

THE NETWORK NEWS

July-August 2017

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OUR MISSION

To create a climate in Virginia where peers are empowered to understand and find their own recovery through programs that achieve:

- personal transformation
- community transformation
- systems transformation

The Network News is published six times per year by the

VOCAL Network
1904 Byrd Avenue, Suite 124,
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The Word is Out: WE ARE ENOUGH!

By Ann Catherine Braxton, Hampton, VA

On Tuesday, May 23 and Wednesday, May 24, 2017, I experienced a two-in-one dream come true. I attended my first VOCAL Conference where I introduced my childhood ambition—a complete volume of poetry. I arrived at the Virginia Beach Holiday Inn via Hampton Roads Paratransit. I finally met Yolande, Deidre Ann, and Malaina, voices I had grown to love by calling the Richmond-based VOCAL office. This year’s theme was “I Am Enough.” It was clear that as a group “We were enough!”

Workshops and support groups taught the delegates and other guests about the power of positive thinking and self-love that all leads to mental—and sometimes physical—recovery. Keynote speaker and life coach Beth Gager shared her journal and how she imparts uplifting mediating. Matt, an In Our Own Voice speaker from NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) from Virginia Beach, opened up about his recovery from an eating disorder. Representatives from Mental Health Association of Virginia (MHA) gave out information about the Warm Line, a non-crisis statewide outlet for anyone who just needs to talk. Sponsors from 1-800-QUIT-NOW offered printed information as well as an entire afternoon class for smokers who want to quit and for attendees like myself who have a close loved one who wants to quit.

There were poets, painters, craftsmen, souvenirs, and therapy dogs all about. I learned that therapy dogs are not just for the blind or physically disabled but also a therapeutic assist in helping mental health consumers take their medication. On the book display tables, there were copies of “Firewalkers”, a collection of recovery stories from all over the state, autobiographies, and volumes of poetry—like mine “Through the Seasons: Rhythms, Rhymes, and A Recipe.” I sold only six out of the twenty I brought but it was still a dream come true and an honor to contribute to an organization that has helped so many. I volunteered by alphabetizing name tags. We even had a DJ dance with karaoke and support groups for those in substance recovery and the LGBT and Q community.

“Where have you guys been all these years?” asked a hotel guest as she looked over the literature. She told me she had a brother who kept her on the phone for hours, dumping his issues, I told her that VOCAL was a place to start for recovery and advocacy. I can’t wait for next year’s conference!

VOCAL Board of Directors News

The VOCAL Board will meet Wednesday, July 12 from 10am – 2pm in Richmond at the disAbilty Law Center at of Virginia. If you would like to contact your regional Board member, please call the VOCAL office. The conference call phone number is 866-423-8755. The guest code is 27181.

Letter from the Network Director by Malaina Poore

If you were at the VOCAL Conference last month, hey, it was good to see you! If you couldn't make it we hope you will join us next year. I learn so much every year about what VOCAL members are doing in their respective parts of the state. Each year there are new businesses in bloom, new workshops to be shared, new peer programs and new people to meet. That is the great pleasure of such a large event – so many faces, both familiar and brand new.

It is a collective effort, to be sure. The staff pull together to plan and perform what goes into a two-day event. Our Board put in extra hours ahead of the annual meeting. Countless volunteers (ok, 81 to be exact) are assigned to oversee daily details. Friends prepare workshops and wisdom to share. They write speeches and put together slide shows and lug heavy speakers all the way from Martinsville! Every one of us with our particular journeys and our particular struggles come together and give what we have to offer.

Once we have unpacked and unwound after the conference,

“In nature, nothing is perfect and everything is perfect. Trees can be contorted, bent in weird ways, and they're still beautiful.”

Alice Walker

VOCAL staff read conference evaluation and look for ways to improve. In a member-driven organization feedback is very important! This is not just true of the conference but all of our programming. Thank you to everyone who took the time to write about your experiences.

One of my favorite evaluations said, “Thank you for the peers, the learning and the judgment-free zone.” Not to be overly dramatic, but I think I will keep these as ideals. Just this moment it seems like when you have those three elements you have the ingredients to make anything work. When I fall short, as is inevitable, I will have to remind myself that *I Am Enough*.

