

## New Beginnings Program Holds Open House At New Location

Earlier this year, Horizon Health Services' New Beginnings Program celebrated its new location at 3297 Bailey Avenue with an open house.

The New Beginnings program offers a variety of therapies, treatments and holistic services to people living with HIV/AIDS in an affirmative atmosphere. In addition to Horizon CEO Anne Constantino and New Beginnings program manager, Khris Decker, speakers included Reverend Arthur L. Davis, the former coordinating chaplain and HIV/AIDS program coordinator at the Collins Correctional Facility and Deshell, a New Beginnings program graduate, who spoke of her life journey with HIV and mental illness.

Tours of the facility and holistic services demonstrations, including nutrition, spiritual care and acupuncture, were provided. ♥



Reverend Arthur L. Davis, former coordinating chaplain and HIV/AIDS program coordinator at the Collins Correctional Facility

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](mailto:mwroblewski@horizon-health.org).

**President & CEO . . . . .Anne Constantino**  
**Medical Director . . . . .Hak Ko, M.D.**



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**INSIDE:** Everyone can be a leader...

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**HORIZONHEALTHPULSE**





## Empowering consumers to get involved.

As part of its ongoing effort to treat the “whole consumer,” Horizon partnered with Action For Mental Health, a not-for-profit agency in Kenmore, to offer a leadership training program for interested consumers.

The goal of the program is to empower Horizon’s consumers to become more active in civic matters by providing them with the skills they will need to do so.

“Horizon was the first program to come to us and ask us if we could develop a leadership program specifically for its consumers,” says Sharon Ward, civic empowerment educator/ leadership coordinator for Action For Mental Health.

“We were very excited to do so, and we have been thrilled with the results of our first joint effort.”

**“The goal of the program is to empower Horizon’s consumers to become more active in civic matters by providing them with the skills they will need to do so.”**

“Every consumer should be able to be a true part of his or her community to the extent he or she wants to be involved,” says Stephanie Watson, Horizon’s senior coordinator of rehabilitation and recovery services. “We want to help them identify their talents and skills so they can do that.”

The initial 12-week program began in November. Ten consumers applied and were accepted; seven completed the



Lana Shvarts (standing), rehabilitation specialist at Horizon, gives some pointers to Leadership Training participating consumers Charlene (far left) and Brenda as Sharon Ward (second from right) and Stephanie Watson (right) look on.

eight-session program and graduated in February. The program consisted of guest speakers on such topics as *How to earn money and still receive Social Security benefits; Laughter in leadership; Resume writing; Public speaking* and *Proposal writing*. The participants were also given a group project, and chose to develop a client governance system for Horizon’s Continuing Day Treatment (CDT) Program. The idea behind the system was to provide suggestions from a consumer point of view that would improve the program. For example, the group wants to appoint consumer mentors to new consumers coming into the CDT program to make the transition easier and friendlier. There were also simple suggestions, such as requiring covers on coffee cups to eliminate spills and keep the facility cleaner. Horizon management embraced the proposal warmly, and began implementing the suggestions immediately.

“Every individual has leadership qualities,” says Sharon Ward. “We found the consumers who participated in this program were very committed. They were very eager to learn and to effect change, and opened up considerably as the program progressed. We’re working on two more programs for May, and already have more than enough consumers interested in participating!”

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From the desk of...

**Anne Constantino**  
President & CEO

What is a hero?

The dictionary defines a hero as “a remarkably brave person who has shown great courage or strength of character.”

The heroes in our society and culture typically are celebrities, sports stars and royalty, who are admired because of their positions in life. I question whether such admiration is truly deserved and whether these people are true “heroes.”

The bravest people I know are in recovery. I am inspired, and always humbled, by those people who have had the will and courage to change their lives through recovery from mental illness or chemical dependency. Most of us have some problem or “bad habits” we know we need to change or fix. However, as we all know, change is very difficult. Sometimes we are successful and sometimes we are not. The commitment to recovery, or positive change, is a process and a journey that includes setbacks, but always includes joy.

