MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of MHA is to promote mental wellness through advocacy, prevention and education in Mecklenburg and Cabarrus Counties.

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Vote: Let Your Voice be Heard!

With all of the changes in health care and voting laws happening at the state and federal level, it’s more important than ever for the mental health community to be involved in this year’s election. Our national affiliate has prepared a voter guide to help mental health advocates ensure that people with mental health and substance use conditions feel empowered and able to vote; that candidates at the federal, state, and local levels are considering the concerns of the mental health community; and to encourage all voters to ultimately “Vote for America’s Mental Health in 2016.”

The simple act of asking a question, at a town hall meeting or via an email to a candidate, is a great way to see where they stand on mental health and addiction issues. Here are some suggested candidate questions:

Workforce and Access:
How do you plan to ensure that people can actually get the mental health services that are supposed to be covered by their health plans?

Families:
How will you make sure families have access to the evidence-based programs we need to best help our children with emotional and behavioral challenges?

Integration:
How will you make sure that health care providers most effectively partner with the community to treat mental health and substance use conditions?

More at metalhealthamerica.net/Vote16.

Finding Peace of Mind

“If I had not found you (MHA), I might not have my daughter now,” said Linda when she was interviewed about 17 year old Makayla (pictured right). Their journey has been difficult. Soon after the family went through divorce in 2010, Makayla became angry and abusive to her mom. Through four years of outpatient therapy, a variety of diagnoses and medications, even four hospitalizations, Makayla’s violence continued. In addition to hitting Linda and getting into fights at school, Makayla was hurting herself by cutting. In February of 2016, Linda says they turned a corner when she found “her guardian angel” Cathy through MHA’s ParentVOICE program. The rest of the story… coming in November.
Philanthropy Spotlight

MHA is pleased to shine a spotlight on Judy Jenkins, a fellow mental health advocate, who joined MHA’s 1933 Society this spring with a five year pledge of financial support to further our mission. Judy provides her gift through a monthly investment, which may be selected on our website at www.mhacentralcarolinas.org.

When asked what motivated her to join our 1933 Society, Judy said “In the almost five years of working with MHA, I find the community has benefitted from the comprehensive advocacy of their programs for those affected by chronic mental illness. I have experienced their empathy and passion for moving people with a lived experience towards recovery. I can’t wait to see what 2017 will bring as they continue to shine a light on ‘B4Stage4.’”

Leadership Spotlight

“When I was approached four years ago about joining the Board of MHA, I jumped at the chance to serve. Partly because the mission is personal to me. As a young adult, I faced a struggle with alcohol abuse which placed me on a long path of recovery through which I continue to learn about the many ways to take care of my mental health. Reaching out for help changed my life for the better, and I know first-hand that my journey would not have been successful without receiving the support and resources I needed.

My experience gave me just a small glimpse into the problems we face as a society when it comes to mental health and recovery. Serving on MHA’s Board has broadened my awareness of the challenges in our own community and the impact we can have when we support an organization like MHA.

MHA has made extraordinary strides in serving our community through its leadership in educating our state and local legislators and policy-makers about mental health and advocating for beneficial changes to the existing community and health care systems which grossly underserve individuals and families affected by mental illness. The need for MHA is great, and it is a critical time to continue making progress on all of these fronts. MHA’s leadership and staff are second to none, and I believe we are poised to make an even greater impact in our community.

I’m honored to serve as Board President this year and to lead what I think is our most talented and engaged Board to date!”

By David P. Milling, Jr., Esq. 2016-2017 Board President

www.mhacentralcarolinas.org
PhotoVoice: Catalyst for Change

PhotoVoice engages young people in their communities and teaches them to see and express themselves through a new lens. The process involves youth using cameras to document their day-to-day experiences and highlight the strengths and challenges within their communities and lives. The photographs they take and the stories that emerge from small group discussions around the pictures can lead to self-discovery and ultimately promote mental wellness. PhotoVoice’s benefits are aligned with recovery principles including but not limited to the reduction of stigma, self-representation, self-expression, self-empowerment, and engagement in a change process.

MHA’s next PhotoVoice project will be Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m. and Saturdays at 12:30 p.m. in October and November. Contact MHA’s ParentVOICE program Youth Engagement Specialist Kevin Markle to learn more about this 5 session workshop series at 980-406-1527 or check out the video on our website homepage. Examples from past participants (right).

Connections Matter

MHA’s Compeer program reflects the belief that “integrating mental health, substance abuse, and primary care services produces the best outcomes and proves the most effective approach to caring for people with multiple healthcare needs” (SAMHSA). Compeer is an evidence-based volunteer program which matches screened and trained volunteers with same gender adults living with chronic mental health conditions. Persons matched with a Compeer volunteer often report fewer hospitalizations, have increased self-esteem, and are more likely to adhere to their treatment programs. Improved mental wellness leads to many overall health benefits, as friends Pam and Sylvia (pictured) can attest to. Since 68% of adults with a mental illness also have one or more chronic physical conditions, the power of the Compeer program becomes even more impactful!

Check out the “sweet outcomes” from the friendship in their own words...

Sylvia: “I don’t get out much because I have arthritis in the legs. My family had been pushing me to get back out into the world more like I once did, and having a friend like Pam is delightful for me.”

Pam: “Sylvia is just an amazing woman, and it’s been a real benefit to have her in my life. Many people in her situation don’t know how or they don’t get help. Sylvia has raised two wonderful children who are nice, successful adults, and she did it practically by herself.”

Sylvia: “My doctor said she can see the difference in me by going out more and focusing more. My children have also seen that I have made progress since having Pam as my Compeer friend.”

Pam: “I think Sylvia just getting out and feeling better about herself, she’s also lost weight, and her diabetes is more under control.”

Sylvia: “My sugar is down real low now!”

Call us at 704-365-4380 and you can, Make a friend, change a life!

Pam and Sylvia (L to R) have been friends through Compeer for over a year.
Compeer, QPR Gatekeeper Training for Suicide Prevention, Mental Health First Aid, and Triple P: Positive Parenting Program are all NREPP approved. MHA’s certified instructors are proud to offer these programs free to Mecklenburg and Cabarrus county residents, thanks to generous donors like you.

Join Team MHA in support of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Out of the Darkness Walk in Charlotte on Saturday, October 29, 2016. This year’s walk will be uptown at Romare Beardon Park from 2-4 p.m. Out of the Darkness Walks around the country raise awareness and funds that allow the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) to invest in new research, create educational programs, advocate for public policy, and support survivors of suicide loss.

MHA is honored to have more than 20 team members registered to be a part of this walk to fight suicide. Register at www.mhacentralcarolinas.org or at www.afspdonordrive.com.

In 2015-2016, AFSP’s local suicide prevention and education efforts included co-sponsoring Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) led by MHA’s certified instructors. Of the 1,372 community members we taught life-saving MHFA skills last year, AFSP’s financial support enabled over 800 individuals to receive the 8-hour evidence-based course at no cost.

Joining AFSP in support of MHA’s Mental Health First Aid delivery in 2016-2017, is the Mecklenburg County ABC Board.