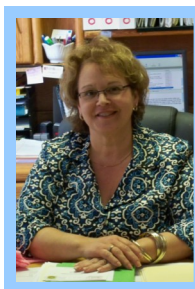




From the desk of the Executive Director



Whew! The holidays have come and gone and for many of us, it's time to get back to work. In the past few weeks, I've had the opportunity to play catch up with a special friend from Maine. I was able to spend some quality time with my son who lives in Boston and with my daughter who lives in Alabama. My husband, kids and I did so much in such a short time that we were exhausted by the end of their visits. We mixed it up with other family members and friends and went out for chicken wings, wine tasting and did some shopping. We had a bon fire and enjoyed a huge dinner at my parents. We played some cards, showed our artistic talent (not much) while playing Pictionary and laughed like crazy playing Catch Phrase. It was a great time.



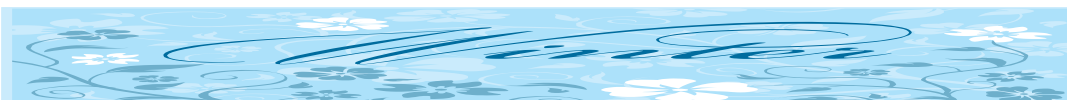
Cheryl Blacklock

Now, everyone has gone home. The house is once again clean and quiet. There aren't a hundred wet towels hanging in the bathroom and there is extra room in the driveway. We are already looking forward to the next visit and can't wait for the chaotic schedules filled with tons of love and laughter.

2009 was a great year for the MHA. We added a lot of new volunteers to our programs, The Compeer Kids successfully completed their 1st Environmental Summit Project and we developed one of the most sought after programs in the county for Postpartum Depression called Moms Net. Although we've already received word from some of our funding agencies that we should expect deep cuts to several of our programs, we feel that 2010 will be one of our biggest, strongest years yet.

As a reminder to all of you who have made a commitment for 2010 to volunteer your services somewhere, remember that the MHA is always looking for special people to match with our Compeer friends. May you and yours have a safe, healthy, happy, prosperous year.

Cheryl



Inside this issue: Program Updates

<i>Compeer for Kids— News and Events Update on the Compeer garden project</i>	4
<i>Compeer for Adults— News and Events</i>	5
<i>Consumer Activities— CPAC Hospital Advocate Program Support Groups</i>	5
<i>Community Education— Tips for "Beating the Winter Blues" Workshops Resource Library Book Review</i>	6
<i>In-Home Respite</i>	2
<i>Mom's Net and the Warm-line Facts about Post-Partum Depression Support Groups Presentations</i>	2
<i>Youth Education</i>	7
Special Points of Interest	
<i>"Picture This" –Special contribution by Mary Furlong</i>	3
<i>Membership Information— Mailing list is going green Board of Directors</i>	7
<i>Women's Conference</i>	8



“The Many Faces of Mental Health”

LCTV

Channel 20
Tuesdays at 10 pm
(see TV listings for

Upcoming Topics:

“Loving Yourself from the Inside Out”

Plus programs featuring the Mom’s Net

And GriefShare



All programs produced by
MHA in Niagara Country, Inc.

Mom’s Net and the Warm Line

by Carleen Stover,
Mom’s Net Coordinator

The Mom’s Net Program, which started on September 1st, 2009, provides supportive services for new and expectant moms who are experiencing emotional changes as a new parent. Supportive services such as support groups and the Warm-Line will help these moms feel better and bond positively with their baby.

The Facts about PPD

A woman has postpartum depression if she feels down, fatigued, or is having trouble sleeping for a period of two weeks or longer. It is the most common complication among women who have just had a baby. In fact, approximately 1 out of every 8 women has postpartum depression (PPD) after delivery. It is important to understand that postpartum depression is not something a woman can control, *and it is not a sign of being a bad mother.*



How Mom’s Net Can Help

Having a baby is one of the most emotionally challenging times of life. The Mom’s Net Program is here to help during that time. The program will help

moms who might be feeling sad, anxious or frustrated understand why they might be feeling this way. Below are three specific ways the Mom’s Net Program supports women.

Warm-Line

The Warm-Line links new moms with other volunteer moms who listen and offer caring advice. To reach the Warm-Line for general questions, referrals or to be linked with a volunteer mom, please call (716) 433-3780 ext. 312 from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm or (716) 282-5432 after 4:00 pm and on weekends.