In my life, I have had the opportunity to know many amazing and wonderful people who are in recovery. A very special and dear friend is celebrating 15 years of sobriety this month. When I think of spirit and courage, I think of this woman who fought so hard for her life.

People who choose to make a positive change in their lives and who commit themselves to the process of recovery are true heroes. ♥



## It's all in the family.

**When a person struggles with an addiction, it's often viewed as "his problem."**

But the truth is, addiction doesn't just affect the person with the addiction; it can also have a profound effect on the lives of those around him. Horizon understands this, and that's why it offers a family-based treatment program that involves the families of the consumers it treats for chemical dependency. The program encourages parents, spouses, children and significant others to take part in the treatment process.

"Studies have shown that consumers in early recovery have lower relapse rates, are less stressed and report increased satisfaction when family members are involved in their treatment and recovery," says Brenda John-Banach, senior coordinator. "They report improved family relationships, have a higher rate of treatment success and are more employable."

Horizon's program helps rebuild family relationships and communication, answers family members' questions, helps them to identify and manage their feelings and assists them in finding ways to help their whole family to "recover."

Family members are often "enablers," usually without even realizing it. They make excuses for their loved one's behavior. They may pay

the bills. They may make themselves available 24/7, putting the needs of the individual with the addiction even before their own.

"If a person with an addiction responds well in treatment, but his everyday environment and his personal relationships don't change, it triggers old behaviors, makes it more difficult for him or her to change and often defeats the treatment," says Maria Russo, program director at Horizon's Niagara Falls Outpatient Clinic. "Enlightening family members – who often can't or won't acknowledge they're part of the problem – is a challenge, but it's well worth it."

Judy Tejada, an addictions counselor at Horizon's Boulevard Clinic, concurs. "When we help family members become aware of what they're doing to enable their loved one and get them to change their behaviors, it forces the consumer to deal with his situation and make changes."

Participation in the family treatment program is a difficult choice for families to make. Often they are not aware that insurance will cover family treatment. And, while most family members really do want to help, they often don't believe they are the ones who need to change, that it is the consumer alone who must change. They believe that if the person with the addiction would just stop using, then the family problems will be resolved. Continued on page 3

## MEET OUR Board

Gordon James Photography



**Name:** Lenore Ranallo  
**Title:** Northeast Human Resources Manager for Adelphia  
**HHS Board:** Has served on the Horizon

Health Services board since 2002.

**How did you come to be on the HHS Board?** "I got to know Anne Constantino when my family was dealing with some health issues. Horizon helped us out considerably, and I became very interested in how the general community views addiction and mental health issues. I wanted to help."

**What have you found most rewarding about serving on the board?** "Hearing the stories of the people who have been helped by Horizon...the commitment of the entire staff...the strides Horizon has made in drug court...the expansion of Horizon Village – there's so much!"

**What do you want people to know about Horizon?** "That Horizon can give people a new lease on life. When they think they're at the end of their rope, they're not; Horizon is truly there for them. They should not give up hope, they should have faith." ♥

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"The leadership program taught me to be stronger and more self-confident," says Brenda, a Horizon consumer who graduated from the program in February. "It gave me lots of good information that will help me in my business and in life."

**For more information on Horizon's leadership training program, call Tara Kane at 831-0200.** ♥

**Hello**  
My name is  
**Michelle Jacob**  
Senior Coordinator  
Niagara County



**Michelle Jacob began working for Horizon Health Services nearly 25 years ago as a counselor in the day treatment program.** She moved into management 15 years ago, and went on to manage one program, then two, then three...and was recently named senior coordinator for Niagara County. Michelle says she's very excited about her new position.

"Niagara County is brand-new territory for me," says Michelle. "It's very exciting because it's growing and it has a lot of potential. And the people I've been meeting are wonderful."

Before moving up to work in Niagara County,

this West Seneca native was the overall coordinator for Horizon's six day treatment programs. Michelle also temporarily ran the mental health court program when the current coordinator was on maternity leave.

"I like change," says Michelle. "I think it's good, it's healthy. And I love Horizon because they encourage change. This is a company where the opportunities are endless. You can start out in one position, but there are options throughout the entire company, which makes it very easy to make a career here, which is exactly what I have done."

