

A newsletter covering
jail diversion

March 2013

Volume 4, Issue 1

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Special points of interest:

- ◆ State Rep. DiGirolamo to attend SE CSP Meeting on April 1, 2013 at HopeWorx Inc.
- ◆ 1st Montgomery County CSP Conference on May 29, 2013 at Mermaid Lakes in Blue Bell

Student making changes, one step at a time



By: J.B. Brooks and Kathie Mitchell

Steve was in jail facing some serious charges and jail time for a bizarre crime he committed. While waiting for trial, he decided to spend most of his time attending our justice and recovery class on a regular basis.

It was a decision that changed his life.

Steve (not his real name) was part of our class called "It's T.I.M.E." at the Montgomery County Correctional Facility (MCCF) since the group's inception in 2010. The class helps people who were arrested because of their symptoms of mental illness or their actions that result from dis-

torted thinking. It helps people identify thinking that gets them in trouble and to learn to change their thinking so they don't repeat past mistakes.

Steve was determined to learn as much as he could. He ended up receiving three Certificates of Completion for this 13-week course. And the work wasn't easy for him. Steve was diagnosed with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) and suffered seizures as a result of an injury which occurred years earlier. Advocates who facilitated the class weren't familiar with the symptoms of ABI and educated themselves about the condition so they could support Steve in class.

What the advocates found out would ultimately help Steve, his classmates, his family and the court – understand why Steve committed the bizarre crime – and give Steve a second chance at life.

Steve was arrested for holding up his own bank with a toy gun. The bank teller did not know the gun was a toy. Steve's father, who was waiting in the car while Steve did his banking, had no idea that his son was robbing the bank. After leaving

Continued on page 5

The Job Connection

By: Jeff Shair

Michelle Tuck is the Manager of the Employment Center at Creative Health, in Pottstown, PA. The center opened last October, and it assists in attaining jobs for people with criminal backgrounds, as well

as for the general public. These tasks include supporting the person in writing resumes, conducting interviews, and guiding the person in any steps that are necessary to find a particular job of their choice. For instance, they

are informed of what kind of education that will be required of them to work in their preferred occupation. The objective of the center is to prepare and teach the people they work with, to sell their skills during an interview. *(continued on page 5)*

What to Do If You or a Loved One Encounters the Legal System

Quick Guide—By Community Advocates and NAMI PA OF Montgomery County

<p>Intercept 1</p> <p>Law Enforcement & Emergency Services</p>	<p>Intercept 2</p> <p>Initial detention & court hearing</p>	<p>Intercept 3</p> <p>Jail, Court, Forensic Evaluation & Hospitalization</p>	<p>Intercept 4</p> <p>Re-entry</p>	<p>Intercept 5</p> <p>Community Corrections/Community Support</p>
<p>Police or emergency services are needed or have been called. You may be about to be arrested, have just arrived at the police station or jail, or are at MCES.</p> <p>CALL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCES 610-279-6100 or (800) 452-4189 • 911 – ask for an officer with special training in mental illness • A friend or family to let them know where you are • Access Mobile Crisis Support 855-634-4673 <p>DO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be polite and respectful • Follow instructions • Keep your hands where they can be seen • Do not struggle with police • Exercise your right to remain silent <p>See Section 1 for more information.</p>	<p>You have been arrested, are in detention, at a mental health facility or released on bail facing a hearing.</p> <p>CALL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Advocates 610-270-0375 • Public Defender 610-278-3295 • Montgomery County Bar Assn. 610-279-9660 • NAMI 215-361-7784 • MCES Justice Related Services 610-279-6100 • BHC & VC Coordinator 610-324-4902 <p>DO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get legal advice • Talk with recovery coach or therapist if you have one • Enlist help and support of peers, family, clergy, others • Contact advocates to discuss options <p>See Section 2 for more information.</p>	<p>You are in jail, committed to a hospital or in the community waiting for a court hearing.</p> <p>CALL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social worker at jail or hospital • Call BHC & VC Coordinator 610-324-4902 • Community Advocates 610-270-0375 <p>DO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow instructions • Learn about resources that can help you • Join groups at jail or hospital • Enlist help of family and friends • Contact advocates to discuss options • Contact Court Administrator's Office 610-278-3224 <p>See Section 3 for more information.</p>	<p>You have been or will be released to the community.</p> <p>CALL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits such as Social Security Office, Welfare Office • County Assistance Office • Community Advocates 610-270-0375 • NAMI 215-361-7784 <p>DO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enroll in benefits • Meet with probation officer • Follow conditions of release • Find peer support • Join support groups • Secure safe and supportive housing <p>See Section 4 for more information.</p>	<p>You are back in the community. What to do in a crisis:</p> <p>CALL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Mobile Crisis Support 855-634-4673 • MCES – Crisis Line 610-279-6100 or (800) 452-4189 • Therapist or doctor • Peer Specialist • Recovery Coach • Advocates • NAMI • 911 – Ask for officer trained in mental health <p>DO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared for a crisis or relapse • Have a support network • Consider a WRAP • Join support groups • Volunteer • Find a job • Go to school • If needed, go to a hospital <p>See Section 5 for more information.</p>

