

HORIZON HEALTH PULSE

thePathtoRecovery

Here is the true story of a consumer who overcame many obstacles to turn his life around. Last names have been omitted for privacy.

Karl knows about setting goals, staying focused to overcome obstacles and pacing himself. Karl is a long-distance runner. He is also a recovering drug addict diagnosed with bipolar disease.

"My life today is far beyond what I could have imagined for myself 20 years ago," says Karl. "I never believed it possible to live drug free and manage my mental illness. Yet here I am, living proof that recovery is possible."

Karl drank in high school, getting hooked on marijuana in college. Things quickly crumbled: his grades suffered, he began hearing voices, became delusional and was suicidal. For years, Karl was in and out of hospitals and institutions. Shock treatments helped his depression, but he couldn't break the cycle of drugs.

He started counseling through Horizon in 1980, but couldn't relate to his counselor and so didn't truly participate. He established a trusting relationship with a new counselor and began to respond. "He was very honest with me," said Karl. "He said I could go to the hospital or go through rehab. I went to a 12-step program meeting, which turned my life around."

Karl says making the connection between his mental health and his drug use was

the key to finding hope, and he has been clean for 20 years. He takes medication for his bipolar disease, and regularly sees a psychiatrist. "There have been relapses," says Karl, "but I try to stay on top of it and get my meds adjusted when I need to."

"I never believed it possible to live drug free and manage my mental illness. Yet here I am, living proof that recovery is possible."

Jane Epstein, LCSWR, a former full-time counselor at Horizon, now consults for the organization and maintains her own private practice. She has worked with Karl for nearly 17 years. "Karl's motivation for change has always been extremely high," says Jane. "He's always had the wisdom to know when major life events warranted his seeking help and he would do just that. I feel privileged to be a part of his journey."

Today, Karl is happily married "to an extremely loving and supportive wife" and is also a father. He graduated from college and went on to receive his master's degree. He switched from a career in addiction counseling to higher education and is employed at a local college. "Denial is a bad enemy," says Karl. "You have to believe in yourself, recognize that mental health and addiction go hand in hand and use all your resources to change your life. I did." ♥

High level of services a priority for new medical director

In September, Kristin Ahrens, MD was appointed medical director for the Horizon Corporations and now is responsible for all psychiatric services for our 10 clinics in Erie, Niagara and Genesee counties.

This includes psychiatric assessments and follow-up care, specialty clinics (including the Clozaril clinic) and the program for prenatal and postpartum depression.



Photo credit: Selectus Inc.

Dr. Ahrens joined Horizon in 2005 as staff psychiatrist and was instrumental in implementing Horizon's program for treating pregnant women and new mothers experiencing depression.

We thought you'd like to get to know Dr. Ahrens, so we asked her to respond to a few questions:

HHP: What is your view on "recovery"?

KA: "I view recovery as a process of change. We are all in various stages of change at different points in our life, no matter how healthy we are."

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From the desk of...

Kristin Ahrens, MD
Medical Director

Welcome to 2008!

Unfortunately, it promises to be another year filled with many challenges for our consumers. The rising cost of oil, lack of jobs, an increasing inability to afford health insurance, neighborhood crime and a struggling educational system are just a few of the challenges we will all face. The stress that these issues create can lead to depression and anxiety disorders in many individuals, and can predispose others to drug and alcohol abuse.

Everyone deserves an opportunity to be emotionally healthy and to gain the strength to deal with these life challenges. Horizon continues to offer an exceptional level of mental health care and chemical dependency services. The dedication of our staff cannot be duplicated elsewhere, and our consumers reflect the benefits. By offering this opportunity for health, we do not eliminate all of life's challenges, but we sure make them easier to tolerate. ♥

New facility to fill unmet need for specialized treatment for young adults.



An artist's rendering shows how the proposed Horizon Village Young Adult Treatment Facility would become an integral part of the Village campus.

An exciting new project is underway: the **Horizon Village Young Adult Treatment Center**. Our plan is to build a 30-bed facility on the Horizon Village campus that will be designed specifically to respond to the unique chemical dependency treatment needs of the young adult population. It will offer a recovery and rehabilitation program that includes linkage to continuing education opportunities.

“At Horizon Village, 37% of all individuals seeking treatment are under age 27.”

The rate of substance abuse or dependence among young adults (ages 18-25) is over 21% (one out of five). This is higher than the rate of substance dependence for adolescents or adults. However, of the millions of young adults with serious drug and alcohol problems, fewer than one in 10 receive treatment. In WNY, just 13.5% of the regional demand for intensive residential treatment services is being met. There is a definite need for this type of facility and specialized care, and we will keep you updated on our progress! ♥

More than 23 million Americans struggle with some kind of addiction, but less than 10 percent get treatment for it.

Hello
My name is
Lisa Arnet
Corporate Director of
Employee Services



has helped to implement programs and benefits with the help of a newly-formed “WOW” committee.

“There is a very proactive

culture here,” says Lisa. “Management is willing to implement creative ideas such as our employee birthday program, a team-oriented road rally and a wellness program. It’s been very satisfying so far, and there’s lots more to come!”

