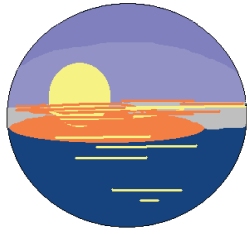


THE RECOVERY JOURNAL



Recovery Institute Staff

Sean Harris, Director
Lon Reinbold,
Admin. Team Leader
Steve Goodyke,
Computer Lab Specialist
Jennifer Mills,
Administrative Assistant

Access & Outreach

Cathleen Hursh, Team
Leader

Paula Chomis

Bill Jones

Tina Lauer

Marcia Probst

Scott Spicer

Living in Recovery

Rosie Corliss, Team
Leader

Sean Jennings

Tricia Shaff

Peer Companions

Patti Bronson

Tre Burnett

Matt Linihan

TRANSFORMATION LEADERSHIP AWARD

Presented to Interim Director



**Executive Director &
Transformational Leader,
Dr. Rich Visingardi, left.**

consultant roles since 1993, assisting organizations in developing or implementation of strategic planning. In parting, he shared that this (RI) has been a “joyful experience”, and that RI has “demonstrated capacities and competenciesfar more advanced than multi-million and multi-billion dollar entities and organizations.” He believes what RI offers and pursues is consistent with the agency’s vision. The inscription on the plaque awarded by the Board of Director reads:

By unanimous Resolution of the Board of Directors on the twelfth day of the month of April in the year two thousand ten; Dr. Visingardi is recognized for his leadership as Executive Director from 2008 to 2010, a crucial moment in the Recovery Institute’s development as a grassroots community peer-run organization. Dr. Visingardi is the principal architect of the organizational structure in Recovery Institute.

“Dr. Visingardi is especially appreciated for the passion, wisdom, tenacity, transformational leadership style and kindness that he brought to the organization, the board, its staff and membership.”

Thank you, Rich! ! We wish you the very best in all future endeavors!

One by one, RI staff imparted their appreciation, fondness and good wishes to Rich Visingardi, departing Executive Director, during a surprise potluck held early April in his honor. Even though staff knew Rich was contracted on a temporary basis to help in the development of RI, it was difficult to see him go.

In addition to Rich’s wealth of knowledge, he brings a passion and sincerity to his work as well as to relationships; traits too often found lacking in today’s leadership and mentoring roles. Rich always offered encouragement to everyone, and was eager to share his expertise and work experiences.

Rich has contracted in executive or leadership

Visit our Web Site:

<http://recoverymi.org>

Our newsletter is now on the web!

NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ANNOUNCED

Sean Harris, Ph.D., was officially named as the succeeding Executive Director for Recovery Institute during the April Board of Directors Meeting. Dr. Harris has been an integral contributor as Deputy Director to RI’s inception in various capacities over the past few years, beginning with Kalamazoo Community Mental Health.

Sean’s direct contributions to the development and continued growth of RI cannot be overstated. Committed to the peer movement, Sean has been instrumental in developing key community relationships, staffing and organizing RI while implementing a number of the services currently available from RI.

Sean has an extensive background in the field of mental health and has been the vital impetus in the development of a college course, “Principles of Peer Support”, a 3 credit psychology class available at Kalamazoo Valley Community College.

Recovery Institute staff and members alike are delighted to be under the competent direction of Sean. He brings a quiet, unassuming yet enthusiastic approach to RI. We look forward to continued progress and ever expanding contributions in the field of mental wellness with Sean!

Recovery Institute (RI)
Peer run — Peer delivered!
Incorporated in September of 2006, The Recovery Institute of Southwest Michigan is funded by Kalamazoo Community Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services.

IN THIS ISSUE

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- * Creative Angles
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- * Veteran’s Group
- * Words of Wisdom

We foster recovery through our work and our example. We aim to give HOPE where there is little or no hope. Recovery is a dynamic and active movement that brings about a meaningful change in lifestyle and habits.

