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**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**  
**DIVISION OF COMMUNITY & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES**

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**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Participants of the 2015 Public Forum for Consumers and Families

FROM: Laurie Becker, Mental Health Administrator

DATE: August 6, 2015

RE: Public Forum Summary Report

I thank each of you for participating in this year's Forum. The abbreviated summary is attached for your review. You may access the full 8-page report as posted on the County website at:

<http://morrishumanservices.org/boards/MentalHealth/Publications/2015SummaryReport.pdf>

If you prefer, I am happy to send you the full report at your request.

Every year, the Forum Summary Report is incorporated into Morris County's planning and advocacy activities. The Report is also sent to the State's Division of Mental Health and Addictions Services and public officials for consideration.

If you would like to participant on next year's Forum planning committee and/or if I can be of further assistance to you, please contact me at 973-285-6852.

C: Jennifer Carpinteri, Director  
MHSAAB Members  
Eileen Alexander, DMHAS

**Morris County Mental Health Substance Abuse Advisory Board (MHSAAB)**  
**Public Forum for Consumers and Families**  
***Many Faces of Recovery: Creative Expressions***  
**June 9, 2015**  
**SUMMARY**

**Attendance**

The 21<sup>th</sup> Forum drew approximately 200 participants, the highest turnouts for this annual event. The majority of participants were consumers, followed by a good mix of family members, providers and officials. Attendees included representation from NJ Division of Mental Health and Addictions Services, family and consumer advocacy groups, Greystone Hospital leadership, the County Freeholder Board and the majority of MHSAAB members. Agency leadership was well represented and there was good participation at community resource tables.

Daily Record feature reporter Lorraine Ash and her photographer also attended. (See scanned attached newspaper article.)

**Accommodations**

The Haggerty Center is an ideal venue. The planning committee continues to address a few challenges with the audio system.

**Agenda**

Morris County Human Services Director Jennifer Carpinteri gave welcoming remarks and introduced Freeholder Director Kathy DeFillippo.

Director DeFillippo thanked all in attendance and emphasized the importance of providing an annual forum for the public to hear the benefits and challenges when utilizing the local human service system. She also reported on the Task Force on Opiates initiative, recently formed to deter children and adults from using heroin and abusing prescription drugs.

Director DeFillippo gave special thanks to NAMI and Kathy Moser for bringing art and song to the event and extended appreciation to the all of the speakers who shared their recovery stories. She then introduced Ms. Barbara Ward, the Chair of the MHSAAB. Ms. Ward introduced her MHSAAB colleagues and gave a brief overview of the advisory board's role and responsibilities.

Special recognition was given to Carol MacLean and Eileen Griffith, mental health leaders, who collectively have spent over 60 years as family advocates.

Ms. Ward introduced Peter Basto, forum facilitator. Mr. Basto reported on his recent travels to Norway and Philadelphia to museums and conferences that explored how art and storytelling can inspire recovery. He thanked the NAMI representatives for sharing the "Mind My Art" exhibit.

Mr. Basto introduced the three speakers who shared personal stories on their recovery from mental illness and/or addiction. The final speaker, Kathy Moser, ended her presentation in song with the audience.

Mr. Basto then opened the floor for public comment.

**Highest Service Priorities --- :**

- Transportation – increase access countywide. The Medicaid provider (Logisticare) needs to improve quality of service.
- Housing subsidies, supportive housing, homeless services
- More places for socialization, recreational activities, writing and music.
- Employment with supports, willingness of employers to hiring individuals in recovery.

**Newer priorities:**

- Groups, education for families who have an addicted loved one
- More youth advocacy, ways to get youth off the streets

**Suggestions for 2016:**

- More resource information.
- Decrease time on introductions to allow more time for public comment and presentations.

**Written evaluations: 20 completed**

- 55% said Forum met expectations/40% somewhat
- 55% had attended previous forums, 45% first time participants
- 60% said the personal recovery stories and music were program highlights.