Formerly an employee benefits consultant for Vanner Insurance Agency and former president of We Care Transportation, Lisa is a past recipient of *Business First’s* 40 Under Forty Award and she was a *Buffalo News Hero* of the Year. In addition, Lisa has

received the National Kidney Foundation Volunteer of the Year award, the PTA Innovation Award, the BLES Community Service Award, the Niagara Lutheran Community Humanitarian Award and the Yellow Rose of Zonta Award. Lisa is a member of the Buffalo/Niagara Human Resource Association and the Society for Human Resource Management. ♥

“Our goal is literally to make Horizon one of the best places to work in Western New York. We’re heading in that direction very quickly, and the employee response to the changes so far has been overwhelmingly positive.”

– Lisa Arnet

Fostering a culture of respect and recognition

Working with consumers dealing with mental illness and addiction can be emotionally draining. It takes qualified, caring individuals who are truly dedicated to others. It also takes a work environment that fosters respect, teamwork and camaraderie. That's why Horizon is in the process of adapting its work culture to ensure its employees are in the best possible environment.

"Our employees are dedicated to our consumers and to Horizon, and consistently go 'above and beyond.' We want to repay that dedication by creating a culture that is more respectful and provides more opportunity for recognition," says Lisa Arnet, corporate director of employee services.

A "WOW" Committee, consisting of management and staff, has been formed to come up with benefits and practices that will, literally, make employees say, "WOW!" So far, those that have been implemented have been very well received.

“I think it's a huge step in the right direction for any company to recognize and understand the needs of its employees and their families.”

— Robin Bertini RN
Clinical Nurse Manager
Medical Units

"One of the huge issues with every employer is health benefits," says Arnet. "That was one of the first areas we focused on. We've introduced AFLAC to our employees and we've lowered the rates they pay for dental and vision coverage." In addition, Horizon has instituted a Wellness Program, consisting of yoga classes, smoking cessation and Weight Watcher groups and other health-related ideas.

Several internal communication initiatives have also been launched, such as a quarterly CEO letter; employee newsletter; improved performance evaluation system; employee



Lisa Arnet (left) meets with Aretha Jordan, administrative assistant at the Bailey Kensington Clinic.

birthday and anniversary acknowledgments and an employee recognition program.

“I can personally say from my work experiences that I've never worked for a company that showed so much concern as Horizon does for its employees.”

— Aretha Jordan
Administrative Assistant
Bailey Kensington Clinic

There are some fun activities, as well, such as this summer's road rally, a waiting room contest and a productivity competition for which the winner received tickets to the Sabres' January "Ice Bowl" game. "It was designed to be a fun event with results, and it worked," says Arnet. "Some counselors' productivity went up 33 percent during the contest." ♥

“My supervisors (at Horizon) have always supported me and encouraged my professional development. I am not unique; Horizon is always willing to help employees develop and grow.”

— Julie Gutowski
Program Director
Main/Amherst Clinic

According to SAMHSA, prescription drug misuse among 18- to 25-year-olds jumped 19 percent between 2002 and 2006, due largely to an increase in the nonmedical use of pain relievers.

With heartfelt thanks

Horizon thanks Key Bank for its generous donation of a \$500 Key Bank gift card during our Supportive Housing Program Holiday Food Drive in December.

"The consumers in our program were living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings or on the street," says Don Will, vice president of infrastructure and resource management for Horizon. "We stabilized their housing and were able to purchase food and holiday gifts for them with the gift card. That brought joy to their holidays, and our consumers greatly appreciated such generosity, as did we."

Horizon staff members also contributed to the Holiday Food Drive. ♥

Psychiatrist Wanted Referral bonus: \$600

Horizon seeks MD or DO with NY state license and board certification in Psychiatry. One year exp. preferred (but not required) in mental health or substance abuse. FT, flexible schedule, great benefits and innovative work environment. Visit our website for full job description or call 831.1800 and ask for Lisa. We will pay \$600 to anyone who refers someone we end up hiring.

*"High level of services a priority"
continued from page 1*

HHP: What do you see as WNY's biggest concern right now regarding addiction?

KA: "WNY is already struggling with a tremendous increase in prescription drug abuse, particularly in the adolescent/early adult age groups. This needs to be aggressively dealt with, as these 'kids' are our future and still have their whole lives ahead of them."

HHP: What is your goal as medical director for Horizon?

KA: "My goal as medical director is to continue to offer a very high level of services for both mental health and chemical dependency programs, because everyone deserves an opportunity to be healthy." ♥

Life-saving information available on our website.

Horizon's website is full of helpful information on chemical dependency, alcoholism, gambling, mental health issues and so much more. We're constantly updating our site to provide valuable information on the services we provide to assist consumers and their families, as well as links to other helpful organizations.



Visit our website at www.horizon-health.org.

Here are five things you'll find on our website right now:

- Information on our Brief Strategic Family Therapy Program
- Self test for chemical dependency
- Photo slide show of Horizon Village
- Information on our newest clinic, in Genesee County
- Current job openings at Horizon.

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 Pat Chrzanowski at 716-831-1800 or email her at pchrzanowski@horizon-health.org.

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INSIDE: Former consumer shows recovery is possible.

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