



# Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health

# NEWSLETTER

Fall 2022

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## 5 Questions on Mental Health and Street-Homelessness with the RISE Outreach Team -Victoria Furfaro and Jenna Espey

*In June of 2022, in recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month, the Saratoga County Alliance to End Homelessness sat down with the street outreach team members at RISE – our county’s sole mental health and recovery housing provider. Victoria Furfaro and Jenna Espey provide outreach services to individuals experiencing street-homelessness in Saratoga Springs and coordinate the City’s Community Outreach Court - assisting persons with a mental health diagnosis or substance use disorder who are also experiencing street-homelessness, from continuing the cycle of street, to jail, and back into the courts.*

**Q: Does your professional experience in Saratoga indicate a correlation between street-homelessness and mental health?**

**Victoria:** *Through my work in Saratoga, the correlation between street-homelessness (specifically) and mental health has become abundantly clear. I would say the majority, if not all, the folks we work with have a mental health condition - whether it be diagnosed and treated... or not. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs outlines the importance of having basic needs met to reach an optimal psychiatric state. When an individual is experiencing street-homelessness, they are not having those needs met, and are more vulnerable to developing or exacerbating a mental health issue.*

**Jenna:** *Yes! - Without continued treatment and services, it is hard for an individual that is living with mental illness to stay off the street. Supported housing is an effective option for people living with mental health conditions - offering a variety of services such as health care, peer support, advocacy, money management, daily living support, social/recreational activities, and crisis intervention. Unfortunately, lack of funding is often a major barrier to the implementation of supported housing programs.*

**Q: What resources are available for folks experiencing street-homelessness that are struggling with mental health issues?**

**Victoria:** *Individuals experiencing street-homelessness have the same mental health resources as someone who is housed – though they suffer additional roadblocks to access. They often do not have insurance, and if they do, they likely do not have their insurance card. Transportation to appointments is another inequitable barrier. Even when telehealth is provided as an option, most do not have cell phones or laptops to meet virtually. Due to the COVID pandemic, waitlists for outpatient mental health services are very long. If an individual misses an appointment, they must wait for another slot to open. Due to unreliable transportation and minimal access*

**Continued on pg. 4**

**CHAIRPERSON'S NOTES**

By Peggy Lounsbury

In this issue of SCCCMH News, our headline story talks about street homelessness and mental illness. SCCCMH board decided that for this year we will focus our attention on homelessness. In addition to this article, the board is organizing an event on **March 1, 2023, at the Saratoga Springs City Center, "Changing the Lens on Homelessness."** As we discussed this topic, we recognized there are many facets to this issue. Therefore, by "changing the lens" through which the general public and professionals view homelessness perhaps this will result in a clearer and more compassionate view. On page 7 there is an ad that can be printed and posted to promote this program. Also, on page 7 is the "Save the Date" for SCCCMH **Annual Mental Health Matters Benefit, April 29, 2023.** We hope to see you at both events!



If you are an Amazon shopper, please select the Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health (SCCCMH) as the non-profit charitable organization to benefit from your purchase. When you make purchases through Amazon Smile, Amazon will donate .5% of your purchase to SCCCMH. It's easy to do, and it does not cost you any money.

Please use Amazon Smile and designate SCCCMH to receive a donation from Amazon! Every little bit helps!

**SCCCMH Grant Improves & Updates Play Therapy Room**

The Youth and Family Services (YFS) team at Saratoga County Department of Mental Health & Addictions Services received grant money from SCCCMH to update and improve their established Play Therapy Room. The Youth & Family Services team strives to provide high-quality, effective, evidence-based mental health care for Saratoga County youths and families.

Originally established with Grant funding in 1994, the Play Therapy Room is utilized by YFS Clinicians for play therapy sessions with individual children and their families. Play Therapy is a modality by which children are able to express themselves and work to resolve presenting emotional issues and stressors through play. This evidenced-based technique supports the resolve of a variety of mental health diagnoses and is particularly beneficial for children who are working through trauma.

*-Submitted by Katelyn Brunet, LCSW  
Supervising Social Worker - Therapist  
Youth & Family Services Program*



**Donate your Birthday on Facebook to Benefit SCCCMH**

Using Facebook's fundraising tool, you can donate your birthday to a SCCCMH.