***Meetings of the Morris County Mental Health Substance Abuse Advisory Board (MHSAAAB) are open to the public and are held most second Thursdays of the month, 5:15 p.m., Morris County Department of Human Services, 30 Schuyler Place, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Morristown NJ. Parking is available under the building and parking passes are available at the meeting.***

*The primary purpose of the MHSAAAB is to advocate to the County and State for a strong continuum of human services to benefit individuals living with mental illness and/or addictions disorders. All are welcome to attend and provide public comment to the MHSAAAB for consideration. Call the mental health administrator at 973-285-6852 to confirm the meeting time and to address any questions or concerns.*

**Morris County Mental Health Substance Abuse Advisory Board (MHSAAB)**  
**Public Forum for Consumers and Families**  
***Many Faces of Recovery: Creative Connections***  
**June 9, 2015**

**Speaker Highlights and Sampling of Public Comments**

**RECOVERY STORIES**

C—Spoke about her fight for many years to recover from anorexia, bipolar disorder. With help from family, friends and her church as well as a mental health provider, she considers herself to be in recovery.

ME—Spoke of a long history of trauma and abuse and relationship problems which all contributed to her severe psychiatric problems with many hospitalizations. Through treatment and spiritual supports, she is now employed part time and has family in her life. She suggested it is best to fight stigma by talking about the illness.

K—Spoke of being humbled to be in long term recovery. She has been clean and sober for 19 years and is the only person in her family that got help for addictions and mental illness. Creativity saved her life. She asked everyone to sing with her one of the first songs she wrote about being sober—“I am who I am”.

**Questions for Attendees:**

**What services and supports are most helpful to your recovery?**

- Supportive housing programs – New Bridge specifically.
- Rides back and forth to work.
- Morris Community Wellness Center – a place to socialize, gather and make friends.
- Transitions Program – Saint Clare’s – coping skills helped her live better.
- Supportive housing program at Saint Clare’s.
- Homeless Programs – free meals and a place to go and get food.
- Morris Community Center – used to be Self Help Center – helped her to get involved and to give back to the community.
- Exercise programs at New Bridge – they have a lot of activities.
- Wellness Center – helped to go there and spend time with others and stop isolating.
- Community Hope – helped him get an apartment but he is still lonely. The nurse at the Wellness Center helps him but he believes there needs to be more place for disabled people to go. He would like more socialization.
- Saint Clare’s helped her get a job through their career services.
- Mental Health Programs (through PACT) got services and supports from them. They are great and helped a lot. Also it’s good to have friends and to help others. Reaching out others is important.
- Mental Health Association of Morris County helped her to get out of the house and meet people.
- MHAMC helped her with their various programs (fitness center, community garden, exercise, etc.) Special thanks to Lou Schwarcz.
- Help from the food bank and music helped in recovery.
- Career employment services helped get a job.

- Thanks to many people and all those that are here including Saint Clare's transitions programs, MHAMC, Morris Wellness Center and many programs were helpful. Now a driver from Wellness Center, "paying it forward."
- Was placed in Saint Clare's and Greystone for drugs/alcohol. Then was sent to a group home. Had a relapse and got better and got a job. Saint Clare's helped with recovery.
- MAPS provides great transportation services

**What services did you look for but were unable to find or unable to access?**

- Families of addicts have a lot of problems in recovery and need information on how to cope with their situation. It is important to point the families in the right direction. In court it would also be helpful to have some help to move the family in the right direction. Seems to be a lack of information to the families. Need more information on AA/NA and often this information is not in brochures and not easy to find.
  - *Families that interact with drug addicts need to learn good interactions – change must be with the non-user. The drug user won't seek help as long as the family solves his/her problems.* (Mother of a drug addict)
- Help to find more jobs. More employment services needed. Although there are places to go it is difficult to get a job. I have been healthy for four years and at twenty nine years old can't find a job. Probably due to past problems.
- More vocational programs for the disabled to gain skills. Working is very important. Families need education and to understand why it is important for disabled to work. His family tells him he should stay home.
- Think that human services are pretty good but that One- Stop- Career Center should make some changes. They said they can't help me get a job since I attend school. I often sit in the waiting room and then end up getting sent home.
- More services to get kids off the street. More youth advocacy. More people to hear the youth voice.
- Maybe a help line just for those with mental illness.
- Transportation

**What barriers are there to access service?**

- Lack of transportation – need more services.

Ms. Becker introduced Ms. Lauren Burd, Morris County MAPS director, who reported that there is a statewide campaign to ask the Governor's office to increase transportation budgets. \$750,000 has been lost from the MAPS budget in recent years. She asked all in attendance to complete the campaign surveys that she will be forwarding to the Governor's Office.

Ms. Fox stated that MAPS is a wonderful service and has been helpful to her.

