



Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2021

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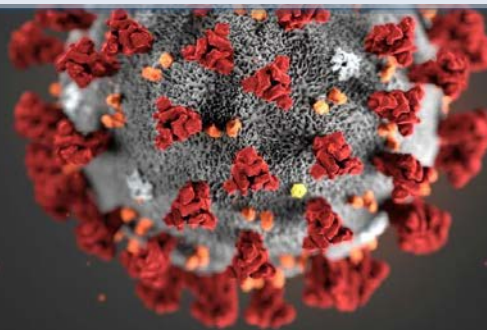
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COVID-19 Redefined our Lives in 2020



This year will go into the history books as one of the most difficult times our humankind has faced. This deadly pandemic and global threat present challenges that few alive today have experienced since the Spanish Flu over a 100 years ago. Our basic way of life will likely be forever changed even after most people are vaccinated.

Maintaining routines has become one of the most difficult challenges among all walks of life and among all the young and old. New way of doing things that require leaving your home takes on new checklists before stepping outside. Do you have a mask, gloves, face shield if you are so inclined to use it and, minimally remember to maintain social distancing measures.

The political climate did not help in promoting less confusion but added to it and wearing a mask somehow became a political statement. Confusion over when and how long to quarantine. Now the new question, when and how to access the vaccine?

And new vocabulary words sprung up: super spreader event, asymptomatic, telemedicine, essential, non-essential, intubation, respirators, PPE, N95, lockdown, stay at home orders, Zoom, Google Meets, Team Meetings, to name a few. Virtual and digital contacts have become the mainstay for many services we used to take for granted.

This issue will share experiences, mental health resources in face of this pandemic, tips and resources available to our community.

CHAIRPERSON'S NOTES

By Peggy Lounsbury

The SCCCMH, like many organizations, had a very difficult year. No successful fundraising and no activities. We are not sure when we will be able to resume regular activities, but meanwhile, please join or update your membership, and when possible, make a donation!

This special issue of our newsletter includes COVID-19 Information and resources, including where to get the vaccine and "How to Help Your Child" from isolation and depression due to the pandemic restrictions. And, "The View From Here", for the first time, features three submissions!

Please stay safe and get vaccinated so we can get back to some type of "normalcy" sooner!

**TSA is now RISE:
Healthy Housing & Support Services**

Transitional Services Association (TSA) has changed its name to RISE.

The name, "Transitional Services Association" no longer aligned with the organization's culture and vision. The organization felt the name should inspire hope and action – a welcoming brand that embraces the process of personal transformation.

RISE believes every person struggling with mental health diagnoses, substance use, and other life challenges has the power to RISE above those challenges. Through healthy housing and support services that respect the unique needs of every person, RISE knows that lasting positive change is achievable. Regardless of their situation, everyone deserves the chance to bring their talents and energy to their community, and to connect with people who value and respect them.

The high-quality residences and programs at RISE will continue to operate in the same way our community has come to know and trust. The devoted staff are re-energized by the work done to make this change possible. They are sporting new logo wear to raise awareness of our transformation – if you spot one of us in the community, please come say "hi!"

RISE is a brand built and designed by the community and our own staff and board, who came together to envision this next phase of our evolution. For more information, check out the RISE website: <https://www.riseservices.org/>

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Take NAMI's Stigma Free Pledge:

<https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Pledge-to-Be-StigmaFree/StigmaFree-Me/StigmaFree-Pledge>

No one should feel alone or without the information, support and help they need! Stay connected!



Submitted by Melodie Masterson

Donate your Birthday on Facebook to Benefit SCCCMH

Using Facebook's fundraising tool, you can now donate your birthday to a SCCCMH. In order to donate your birthday, simply click on the fundraising tab on your News Feed. From there, you can select SCCCMH as the charity you want to give to and set your fundraising goal as well as your fundraiser's end date. You can invite your friends directly to the fundraiser, so they can help you celebrate your birthday by helping the mental health community in Saratoga.



Help SCCCMH Increase Awareness: "Like" our Facebook Page!

Currently the Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health Facebook page has only 41 Likes. Please share with your friends and urge them to check-out our Facebook, and then then "Like" our page, and "Share" with your Facebook Friends

Thank you for your support! We continue to need your support to help us in our advocacy efforts toward improving Mental Health Services in our county, remove the stigma associated with those who live with Mental Health issues. We provide grant monies to those agencies that want to start up a new service or initiative that improves the lives of those they serve in Saratoga County! Please share our Facebook page to spread the news!!

COVID-19 Resources

New York State – Governor Cuomo has mandated wearing a mask and maintaining a 6-foot distance from others in public.

