

Motivation and a wonder drug put consumer on the right track

Rodney Thompson has been dealing with mental illness for a long time. At the age of nine he began hearing voices. When he was 12 he was diagnosed with bi-polar disease. He came from a military family that moved around the country a lot and at the time, his parents didn't know how to respond to their young son. Rodney left home at an early age and lived through some difficult years before he ended up in Buffalo and was referred to BFNC. He is now 35, and proud of the fact he has been stable for six years.

"This is the longest time I've ever been without being in the hospital," Rodney said. "It's all because of Clozaril – the wonder drug."

Rodney said that before he found the right psychotropic medication he experienced frequent outbursts and continued to hear voices. Now, he never misses his chores at Wende House where



he lives; is studying to get his GED; and would eventually like to further his education in music.

"It has also been more than six years since I've had any alcohol or drugs, and six months since I've had a cigarette," he said, proudly.

Rodney participates in the Empower Program, where he is learning to become more independent. He enjoys the groups, the field trips to places like Darien Lake and the Erie County Fair, and the Holiday

celebrations. This summer he has also been playing softball.

In addition to attending program, Rodney listens to all types of music, plays the keyboard, and is learning to play the two guitars he owns. Someday he'd like to take lessons. One of his other interests is tattoos. He appreciates the art involved in creating a tattoo, has 12 of them and plans to collect more.

"They're cool to me," he said. His House Manager, Preston Stevens, even rewarded Rodney with a new tattoo because he has done so well in handling his illness.

Rodney is also diabetic and manages that disease with insulin, by eating right, and exercising. He says the doctor has told him he may eventually be able to get off the insulin if he continues to do well.

"Rodney is very motivated and he's done very well at meeting all of the challenges life has given him," Stevens said. "All he needed was the right medication and the right support to get himself back on track."

BFNC News

Unlocking Potential ... Enriching Lives

Summer 2010



Revisiting Andrea Brown



Andrea Brown

We last talked to Andrea Brown in the Fall of 2008, when she described how her family, church and BFNC's New Options program had provided her with the support she needed to recover from paranoid schizophrenia. Residential Services program had provided her with the support she needed to manage her illness. Andrea continues to do very well living independently in the community.

"I am still working as a nurses' aid at Deaconess Hospital, keeping up with my appointments and attending group," she said. "I also volunteer at Niagara

Lutheran Home, where I visit people, go on outings, and help transport the residents."

Andrea is developing her self-confidence, which has allowed her to follow one of her dreams: to travel. Last summer she spent a week in the Bahamas with her cousin.

"I hadn't seen her or been on a plane in a long time and with the airplane accidents that have happened in the past year or so, I was fearful of flying," she said. "But I prayed and others prayed for me and I got over it. It was a wonderful trip."

Later this summer she will visit her family in New York City and school is still on the horizon. Someday Andrea hopes to be a registered nurse. Currently she is registered at the Adult Learning Center, and will be attending classes five mornings a week.

Andrea is also learning to drive. She has been linked to VESID for assistance in driver's training courses and for obtaining her driver's license. One step at a time, Andrea is moving towards an independent life.

BFNC Staff In The News

Kathryn E. Benfanti, Intensive Case Manager, New Options

Kathryn, who graduated from Medaille College, May 21, 2010 with an MA in Mental Health Counseling, was chosen to be Student Speaker of her graduating class – quite an honor considering it was a class of 800 students. Kathryn also received an academic department award for carrying a GPA of more than 3.50 and achieving other goals set by her department.

In her speech Kathryn talked about the value of diversity, connection, and of formal education to an audience of 2,700 people at Kleinhans Music Hall. She attributed much of her success in college to her work as an ICM.

Dina Gorzynski, Intensive Case Manager, New Options, Lisa Greenan, Intensive Care Manager, NYS (assigned to BFNC) and Myra Sims, Senior Residence Counselor.

