

THE NETWORK NEWS

May | June 2018

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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

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From the Desk of the Executive Director, Deidre Johnson

Greetings, friends! Summer is here and I'm looking forward to the longer, warmer days and spending time with my family. While this time of year is sometimes challenging for my family, it happens to be the time of year when I'm feeling my best (likely because I can go to the beach!), and especially full of gratitude.

I'd like to express my appreciation to our partner organizations, members, and friends who took the time to advocate during this year's legislative session. With your help, this session was incredibly successful! Virginia made the historic move very recently to approve Medicaid expansion to provide healthcare coverage to an estimated 400,000 Virginians! The final budget was approved with \$12.75 million in monies allocated to alternative transportation for those experiencing temporary detention orders, discharge planning at jails for those with mental health challenges, development of appropriate housing for those in state hospitals that may benefit from comprehensive community-based care, and providing community-based services for those in state hospitals ready for discharge. This year's session also passed an amendment to screen-able barrier crimes that would enable those with a past burglary conviction to obtain employment with providers licensed by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. What a win for the peer profession! Again, thank you for your tireless advocacy!

This year has also seen some changes at the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. VOCAL thanks Dr. Jack Barber, former Interim Commissioner of DBHDS, for his many years of service and his support of recovery principles and to the recovery community at large. Dr. Hughes Melton was appointed as the new Commissioner of DBHDS by Governor Northam. Dr. Melton previously held the position of Chief Deputy Commissioner of Public Health and Preparedness at the Virginia Department of Health. Mira Signer was appointed by Governor Northam as Chief Deputy Commissioner. Ms. Signer previously held the position of Systems of Care Director at Magellan Healthcare of Virginia, and is the former Executive Director of NAMI Virginia. Join me in extending a warm welcome to both Dr. Melton and Ms. Signer!

The last change, though certainly not the least, is the retirement of Becky Sterling from her position as Director of the Office of Recovery Services at DBHDS. Becky was an inspirational leader who served as a beacon of hope to so many in Virginia. The love and gratitude the recovery community holds for her is palpable, as evidenced by stories shared by many peers, both at VOCAL's annual conference and at her retirement celebration, held at Friends4Recovery in early June. Becky will surely be missed, yet I know we're all excited to see where her next adventure leads her! Cheryl DeHaven has now been named Interim Director. She previously held the position of Recovery Services Coordinator with DBHDS and prior to that, Manager of Recovery and Resiliency with Magellan Healthcare of Virginia. Let us also extend a warm welcome to Ms. DeHaven in her new position!

VOCAL staff have been very busy this year with the kickoff of our new trainings, our annual conference, and a myriad of other tasks and events. I heard from many of you at our annual conference in Roanoke that you greatly enjoyed yourselves and that it was one of VOCAL's best conferences yet. I can't begin to express how much those kind words mean to everyone on staff. I'd like to express my appreciation to both Malaina and Yolande for doing a wonderful job and making the conference more successful with each passing year!

I'd also like to thank the rest of the staff - Ann Benner, Erin Crettier, Heather Orrock, and Megan Sharkey - for pitching in wherever needed to help facilitate a great conference experience! I'm grateful for the staff every single day, but because the conference is such a large event that requires extensive planning and a lot of teamwork, it affords me the opportunity to also publicly express my appreciation for all of their hard work. We have an amazing team, and I'm incredibly proud of them!

This year's annual meeting saw an approval of Bylaws revisions, which condensed the size of the board to be consistent with the state's five regions. This change will allow the Board of Directors to have board candidates vetted, ensuring our board members have the skills, time, and ability to participate on a fully engaged, working board. I'd like to thank Bobbie Hepner, former Board President, for her years of service and leadership. Please join me in welcoming VOCAL's new board: Jamie Reavis, President; Steve Clemons, Treasurer; Becky Graser, Secretary; Jessica Daggett; Sue Eller; Marty Grizzle; Jerry Higginson; Traci Jones; Avis Marsh; and Dr. Allan Wentt. The Auxiliary Committee is: Adam Babb; Margaret Giglio; Jeff Leonard; and Ryan Tempesco.

The expansion of our new trainings is under way and going well. I attended an eCPR training in Charlottesville and it was a gratifying experience! I learned so much about myself in those two short days. I'd like to encourage each of you to take advantage of ALL of these trainings in each of your regions while they are still being offered for free!

In closing, I wish each and every one of you a wonderful summer, and I hope to see you at one of our new trainings very soon!

