

THE NETWORK NEWS

November-December 2018

INSIDE

From the Network Program Director Page 2

Member Spotlight Page 2

R.E.A.C.H News Page 2

An Interview with OORV's Robin Hubert Page 3-4

"From Where I Sit" Page 5

From the Editor Page 6

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

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From Deidre Johnson, Executive Director

You can transform Virginia's mental health system.

Great strides have been made in transforming Virginia's mental health system. However, more change is critical – lives are at risk by system failures every single day. With your help, VOCAL is able to advocate for system changes, transform lives, and empower peers.

Temporary Detention Order (TDO) admissions to state hospitals increased drastically over the last four years from 1,580 in 2014 to 5,356 in 2018 – that's an alarming 339% increase. While TDOs to private hospitals have seen some stabilization and even decreases in some areas due to voluntary admissions, such a drastic increase in admissions to state hospitals have caused the state hospitals to be at or over their bed capacity in some cases. This, combined with Virginia's "placement of last resort" requirement, as well as peers that face significant barriers to discharge, such as lack of community placement for peers with complex medical or behavioral needs and lack of housing have contributed to the psychiatric bed crisis the state now faces.

As we head into the 2019 General Assembly session, VOCAL is working on expansion of community-based services such as permanent supportive housing, supported employment, increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates for the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist profession, and alternative methods of hospital and TDO diversion by advocating for peer-run respite. This work could not happen without you!

Your support makes this this transformative work possible. As you celebrate the holiday season, please consider making a gift to VOCAL. To give, visit www.vocalvirginia.org. Thank you for making a difference!

Deidre

Member Spotlight: Ryan Tempesco

I was born and raised in Virginia Beach. I remember growing up really quiet and shy, but I think I spent a lot of time trying to figure out where I fit in with everyone else. Once I had kinda figured that out, I became much more extroverted and passionate and just wanted to be involved with anything that I could be. I've since become very outspoken across multiple platforms, from advocating for my identity as a transgender individual to my constant advocating as a peer in our ongoing peer movement.

I am beyond proud of my accomplishment of working for The Copeland Center for Wellness and Recovery. I had always thought that I'd be working my entire career to build up to working there and then one day, it just happened! Not to mention being the youngest-ever full-time staff member. I am also proud of becoming certified in this field at such a young age. I was certified as a peer specialist when I was 20 and, three years later, I still haven't met any certified peers in Virginia younger than me, now or then. I also became an Advanced Level WRAP Facilitator at 22, and even though that doesn't break any records, I still think it's an amazing accomplishment. There are other things, of course, like becoming involved in VOCAL and all the board experience I had the opportunity of gaining from the different organizations I've worked with. I'm also really proud of giving my first keynote speech at the Alternatives Conference when I was 22. (I think there were about 650 people in attendance at that conference -- no pressure...haha.)

I was introduced to the peer recovery movement while looking for support groups of my own, which then led me to the now-closed peer drop-in center in Virginia Beach, Hope in Motion, and I feel like things just took off from there. We had this joke about how I was just pointed in the right direction, and then I opened up the door, ran through it, and opened up 12 more on my own.

A few things I try to live by would be, "trust the process" and "everything happens for a reason." Another good one would probably be, "always remain flexible." I also constantly remind myself to be my authentic self, as I've fought hard to be myself, so there's really no point in being anyone else after all the trouble I've already gone through to get here.

I really enjoy nutrition and fitness -- hiking and nature, too. I also love being guilt-tripped by my cat for always being on the road. And I really like the involvement I have with the trans community, and the advocacy that happens there. I have developed a passion for reading poetry and have a special appreciation for all of the arts, and I'm always looking for a new adventure in my life.

REACH: Recovery Education Trainings

Thank you to everyone who has joined us thus far for trainings. We appreciate the time you have taken so far to engage with us in these great educational opportunities.

September Attendees: 25 people joined us!

October Attendees: 61 people joined us!

November Attendees: 25 people joined us!

How many will join us in December and January?!

To learn more about these opportunities, please visit our Peer Recovery and Leadership Trainings webpage at <https://tinyurl.com/y9o4a776>.

From Malaina Poore, Network Program Director

I am in the sky on a very small aircraft with my daughter and my son, who has never been on an airplane before. I am watching him watch the lights below get smaller and smaller. He tries to capture the picture with his I-phone. The picture will not do it justice, of course. It is hard to capture the totality of a scene - the visual, the visceral, the emotional, the ephemeral- but we are compelled to try.