Support Groups

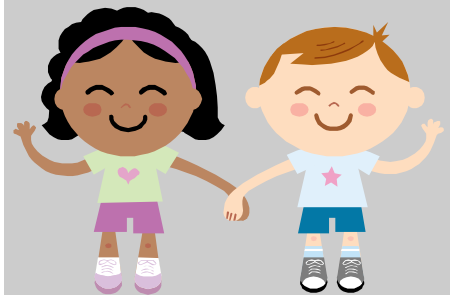
Attending support groups can help moms express their concerns, talk about their feelings and identify with other moms. Support Groups are held in Niagara Falls the 2nd Thursday of each month and in Hartland the 4th Thursday of each month. Both groups run from 6:30 pm. - 8:00pm. For more information please call Carleen at 433-3780 ext. 312.

Community Education

Educating women on Postpartum Depression and Self Care for mom and baby is an essential piece to supporting the family. To request a presentation on Postpartum Depression or Nurturing Self and Baby please call 433-3780 ext. 312.

In-Home Respite

by Marg Raduns,
In-Home Respite Coordinator



About the Program

In Home Respite is a non-therapeutic break for the family that has a child or children with a mental health diagnosis. In Home Respite workers are trained to take over for parents or guardians. This break or respite is to give everyone a much needed change. Respite workers provide one on one time for the children. Respite also allows the parent or caregiver a chance to recharge, go shopping, have a cup of coffee with a friend or spend quality time with a spouse or significant other.

As we start the New Year, remember to schedule in home respites so that everyone in the family can have a break. If you haven’t had an interview to start the process, please call (716) 433-3780, ext 304.

News

It has been a good year for the In Home Respite program: we have added new families and renewed contact with families from whom we haven’t heard in a while.

Our end of year surveys have been returned and a winner selected! The winner received a gift card in the mail. We are now looking at all comments from the surveys and will be using them to improve our services to families.

Compeer Friendship Connection

Picture this

Special contribution
by Mary E. Furlong



Scrapbooking. The word kept jumping out at me from my notes about Compeer for Kids volunteer, Carin. She mentioned it only once during our interview, but somehow I kept coming back to it. Maybe it was because it stood alone on the notebook page, the only hobby that Carin brought up. Maybe it's because I've always wanted to be a scrap-booker - one of those organized souls who can turn a blank page and a pile of photographs into a one-of-a-kind keepsake. I've got photographs here, there and everywhere. But Carin and her scrap-booking ilk have the gift of getting the picture *together* - of creating wonderful montages of selected moments in time, with snapshots and labels, fancy borders and cut-out-shapes. Often, they add a bit of inspirational poetry to the page as well, writing it in that graceful calligraphy that's a kind of poetry in its own right. In the end, their scrapbook creations become almost as memorable as the occasions they represent.

Some significant moments are hard to pin down however. For instance, Carin - presently a mental health and chemical dependency counselor at Visions Place in Buffalo - probably can't recall exactly when her career goals started to move in a different direction. She only knows

that they did. She knows, too, that she owes the change in her outlook, at least in part, to her volunteer work with Compeer for Kids.

Carin began volunteering with the Compeer for Kids program in a limited way in 2004, when she was still an undergraduate at the University of Buffalo. As a way of fulfilling a class requirement, she signed on with the Compeer for Kids' "Friends for a Day" program. As its title suggests, "Friends for a Day" features one-day-only activities, like crafts, picnics and field trips to area places of interest. It's a great idea, for it gives prospective volunteers the chance to sample the Compeer for Kids program without making a serious time commitment - to test the waters before diving in, so to speak. And it gives participating kids a chance to get acquainted with each other in a relaxed, accepting environment. Carin loved it.

After graduation, Carin went on to begin a master's degree in Social Work, with an emphasis on psychiatric issues. Once that degree work started, the Visions Place position, which involves working with clients aged eighteen and older, seemed to offer the kind of initial professional experience she was looking for. The job is demanding and challenging. Nevertheless, Carin finds time to continue volunteering with Compeer for Kids, now making a more substantial commitment than that first experience with "Friends for a Day" required.

Presently, her young Compeer friend is eleven years old. According to Carin, at

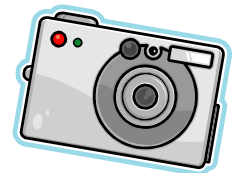
the beginning of their friendship, her friend was withdrawn and introverted. Now, she's "into everything," especially the Girl Scouts, her favorite after-school activity. Carin helps her with Girl Scout projects and with her middle school homework as well.