Please Help VOCAL by Taking Our Annual Survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NDNJ5Z8>

Please Help the NEC by Taking Survey

The National Empowerment Center is seeking input on what matters to YOU so they may plan their priorities accordingly. Take a moment to express where you would like to see this national mental health group focus their energy. The survey takes approximately 5 minutes.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FLHNV5H>

From Malaina Poore, Network Program Director

May was Mental Health Awareness Month and I can't complain. I've met with lots of people and traveled at a pace that I can only hope is temporary. It was exciting and I learned a lot, but I like to take time to process each experience before embarking on the next. VOCAL just happens to be in a time of amazing growth, and I get excited and say "yes" to everything! So let me tell you what early spring has looked like for the Network....

A lot of work went into planning the March event, "Telling Your Story", in Wytheville. Our conference planning team met. The venue was booked. A fabulous peer, Charles Herring Jr., offered to step into his first MC role ever. The caterers were set to prepare a good old-fashioned comfort meal. Tickets were reserved and the programs were printed. And then it snowed. All over the state, but particularly in the Valley and Southwest region. In order to keep staff and participants safe, the event needed to be cancelled.

And yet, we are resilient people! Though the event will not happen as planned, new opportunities have presented themselves. Mt. Rogers CSB graciously offered to partner with VOCAL for their 2nd annual Recovery and Resiliency Conference, which will be held October 23 at the Wytheville Meeting Center. On May 31, VOCAL collaborated with the Office of Peer Supports and Recovery at New River Valley CSB to host a conference for Peer Recovery Specialists in Abingdon. The VOCAL Conference was in Roanoke May 21 and 22, and we will be hosting a Trauma-Informed Care training in Wytheville in November. We expect to continue to build relationships in this region.

In April, I was lucky to receive eCPR training with the National Empowerment Center. Two days of deep listening and new techniques. I loved it, but needed rest afterward! I will be attending the next training in Charlottesville as part of a possible apprenticeship to become a facilitator.

I also drove to beautiful Nelson County for the first-ever "Stamp Out Stigma" event hosted by Stephanie Martin and Blue Ridge Medical. They brought in nationally-recognized speakers (as well as locals, like myself), to talk about suicide prevention, mental health and language, and how to use art to challenge stigma.

As usual, the annual conference was always first on my mind in May. The detail planning happened throughout the month, and we wanted to make the conference easy and useful for our 180+ registrants and presenters. But the month really started for me on May 6, when Erin Mahone came to Charlottesville to present, "ReStory Your

Life.” We collaborated with On Our Own of Charlottesville and The Women’s Initiative, to offer this interactive morning dedicated to personal storytelling and the power it holds.

After writing this I realized that I gave my love and attention to four significant events in May. Let’s name June Mental Health Month of REST! In the meantime, I hope to connect with you at a VOCAL event. Be sure to check out the many trainings we will be hosting across the state this year.

“Everything you’ve ever wanted is on the other side of fear.” - Brian Tracy

REACH News: Recovery Education Training Opportunities

VOCAL, in partnership with DBHDS and our local hosts, is working to bring six different Recovery Education Programs to communities across Virginia. These programs include: eCPR, Community Inclusion, Trauma-Informed Care, Peer Support Whole Health and Resiliency, Pathways to Recovery Facilitator Training, and SMART Recovery. To see a brief description of each of these programs, view our Recovery Trainings Program Flyer (<https://tinyurl.com/y9lgwn2s>). Stay updated on the upcoming trainings and access the registration forms via our Peer Recovery and Leadership Trainings webpage (<https://tinyurl.com/y9o4a776>).

These programs are free to the first 25 registrants and continuing education credits are available. Don’t miss out on these opportunities – plan how you can participate today!

Upcoming Recovery Education Trainings:

- June 21-22: Pathways to Recovery in Roanoke
- July 11-12: eCPR in Annandale
- July 19-20: Community Inclusion in Richmond
- July 26-27: Peer Support Whole Health and Resiliency in Danville
- August 9-10: Community Inclusion in Wytheville

Plus, more to come!

Please contact Megan Sharkey: megan@vocalvirginia.org or Ann Benner: ann@vocalvirginia.org or phone them at 804-343-1777 with any questions related to the Recovery Education Trainings.

One Person’s Community Inclusion

by Ann Benner

When I was 48 years old I learned that I had been depressed all my life. I entered an inpatient eating disorder treatment program, having been more and less anorexic since high school. I had never talked to anyone about my eating or lack of eating, and no one talked to me about it except my mother, who recognized the anorexia and used it like a club over my boney body. Anorexia was my secret addiction and my best friend (until I met my husband). The inpatient program, full of caring, information, and sharing with peers, gave me hope and a path to becoming myself. The path included unbelievably difficult work in therapy. I sometimes felt that I would not be able to survive the fear and pain I was asked to face.

