HAVING MY VOICE HEARD AT THE CAPITAL BY PATTI UHRICH

At a Leadership Council meeting, Kathyann explored with us what it means “when we feel heard.” I recently decided to step outside my comfort zone, and explore “being heard” by my legislators at the state Capitol about the effect their proposed human services budget cuts, slashes and amputations would have on mental health consumers—like me. I wanted them to be able to see the face of mental illness, mental health and the recovery journey—sitting directly across from them.


After what seemed like an endless trek over hill, dale and unending stairways, I had to pass through Security. Check…NOT! Two artificial hips and a metal-lined wrist brace set the detectors off fast! The scanner approved my tote bag, but I wondered about people emptying their pockets into what looked like dog food dishes, which were also scanned. Capitol Security guards assured me that’s what they were. Thank goodness no guard dog was nearby. I’m afraid it would think the dishes were filled with breakfast treats!

The trek continued. Week one, I met with my House Representative John Payne. The second week, I spoke with State Senator Mike Folmer and his legislative assistant. Both weeks I was encouraged by Representative Gene DeGeralimo, whom I met at the PMHCA conference, where he reminded us that our voices needed to be heard. Up front, in your face, in person. Game on!

It was a fun day at the PMHCA conference. I sat at the Keystone table Wednesday Morning and talked to a few people about what Keystone has to offer. Later in the day I was able to display my artwork with all the other great artists. It was a festive atmosphere. I want to thank all the people who allowed me to attend the conference. Robert Martin

Conference was pretty good and I enjoyed talking about the Recovery book and sharing my story and having people buy books.

I enjoyed hearing Carol Kivler as the keynote. She was a good speaker sharing her story about having received ECT treatments and what she lost as a result and how
how she has rebuilt her life. I would have liked to hear her speak more about receiving the actual treatments but her presentation was really good. Linda Thomas

This year the conference was a bit different for me partially because since it was a local conference and it was day trips in/out without being able to enjoy any of the evening festivities. In the past I went to a number of workshops, support groups and coffee houses, this year I spent most of my time manning the information table as an exhibitor.

While working the Exhibit Hall, Mike Veny asked people to share a Recovery Story and receive a Coconut water. The water did not taste great but the sponsorship story was interesting at the end. Mental Heath and Business working together.....hmmm

At first I was a bit upset over that, but then I realized that a consumer was the best person Keystone could have at their table. Being a consumer at the table showed how Keystone can work in a person’s life. What a joy to be an example for such a great organization. Kim Morrison

For me this conference was bittersweet in many ways. It wasn’t just the driving in/out each day. It was the uncertainty of what the future holds. There were excellent speakers from Carol Kivler with her personal story of endurance and overcoming, there was the phenomenal story of Paulo del Vicchio who is a Bucks County native with his personal recovery story and how it impacts the current mindset he has working for CMHS in implementing recovery and the story of Mike Veny and his search for his identity through music and entrepreneurship. I found the roll out of the new SAMSHA definition and the Recovery Stories that were shared with the state and federal representatives. I basically agreed with the facilitator that while there are slight variances between the headings and the stories that the stories written do encapsulate the concepts of the new principles that have been identified.

There were great legislative advocacy through out the conference from voting registration. Individuals who lobbied in the rally at the Capital Tues morning to Phone calling the Legislatures who supported people through making the calls. Kathyann Corl

I thought the PMHCA conference was well-organized and the speakers were friendly and welcoming. I appreciated the enthusiasm from the Advocacy Seminar which promoted me further to do the work on Capital Hill.

The other workshop that I enjoyed was the CRIF Consumer Recovery Investment Fund where I heard how Delaware County has created a totally integrated recovery program that is individualized to the person and integrated in the community. Patti Uhrich
HAVING MY VOICE HEARD AT THE CAPITAL (CONT PG1)

Week three found me at Governor Corbett's press conference, sitting among the reporters and cameramen. Realizing I knew more than these people about mental health issues (having lived with them since 1974) helped put me at ease. For once, I wasn’t an outsider. I was the evidence of what these people were debating and posturing about.

