

"Financial crisis may increase mental health woes"

Reuters, October 9, 2008

"Financial fears trickle down to kids"

MSNBC, October 6, 2008

"PTSD Survey Shows Increase"

Army Reserve Family Programs (Online), March 12, 2008

"Foreclosure-Related Suicide: Sign of the Times?"

ABC News On Call, July 25, 2008

These are challenging times – the most challenging in recent history. Whether in the conference room or the classroom, across the back fence or across the country, people are talking about today's world and how we can cope with its challenges.

We are stressed and confused. Our health is affected. Our bodies and minds are under tremendous strain. Across the country, authorities are becoming concerned that the nation's financial woes could turn those affected increasingly panicked, worried and potential violent, and they are urging people to get help. Mental health hot lines are jammed, counseling services are in high demand and domestic-violence shelters are full.

Suicides are on the rise. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is increasing at an alarming rate. Depression is quickly becoming the #1 cause of employee absenteeism in corporate America and costing businesses an average of \$25,000 per employee.

When our mental health is good, we can deal better with what comes our way -- at home, at work, in life. Only through education and advocacy can we erase the stigma associated with mental illness that prevents so many from seeking the treatment they need.

Now, more than ever, continuing mental health education, outreach and advocacy are needed to help every Georgian. We must educate ourselves about recognizing the signs of stress and depression. We need the tools to understand how we are affected by anxiety and tension. We must advocate at the State Capitol to keep mental health legislation a high priority for our elected officials, so that services are there when we need them.

Your support has allowed MHA of Georgia to carry on the important work which people with mental illness and their families and caretakers need us to do. There is still much to accomplish. We thank you for your support in 2008. Without it, our programs would not be possible. We thank you in advance for your support in 2009 as we all work together for better health for all Georgians!

From our Executive Director, Sarah Schwartz



We are living in challenging times. The cost of groceries is up, gas is at a premium, unemployment continues to increase and families struggle more every day. As Georgians work to survive in these difficult days, it is more important than ever to remember that good mental health is fundamental to the overall health and well-being of every Georgian. Every day MHA of Georgia works in our state educating the public about mental illness and working to reduce its stigma. Every day we advocate on behalf of people with mental illness to be sure our legislators keep mental health legislation a top priority. Every day we reach out to all Georgians to remind them that there is no health without mental health and that living in recovery is not only possible, but very achievable. During this crucial time, we at Mental Health America of Georgia are working harder than ever to keep our programs going and expanding—but it is difficult and we need your help to continue our work.

Here's a look at what we've been up to:

Kids on the Block (KOTB) – So far this year, over 8,000 kids and families have seen the Kids perform. KOTB is a puppet troupe which utilizes multicultural, life-sized puppets that perform copyrighted, best-practice scripts on mental health topics to promote mental wellness and stigma reduction for children, their families, and caregivers. **KOTB** has been and continues to perform in Fulton County, through funding provided by Fulton Roundtable Expansion Services Headquarters (FRESH). In addition, we've been to Fort Benning to perform for kids whose parent have been deployed. Over 350 children have seen these performances. We have plans to go back again soon to do a performance of a new script on the prevention of substance abuse. Our goal is to expand the program into all areas of Georgia. Our kids need this information presented in a way that they understand and relate to.

Project Healthy Moms (PHM) – Did you know that perinatal mood disorders, such as post partum depression, affect 1 in 8 new mothers each year? PHM is a lecture series whose purpose is to increase awareness, identification, treatment, and support of mothers with perinatal disorders in Georgia while also reducing the stigma associated with them. PHM's outreach is statewide, and to date we've brought greater focus and education to practitioners throughout Georgia. The response to the series has been huge and positive, as perinatal mood disorders is an area that is largely underserved in Georgia. We plan to expand our reach in this program to touch as many providers and community members as possible.

Project Healthcare Access (PHA) – Imagine having access to mental health services in even the most remote areas of our state! In partnership with the Georgia Free Clinic Network, the Georgia Partnership for Telehealth, and the Georgia Psychiatric Physicians Association, MHA of Georgia has been spearheading an exciting new initiative to implement tele-psychiatry programs in free clinics throughout Georgia – especially those in rural areas – to increase access to mental health services for these underserved populations. Through a generous donation of equipment for one pilot site from the Georgia Partnership for Telehealth, we plan to start seeing patients through our pilot clinic in January 2009.

Project Workplace [aka Atlanta Business Leaders Initiative (ABLI)] – This program assists Atlanta-based employers in raising awareness about the business impact of mental illness and reducing the stigma associated with getting treatment for mental illness. Thanks to grants from Wyeth Pharmaceuticals and the American Psychiatric Foundation, this program is flourishing.