Monitor Your Symptoms. Common symptoms are fever and cough.

Emergency Warning Signs Include:

- Trouble breathing
- Pain or pressure in the chest that doesn't go away
- Experience confusion or trouble waking up
- Bluish lips or face

Call for medical attention immediately.

*This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are concerning or severe. You may also access the NYS

website <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/protect-yourself-and-your-family-coronavirus-covid-19>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

(Continued...)

COVID-19 Resources – Continued...

NY State Covid-19 Hotline – (888) 364-3065

NY State COVID-19 Emotional & Mental Health Toll free Support Line:
(844) 863-9314

Saratoga County COVID-19 Information:

<https://www.saratogacountyny.gov/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Resources-for-Saratoga-County-4.2.pdf>

VACCINES are available to people 16 and over in NYS. **They are FREE.** Locally, Walgreens and Price Chopper offers the vaccines by appointment via their websites or cell phone apps.

JOIN NOW!

Consumers, family and friends, mental health professionals and others, please join the SCCCMH now for the new year. As a member of SCCCMH, you will get our newsletter, and more important, you will help SCCCMH carry-out our mission to be the voice of people living with mental illness in Saratoga County. The more members we have, the more power we have to influence local and state government.

Also, consider a charitable gift to SCCCMH. You can honor or memorize someone and help make a difference in the mental health community, too.

Give power and your support to the mental health community...join today!

SCCCMH Newsletter is the official publication of the Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health, P.O. Box 820, Saratoga Springs, New York 12866
www.SCCCMH-Saratoga.org

The views expressed in this newsletter represent the opinions of the authors and do not represent the official position or opinions of the SCCCMH unless specifically stated.

The SCCCMH Board of Trustees reserves the right to decide the content of the newsletter, and reserves the right to review, revise, shorten or deny articles for publication. Articles submitted for publication consideration should not be longer than 250 words unless the author is specifically invited to do so. Also, submitting the copy as a Microsoft Word document or typed within the body of an e-mail message is preferred. Send articles to the Newsletter Editor's e-mail address. Articles not submitted electronically can be mailed to the address above.

THE VIEW FROM HERE

"What Happens"

by Amanda Blodgett

First, I feel it in my gut.
It feels like my gut is waded up
into a ball.

Then I feel a hard tingling
up my spine.

Then my palms start to sweat.
Then I feel kind of dizzy.

Only after all that does my mind
go a little crazy and seem
not to focus on anything.
And my heart races and
I feel like I can't breathe.

Yup, that's a panic attack.

Another View:

"On Compassion"

By Effy Redman

Moving through the mental health world as both a recipient of counseling and an ad hoc listener and empath, I think a lot about the vitality of compassion. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines compassion as "sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it." This desire stems from our humanity. Everyone suffers. Therefore, those who choose to serve as compassionate listeners transform pain into empathy.

What does it take to listen, to offer someone your complete attention? My therapist once told me that sometimes, at the end of a day in session with clients, she is beyond exhausted, unable to do anything other than rest. Hearing this, I realized that, momentarily, the tables had turned, that my therapist was confiding in me. The difference between her confidence and my confidences lay partly in the fact that was not expected to present a solution to her difficulty.

Rather, we took a pause in dialogue before returning to discussion of my personal issues. Hearing my therapist speak of her exhaustion

Continued on page 6, see The View

Mental Health First Aid Training

MHANYs' is providing **free** Mental Health First Aid training to individuals who work with or support the **General Public** within Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties. Mental Health First Aid is often referred to as CPR for the mind; it is an evidence-based training that introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental illness along with a 3-year certification from the National Council for Behavioral Health.

You are more likely to encounter someone — friend, family member, coworker, neighbor, or member of the community — in an emotional or mental crisis than someone having a heart attack. **Mental Health First Aid teaches a 5-step action plan** to offer initial help to people with the signs and symptoms of a mental illness or in a crisis, and connect them with the appropriate professional, peer, social, or self-help care. Anyone can take the 8-hour Mental Health First Aid course — first responders, students, teachers, leaders of faith communities, human resources professionals, and caring citizens.

A new schedule for more trainings in 2021

www.MHANY.org for more information

Share Mental Health news
and Views

Please consider sharing your opinions and news of community efforts that address mental health issues in our local area!

We want to invite more readers to contribute to our newsletter, so we can continue to enrich, advocate, and educate all that happen to pick up a copy! Help us reach out and share what really matters to you!

Grants Available from SCCCMH

The Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health awards monetary grants to not-for-profit organizations that provide services or assistance to people living with mental illness in Saratoga County. Awards are generally up to one thousand dollars and are distributed three times a year. Contact Peggy Lounsbury or visit our website for more information and an application.