Dina, Myra and Lisa were honored as "persons who made a difference to the recovery journey" at the Sixth Annual Provider Recovery Awards Dinner, sponsored by the Buffalo Psychiatric Center. Individuals who received these awards were nominated by consumers who had received services from them.

Lonnie Patterson, Intensive Case Manager, New Options

The NFJC (National Federation for Just Communities) featured Lonnie in their most recent newsletter. Lonnie is a lead

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

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Fun and Learn moves forward on a smaller scale

This year BFNC continued its after school Fun and Learn program on a smaller scale, returning to its prior location at Westminster Community House.

“After almost 30 years of providing after-school programming for children in the Fruitbelt and Emslie/Johnson neighborhoods, we were determined to find a way to continue even though our funding has been cut and we lost our space in the BPS schools,” said Tiffany Prunty, Program Director.

Parent surveys show that Fun and Learn is very important to children from low- to moderate-income households in improving their ability to develop better work habits in the classroom, their motivation to attend school regularly, and better behavior in school. Families of students who participate in Fun and Learn, which is a free program, cannot afford to send their children to other after school programs or extra-curricular activities because of the cost.

“We know how important we are to the community we serve. For that reason we plan to move forward, look for new sources of funding, and make whatever compromises we have to make – but we will continue to be here for the kids and their parents,” Prunty said.



Kathryn E. Benfanti cont'd . . .

facilitator with the NFJC and has been with the organization since 2007. Lonnie is passionate about helping people and has worked with the Boys and Girls Club as a youth mentor, a teacher and coach, and with Hopevale family services. The NFJC said Lonnie brings “exceptional compassion, insight, and astute instincts to every program which he facilitates. It is the NFJC’s privilege to count him among our dedicated and talented team members.”



Financial Statements

Support and Revenue	2009	2008	2007	2006
<u>Support</u>				
Contributions	46,301	48,286	131,454	101,187
Westminster Presbyterian Church	7,150	7,150	6,700	18,000
United Way Of Buffalo & Erie Co.	259,001	259,036	267,797	268,232
Donor Designations	24,906	28,952	33,511	32,821
Total Support	337,358	343,424	439,462	420,240
<u>Revenue</u>				
Grants	2,974,567	2,947,669	3,403,519	3,245,821
Medicaid	2,163,316	1,927,213	1,811,304	1,670,004
Rent Income	712,426	702,176	742,320	727,701
Program Income	20,299	17,055	18,239	20,846
Investment Income	18,110	15,717	30,086	(24,770)
Miscellaneous	19,129	90,102	81,308	24,951
Total Revenue	5,907,847	5,699,932	6,086,776	5,664,553
Total Support & Revenue	6,245,205	6,043,356	6,526,238	6,084,793
<u>Expenses</u>				
<u>Program Services</u>				
Mental Health	4,089,380	4,020,630	4,072,317	3,779,086
Case Management General	-	7,179	243,985	307,421
Children & Youth Services	1,037,025	409,923	465,324	458,389
Pregnancy Prevention	-	412,417	408,856	453,161
Community Services	106,422	102,847	227,567	124,248
Senior Services	209,400	223,830	211,269	250,519
Grant Management	93,999	126,394	65,323	109,760
Total Program Services	5,536,226	5,303,220	5,694,641	5,482,584
<u>Support Services</u>				
General and Administrative	662,321	775,254	674,037	650,265
Property Management	1,819	7,172	915	1,995
Fundraising	2,908	5,036	17,424	16,376
Total Support Services	667,048	787,462	692,376	668,636
<u>Depreciation</u>				
Total Expenses before Depreciation	6,148,935	6,038,237	6,327,252	6,086,815
Depreciation	54,339	52,445	59,765	64,405
Total Expenses	6,203,274	6,090,682	6,387,017	6,151,220
Revenue: Expenses	41,931	(47,326)	139,221	(66,427)
Net Assets at beginning of year	(38,161)	9,165	(130,056)	(63,629)
Net Assets (deficit) at end of year	3,770	(38,161)	9,165	(130,056)

Figures based on audited statements by Dopkins & Company, Inc.

