

# MENTAL HEALTH REVIEW

WINTER 2016

# New Beginnings

New Life  
Skills  
Building  
P. 5



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**MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION**  
*FIND WELLNESS*

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# MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

## FIND WELLNESS

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### *A letter to our community*

Dear friends,

The end of the year offers us a great opportunity to reflect on the progress we've made and prepare ourselves for a fresh start. This is why we've made this newsletter's theme "New Beginnings."

The dedication of the Mental Health Association's staff, donors, and volunteers this past year made it possible to begin offering services at our new Life Skills Building (p. 5). It has meant that we're ready to begin offering Home and Community Based Services. It has meant that we were able to begin the new tradition of a Holiday Jobs fair to help people with a mental health challenge get back into the workforce. (p. 4)

In 2017, that same dedication will mean the MHA can begin offering services in Ontario County. It'll mean we can begin a new program to support transition aged youth in our community.

But most importantly, each of these changes gives us an opportunity to better serve people in our community. Together we offer a new beginning to forge a path to wellness.

Happy Holidays and Be Well,



*Patricia M. Woods*

Patricia Woods  
President and CEO

**Mental Health Association Offices:**

**Main Office**

320 N. Goodman Street  
Rochester, NY 14607

(585) 325-3145 Fax: (585) 325-3188

[www.mharochester.org](http://www.mharochester.org)

[Facebook.com/mharochester](https://www.facebook.com/mharochester)

**Self-Help Drop-In Support Services**

539 South Avenue  
Rochester, NY 14620

(585) 454-3530

**MHA Life Skills**

344 N. Goodman St.  
Rochester, NY 14609

(585) 224-2005 Fax (585) 224-2761

**Wyoming County Office**

27 W. Buffalo Street  
Warsaw NY 14569

(585) 786-0992 Fax: (585) 786-0751

**Livingston County Office**

10 Park Place, P.O. Box 206  
Avon, NY 14414

(585) 226-3150 Fax (585) 226-3162

## Managing the Stress of Change

Change is often hard and can be a source of stress. When we face change in our personal lives there are stressors that can be managed or at least understood. When we face periods of great change in our environment, in those places where we have no control, we can often feel high levels of stress. Much of that stress is based in the unknown. Not knowing what will happen. Not knowing how or when things will happen. This inhibits our ability to plan and prepare.

Something that we know is that change is inevitable. What we can do is equip ourselves with tools that enable us to manage the stress that comes with change so that we can successfully negotiate the changes in our lives. Mental Health America offers some strategies for managing stress that can be helpful in times of change.

**Be realistic-** If you feel overwhelmed by some activities (yours and/or your family's), learn to say NO! Eliminate an activity that is not absolutely necessary. You may be taking on more responsibility than you can or should handle. If you

meet resistance, give reasons why you're making the changes. Be willing to listen to other's suggestions and be ready to compromise.

**Shed the "superman/superwoman" urge-** No one is perfect, so don't expect perfection from yourself or others. Ask yourself, "What really needs to be done?" How much can I do? Is the deadline realistic? What adjustments can I make?" Don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it.

**Meditate-** Just ten to twenty minutes of quiet reflection may bring relief from chronic stress as well as increase your tolerance to it. Use the time to listen to music, relax and try to think of pleasant things or nothing.

**Visualize-** Use your imagination and picture how you can manage a stressful situation more successfully. Whether it's a business presentation or moving to a new place, many people feel visual rehearsals boost self-confidence and enable them to take a more positive approach to a difficult task.

**Take one thing at a time-** For people under tension or stress, their day-to-day workload can sometimes seem unbearable. The best way to cope with this feeling of being

overwhelmed is to take one task at a time. Make a list of things you need to get done and start with one task. Once you accomplish that task, choose the next one. The positive feeling of "checking off" tasks is very satisfying. It will motivate you to keep going.

**Exercise-** Regular exercise is a popular way to relieve stress. Twenty to thirty minutes of physical activity benefits both the body and the mind.

*Melanie Funchess is the Director of Community Engagement at the Mental Health Association*



# STAY CONNECTED!

Subscribe to the MHA's monthly email newsletter to keep informed about upcoming classes, workshops, and groups that meet at the Mental Health Association.

A once per month digest of EVERYTHING that's happening.

Go to [mharochester.org](http://mharochester.org) to sign up.

## First Annual Holiday Jobs Fair

On October 6, 2016 the Mental Health Association hosted our First Annual Holiday Jobs Fair. The Fair was held on the campus of Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School. It included 20 different employers and service providers, as well as over 100 job seekers who came to network with local employers, apply for jobs, and get interviews.

The Fair was organized to meet the needs of consumers who were looking to gain part time and seasonal employment. With high unemployment being reported among persons with mental illness (3 to 5 times higher than unemployed persons without a mental disorder), this job fair helped to bridge local employers and our consumers. According to the National Association on Mental Illness, New York's unemployment rate for persons receiving public mental health services is 84%. Yet, one major step that people with mental disorders can take towards their own recovery is having a job. Employment is helpful towards recovery as it reduces the potential for psychiatric crisis relapse, improves one's self-esteem, promotes social interaction and inclusion, and allows people to enjoy an overall satisfaction in their life.

