

BFNC News, Spring 2002/ Text Version

Join the fun at the Second Annual Summer "Soul"stice!

Ready to celebrate the arrival of summer in Buffalo? Then join your friends for the Second Annual BFNC Summer "Soul"stice Happy Hour, scheduled for Friday, June 21, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. at D'Arcy McGee's Irish Pub, 257 Franklin Street.

The event, which premiered last year as the Summer Fun Days Happy Hour, is back with a brand new name and theme. Guests will enjoy listening and dancing to "soul" music and oldies favorites from the 60s and 70s. Admission is just \$25 per person, and includes two bar drinks, hot and cold hors d'oeuvres, and the chance to win fantastic door prizes!

Best of all, proceeds from the event will benefit BFNC's Summer Fun Days program – an eight-week day camp that that will serve 450 children this summer.

Sponsorships ranging from \$250 to \$1,000 are still available to companies and community organizations. **Please call John Senall today at 852-5065 for individual or group tickets, or for details about sponsorship opportunities.** •

Noteworthy...

John R. Oishei Foundation Supports Agency Programs

The John R. Oishei Foundation has awarded a \$50,000 basic human services grant to the agency to support BFNC's Fun & Learn, Youth Advocacy and Moot Senior Citizen Center programs. The funds will be used for general operating support for the programs. •

ECDMH Awards 50 Beds to Residential Services Department

The Erie County Department of Mental Health recently approved \$392,456 in annual funding to add 50 new beds to BFNC's supported housing program. The addition brings the department's capacity to 104 supported housing beds, out of a

department total of 188 beds. •

"New Options" Recognized by Mental Health Association

The Mental Health Association of Erie County will present its Outstanding Program Award to BFNC's "New Options" Intensive Case Management program on May 22. New Options was initiated in 1991 to coordinate services for the most severely challenged mental health consumers in Erie County. It has recently played a leading role in the County's Assisted Outpatient Treatment Initiative, serving as a model for newer programs. •

Leadership Buffalo Visits BFNC

Four members of the Leadership Buffalo Class of 2002 visited BFNC for a site visit on April 18. The information session and tour was part of the group's annual Health and Human Services Day. •

Living Life on the Other Side of Reality

"A Beautiful Mind" Reminds Us of the Challenges and Stigma of Mental Illness

by Robert L. Cannata

Director, "New Options" Intensive Case Management Program

The Oscar-winning film, "A Beautiful Mind," reminded me that we all move back and forth along a mental health continuum each day of our lives. Our experiences range from feeling perfectly well mentally to being very out of touch with reality. Between these extremes, are degrees of anxiety, depression, intrusive thoughts and mood swings.

Fortunately, most people move along this line on a daily basis with just fleeting visits to the other side of reality. I'll admit, I end up on that side every single day. However, I'm there only while I sleep. It's during my dreams that I have the occasional nightmare of feeling chased by others, or vivid hallucination-like experiences. Once I awaken, I quickly realize that "it was all a dream." Then I go about the rest of my day trying to follow the usual advice I get from others...

"Have a nice day!"

In trying to understand schizophrenia, I imagine it is much like not knowing where our dreams end and reality starts. In less severe cases, there are brief "spilling over" periods of the dream-like experience. But in extreme cases, one essentially lives in the dream world.

Labeled as "nuts," "insane," "crazy" or "psycho," these individuals are often seen as outcasts from the rest of our society due to their odd behaviors. Yet underneath the illness is a person with the same needs and desires as everyone else. Sadly, they've just been placed farther along the continuum.

As director of the Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers' "New Options" Intensive Case Management program, I see their stories on a daily basis. People who are so ill, they cannot see just how ill they are. People whose conditions lead to lengthy psychiatric hospitalizations, and family alienation. And others whose illnesses have led to lives of incarceration and homelessness.

In any given month, our program serves approximately 300 people with severe and persistent mental illness. Our case managers visit their clients at least once weekly to coordinate someone's care, and increase his/her tenure in the community. We help clients get to appointments, monitor their use of medications, teach basic living skills, arrange housing, and explore vocational and social outlets.

Our clients are people on the farthest edge of the continuum. But there are so many others in our community who could benefit from mental health consultation, treatment or intervention. Unfortunately, they often feel too isolated, stigmatized or embarrassed to seek help.

"Mental illness is treatable...Let's treat it that way" is a message adopted by the Erie County Mental Health Anti-Stigma Task Force and posted on several local billboards. This message is part of a community campaign to address the stigma of mental illness. I wholeheartedly support it because I believe that most mental illness can be treated with therapy, often combined with a medication regimen.

As I stated, it's important to view mental health on a continuum. By thinking this way, it helps us to recognize that there is no guarantee of mental wellness for any of us, any more than we're immune from contracting diabetes or heart disease. In over 20 years in my profession, I've seen otherwise "healthy" friends and

colleagues develop serious mental health challenges. I've also marveled at the ability of some very troubled individuals to be in remission from their illnesses.