MHA of Georgia also continues to be the only mental health organization in Georgia with a mental health lobbyist who does not represent a particular profession or industry. Ellyn Jaeger, Director of Public Policy & Advocacy, is recognized as a leader in mental health advocacy and often acts as a resource for a number of Georgia legislators. Ellyn continues to be very active in public policy and advocacy efforts both at the state and federal levels.

Finally, be on the lookout for MHA of Georgia around town at health fairs, as we promote mental health and disseminate information about it.

As you can see, all of our programs do important work on behalf of Georgians with mental illness, their families and supporters. However, we need funding to keep these programs going! Please donate whatever you can to help keep our initiatives active and strong. If it weren't for your support in the past, we wouldn't be here today. Thank you for your support going forward.

CONGRATULATIONS!!

Heroes in the Fight Award Winners



CYNTHIA WAINSCOTT
Community Supporter



PHYLIS HOLLIDAY
Community Supporter



GLORIA CHOO
Allied Health Care Professional

HEROES IN THE FIGHT
celebrates dignity, courage, hope,
and recovery in the ongoing
treatment of persons with
serious and persistent mental
illness (SPMI) by recognizing
“heroes” who provide care and
support for persons with SPMI
and their families.



JEANETTE DEPOY
Allied Health Care Professional



FUQUA CENTER FOR
LATE LIFE DEPRESSION
(Dr. William McDonald)
Treatment Team



JEFF ANDERSON
Media Professional



DR. PATRICE HARRIS
Psychiatrist

MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF GEORGIA

announces

a new KIDS ON THE BLOCK program:
ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND DRUG AWARENESS



Scripts include:

UP IN SMOKE (early Elementary school): Joanne and Eric talk about the negative effects of tobacco.

IT'S ONLY MEDICINE (early Elementary school): This script focuses on why you must only take medicine which has been given to you by a parent or doctor.

STARTING OVER (late Elementary/Middle school): Eric talks about the dangers of drinking and partying.

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICES (late Elementary/Middle school): Friends discuss making the right choice about attending a party where drugs are present.

HELPING A FRIEND (late Elementary/Middle school): Paul confronts Eric about the lies he has been telling about his drug abuse.



For more information, contact:

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AROUND GEORGIA

MHA OF NORTHEAST GEORGIA

Sunday, January 25 — 2:00 pm
Reception for contributing artists
Cine Theatre, 234 W. Hancock Ave., Athens

Monday, January 26 (time & location tbd)
presentation by Ellyn Jeager:
Mental Health Issues in the 2009 Session of the Georgia
General Assembly

Tuesday, January 27 — 7:00 pm
Movie at Cine Theatre, 234 W. Hancock Ave., Athens

Thursday, January 29 — 7:00 pm
Movie at Cine Theatre, 234 W. Hancock Ave., Athens

Friday, January 30
"Five Eight" performs
The 40Watt Club, 285 W. Washington St., Athens

Saturday, January 31 — 6:00 pm
The 19th Annual Mental Health America of Northeast
Georgia Art Auction
at Cine Theatre, 234 W. Hancock Ave., Athens

**Contact Eddie Whitlock at 770-633-3513 or
office@fightthestigma.com for more information**

MHA OF ETOWAH VALLEY

Meeting with our new state representative, Paul Battles.
Date TBD.

Working with Bartow Health Access to conduct a commu-
nity needs survey.

Working with the Georgia Mental Services Coalition as a
member of the planning committee for Mental Health Day
at the Capitol.

**Contact Cynthia Wainscott at 770-606-8715 or
mhaev@bellsouth.net for more information**

MHA OF GREATER AUGUSTA

Thanks everyone for a very successful 15th Annual Bert
Yancey Golf Tournament!

Planning 2009 Augusta Mental Health Coalition Meeting/
Dinner to meet and inform legislators. Date and time to be
announced.

Depression Screening Day was held Thursday,
October 16th.

**Contact Phyllis Holiday at 706-736-6857 or
friendshipcenter@knology.net for more information**

VICTORY FOR MENTAL HEALTH PARTY



On October 3, 2008, Congress passed the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 - a groundbreaking piece of legislation requiring, for the first time, that insurance coverage for mental health conditions be on par with that of physical health.

With passage of this Bill, more than one-third of Americans will receive better insurance coverage because of the law, which applies to group health plans that cover more than 50 employees.

Advocates described the new law as a milestone in the quest to end insurance discrimination and reduce the stigma of mental illness.

Mental Health America, which has worked for years to pass mental health parity, applauded Senators Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Pete Domenici (R-N.M.) and Representatives Patrick Kennedy (D-R.I.) and Jim Ramstad (R-Minn.), as well as Senate and House leadership key committee chairmen for championing the legislation and their long-standing commitment to ending this civil rights inequity. This victory also owes much to tireless champions such as Rosalyn Carter, David Wellstone and tens of thousands of Americans who have pressed for this historic reform.