The Mental Health Association promotes mental wellness by providing employment related services. These services include employment related one-on-one sessions include:

- Resume' writing
- Writing cover letters, thank you letters, acceptance letters, etc.
- Employment networking
- Interviewing skills
- Soft skill development (effective communication, conflict

- resolution, etc.)
- Budgeting

Sessions are for persons who have mental disorders who are seeking employment or who need support to maintain their employment. Each session is consumer driven with support provided in order to help them achieve their goals. There is no fee or referral needed to access employment support.

For more information about employment support options at MHA Rochester, please contact John Hogan, Employment Support Specialist, at [jhogan@mharochester.org](mailto:jhogan@mharochester.org) or call 585-325-3145 extension 121.



## Your Support Makes a Big Difference!

The Mental Health Association serves over 15,000 people each year. Whatever step an individual or family is on in their journey to wellness, we strive to be a resource for them. We couldn't be that resource without the support of people like you.

Funding for the Mental Health Association comes from many different sources, but we still rely on your individual gifts to fulfil our mission of promoting lasting mental wellness. Your gift works towards ending the stigma of mental illness. Your gift enhances our programs so staff have the tools they need to help people wherever they are on their path to wellness. Your gift changes lives.

Please support mental health in our community by making a tax deductible gift to the Mental Health Association this year. **Whether it's a single donation or a recurring gift of just \$10 a month, it'll make a big impact on someone's journey to finding wellness.** If you have any questions about how to make a gift or how it'll be used, please call me at (585) 325-3145 Ext. 115 or email me [kwilson@mharochester.org](mailto:kwilson@mharochester.org)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Wilson'.

Kevin Wilson

Director of Community Relations





## Life Skills Moving to New Location

In November 2016, Life Skills Services reopened at our new location just across from the Mental Health Association main offices in the Village Gate. This move marks an exciting next leg of the journey for Life Skills Services. Proximity to the central offices will provide an opportunity for individuals to access all of the services that the MHA provides, enhance collaboration, and reduce transportation challenges. The bright new space will mean more room for groups and a launching point to delve into new topics. The configuration will also allow us to explore different tools for recovery, such as computer-based groups to access online resources and training. It will mean increased capacity to bring in experts from the community to talk about local resources, from housing to volunteering.

One way the community at Life Skills combats the stigma of mental illness is through empowerment and mutual responsibility, and our transition to the new space will embody these values. Everyone who walks through the doors in some way shapes our Life Skills community, and in many ways we encourage each other to spread that to the broader community as well. Advocacy has been an important topic of discussion here at Life Skills over the past month, and a new group will also be starting soon that helps individuals join groups in the community and

connect with peer services. Finding one's voice is a key ingredient in wellness. Life Skills Services new location will be filled with people finding their voice.

*Written by Kirsten Muckstadt, Program Coordinator at the MHA's Life Skills Services*

### *Photos of Life Skills after the walls went up*



*More Photos on Page 6*



More photos from inside the new Life Skills building. The main space is open concept but there side rooms for group classes and individual support sessions. Soon, the Mental Health Association will begin using the space to host additional employment support workshops, transition age youth programs, and more.



## A Family Journey

When I first meet Irene 8 years ago, she was suffering from depression and starting to see some behavioral issues in her daughter Cara, who was 5 years old at the time. Her son Parker was just 2 years old. Irene was concerned about things going on at school that were impacting her daughter's ability to learn in the classroom. Cara was having trouble staying focused.

Things at home had their challenges as well. They didn't live in the safest of neighborhoods and it was difficult for Irene to let her daughter go outside and play. She wanted Cara to be supervised but with her own mental health challenges, and a 2 yr old who liked to run, it was just another instance where Irene felt like she was failing. She often felt alone and isolated.

We began our journey with a conversation about what Irene thought was the ideal life for herself and then brainstormed ways to try and make those things happen. One of our first

tasks was to get Irene back involved with any kind of therapy. With the father of her two children working full time, and a 2yr old home all the time, it was near impossible for Irene to get to a therapist. She found various ways to be proactive about her mental health in a way that fit her lifestyle.

As time went on, Irene was able to get herself to a mental health professional and combine medical advice with the personal strategies she developed



Fast forward to 8 years later. Cara is in High School. Parker is 11 and has the same curly blonde hair he had when I first met him. Both have had their own challenges, but with the help of their Mom, school personnel and an educational advocate, they are receiving services that have benefitted their way of learning. Irene, continues to seek out support. She is more organized, more focused, and has even made friends in a local support group. She still has her days when the depression wants to keep her home and isolated but more often than not, she pushes through and keeps walking her path to wellness.

