



Peer Connection

Empowering people with mental illness to become more self-sufficient.

Several years ago, Horizon CEO Anne Constantino was asked to participate on a committee with several other providers and consumer advocates. She was initially hesitant about participating due to some of the historical tensions between consumer advocates and traditional care providers. Consumers often see care providers as controlling, as taking over at a time when they want to demonstrate their independence by making their own decisions.



Eric Frick Photography

Anne Constantino (left), CEO of Horizon Health Services, chats with Marcie Kelley, Mental Health Peer Connection director, at the Independent Living Project offices.

Once she agreed to participate on the committee, Anne soon became impressed with the knowledge and attitude of one of the consumer leaders. That consumer leader was Marcie Kelley, director and systems advocate for the Mental Health Peer Connection (MHPC).

MHPC is part of the family of agencies of the Western New York Independent Living Project. It is a recipient-run organization designed to assist people with mental illness in living as independently as possible. Services include peer counseling, advocacy and assistance with all aspects of receiving benefits such as SSI, DS and VESID. MHPC also helps people with mental illness become self-empowered, and helps recipients in identifying life goals, objectives and values, problem exploration, sharing experiences and proposing solutions and resolutions.

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From the desk of...



Anne Constantino President & CEO

I was ecstatic to hear President Bush's endorsement of treatment for addiction. I cheered when he referred to the "miracle of recovery." As one advocate put it, "the solution was placed front and center instead of the problem, and that's extraordinary."

Each year, one in five Americans is affected by a mental disorder or addiction, which can lead to isolation and hopelessness. Even worse, stigma can deter people from seeking care. Mental disorders and addiction are not the result of moral failings or poor willpower; they are legitimate illnesses that respond to treatment.

According to the Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health, research has contributed to our ability to recognize, diagnose and effectively treat mental health conditions. A new recovery perspective is supported by evidence on rehabilitation and treatment, as well as by the personal experiences of consumers.

Over the past several years, a revolution in science and service delivery has broadened our understanding of mental disorders and addiction and greatly improved care. New medicines have been developed, a strong network of community based self-help and peer support is available, and providers have embraced treatment options that focus on recovery.

Consumer advocates and leaders show us that recovery is possible, research tells us that treatment works, and now the President of the United States is saying that the miracle of recovery is possible. This is a powerful message that will help us all in our mission to promote rehabilitation and recovery. ♥

"Addiction crowds out friendship, ambition, moral conviction and reduces all the richness of life to a single destructive desire. As a government, we are fighting illegal drugs by cutting off supplies and reducing demand through anti-drug education programs. Yet for those already addicted, the fight against drugs is a fight for their own lives. Too many Americans in search of treatment cannot get it. So tonight I propose a new \$600 million program to help an additional 300,000 Americans receive treatment over the next three years. Our nation is blessed with recovery programs that do amazing work. Tonight, let us bring to all Americans who struggle with drug addiction this message of hope: The miracle of recovery is possible, and it could be you. "

**President George W. Bush
State of the Union Address, January 2003**



How do you say 'hope for recovery' in Russian?

Horizon Health Services was honored to host 10 Russian public health administrators and physicians for a full day at Horizon Village this past January. The visitors, who hailed from Samara (one of Russia's larger cities, located southeast of Moscow), were part of an administrative program organized and hosted by Buffalo Niagara WorldConnect (BNWC). The Russians spent their day observing how Horizon treats chemical dependency issues. After touring the facility, the visitors spoke with several HV staff members and consumers, and even experienced acupuncture, which Horizon uses to treat addiction. Although none of the three men and seven women spoke English (there was an interpreter present), they seemed to gain much from their visit.

"They were very impressed with the drug court concept and how Horizon partners with the criminal justice system," says Maria Rivett, the visitors' Horizon hostess. "They were also interested in the fact that, in addition to psychotherapy, Horizon utilizes other methods – such as acupuncture and pharmacology – to treat chemical dependency."

Maria also indicated the Russians were happy to see that the incorporation of vocational rehabilitation in the recovery process gives hope much earlier to consumers dealing with chemical dependency issues. In Russia, consumers are required to have five years of

"clean time" before they are allowed to return to gainful employment.

