

Mental Health & Recovery Board

OF PORTAGE COUNTY *NEWSLETTER*

Winter 2008

A publication to increase awareness of mental health and substance abuse services in our community

A Network of Care for All Generations!

Mental Health resources offered for veterans, military personnel and their families

News about the mental health difficulties of enlisted men and women and veterans has resulted in new resources to connect them to services, prevent suicides and help their families.



Consider these grim statistics gathered by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):

- Almost **1 in 3** veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq confront mental health problems.
- In 2007, the suicide rate in the Army reached its **highest level** in 27 years; 121 soldiers completed suicide.
- Approximately 30% of veterans treated in the Veterans health system suffer from depressive symptoms, **two to three times** the rate of the general population.
- Approximately **60%** of homeless veterans have mental illnesses.

Matt Slater, program manger for Freedom House, Portage County's shelter for homeless veterans, says that after researching this new generation of veterans, he anticipates seeing more Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and traumatic brain injuries. Alcohol and drug abuse often result when veterans try to cope with mental and physical illness.

In 2007, the shelter housed 60 veterans, but due to lack of space had to turn away 40. The shelter has seen its first veterans of the Desert Storm, Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts, Slater says. The program is operated by Family and Community Services, Inc.

Shelter advocate **Ryan Everett** assesses the mental health and substance abuse needs of the residents. He connects them with services at the Veterans Affairs facilities or the local network of agencies, which includes Family and Community Services, Townhall II and Coleman Professional Services. VA services are funded by the federal government, while some veterans may be receiving services funded through the Mental Health & Recovery Board.

Network of Care site has special link for vets, military; free printed resource guide available

The Mental Health & Recovery Board's online resource website has easy access for visitors seeking information about the mental health and substance abuse issues affecting military personnel, veterans and their families.

Visit www.portage.oh.networkofcare.org and click on the button labeled "For Service Members and Veterans." The link will take you to a screen providing access to a library, directory of services, the OHIOCARES Guide and the Returning Home Guidebook.

Service members, veterans and their families can also call the Board office for a free printed copy of the OHIOCARES Guide, which was developed by the Ohio Department of Mental Health. It contains key information about contacts, stigma, mental illness, substance abuse, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and advice for families. Call the Board at 330-673-1756, ext. 201, for a copy.



Huntington helps community organizations get message out in Garrettsville



Last month, Huntington National Bank in Garrettsville invited the Mental Health & Recovery Board to put a display in its lobby. Personal Banker Eva Szasz, left, coordinates the bank's outreach efforts and is pictured with Customer Service Representative Amanda Smith. Thanks to the Huntington for its community spirit!



Karen Fleming

Talking with Psychologist Karen Fleming about counseling services for veterans at Coleman Professional Services

Karen Fleming, Ph.D., has been on staff at Coleman Professional Services since 1995.

Q: What is your background in working/counseling veterans?

A: I completed my pre-doctoral internship at the Cleveland VA where I worked in the Center for Stress Recovery with vets diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I also worked on the Dual Diagnosis unit with vets who had both a mental illness and an addiction; on the Acute Psychiatry Unit inpatient unit; and on the Addiction Assessment unit. Veterans often have an experience base from being in the service that is very important to them, and I make an effort to find out how their experience matters to them.

Q: What are symptoms that families should watch for?

A: Combat veterans could experience symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder if they “experienced, witnessed or were confronted with an event that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others” and “the person’s response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror,” according to diagnostic criteria.

Symptoms of PTSD can include: (1) Re-experiencing thoughts, dreams, flashbacks, psychological distress at exposure to cues that remind the vet of the trauma, and physical responses on exposure to cues that resemble the traumatic event; (2) Problems with sleep, irritability, anger, concentration problems, hyper-vigilance and exaggerated startle responses; and (3) Avoidance of thoughts, places, activities, people and facts associated with the traumatic event. The veteran may have little interest in things around him or her, be detached, without feelings and may be unable to envision a future.

However, veterans are a cross section of our population and because of that may exhibit any number of mental health problems like depression, anxiety and severe and persistent mental illnesses like Schizophrenia and Bipolar Disorder. Substance abuse problems may be either a primary problem for some veterans or a problem that exists with a mental illness.

Q: What kind of progress can a veteran or enlisted person with a mental health problem make with counseling? Is medication often a part of this?

A: A veteran with a mental health problem can expect to make progress and better his or her life with counseling. Medications may or may not be part of his or her treatment. Our focus is on recovery for everyone, and this includes people diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness. So, it is important that we expect and support a recovery model.

The VA has helped us too. We at Coleman have benefited from the research on effective, evidenced based treatments for PTSD developed through research at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Q: What are two basic things families should keep in mind when the veteran or enlisted person is having emotional problems?

A: First, help is available for the individual. Second, help is available for family members individually or as a family unit.



Mental Illness in Your Family?

Do you need to know more?

Family-to-Family Education Program for families with an adult who has a mental illness. **FREE.** Runs 12 weeks.

Tuesdays starting March 4, 6:30 to 9:30 pm
Mental Health & Recovery Board
155 E. Main St., Kent
Call: 330-673-1756, ext. 201
by Feb. 27

A Service of NAMI Portage County and the
Mental Health & Recovery Board of Portage County
(www.portage.oh.networkofcare.org)

New Family-to-Family Education class set to start March 4

Family-to-Family is a free, 12-week education course for family members or significant others of persons with mental illness. The program is provided by NAMI Portage County with the support of the Mental Health & Recovery Board. The course is taught by family members who have received specialized training. Each week is a specific lesson from a detailed and researched curriculum that includes information on brain diseases, medications, treatment, advocacy, self-care and conflict resolution.