*** Recovery Journeys will return in the next quarterly issue of the Recovery Journal!**

Creative Angles

I Am

By Cathleen Hursh

*I am an ever changing
kaleidoscope of colors.
I am vibrant red.
I am passionate purple.
I am naturally green.
I am a sour puss lemon
named Cat.
I am impatiently pink.
I am learning to be bipolar
effectively.
I am lost.
I am found.
I am first.
I am last.
I am dark and light and
shades in between.
I am as brown as the mud
on my shoes.
I am as black as the night of
no moon.
I am skating across the sky
full of stars. I fall.
I am as blue as a
saxophones tenor.
I am me.
I am all that I have.
At the end of the day I am
grateful for my recovery.*



Want to share your recovery story, RI experiences, or creative writings? Would you like them included in the Recovery Journal? Call Recovery Institute at 269-343-6725 or send an email to: rcorliss@recoverymi.org

Midnight with the Trees

It's midnight,
and as I sit in my new back yard
legs crossed underneath me,
foot tingling with numbness,
late September breeze caressing
my skin...

...my mind calms.

Nothing is here...
...but the trees and I...
...to listen.

We listen together...
as the sounds of the world
work together as the gears in a
clock
click and mesh together,
turning a minute to an hour,
and an hour to a day.
Working in unison to survive.

We watch...
the moon illuminate the night.
and patiently await the sun rise
again tomorrow

Knowing...
...that the only time that exists...
...is the present.

We wait...
for a time when others will listen
too...
to the peace and serenity
in a babies cry,
an arguing couple down the
street,
a cat's painful bellow,
a dog's sorrowful howl,
a car's engine whirring,
and...
...the trees rustling leaves.

It's midnight,
and tomorrow will be another day
Where I will work together with
the world
to help someone else,
and hopefully myself
to see

that everything is...
... just here...
... surviving...
... as one.

- Jennifer Lynn Mills

Living in Recovery

By Rosie Corliss

The Living in Recovery Team has been actively engaging members in several recovery skills classes this year. The first PATH Workshop (Personal Action Toward Health) held at RI was successfully completed by an enthusiastic group on March 23rd. Participants enjoyed the workshop and each other so much, they are planning to hold a reunion in late May or June!

A number of members finished Pathways 4 U and College Prep classes in April and other motivated individuals are actively participating in WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) class at this time.

A new Spring/Summer Class Schedule has been released and covers a wide variety of options for people in or seeking recovery.

If you haven't received the schedule of opportunities and are unable to access the internet, please stop in or call and we'll mail one to you.

A new PATH Workshop is underway, and we're beginning a **Pathways 4 U** on May 20th. **Call now to reserve your seat.** This is a wonderful way to begin or continue your personal recovery. Another WRAP Class and PATH Workshop are scheduled for July, followed by College & Technical School Preparation Class. This class will end late August, before the fall semester begins in September and offers a great chance to get ready to take for credit classes.

The weekly support group, Transformations, continues to evolve with committed members. This is open to those in recovery or interested in recovery.

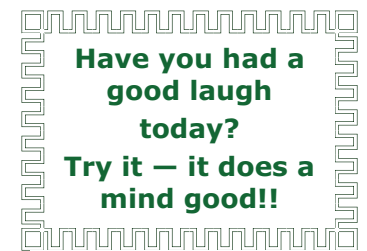
Requests to be tutored in Computer skills have increased, and PALS Video Group and Card & Board Game events are gaining participants.

ArtWorks is reorganizing with the competent assistance of Paula Chomis. Paula has brought a number of art teachers and experts in to instruct members in different creative techniques as well as to provide suggestions to improve the gallery. Come in and

visit. It meets every Wednesday afternoon from 1-4 pm and is open for Art Hops the first Friday of every month.

Last, but not least, RI is offering 2 new ongoing support groups. The first is a Vet to Vet Group which meets on Thursday mornings from 10:30 to 12:00 Noon. This offers an emphasis on developing natural and mutual supports along with other empowering ideas.