I asked the Governor some pointed questions about his support of the block grant proposal. The fact that I was in the media room was awesome. The fact that the Governor stood within 10 feet of me, and responded to both of my questions, was almost unbelievable.

After meeting Representative Payne, I was astounded by the noise, chanting and cheering coming from the Capitol Rotunda. The PSEA (PA State Educators Association) was out in full force—and even fuller voice—opposing Corbett’s proposed education cuts. Signs dotted the crowd in every direction. Men and women were cheering, applauding, or booing. Children were hoisted on shoulders as “evidence” for their fight.

It was an overwhelming trek into advocacy. I surely stepped out of my comfort zone. Yes, I was apprehensive. Yes, I thought I’d be viewed with skepticism once I identified myself as a mental health consumer and peer. And yes, it made a difference. A difference to me, knowing I actually followed through and DID this. To legislators and staff, whom I met both formally and informally, who thanked me for my story and my thoughts about the budget. Hopefully, to the mental health and recovery communities at large, who didn’t have the opportunity I had. Or for those who did, but couldn’t quite “Carpe Diem!” or “Seize the Day,” as Robin Williams exclaimed in his movie, Dead Poets Society.

Despite party differences and ideology, being in the Capitol buildings, listening to the crowds, and knowing that I could speak up and be heard without fear of repercussion, actually gave me chills. Freedom of speech and voting are guaranteed rights in our country. I’m glad I had the chance to exercise both. “My voice matters when”…I use it to speak up for what I believe in.

During the Budget process this year Leadership Council Members could be found:

- Writing legislators
- Calling legislators
- Writing newspaper articles
- Emailing legislators
- Meeting with county representatives

Your voice does matter!

“My voice matters when”...
I use it to speak up for what I believe in.

Patti Uhrich
I'm not sure how many of you who read this newsletter are alcoholics in recovery, but for those who are this is a weekend for you to rediscover the AA roots. There are numerous meetings and bus trips. One bus takes you on a guided tour of all the places involved with the start of AA and a stop at the inter-group office where the archives are. You can also purchase items such as books, medallions, or pins. Books can then be stamped so that you remember where and when you got the books.

A van will take you to Doctor Bob's house (the co-founder of AA). What a thrill that is, to be where it all began 77 years ago, to sit at the very table where they sat and created the Big Book. It was like the past and future coming together.

Our last meeting on Saturday was in the University's football stadium where we were told that the count for that weekend was ten thousand people. In the stadium we did a sobriety countdown where the least was 1 day and the most was 63 years. WOW!!! What incredible sobriety and togetherness was felt that day. If you ever get the chance to go I recommend that you do it. Meeting people from all over the world is so fascinating. And the motorcycles!! If you like bikes, well, there was probably about 200 or more there and they led the motorcade to Doctor Bob's gravesite. How heartwarming.
NEW APPROACHES FOR RECOVERY: CRIF

During the PMHCA conference there was a workshop presented by Mental Health Association of Southeast PA on a two year pilot program that they have conducted in Delaware County called CRIF Consumer Recovery Investment Funds. The workshop was attended by several of our Leadership Council members including Kim Morrison, Richard Evans and Patti Uhrich. During the workshop peers discussed how the program has been used to create Freedom Funds which support individuals in their Recovery journeys. The Freedom Funds which are calculated based on the savings of the individual by using less costly mental health services are coordinated with their managed care, Magellan. Recovery Coaches and the person work together in identifying clear goals and then working towards increasing the individual’s use of community resources (support groups, bus passes) while reducing medical assistance services. Keystone is looking forward to participating in the Delaware County based CRIF program in the upcoming year.

INTERVIEWING SKILLS AT CHAMBERSBURG

We had two days of interviews on Wednesday and Thursday of last week. The interviews went very well. Wednesday’s group did a great job. And Thursday’s group did a great job too.

We all had to dress up for the interviews. Some of the guys wore dress shirts and dress pants. Some of the ladies wore dress shirts and dress pants.

