



MHA's Family Support Services Launches New Program for Sibs

Family Support Services has a new offering in its mix thanks to funding made possible through the agency's *Best from Within* internal grants program (see page 3). The new initiative, *All About Me*, is designed for the siblings of children with mental health challenges.

Often, the brothers and sisters of children with disabilities, including mental illness, do not enjoy the same degree of parental and family attention as their siblings because so much energy is focused on the child with the diagnosis. This situation can lead to feelings of isolation, frustration, and resentment in the non-challenged siblings and problems of their own, including behavioral issues and poor performance in the classroom.

All About Me is designed to help children, ages 8 - 13 having a sibling or family member with a mental health diagnosis, change their thinking when dealing with their perceptions of themselves and the world around them. It offers these children opportunities for respite, time away from the family and the identified sibling or family member, and opportunities to network with children who have like life experiences. *All About Me* focuses on these children and their need for nurturing and attention in a safe and supportive environment that promotes self-confidence and enjoyment of childhood experiences.

Debbie Myricks, Family Support Services Respite Supervisor, expects *All About Me* to engage at least ten children each month over the course of one year for a total of 120 children served. Sessions focus on coping and communication skills and include bi-annual sessions, allowing parents and children to have opportunities for open communication. Facilitators provide networking opportunities and create natural supports as children learn skills to lessen the incidence of family or individual crises. "This model takes the wellness approach and delivers content in a fun and recreational format that is engaging and supportive," explains Myricks. "The wellness approach involves working with the families to set goals and work toward a level of improvement that is acceptable to them and representative of what they consider to be well or an improvement in wellness."



Debbie Myricks, Respite Supervisor

All About Me incorporates fun activities into the learning, including puzzles, games, arts and crafts, and field trips. Sessions are currently scheduled the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. Enrollment is free although pre-registration is required. For more information or to register a child or children, call 585-325-3145, ext. 134.



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A Letter To Our Community...

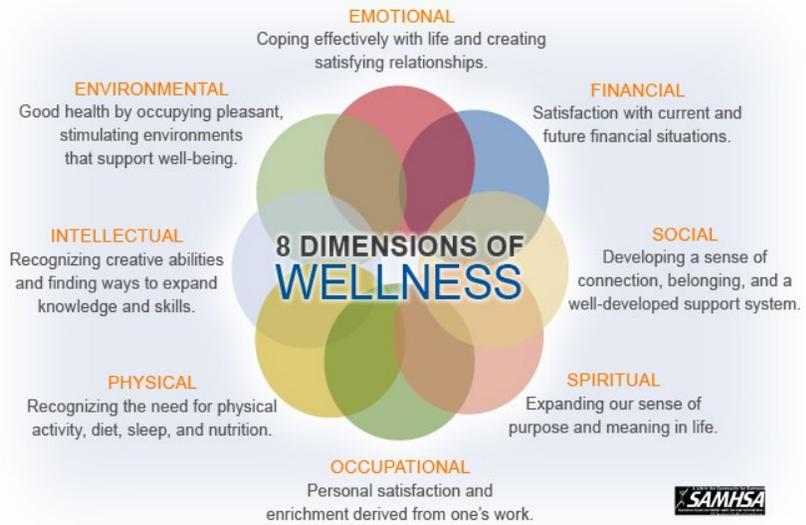
Find Wellness. -- That's the tagline of the Mental Health Association of Rochester/Monroe County, Inc., and what the MHA is all about – helping people in our community (some 15,000 annually!) access the resources they need to move toward and maintain mental health.



Patricia Woods

Mental wellness does not mean that there are no problems or stress in our lives. Rather, mental wellness means that people have the tools and resources to understand and handle their problems in ways that are positive and lead to healthy productive lives.

A key to achieving mental wellness is to strike a balance in many different areas of one's life, areas that the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration refers to as the *Eight Dimensions of Wellness*:



In 2014 the MHA secured a trademark for *Where's Your Wellness?™*, a slogan which debuted publicly earlier this year. The question, on our website, Facebook page, and on 3 by 5 cards in our reception area, invites responses from anyone

wishing to share information about where they find their own wellness resources -- from the general "In my garden" to the more specific "On the indoor track at my neighborhood Y."

We invite you to share thoughts about *where* you find *your* wellness. Please visit our website at www.mharochester.org.

Patricia Woods

Best from Within 2015 Grant Awards

Last year, the MHA Board of Directors authorized the launching of *Best from Within*, an internal competitive grant program through which MHA direct care staff can apply for grants from Board restricted funds for service enhancements. A total of five grants, ranging in size from \$250 to \$1,000, were granted last year. The program continues in 2015, with maximum grant size increased to \$1,500. This year *Best from Within* awarded seven grants, ranging in size from \$1,000 – 1,500, for a total disbursement of \$9,500. The awards, announced at the *President's Reception*, on May 14, are as follow:

- \$1,500 to Life Skills to create an indoor garden
- \$1,500 to Peer Navigation to fund scholarships enabling clients to attend job search/job readiness training sessions
- \$1,500 to Peer Navigation to help individuals cover the cost of fees and expenses related to start-up businesses
- \$1,000 to Peer Coaching to purchase furniture for individuals moving on to greater independent living
- \$1,500 to Family Support to fund skills building services for children with mental health issues
- \$1,500 to Family Support to provide respite activities for siblings of children with mental health issues

Did You Know?