SMART Recovery (Self-Management & Recovery Training) meets on Monday afternoons from 2:00-3:30. This is a science based group that focuses on managing life issues sensibly without using substances.



Getting forgetful

Three older people sit in a diner discussing their health.

One lady says, "You know, I'm getting really forgetful. This morning, I was standing at the top of the stairs, and I couldn't remember whether I had just come up or was about to go down."

The second lady says, "You think that's bad? The other day, I was sitting on the edge of my bed, and I couldn't remember whether I was going to sleep or had just woken up!"

The man smiles smugly. "Well, my memory is just as good as it's always been, knock on wood," he says as he raps on the table. Then with a startled look on his face, he asks, "Who's there?"



When we can laugh at ourselves, we find we are constantly amused!

Humor is a necessary tonic for the soul.

Fay Angus



EMPLOYEE CHRONICLES

By Jennifer Mills

Unlike many recovery stories that I have heard, I start mine out a bit different. I will tell you where I am today, what I have been doing for the past three years, where I was before my recovery journey, and list the resources I used to bring myself to where I am.

My name is Jennifer Lynn Mills and I am 28 years old. I live in a stone house on sixteen acres in the country, in a small town named Scotts, Michigan. It is a far cry from where I was 3 years ago. I am employed as an Administrative Assistant at the Recovery Institute of SW Michigan. Recently, I completed training and became a Certified Michigan Peer Support Specialist.

In addition to working, I attend college at Kalamazoo Valley Community College part time. Next semester I will be able to apply to graduate with an Associate of Arts degree. In two semesters I can apply for the Administrative Assistant Certificate and a Computer Information Systems degree.

In the past three years, I've stayed busy by being involved in the recovering community. One endeavor that I am particularly proud of is a Self-Esteem Art Class that I created. I wrote the curriculum, itinerary, schedule, including all the art projects. After I organized it, I took my idea to the Kalamazoo Community Foundation where I wrote and received a grant to fund the class. I also run this class for Marian Thornton's women's group with the Jim Gilmore Treatment center. This class remains on my agenda to teach in the years to come.

I have donated time to help establish another non-profit peer-run group called Power Branch, in which I recently became the Vice President of their board. With Power Branch, I helped to organize the foundation for a program called Peer Companions (currently managed by RI). I continue volunteer work for other non-profit agencies whenever possible. Keeping up with an innovative recovering community takes a lot of pro-bono work.

In the past year, I have been employed as a Peer Companion through Power Branch,

Assistant Director of Keystone, and now hold a newly implemented part time position at RI as Administrative Assistant. I hope to move to full time as the RI continues to receive additional funding and we establish more and more peer services. Now that I feel better by listing all the good things in my life; I can tell you where I was three years ago.

I was homeless and without a car. I lived in a shed in an old ladies back yard off Mount Olivet St. I smoked Crack to forget about my heroin addiction, and cooked Methamphetamine to supplement the Crack. My drug of choice was "more!" and I didn't care what happened to me or anyone else for that matter.

When I needed money I would beg, lie, cheat, and steal; I had no remorse or feelings of guilt over things that I did. I broke into houses, cars and stole from my friends and family to get myself "unsick" as they say.

My family would no longer talk to me, my friends had long gone, and I was alone and cold. It took six years to get to that point, and the entire ride was a "Requiem for a Dream." Near the end of my addiction, all I wanted was sleep, and to forget that life was real around me. Nine years ago, I had been in college, with a car, a bank account, a great job at Pepsi and tons of friends. What happened?