Michelle says she truly believes Horizon is on the cutting edge of treatment. And she attributes that to the fact that the company is always looking at "how to do it better." "Horizon is always looking for new and different ways to help our consumers," says Michelle. "I work with some great people who are truly committed to what they do, who take pride in their work and who don't view this as 'just a job.' That makes it very easy to come to work every day." ♥

## 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.

For a young woman barely in her thirties, Brenda has seen her share of bad times. Her mom passed away on the eve of her senior prom. She suffered a work-related injury and eventually lost her job. Her marriage fell apart and she became a single mother to two children. As more things happened, Brenda became depressed, crying a lot and having difficulty coping. Eventually she had a nervous breakdown, and was hospitalized. Her doctors at Buffalo General Hospital referred Brenda to Horizon where, according to Brenda, her life began to change for the better. Her counselor set her up with individual and group therapy sessions and got her on the proper medication for her depression.

"I am the type of person who holds it all in, who doesn't talk easily to people," says Brenda. "Horizon changed all that when they introduced me to others who had been through similar things I had been through. I really began opening up."

Brenda credits a recently offered leadership program (see article this issue) with giving her the confidence to turn her life around and the opportunity to meet others in the community who could help her, such as with legal problems, etc. The program also allowed Brenda to voice her opinions on how to make the program better so as to help more consumers, which made her feel needed and valued.

It's been nearly two years now that Brenda has been coming to Horizon, and her counselors see the difference. "Brenda has made great strides in her recovery," says Shari Doyle, a counselor at the Bailey-Kensington facility. "I have seen her blossom in all aspects of her life, and I'm proud of what she's accomplished."

Brenda agrees that things are much better. She says she rarely cries anymore. She's grown stronger and has gained much insight about herself. She thinks more positively than negatively and she's happier in her personal relationships, especially with her children.

**"It's great to know that Horizon is there for me," says Brenda. "Whenever I begin to get depressed, I know I have backup – a place where I can go where they care about me and listen to me and help me."**

"It's great to know that Horizon is there for me," says Brenda. "Whenever I begin to get depressed, I know I have backup – a place where I can go where they care about me and listen to me and help me. The people at Horizon are excellent. I don't know where I'd be if I hadn't found Horizon."

Today, Brenda has accomplished one of her biggest goals: she has opened a day care center with two partners, and she helps Horizon in any way she can. "It's important to me to give back to these people who gave me so much," says Brenda. "I want to help others in any way I can." ♥

## Khrist Decker Named Program Manager for New Beginnings Program

Khrist Decker, CSW, ADS, has been appointed program manager for Horizon Health Services' New Beginnings program. The program offers a variety of therapies, treatments and holistic services to people living with HIV/AIDS.



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Khrist Decker  
Program Manager  
New Beginnings  
Program

Khrist has been an employee of Horizon since 1998, when he was a clinical supervisor/senior counselor in the New Beginnings program. He also served as senior counselor in Horizon's Medical Psychiatric Program, and was counseling director for Gay & Lesbian Youth Services of WNY, Inc.

"New Beginnings provides a truly unique opportunity to improve the quality of life for persons living with HIV/AIDS by allowing them to participate in treatments that recognize the whole person: mind, body, and spirit," says Decker. "By combining traditional and complementary therapies using a person-centered approach, our goal is to reach consumers and engage them in services that make sense to them and that are driven by their personal preferences and strengths."

"Khrist has a set of values that are person-centered, which he brings to his treatment team," says his supervisor, Stephanie Watson. "His program is a great example of what all our programs strive to achieve."

Khrist has a Master of Social Work degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo. In addition to receiving his license as a Certified Social Worker, Khrist is certified for HIV Test Counseling and as an Acupuncture Detoxification Specialist. He resides in the city of Buffalo. ♥

"It's all in the family" continued from page 2

The program helps family members figure out their role and determine how they really can help the person with the addiction and truly support recovery. "Once family members do participate, they really

open up," says Maria. "They're able to be more honest and less inhibited. And that is a benefit to everyone involved."

**For more information on Horizon's family treatment program, call 831-1800. ♥**