What does this mean to you? If you are a member of a group health plan of 51 or more, the following applies:

1. There is no requirement as to what conditions must be covered. But when a mental health or substance-use condition is covered, it must be at parity with medical coverage (except to the extent that a state parity law requires broader coverage). Specifically, it prohibits group health plans that offer coverage for any mental health or substance-use conditions from imposing treatment limitations and financial requirements on those benefits that are stricter than for medical and surgical benefits.
2. If a plan offers out-of-network benefits for medical or surgical care, it must also offer out-of-network coverage for mental health and addiction treatment and provide services at parity.
3. Strong state parity and consumer protection laws are preserved while extending parity protection to 82 million more people who are not protected by state laws and 31 million in plans that are subject to state regulation.

"This law sends a powerful message that we as a nation must address mental health conditions with the same urgency as other health problems," stated David Shern, PhD, President and CEO of Mental Health America.

We at Mental Health America of Georgia applaud this legislation and thank everyone for their advocacy efforts!

DOES ADVOCACY REALLY WORK?

Ellyn Jeager, Director, Public Policy & Advocacy



Anywhere you go in Georgia, you will hear people talking about the lack of gas, the lack of water, the cost of food, the cost of healthcare, the fear of losing a home or job, or both. People will talk to their family members, neighbors, friends and even strangers! People will voice their opinions to almost anyone... except their legislators. *Most people do not even know who their state legislators are!*

While in line for gas the other day, I was sitting in my car reading when I heard three people—strangers— talking to each other. They were angry about the long lines. One said, “My sister lives in New Jersey, and they don’t have a gas problem.” Another said, “we’re paying more in Georgia than people pay in Los Angeles.” The conversation then went on to cover the other serious situations both here in Georgia and around the country. I listened for over an hour about “big business,” taxes, the upcoming elections, and the differences — or lack of differences— between the Democrats and the Republicans. On and on the conversations went with more people adding comments. Finally, I had to ask one burning question: Do you know who your state legislators are and have you called them? I got complete silence - who is this newcomer asking such a ridiculous question? One woman told me she once spoke with Johnny Isakson, but that was before he became a U.S. Senator. Another told me her sister lived near Jim Martin’s brother.

As a person who believes in every voice being heard, this “gas line” conversation was very frustrating for me. No one knew their state legislators, and no one thought it would do any good to call them anyway. Boy, had I failed. After years and years of talking and teaching advocacy, I was back explaining the differences between basic programs and why advocacy at the state level was crucial.

So, I am back asking each of you the same question: Do you know your state legislators and have you called them? Not sure? The websites www.sos.state.ga.us or www.legis.state.ga.us will tell you everything you need to know.

Not sure what to say? Most importantly, make sure your call or email is about a topic of importance in our state. Next, have the facts you need about what is happening with mental health here in Georgia. Check out our website - www.mhageorgia.org - and get the facts.

It only takes a few minutes to call or email your representative about topics of importance to you and your family. They listen to their constituents, so your voice is heard.



Yes—advocacy works—but only when you work it!!

Join MHA of Georgia’s Advocacy Network

Send your email address to ellyn@mhageorgia.org

and your voice will join with others to take our message forward.

MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF GEORGIA
UPCOMING EVENTS

"Project Healthy Moms"
Upcoming Lectures and Seminars

Medical Center of Central Georgia, Macon, GA – Oct. 30

Augusta OB/GYN Society – November 4

Medical College of Georgia Grand Rounds, Augusta, GA – November 5

Henry Medical Center Annual High Risk Seminar, Stockbridge, GA - November 10

**Healthy Families/First Steps Program of Sumter County
Americus, GA - November 13**

*To schedule a Project Healthy Moms Presentation,
please contact Katherine Stone at
678-764-2141 or stonecallis@msn.com*

Mental Health & Primary Care
Skyland Trail
Thursday, December 11 at 6:00 pm
Contact Sarah Schwartz, 678-904-1970 for details

HOW CAN YOU HELP MHA OF GEORGIA?

The work of MHA of Georgia is dependent upon individual and organizational support of its mission and vision. Your donation will help us have the financial resources needed to succeed.

Please fill out the following information to become a member:

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____

Email _____

Would you like to be added to our mailing list? Yes No

Would you like to volunteer with MHA of Georgia? Yes No

Please circle your donation amount.

(\$500) (\$250) (\$150) (\$100) (\$75) Other: _____

Please mail your check and this form to:

MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF GEORGIA
100 EDGEWOOD AVENUE, SUITE 502
ATLANTA, GA 30303
For Credit Cards-Please call 678-904-1973

*Or you can donate at our secure website—www.mhageorgia.org
MHA of Georgia is a not-for-profit, 501(c)3 organization tax ID number: 58-0611310*