.How to help your Child Manage Depression from Corona Virus Isolation

DEC. 04, 2020

By Anna Medina


Children and adolescents are currently more vulnerable to depression due to the prolonged isolation from this pandemic. However, parents can help their child prevent or manage symptoms of depression by noticing the warning signs, being there for them and encouraging the use of healthy coping skills.

Warning Signs to Look Out For

Not all parents know when their child needs help with their mental health. So, let's look at some of the warning signs for the onset of depression.

- Mood changes that are unusual for your child. For example, it could be an increased feeling of irritability, anxiety or anger.
- Behavioral and communication changes. For example, you may notice that your child has begun to communicate less with peers, avoids communication on social networks or does not want to communicate with relatives for no apparent reason.
- Lack of interest in usual activities. For example, if your child abruptly abandons their hobbies for no reason.
- Trouble falling asleep and waking up.
- Physiological change, such as weight gain or loss due to increased appetite or lack of it.
- Unwillingness to study and a decline in academic performance.
- Bad memory and concentration

Become a part of the Voice of Saratoga County Mental Health Community. Join SCCCMH Today!


This publication was prepared with the assistance of Four Winds –Saratoga

How to Help Them Cope

In addition to getting them professional help, you can also help your child learn and practice healthy coping skills.

Establish Trust - The relationship with your child plays a significant role. Talking openly with them and show them the value and benefit of speaking openly about their mental health, which is a very important coping skill. It's important that you practice healthy coping skills to set a positive example and to be more emotionally available to help your child.

Find Alternatives- It can be stressful and overwhelming for a child that the usual way of life is not available. It is vital here to explain that there are potential benefits during this isolation as well as many alternatives to their normal activities. For example, if your child is very socially active and cannot do without communication with peers, tell them can stay up later than their normal bedtime if they want to talk to their friends on the phone or over Zoom.

Set a Social Media Schedule - Isolation has digitized almost all interactions and it is important to remember that social networks can be harmful to a child or teenager's mental health. Talk to your child about creating a social media schedule so that it will be easier for them to return to the old schedule after the end of quarantine. It is also important to give your child attention. The more live communication you provide, the less desire the teen will have to disappear on the Internet. Create evening entertainment for the whole family. This can be board games, table tennis, cooking and so on. The key is to find entertainment that will interest them.

Reward Your Child for Academic Success -If you notice that your child is losing the desire to learn because of distance learning, then come up with good motivation or encouragement. For example, you can incentivize your child by offering gifts, prizes or their favorite meal at the end of the school week if they stay on task.

Spend Time Outdoors- Spending time in your backyard during isolation can be helpful to boost their mood. But it will be even better if you arrange a family trip outside your home at least once a week. Go to the forest or river, where it will be safe to spend some time, take a walk and get some fresh air. It can help your child feel less isolated to go out into the world. Time outside also reduces stress and is a great way to spend quality time as a family.

Remember that a period of isolation is a good opportunity to improve your relationship with your children and give them the attention they need. If they are struggling with their mental health, don't lose hope, you can help them get through the tough days of this pandemic,



The View, Continued from page 4

changed my perception of her, from an image eternally stoic to one reassuringly human. After all, there is only so much listening a person can do without reaching informational capacity. However much the well of empathy expands, at a certain point, something's got to give.

Granted, I am not a therapist, numerous people have told me I am a good listener. I think this stems from my belief in compassion as a method toward survival. I listen because others listen to me. It makes sense to complete a circle. In the right environment, negative emotions spoken out loud lose some of their power; positive emotions voiced stretch wider, as easily as a cloud before rain. Similarly, to how the whole reflects the broken, compassion encompasses pain.

Feelings may fluctuate, but compassion's role is steadfast--a safety net for any human struggle. No matter how heavily you fall, compassion catches you, like cupped hands receiving a ball.

And, Another View:

"A Proposal"

by Mark Porteus

The mentally ill are disadvantaged and subject to discrimination in society and the workplace. What if, through a shift in public policy, it was decided to deliberately form an intentional, parallel society of the mentally ill, which was recognized as separate but equal. A possible justification is the economic status of the mentally ill, with most of them living in or near poverty, and with very high unemployment rates. This is true throughout the U.S. Plus with recurrent talk of entitlement reform, the mentally ill as a class are VERY dependent on transfer payments for support, it would be beneficial for them to become, at least in part, economically self-sufficient. It would also benefit the nation, and relieve the drain on the Treasury.

The point should be made that there is plenty of work crying out to be done in this country if the political will to tackle it could be summoned. It may not be rocket science, but it needs to be done. Ideally, this change in public policy would occur at the Federal level and be written into law. What would this look like?