To figure this out and to get myself to where I am today, many changes occurred. First, I had to quit using all mind altering substance. One thing that helped was being placed into a county Drug Court program in 2007. This program held me accountable, not only for my criminal behaviors, but my drug addiction as well. The sanctions and requirements were hard to follow through with, but I have proudly accomplished that today. I also went to drug therapy sessions, AA/NA, and many other treatments that could help me to deal with my addiction. I quit using the drugs, but I was still miserable. Now I had to look harder within myself to figure out what my true problem was (the reason for my drug use). The hardest part of my recovery was determining what things inside of me made me want to use drugs. I had to

We are a family—a family in recovery

think back to when I was 16 and tried to commit suicide. Why did I do that? Was there something wrong with me? When I was 18 I thought I was done with negative thoughts, that it must have been a passing phase. But if that were true, why did I try it again when I was 23, and even more when I quit using the drugs? With dual-diagnosis, sometimes you don't know which came first "the chicken or the egg". I didn't know if the drugs made me depressed, or if the depression made me want to use. Although I will probably never know, I now know how to deal with depression and anxiety without drugs, thanks to community mental health.

One program that I used was Interact, who through case management and my own perseverance, helped me to cognitively deal with my problems. At Interact; I attended many therapy appointments, psychiatric appointments, and dual disorder groups where I learned to use skills to prevent relapse and to recognize triggers and stressors. Not only did Interact (with other community programs) help me with my problems, they helped me decide what career I wanted as well.

From there I donated time to non-profits, getting involved with the recovering community as much as possible. This helped to fill my time, as well as give me a sense of purpose. My efforts paid off by getting me a job at the RI. I also want to return to school for a Social Work degree.

Now that I have told you where I am today,, where I was and what I did to get "better", I can say this: I am in no way "recovered" from anything. I will continue to work through my past, with the help of my work peers, school, and AA. I have gained knowledge of resources through experience to help me through if I have a bad day, or even if I am having "too good of a day". A recovering addict once said to me, "If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change". That saying has stuck with me through the thick and thin of the last three years, and I will continue to quote that for years to come.

PRINCIPLES OF PEER SUPPORT

By Matt Linihan

Taking the *Principles of Peer Support* Class at Kalamazoo Valley Community College was one of the best things I could have ever done for myself. This class helped me to focus on my recovery and strengths. I've learned a lot about myself and it has been a life changing experience.

In the beginning of the class we focused on our own personal recovery and learned how to effectively tell our own recovery stories. As the class goes on, Dr. Harris and the co-instructors taught us how to help others explore available options in their own recovery.

After taking this class I am extremely excited about the potential of becoming a Peer Support Specialist. I recommend this class to any who wants to move farther along in their own recovery and to anyone who wants to serve others as a Peer Support Specialist!

WORDS OF WISDOM

**Nothing is predestined:
The obstacles of your
past can become the
gateways that lead to
new beginnings.**

Ralph Blum

**Success in the affairs of
life often serves to hide
one's abilities; whereas
adversity frequently
gives one an opportunity
to discover them.**

Horace

**Difficulties strengthen
the mind as well as labor
does the body.**

Seneca

WHAT'S NEWS WITH ACCESS & OUTREACH?

By Cathleen Hursh

The Recovery Institutes Access and Outreach would like to welcome and congratulate our newest Peer Companions, Amountry (Tre) Burnett, Matt Linihan and Patricia Bronson!!

Tre, Matt and Patricia are already busy using their skills and are becoming great Peer Companions! If you didn't know, and it's no secret, you would think that they've been doing this for a very long time. We are busy with new members as the word gets out to more and more people and they tell more people and well.....you know.

Paula and Bill are doing great work in the Access office at KCMHSAS. We are all glad to be able to offer individuals the option of working toward a self-determined, responsible and productive life. The biggest change is that instead of being up in the I&R office we are now located in the old computer lab space downstairs at 418 W. Kalamazoo.

Scott is working hard to help folks with goal planning and determining how best to spend their Medicaid dollars while moving forward in their recovery. Our self-determination program is full of curves and bounces but Scott is doing a superb job of negotiating them.

Bill and Marcia are providing "Role Modeling Recovery" at Borgess One North. We are now getting referrals from doctors, nurses and social workers! I know I never dreamt that I'd see the day when doctors would

call a Peer Support Specialist! Change takes time and things are changing for the better!

NEW VETERAN'S GROUP

Recovery Institute is proud to announce the introduction of a new Vet to Vet Group here in Kalamazoo!