Friends 4 Recovery 8th Anniversary Celebration

Come celebrate on Saturday, July 22 from noon until 4PM at the Center at 7420 Whitepine Road in Richmond. There will

be food, music, live entertainment, and a keynote speaker. Peers will also be sharing their recovery stories.

The number for the Center is 804-308-1366.

Erin Crettier Joins VOCAL Staff as Operations Manager

After 5 years in retail management, Erin began as a volunteer for VOCAL in November, 2016. A passion for mental health advocacy and social justice led her to VOCAL's offices. She graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2007 with a BFA in Theatre: Costume Design.

When not at VOCAL, Erin can be found driving for Lyft, riding her bike, doing yoga, or Improv!

Erin currently resides in Richmond, and she's very excited to join the VOCAL team.

Are You in the Virginia Peer Recovery Specialist Network?

Danielle Donaldson of VOCAL's partner organization, Mental Health America of Virginia, has developed the VPRSN and has held networking and educational meetings for peer support specialists all around Virginia for several years. As the PRS profession grows and there is more interest in certification and employment, Danielle is looking for new ways to foster connection and mutual support.

On July 12 Danielle will hold the VPRSN Meeting Facilitator Training in Richmond. (The deadline for application for this training was June 20.) The peer recovery supporters trained here will return to their communities around the state to organize local, ongoing groups or networks.

All peer recovery supporters are welcome to join the Facebook VPRSN group. This will eventually be an effective way to locate other peer recovery specialists in your own community.

<http://virginiapeerspecialistnetwork.org>

Member Spotlight: Four Questions for Scott Haugh

Scott is an artist and long-time VOCAL member.

One: Hi, Scott. What's new?

I'm excited to unveil:

www.TheUnmedicated.com

It's a saga of peer support that takes place over the course of an evening. It was created from scratch with digitally edited photos from Floyd, Roanoke & Salem, Virginia as well as Washington DC. All the photos were day shots but altered to look like nighttime. The drawings were done in a sketch book then scanned & digitized then placed on top of the photos. To get a copy you can use bitcoins or a check on the website for \$5. I'm currently looking for advertisers for the hard copies with options for quantities. Also the graphic art is free & 3 pages are available as advertising space.

Two: What is your relationship to Mental Health Recovery?

I'm less active in VOCAL then I once was, but I work every day to build on my mental health. After breakfast I read 12 step literature & meditate for 20 minutes. I attend meetings & counseling weekly. My goal is a peer run business that sustains me in full time work.

Three: What would you most like people to know about you?

I'm so creative that if I don't reality check with folks I get lost in the weeds. Sometimes the only exercise I get is jumping to conclusions.

Four: What do you know now that you could have only known by living your exact life?

I'm learning to trust the still small voice inside as the current of the universe. Mistakes are just lessons & when I follow divine guidance, one strange choice leads to wonder that was unattainable via other means.

Virginia BHAC Seeks New Members

The Virginia Behavioral Health Advisory Council (BHAC) is in search of members! The BHAC is a stakeholder group includes mental health and addiction peers, family members, service providers and advocacy organizations which is created under federal law to provide input to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental services on the state's expenditure of funds for mental health services. The BHAC meets every other month in Richmond and is in need of peer voices.

If you are interested in becoming a member, click the "Members" tab at the bottom of that page for information on how to apply for membership."

<http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/about-dbhds/boards-and-councils/bhadvisorycouncil>

**Creative Offerings From Members
By Thynesis Harris**

Thinking of others always
 Hoping others are thinking of me
 Yes, I love people all the time
 Nothing can stop that frame of mind &
 Excitement that I receive when
 Sharing my feelings with others
 I realize people are kind and
 Special to me

Editors note: This poem came from a creative expression workshop with Ann Benner at the VOCAL Conference. Thynesis is one of many new friends we have talked to many times by phone and met in-person for the first time this May. She exudes kindness, as this poem will attribute, but if you would also like to attach a face to the name check out VOCAL's Facebook page.

Fun Fact: Thynesis tells me her name translates to the Greek word for LOVE.

Summer Peer Recovery Support Training

This 72 Hour training is approved by the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. The first round of training is free but in the future fees will be charged.

