

Peer recovery group starts at county jail

By: **Kathie Mitchell, Director**

Eagleville – Seven men attended the first recovery group held at the Montgomery County Correctional Facility in early October.

They were quiet as we explained that the group was being held to share their experiences about jail, how they got there, and what they were planning to do to avoid coming back once they left.

Anthony Garcia, of Community Advocates of Montgomery County, told the men that this was an opportunity to talk freely about the problems they faced with the law and to describe what support they could use to help them in their recovery from mental illness.

Garcia shared his own personal experience about his trouble with the law as a young man - how tough it was to be in jail and how one day he finally realized he had had enough.

He decided to accept the help being offered to him and took back control of his life. He told the seven men that they could do it, too.

Gradually, one by one, the men started opening up.

One man had been employed full time with benefits. He was laid off from his job, lost his benefits and could not afford his psychiatric medication. He started using street drugs and was later arrested and incarcerated.

Another man talked about his frustration over the lack of drug and alcohol rehabilitation he received after a past incarceration. Years ago he received 90 days of treatment. When he leaves the jail this time he says he'll get a week of rehab – definitely not enough time to get well and stay well.

Several men described similar experiences. They had different reasons for not getting treatment, but many turned to illegal drugs to get by.

Many had few housing options and ended up going back to the same neighborhoods and same acquaintances where the problems occurred. Garcia asked the men how many of those neighborhood friends came to visit them at jail or sent them money.

The answer was zero.

So over the next few weeks, the discussions centered on what support they needed to succeed in the community after jail.

We shared a Re-entry Planning Form with the men which covered a broad array of services and

(continued on page 2)

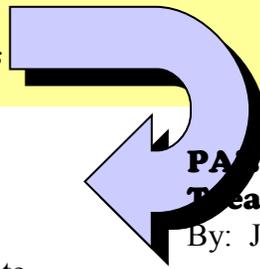
In this issue:

Peer recovery group starts at jail.....Page 1

PA Forensic Conference.....Page 2

Statewide forensic peer support initiative begins.....Page 3

Recovery Principle 5 –Community focus/integration.....Page 4



PA 18th Annual Forensic Rights and Treatment Conference

By: Jeff Shair, Editor

(Recovery group continued from page 1)
activities they could focus on while in jail to prepare them for discharge into the community.

One man who was later accepted into Behavioral Health Court and got a job at the jail, said the Re-entry Planning Form helped him think of supports that he never considered before.

He pointed to a goal which focused on knowing at least two ways you can give back to others who help you. Further explanation of the goal in the re-entry plan states: "Expect to give and receive help...Nothing is free and easy. Find ways to give back while you are receiving help."

One man was concerned that he couldn't answer all the questions. We reassured him that most people wouldn't have all the answers right away. During the group meetings, we help each other find the best answers.

It turns out that some of the men had family at home that gave them motivation to make it through jail and to not give up.

Some of the supports the men said would help them in the community were families, church, spirituality, volunteering and working. Also important was access to medications that work and being connected to mental health services.

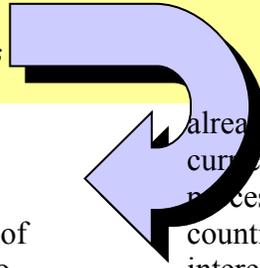
Community Advocates is grateful for the opportunity to work in the jail and provide education, resources and support to the men who participate in the group.

We thank MCCF for making this happen. We thank the men who participate in the group for having the courage to talk about their troubles and their hopes for a better life after jail.

The theme of the 18th Annual Forensic Rights and Treatment Conference is "Learning Growing Transforming Forensic Services." The meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn in Grantville PA, from November 30 to December 2, and is being sponsored by the Behavioral Healthcare Education of Drexel University College of Medicine. This year's objectives include determining how well problem solving courts are doing, and identifying several effective treatment approaches for persons with mental health issues who enter the criminal justice system. The PA Forensic Conference can benefit various providers in the behavioral health system, in the criminal justice system, and in the medical field. Educators and, of course, advocates could find this conference worthwhile as well.

The conference Co-chairs are Bill Holt, MSS, and Donna McNelis, PhD, whom have both worked tirelessly for decades advocating for the rights of people who have a mental illness, including those who get involved in the criminal justice system. The activities begin on November 30th with all day pre-conference institutes detailing how the police sensitively respond to persons with mental illness in crisis. The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) model will be explored, which will include the teaching of de-escalation skills. Since the institutes are optional, it will cost an additional \$60 of your registration fee to attend.