At some point, when I was far enough along to have confidence that I was going to make it, I realized that the world was full of other people struggling alone with eating disorders, and that it would be good if they could have connection and support. I had a kind of restless feeling, too, like a young bird for whom the nest had become too small. I reached out to a group of therapists I knew of in Charlottesville who worked to educate the community and health professionals about eating disorders. I started a peer support group and went on to help organize that eating disorders education, prevention, and referral program.

It was scary at first to come out with these professionals. I was afraid of their judgement and my voice was shaky. But the process of working through fears gave me a huge boost in integrating the new me . . . in building confidence, supporting my own recovery, building new skills, practicing with my new voice.

I was thinking about all this in the Community Inclusion training led by Matthew Federici, Letty Elenes, and Ryan Tempesco, in Roanoke in May. I thought about how it would have limited me to keep my recovery to myself and my therapist. I thought about how my presence as a peer in the community gave people a new perspective on people in recovery. How it made it easier for others to come out. My story represents one aspect of the value of peers participating in community. I imagine many peer specialists and activists can relate to my experience. I’m eager to see what other inclusion possibilities will become known and be developed in Virginia as the result of this year’s series of trainings.

Our Perspective on VOCAL's Annual Conference

by Carla E. Heath and Dianna Taylor, Region IV Peer Recovery Specialist Coordinators
VOCAL's annual conference, "Recovery in Community", was held May 21 - May 22, in beautiful, mountainous Roanoke, Virginia.

Matthew Federici, MS, and Executive Director of the Copeland Center for Wellness & Recovery, was the keynote speaker. Matthew weaved his inspiring personal story in with his message regarding community inclusion. Matthew stated community inclusion is a critical means for getting and staying healthy. There were a number of workshops to choose from, ranging from leadership and non-profit skills, dealing with health issues, and various means of creative expression.

Carla Heath, Dianna Taylor, and Robin Hubert facilitated a workshop entitled Creating Recovery Cards. We talked about the benefits of art, and participants created their own recovery cards. There was lots of creativity going on as we listened to a recovery soundtrack. Carla also attended Crafting Magnetic Meaningful Support with Becky Sterling, Wellness-Based Leadership with Matthew Federici, and Music, Poetry, and Your Story with Traci Jones and George Waldrop.

Dianna attended the live and uncut karaoke session on Tuesday night. What a lively line-up of Karaoke singers. Songs ranged from Shania Twain's Country Music, "Man! I Feel like a Woman!" to Will Smith's R&B all-time favorite, "Summertime"! When the DJ announced it was the last song, everybody shouted "Noooooo!" We all wanted to dance and sing some more. The DJ who provided the entertainment was nothing short of accommodating and awesome.

The food at the conference was flavorful and plentiful. We felt our time spent amongst our peers, the keynote address, and the workshops was time well spent.

Upcoming Trainings, Events, and Announcements

Yoga Class (Trauma Sensitive) at Robin's Hope in Chesterfield

Wednesdays, 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
9505 Hull Street Road, Suite C, N. Chesterfield, VA 23236
For more information about this and other programming, call 804-317-5710 or visit www.robinshope.com.

Living Proof Outreach LLC 1st Annual African American Mental Health Awareness Month Forum

July 7, 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
2 East Main Street, Richmond, VA 23219
For more information, call Calendria Jones
804-503-6489
RSVP: livingproofoutreach.com.

"Illuminating the Way": One Day Conference in Williamsburg

The Region 5 Consumer Advisory Council (CAC), sponsored by a grant from the DBHDS Office of Recovery, presents, "Illuminating the Way", a one-day conference. This conference will focus on aspects of recovery as it relates to mental health and substance use disorders.

August 8, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
For further information:
melissa.evans@dbhds.virginia.gov.

dLCV (disability Law Center of Virginia) Office Hours in Norfolk

Thursday, June 21, 11:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Independence Center, Inc.
6300 E Virginia Beach Boulevard, Norfolk, 23502

Appointments preferred, but walk-ins accepted. Contact Rena Lewis at 757-461-8007 to schedule an appointment.

Trauma-Informed Care Workshop in Warsaw

June 25, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
84 Main Peer Resource Center, Warsaw VA, 22572
For more information: 804-333-3671.

Free Peer Recovery Specialist Training in Richmond

August 1 - October 10 on consecutive Wednesdays at the NAMI Central Virginia office.
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
1904 Byrd Avenue, Suite 207, Richmond 23230
Contact Jim Kochany, CPRS, at oakowhill@gmail.com or 804-304-9797.

Volunteers Needed for Alternatives Conference in August

Volunteers are needed to help at this year's Alternatives conference. The Peoples' Alternatives Conference will be held at Catholic University, in Washington, D.C., July 29 - August 3. <https://www.alternatives-conference.org/>.

New WRAP® Group at Friends 4 Recovery

7420 Whitepine Road, N. Chesterfield, VA 23237
 8-week workshop starting June 20, 2:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m.
 Call 804-308-1366 or e-mail: info@friends4recovery.org,
 to register.

