

Spreading Hope, Spurring Action, Supporting Families, Saving Lives!

"Through stories, we share passions, sadness, hardships and joys. We share meaning and purpose. Stories are the common ground that allows people to communicate, overcoming our defenses and our differences."-Pamela Rutledge



Mental Health Matters: A Monthly Blog Post from the Director

What's Your Story?

We all have a story. Some have put their stories to pen and paper and even published their memoirs or shared their story in a TED Talk, but the majority of us live our lives without giving much thought to how our story can impact another. If you are part of the one in five Americans who have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder, your story can be a powerful message of hope and can serve as inspiration for those who fear the stigma that still surrounds mental illness.

According to Pamela B. Rutledge's article in Psychology Today, *The Psychological Power of Storytelling*, "Stories are about collaboration and connection. They transcend generations, they engage us through emotions, and they connect us to others. Through stories we share passions, sadness, hardships and joys. We share meaning and purpose. Stories are the common ground that allows people to communicate, overcoming our defenses and our differences. Stories allow us to understand ourselves better and to find our commonality with others."

Mental Health America of Central Carolinas has witnessed the power of storytelling and the organization's cadre of volunteer storytellers are an inspiration to others. I am personally amazed and grateful for their willingness to share their stories during monthly [Coffee & Conversations](#), community events and MHA sponsored events like [Wake Up for Wellness](#). Here are just a few of the people I have come to know over the past year:

Rachel is a school psychologist and foster parent whose foster child was struggling with his gender identity. There were multiple times when she came to his aid and counseled him through difficult times. Unfortunately, it wasn't enough, as she later learned that he had died by suicide while in college at UNCC. Now she honors him by teaching suicide prevention skills and telling his story, which has become her story.

Rob is a successful businessman, the picture of strength and power. However, this banking executive,

while struggling to help his own siblings, found that he needed support of his own. It took years, but he finally found the strength to break the silence about his own struggles with anxiety and PTSD.

Emily is a survivor of a suicide attempt. Her struggles over the years with mental health challenges led her to a career in mental health. She uses her own pain and struggles to empathize with others who she meets in her day-to-day job as a clinical social worker.

Bill's story is the powerful biography of someone who, on the outside, had it all: a beautiful family and successful law practice. However, since childhood, Bill had been struggling with mental health issues that nearly destroyed everything he loved and cherished. His journey to being healthy began with three words, "I need help."

Iris' bipolar disorder led to drug use and chronic gambling, but she is now an IT consultant within the real estate industry and she is helping others see that "normal" is different for everyone.

Guillermo shares his story of battling depression using his three-legged dog as an illustration for self-acceptance. He relays that Oscar knows when to ask for help, a trait we all should emulate as we need to rely on others at some point in our lives.

Missy knows the unique grief and loss of suicide, losing her brother years ago. She has turned her experience into a mission to share with others and to teach how letter writing can help us heal.



The power of one story can be immeasurable. Your story can be the glimmer of hope someone is seeking; it can empower an individual to get help; it can stop the hurting and remove the stigma. You also have the power of one through your gifts. Through the Power of One gift you can join [storytellers like Rob, Iris and Bill](#) in changing the conversation about mental health by supporting MHA in its year-end appeal. If you have already given to MHA, we thank you. If not, [we hope you will consider investing in MHA](#). No gift is too small.

So....what's your story?

Kathy H. Rogers
Executive Director

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Mental Health America of Central Carolinas promotes mental wellness through advocacy, prevention and education in Mecklenburg and Cabarrus Counties.



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