At some point during all this, Carin then had an insight: Her work at Visions Place is important, but it's her casual encounters with her Compeer friend that offer the most satisfaction. Compeer for Kids gives her a "sense of giving back" that's somehow missing from her so-called real job. She's discovered that she finds kids more interesting than adults - at least in terms of their mental health needs. As a result, Carin has that new career goal I talked about earlier.

Now, her dream job is to be a behavioral specialist in a school or a children's psychiatric ward.

Compeer for Kids gives her a "sense of giving back" that's somehow missing from her so-called real job.

As I've said, Carin really can't pinpoint the date when the new dream took hold. It's not an event that she can create a scrapbook page to commemorate. But how about this? A Compeer friend page. Or a whole bunch of them. With snapshots and labels and colored paper cut-outs and fancy borders. And maybe some bits of inspirational poetry written in elegant calligraphy, too. Memories of not one, but of a series of life changing events. Get the picture?



Mary Furlong is a published author and former Compeer volunteer.

Compeer for Kids

Thoughts for the New Year

by Darlene Paulson,
Compeer for Kids Coordinator

Winter is back! But we had a great year and a busy fall.

Looking Back

In November, Howard Morgan, MHA Board President, did a training for families on Natural Disaster Preparedness at the Wheatfield Community Center. First Aid kits were distributed and adults were encouraged to sign up for additional training. The event wrapped up with a delicious Italian Buffet.

Here are some of the other fun activities we did this past year:

- *Dinner buffets*
- *Movies*
- *Arts and crafts*
- *Outing to the animal sanctuary*
- *wii bowling*
- *Spring Fling with Glenn Colton*
- *Fantasy Island*
- *Buffalo Zoo*
- *Environmental Youth Summit*

Looking Ahead

This coming year, I have two goals. One, I would like to have the children



involved in more Community awareness programs, such as the garden project we did this past summer. Also, it would be great if we could get matches for the many kids still waiting. That means more volunteers are needed! We also need volunteers to assist at the “friend-for-a day” activities. Our families are increasing in record numbers, but our volunteers are few.

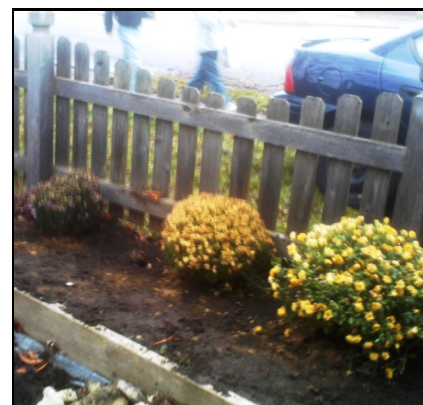
I hope you are reading the Compeer for Kids/Family Support monthly newsletter. All of our events and activities are listed there so you can stay involved! Because we purchase admission tickets in advance, we need to know ahead of time how many people plan to attend each event. Please keep this in mind when we request for RSVP's by a certain date. All you have to do is pick up the phone, call (716) 433-3780 and let us know you are coming. We thank you ahead of time for making our job easier!

Happy New Year... Darlene

Upcoming Events:

We are planning some fun outings for 2010. Details will be sent out to Compeer families.

- *Tour of Pizza Hut - children will make their own personal pan pizza!*
- *Trip to the alpaca farm in Lockport.*
- *Trip and tour of the Amherst Museum.*
- *Environmental Youth Summit for High Schoolers*



The Compeer Garden in the fall.



The Garden

The garden on Walnut and Saxton Streets in Lockport has been winterized, thanks to master gardener Shirley Yaremo (left) and her crew of volunteers (right). Compeer teens who attended the Environmental Youth Summit began improvements on the garden last June as part of a long-term plan to beautify Lockport and raise awareness of environmental issues. Let us know if you would like to help nurture the garden in the spring!

Garden Project updates can be found on Facebook and Twitter at “GreenTeen14094”



Volunteers spent a cold day getting the garden ready for winter

Compeer for Adults

by Virginia Gonzalez
Compeer Adult Coordinator

To Our Compeer Members

Happy new year to all! This last year saw many of you attending our monthly enrichment activities. We ushered in the fall with our annual harvest banquet. We had a delicious feast and excellent entertainment from magicians Rob and Carol Allen, whose feats of illusions had us in awe and laughter. Our Christmas dinner and party featured a scrumptious meal followed by live fiddle music covering an array of holiday songs.

It is our hope that you will continue to attend our monthly activities throughout this new year.

Upcoming Events:

January - Chinese buffet and movie night.

February - White elephant bingo and pizza night - everyone wins a prize!

March - A trip to the Niagara Falls Aquarium will brighten the month of March.