To see a list of approved trainers visit <http://trilliumdropincenter.org/prstrainers>

Fredricksburg

When: July 8 – September 9 – 10 Saturdays

Applications due 7/3/17 in order to be considered.

Contact: Joe Stafford
jstafford@rappahannockareacs.org

Culpeper

When: August 7th-11th and 14th to 18th, 8a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Cost: Free; meals and lodging not included.

Contact: Heather Fossen

Heatherfossen420@gmail.com or 540.358.5656

Suffolk

When: July 10 – 14th and July 24 – 28.

Where: Suffolk Workforce Development Center.

Contact: sminor@wtcsb.org or

lreichert@wtcsb.org

Middle Peninsula Northern Neck

When: July 14th, 21st, 28th Aug 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th Sept 8th, 15th, 22nd. Class runs every Friday from July 14th through September 22nd, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Where: Middle Peninsula Northern Neck Community Services Board (MPNN CSB) Consumer Operated Programs (CoOP)

Contact: Ann Conner, CPRS
804.462.5040 or conhod@msn.com

Richmond

When: July 31st – August 7th including the weekend from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Cost: Free

Contact: Calendria Jones
Jonesca@rbha.org or 804.726.1736

Winchester

When: Tuesday July 11th and the next nine following Tuesdays

Where: 58 Front Royal Pike, Winchester

Cost: Free. Participants will provide their own lunch and hotel fees.

Contact: Bryon Johnson
bjohnson@nwcsb.com or 540.325.6000

Carilon Roanoke

When: Evenings and on Saturdays

Monday August 14 – Saturday August 26

Contact: Erin Casey

540.983.4045 or eecasey@carilionclinic.org

Williamsburg

When: June 29, 30, July 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21
8:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Where: 5800 Mooretown Road, Williamsburg (23188), upstairs classroom

Contact: Jan Brown

jan@spiritworksfoundation.org

Arlington

When: Both August 7 -11 and August 21 -25, 9:30 AM – 5:30 PM

Where: Arlington County

Cost: Free. Meals and transportation not provided.

Contact: Tanisha Trice ttrice@arlingtonva.us or 703-228-5026

Application deadline is July 7th

On Our Own of Roanoke

When: July 18 – 21 and July 25 – 28

Where: EHS Support Services, 1315 2nd Street, SW, Suite 300, Roanoke (24016)

Cost: There is no cost for this FIRST Training. Lunch and lodging will not be provided. (Rooms are available at Comfort Inn Airport for a special rate of \$85/night plus taxes.)

Contact: dmartin@rvonourown.com

From the Editor

The deadline for the next issue of “The Network News” is *Monday, August 17*.

Please submit your submissions to Yolande Long: yolande@vocalvirginia.org or mail them to: Yolande Long, 1904 Byrd Avenue, Suite 124, Richmond (23230)

From the Executive Director, Deidre Johnson

What a whirlwind the last couple months have been and I'm so looking forward to the longer summer days! These hectic months have served as a great reminder for me to concentrate on making self-care a priority—whether it be going for a walk, meditating, enjoying coffee with a friend, reading a good book, or walking barefoot in the grass (Yes, I really do that and love it!) I hope this newsletter finds all of you well and practicing your own self-care and making it a priority.

VOCAL welcomed Erin Crettier to its Operations Manager position last month. Prior to being hired as Operations Manager, Erin volunteer for VOCAL in multiple capacities. Please join us in extending a warm welcome to her!

We launched VOCAL's annual survey at this year's conference. The purpose of our annual survey is to assess VOCAL's programming and to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our members across the state. Please visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VOCAL2017Survey> to participate in the survey online or contact the VOCAL office to request a survey via postal mail. To thank our members for the important work of helping assess the needs of our membership, you'll be entered in a drawing for a VOCAL Swag Bag. The winning entry will receive a VOCAL tote bag, lanyard, 2 pins, and 2 bracelets. Please notify Erin Crettier, Operations Manager, by email at erin@vocalvirginia.org or call 804-343-1777 to notify her that you've completed the survey and she will place your name in the drawing that will be held on 8/31/17.

Central Peer Connect July 11

Central Peer Connect will meet on Tuesday, July 11th at Friends 4 Recovery Whole Health Center, 7420 Whitepine Road in Richmond/Chesterfield. Lunch will be served. For more information please call the VOCAL office.



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