During the nearly three weeks the Russians were in Buffalo, they also visited major area hospitals, including Roswell Park Cancer Institute, ECMC and Women and Children's Hospital, as well as many not-for-profit organizations such as Hospice Buffalo, Mothers Against Drunk Driving and several AIDs organizations. According to BNWC community connections program director, Brooke Fitzpatrick, these programs are conducted three to four times a year by BNWC for the U.S. Department of State, and can involve various professions. Librarians and tourism representatives from Russia and the Ukraine have also been in WNY recently.

"The idea behind these programs is to show our guests how a democratic society functions, and to help them develop ideas to take back to their country," says Fitzpatrick. "The Russian visitors had an incredible time, and were very impressed with the level of technology we have here in Western New York as it relates to public health.

"They thought Horizon was an outstanding organization, and were very impressed with the size and scope of the facility," she added.

For more information on Buffalo Niagara WorldConnect, visit www.bnwc.org. ❤️



Horizon employees posed for a group photo with their Russian visitors at Horizon Village.

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Anne and Marcie formed a bond, and began talking about ways their organizations could partner to improve services to consumers. Today, as the relationship between the two organizations continues to grow, Horizon is utilizing more and more of MHPC's services, such as peer advocates.

"MHPC has helped improve the quality of our care, as well as the depth of our resources," says Anne. "They believe, as we do, that people can – and do – recover from mental illness, and we share a philosophy of helping the consumer to increase his or her level of functioning."

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MHPC coordinates with Horizon in many ways, such as through presentations, education and consumer rights advocacy. Marcie Kelley agrees that the partnership works, to the benefit of the consumers they are able to help.

"Many agencies can be intimidating or aloof," says Marcie. "Horizon has made itself very approachable. We feel very comfortable calling them with questions, concerns or problems because we know they will be open and willing to help."

Horizon and MHPC have proved that when organizations work together, everyone benefits.

To learn more about the WNY Independent Living Project or Peer Connection, visit www.wnyilp.org or call 836.0822. ❤️

Eighty-three percent of people who transitioned out of the Erie County Holding Center with Peer Connection's assistance remained out for six months or longer.

Best Practices Program

A person-centered initiative for coordinating holistic care.

New York State has defined several "best practices" areas that treatment providers around the state should focus on as a way to offer better treatments and more choices for consumers. As part of its strategic plan, Horizon has made a commitment to review and improve its practices in those areas and more.

The "best practices" focus during first quarter 2003 was Community Outreach.

In February, Horizon held an "in-service" staff program that featured Horizon's three case management programs. The idea was to help the staff understand the types of services case management can provide for Horizon consumers to generate more positive treatment outcomes for them. The theme was "community outreach" or "a person-centered initiative for coordinating holistic care" and it ties in with Horizon's philosophy of treating the whole consumer.

Horizon has three case management programs: the **Niagara County Comprehensive Case Management Program** is designed to

assist individuals with severe and persistent mental illness in Niagara County. The **Horizon Village TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) Case Management Program** provides services for individuals being discharged from Horizon Village, to insure a smooth transition and access to outpatient services for a variety of life situations. The **Transitional Case Management/Mental Health Court** is a division of Buffalo Drug Court, and its purpose is to assist individuals with mental illness who have committed a crime so that they can avoid jail time.

According to Maria Rivett, Horizon's project coordinator for the Best Practices Community Outreach Initiative, case management is defined as "a process or method for insuring that consumers are provided with whatever services they need in a coordinated, effective and efficient manner."

"We want to remove as many obstacles as possible for our consumers," says Maria. "Our goal is to educate our staff to the many services available for our consumers so we can do whatever we can to get more positive

outcomes for them."

For example, if a consumer has housing issues, or can't afford child care, or has no transportation...that consumer may not come to treatment. Horizon can step in and, using money from the various programs, provide "service dollars" to the consumer. Those service dollars can be used to pay for prescription medications if the consumer's Medicaid hasn't yet been activated, or to pay a babysitter so the consumer can come to a follow-up therapy session.

