The Mindful Messenger: April 2021
A publication by MHA in Putnam County

Ah Spring! We hope you are taking advantage of the many offerings provided during this fresh, new and beautiful season. With warmer weather, longer days, chirping birds, and the sights and scents of nature's blossoms, this is a season filled with regrowth and renewal. As human beings, we too, are integral parts of this natural cycle. Our connection to the universe makes Spring the perfect time for us to also revive and rejuvenate. Perhaps we can resume our New Year's resolutions or find another, simpler way to re-energize our body and soul. Whether we take action by; waking up earlier, going outside more, picking up a new habit or hobby, or tackling some spring cleaning, may Spring leave us all feeling revitalized and restored.

March 27th-April 4th

SUNDAY, APRIL 4TH

While there are always a variety of mental health and related awareness issues to focus on each month, we are proud to highlight a few chosen by some of our staff. We're confident you'll find their personal insights and articles invaluable. In the future, we look forward to sharing many more contributions from both staff and community members.

We're in this together.

Take one for the team.

Get your COVID vaccine!

For vaccine locations and details,

Visit: covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov

"The Specter of the Spectrum"

Nine years ago I was in North Carolina to visit with my wife's niece who had just given birth to triplets (2 boys and a girl) and were spending the first five weeks of their lives in a NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) at one of the finest hospitals in their area. First let me say that I am not a mother but that I can relate to the father and the feeling of helplessness. But I cannot imagine the sheer and intense pressure of being a mother of a child (children) whose lives hang in the balance. The girl (I am happy to say has become the toughest of the three) could be held in the palm of your hand, weighing in at just over 2 pounds.

Their mother noticed that something was 'different' with one of the boys from the very start. She told me they noticed he was fussier than the other two and was having issues with drinking from a bottle, since each required a special formula. Note to self, you may have two arms, but you don't have three. He had severe reflux and other signs, but as all three had issues because of the difficult birth, they also noticed developmental issues with him specifically. When they started to notice he was not meeting developmental 'milestones' such as crawling, speech and play skills they took action. I say this not because they told me they jumped on their steeds and rode into battle for their child, but because I witnessed it first hand as they quietly stood firm to obtain what was best for their child.

They would not be idle; they would not be quiet (but as North Carolinians they were always polite) and they took it unto themselves to do what was right for him. They became his strongest ally and voice. They went through CDSA (Child Developmental Service Agency), NCDHHS (NC Dept of Health and Human Services) to obtain the needed diagnosis of Sensory Processing Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorder just before his 4th birthday, being told they had to 'wait' till he was older for an 'official' diagnosis of something that was clearly apparent. I can tell you that in the intervening 4 years they were not just sitting waiting for someone else to tell them what to do. They learned on their own and really began to know what was best and how to deal with their child. They realized he needed structure as they prepared the daily schedules, certain foods and certain activities that would calm him. Other parents I saw in the same situation were not as proactive seeming to be in a form of denial, which changes nothing, only delays an inevitable..

I would like to add here that in the years I have seen the children grow (they are 9 now) I have always been amazed at how their parents treated them. My generation may have had a slap or two (OK maybe more), as punishment for this or that but as I saw them deal with their kids they were firm but they always explained, always showed there were consequences to their actions but that they were always loved and this was a learning time. All you have to do is be with a child whose sensory and cognitive abilities are in overload to understand the difficulty of helping them feel understood and in control. They did it day in and day out with an ability I truly admire as well a dealing with two other very unique children in the process.

Over the years it has been interesting to see how laser focused he would become about certain things, such as trains, pirates (running across a beach in boots and pirates clothes with a sword) and most recently sports. His ability to know every facet of something and the difficulty of enjoying or showing interest in things outside of their 'restricted' interest of the time. To sit on the couch next to him while he has a blanket over his head as he watches a game, plays a game or just uses his tablet. He knows you're there, he talks, but he would rather you didn't 'disturb him'. He's a funny kid.

I close this with something his mother wrote me: *"Our son (now 9 years old) continues to receive services currently through his elementary school which offers support in his typical fourth grade classroom. We have also received services through organizations like the Autism Society of NC for behavioral challenges at home. We wanted to give our son the best possible outcome, and these therapies and organizations have made such a difference in all of our lives.*

The journey from his first being diagnosed until now has been full of ups and downs and has really taught us a lot. Mostly, our son has given us a huge lesson in perseverance and unconditional love. While at times there are challenges, there are also many joys. He is smart, funny, and talented. When he was first diagnosed we were told that he may never play team sports, yet he is now the quarterback for his flag football team and plays competitive soccer! He also amazes us with his memorization and recitation of sports facts. Every triumph, whether in sports, school, or friendships, is appreciated and celebrated knowing how far he has come. Our son has been a gift to our family in many ways, but one we are especially thankful for is him inspiring us to be more understanding and accepting of those with differences."