In this spirit I will attempt to tell you something about the events of this past season and the way I am moved by the people I work with - both colleagues and VOCAL members. Our staff has just returned from a retreat where we broke bread, dreamed about the future, and expressed our appreciation for one and other. So many friends have been struggling with health, loss, and uncertainty. It is hard to ignore and even harder to lend enough empathy and usefulness. Yet there is so much goodness in our community. On Our Own Roanoke celebrated their 25th anniversary. Twenty-five years of peer and practical support at no charge to those who need it! New peer-runs emerge across the Commonwealth. I had the pleasure of meeting with staff at the beautiful 401 Main in Radford. It was worth the trip just see to the gorgeous murals and sit in the enormous bean bag chairs! Angela Scott had the idea to look up recovery-themed art on Etsy and that is where they found the colorful prints and posters that hang on the wall. What a way to share the wealth! In Wytheville, where I visited for the 2nd Annual Recovery Resiliency Day, I heard there is a restaurant called Open Door where patrons pay what they can. Leave it to Wytheville to take hospitality and generosity to this level! Southwest Virginia is one of the warmest places I know. At the VAPRA Conference in Bristol, Megan Sharkey and I presented a workshop about creating safer spaces for LGBTQ individuals. Someone who had long been involved with the conference (which is 34 years strong) told me that even 10 years ago

this kind of workshop would have never made it into the schedule. We were met only with kindness. I know this is possible because of the work done by those who came before me.

If there is anything I most want to convey, it is gratitude. Today I have my children, my small house in the country, the gift of a small vacation, and a hope for the future. I have immense gratitude for the peers who work towards the common good, for our members who graciously share themselves and their light, for the perfect autumn weather, and the view from the road.

VOCAL Needs Your Participation on Its Advocacy Committee!

Your participation in VOCAL’s Advocacy Committee calls gives VOCAL invaluable insight into the unmet needs of peers across the state. Your participation also provides VOCAL with direction in educating legislators on recovery and the needs of peers as it relates to specific legislation. Advocacy Committee calls are held weekly via conference call during legislative session and notices are sent out via the e-digest. Please contact Deidre Johnson with any questions, or to express your desire to serve on this committee: Deidre@vocalvirginia.org or 804-343-1777.

Shop at Kroger, Help Support VOCAL

Please link your rewards card to VOCAL (account #JY336). The more you shop at Kroger and use your rewards card, the more money VOCAL will earn! This support helps achieve a peer-driven mental health system in the state of Virginia. Thank you!

An Interview with Robin Hubert, Executive Director of On Our Own of Roanoke Valley

OOORV just celebrated 25 years! As part of that celebration, Yolande interviewed Robin Hubert to get her unique perspective of the organization and its place in their community.

Y: What is the history of OOORV before you came on?

R: Through a grant from DBHDS, Blue Ridge Behavioral Healthcare presented their idea to open up a peer center to a couple of folks they knew in mental health recovery (Were you one of the two folks they presented the idea to?). They aided them in their 501C3 application, and thus, OOORV opened in 1993.

Y: What was your role when you came on board?

R: Hired as Project Director in July 2001, I was in charge of the two of programs OOORV had back then, but which mostly consisted of a place for 80 people who lived in a group home across the street to come and enjoy coffee, snacks, and the occasional Bingo game. I decided more was necessary and needed, and the following month had an opportunity to attend a VOCAL meeting where I met key VOCAL staff and directors of other peer centers. Although the meeting attendees were small in number, I came away with new energy and inspiration and a whole new world of wellness opened up for me! I understood that people have the potential to recover, and went back to OOORV and began to work hard to bring that message to the people who walked through our door. We got a “Two People, Two Chairs” grant from VOCAL which allowed us to start a computer training program and our Saturday night coffee house (which is still a hit!). Besides the people in the group home, other people in recovery began to hear about us and attend our programs. I started publishing a calendar of events and got the word out about what we had to offer – my job description was changed and I became the Executive Director. With a 2008 grant from DBHDS, (which I call our ‘enhancement grant’), I was able to hire some staff, add programming, and open the center 7 days a week. I am proud to say that 6 days of those 7 we offer a peer support group!

Y: What services do you currently provide?

R: OOORV has really expanded! We now offer not just our peer support group, but a veterans group, dual recovery anonymous, healthy living group (which will become Peer Whole Health and Resiliency in 2019), crafts, bingo, coffee house with karaoke, yoga, circle singing and WRAP classes. We celebrate birthdays monthly, and are open every holiday. Staff also has been invited into group homes serviced by Blue Ridge Behavioral Healthcare services, and we model recovery for them. This builds relationships and it’s a good way for outreach in the community.

We are part of the Blue Ridge Behavioral Healthcare and Catawba Regional Partnership – going in to Catawba Hospital once a week to provide two classes: WRAP and a wellness and healthy living group. Blue Ridge Behavioral Healthcare – We’ve established a “Hope and Hospitality” room, which has a mini OOORV “feel” at Blue Ridge Behavioral Healthcare. There we talk to folks waiting for appointments and invite them in to have coffee and introduce them to our programming at the center. I see this as a stepping stone to recovery as sometimes this is someone’s first encounter to the possibility of recovery.

Y: What are the biggest changes you've seen in the years you have been there been at the center? In VA in general?

R: With the advent of new programming at OORV, many more people have been introduced to recovery – we get about 6000 visits per year now which is a lot of growth! We employ people in recovery, and over the years have had some student interns in recovery. All of our volunteers and employees are people in recovery and I am proud that we provide folks that opportunity. We have just celebrated our 25th anniversary!

In Virginia – the peer support movement has grown exponentially since 2001! I have facilitated so many trainings for so many peers! Folks have gotten their hope back because they have finally seen things they could do with their lived experience.

