

BFNC News



The newsletter of the Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers, Inc.

Unlocking Potential ... Enriching Lives

Summer 2004 — Volume VIII, Issue 2

Summer Soulstice is a good time for all



The Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Center's Summer Soulstice 2004 was a successful event - a good time and a successful fundraiser for Summer Fun Days at Masten Playground.

"Summer Soulstice is a great event so it's growing each year. Everyone enjoys the evening and feels that they are helping a good cause," said Jan Peters, executive director.

This year the event was sponsored by Citibank; Kaleida Health; Harlequin Distribution Center; Hodgson Russ LLP; Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus; Ciminelli Construction Companies; Dopkins & Company, LLP; Parsons Brinckerhoff, Inc.; Foit Albert Associates; and Brockport Ford. In addition to financial support, Harlequin provided a number of children's books that were signed by guests to be given to children at Summer Fun Days.

The BFNC's Summer Fun Days program provides a safe, productive way for children ages five to 12 to spend the summer. This year it's expected that 200 children will participate in academic enrichment, sports and field trips at Masten Playground. The entire 10 weeks cost parents only \$2 per day or \$100 for the summer.

"Mornings are spent on academics - Math and English, supports handwriting," said Tiffany Prunty, program director. "Then after lunch we do enrichment such as African History, Tae Kwan Do, and sports like tennis, swimming."

Summer Fun Days is licensed by the Erie County Department of Health and provides breakfast, a lunch and snack through USDA, operated by the Buffalo Board of Education. The program runs from 8:00 a.m. to 6 p.m. during July and August.

Program brings exchange between Irish and BFNC housing professionals

In mid-June the Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers (BFNC) Residential Housing Services hosted an exchange group of housing professionals from Ireland. The meeting was organized by Atlantic Corridor USA, Inc. The mission of this organization is to open an exchange of information between people from different countries who are in like industries with the goal of improving and developing business practices.

Jan Peters, executive director, gave the visitors the background of BFNC and the overview of our tiered levels of housing and following her talk, staff representing these levels talked about their jobs and the challenges they face.

"It seemed that although our cultures might appear to be very different, when it comes to housing disabled, mentally ill or senior citizens, we have a lot of similar experiences," Peters said.

For the past few years the Irish economy has been described as the "Celtic Tiger," because it has been booming. But this is coming to an end, says Arthur Canning, chief executive of Choice Housing Association.

"Unfortunately there has been some corruption in business and political affairs," he said. "Just how much has impacted the current trends is open to debate but society has become more

divided into the haves and have-nots."

House prices in Ireland have risen dramatically, beyond the ability of those less well off to purchase their own homes and increasing the need for social housing.

"The biggest problems are people who feel left behind by the economic boom, anti-social behavior, crime, protecting vulnerable members of society such as seniors, drug use and affordability," Canning said.

The agencies in Ireland serve a broad range of clients: families, singles, homeless, those with disabilities and the elderly. Canning said there is a move to "person centered" care and support.

"Our clients don't buy into a particular program but we provide for all levels from minimal support, which is just watching out for your welfare, to 24/7 support for the severely disabled."

That's very similar to person-centered planning or PCP, Peters said.

"In keeping with new County programs, we've been training our staff in PCP - although that's something I think BFNC has always tried to do," she said. "It's important that people are able to talk about and reach their personal goals; in the long run that's what keeps



continued on page 3

Our Vision

The Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers plays a major role in ensuring that anyone in Western New York who needs help and has no place to turn, or who has had trouble accessing services, or who has slipped through the cracks of the human service system, has a trusted place to go for help in taking the next step toward maximum independence.

Our Mission

BFNC prepares, equips and empowers individuals to address life management issues, and to improve the quality of life in their communities.

BFNC News is a publication of:

Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers, Inc., 97 Lemon St., Buffalo, NY 14204-1297
Phone: 856-0363 * Fax: 856-1432
Web page: www.bfnc.org

Officers:

President - Daryl Rasuli
Vice President - James Morell
Treasurer - James Miller, CPA
Assistant Treasurer - Joseph Eicheldinger
Secretary - Herbert Cadle
Assistant Secretary - Lawrence Shulman, Ed.D.