SAARA of Virginia Offers Peer Recovery Specialist Training

Friday - Friday, July 20 - 27, 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
 2000 Mecklenburg Street
 Richmond, VA 23223
 For more information, contact Marjorie Yates:
marjoriey@saaracenter.org.
 Volunteer internships are available at SAARA for
 fulfillment of 500-hour certification requirement. For
 details, email marjoriey@saaracenter.org.

Floyd Integrity Opens in Floyd, VA

Floyd Integrity provides acudetox, peer counseling,
 anxiety/depression groups, art class, and payee services
 for people 18 years and older.
 For further information, call 540-651-2657.

From Where I Sit ... Creative Offerings from Members and Friends

You Tell Me Your Favorite Song, I'll Tell You Mine...VOCAL Workshop 2018

By George Waldrop

We all look through different windows,
 but we find God and the universe on our own.
 We had togetherness here...Our top 40 songs
 You should feel represented! You made this
 mix. I only wanted to hear from you. You
 made this mix, you are my friends. I wish
 you were here. Time will tell about 2018:
 how we made a mixtape to survive our times.
 The fun I had listening to you, it will be heard
 by you. I'm happy you got represented...
 If you feel a part of our workshop then you
 are, because we are the folks to listen, dance
 a thrive in our creation... These are the signs
 of our times to create a mixtape with all of our
 faces, smiling faces and songs.

- Bob Dylan - A Hard Rain's a Gonna Fall
- Wiz Khalifa - See You Again
- Tim Mcgraw - Humble And Kind
- Bob Marley - One Love (Photek Remix)
- Leonard Cohen - Hallelujah
- Isael Kamakakawiwo'ole - Somewhere Over The Rainbow
- The O'Neill Brothers Group - I Believe I Can Fly
- The Beatles - Let It Be

- Lauren Hoffman - Let The Mystery Be
- Dewayne Woods - Let Go
- Elvis- You'll Never Walk Alone
- Dolly Parton - Coat of Many Colors
- George Benson - The Greatest Love Of All
- Meg Hutchinson - Seeing Stars
- Daughter - Human
- Ziggy Marley - Love Is My Religion
- The Staple Singers - The Lord's Prayer
- Terry Callier - Lean On Me (Beth Orton feat. Terry Callier)
- Bill Withers - Lean On Me
- Keith Green - Holy, Holy, Holy
- Bryan Bowers - Amazing Grace
- The Grateful Dead - Scarlet Begonias Live at Selland Arena on 1974 07 19
- Drake - God's Plan
- Queen - Another One Bites The Dust
- TobyMac - Move (Keep Walkin')
- Sara Bareilles - Brave
- Rascal Flatts - I Won't Let Go
- Tribe - The Peace Pipe
- Josh Groban - You Raise Me Up
- Marvin Gaye - Mercy, Mercy, Me (The Ecology)
- Dar Williams - Comfortably Numb
- Randy Travis - Three Wooden Crosses
- Tim McGraw - My Best Friend
- Tenth Avenue North - No Man is an Island
- System of A Down - Toxicity
- Gummibar - I'm A Gummy Bear
- A\$AP Ferg - New Level
- Zolita - Fight Like A Girl
- Pink Floyd - Wish You Were Here

Mixcloud Link:

<https://www.mixcloud.com/TexHobart/you-tell-me-your-favorite-song-ill-tell-you-minevocal-workshop-2018/>

I'm a Survivor by Thynesis R.

I feel that I'm a survivor because I have been through so much in my lifetime that you wouldn't believe. I was first diagnosed with a mental illness at the age of seventeen. I struggled so hard through the years. The harder the struggle, the more determined I was to survive. There were times that society tried to discourage me by saying that I wouldn't make it; however, changes in medicine, going to therapy, and having case managers and counselors who cared gave me a strong desire to push on and prove everyone wrong. I'm especially proud because the Hospitality Center is one of the places in my life that I chose to attend; where my needs and wants are met on a daily basis. I have God in my life, my sons, my family, and friends. I also have a special friend whose concern about my welfare is very helpful in my recovery. With these

special things working for me I can go on to bigger and better things, and I shall.

I made major sacrifices in my life when I became ill so that I could raise my two sons in an environment which included a good education and spiritual upbringing. My purpose was to live a normal lifestyle and remain stable. I continued to take my medication, visit the Hospitality Center, and give support and guidance to others. I say to myself and others that life is not that hard, what you put in life is what you get out of it. Believe it; take it from me!

From the Newsletter Editor

The deadline for the July/August “Network News” is July 23. Please send all contributions VOCAL’s office or email Yolande Long at yolande@vocalvirginia.org.