

January, 2012

A Very Good Year for MHA

Along with other affiliates of the national office of Mental Health America, the Sheboygan County chapter has been carrying out the organization's mission of promoting good mental health since 1963.

Currently, the staff of three is supported in their work by a volunteer board of 14 members who represent a wide variety of occupations. Donations from the community are critically important to the work of MHA. The organization is especially thankful for the donations provided this past year by:

- Sheboygan and Plymouth Area United Way
- Sheboygan Falls United Way
- Cedar Grove United Fund
- Random Lake-Adell United Fund
- Oostburg United Fund

Financial support from the community has been reinvested in a variety of ways. The following statistics compiled at year's end

serve as an indicator of MHA's level of activity in the community this past year.

- Educational programs offered by MHA or in collaboration with other organizations reached 4,769 individuals, pre-school through senior citizens.

Among school-age audiences, 84% reported learning at least 3 new things. Comments from students' evaluations included, "[This program] hit close to home. People don't really care about [suicide] stats because they think, 'Oh, that won't happen to me or my friends.'"

- Requests for assistance through MHA's Emergency Medication Account were up 20.3% over 2010. In all, approximately \$29,450 was spent to provide assistance with psychotropic medication costs on 279 occasions. One needy individual referred to the antidepressant medications he was on as his "lifeline." He went on to say that

prior to being on the medication, he had contemplated suicide "to make the pain go away."

- Those seeking confidential referrals or information on mental health issues contacted MHA a total of 783 times.
- The four support groups affiliated with MHA (Suicide Loss, Compassionate Parents, National Alliance on Mental Illness and Health and Hope for depression) provided emotional support and information for 108 individuals during the year.
- MHA's online screenings for common mental disorders were used a total of 346 times in 2011. Recently, MHA had contact with a man who has been troubled by the symptoms of a disorder for 40 years and didn't recognize them. The first step he took was to complete the assessments. Based on the results, he contacted MHA for referral information which he found very helpful.

MHA's Mission

In 1909, Clifford Beers, the founder of the mental health movement in the United States, made an historic commitment to fight the discrimination, shame, and ignorance surrounding mental health issues. He publicly acknowledged his own mental illness by writing the book *A Mind that Found Itself*. It can be viewed at www.gutenberg.org/files/11962/11962-h/11962-h.htm.

MHAs throughout the nation share a common mission that stems from those early efforts - to promote mental health, prevent mental disorders, and achieve victory over mental and substance abuse conditions through advocacy, education, research, and service.

Annual Meeting Scheduled

MHA's annual meeting will take place on Monday, January 30, 2012. Those interested in learning more about the organization are invited to attend along with board members and Friends of MHA.

The event begins with a potluck lunch at 11:30 a.m. in the community meeting room of the United Way building, 2020 Erie Avenue, Sheboygan. The annual meeting will follow.

President Al Hardersen and outgoing board members will be recognized for their years of service, voting will take place for new board members and officers of the organization, and highlights of

the year will be shared.

Those who will be completing their terms on the board include Vicky Almgren of RCS, Rick Cawthon of Prison Ministries, and Sgt. Kristy DeBlay of the Sheboygan County Sheriff's Department.

Nominees for the board include Tracy Brinkman of Sargento, marketing professional Brad Fleming, Christine Jenkins of Network Family Counseling, and Rich Wassink of the Sheboygan County Detention Center.

Those planning to attend the meeting are asked to RSVP by calling the MHA office.



Here's to a Healthier You!

Resolutions. They are so easy to make and so difficult to keep. If you have been able to follow through on your intentions, you probably have already experienced the personal benefits of the changes. Celebrate your success!

While you're at it, it's not too late to make a resolution or two that will have an impact on your good mental health. The results might be a greater sense of contentment, being better able to handle adversity, strengthening your support system, or having greater appreciation for who you are and what you are able to accomplish.

The following self-care suggestions are all part of a mentally healthy lifestyle:

- Get enough sleep to be able to function at your best.
- Fuel your body with nutritious

foods.

- Spend time with people who you enjoy being around.
- Volunteer. Helping others can have a profound effect on how you feel about yourself.
- Discover healthy ways to keep your stress levels manageable.
- Make enjoyable physical activity a part of your day. Exercise can relieve stress and lift moods.
- Stretch your mind by learning something new.
- Spend time enjoying relaxing hobbies.
- If you haven't been feeling like yourself, reach out for help. Don't know where to turn? Call MHA for confidential referrals that will lead to a healthier you.

2012 Directory Now Online

After extensive revisions, the *2012 Directory of Community Resources* is now available online at MHA's website - mhasheboygan.org.

The 73 page directory provides a wealth of information about agencies, organizations, and support groups within Sheboygan County. Entries include contact information, the types of programs and services that are offered, and how to initiate services.

Due to budget limitations, print copies of the directory will not be available. Individuals may print their own copy from the website since there are no copyright restrictions.



Lock It When You Leave It



MHA and the Mental Health Committee of Healthy Sheboygan County 2020 support the use of gun locks to prevent accidental injury and suicides.

In Wisconsin, the facts involving death by a firearm are startling. Each year, approximately 730 individuals die by suicide using a firearm. Another 420 individuals die from accidents involving a firearm.

To promote the safe storage of firearms, MHA is distributing free gun locks in Sheboygan County. They are available at MHA during normal business hours, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. The free locks are limited to one per household.

MHA thanks the Kubly Foundation, Project ChildSafe, and MHA - Wisconsin for providing the locks.