Horizon utilizes the services of many outside sources, including the Child Care Coalition to help identify childcare needs; several halfway houses in Erie and Niagara County for housing placements; food pantries to assist with meals and HEAP to help consumers who can't pay their heating bills.

"We also contract with taxi companies or provide bus passes to assist consumers with transportation issues," says Maria. "We try to do whatever we can to make the transition smooth and positive." ♥

Hello
My name is
Maria Rivett
Vice President,
Program Development
Horizon Health Services



Maria Rivett was just a few years out of college and working in Massachusetts when she decided she wanted to return to Western New York. She answered an ad from an organization looking for someone to work with individuals with developmental disabilities as well as mental illness. Her bachelor's degree in special education from SUNY Geneseo and her experiences with testing and functioning levels of the developmentally disabled gave Maria an edge, and she got the job. That was 1982, and Horizon was then called the Erie County Mental Health Services Corporation 2. It was comparable to a family-run business,

funded by the county and operating out of various, spread-out rented locations, including church basements.

In the nearly 21 years Maria has worked for Horizon, she has seen it grow from that county-funded organization to a private, financially stable not-for-profit organization with nearly 300 staff members. Maria has grown right along with Horizon, moving from that original position in 1982 to recently being appointed vice president, program development. Along the way, she earned a master of science degree in Rehabilitation from the University at Buffalo.

"Throughout my school years, I was always aware of students with mental retardation," says Maria. "I always thought they had more potential than they were given credit for. I knew that was the field I wanted to enter, because I knew I could make a difference."

Maria has had many mentors at Horizon through the years, and has found what she has learned from them to be invaluable, helping her to grow and advance at Horizon. Today, in her position as vice president of program development, Maria is responsible for the development and successful implementation of such Horizon initiatives as Acupuncture Detoxification; Naltrexone and TANF Case Management Services in Outpatient and Residential Chemical Dependency Services. She is also active on many local committees and spearheads Horizon's Community Advisory Board (see article this issue).

"Each job I have held at Horizon has exposed me to another disability," says Maria. "That helped me to learn that consumers most often have multiple issues rather than just one, obvious issue. That's important to know, because it helps us better understand their needs in terms of treatment and recovery." ♥

theRoadtoRecovery

Here is the true story of a consumer who overcame many obstacles with the help of Horizon Health Services to turn her life around. Last names have been omitted for privacy.

Sarah knew, back in high school, that she wanted to help others. But she feared her family wouldn't approve of the type of career she wanted to pursue, that they would think she wouldn't be able to get a "good enough" job or hold onto a job. She lacked self-confidence, so she put the idea out of her head...for a while anyway.

At age 15, Sarah began treatment for what doctors labeled as "depression." They said it was a phase she was going through, and prescribed antidepressants and tranquilizers, which Sarah took for many years. During this time, Sarah also had difficulties with drug and alcohol addiction, and was even arrested on several misdemeanor charges.

Sarah tried participating in the Vocational and Educational Services to Individuals With Disabilities program, or VESID. VESID is a state-run agency that works with disabled individuals to help them become competitively employable by offering training programs, school assistance, job assessment and work readiness programs and job placement services.

But VESID and therapy couldn't help Sarah because her diagnosis was incorrect. Things eventually got so bad, Sarah suffered a nervous breakdown.

It wasn't until she was in her early 30s – just seven years ago – that Sarah was properly diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

"I was fortunate to finally find a doctor who took the time to go through my entire medical history," says Sarah. "He was the one who determined it was bipolar disorder, and that diagnosis changed my life."

Once Sarah got into the proper treatment programs, she began to realize that her actions in the past had been a direct result of what was going on in her head at the time. She had had feelings of paranoia and distrust. The programs helped her to gain

insight, and to look more toward the future with confidence.

She re-entered the VESID program recently, began lithium therapy and is now well on her way to becoming the person she wanted to become back in high school. But Sarah knew she had to take things one step at a time. She wasn't ready yet to go back to school to pursue her career goals, so her counselors at VESID referred her to Horizon's vocational services program. Sarah hadn't worked for 10 years, and spent much of that time in and out of hospitals and programs. But she began Horizon's vocational services program in October 2002, and completed all phases – from testing to job placement – in roughly three months. The program helped her to talk about her goals, share her experiences with others in her group and, most importantly, gave her the self-confidence and the reassurance she needed.