Board of Directors:

Gladys Jean Diji
Andres Garcia
Wesley Hicks, M.D.
Fatima Johnson
Jerry McGrier
Verna T. Morton
Cromwell P. Msuku, M.D.
John Reindl
Elaine Taylor

Board of Advisors:

Schuyler A. Banks	James Metzler
Michael Battle	Richard E. Moot
William Clarkson	Lauren D. Rachlin
Genevieve Collins	Judge Robert Russell
Richard E. Friske	Bonnie Smith
Jeffrey Grace, M.D.	E.W. Dann Stevens
F. William Gray, III	Ann E. Stewart
Calvin J. Haller	Ruth Williams
June W. Hoefflich	Oliver C. Young
Judith M. Jones, Ph.D.	

Relief from stress of home ownership improves senior's mental functioning

When caseworker Dawn Obe first met 68-year-old Aaron Brinson, known as "Sonny," his mental condition could only be described as "confused." He was living in a double house that he owned and had gotten so far behind on his bills that he wasn't even attempting to pay them anymore. He rented the upstairs, but the tenants rarely paid him and regularly stole from him, so he was trying to make ends meet on \$700 a month.

"He wasn't keeping the house clean, and he was pretty sad and lonely," Obe said. "He was trying to help his neighbors out with their dog and he visited his sister-in-law, who lived a couple of blocks away, almost every day."

Adult Protection called the BFNC in to see Sonny in March and since then, Obe has moved him into an apartment for seniors living on low incomes, and linked him with several agencies such as Meals on Wheels to make sure his basic needs are met.

"He claims he's healthy as a horse, so he won't go see a doctor, so I arranged for a Visiting Nurse to come in and check him over," she said. "He has a prosthetic leg but other than that he does seem to be in pretty good shape."

Since he has been in the apartment, Sonny's confusion has gradually been clearing. He is now cheerful and very outgoing, talking more about his life experiences.

"I worked at Chevy on Delavan from 1953 into the 70's," he said. "Then I had a car accident and lost my leg. That's when they let me go."

Afterwards Sonny says he still worked at various jobs – 10 hours a day for seven days a week he says. He kept touch with some of his brothers (there were nine boys in the family), although many of them moved out of town, and helped keep his invalid sister-in-law company.

"My sisters-in-law became my sisters – and that one, she doesn't like to be alone," he said. Sonny can still walk to her house from his new apartment, and he is already making friends in the building. One lady has invited him to Bingo, others are taking the time to chat with him. It gives him a break from his soap operas.

"At least it's some kind of recreation," he said. "Although they are older – the Bingo lady is at least 82. But I respect older people – I have since my mother was elderly."

In a recent conversation with Obe, he reported that the nurse told him he is healthy although he does have cataracts in both eyes, which is why the

light from the uncovered windows bothers him. He also mentioned he has a daughter still living in Buffalo. So Obe, who found him the apartment, purchased the basics in furniture for him and linked him to the services he needs, is now trying to find the daughter and -- get blinds for the windows.

"It's hard when you meet people and they are really in bad shape," she said. "But it is rewarding when you see them in a better environment and they start to function better and have a better outlook on life."

"Sonny has come a long way in a short time." ■



Aaron "Sonny" Brinson

PATH meeting sets plan for implementing PCP initiative

About 20 of our Case Management, Residential, and Administrative staff members recently spent a day with Hans Meissner, Ph.D., developing a PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) plan for the transition to an initiative that embraces the principles of person-centeredness and recovery. Meissner was the facilitator for the meeting, and was assisted by Carolyn Camm, CSW, of the Erie County Department of Mental Health.

"The goal for the day was to develop a basic plan to initiate person-centered practices within our organization," said Robert L. Cannata, CSW. "PATH begins with the vision of inspiring individuals and organizations to strive for 'a better world' for persons with mental illness."

The group participated in visioning exercises to guide them in developing goals and planning actions that will be used to move their programs towards person-centered practices. ■



Making time count

Tyrone Humber was a pretty typical young man at the age of 22. He was married, worked in auto body repair, drank a little with his friends when he went out, and occasionally smoked some marijuana. But he was dealing with several factors that were not typical for most young men.

Humber's mother had struggled with depression all of her life, and he was beginning to experience the symptoms of the disease himself. His marriage ended and he began to have suicidal ideations. But Humber was able to continue a relatively stable life. He remarried and moved to New York City where he got a good job in an auto body repair shop.

"I had a lot of free time there and money was easy," he said. "I got into crack cocaine, but I didn't think it was a problem."

The crack did become a problem, however, and before long Humber found himself separated from his second wife and living on the streets. Thus began six years of homelessness.

"At the time, I thought it was very temporary - I never imagined it would go on for so long."