I couldn't have said it better.
By John B.

April is National Autism Awareness Month

April is Alcohol Awareness Month

RECOVERY DURING THE PANDEMIC - BY CHARLES JONES

It has been a little over a year since the pandemic hit us, as a person in long term recovery I noticed many people with Substance Abuse Disorder relapsing and many times dying which raised a concern in my heart for the recovery community. I quickly began to realize that the dynamics that came with the virus restrictions really were similar to a life in active substance use because after catching COVID -19 I went through similar feelings as well, the loneliness, the isolation, the fear of uncertainty of what the day was going to hold and not to mention the physical pain that really affected my thinking process, pain does that at times but all these were feelings I could identify with when I was actively using substances, yes triggers. Now I am going through all these emotions and feelings and I am used to having a place to go talk with others at these social support groups, but they are not available, what do I do? Where do I go now to seek the support that has sustained me thus far? I needed to stay connected. I began to find information on 12 step virtual meetings, I reached out more by phone, my spiritual and physical exercise increased, and I began to connect with others in the virtual meetings by talking, getting numbers, and making calls. The lifeline for recovery was different but I had something I could work with now in this trying time and more importantly I knew and felt I was not alone.

I began to feel better physically and mentally as I adjusted to this new way of getting support to maintain my recovery a day at a time.

Today there are hotlines up and running, many 12 step social support groups have virtual meetings all day or the times are listed, recovery coaches and peer support is available though local mental health offices, so we have a way to continue to live a healthy productive life. You are not alone in your quest for continued recovery, I wish you good health and healing. Below I have listed some support information for you.

- Alcoholics Anonymous – aa.org
- Narcotics Anonymous – virtual-na.org
- Cocaine Anonymous- ca-online.org
- Opiates Anonymous -www.opa12.org/meetings

Support is just a call or click away

You are not alone….
To share your recovery story
or recovery journey with Charles,
call him on the MHA warmline
Thursdays from 10am-1pm
(845) 278-7600, ext 242

Support Denim Day: Wear Your Favorite Jeans

Contributed by Peer Bridger, Jessica

On April, 28, 2021 millions of people worldwide will wear jeans with a purpose. They will wear jeans as a visible expression of protest against sexual violence. This day is known as Denim Day. Denim Day is a campaign in April in honor of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. It started because of a decision made by the Italian Supreme Court in the 1990's. The decision was to overturn a rape conviction because the victim wore tight jeans. The judges reasoned that the victim's tight jeans meant that she had helped the person who raped her remove them, implying consent. The women of the Italian Parliament were outraged by the ruling: They organized a protest wearing jeans in support of the victim. This protest caught international media attention.

Peace Over Violence, a non-profit organization in Los Angeles, developed the Denim Day campaign in response to the case. The executive director Patricia Giggans thought everyone should be wearing jeans to bring awareness to victim-blaming and prevent sexual violence. Denim Day has grown into a national movement with more than two million Americans participating. The day is an opportunity to support survivors and educate others on preventing sexual violence . If you would like more information on Denim Day **visit: denimdayinfo.org and denimday.nyc**

More information on how you can support a survivor of sexual violence:

Acknowledged the survivor's courage.
It takes trust and strength to share their story. By sharing with you, survivors take the risk of being judged, disbelieved , or blamed. Thank survivors for trusting you enough to share their stories.

Let the survivor set their own boundaries.
Survivors might feel uncomfortable sharing certain information. Try asking if there's anything they would rather not talk about before starting the conversation. If the survivor says they don't want to talk about something, do not push them. Instead, use statements such as, "That must have been difficult." This statement will show support and understanding.

Be mindful of your own reactions.
Try to avoid asking "Why?" questions. These questions can sound judgmental and pressure the survivor for an explanation. Questions and statements like "Why didn't you call the police?' or "You should have been more careful" can be victim-blaming and make the survivor shut down. Consider saying, "I'm so sorry you went through that" or "This was not your fault."

If you or someone you know is a survivor of sexual violence, you can call: RAINN's National Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-HOPE (4673)

Support MHA at the Carmel Rotary Basketball Challenge on April 24th

At ShopRite of Carmel

Pre-registration is required

https://portal.clubrunner.ca/2208/
for more information

Join our team using this link
https://www.mightycause.com/team/5rxi3f