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.

**THE VIEW FROM HERE**  
**Twelve Steps Made Me Sane**  
By Amanda Blodgett

First, I want to say that in no way I'm an expert or even a qualified sponsor! I've only reached Step Five. I'm just a fellow grateful traveler on the journey of the Twelve Steps. Next, I would like to say that the Twelve Steps are better when they are done with meetings, literature, and a sponsor. It's like losing weight, you need to exercise, eat right, and have professionals like a dietitian.

In my addiction, I kept trying to deny it and stay in a life that was "unmanageable." I was seeing my life in black and white. After my first couple of meetings, I started seeing my world in color. There so many points of view in life that I had even thought of. I now respect where I am in my life's journey and respect other's place in their journey.

Using my Twelve Step mediation book helped me by reminding me what I should be working on. And the first time I read my big book, I thought someone was reading my mind! I couldn't believe it. Something had been missing my whole life and now knew what it was.

The Twelve Steps themselves are miracle! My sponsor told me, after I worked the first three steps, "The first three steps can be sum up by, I can't (We admitted we were powerless over our addiction – that our lives had become unmanageable, He can (Came believe a power greater than  
Continued...

ourselves could restore us to sanity,) and I will let Him (Made a decision to turn our lives and our will over to the care of God as we understood God.)" I know one day, when I work all twelve steps, and take my first sponsee that I may have to change the pronouns. My sponsor used "he" because my higher power is a male.

My life is different now. The most important is that I stop think. Also, when I have "slip" I do not dwell on it, but think about what's the "next right thing." I have a journey to continue going on, but I have a fellowship to help me. Every night of the week I can find a meeting. I have a sponsor, who even though she does have her own life, tries to always make time for me. And I have all kinds of source martial to find wisdom. No, I'm not alone anymore!



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with the assistance of  
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[www.SCCCMH-Saratoga.org](http://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 SCCCMH unless specifically stated.

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.

**Continued from page 1:**

**Mental Health/Street Homelessness**

to clocks/watches, missed appointments are inevitable

**Jenna:** The Community Health Center provides a variety of services, including behavioral health care. The Saratoga Mental Health Clinic provides emergency and crisis intervention, screening, and referrals, individual, family, and group counseling, medication education and management, and symptom management. Unfortunately, when individuals are living on the street, they cannot appropriately manage their mental health symptoms. They often become decompensated to the point where they are unable to take care of themselves - not only mentally, but physically. If a harm to themselves or others, the Saratoga County Mental Health Clinic can be contacted to request a "pickup order." In this situation, an individual would be picked up by the police and brought to Saratoga Hospital for a mental health evaluation. If deemed necessary, they would be admitted to the Hospital's Mental Health Unit. In a perfect world, the individual would then be transferred directly to a housing program that would provide extra support while they focus on their recovery and/or mental health needs. However, due to the growing need for low-income housing and support services, many housing programs have long waitlists which leads to individuals being released from hospitals back to street-homelessness.

**Q: What resources are missing?**

**Victoria:** The biggest gap is the accessibility of providers. Mobile units are far and few between and are CRUCIAL for these individuals. Providers' knowledge of street-homelessness and the correlation it has with mental health and chemical dependencies could also be improved upon. Often mental health providers will deny a client if they are using substances due to being outside of the scope of practice, though the two essentially go hand-in-hand. Our community is also in need of crisis stabilization residences/hospitals for individuals in acute psychiatric distress. RISE currently operates the

only crisis-stabilization beds in the City and is developing a facility which will add another 10. We anticipate opening the doors before the end of 2022.

**Jenna:** We need more low-income housing! No human can be their best self when their basic needs aren't being met. Providers face many barriers to finding housing for individuals living with mental health conditions. Some examples are landlords refusing to accept subsidized rent payments, stigma surrounding those with mental health conditions, and lack of available, affordable units. RISE is working to fill this gap with two 60-unit affordable housing developments in Ballston Spa and Corinth. Half of these will be supportive housing units for those living with mental health conditions.

**Q: What do you think is the most important thing for our community to know about street-homelessness and the impacts of mental health?**

**Victoria:** I think it's very important that individuals in the community put themselves in the shoes of those experiencing street-homelessness, as they are often looked down upon. If YOU had to wonder where you would lay your head at night, where your next meal was coming from, or if you would find a restroom to use, how would your mental health be? Feelings of self-worth, purpose, and acceptance often elude these individuals, and the community can play a role in advocating for those who have lost their voice.

