MHA PUTNAM
Mental Health Association in Putnam County

The Mindful Messenger:

July/August 2021

This issue is dedicated to founding MHA Board President, Mildred Smith. Mildred was a pioneer in mental health and family support services. She was the founder of the Putnam Chapter of NAMI– the National Alliance on Mental Illness. She took calls at home on her residential landline phone from family members who, like her, had an adult child with mental illness. Her son had schizophrenia. Her son was born in 1950 and when he was diagnosed with his illness, they told Mildred that her son would need care for the rest of his life that could only be provided in an institutional setting.

Mildred worked tirelessly as a Family Advocate at Harlem Valley Psychiatric Center during deinstitutionalization, the closing of long-term inpatient psychiatric hospital beds as people began to realize that mental illness was not a death sentence. Recovery was possible and people with severe symptoms could live in the community, both with support and independently. Mildred worked with other community stakeholders to establish MHA in Putnam, asking each of the founding Board members for checks for $25 to file the incorporation papers and the rest is our history.

Our MHA was founded on peer support, providing much needed support for individuals with lived mental health experiences and family members that was not being offered in other community settings. In hindsight, in 1993, this was very progressive and our mission continues today with family support being a significant, but under marketed, component of MHA's services. We offer support groups for families and several of our staff are trained, experienced family advocates. You will read more about them in this issue.

As peer support continues to be recognized and grow as a best-practices model for recovery and healing, let us not forget that family members are often the unsung heroes who work tirelessly to support their loved ones and steer them to the care they need, often without support or guidance. **You are not alone and we are here to support and help.** We are currently developing family support programs for Veterans, law enforcement, and first responders as we know that family members are often the first point of contact in recognizing that their loved one is struggling, be it with depression, anxiety, grief, loss, survivor guilt, sadness or thoughts of suicide. Please know that you are not alone! Reach out to us, we have been there and we care. MHA is "judgement free zone", no stigma here.

I have to share one of the funny stories Mildred told me about her experiences with her son being institutionalized. I admired her for many things, especially for finding humor in something so traumatic for her family. A staff person from Harlem Valley called to say that her son had "eloped", meaning, left without permission. Mildred replied, " eloped? I didn't even know he had a girlfriend!"

Megan Castellano, Executive Director

In this issue:

Page 2: Coping with Anxiety… warning sounds and how to cope

Page 3: MHA's virtual family support groups

Page 4: NAMI-Putnam Family support warmline Support for families of Veterans, law enforcement & first responders

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately one in two people has now experienced some form of anxiety, which affects both adults and children

What Is Anxiety?

Anxiety is both a mental and physical state of negative expectation. Feelings of dread in anticipation of some bad outcome, and physical sensations such as jitteriness and a racing heart are designed for discomfort, your body's warning system.

Signs of Anxiety

Everybody gets anxious sometimes, whether it's about the possibility of getting seriously ill with COVID-19 or worrying about financial problems when you're actually well-off. Some anxiety is normal, and even healthy-meant to keep us safe, a survival mechanism wired into our bodies. Anxiety can be viewed more as a disorder when the worry is more intense than a situation warrants, it persists for weeks or months, the thoughts of worry are difficult to control, and they interfere with everyday functioning. Physical symptoms may include: restlessness and edginess, muscle tension, sleep disturbance, and difficulty concentrating. Like depression, anxiety can make its presence felt in many systems of the body—disrupting digestion, speeding heart rate, setting off ringing in the ears.

Anxiety in Children and Adolescents

Anxiety is on the rise among children and adolescents. Recently, as many as one in four children might experience significant anxiety. Perhaps most important among the reasons, children's lives have changed so that there is almost nonstop sedentary screen time at the expense of play and physical activity, experiences through which children traditionally decompress, work out their concerns, and form supportive relationships. What's on those screens, coupled with social distancing, change in routines, and uncertainty are new opportunities for young people's worries.

Self Care Can Help

Practice relaxation techniques, such as yoga **Maintain a positive attitude** **Exercise daily**
Eat well-balanced meals **Stop smoking and limit alcohol and caffeinated drinks** **Get enough sleep**
Learn what triggers your anxiety and what alleviates it

See a Doctor

If anxiety is interfering with daily tasks **If anxiety is accompanied by insomnia**
If depression is evident
If you have a previous history of anxiety and notice increased or more severe symptoms

See a doctor immediately if you notice suicidal thoughts or that you are having a panic attack.

For more information: www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/anxiety/signs-anxiety

Our Family Support Services are free of charge and offered to adults who love or care for someone who suffers from mental (illness) health challenges.

We strive to provide a safe, supportive environment for families and loved ones so that they too, can receive understanding, encouragement, education and resources. Through our peer-led programs, participants are empowered to better advocate for themselves and their loved ones while fostering and maintaining healthy and supportive relationships.

Because loving or caring for someone with mental health challenges can take a toll, families and loved ones need their own, targeted, support. Our peer-led, **Family Support Group** meets bi-monthly on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month. Each session runs from 6:30 pm– 8:00 pm. This virtual community gathering offers a safe, non-judgmental environment for those who are willing to listen to one another and share their own personal, lived experiences.

Virtual Family Support Group with Bill

Wed, Jul 14, 2021 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM (EDT)
Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.
https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/378614485
You can also dial in using your phone.
United States (Toll Free): 1 866 899 4679

Access Code: 378-614-485
————————————————————————-

Wed, Jul 28, 2021 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM (EDT)
Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.
https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/865032133
You can also dial in using your phone.
United States (Toll Free): 1 877 309 2073

Access Code: 865-032-133
————————————————————————

Wed, Aug 11, 2021 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM (EDT)

Canceled

————————————————————————

Wed, Aug 25, 2021 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM (EDT)
————————————————————————

Canceled

The Virtual Family Support Group resumes in September the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 6:30pm

You are not alone...connect with us for support.

Turn the page to read more about support for families...

Call NAMI-Putnam for family support through their support line or to receive information about their monthly speaker series featuring topics of interest to family members.

MHA has an information and referral warmline for a variety of mental health concerns, including resources and supports for parents of children-of all ages-with mental health needs. Bonnie is a Recovery Coach with many years of experience navigating systems of care for children, adolescents, and adults. Bonnie is a wealth of knowledge about care coordination, advocacy, entitlements, and so much more. As former family support group leader, Bonnie approaches each call with compassion, empathy, concern and a passion for getting the answers callers need to support their loved ones. Give her a call….

Mondays 10am-12:30pm and Wednesdays 10am-3pm - 845-278-7600, ext. 231

Coming soon: **Family Support Programs for family members of Veterans, law enforcement and first responders**

Call 845-278-VETS for more information about support for family members of Veterans

Call 845-745-0088 for more information about support for family members of first responders

FIRST LINE
PEER TO PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM
"We Understand and We Care"