- Problems with insurance—understanding the paperwork requirements and making the payments.
- DYFS (DCPP) Programs are difficult to access. Has been trying to work with DYFS for ten years and they often don't answer the phone, or don't give him the information he needs. Has been frustrating trying to deal with them.

**Wish question – if I could create a program what would it be?**

- A program on rape and incest.
- Opportunity for nonprofit and profit organizations to work together.
- More programs for foster children and homeless children. Would like to expand programs so the children can visit nursing homes and be involved in other activities.
- Create an evening of poetry and coffee once a month or so.
- More social gatherings – alternative ways to spend time.
- More transportation – especially in the evening.
- More affordable housing and a speedup of access to subsidized housing.
- Peer visiting at hospitals. Would like to gather more folks together to visit hospitals.
- Morristown has a Wellness Center but insurance doesn't cover it. Wish there was something similar for people that don't have insurance.
- Supportive employment at Saint Clare's.
- Low cost dental clinic that specializes in anxiety. Also a training program for clinics to teach staff how to work with the mentally ill.
- Everyone needs a car. It would be good if there could be help for folks to get a car. Also would be great if there was an innovative transportation system. Better transportation services would be helpful.

In response to request for information on public entitlements and supportive employment, Ms. Becker identified two providers in attendance, Saint Clare's careers program and Office of Temporary Assistance. She also reported on two new programs set to begin later this year:

1. Assisted Outpatient Treatment in Morris and Sussex will be under the auspices of the Mental Health Association of Morris County
2. Medically enhanced supportive housing for five individuals leaving Greystone will be provided by NewBridge Services.

All comments brought to our attention tonight will be reported to the Mental Health Substance Abuse Advisory Board. The MHSAAB meets monthly and all are welcome. It is a public meeting the second Thursday of the month at 5:15 p.m. at 30 Schuyler Place, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor in Morristown. The meeting dates are also on the [www.MorrisHumanServices.org](http://www.MorrisHumanServices.org) website. The MHSAAB wants to hear from you on advocacy issues. Thanks you!

Forum Summary—Written Evaluations  
20 Evaluations received

**THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR THE MHSAB TO ADDRESS IS:**

- Housing/transportation. - 4
- Helping consumers stay in recovery and get back into life.
- More pediatric therapists.
- Affordable alternative care i.e. acupuncture, meditation.
- To be more inclusive – have more alternative creative programs such nature, programs at the arboretum, and music programs.
- Housing/energy assistance.
- Eating disorders.
- Unreliability of Logisticare.
- Communication between agencies.
- Tobacco addictions.
- Getting information out to the community. It is difficult for people in the community to navigate the system.
- Police education about mental illness especially in Essex County.
- Recovery options.

**IN MY OPINION, THE BIGGEST GAP IN MORRIS COUNTY'S SERVICE SYSTEM IS:**

- Supervised housing for people in our community.
- Services to integrate consumers into the community.
- Job help/technical classes - 3
- Suggest more nature based recovery and more community gatherings.
- Transportation - 4
- Housing – 3
- Rent too high/need more low income rent - 2
- Food stamps is not enough money - 2
- Utility/Heating Assistance – 2
- Homelessness
- More available for people with learning disabilities and mental illness.
- Care management process.
- Poor communication.
- Child support.
- Insufficient board certified psychiatrists accepting Medicaid plans.
- Information/resources available to people in the community. Find ways to advertise more; use 211 information.
- Stigma free campaign.
- Tobacco cessation support.
- Residential and supportive housing for mental health women consumers with proper oversight of medications.

**WHAT I WISH I WOULD HAVE SAID AT THE FORUM:**

- The need for more doctors to accept Medicaid.
- What places can I go for socializing?
- More artwork/music/creative and social programs. - 2
- How great the IOP is.
- I wish I would get a job and money someday.

- I would like help to get a job and drive a car.
- People recommended me to go to the Morris Wellness Center. There are improvements from last year; however I don't see others that were substance abusers there.
- There is a need for at home nursing care.
- Transportation is not reliable and there is inadequate scheduling.
- Morris needs more transportation.