- Of all the psychological problems, mood disorders, including major depression, dysthymic disorder*, and bipolar disorder, are the most prevalent in the U.S.: 9.7 percent of all adults will suffer over the course of a year, and 21.4 percent will be affected over the course of a lifetime.
- Women are 50 percent more likely to suffer from mood disorders than men.
- About 19 percent of all adults in the U. S. will suffer from an anxiety disorder this year, but this number becomes 31 percent over their lifetimes.

Source: The World Health Organization

*Dysthymia (dis-THIE-me-uh) or dysthymic disorder is a mild but long-term (chronic) form of depression. Symptoms usually last for at least two years, and often for much longer than that. Dysthymia interferes with one's ability to function and enjoy life. (Source: Mayo Clinic)

Our thanks to the following donors for their generous support.

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President's Reception Honors Three

The Mental Health Association presented community awards to three individuals the evening of Thursday, May 14, 2015, at its *5th Annual President's Reception* at the Monroe Golf Club.

Honorees included: Kevin Best accepting the *Distinguished Volunteer Service Award*; Everett Rose, accepting the *Mental Health Practitioner's Award*; and Laurence Guttmacher, M.D., accepting the *John Romano Award*.



The *President's Reception* provides a forum for the awards presentations as well as acknowledging supporters of MHA. This year's event, attended by about 100 guests, including NYS Senator Joseph Robach, was sponsored in part by Canandaigua National Bank and Trust.

Dr. Laurence Guttmacher, center, 2015 recipient of the *John Romano Award*, joined by from left to right: Elizabeth Suhre, Patricia Sine, NYS Senator Joseph Robach, and MHA President and CEO Patrica Woods

First BeWell Event Attracts 350 to Frontier Field

A blue-ribbon day helped make the MHA's first BeWell event a resounding success, with an estimated 350 participants in attendance to enjoy a morning of yoga, health and family fun, Saturday, June 6, 2015, at *Frontier Field*.

With Wegmans as lead sponsor, BeWell featured celebrity yoga instructor Stency Wegman, joined by yogis from many of Rochester's premier studios, teaching a class for beginners through advanced practitioners. A second kid-friendly class followed. Two family "walks for wellness" around the perimeter of the field earned kids a healthy snack from Wegmans. The morning also included an obstacle course, face-painting, and vendors court.



Yoga enthusiasts enjoying fresh air and sunshine on *Frontier Field*

BeWell, which raised almost \$30,000, followed a year of intensive planning, with the agency wishing to create

Joanna — A Story of Courage, Resiliency and Healing

Joanna's childhood was not an easy one. Her mother and father divorced when she was very young and there was much shuttling back and forth between households with her parents differing greatly in their values and their approaches to parenting. Shifting weekly between radically different environments resulted in Joanna's asking herself, at a very young age, "Who *am* I?"

Finding herself in a self-protective mode, Joanna says she "became a warrior." At eight years of age, she took up martial arts, at which she excelled. Her practice sessions, which she attended two to four times each week, represented a reprieve from her chaotic home life. Eventually earning a black belt, Joanna developed discipline and self-confidence, and found an outlet for feelings of anger.



Joanna with her Mom, Ann

As a young girl and through her teenage years Joanna also took horseback riding lessons, finding great comfort in connecting with animals. Joanna loved everything to do with the horses, even cleaning out their stalls. Again, she excelled, and was invited to be part of a drill team.

Graduating from high school, Joanna enrolled at Monroe Community College, unsure as to what she wanted to do. Family dynamics continued to be complicated and stressful.

About this time Joanna began dating "Michael" (not his real name) in spite of the fact that he was sixteen years older than she, and they eventually married. Joanna gave birth to a daughter. Sadly, the marriage broke down and Joanna found herself feeling isolated and as if she were dying, with no voice in her marriage.

In the meantime Joanna's daughter showed developmental delays and was diagnosed with autism. An argument with her spouse over finances in December 2012, which, Joanna says, became physically violent, was a turning point for her. "That's it!" she said to herself.

With help from a family member Joanna fled to her biological father's home in Avon, after which she transitioned to a shelter in Monroe County before checking herself into Strong Memorial Hospital's Psychiatric Unit for a three week stay. Through her social worker she explored options available to her in the community, choosing a mental health housing program offered by East House, eventually graduating to an independent living program.

As time passed Joanna found part-time work with a pet store and was interested in exploring volunteer options in the community. She learned about the Mental Health Association's Self-Help Drop-In Services on South Avenue and made an immediate connection, understanding that here, she could make a difference for she could speak the language. And listen.

After volunteering for a couple of months at Self-Help Drop-In Services, Joanna was asked if she would be interested in a part-time staff position, and, since October 2014, she has been an official member of the



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www.mharochester.org

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