Community



Legal System

Community



Justice and Recovery Quick Reference Guide

By: Kathie Mitchell, Director



Community Advocates partnered with NAMI of PA, Montgomery County, to create the “Justice and Recovery Guide” to assist individuals with mental illness, family members and friends in navigating the criminal justice system and to use jail diversion services to support opportunities for recovery.

The guide is in its final draft form and will soon be available. In the meantime, we are sharing the “Justice and Recovery Quick Reference Guide” which is included with the guide. The quick reference guide, shown on the previous page, was developed to follow the format of the “Justice and Recovery Guide” and walks a person through the different stages of diversion using the Sequential Intercept Model. The Sequential Intercept Model was developed by Drs. Mark R. Muentz and Patricia A. Griffin of the GAINS Center in Florida. It is a concept for communities to use which identifies points of interception in the criminal justice system where interventions can be made to prevent people with mental illness from going to jail because of their symptoms or to reduce the length of time individuals remain incarcerated.

Community Advocates and NAMI of PA collaborated with many different experts and agencies to create the guide. Dr. Griffin provided numerous research materials that the committee reviewed and adapted for the Montgomery County guide. The research materials and all of the contributors are referenced in the guide. The guide was reviewed by Mental Health Administrator Nancy Wieman and by Court Administrator Michael Kehs.

If you have any questions about the Quick Reference Guide or the complete guide, please contact Kathie Mitchell at 610-270-0375 or kmitchell@hopeworxinc.org.

Community Advocates recently filmed a new training DVD at the Montgomery County Correctional Facility. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Warden Julio Algarin and Asst. Warden Sean McGee for offering their facilities to us so that we could produce a realistic film about individuals with mental health issues who find themselves in jail, and the resources they can use to re-enter the community and work toward a justice-free life.

A special thanks to our actors: Dr. Gail Vant Zelfde, Kathy Burns, J.B. Brooks, William Moody, Todd Gorman, Carla Pendergrast, Alvin Slusher, Bryan Stoffregen, Larry DePietropaolo, Anthony Garcia, Nate, Brian Sprague, Shelley Johnson, Sean McGee and last but not least, Nancy Wieman.

Thank you, Sue Shannon, for directing and filming the entire project!

Overview of “It’s T.I.M.E.”

By: Kathie Mitchell

As director of Community Advocates, I have had the privilege of working with many individuals who are dedicated to educating and supporting people who have mental health and justice related issues. I applaud all of our partners for their tireless efforts.

I also applaud and admire the students of our justice and recovery

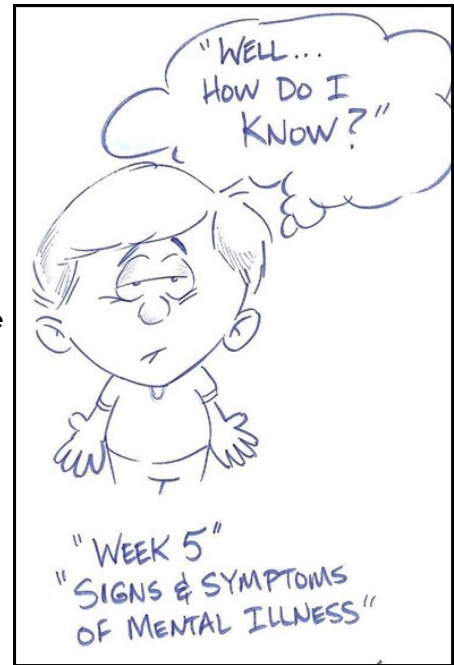
class known as “It’s T.I.M.E.” They inspire me and our team as they courageously take the steps necessary to think about themselves, what motivates them, what needs to be changed and how they can start a new life.

It’s far from easy. But every 13 weeks we have a new group of men who are willing and determined to try.

Our peer instructors are there to walk beside them, to make connections and provide the skills for successful re-entry into the community.

And the students are stepping up to the plate.

To date, 39 men took the class and another 10 are enrolled in the current class, our sixth session.