Summer Youth Employment Program

In a project designed to introduce young people to the world of work Buffalo Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Services (BAPPS) hired 25 teens for seven weeks during the summer. The program is funded by the NYS Department of Health and Planned Parenthood of Western New York. Approximately 86 teens ranging in age from 14 – 18 representing public, private, and charter schools from all over Buffalo applied for the positions.

Those who were hired worked at various clerical and maintenance positions throughout BFNC, and helped at the Moot Senior Center and the Senior Day Training program. Other youth at Gloria J. Parks Community Center provided support services for the summer high school basketball leagues which involved student players from all over greater Buffalo. Some assisted

with “The Reading Circle” children’s program in the People’s Park on Main Street. Still others were trained to assist teachers in tutoring science under the guidance of First Hand Learning.

The idea behind Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) is to provide youngsters with a “real world” work experience. To participate in the program, they have to obtain working papers, fill out a job application and successfully complete an interview.

In addition to working 13 hours per week, the youth are required to attend weekly workshops that address life skills including resume writing, sexual harassment, an introduction to budgeting and money management, sexually transmitted diseases, “Hot Topic Careers” and healthy relationships. Some of the life skills included dressing appropriately for the workplace, interacting and communicating with work colleagues, using office equipment, and managing bus schedules and being on time. This year they also explored career

possibilities with the National Guard and had a field trip to IIT Technical Institute to learn about educational opportunities.

BAPPS case managers also met with each of the teens on a weekly basis to explore goals and to discuss their work experience. The teens also had to complete three writing assignments: a thank you letter and two essays, one about the needs of teens and the other about their summer work experience.

Erik Daniels, BAPPS project assistant and manager of the summer program, made every effort to match the teens with work they were interested in doing. All of them indicated they had learned a great deal about themselves and work environments.

“I’ve really enjoyed the work and the experience is going to help me as I begin to study for a business degree,” said Jamie Washington, a SYEP worker at Westminster House who is a graduate of Seneca High School and will attend Niagara County Community College in the fall.

Senior Companion Program gives a lift in a time of need

The Moot Senior Center is unique among its peers in that it provides services not only to hale and hearty seniors, but also to seniors in need of a little extra assistance. In many cases the help is provided by the Senior Companion Program, a federal program funded by Child and Family Services.

“The program is pretty much just as it sounds, the participants mainly provide companionship to seniors who might not be fully able to function at the Moot Center on their own, or who are housebound,” said Carrie Bryant, coordinator. “For example, we have several seniors at Moot who can’t stand in line to get their lunch. Their senior companion helps them out.”

Ruth Richardson and Eula Ross are two very active senior companions. Ruth helps Elzena Collins, who is blind, get her lunch and snacks while she is at the Center, and also assists with other tasks Elzena can’t do on her own. Eula visits a lady who is an amputee, keeps her company and sometimes puts together a little lunch for them both.

“The senior companions get a small stipend and



Ruth Richardson and Eula Ross

funds to cover transportation costs, but mainly they participate because they enjoy being a buddy to someone who is not as fortunate as they are,” Bryant said. “It gives the companions a sense of fulfillment, and it helps the people who aren’t as healthy, so it’s a win/win for everyone.”

Senior companions must be more than 55 years old, must pass a physical provided by the Erie County Health Department, be able to volunteer a minimum of 20 hours per week and be income-eligible.

Youth Advocacy Program faces uncertain future

Since 1997 BFNC’s Youth Advocacy Program (YAP) has been providing counsel to the parents of BPS students and the students facing suspensions. Youth Advocates who are trained in the hearing process offer their assistance free of charge to families going into suspension hearings. This service ensures youngsters are treated within the limits of the law at their hearings without it being necessary for parents to hire an attorney. Literally thousands of students have been served, with an average of 1,336 helped each year during the past three years.

“The goal of YAP is to keep children in school and in the classroom,” said E. Greenard Poles, Program Administrator. “School suspensions represent major disruptions in the educational lives of the students. The YAP initiative minimizes that disruption by protecting the due process rights of a major group of children involved in the formal suspension process.”