Before long Humber was desperate for money so he struck up a friendship with a fellow who was squeegee-ing windshields to get by. This friend took him to a shelter, and for much of those six years shelters and rehab were a regular part of Humber's life.

There was help along the way. He was hired to help keep an auto body shop clean and eventually worked his way back into the trade he still

loves today. A friend gave him a home for a while. Finally, after a bad episode with his depression, Humber knew he had come to the end of the line.

"I had to find a way out - so I asked God. I had a dream which led me to pack up my things and go into long-term rehabilitation in New York," Humber said. It wasn't an easy choice - Humber found the first six months of staying clean were pretty rough, but his peers in the halfway house provided great support. After he got his 90-day pin he also got a job in a collision shop.

"I would go to work and go to group. My mother died but I still didn't use. I went back to New York and was doing pretty well in transitional housing when the police picked me up for an old arrest warrant," he said.

Humber spent the next six months in an Erie County jail, where he met Wane Barnes of the BFNC.

"Wane has been a great help to me - he is such a good example," Humber says. Humber has been living in transitional housing in Buffalo, working in auto body repair, and working on his mental health issues. He has had a couple of brief relapses, but says he is getting better at managing his illness.

"There is no reason to use - you lose everything. There are so many other things I can do to replace drugs," he says. "The best day of homelessness is worse than the worst day straight - using would take me back there."

Humber plans to get his certification for collision shop work and, as he says, "make time count - instead of counting time." ■

Irish Exchange continued from page 1

them functioning at the highest possible level."

Some of the common issues in the two countries include placing people in appropriate settings, gaining cooperation so clients comply with programs such as rehabilitation and medication regimes and the response to group housing from the community.

Canning said it was very worthwhile to see first hand similar types of programs to those in Ireland, although the experience will not be complete until the return visit (USA to Ireland) later this year.

"It will be interesting to see the reaction and discuss our programs from an international perspective," he said. ■



PROS puts new focus on individualized services

The field of mental health is changing its focus to customize the rehabilitation and support services provided to clients. Ricardo Herrera, director of Life Management Services, has been a key person in formulating and implementing Personalized Recovery Oriented Services (PROS) at the BFNC.

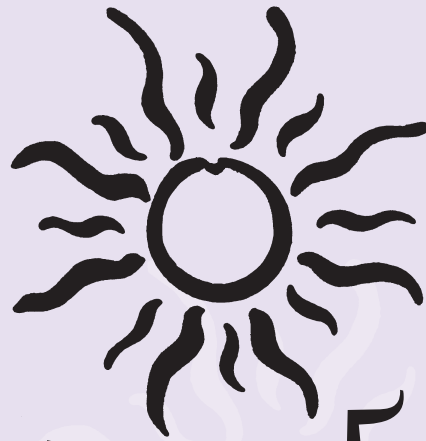
"The attention will be on what has traditionally been non-treatment services such as life skills, work, and outside activities," Herrera says. "Rehabilitation goals will be set using the principles of Person Centered Planning or PCR. Each person will have his or her own individualized rehabilitation plan."

In addition to developing traditional treatment plans, case managers will look at what individuals want to do with their leisure time, what their vocational and educational goals are, and other areas in which they would like to build skills. Setting goals will be an important part of the process.

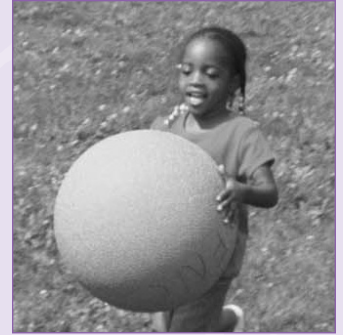
"It will be more measurable, plus it expands the mechanisms we have to pay for critical services that we previously called 'soft' services. Up until PROS, Medicaid wouldn't pay for those services, now it will," Herrera said. "But we will have to meet Medicaid standards and track the individual consumers' outcomes. It will all have to be reported out."

This will require some building and restructuring of staff. Although mental health professionals know that lifestyle, education, work and leisure activities are all essential to good mental health, translating that to the Medicaid system is not going to be clear cut or easy, Herrera said.

"The mix of staff will change, there will have to be added program staff to meet Medicaid standards," he said. "What's most important is the individual participation by the clients." ■



Summer Fun Days Program



The BFNC gave children a safe, productive and fun summer!



BFNC
Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers, Inc.
97 Lemon Street
Buffalo, New York 14204

