

connections

HEALTH•WELLNESS•ADVOCACY

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CEO Corner

Christmas, Hanukkah and New Years' Day have come and gone. I am writing this on January 4, 2013 –less a month after the

horrific event where 20 children and 6 teachers were slain on December 14, 2012 in Newtown, Connecticut. This unpleasant incident will remain seared in our brains and hearts forever and will be impossible to forget – as it should be. Our conversations immediately following the shootings were filled with sadness and shock as we wondered: “How could this happen?”

Such episodes of violence have become a much too familiar happening in our cities, our schools, our malls, and our theaters. There have been many discussions about why and how this happens and how to solve the problem. The blame has been placed on guns, videos, movies, families, poverty, and mental health care, to name a few. The Truth is, it is all of these things and more (some not yet defined) that have caused this onslaught of violence that has become all too common. The task of addressing this issue is daunting. I believe that it cannot be resolved without a healthy dialogue between communities, places of worship, government and health care systems.

I do not wish to start the new year, and this first newsletter in 2013, on a depressing note. However, I do think we must be realistic. We are faced with a great challenge as a country. Are we ready, able, and interested in tackling this awesome problem? Because I believe there is hope even in despair, I think we can, if we set our minds to it. The question is: “Are people really invested in solving the problem?” As with any problem, there are solutions. This one cannot be resolved without everyone setting their agendas aside and having an honest, respectful dialogue.

The issue of underfunded mental health care has been mentioned often in the discussions.

(cont'd on page 2)

Performance Improvement Report Restricted Status Progress

In response to a high number of missed appointments, combined with an increased need for clinical time with all of our services, a new appointment policy was implemented. As of January of 2012, consumers who have missed 2 appointments in a 90-day period of time are put into restricted status. This means that they are prevented from scheduling future appointments without first talking to their clinician(s), a manager, or the Engagement Specialist, to address barriers to attending scheduled appointments. The process for putting consumers in restricted status was automated by our I.T. Department in June. Since that time there has been a steady drop in the number of new individuals restricted from scheduling.

We are beginning to see a positive impact on the number of people who attend their doctor appointments. Since June 2012, there has been a 5% increase in the show rate for psychiatric appointments. At the same time, the wait time for a new consumer to receive psychiatric services has declined from an average of 22.8 days in January to an average of 6.6 days in October. Research shows that the quicker an individual receives services after intake, the more successful the treatment.

On September 10, 2012, Kim Howell became our Engagement Specialist. With this position filled, we will soon have data that reflects the impact this position has on these individuals. Additional metrics we are pursuing include pre- and post-engagement show rates and the length of time a person remains in active status after meeting with the Engagement Specialist. ❖

James Vernon, Performance Improvement Manager

Ohio Council Presents the 2012 Outstanding Contributor of the Year Award



The Ohio Council of Behavioral Health and Family Services Providers held their annual conference on October 4th and 5th at the Hilton Columbus. At their Thursday, October 4, 2012 Annual Awards Program, Hubert Wirtz, CEO of the Ohio Council and Bill Lee, Board

President presented Esther Pla with the Special Recognition Award for Outstanding Contributor of the Year for 2012! Congratulations, Esther! ❖

Meet our Board



Joanne E. Cooke is Chair of Circle of Hope, a faith-based support group, through Aldersgate United Methodist Church. Circle of Hope is a member of The Mental Health Advocacy Coalition. She is a former Community Coordinator and she taught

Early Childhood Education. She is a trained Peer Support Specialist, a Family to Family Instructor for NAMI Greater Cleveland and a WRAP facilitator. Ms. Cooke was recognized in 2008 by NAMI by winning the Community Service Award in the Category of Cultural Competence. In 2001, Ms. Cooke actively worked on the planning committee to form a consumer advisory council for The Mental Health Board of Cuyahoga County. She was elected Secretary of The Adult Consumer Advisory Council and served from 2002-2005 and served as President from 2005-2008. She served on the committee to form NAMI Greater Cleveland's Multicultural Advisory Committee and served as Co-chair. She was appointed as Social Action Chair for the United Methodist Women, North Coast District, which encompassed 69 churches. As chair she added mental health advocacy and health care reform to the agenda. She also was highlighted in a documentary video in 2009 which was produced by PBS entitled "Facing Depression," which speaks about her experience with depression. This powerful video was grant funded through Mt. Sinai, Woodruff and several other organizations. The documentary video that she appeared in has won the media award from the Ohio Psychological Association. Each May a display is set up regarding Mental Health Awareness Month at the Warrensville Branch of the Cuyahoga County Public Library and a Sunday is devoted to the importance of having a place available for people suffering or recovering

from a mental illness in their places of worship. Currently Circle of Hope sponsors two NAMI programs at the church. They are Family to Family and the Caregiver's Group. An important aspect of her life is family. She has one son, two daughters and 7 grandchildren. When she has time for herself, Ms. Cooke takes pleasure in reading, writing poetry, listening to music and participating in community and church activities. ❖

CEO Corner (cont'd from page 1)

Even though the system is underfunded and access is difficult, having been in the field for nearly 40 years, I also know we can do more and do it better. Mental Health Providers must come together and solve the system's problems, jointly. We must put our own agendas to the side, and be willing to have the hard dialogue and make the difficult decisions. It is time to stop blaming the insurance companies, the government, or poor budgets and put our collective intellects together and fix the mess we are in. I suggest that we stop any duplication of services and manage the care of our clients to reduce our costs and serve more people. We must arm ourselves with a better understanding of prevention and prevention options. We must take time to educate our communities on signs and symptoms and work to break the evil of stigma. Until these things happen – until we stop being so focused on our own agendas and how we are perceived, stigma and fear will reign.

One of the ways that Connections: Health•Wellness•Advocacy will begin this fight is by partnering with Signature Health to host the Second Annual Mental Health Summit, taking place on October 11, 2013. The theme will be Prevention in Mental Health. It is our hope that some of these most difficult topics can be addressed by outstanding people in local, state and national government; health care providers from both academic and clinical settings; as well as consumers and their families. Will you join us in this discussion by planning to attend the Summit? If you wish to participate as a Presenter, please look for a "Call for Presenters" to be sent out in the month of February.

I have a strong belief and faith that we can change what is to what we know we can be. It is up to us to begin. Our President, Barack Obama, said it so well:

Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.

With best wishes to all for a healthy, happy and successful 2013. ❖

Esther Pla, RN, BC, President and CEO

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- ✚ The Cleveland Foundation -- \$250,000.00 for development of the Electronic Health Record...
- ✚ The O'Neill Foundation -- \$50,000.00 for the development of the Electronic Health Record.

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For more information, please call 216.831.6466 ext. 241 or email iruch@connectionsleveland.org.

Note: Please note that Connections now accepts the “Discover” credit card.

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