One of the key speakers presenting at the conference is a former police officer, Michael S. Woody, who founded the CIT program in Ohio in 2000, and lends his expertise of the police response model across the country and throughout the world. Other main speakers include, Mark Yantzi, MA, Sc, who specializes



in the area of sexual abuse and restorative justice, and Cynthia Robbins JD, who co-
(continued from page 2)
founded the Racial Justice Initiative (RJI) of TimeBanks USA. The purpose of RJI is to eliminate the structural racism in our public systems. During the two days of workshops offered at the conference, there will be three available times for attendees to choose to go to rooms where a variety of issues will be discussed. The topics range from the usefulness of hiring Peer Forensic Specialists, to sexual offenders' issues, to knowing how men and women experience trauma differently, to addressing recidivism. Currently, the criminal justice system is in the process of transformation, and the PA Forensic Conference embraces those values of respecting the rights of the individuals they serve.

Statewide forensic peer support initiative begins

By: Jeff Shair, Editor

The Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers' Association (PMHCA) has collaborated with Drexel University in forming a statewide forensic peer support program. The purpose of the program is to increase recovery-oriented services for people that have a mental illness and/or co-occurring substance use disorders, and who are also involved in the criminal justice system. The project is being sponsored by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) and the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS), PA Department of Public Welfare.

Besides benefitting the individuals who will be served by the forensic peer support program, it will also be helpful to mental health programs at the county and state level. They will be working jointly to divert offenders from the criminal justice system. A forensic peer support curriculum has been created and has been tried

already at some organizations. Although the curriculum and trainer development is still in process, PMHCA is currently contacting counties in the state to find out if they are interested in having the trainings in their area. In addition, counties will be asked to inform the Certified Peer Specialists about the trainings. The goal of this initiative is to have a train-the-trainer program, so forensic peer support could be implemented throughout the state.

“The Forensic Peer Specialist train-the-trainer project provides a unique opportunity to support persons who may be involved with the criminal justice system with their recovery journey,” said Pat Madigan of PMHCA.

“Recovery is both individual and communal. This project is a combination of community and service system education and the provision of peer support that has been absent from forensic services. Forensic peer support is a proactive ‘intercept’. Recovery does happen.”

In the fall, applications will be available for a pilot training in January 2011. For more information about the forensic peer support program, you can contact Lynn Keltz, Executive Director of PMHCA, at lynn@pmhca.org or Pat Madigan, Director of Training and Technical Assistance of PMHCA at pat@pmhca.org, or 1-717-564-6430.

Recovery Principles for Montgomery County's Partnership in Recovery

In the past, we talked about *hope, individuality, choice* and *peer support*. This month, we highlight the recovery principle **community focus/integration**.

A recovery supportive environment provides the opportunity to live in, be connected to and flourish within the community of one's choosing, with access to those community supports and

The Interceptor

November 2010

Newsletter of the Community Advocates

of Montgomery County, PA

resources that will best promote one's own recovery.

(continued from page 3)

Community Advocates believe all people with disabilities should have this opportunity including people who have criminal justice involvement.



Advocates from left: Kathie Mitchell, Ellen Kozlowski, Jon Sigal & Anthony Garcia

About the editor – Jeff Shair is a consultant for the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health where he gives input from the consumer perspective at transformation meetings of day services in the city. He is also a Compeer Philadelphia volunteer, writer, and board member.



Helping people help themselves

Community Advocates is an affiliate of The Consumer Satisfaction Team of Montgomery County, Inc.

*Community Advocates Director: Kathie Mitchell
CST Executive Director: Sandra Watson*

CST Board of Directors:

- Carla Neely, President*
- Timothy Tunner, Vice Pres.*
- Molly Q. Frantz, Treasurer*
- Sue Soriano, Secretary*
- Marge Zipin*
- Romani George, MD*
- Stacy Volz*
- Clark Bromberg, Ph.D*
- Roselyn Wealth*
- Rebecca Rohrbach*

To contact Community Advocates:
Phone: 610-270-0375 Web: www.caomont.org
Mail: 1001 Sterigere St., Norristown, PA 19401

NOTE: Beginning 2011, The Interceptor will be published on a quarterly basis. The publication months are March, June, September and December.

The mission of Community Advocates of Montgomery County is to help people who have experienced mental illness by providing advocacy services which promote recovery through choice, self-determination and empowerment in collaboration with all community members.

Advisory Committee Members

- Pat Allen
- Tom Costello
- Jennifer DeAngelis
- Larry DePietropaolo
- Andrea Galambos
- Michele Gough
- Kim Keyes
- Joan Kozlowski
- Ed Schwenk
- Sandy Watson
- Dr. Gail Van Zelfde

- Community Advocates of Montgomery County is a team of peers and family self-advocacy through outreach and...
- Community Adv for the Southeast Support Program



Helping people help themselves