Cartoon created by Christopher Titanic, class graduate

“Community Advocates class got me to take a good look at how my thinking has gotten me in trouble and taught me ways to change and/or prevent it.” By It’s T.I.M.E. Student

Topics discussed in class:

Week 1: Orientation

Week 2: Understanding the criminal justice system

Week 3: Motivation

Week 4: Risk Factors

Week 5: Signs and Symptoms of Mental Illness

Week 6: Identifying Triggers

Week 7: Distorted Thinking I

Week 8: Distorted Thinking 2

Week 9: Distorted Thinking 3

Week 10: Problem Solving Skills

Week 11: Stress and Anger Management/Impulse Control

Week 12: Making the Most of My Resources

Week 13: Wrap Up/Evaluation

Students complete 6th session of It’s T.I.M.E.

On March 21, 2013, nine men graduated from the sixth session of “It’s T.I.M.E.” According to J.B. Brooks, one of the peer facilitators of the class, “There were seven individuals who made every class. This was the most interactive class we’ve had. They listened to each other and supported each other.”

One member of the class was moved to the pre-release building. Another was released on bail. One student was heading for state prison. Four of the class members have signed up for the 7th class along with 17 others.

The 7th class begins on Thursday, March 28, 2013.

Student making changes (continued from page one)

the bank and driving a short distance, police cars chased them down. Steve's father was shocked to learn what had happened.

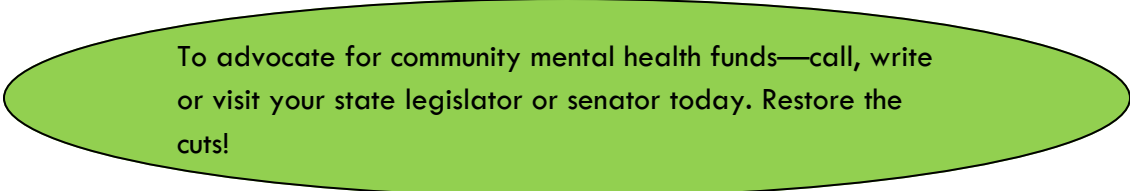
Why did Steve do this? Experts in ABI say the bewildering actions by Steve are examples of the behavior a person exhibits who has suffered a traumatic brain injury. Steve faced felony charges and a minimum five years in state prison for being in possession of a "firearm." The advocates recognized the seriousness of the crime but felt that the fact that it was a toy gun and in light of Matt's condition, he should be reconsidered for the mental health treatment court called Behavioral Health Court (BHC).

Diligent work on the part of his public defender and his very supportive family along with the partnership of forensic advocates (who were by his side at MCCF and in court) paid off. After a second request for consideration to participate in the BHC, Steve was accepted. Stephanie Landes, Coordinator of the court, and Judge Joseph Smyth who presides over the court, recommended diversion from jail to the court.

After spending 19 months in jail awaiting hearing after postponed hearing, Steve was released to the community. The BHC involves a very intensive probationary period and Steve has been keeping up with his weekly court dates and meeting all the conditions of the court.

Steve also recently overcame another obstacle in his life – melanoma – which was diagnosed soon after his release from jail.

Steve is continuing to partner with us and the BHC, manage his physical and emotional health and has been an asset to his family. He has demonstrated confidence in himself and continues to advocate for his future. We applaud his perseverance and determination!



To advocate for community mental health funds—call, write or visit your state legislator or senator today. Restore the cuts!

The Job Connection (continued from page one)

Sometimes, if needed, Tuck is in the same room as the applicant, as they place a call to a potential employer, to give the individual that added support. Nevertheless, the manager emphasized, the more the person does for him or herself, the better it is.

Tuck stated that over 50% of people who are seeking employment at Creative Health have committed offenses. The manager makes sure that the rap sheets on the justice-involved individuals she serves are accurate. A lot of times, justice-involved individuals are denied an interview, simply because of their criminal past, Tuck noted. To combat this barrier, Tuck encourages people seeking employment who have been in jail or prison to highlight their skills that they had acquired, while they were incarcerated. The manager encourages them to keep applying for jobs, even if they are denied numerous times. Several people at the center find work in the service industries. The manager considers the success of the people she works with, being achieved at every level of the process that they complete. Tuck supplies hope and teaches people at the center to be persistent.

Tribute to Editor

By: Kathie Mitchell

Jeff Shair has worked for the past three years as editor/reporter for our newsletter, “The Interceptor.” He has interviewed corrections administrators, certified peer specialists, employment specialists, and judges regarding jail diversion for individuals with mental health issues. Jeff has attended conferences and written articles summarizing the workshops he attended. Through his interviews and reporting, Jeff has documented the establishment of Community Advocates’ peer led justice and recovery classes at Montgomery County Correctional Facility (MCCF) and at mental health agencies in the community.

We, at Community Advocates, thank Jeff for his hard work, dedication and compassion in helping us promote the work that is being done to divert individuals with mental illness from corrections into treatment, and to provide resources for community re-entry.