Overall, everything went great. We learned a lot from the mock interviews and it has helped to understand how important it is for the first interview. Danielle Lefever

DAUPHIN COUNTY RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY EVENT

I was one of many who was asked to tell my story for Dauphin County. The County wanted to show that they are working towards Recovery in Dauphin County. At first I was just going to answer three questions, but I was then asked to do a video. It went well except that I was looking all around as I was talking. I told my friends that I was looking around much and with my dark sunglasses on that I probably looked like a white Ray Charles. It was fun though. We each had our pictures taken and were given a frame for one picture.

It is so awesome to be asked to do such things to help show that we are working on Recovery here in Dauphin County.
We had our annual Art Show for Mental Health Awareness on May 18-20, 2012 at the Chambersburg Mall.

The Shoe Art featured above was designed by Monte and the artists in the show used a wide variety of mixed media in the exhibit. “Nothing About Us Without Us” was a button display and art by Charlie Morgan.

The Art Show 2012 turned out to be a huge success. There were a lot of different art entries done by various different people. All in all, it turned out well this year.

My one major concern is what happens to people who need the services and there is no one there to provide them. If you are in a crisis situation it is not always easy to talk to a stranger, but you can talk to someone who knows you, such as a case manager or supportive living work, or peer support. At this point, I'm going through a rough time. My therapist left (providers not being able to fill vacancies due to uncertainty about the budget) and I'm on three waiting lists for a new one. I have been on the lists now for 6 months. I am going through a lot of rough times. If it were not for case management and supportive living, I probably would be in the hospital or living out on the street. What are people supposed to do without this help? The hospitals would be full and they would need to reopen the state hospitals which there is not enough money for. Connie Z

With budget cuts, services will have to be cut and when services are cut people with mental disabilities have fewer places to go for help. For myself, without the help that I got I'd probably still be living on the streets and doing drugs. I know there are others out there who could use the help like I got but if the budget goes through as is they won't have that chance. Kim M

Keeping our health care costs down for doctors, medications and medication co-pays. Now it is hard to even get an appointment to see a psychiatrist. Tom S
FROM ANOTHER CORNER OF THE WORLD

I wanted to share my favorite photo from my trip to Italy.

After Rome we went to San Gimignano (pronounced Jimmy-g-yawnno). It’s a small walled medieval hill town in the province of Siena, Tuscany, north-central Italy.

It is mainly famous for its medieval architecture and towers. It was AWESOME!

The town is the only one that can be closed off because it still has its original city walls intact since the 1100’s. The town was first established in 3rd century BC. Lori Brocious Chambersburg

CSP CONFERENCE OF DAUPHIN CUMBERLAND / PERRY

“Making the Pieces Fit” was the theme of the annual conference this year on May 8, 2012 at the Holiday Inn Harrisburg in New Cumberland. There were over 185 conference participants with about 11 Leadership Council members in attendance.

The keynote was Matthew Federici of the Copeland Center discussing the impact that CSP had on his life and that of his family.

At lunch the quilts were unveiled. There were two quilts from Dauphin and pictured to the left is the Cumberland Perry quilt.

Keystone had been involved in making the quilt squares at various quilting parties across the counties and the quilting work for the quilt in the photo was done by a Keystone staff person.

In the afternoon there was a panel discussion on living recovery with a varied panel from community members representing the spiritual community, employment specialists, peer supports and advocates talking about how to make the pieces fit.
What is Keystone Leadership Council?

Leadership Council is an advisory board to the Keystone Mental Health Services Management Team. People in recovery who have affiliations with Keystone Human Services-Mental Health are invited to join. Leadership Council is directly involved in working with the Management Team in the development, implementation, and evaluation of Keystone Services.

Leadership Council Activities are peer driven and geared toward:

- Empowering peers to develop their own voice
- Educating peers about the choices they have in the delivery of services

Contact person: Kathyann

Leadership Council monthly teleconferences are usually the third Thursday at 10 a.m.

There are monthly face-face meetings at the Derry Street office. They are usually on the fourth Monday of the month at 6 p.m., Alfirst Room

Next class of Solutions For Wellness coming in Fall 2012!!!