**THE FORUM MET MY EXPECTATIONS:**

YES - 11  
 NO -  
 SOMEWHAT - 8

**HAVE YOU ATTENDED PREVIOUS CONSUMER AND FAMILY FORUMS:**

YES - 11  
 NO - 9

**FORUM HIGHLIGHTS**

- Kathy's song AND MUSIC! - 5
- Consumer recovery stories. – 6
- Friendly people
- Mental and physical health.
- Peter's talk and examples.
- I can express my opinion.
- Counseling services and support services.
- Stories were more inspiring than last year.
- Open discussion from attendees.

**MY SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE NEXT YEAR'S FORUM:**

- Use a regular microphone, it was hard to hear.
- Omit introducing the whole board-we don't need that information – prefer more time for open forum instead.
- More recovery stories.
- More agencies with tables.
- Have better questions.
- Tables to eat dinner at. - 2
- Dealing with Greystone – just a holding area and no adequate counseling and significant group therapy. One's safety is of great concern.

**TOPICS FOR NEXT YEAR'S FORUM:**

- How families can help their loved ones.
- Socialization opportunities.
- Any additional funding.
- Insurance coverage.

**I CURRENTLY RECEIVE SERVICES FROM THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES  
(OPTIONAL):**

- Mental Health Association of MC - 4
- Food Pantry (Interfaith Food Pantry) - 2
- DCA
- Hispanic Affairs
- OTA - 2
- Self Help Center Parsippany
- Saint Clare's – 3
- PACT
- Mountainside Hospital, Montclair, NJ
- Intensive Family Support Services of M.C.
- Section 8 Housing
- Soup Kitchen
- Medicaid

**OTHER COMMENTS: -**

- Although things are not perfect – this county has the best mental health resources.
- To improve funding for Medicaid recipients.
- I never abused drugs in my life.
- I don't use drugs.

# Annual Morris summit looks at mental health, substance abuse

LORRAINE ASH @LorraineVAsh 1:20 p.m. EDT June 10, 2015



(Photo: Keith Muccilli/Staff photo)

Some 200 people recovering from mental health and substance abuse problems voiced what's working—and what's missing—in services in Morris County during the 21st annual public forum on the topic at The Frelinghuysen Arboretum Tuesday night.

Yearly, \$23 million in county and state funds is spent to deliver services in Morris County, according to Laurie Becker, the county's mental health administrator.

The annual feedback session, sponsored by the Morris County Mental Health Substance Abuse Advisory Board and the Morris County Board of Chosen Freeholders, is designed to ensure the money goes where it's

most needed.

Those gathered gushed with praise for supportive housing by the nonprofits Community Hope and NewBridge Services, the Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) at St. Clare's Behavioral Healthcare Services, the state-funded Morris Community Wellness Center in Parsippany, and more.

"I would be remiss if I didn't thank many people in this room and programs I went to in this county who have literally saved my life," said Johnny Charles of Kenvil. "I'm talking about the Transitions program at St. Clare's, which I recently graduated from; the Mental Health Association of Morris County, which has taken me to events and activities and shown me fellowship and community and love; and the Morris Community Wellness Center, which has rescued me in so many ways—emotionally, physically, spiritually."

But there were also suggestions for improvements and additional help, including more employment services with supports, more affordable housing, a program that specifically addresses rape and incest, and opportunities to gather primarily for social and creative—not clinical—reasons.

Another topic, which endures from year to year, raised its head again.

"I will say one word: transportation," offered one woman who, like many of those gathered, preferred anonymity.

"What about it? Too much?" teased Peter Basto of the Rutgers University School of Health Related Professions, who facilitated the evening. Laughter rippled through the audience.

At that point, Lauren Burd, director of special transportation for the Morris Area Paratransit System, known as MAPS, urged people to sign a "Will I Have A Ride Tomorrow?" statewide campaign petition asking Gov. Christie to supplement transportation funding, which has been severely dropping. Many people in the room said they depend on MAPS to get them to their mental health and substance abuse services.

"The funding for transportation in our county comes from casino revenue," Burd said. "As we all know, the casinos in Atlantic City are not doing well, so it affects our funding. In fact, we've lost 52 percent of our funding from 2008 to now. For Morris County, that equals \$750,000 for transportation in one year.

"So what we're asking the governor's office to do," she added, "is supplement our program with a subsidy of \$6 million, to be split across every county in the state, to be put toward transportation so that we can get you to your services."

One Rockaway Borough woman, the mother of a drug addict, called on the county and court system to better direct the families of addicts.

