Telling our Story

We have found the writing and telling of personal stories to be a source of inspiration and strength during those times when we need hope and refreshment.

This book is an overview of the ten fundamental components of recovery. Leadership Council has worked very hard to help in the reduction of mental health stigma. As a result of telling these stories we know that we are not alone. Linda Thomas and Kim Morrison are co-chairs of Leadership Council and have been involved from the beginning. Leadership Council has made a lot of changes and we hope to continue making changes to break free of the stigmas of mental health. Both of us have donated stories of what their recovery means to us and we appreciate the courage of the other writers for sharing their stories as well.

Editing this book was done by Leadership Council members offering constructive guidance and support to each other as we sought to find our voices. Our members contributed their stories using different formats, some stories were written while others were shared orally, each finding their own voice in the process.
Involvement with Leadership Council has allowed us grow in many ways. Through our attending different events we have been trying to get our message of hope across to as many people as possible. This book is one of those events that we hope you will enjoy as you read the stories in this book. We have enjoyed writing them. We look forward to new adventures in understanding and believing that there’s hope for the future for all of us.

*Linda Thomas, Leadership Council co-chair*

*Kim Morrison, Leadership Council co-chair*

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**Outside Looking In**

When I heard about Meet the Peer Day at Danville State, I thought it would be nice to see the friends that I had made when I was there. When I got there, I was surprised at how many had left and since come back again.

I was talking about my services and I had a great idea of doing a visual walk through my program. I was surprised how many people did not know what services were available. It seemed like there was a revolving door and people were having trouble finding their way to the outside.

I was happy to see some of my friends are now working as peers to help others; that is kind of exciting.

There were many more peer providers than I ever remember seeing at Meet the Peer Day and this was intriguing.

*Chris Baer*

*Progress Ave*
Websites Where You Can Tell Your Story

Below are websites that currently contain personal stories.

Stories that Heal - Stories of Recovery from the African-American Community
http://www.storiesthatheal.samhsa.gov/index.asp

SAMHSA’s What a Difference a Friend Makes - Multiple Personal Stories of Mental Health
http://www.whatadifference.samhsa.gov/listen.asp?nav=nav03&content=3_0_listen

SAMHSA’s Resource Center to Promote Acceptance, Dignity and Social Inclusion Associated with Mental Healthy
http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/publications/mystory/

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance – Share Your Story
http://www.dbsalliance.org/site/PageServer?pagename=empower_ShareYourStory

Mental Health America – Share Your Story
http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/reallives/page.cfm/share-story

National Empowerment Center - Recovery Stories
http://www.power2u.org/articles/recovery/recovery_stories/stories.html

Art Show

The art show was on Friday, May 28, 2010 to Sunday, May 30, 2010. It was a good turn out this year of arts and crafts. There were paintings of landscapes, to paint by number, to dream catchers, and much other stuff there. There were judges to judge the art show. I did not get the results in because they were not ready yet. The thing I like the most from the art show was the dream catcher. It was with little horns, and certain beads on it that meant certain things to the maker and the person that would be getting it.

Alicia Kanelopoulos
Keystone Center Chambersburg

Recovery: A Journey, Not a Destination

I have been active in AA since 1979. I have a great sponsor who has encouraged and strengthen my recovery. It was my sponsor who supported me in address my feelings of depression and hopelessness that limited me in moving forward in my recovery. The year was 1985 and I was diagnosed with Depression and began to move to attain the
necessary treatment that allowed me to continue my AA recovery, as well as more effectively manage my mood. The choice to begin this treatment positively changed my life and allowed me to enjoy life again.

One thing that I have learned is that at times of depression I tend to close myself off from family and friends. This resulted in me needing to be hospitalized in 2008, feeling extremely hopeless and like my life felt meaningless. During this time, I lost my apartment, and I then worked with my case manager to find housing and I chose to live at Keystone. At this point, I realized that living independently would need to be a long term goal and that Keystone could help me meet this goal.

I moved to Keystone’s Personal Care Home, located in the North Hills section of Pittsburgh, to be able to get more independent living skills, as well as to continue my mental health recovery. During the past year, I have been able to return to spending time in the community, which is important to me staying well. I am now able to pay my own bills, take my own medications, cook meals and houseclean. I have connected with a local transportation agency and schedule my own transportation into the city. I have reached my goal of being able to live independently again. Staff have really encouraged my recovery since I moved here last year.

Now after 18 months of support, I will be moving to Mount Washington. I will be able to again live in the city where I grew up and will be able to walk to a number of stores, restaurants and AA meetings. What my journey has taught me is that Recovery is possible for everyone. It should be embraced in your heart and lived in your life.

Robert P.
Allegheny

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Walk to Walk

It was a nice, sunny day and it was not too hot. There was around three hundred people there. The coordinator announced, “This is the biggest turn out yet.” After the coordinator said a few more words, we started the walk. The walk began at the recreation center and ended at the square. There were four speakers at the square. Two of them spoke about mental health, one spoke about his life story, and a married couple spoke about their son’s death.

The walk was about one mile. After the speakers were finished, we returned to the recreation center for lunch. The lunch menu consisted of hot dogs, macaroni salad, tossed salad, chips, and cookies. Last, there was a presentation of awards for the people that participated in a business class. Some of the people that came to the walk were Mary Angela, Sarah, and Sherman. We had a great time.

Alicia Kanelopoulos
Keystone Center Chambersburg