We look forward to seeing all of you at these events!

Call for Volunteers: Be a Friend!



Therapists continue to refer individuals to our program. As a result, volunteers are very much needed throughout Niagara County. Why not become a Compeer Friend to someone who doesn't know the joy of having a supportive friend? Even one hour a week can make a big difference! Free training provided. Call today and learn more about the adult Compeer program at (716) 433-3780, ext. 309.

Consumer Activities

by Marg Raduns,
CPAC Coordinator

CPAC Meetings

CPAC stands for *Consumer Planning Advisory Committee* and it is a service of Consumer Activities. CPAC holds monthly meetings usually on the third Thursday of the month at the Lockport Library. Some of the objectives of CPAC are to identify gaps in services, to educate and inform consumers about current issues and opportunities, to broaden community awareness of mental health issues and to reduce stigma.

How can I be involved?

To stay up-to-date with CPAC meetings, please watch the mail for updates. Each month before the meeting, a mailing is sent listing the time and location of the meeting and if there will be a speaker. If you would like to be put on the mailing list, please call (716) 433-3780, ext 304.

NEWS:

Plans are in the works to expand CPAC meetings into Niagara Falls on a regular basis in the New Year.

Hospital Advocate Program

Consumer Activities also oversees the Hospital Advocate program, which provides a very welcome service of support on the Behavior Health floors at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center. The Advocates see each patient in the hospital and offer moral support and encouragement. Also, the Advocates oversee a group called Reflections that the patients attend. The group is designed to encourage patients to reflect on past, present and future behavior, and to help patients focus on their goals for the future.

Support Groups

There are many support groups sponsored by the Mental Health Association in Niagara County, such as Depression and Anxiety group, Peer to Peer group for teens, and Grief Share. We also offer Art for Relaxation, held every Wednesday from 12 to 3 pm at 77 Main Street in Lockport. The Art for Relaxation class gives consumers a creative outlet for their feelings, helps some to relax and also allows for socialization. Please call for dates and times of different groups at (716) 433-3780.



Volunteering



There are many ways you can help out!



These volunteers made "Les Stress" stress balls by filling balloons with sand. These items are then given out at healthfairs and presentations.

To learn more, please call MHA at (716) 433-3780.

Community Education

Beating the Winter Blues

Pamela Szalay,
Community Education and
Referral Coordinator



Are you lacking energy, feeling sad or just looking for a boost during these cold, dark months? Many people are affected by Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.) during this time of year. Here are some things that may help you beat the winter blues:

- *Proper sleep*
- *Light*
- *Exercise*
- *Nutritious food*
- *Taking care of yourself and others*
- *Careful use of medication*
- *Getting professional help when you need it.*



To find out more about S.A.D., depression, or other mental health topics, please call our office to take advantage of our resource library or to request a presentation.



Presentations Available

We offer workshops on a variety of on mental health topics suitable for any organization. Topics address both personal and workplace issues such as Stress and Anger Management, Conflict Resolution, Mental Wellness and Mental Illness. A few are listed below. Also available are topics specifically for youth, adults and older adults. For more information, please call Pamela Szalay at (716) 432-2987 or email her at pszalay@mhanc.com.



Strategies for Coping with Stress

You will learn the value of pursuing mental wellness, receive several strategies for coping with everyday stress, and receive a list of valuable local resources that can provide further assistance. This presentation is timely and empowering for these challenging times.



Lunchtime Wellness: Overview of Mental Health

Bring your lunch (or your breakfast!) and enjoy a presentation that will help you manage your mental health. All you need is 30 minutes to learn the basics of mental wellness: why it matters to everyone, and how the Mental Health Association is your partner in helping you be your best.

Support Group Facilitator's Training

Coming this March:

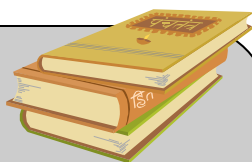
Learn how to start and run a successful support group!

In this free workshop you will receive information and training about leading a support group, managing meetings and overcoming common challenges. All materials provided.

Details will be available soon. For more information and to register, call (716) 433-3780, ext. 311. Or send an email to pszalay@mhanc.com. Please provide your name, email or mailing address, and phone number.



Our Resource Library



The MHA maintains a library of books and videos on a wide range of issues, available for you to borrow. For a list of the new additions to our library, please visit the website at www.mhanc.com or call us at 433-3780. A special bonus for visiting our website: you can read additional book reviews submitted by our staff!

Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key

by Jack Gantos - Winner of the National Book Award for Children's Literature.