Classes will be held at the Mental Health & Recovery Board office, 155 E. Main St., Kent, 6:30 to 9:30 pm. starting March 4 and running on Tuesdays for 12 weeks. To register by Feb. 27, call Laura at 330-673-1756, ext. 201.

For more information about Family-to-Family, go to www.nami.org or www.namiohio.org. For local service and education information, go to www.mental-health-recovery.org or www.portage.oh.networkofcare.org.



Karen Cox

Cox, Langstaff join Board

Karen Cox of Atwater Township, a lifelong resident of the county, was appointed to a four-year term by the Ohio Department of Mental Health as a family member. Mother of a child with a mental illness, her interest in volunteering on the board was the result of attending the Family-to-Family Education program in Portage County, an in-depth education program for families and others who have a loved one with mental illness.

She also became the coordinator of NAMI Portage County, the local chapter of a national organization that advocates on behalf of persons with mental illness. Cox is interested in making sure parents have information about mental illnesses that affect children because of her family's experience. She says she understands what happens in a family when a member has a mental illness and will help the board take those issues into account when making policy and budget decisions. Cox provides in-home domestic services for older adult.



Jeff Langstaff

Kent Police Juvenile Counselor **Jeff Langstaff, LICDC**, was appointed by the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services to a four-year term to fill the seat designated for a professional in the field of substance abuse treatment. Langstaff is a licensed independent chemical dependency counselor with 30 years of experience counseling children and teens facing problems in school and the community and working with their families.

His job also includes counseling and managing cases of adults with mental health or addiction problems, who come in contact with the department.

Langstaff says he wants to see the board work on more programs to reduce the stigma of mental illness and addiction in communities, businesses and schools. Langstaff is a graduate of Kent State University and has a bachelor's degree in sociology. He is a member of Portage County Suicide Prevention Coalition and a graduate of the Mental Health & Recovery Board's Crisis Intervention Team training. A past president of the Kent Lions, Langstaff has two sons, Ben and Sam.

Board tours Family and Community Services' new home

The Mental Health and Recovery Board has taken its monthly board meetings on the road and visited the offices of network agencies. In December, Family and Community Services, Inc., hosted the group at its new central office on Oakwood Street in Ravenna. F&CS Executive Director Mark Frisone, right, points out the building location on an aerial photograph. Looking on are, left to right, board members Dan Todd of Streetsboro, Leona Brown of Brimfield Township, Vice Chairman Kris McCully of Rootstown Township, Hilary Kane of Mantua Township with her back to the camera, Terri MGuckin of Kent and Dr. Stan Wearden of Kent.



Advocate helps adults learn to communicate with teens on relationship violence

Colleen Haines of Safer Futures keeps a stack of cards at hand to remind her that teens in Portage County have many questions about healthy and unhealthy relationships. The cards contain "every kind of question you can imagine" from the students she talks to during her **Dating Violence and Healthy Relationship** presentations at area high schools and middle schools.

Haines has served as the child advocate at the county's domestic violence shelter for more than five years. Her position is funded by the Mental Health & Recovery Board of Portage County with funds from a local mental health and recovery levy. Family and Community Services, Inc., operates the shelter that protects an average 50 families per year while also starting them on the road to healing.

Haines' role as an educator is part of advocate's responsibilities. The **Dating Violence and Healthy Relationship** workshop was developed in tandem four years ago with Townhall II, another agency funded by the Mental Health & Recovery Board.

"Adults working with teens need to be aware of the issues surrounding teen dating violence and be able to act when they see it," she explains. "This workshop helps school staff understand the dynamics of a violent teen relationship and the seriousness of the issue."

One workshop is geared to school staff while another is designed for middle and high school students, usually presented during health class. There is no cost for the workshops. She offers other talks from 15 minutes to three hours based on audiences' needs. She has trained daycare workers on the signs of abuse, professional staff on children who witness violence and community groups on these and other topics.

Haines' main role is to work with families who are seeking shelter at Safer Futures. During an intake or interview with each family, Haines identifies the needs of each child, which can be medical, educational or emotional. She creates a case plan to connect the family with services and works with mothers on parenting. She also leads weekly support groups for children living with domestic violence. Haines can be contacted by calling 330-673-2500 or 330-296-2100.

Visit our website at www.mental-health-recovery.org
or www.portage.oh.networkofcare.org



...continued from page 1

National Alliance on Mental Illness establishes Veterans Resource Center

NAMI has developed the Veterans Resource Center, an online portal to mental health resources for America's veterans, active duty service members and their families. The address is www.nami.org/veterans

VA Suicide Prevention Lifeline up and running 24/7

To ensure veterans with emotional crises have round-the-clock access to trained professionals, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun operation of a national suicide prevention hotline for veterans. To operate the national hotline, VA is partnering with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Veterans can call **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** and press "1" to reach the VA hotline.

What is the MHRB?

The Mental Health & Recovery Board supports healthy communities by investing in services to help residents of all ages who need treatment for mental health or substance abuse dependence problems and to provide prevention education, especially for youths at risk for substance abuse. The Board's funds also support 24-hour emergency services to help residents in crisis and to provide assistance when communities experience crisis incidents. A county government agency, the Board funds services through a network of community-based agencies. Services help thousands of children, teens, families, adults and seniors each year. The network includes: Coleman Professional Services, Townhall II, Children's Advantage, Family and Community Services and its Safer Futures program, The Bair Foundation and Compass Recovery.

Members of the MHRB

Ronald Heineking of Kent, Chairman
Kristine McCully, R.N., of Rootstown Township, Vice Chairman
Leona Brown of Brimfield Township
Jennifer Colgrove of Ravenna
Karen Cox of Atwater Township
Barbara Evans, M. Ed., of Rootstown Township
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