"In the beginning Sarah was very apprehensive, very nervous and quite unsure of herself," says Becky Rechlin, Horizon's coordinator of vocational services. "But she was always very motivated. She always showed up and participated actively. She's a great role model for our program!"

"Horizon is always there for me," says Sarah. "I am always able to call them if I need them. They were great with referrals and follow-up and have really given me the confidence I needed to pursue the career I want."

VESID liaisons work closely with Horizon and its consumers, and referrals go back and forth between the two agencies. Horizon's vocational services program provides varying levels of assistance to its consumers, depending on their needs and their desired level of involvement. Annually, the program places 75 people who have a history of behavioral health problems into employment.

In Sarah's case, Horizon didn't have to do much advocating when it came time to find a job.

"Sarah did a lot of it herself," says Becky. "She interviewed well, she was sure of herself and she was honest with her future employer, who respected the fact that she brought up her past problems and didn't

lie or hide anything. That honesty helped Sarah get her job."

Today, Sarah is an aide in a local elementary school, assigned to a six-year-old autistic boy. She loves working with kids, she likes having a routine and she is always surprised at how fast her day goes. "It's hard work, but it was well worth it," says Sarah. "These kids always say something that makes me smile, or do something that makes me feel like I am making a difference."

Sarah says she is grateful that Horizon has stuck with her even after she completed the program, and she takes comfort in the fact that she can call them whenever a problem comes up or she has a question. And she plans to attend Horizon's Job Support Club, which meets the second Tuesday of every month.

"We are very open here," says Becky Rechlin. "We stay in contact after a consumer has gone through the program. We follow up with calls, and they all know they can come back anytime." In fact, Becky said the program recently received a call from a woman Horizon had placed seven years ago. She'd been laid off and wanted to know if she could come back to the program. "Of course I told her she was welcome!" says Becky.

And as for Sarah? Well, she sees herself staying employed so she can go back to school and prepare herself to do more... perhaps some sort of counseling position where she can help others. "I know now that this is what I was meant to do, and I am so anxious to do even more!" says Sarah... now a far cry from the nervous young girl with no self-confidence who couldn't hold a job. ♥

There are more than 200 Twelve-Step Programs that address the many different forms of addiction.



The ingredient that sparks recovery.

By Carol Sabatino
Chief Operating Officer

Having worked in the field of mental health and chemical dependency treatment for nearly 20 years, I am often asked, "What is needed to help someone get better?" A major mental illness like schizophrenia, major depression or bipolar disorder can be a terrifying experience. These diseases can be terribly isolating, and often leave the person fearful and unwilling to trust anyone. Through my relationships with individuals who have experienced mental illness, I have gained tremendous respect for the courage it takes to trust doctors and counselors in the hope for recovery.

When a person first enters mental health services, he or she often has no idea what is going to happen. During the acute phase of the illness, the individual may have been seen in a psychiatric emergency room or been hospitalized, which can be confusing and frightening.



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MEET OUR Board

Name:

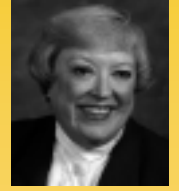
Dr. Eileen Joyce

Title:

Psychotherapist in Private Practice

Length of Term:

Dr. Joyce has served on the Horizon Health Services board of directors for more than 15 years. During that time, she has served in many positions and on many committees, including the Community Advisory Board (see article on this page).



How did you come to be on the HHS Board?

"Dr. Ron Gentile, a professor at UB who was on the board at the time, submitted my name because he knew of my interest in mental health services."

Why did you want to serve on the HHS Board?

"I was very interested in gaining insight into how a well-functioning mental health agency works, and to be a part of it and contribute in any way I could."

What have you found most rewarding about serving on the board?

"I have found it very uplifting to be involved with people who have turned their lives around, especially through my involvement with the Community Advisory Board. It is very inspiring to see how getting the proper help can really work. Horizon is a wonderful agency in terms of its quality of care, the concern of the administration and the staff and their overall dedication in wanting to make a difference in the lives of people with chemical addictions or mental health issues."

