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

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**MHA CONNECTION**

**#B4Stage4**
The #B4Stage4 campaign, championed by MHA’s national affiliate, Mental Health America, is specifically aimed at improving mental health across the nation. When we think about cancer, heart disease, or diabetes, we don’t wait years to treat them. We start way before Stage 4. We begin with prevention. This is what we should do when people have serious mental illnesses, too. When we first have symptoms such as loss of sleep, feeling tired for no reason, feeling low, feeling anxious, or hearing voices, we should act. Identifying and intervening effectively during early stages of mental illness can change the trajectories of—or even save—lives, for people with mental illnesses. **Take a confidential Mental Health Screening on our website today at www.mhacentralcarolina.org.**

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**LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY**

In keeping with the #B4Stage4 campaign, the MHA hosted our Annual Legislative Breakfast on March 23rd, to educate local policymakers and advocates through a panel of experts on Prevention, Early Intervention, Integrated Care and Treatment, and Recovery.

**Top 4 Actionable Take-Aways:**

1. **Prevention:** Mental illness needs to be conceptualized more similarly to physical illness or disease, including taking measures to prevent the onset of mental illness when possible. **Promote legislation that would make systematic prevention a high priority in the health care system.**

2. **Early Identification:** Mental health problems affect one in five people at any given time, and only one-third of those are getting the help they need. **Support legislation that would invest in the early identification of mental health illnesses and promote mental health screening.**

3. **Integrated Care:** The current health care system is unable to adequately address both sides of the primary care/behavioral health interface. **Encourage legislation that would eliminate the clinical, financial, policy and organizational barriers to the integration of mental and general health care.**

4. **Recovery** from mental illness is achievable. Mental health and substance abuse systems transformation will occur only when all stakeholders view recovery as part of their mission. **Incorporate principles of recovery-based care into day-to-day activities and goals of local, state and federal mental health departments and agencies.**

Panelists included Melissa Candela (L) and Antoinette Souffrant (R). Roger Suclupe (C), MHA Advocacy & Public Policy Committee member, helped plan the event along with MHA of Cleveland County.
**Educating Ethiopian Leaders**

MHA hosted a 12-hour Paraprofessional Mental Health training with thirteen Ethiopian community leaders over two Saturdays in March 2015. The training was requested by Pastor Israel G. Gebreegziabhar as a way to better support his community members. Many participants expressed a lack of willingness to talk about mental health issues within their culture. While recognizing barriers, they all agreed on the importance of speaking about mental health in order to begin to combat the associated stigma. “Depression” has only been a word in the Amharic language for the past 20 years.

Comments about the training included, “We need more training on this topic because it is hard to integrate to a new culture and lifestyle.” This group was very passionate about bringing mental health awareness and education to their community members. In Ethiopia, mental illnesses are often perceived as punishments from God or possession by a devil (evil-spirit); in fact, many people do not consider problems such as depression as mental illnesses (SOURCE: Ethiopian Journal of Health Science).

**May is Mental Health Month**

**May 6**—Mental Health First Aid (adult version) hosted free by the MHA from 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Meal and manual included. Register at www.mhacentralcarolinas.org.

**May 7**—Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day: “Make Charlotte Ring!” Join MHA and partners at 12 noon in the courtyard plaza by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center.

**May 12**—QPR Suicide Prevention workshop hosted free by the MHA from 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Lunch and QPR resource booklet included. Register at www.mhacentralcarolinas.org.

**May 12**—Mental Health Professionals Networking Event, hosted by MHA and Mecklenburg Psychological Association at Vin Master. For details, contact mha@mhacentralcarolinas.org.

**May 16 & 30**—MeckCares Community Training Institute (MCTI) System of Care Training in Cabarrus. For details, contact Sheila at swallhill@mhacentralcarolinas.org.

**May 18**—ParentVOICE program Family Support Group in Concord from 6:00-8:00 p.m. with dinner provided. For details, contact Cathy at cjohnson@mhacentralcarolinas.org.

**May 21**—Wake Up for Wellness Breakfast; for details, see page 4 or www.mhacentralcarolinas.org.

**May 26**—ParentVOICE program Family Support Groups in Charlotte from 6:00-8:00 p.m. with dinner and childcare provided. For details, contact Sheila at swallhill@mhacentralcarolinas.org.

**Invest in Wellness**

In honor of Mental Health Month or in honor/memory of a loved one, consider making a gift to the MHA utilizing the enclosed envelope or our “Donate Now” page at www.mhacentralcarolinas.org. Your donation helps real people in our community (like Hailey, pictured) through our advocacy, prevention and education initiatives. Take action #B4Stage4!
Parentvoice and Compeer Volunteer Awards

The MHA is proud to have 162 of the most talented and dedicated volunteers in the Charlotte region. Each year, we recognize two individuals as our most outstanding ParentVOICE and Compeer program volunteers. This year, our award winners were Pamela “Pam” Lee and Bob Bradford.

Pam Lee has been involved with MHA’s ParentVOICE program for two years and has proven to be a dependable and engaged volunteer who is passionate about family advocacy. Pam joined the 2013-2014 Family Partner class and showed her commitment, completing over 100 hours of training. She seeks out opportunities to volunteer, serves as an extension of the staff at support group meetings and workshops, and reaches out to other parents wherever she is. Pam says, “ParentVOICE gave me my power back and taught me to stand up for my family. I want to help other parents avoid going through the (school and mental health) system blindly.”

MHA’s ParentVOICE Program Director Candace Wilson (L) presented Pam Lee with the Annual ParentVOICE Volunteer Award.

MHA’s Compeer Volunteer Award for 2015 went to Bob Bradford. Bob was matched as a Compeer volunteer in January 2014 and joined the MHA Board of Directors six months later. Bob has been an incredibly supportive friend and has stayed the course with Ross during a very challenging year. Bob never let his friend’s serious life events deter him from seeing him through a series of crises. He has demonstrated the importance of loyalty and having a friend you can count on can. It can make all the difference in one’s life. Bob shared, “It’s been a privilege to be accepted and trusted by Ross. He shares openly and allows me to put things into perspective.”

MHA’s Compeer program matches community volunteers with adults in mental health recovery programs.

Don’t wait. When you don’t have to.

When you or a loved one is going through a mental health crisis, call 1-800-939-5911 before going to the Emergency Room.

One of Cardinal Innovations’ mental health professionals is available 24/7 where we immediately connect you with appropriate treatment and services.

We provide over-the-phone screenings, referrals and emergency counseling.

Cardinal Innovations is able to assist callers in languages other than English.
MHA’s Wake Up for Wellness is a free breakfast program on May 21st, designed to inspire, educate, and break the stigma of discussing and seeking support for mental health issues. Event costs are underwritten by our sponsors (right), however, we will ask guests to make a financial investment in the MHA’s mission. We will introduce the 1933 Society, a multi-year giving opportunity for donors to help sustain the MHA into the future. Support from individuals like you allows us to continue providing much needed supports and free resources to our community. You can be an integral part of promoting mental wellness and preventing mental health crises! Details and registration at www.mhacentralcarolinas.org.