"What I have learned from Nar-Anon is that families of addicts are a large part of the problem in their recovery," the woman said. "I have a paragraph here from Nar-Anon literature and I want to share it: 'In all cases a change in the family is necessary before any change in the individual may be anticipated.'"

"The court systems have sentences for the addict, which involves treatment programs, but the family is not pointed in the right direction," she added. "I notice in the literature distributed tonight that, under National Self-Help Organizations, AA and NA are listed, but Al-Anon and Nar-Anon are not. I think it's important to list them."

One man emphasized the need for job opportunities, describing himself as a 29-year-old who, because of his past, has had only three jobs his whole life.

"I am capable of working now. Full time, actually," he said. "I'm healthy. I haven't had any setbacks. Now that I'm fully capable, mentally and physically, I can't find a job. I'm strong. I like to do factory work. I've been turned down. If we can have more resources, especially for people who are fully capable, that'd be great."

Becker noted his concern and reminded the group about St. Clare's Supported Employment program. Ann Marie Flake, team leader of career services at St. Clare's Health System, was present and available to field questions from individuals.

### Creative options

The theme of this year's forum, entitled "The Many Faces of Recovery: Creative Expressions," echoed a general call for more gatherings and programs that help people find their voice through art.

"It would be nice to have a poetry and coffee program, maybe monthly," one woman suggested. "It would be a non-alcoholic gathering, just for sharing."

The programming included presentations by two mental health consumers who shared their personal stories through writing. Both went only by their first names.

Cynthia, who is recovering from anorexia, bulimia, self-harm, bipolar disorder, and suicidal depression, told of a difficult childhood and young adulthood that left her unconvinced that she even deserved to live and unable to articulate what troubled her.

"Unfortunately, I was using behaviors to express my pain," she said. "Because I had no voice, no one knew what the heck was going on in my heart and mind. I had to stop allowing others to hurt me, but at the same time, I had to regain my voice. In order to recover, I had to relive my past. But this time, I had to express my feelings in a healthy way."

So, too, Mary Ellen, who told of seven hospitalizations over the course of her lifetime and achieving, after decades, a peaceful life, talked about the role of journaling and how it helped her new psychiatrist treat her.

"I took my meds religiously," she said, "and wrote a few words each day describing my mood, and Dr. Patel used this journal to adjust the strength and frequency of my meds. Miraculously, within a few weeks I began to feel calm and comfortable with myself."

In keeping with the spirit of self-expression, the "Mind My Art" art exhibit, sent by the National Alliance on Mental Illness and A Space on Main, a Cranbury gallery, lined the walls of the arboretum's Haggerty Education Center. Each work depicts the artist's recovery story.

Stanhope singer/songwriter Kathy Moser, who is in long-term recovery, had the whole assembly singing, laughing, and clapping as she sang a song she wrote about self-acceptance.

"Creativity was a big part of what saved my life," she said. "It gave me a voice and enabled me to speak."

In closing, Becker said she heard Tuesday about how important it is for people to feel like they are not isolated and how they'd like to explore music and art as part of their recovery. She said some programs in the county offer such services privately.

"We're going to learn more about what resources are available," Becker said, "and be sure to get that out to you. There are some places now where you can have a cup of coffee, talk to others, do some song, poetry, writing, drumming, and crafts."

Moser has a Music for Recovery program. Also present at the forum was Vicky Mulligan of Rest Stop Rejuvenate, whose LIFE Center Stage in Rockaway presents the twice-monthly Journey Through Song program, among others.

A dozen service providers gathered at the arboretum Tuesday, each staffing a table that forum participants could visit.

Freeholder Director Kathryn DeFillippo assured the crowd of the support of the freeholder board.

"We continue to recognize the importance of supporting a broad range of prevention, education, treatment, and recovery services, with the goal of providing a safety net for everyone in need of help," Freeholder Director Kathryn DeFillippo assured the crowd.

She noted the Morris County Task Force on Opiates, a local collaboration started last year and now some 50 members strong, has many local activities planned for this year.

"The single, most important goal of this group is to deter children and adults from the misuse of this potentially deadly drug," DeFillippo said.

## Annual Morris summit looks at mental health, substance abuse

Becker noted two more developments on the local mental health horizon— an Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program for both Morris and Sussex counties, soon to be rolled out by the Mental Health Association of Morris County, and funding for five more housing opportunities, primarily for people coming out of state hospitals, recently awarded to NewBridge Services.

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