**Jenna:** Society needs to understand that with housing and support from service providers, individuals living with mental conditions can manage symptoms and live productively in communities. Too many believe homelessness is due to individuals' shortcomings, while studies show that the four main causes are lack of affordable housing, poverty, unemployment, and low wages. Due to this, there are many gaps in services that make it difficult for individuals that are experiencing street-homelessness and impacted by mental health issues to get back on their feet. Efforts need to be made to mend these gaps in the system to effectively help our street-homeless population."

**The end**



***Donate to SCCCMH and be entered into a drawing for local gift cards in the Love Our Locals 2022 campaign.***

The Love Our Locals Campaign began in 2020 with a focus on supporting Saratoga County businesses and nonprofits, and the goal was to encourage economic growth and investment in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to an outpouring of support for this campaign, it returned in 2021 and continued to benefit the country's economy.

For 2022, the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce is presenting the Love Our Locals \$20.22 campaign, which runs from now through December 31, 2022. After spending or donating \$20.22 or more in support of a Saratoga County business or nonprofit – like RISE, all you have to do is take a photo of your receipt and email it to [loveourlocals@saratoga.org](mailto:loveourlocals@saratoga.org).

Each week the Chamber will randomly select winners to receive the \$100 gift cards to local businesses. Winners will be announced across the Chamber's social media channels and notified separately via email with details about how to claim their gift card.



**Support Saratoga County organizations for the chance to win!**



**Help SCCCMH Increase Awareness:  
Follow our Facebook Page!**

Please share the SCCCMH Facebook Page with your family and friends and ask them to follow and share our page!

**Thank You for Your Support!**

We need the continued support of people like you to help in our advocacy efforts toward improving Mental Health Services in our county and to remove the stigma associated with those who live with Mental Health issues. We provide grant money to agencies that want to start up services or initiatives that improves the lives of those they serve in Saratoga County! Please follow and share our Facebook page to spread the news!

**JOIN NOW!**

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

Please consider a charitable gift to SCCCMH. You can honor or memorialize someone while making a difference in the mental health community.

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



## **SCCCMH Represented at Business to Business Expo**

SCCCMH attended the 2022 Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce Business to Business Expo on Thursday, October 6, 2022. We connected with many individuals and businesses who were in attendance. We shared our mission and the need for donations to SCCCMH to help us in providing grants to organizations who provide mental health services to individuals in need in Saratoga County as well as to assist us in educating others to help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health.



Melodie Masterson and Victoria Furfaro

## **Submit Mental Health News and Views Articles**

Consider submitting an article for the “View From Here” column. This is a powerful way to share your experience as a consumer, family member, professional, or advocate.

Also, appreciated are mental health-related news and stories.

Articles can be around 150 to 250 words.

Submit your articles via e-mail to [info@SCCCMH-Saratoga.org](mailto:info@SCCCMH-Saratoga.org).

## **Mental Health First Aid Training**

MHANY provides **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.

For more information, visit the MHANYS website:

<https://mhanys.org/products/mhfa/>

***Become a part of the Voice of Saratoga County Mental Health Community.***

***Join SCCCMH Today!***

## **SCCCMH Grants Available Now**

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 download an application.

**SAVE THE DATES!!!**

The Saratoga County Citizens  
Committee for Mental Health

PRESENTS:

# CHANGING THE LENS ON HOMELESSNESS

A public discussion on homelessness  
and mental health in Saratoga County

DATE:  
March 1, 2023

TIME:  
6 pm - 8 pm

LOCATION:  
Saratoga Springs City Center  
Meeting Room 1



***Save the Date!***  
***Annual Mental Health  
Matters Benefit  
Saturday,  
April 29<sup>th</sup> 2023  
Wilton Elks Lodge***

# Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health Newsletter

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Phone: 518-583-8371

Or visit our website: [www.SCCCMH-Saratoga.org](http://www.SCCCMH-Saratoga.org)  
and check out our **Facebook Page!**

## **ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM FOR YEAR: April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023**

**SCCCMH Mission:** 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 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 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!!**