

Spring Edition: May 2022

The Voice



A letter from our Executive Director

Hello Friends of the MHA,

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Mental Health Awareness Month provides a timely reminder that mental health is essential and that those living with mental health issues are deserving of care, understanding, compassion, and pathways to hope, healing, recovery, and fulfillment. How can you recognize and support Mental Health Awareness in your daily life?

END THE STIGMA!

We can help end the stigma of mental health by normalizing the conversation surrounding it. Stigmas are born of negative stereotypes, false-truths, and misconceptions. Doing nothing only encourages this misguided, negative behavior. Educating yourself, getting the facts, and positively supporting others are examples of how you can help create an opening for discussions and normalize these conversations.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH!

Mental health affects physical health, and can lead to a weakened immune system, high blood pressure, heart disease, asthma, diabetes, and can even negatively impact life expectancy. For example, anxiety and depression often manifest as sleep disturbances – either sleeping too much or not enough. Sleep disorders can cause physical and emotional fatigue, irritability, poor memory recall, and physical pain such as muscle tension, headaches, and stomach issues. And vice versa, chronic physical conditions can contribute to a higher risk of depression and anxiety.

INSPIRE OTHERS TO GET INVOLVED ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social media platforms are great ways to educate others and spread the word about Mental Health Awareness Month. Plus, these platforms allow your friends, colleagues, and followers to easily share what you post to increase your outreach. Post facts, tips, and support on your personal or organizational accounts to get others involved. Whenever you post about mental health, don't forget to use hashtags like #MentalHealthAwarenessMonth or #EndTheStigma to be included in the larger conversation about mental health on social media. Hashtags allow your posts and tweets to be included in search results on Facebook and Twitter so that you can reach a wider audience.

Daniel Colpoys
Executive Director





Office of
Mental Health



Niagara County Department of
Mental Health and Substance

Abuse Services



American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention

Colonial Heights
FREE METHODIST CHURCH



Planting Seeds of Hope!

A suicide prevention community event.

When: May 21, 2022, 12-2:30pm

Where: Colonial Heights Free Methodist Church:

1310 Saunders Settlement Rd., Niagara Falls, NY 14305 (Rte. 31)

Why: in conjunction with Mental Health Awareness Month

What: Mental Health and Wellness 101 presentation, panel discussion, "Chalk the Walk," several vendors will be on hand, and there will be giveaways. Light snacks will be provided.

For any questions, please contact the Mental Health Association in Niagara County at 716-433-3780. You can also contact the Community Education Coordinator, Rhiannon O'Shea, at 716-433-3780 ext. 309 or via email at roshea@mhanc.com.

Meet our new hires!

Deja Darrell, In-Home Respite Program

I have studied forensic science at Hilbert College and I'm currently studying criminal justice at Bryant & Stratton. I enjoy getting to know each and every kid in Respite and how unique they are in their own way. I also work at the Lockport Parks program over the summer with kids.



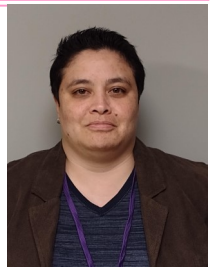
Jared Grenzebach, Mobile Transition Specialist at Hope House

I like to hike, travel, meditate, and go to concerts. I really love being able to validate a client's feelings and relate to a client to help them reach their goals. Now that COVID restrictions have eased, I also like being able to meet the clients at their homes to connect face to face.



Jean Bonet, Peer Specialist at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center

My hobbies include arts and crafts, In this new job position, working on the behavioral health unit, I am learning that self-care should include such things as arts and crafts in our daily routines. Our self-care choices keep our mental health in balance.



Consider the Platypus by Crystal Hites, Peer Activities Director

Everybody loves the platypus. But the platypus makes no sense. Endlessly complex, the platypus apologizes to no one for being ridiculously different. They are furry mammals with duck bills and beaver tails and webbed feet, and the males have venomous spurs on their hind feet. Even though they're mammals, they lay eggs. In this differentness the Platypus is wonderfully adorable and adapted to its own particular life. No one can live the platypuses' life better than the platypus can. What does this have to do with mental health? It's okay to be you. It's okay to be complex. You don't owe anyone an explanation or an apology for your brilliant, weird, complicated existence. Work towards being a lead singer while overcoming social anxiety. Be in love with someone and still recognize they are unhealthy for you to date and thus move on. Do the right thing even though it feels uncomfortable. Cry and not know why, just know that you need to cry. Have a career with kids because you're great with them, even though you don't want to have any. Go out and do something when your depression tells you that's impossible. Take that job that you know will be a challenge, but in a good way, and don't apologize to anyone if it doesn't work out. Be proud of who you are without needing any affirmations from anyone. Life doesn't have to make sense. It just has to be embraced in a big, huge affirming cuddle.



Educational Presentations for Students

Since the beginning of 2022, our Community Education Director, Rhiannon O'Shea, has presented to over 500 students in the Lewiston Porter and Newfane School Districts, as well as Orleans-Niagara BOCES and the Catholic Academy of Niagara Falls Elementary School. With support from the Grigg Lewis Foundation, and in collaboration with Mental Health Advocates of WNY, the presentations have included topics such as Building Health Relationships, Social Media & Cyberbullying, and Mental Health and Wellness 101 among others. One in six U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year. This is part of the reason the MHA has made doing presentations in schools to students AND teachers a priority. If you are a local student or Niagara County school district employee and would like us to speak in your class or school, give us a call at 716-433-3780.





Bowl-A-Thon 2022

The MHA's Bowl-A-Thon FUNdraiser held on Saturday, March 26th, at Allie Brandt Lanes in Lockport was a great success thanks to the close to 100 bowlers who participated. A basket raffle and 50/50 raffle were held in addition to the bowling. We look forward to seeing everyone at next year's Bowl-A-Thon.



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The Mission of The Mental Health Association in Niagara County, Inc. is to promote mental wellness by sponsoring and implementing advocacy, education and community service programs.

Executive Board

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The Mental Health Association in Niagara County, Inc. is funded by the New York State Office of Mental Health, the Niagara County Department of Mental Health, the United Way of Greater Niagara, grants, memberships and voluntary contributions.