Promoting the Mental Health of Children

As a new year begins, many individuals will be making resolutions related to better health. Healthy behaviors are important for people of all ages, but are especially important for children. The patterns and actions that children learn in childhood may influence them for years to come. Here are some ways to promote the mental and overall health of children.

Encourage daily play. Exercise and play are vital to children. Through exercise, children maintain healthy bodies and are able to reduce stress. They also develop social and motor skills through games with friends and family.



Choose to be positive. Children learn from others' actions, so modeling positive behavior is essential. If plans suddenly change, highlight the good that can come from it. If a child didn't get something he or she wanted, point out things for which to be thankful.

Build self-esteem. Healthy self-esteem is formed in childhood. Make the most of each opportunity to build a child's self-esteem. Remind a child that he or she is valuable no matter if a game is won or lost. Praise children for trying their best. It is also helpful to show children that even adults make mistakes.

Model healthy eating habits. Expose children to fruits and vegetables on a daily basis. Limit sweet and salty snacks, and provide healthy options for treats. Teach children that items like desserts and chips can be enjoyed in moderation. Remember that children will learn about portion sizes and food choices by observing those around them.

MHA is Tweeting!

Recently, MHA began "tweeting" informational items. For those who are not familiar with this sort of messaging, a "tweet" allows for a brief message of no more than 140 characters to go out across the internet via the Twitter.com website.



The number of followers MHA has at this time is small. It is hoped that as individuals find out about this source of information, they will add the organization to the groups that they follow.

New Items in MHA's Library

Thanks to an anonymous donor, MHA has been able to add a wonderful collection of VHS cassettes on alcohol and drug issues to its resource library. The items are available for free loan to the public for a two-week period.

The importance of alcohol and drug educational materials cannot be overstated. A report from Wisconsin's Department of Health Services in 2010 said that "for many years, Wisconsin has arguably had the highest prevalence of alcohol use and overconsumption in the U.S." The full report can be found at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov.

Underage drinking is a problem that affects 32% of Wisconsin youth compared to 27% nationally. Furthermore, 23% of Wisconsin adults are affected by binge drinking compared to 16% nationally.

Illegal substance use is also of concern, as it is estimated that 9% of Wisconsin residents age 12 and older have abused drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, or prescription medications in the past month.

The donation of twenty-two items includes the following titles:

- Alcohol and Your Body
- Cocaine and Crack: Back from the Abyss
- Coping with Cravings and Thoughts of Using
- Marijuana: The Escape to

Nowhere

- Oxycontin: Killing the Pain
- Neurobiology of Alcoholism
- Coping with Family and Interpersonal Conflict

Support for Depression

Are you affected by depression and finding it difficult to get through the winter months that further isolate you? Help is just around the corner!

MHA is pleased to announce the formation of a six-week Health and Hope support group for adults being treated for depression. The group will begin meeting on Tuesday,



February 21 from 6:30 - 8 p.m. and will conclude on March 27.

There is no cost for participating in the group. However, individuals need to be working with a professional such as a therapist, family doctor, or psychiatrist who is treating the illness.

The group is limited to 10 individuals. Participants need to complete a one-page registration form prior to the start of the group. Forms are available by calling MHA or at www.mhasheboygan.org.

Free Screenings Offered

The free, anonymous screenings that Mental Health America offers on its website continue to serve as an important resource for individuals questioning whether or not they may be dealing with the symptoms of a mental disorder.

In 2011, a total of 346 screenings were completed. This is almost an 18% increase over 2010 when 294 screenings were completed.

Like any illness that is treated by a medical professional, each mental

illness has unique symptoms. Responses that individuals give to simple questions in the assessment provide immediate results as to whether or not follow-up care is warranted.

The following free, anonymous assessments are available at MHA's website www.mhasheboygan.org:

- ▶ Abuse of alcohol
- ▶ Generalized Anxiety
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Adolescent Depression
- ▶ Bipolar Disorder
- ▶ Eating Disorders
- ▶ Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Read A Good Book Lately?

During these cold winter months, MHA would like to offer a book discussion on a topic related to good mental health. Individuals have expressed an interest in topics such as simplicity or happiness.

Former board member Roger Clapp has offered to facilitate the discussion group. However, it has been difficult to identify a book that is both a good read and practical in its approach. MHA is open to suggestions. If you would like to make a recommendation, give MHA a call.

New MHA Staff Member

If you have had contact with MHA recently, you probably recognized that there's a new person in the front office. Jessica Fale joined the staff in July of 2011, assuming the role of administrative assistant.



Jessica is a graduate of Plymouth High School and furthered her education at Lakeshore Technical College. She and her husband Kyle are expecting their first child in March.

Mental Health America acknowledges the support provided by the following in 2011.

Above & Beyond Children's Museum
Al & Shirley Hardersen
Ali Sagal
Alvina Bassuener
Amanda Lemkuil
Amanda Stauber
Amy Goetsch
Amy Kissinger
Amy Kober
Amy Molepske
Andrea Dekker
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Catharine Stayer
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Charcoal Grill & Fountain Park Family Restaurant
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Christine Nett
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MHA sincerely apologizes for any omissions in the list above. Each and every donation is truly appreciated and furthers the organization's mission.

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Involve Mental Health America in Your Plans

MHA is always on the lookout for opportunities to promote the organization or provide information on mental health topics. MHA participates in health fairs; offers educational programs for schools, worksites, churches, and the community; and provides print materials for distribution. All it takes is a call to MHA to arrange for these free services.



Health fair displays provide an opportunity for individuals to pick up materials and have their questions answered.



Sonny, MHA's mascot, made an appearance at the employee health fair at Bemis.