Book Review by
Carleen Stover



Wired-Joey Pigza can't sit still. He can't pay attention, he can't follow rules, and he can't help it-especially when his meds aren't working. Joey's had problems ever since he was born, problems just like his dad and grandma have. And whether he's wrecking havoc on a class trip or swallowing his house key, Joey's problems are still getting worse. In fact, his behavior is so off-the-wall that his teachers are threatening to send him to a special-ed center downtown.

Joey knows he's really a good kid, but no matter how hard he tries to do the right thing, something always seems to go wrong. Will he ever get anything right?

This story is touching and funny at the same time. You and your child will find yourselves cheering for Joey!



Mental Health Association In Niagara County, Inc.

Mission Statement

The Mental Health Association in Niagara County, Inc. will offer programs and services aimed at promoting mental health while advocating for individuals with mental illnesses and working toward dispelling commonly held misunderstandings regarding mental illnesses.

Executive Board

Cheryl Blacklock - Executive Director
Howard Morgan - President
Susan Mason - Vice President
Dona Chase - Treasurer
Stacy Passino - Secretary

Board Members

Rhonda Bivins Frances Crosby
Rebecca Thompson Jeffery Peresie
Pamela Garlock

Funded by the New York State Office of Mental Health, the Niagara County Department of Mental Health, the Eastern Niagara United Way, the United Way of Niagara, the United Way of the Tonawandas, grants, memberships and voluntary contributions.

Youth Education



By Cristin Scordato
Program Assistant

This past fall, the Youth Education Program has been spending a lot of time with middle schoolers all over Niagara County talking about bullying. The students have been very open and honest about what they think about bullying—and there has even been discussion about starting an anti-bullying club. Both students and teachers feel there needs to be more awareness of the topic. This winter, we plan to build on the topic and talk about building character.

I am new to the Youth Education Program and I have enjoyed talking with students and teachers about the different topics we have covered including Anger Management, Peer Pressure,

and Domestic Violence. Students have been very receptive and enjoyed sharing and discussing during the presentations. I look forward to what the New Year will bring for the Youth Education Program and wish everyone a very happy holiday season.



Become a Friend of MHA

Membership to MHA Niagara offers the opportunity to improve the services provided to individuals with mental illness, and also to promote mental health education.

To become a member:

I would like to become a member of the Mental Health Association in Niagara County, Inc. I understand membership entitles me to receive the *VOICE* newsletter, use of the resource library and access to all Mental Health Association educational programs and conferences, as well as voting rights at the Annual Meeting.

Membership Rates

- Senior/Student \$10.00
- Individual \$15.00
- Mental Health Worker \$20.00
- Family \$25.00
- Organization \$50.00
- Sustaining \$100.00
- Corporate \$500.00

To make a donation:

- Please accept this donation:
 In memory of In honor of

Person's Name _____

Amount of Donation: \$ _____

For Memberships and Donations:

Please fill out contact information below and mail this form to:

The Mental Health Association
36 Pine St
Lockport NY 14094

Make check payable to: "The Mental Health Association in Niagara County, Inc."

Your Name _____

Address (Street and Apartment No.) _____

City State Zip

Phone _____

Go Green!

Ask to receive this newsletter by email!



Sending this newsletter by email saves us money and helps us reduce the amount of paper we use. We ask both new and existing members to consider an electronic subscription! Call us, use the form below, or send your request by email to web@mhanc.com

- Please send me the *VOICE* newsletter by email.

Email Address (please write clearly) _____



**Mental Health Association
in Niagara County, Inc.**

36 Pine Street
Lockport NY 14094

Phone: 716-433-3780
Fax: 716-4333847

We're on the web!

www.mhanc.com



Find us on Facebook
and Twitter at
"MHAniagara"

MHA 45 Years!

Volunteer and Paid Opportunities

Throughout the year, MHA in Niagara County provides wonderful programs that enrich the lives of children and adults. As word about our programs spread, so does the need for volunteers to help us in our mission.

We are currently looking for volunteers in the following areas:

- Warm-Line (answering calls)
- Compeer "Be a Friend" program.

Also needed are home respite workers, who are paid on a per diem basis.

Please consider volunteering for one of our excellent programs. We offer training and flexibility. For more information on how to get involved, give us a call!

Call MHA at 433-3780

**NON-PROFIT ORG.
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Permit NO. 453**

Women's Conference

"Loving Yourself from the Inside Out"



Fashion Show

Makeovers ♦ Vendors

February 8, 2009



Tickets: \$10



For more information, contact

MHA, 36 Pine St, Lockport

(716) 433-3780