What do you want people to know about Horizon?

"Horizon's goal has been to become the 'gold standard' in mental health agencies, and I believe they have succeeded. In addition to the wonderful services and programs it offers, Horizon has much more of which to be proud. It's evident the staff is very proud to be part of Horizon Health Services: they care not just for the consumers, but for each other and for the overall agency. They work together as a team. And there is an ongoing openness to change and willingness to improve at Horizon that definitely is part of its success." ♥

The Community Advisory Board: from the consumer's point of view.

Several years ago, Horizon Health Services set up a Community Advisory Board (CAB) to provide a voice for consumers to express their point of view in regard to many issues relating to Horizon's operations.

From clinical issues to staff sensitivity to confidentiality... and everything in between...the CAB was designed and created to make treatment and services at Horizon more effective, thereby improving the lives of its consumers.

The CAB is comprised of people from the Horizon community who either have a mental illness and/or chemical dependency or have a relative with a mental illness and/or a chemical dependency. There are also WNY community members involved who have a professional interest in these topics. Maria Rivett, Horizon's vice president of program development, has facilitated the CAB since 1997, and Walter Pierce has chaired the committee for the past three years.

In addition to its routine advisement, the CAB accomplishes several other projects. Horizon's annual consumer satisfaction survey is distributed and facilitated by the

CAB. The results are reviewed by the CAB and feedback is then provided to Horizon administration. The survey results are also published and sent to state regulatory agencies. The survey has resulted in such improvements as increased privacy for consumers in reception areas and in consumers being treated more courteously.

The CAB is also involved in the battle against stigmatization and is exploring opportunities for consumer-led activities. CAB members are regularly called on to provide testimony and advocacy regarding the annual state budget, and speak at local church and wellness functions. And the CAB's regular newsletter, *Horizon Gazette*, is full of helpful and informative articles.

All of the CAB's efforts are designed to help Horizon achieve its goals for health, recovery and self-sufficiency.

The Community Advisory Board is currently seeking people in recovery, or friends and family members of people in recovery, to serve on its board. Attendance at monthly meetings, plus participation in special projects, are some of the board members' duties. If you are interested, please contact Walter Pierce at 716.833.3622.

"The ingredient that sparks recovery" continued from page 5

The individual's experience of the world is fundamentally changed by mental illness; what may have been dependable is now fragile and uncertain.

Unlike other diseases, mental illness is not talked about. It isn't like someone being diagnosed with cancer. Often, the newly-diagnosed person with mental illness has no one to ask what to do or where to go. People who are faced with the diagnosis of mental illness may feel that they have few options.

Developing a relationship with a counselor and a doctor the person can trust is very important. Having a treatment team that understands the person's particular condition, its history and what interventions have been helpful can have a tremendous impact on the likelihood of recovery. Connecting with a peer who has had similar experiences can offer both comfort and validation. A comprehensive treatment team that is caring, flexible and responsive is critical. Helping family and significant others understand the illness, as well as how they can support the individual, is another essential ingredient for recovery.

“ Having a treatment team that understands the person's particular condition, its history and what interventions have been helpful can have a tremendous impact on the likelihood of recovery. ”

Once the individual accepts and trusts the relationship with the treatment team, recovery can begin. If a basic trust in the treatment system is established even when changes in counselor or doctor or medication may occur, the individual can maintain recovery. Mental illness, like many other diseases, is treatable and like other diseases, a trusting relationship with treatment is essential. Trust fosters hope and hope fosters recovery. ♥

This newsletter is sponsored in part by Pharm Co TBD.

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Horizon is the largest and most comprehensive outpatient provider of integrated mental health, chemical dependency and medical services in WNY.

HorizonHealthPulse is published for the employees, consumers, Board and friends of Horizon Health Services. Please share this newsletter with a friend. If you would like additional copies of this newsletter or if you have any questions or comments about its content, please call Michelle Wroblewski at 716-831-1800 or email her at mwroblewski@horizon-health.org.

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Medical DirectorHak Ko, MD



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INSIDE: The miracle of recovery...

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