Without General Assistance, People are without Dignity

By: Kathie Mitchell



BRYN MAWR— Since losing her General Assistance, life for Susan has been one humiliating day after another.

“I have to rely on friends to supply me with things I need,” Susan said recently. “I have to beg people for stuff. I rely on handouts. I feel belittled.”

Susan (not her real name) lives in a residential program in Bryn Mawr. She has physical and mental health disabilities that prevent her from obtaining employment and has been waiting for 18 months to qualify for Social Security Disability to help with her living expenses. In the meantime, the residential program provided housing for her in return for 72 percent of her \$215 in General Assistance money. That left Susan with approximately \$60 a month for buying clothes, shampoo, toilet paper, shoes, transportation and other needs.

Now the assistance is gone and she has no extra money whatsoever. But Susan is thankful she has a roof over her head.

“I had more stress because I thought I would lose my residence,” Susan explained. “They haven’t thrown me out on the street. Thank God. That’s all I needed. They’re a business so it’s hurting them, too.”

Susan said she was shocked when the government took away that small amount of money that helped her keep her self-respect and a place to live so she wasn’t homeless.

“It happened with so many people not knowing...they were caught off guard with no warning,” Susan said. “How can you prepare when you don’t have anything” God forbid if you get sick. What if I needed cold medicine or cough drops? Medical Assistance doesn’t cover over-the-counter medication. You get a cold and you’re screwed. You have nothing unless you can get the money some other way. You bum stuff and it puts people out.”

Now Susan is also out of a math tutoring which she was going to receive to help her with her budget. Susan said she lost her ability to do math and was going to attend tutoring at the Literacy Council in Norristown. With no money for transportation, she can’t get tutoring. So Susan waits, begging for handouts from her friends and the agency that runs her residential program, and hopes she can make it.

One humiliating day at a time.

The Faces Behind the Statistics

Share the stories of real people hurt by state budget cuts

By: Sue Walther, Executive Director

Mental Health Association of PA

This past fall, the Pennsylvania Association of County Administrators and Mental Health and Developmental Services (PACA MH/DS) surveyed counties across Pennsylvania about how the state's 10% cuts to community-based behavioral health services—on top of a decade of underfunding—have impacted programs and services throughout the Commonwealth. In December, PACA MH/DS released the survey results: the impact on counties was widespread and pervasive—89 percent of responding counties reduced programs and services at the local level and 63 percent of the responding counties eliminated one or more programs or services.

While this data is critical to helping everyone understand how the cuts have hurt on a local level, **behind the numbers are individuals and families—please help us tell their stories as well.** These personal impact stories show legislators that the people they serve are suffering. We are asking MHAs, consumers, family, friends, providers, and advocates to help collect personal impact stories from consumers across the state.

How to Collect Stories

Encourage people to share stories in one of the following ways:

Online. Direct them to PA Cares for All (pacaresforall.org) to take a survey for individuals, a confidential, online survey that asks for information and stories from Pennsylvanians who have lost their general assistance. Family, friends, and social service providers can also complete the survey.

By Phone, Regular Mail, or Email. For people who would rather tell their story by phone or regular mail, The Psychiatric Leadership Council is collecting stories by phone at (855) 278-0031 (NOTE: This is NOT a HELP LINE); letters to Tears in the Safety Net, P.O. Box 103, Conestoga, PA 17516-0103; or Email to PASafetyNet@PMHCC.ORG.

Please send a message to all of your constituents asking them to help gather stories via any of the above methods. You can tailor this email message to use with your contacts.

Also post the information on your organization's website, Facebook page. And, if you're using Twitter, don't forget to tweet it as well.

Thank you for your help—the more stories we collect, the better we can show Harrisburg the consequences of their actions and prevent further cuts.

You can reach Sue Walther at swalther@mhapa.org.



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We're on the Web!
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House Bill 315

State Rep. Gene DiGirolamo, of Bucks County, has agreed to attend the April Southeast Regional CSP Committee meeting from 3 to 3:45 p.m. This is exciting news!

Rep. DiGirolamo has introduced legislation in the House known as House Bill 315 which calls for the restoration of \$84 million in Human Services funding that was cut as part of the

fiscal year 2012-13 state budget. If the bill passes, the cuts would be restored.

The Regional CSP Committee meeting is an open meeting. Please encourage all interested stakeholders (peers, family members, providers, county OBH staff) in your counties to attend this very important meeting.

We also encourage you to find out right now if your legislator will vote in favor

of House Bill 315. Voices need to be heard now and over the next three months while the state budget is being negotiated.

We are looking forward to a good turnout when Rep. DiGirolamo visits our meeting in April.

By ~ Kathie Mitchell of the Executive Committee of the SE CSP Committee