets cold, people crave comfort food to keep them warm!

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Visit us on the web at www.mhaac.net!

Call us at
412-661-7860 or
1-877-391-3820

BECOME A MEMBER NOW!!!
MHAAC MEMBERSHIP FORM 2012

By becoming a member, you will receive quarterly newsletters, discounted tickets to special events, and connection to a community of people who are committed to eliminating the stigma of mental illness and addiction for all

Please make check payable to: **Mental Health America Allegheny County**
100 Sheridan Square, 2nd Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Membership Level (Mark One): Limited Income — \$5.00 Individual - \$25.00
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You can also join or donate via our website at www.mhaac.net

THANK YOU!!!

For questions please contact MHAAC
at 412-661-7860 or info@mhaac.net

Your gift is greatly appreciated and is tax deductible to the full extent permitted by law.

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