(Continued...)

Perhaps the best description would be communities of the mentally ill within larger communities of ordinary people. This does not mean draconian resettlement schemes, it means the recognition of the mentally ill, under the law, as a distinct group in the same way Native Americans are recognized under the law as a distinct group. The mentally ill would, in effect, band together as a now economically and socially deprived class. This would also entail a change in the public perception of the mentally ill, something that has been tackled piecemeal by private individuals acting as advocates and public figures acting largely on their own, but not in any systematic, broad-based manner. It would require the mobilization of public opinion in much the same way anti-tobacco sentiment became widespread or the acceptance of same-sex marriage. It could be done through structural change in society and law when consensus develops. Like any major societal change, this would require long-term, sustained effort.

All of this would also require a radical re-orientation of mental health treatment practice, especially psychiatric, in that the presumption would be one not of disability, but one of competence in moving from primarily palliative practice to the active re-integration of the client into the work and social fabric of the community. This may seem anecdotal and a slim basis for the above, but from 52 years of living with schizophrenia I believe it holds water: a rehabilitation counselor I knew some forty years ago would frequently remark, "You can be hallucinating like crazy and still play a great game of tennis." She was someone who spent much of her time with patients and knew them in a way many professionals do not. The meaning: the mentally ill, given the leeway to improvise, can very often accommodate themselves (sort out the probabilities and possibilities) to a situation, assuming reasonable allowances are made. Mental illness is not, on the face of it, a prescription for failure. People can and do accommodate themselves to circumstances.

Separate as a class but equal might be the answer. Everyone deserves a fair shake. This is a long-haul proposition. Other groups have altered the national landscape through determined, long-term effort. What the mentally ill do have is a strong moral case, pointing out the wasted human potential many of them now represent, for economic inclusion. Social inclusion might take care of itself if the mentally ill were not set apart by economic circumstance.

Separate as a class but equal might be the answer.



For more information, contact:

Chairperson: Peggy Lounsbury
E-mail: plounsbury@saratogacare.org
Phone: 518-583-8371

Or visit our website: www.SCCCMH-Saratoga.org
and check out our **Face Book Page!**

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM FOR YEAR: April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022

SCCCMH Mission: The SCCCMH is a non-profit, charitable organization [501(c)3] whose mission it is to:

Program Development and Enrichment: Award grants of approximately \$1000 to agencies and programs in Saratoga County that provide services to people with mental illness or have mental and emotional needs so they can enrich existing programs or expand services.

Education: Provide affordable educational opportunities for mental health professionals and consumers of mental health services.

Advocacy: Advocate for improved mental health care and services by lobbying government and elected officials.

Increase Awareness: Increase public awareness of the needs of individuals with mental illness. For example, increase access to public transportation, decrease stigmas or stereotypes.

Member Benefits: Membership fees support the development of mental health services in Saratoga County through grants, educational opportunities, and lobbying, as well as the publication of the biannual SCCCMH Newsletter.

More Members. More Power. More Benefits.

PLEASE CHECK ONE:

New Member Membership Renewal Remove my information from the SCCCMH mailing list

First Name _____ Last _____ Prefix/Suffix: _____

Address Home Work: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone Number(s): Home _____ Work _____

If you want to receive the newsletter and other notices from the SCCCMH via e-mail, please provide your e-mail address:

If you are a provider of mental health services and would like to be included in the Saratoga County Network for Mental Health Professionals and Advocates (SCN-MHPA), then check here:

If you would like to participate in a mental health consumer workshop, then check here:

Membership fee is based on a “pay what you will” basis (Check One):

- I want to be a member, but I am unable provide financial support.
- I want to be a member. I will consider a contribution at a later date.
- I want to be a member, enclosed is my tax deductible donation of: \$10 \$25 \$35 Other: _____

MAKE CHECKS OUT TO: SCCCMH. Do not send cash in the mail.

MAIL TO: SCCCMH, P.O. Box 820, Saratoga Springs, New York 12866

MAKE SURE THE VOICE OF THE SARATOGA COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY IS HEARD.....JOIN SCCCMH TODAY!!



www.scccmh-saratoga.org

For more information about
the SCCCMH, contact
Peggy Lounsbury,
Chairperson,
at 518-583-8371

The Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health (SCCCMH) is a non-profit, charitable organization that **distributes grant money** to agencies and programs in Saratoga County so they can enrich existing programs or expand services for people with mental illness. The SCCCMH also provides affordable **educational opportunities** for professionals and consumers, **advocates** for improved mental health care and services; and **increases public awareness** of the needs of people living with mental illness.

Saratoga County Citizens
Committee for Mental Health

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Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

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