Y: Robin, is there anything else you would like us to know?

R: I tell people I meet along the way who are interested in furthering both their recovery and the recovery of others that all it takes is two people and two chairs, just two people meeting and giving mutual support! That is the best way to start. I would also like folks to know that my faith has sustained me through some very tough times in my life, and with God at the center of my life, along with peer support, I have overcome them!

Save the Date for VOCAL’s Annual Mental Health Recovery Conference, “The Evolution of Us”

Mark your calendars now for our annual conference! The 2019 conference will be held on Monday, May 20-Tuesday, May 21. This year we will convene at the Hotel Madison at 710 South Main Street in Harrisonburg! Please visit: <https://www.hotelmadison.com/> to view the hotel’s website.

Information about registration, cost, scholarships, and schedule will be published in future communications. Stay tuned!

Virginia Peer Recovery Specialist Network

Professional Development and Networking for Virginia's Peer Recovery Specialists

Intentional Peer Support Core Training
 March 11-15 in Richmond
 Don't miss this special one-time event! Space is limited. Partial scholarships available. Visit <http://virginiapeerspecialistnetwork.org> for the application.

PRS Training in Winchester

Tuesdays, January 8-March 12
 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
 1014 Amherst Street.
 Winchester 22601
 For further information, contact Bryon Johnson at 540-325-6000 or bjohnson@nwcsb.com

Mental Health America of Virginia’s (MHAV) Recovery Education

Workforce Skills Training
 January 8-9 in Roanoke
 Roanoke
 Advocacy Training
 February 4-6 in Richmond
 Richmond

Scholarships are available. Apply at www.mhav.org.

Peer Recovery Specialist Training in Fishersville-Staunton Area

January 7-February 13
 Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays
 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
 DARS clients welcome
 For more information or to apply, email ann.b.benner@gmail.com with "PRS Training" in the subject line.

Peer Recovery Specialist Training in Newport News

January 19-February 16
 Saturdays and Sundays
 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
 For more information and to register, email: alethea.lambert@yahoo.com.

VACSB 2019 Legislative Conference

January 22 at 8:00 a.m.-January 23 at 11:00 a.m.
 Hilton Downtown Richmond Hotel
 501 East Broad Street
 Richmond 23219
<https://vacsb.org/January2019/>

VOCAL Board of Directors Meets January 9

For information, contact the VOCAL office.

PRS Training in Hampton

February 2-3, 9-10, 16-17, 25-26, March 2-3
 Agape Foundation Center
 3217 Commander Shepard Boulevard
 Hampton 23666
 For information, contact Eddie Wiggins:
eddiewiggins@outlook.com or 757-637-8705.

Emotional CPR Training

eCPR is an educational program designed to teach people to assist others through an emotional crisis by three simple steps: C = Connecting, P = emPowering, and R = Revitalizing. eCPR was developed with input from a diverse cadre of recognized leaders from across the U.S., who themselves have learned how to recover and grow from emotional crises. They have wisdom by the grace of first-hand experience.
 Offered in Chesapeake on January 28-29. Registration coming soon.
 Call Megan Sharkey at the VOCAL office for more information: 804-343-1777.

Mental Health Advocacy Day Scheduled for January 29

VOCAL, MHAV, NAMI Virginia, and Voices for Virginia's Children are sponsoring this event. Call the VOCAL office at 804-343-1777 for details.

Peer Recovery Support Specialist Training at SAARA of Virginia

January 4-11 (Friday-Friday)
 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
 2000 Mecklenburg Street
 Richmond 23223
 For more information, contact Marjorie Yates:
marjoriey@saaracenter.org

Mental Health America's 2019 Conference "Dueling Diagnoses: Mental Health and Chronic Conditions in Children and Adults"

June 13-15
 Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill
 Washington, D.C.
 For more information and to register, visit:
<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/2019-conference-registration>

**From Where I Sit ... Creative Offerings from Members and Friends
 ARMS by Ann Catherine Braxton**

She has someone in her arms
 And it feels so good
 She's got that special glow
 As any mother would
 He's more than just her son
 He stands out in the crowd
 It's graduation day
 And his honors make her proud

It's been twelve long months
 Since the ensign was deployed
 One look at his new child
 And he cries overjoyed
 He's got two in his arms
 Greeting him today
 They've been holding down the fort
 Now he's home to stay

A lonely old man
 Ponders questions of his life
 Sitting on a front porch
 He misses his wife
 But the blues are no match
 For a little girl's charms
 His young neighbor climbs up
 And holds him in her arms

And now my old friend
 I've waited all year
 My favorite gift is in my arms
 It's good to hold you near

HOPE by Geisha Battle

Hope has awakened
 It does not dissolve
 Hope is timed
 Ready, and revolves

Hope will make it
 And be on time
 Hope keeps away pain
 And is a friend of thine

Hope knows when and who
 And hope will care
 Sometimes hope laughs
 And in nice places hope will be there

From the Newsletter Editor

The deadline for the January-February issue of the “Network News” is Tuesday, January 22, 2019. Please send your submissions to Yolande Long at the VOCAL office, or email them to: Yolande@vocalvirginia.org