Today YAP faces an uncertain future. As of the beginning of 2010, grant funding from New York State’s Child and Family Services, which the program has received since its inception, ended. YAP’s grant application for 2010/2011 was rejected in the face of the turmoil over

the State budget. During the Spring 2010 semester the Buffalo Board of Education provided \$40,000, which paid the advocates and supported the program, however as of the end of June that funding was exhausted.

“We have been told we can reapply to the state,” said Mr. Poles. “The state has admitted to inconsistencies in their review, so we will resubmit for this year and 2011, and we may be back in business. There will be an issue with the Hearing Officers, however, if we have to shut down for a semester and then try to come back. Right now they are used to having us around and it will interrupt their process.”

Poles is also exploring other sources of funding. He is meeting with the Board of Education and has applied to the United Way.

“If United Way funding comes through it will be six months before we see it,” he said. “So that still leaves a semester uncovered.”

“We have been happy and proud to serve City of Buffalo students and their parents. Many good things have come out of this program, including kids who’ve been traveling down the wrong road turning their lives around. It will be a shame if we can’t continue to do that good work.”



Summer Soulstice



Letter from a Consumer

December 30, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been a client of New Options for about two years. In those years I have had Donna Tarnish, Sherri Grover, and Superna Mam as my ICM (Intensive Case Managers).

Donna Tarnish made sure I was stable on my medications and that I went to counseling. She was strict and at that time, which what I needed. I relocated to Florida and she helped me with that.

When I came back to Hamburg I was in and out of the hospital. So Sherri Grover became my ICM. She linked me with Housing Options Made Easy. She got me off my Dad's couch and into my own apartment. She was with me through mania and severe depression. She always was at the hospital for me. She was great to talk to. And when I thought there was no hope she linked me to more counseling and she talked with me and made me feel better. Sherri made sure I was signed up for food stamps and cash assistance. She helped me with getting my SSD. When I needed help with filling out paperwork she would help. Sherri went above and beyond her call of duty.

Then in October of 2008 I moved into Kenmore and Superna Mam became my ICM. She did a great job advocating for me. I had to take care of a legal issue in Florida. She was in contact with the County and stopped them from taking my benefits away. She provided me with transportation – a bus pass – every month. She made sure I would never run out of food, she showed me where all the pantries were. When I had my baby, Drew, she gave me clothes, toys, car seats from her own home. She gave me this stuff on her own and I am very grateful. If she was not so kind my baby would not have a thing. Superna made sure the Holidays were special. She invited my Dad and I to Thanksgiving Dinner through BFNC and for Christmas she gave gift cards to get food. She was there for me when I needed a female's perspective. She was there for me when I was hospitalized. Superna is very good at her job. She also puts her touch and makes you feel special and important, which makes her great.

With my experience with New Options I am a better person today. New Options set me up with three women who helped me change my life for the better. They guided and directed me in the right direction. I am so thankful for New Options. Thank you!

Chrystie McNeight

Spring Donor Breakfast



Reception held at People's Park

The winners of the annual BAPPS Teen Pregnancy Prevention Contest received their awards at a reception held at the People's Park on Main St. in mid-May. Students from the city of Buffalo and their family members gathered to be recognized for their accomplishments. Erik Daniels, project assistant, presented the awards. First place winner was Carlton Sanders, Grade 11, WNY Maritime Charter School (\$500); second place was Sylver Cooley, Grade 8, Enterprise Charter School (\$400); third place was Miozoties Arroyo, Grade 10, Leonardo Da Vinci High School (\$300); fourth place was Gabrielle Rodriguez-Negron, Grade 10, Leonardo Da Vinci High School (\$200); and fifth was

Brazil McGee, Grade 11, McKinley High School (\$100). WNY Maritime Charter School and DaVinci High School won \$125 Gift Certificate at Hyatt's for having the most entries.

The contest is sponsored by the New York State Department of Health.