One important aspect of **Vet to Vet groups**, is that they are **run for veterans by veterans**. Another important feature of the Vet to Vet Groups is that they are **not** affiliated with the Veterans Administration, so Veterans are safe to discuss whatever issues they are inclined to without fear of reprisal.

The Group was developed by a Viet Nam veteran, Moe Armstrong, who became ill while in active combat and experienced symptoms for quite some time after returning to the U.S. Moe's contribution to assist and empower veterans is nationally recognized.

The Mission Statement for Vet to Vet Peer Support, is:

"We dedicate ourselves to helping fellow Veterans in their time of need, leaving no Veteran behind. We wish to help Veterans: Expand their social support network; Increase trust with others; Decrease isolation and loneliness; Participate in problem solving; Teach themselves and others about recovery; Increase coping skills; and Learn to enjoy doing things with others."

Veterans meet here at RI on Thursday mornings at 10:30 am, and all veterans are encouraged to participate. Call Paula Chomis or Sean Jennings with questions at 269-343-6725.

INTERNATIONAL RECOVERY

Guess what? The Recovery movement is alive and well in other parts of the world!

A Scottish initiative, The Scottish Recovery Network (SRN) was formally launched in 2004 with a goal to raise awareness of recovery from mental health problems.

The vision of SRN is: People who experience mental health problems and those around them should expect recovery.

The values and principles which underpin the recovery experience should form the basis of how, as a society, we approach mental health issues.

The goals of the SRN are to raise awareness of recovery from mental health problems, learn more about the recovery process and the factors which help and hinder, share the learning, ideas and encourage as well as support action nationally and locally for the promotion of recovery.

SRN is supported in entirety by the Scottish Government but paid staff receive monies through a voluntary sector organization. Work is overseen by a Strategy Group and is underpinned by the lived experiences of people who have experienced mental health issues and recovery.

The SRN came about through the receiving of information on recovery from the US and New Zealand around 2000. In addition, more people were coming forth and sharing their own personal recovery experiences. This resulted in the establishment of a network of people who believe in a person's innate capacity for change.

SRN currently offers classes to peers, including (WRAP) Wellness Recovery Action Planning and they have developed a curriculum called "Realising*Recovery" for peers working in mental health.

(*No—that is not a mistake, that is how the Scottish spell 'realizing'!!)

MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Mr. Udell Gonder is actively involved with computer training through RI over the last 6 months. Steve Goodyke, computer lab tutor has been working with Udell and he states it has been beneficial for him. He says Steve does a great job and that he recommends tutoring for anyone interested in learning more. Udell praises Steve for his reliability. Udell was previously involved with PALS Groups for a number of years.

When asked what he would like the readers to know about him, he shares that he is 60 years old, African American and interested in art. He grew up in a family with 5 brothers and wonderful hardworking parents. His parents had a dry cleaning business in Kalamazoo and his Father was also a Pastor.

Ms. Barbara Less recently completed the Principles of Peer Support Class at KVCC with Sean Harris. She states the class was very beneficial, and recommends it to others interested in peer support. She also recently completed the College Prep Class with Sean Jennings.

Ms. Less is currently enrolled in the PATH class and hopes to eventually be involved with the PoWeR Group. Her goal is to work with peers at the newly opened Sanctuary here in Kalamazoo. When asked what she would like others to know about her, she states that she loves flowers!

Mr. Enrique Sanchez is actively involved with Recovery Institute as Vice President of the Board of Directors, participates with the Transformation Group and attends Art Hops regularly. He has been a member of RI since it first opened and stays involved because others help you to stay focused. It gives him a stable place to be, builds self-esteem and helps his ability to deal with illness.

Enrique was first introduced to RI through the PoWeR Group and recommends services to other peers. He said he sees the results it has made in his life and thinks it can help others, also. In the future he would like to take the Principles of Peer Support Class and wants to continue to help RI grow. He shares that he wants to continue efforts to change and lead a better life. Enrique says "I have changed my life in a positive way."