When the winter fades, our community will celebrate another Mental Health Awareness Month this May. Is there a better time than now to make the commitment to find out more about mental health issues and to show compassion and tolerance to those spending more of their time on the "other side of the line" than the rest of us?

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Take advantage of the following opportunities to learn more about mental health programs and issues in our community...

The Mental Health Association of Erie County has unveiled a new website at www.eriemha.org. Visit the site today for information about activities, support groups and links. Plus, mark your calendar for the association's 41st Annual Meeting on May 22 at the Convention Center. Call 886-1242 for details.

The **National Alliance for the Mentally Ill** offers information, referrals and support for families of persons with mental illness. Visit their website at www.nami.org or call the local Buffalo office at 839-0548.

Sister To Sister Summit Highlights

The Annual Sister to Sister Summit was held on Saturday, March 9 at the Buffalo State College Student Union. Each year, the summit brings together girls from across Western New York for a full day of workshops, empowerment activities and fun. The event intends to help girls from diverse backgrounds to address the challenges and common issues they face in their lives. It also provides new tools to help teens affect change in their schools and communities.

This year's summit was highlighted by chat rooms, a career fair, presentations by human service providers, lunch and prize giveaways. The event was sponsored by the YWCA of WNY and the American Association of University Women, with support from BAPPS and additional local service providers. •

For more information about the services available through the BAPPS and FACES programs, please call 885-1455, or visit us in the Tri-Main Building, 2495 Main Street, Suite 534.

Movin' Up Main Street

BAPPS and FACES join four other BFNC programs at new Tri-Main office suite.

Update your address books! The BAPPS and FACES programs are moving to new office space in the historic Tri-Main Building. **As of May 10, our new address will be...**

2495 Main Street, Suite 534

Buffalo, NY 14214.

Employees from BAPPS/FACES will join co-workers from the Youth Advocacy Program, Client Specific Planning/Alternatives to Incarceration, Medicaid Service Coordination (DD) and Case Management General Services at their new location. The programs had formerly been housed in the Sidway Building at 775 Main Street.

The move was prompted by the need for additional office space, and the conversion of the Sidway building into market rate apartments.

According to Ellen Trautman, Program Director, the new site offers many amenities, such as a larger conference room seating 30 persons. Trautman added that the Tri-Main building is also called home by a host of other not-for-profits and service organizations including UCP, Deaf Adult Services, People Inc., the OTC Training Center, Hallwalls and Buffalo Arts Studio. •

Spring Consumer Profiles

The BAPPS office is proud of the many teenagers we meet who are working hard to make changes in their lives. Here are just a few of their success stories. We hope that you are as inspired as we are by the teens' efforts.

Sandy's Story

"Sandy" was the victim of a sexual assault approximately two years ago. She was referred to the BAPPS program because of her failing grades, promiscuity and poor relationships with her mother and sisters.

Now in the ninth grade, Sandy has been working with her BAPPS case manager on a regular basis. She has raised her grade point average to an A, and is currently on the honor roll. Her mother has also reported a 100-percent improvement in her family relationships. Plus, Sandy has become very active in her church and in after school activities. She recently received a gift certificate to Salvatore's Italian Garden Restaurant for her academic and personal successes! •

Karen's Story

At age 14, "Karen" was removed from her parents' home because of their drug use. She had begun smoking marijuana to escape her daily problems, and had trouble passing her school courses.

Now 16 years-old, Karen is living a much happier life with her relatives. She has been a daily participant in the BAPPS program at her school, and she tries hard to stay away from trouble. Karen has chosen to be sexually abstinent, and recently made the academic honor roll.

Her teachers report that Karen is now a breath of fresh air at school, acting as a role model for other girls. She spends off-hours babysitting, helping around the house, and dancing. Most importantly, she stopped smoking pot because she realized it wasn't benefiting her in any way. •

Congratulations Spring Honorees!

Community organizations, volunteers and employees were honored at our Fifth Annual Spring Thank You Breakfast, held on Tuesday, April 23 at the Moot Senior Center. Our special thanks are extended to the **M&T Charitable Foundation** for sponsoring the event again this year.

Community Service awardees included the Children's Foundation of Erie County, the Food Shuttle of WNY, the Buffalo Criterion, the Food Bank of WNY and Marva Daniel, Principal of Futures Academy. Employee awards were presented to Dorothy Eaton, Barbara Jones , Susan Rosky, Tascheen Avery and Marshall Joyner. Board volunteers Daryl Rasuli of the NFTA and Bonnie Smith of Horizon Solutions received this year's volunteer appreciation awards.

Congratulations to everyone, with thanks to all our guests for sharing their time with us that morning!