The Mental Health Association works with families like Irene's all the time to keep them on the path to wellness and success. Learn more at [mharochester.org/services/family-support/](http://mharochester.org/services/family-support/)

*Story written by Angie Coleville, Family Support Intake Coordinator at the Mental Health Association*

### A Positive Twist

I have a history of bipolar disorder. Remaining positive is a huge part of what helps me to stay balanced on my recovery journey.

About two years ago, I was in the process of making a change in my life for the better. I expressed an interest to the MHA about doing more for the mental health community in order to help myself be more positive and surround myself with positive people. They suggested that I connect with their Creative Wellness Opportunities (CWO) because workshops and groups at CWO are created and given by peers for peers. There, I found a positive sense of community and have been a peer facilitator of workshops ever since. I get a boost every day I walk into our program because of all the sweet people greeting me with enthusiasm.

I started out at Creative Wellness Opportunities by facilitating a workshop that I created called "A Positive Twist." In the workshop we discuss well-being topics that I pick out especially for the group and create works of art related to what we discuss. The creations never cease to amaze me or any of the other participants. They all have so much meaning behind them.

About a year after I began facilitating A Positive Twist, I was asked to substitute for the Mindfulness workshop for a day. I loved it so much that I asked if I could start facilitating it for a trial run. This proposal was well received, and I have since made the workshop my responsibility too. There is a very steady number of participants in the workshop now and the positive feedback I receive on a weekly basis increases my confidence greatly.

To help me stay busy, motivated and well, I also teach, train and present about mental health and recovery at NAMI Rochester. Additionally, I have great supportive friends; many of whom I met at CWO. My life has definitely taken on a positive twist since discovering and connecting with Creative Wellness Opportunities. I look forward to continuing my affiliation long into the future as I share my wellness journey with others.

-Loekie Windig



### In My Own Words



My story is one of overcoming the odds from the beginning.

I was born

3 months early. My organs were 70% dead, and I weighed around 3 pounds. Due to a combination of my premature birth and medical malpractice, I was blind from birth. My birth father died when I was 3 years old. MY birth mother died when I was 16. My biological family was extremely abusive. I was in 13 foster homes after my removal from my biological family, between 10-14 years old. With all these families, I endured all types of abuse.

I defied all odds by graduating high school in my local public school with honors. I persevered through

many bouts of what I now know is PTSD and many hospitalizations to graduate with a Licensed Master of Social Work Degree from Roberts Wesleyan College. I had my greatest personal dream fulfilled by marrying my beautiful wife and best friend, in April 2014.

But after our wedding, all the traumatic memories and extremely negative past messages resurfaced stronger and more persistently than ever. I began to hate myself for my inability to be there for them when I was most needed because of severe PTSD. I eventually grew very suicidal and irritated.

After talking with my wife and family, I decided to go get help. This decision marked a major turning point for my and my family's lasting recovery. I moved into a supportive living place. They helped me tackle my mental health challenges, build

self-confidence, and address my family challenges. What could have destroyed me and my family only ultimately brought us closer.

Now, I am about to become New York State certified as a peer support specialist in mental health. I have done extensive volunteering for well over 2 years at the Self-Help Drop-in Support Center, a community outreach at my church, the Red Cross, and more. At the Mental Health Association, I have grown personally and professionally. I learn of others' struggles and utilize my own educational background and lived experiences to connect with guests. I let people know I understand where they are. I know, firsthand, there is hope.

-Juan Jesus-Israel Torres

*This story edited for length. Full article can be found at [mharochester.org](http://mharochester.org).*

Mental Health Association of Rochester/Monroe County Inc.  
320 N. Goodman Street, Ste. 202  
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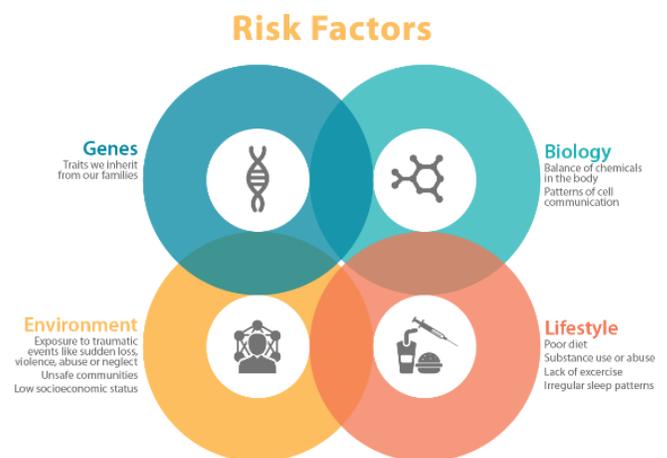
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## *Mental Health Facts*

We know that 1 in 5 American adults will have a diagnosable mental health condition in any given year, but where does mental illness come from? The infographic to the right shows some of the risk factors that may contribute to mental illness. Just like other categories of illness, genetics, body chemistry, environmental factors, and lifestyle choices come together to influence your mental wellness.



Source: MentalHealthAmerica.net

The Mental Health Association fosters an environment to build skills and provide support to individuals facing a mental health challenge, empowering them to make informed decisions on their self directed path to wellness

