

Highlights:

MHM Annual Benefit 2023..... 1
 Chairperson’s Notes..... 3
 A View From Here..... 4
 Changing the Lens..... 6
 1st Responder Peer Support..... 8
 Mental Health First Aid..... 9
 SCCCMH Grants Available..... 9
 MHM Benefit Reservation From..... 11
 SCCCMH Membership Application...12

SCCCMH Board of Directors

Peggy Lounsbury
 Chairperson
 plounsbury@saratogacare.org
 518.583.8371

Leslie Ives
 Vice Chairperson

Robert Lounsbury
 Treasurer

Amanda Blodgett
 Secretary

Chrissy Hechemy
 Social Chair person,
 Annual Benefit Co-Chairperson

Melodie Masterson
 Public Relations, Webmaster,
 Legislation Chairperson

Liz McFarren
 Annual Benefit Chairperson

Victoria Furfaro
 Fundraising Chairperson

Kate Evanico
 Newsletter Chairperson

Heather Wolfe
 Grants Chairperson

Mental Health Matters Benefit

April 20, 2024

Saratoga-Wilton Elks Lodge

The SCCCMH Citizen of the Year



**Jennifer Myers, Unlimited Potential
 Program Director**

Jennifer Myers has been named the SCCCMH Citizen of the Year for 2024. Jennifer will be honored at the Mental Health Matters Benefit on Saturday, April 20, 2024 being held at the Saratoga-Wilton Elks Lodge. The registration form for this event is included with this newsletter or you can **register on line**.

Jennifer began her career in the mental health field after graduating from the State University at Albany with a degree in Criminal Justice and Political Science. Jennifer’s first job in the field was for Residential Support Services’ Young Adult Division Apartment Program. Jennifer speaks of “always (having) wanted to help people and try to make the world a better place.”

Continued on Page 2

Citizen of the year Continued from Page 1

Jennifer's career transitioned from Albany into the local Saratoga community after her supervisor with Rehabilitation Support Services, Inc. (RSS) asked her to come work for her in the Progressive Steps Apartment program (one of several housing programs run by RISE Housing and Support Services, or as it was named at that time Transitional Services Association.)



Jennifer was happy to accept this role in her hometown and to no longer have to commute to Albany. Jennifer was employed by RISE for 11 years in various roles including PSAP Counselor, PSAP Program Supervisor, Supported Housing Program Director, and Assisted Outpatient Treatment Case Manager.

In 2005, she began working at Unlimited Potential as an employment counselor. She was quickly promoted to Director of the Work Center and in 2021 became Program Director for Unlimited Potential.

Jennifer, now going on 30 years of working in the mental health field, speaks of her career fondly. "I feel so very blessed to work in a county that has so many great services available to people and that all the agencies work well together and complement each other as part of a cohesive treatment team.

I am doubly blessed to work with such a great team at Unlimited Potential because you can't do this work alone, you need to have a supportive group of people working towards the same mission."

Outside of Jennifer's busy work life, she enjoys zipping around on her VESPA, participating in local 5ks to support local impact sector organizations, spending time with her llamas and other fur babies, kayaking, and annoying her husband.

In particular, Jennifer shares that she had the opportunity to participate in the development of the very first Building a Community of Excellence Together Summit last year. "It was a great forum to show the stakeholders and businesses all the good work and services the impact sector organizations do."

Jennifer shares that The Starfish Story resonates with her and would like us to share it here.

The Starfish Story

An old man was walking on the beach one morning after a storm. In the distance, he could see someone moving like a dancer.

As he came closer, he saw that it was a young woman picking up starfish and gently throwing them into the ocean. "Young lady, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?"

"The sun is up, and the tide is going out, and if I do not throw them in they will die," she said.

"But young lady, do you not realize that there are many miles of beach and thousands of starfish? You cannot possibly make a difference."

The young woman listened politely, then bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it into the sea.

"It made a difference for that one."

- Adapted from the original by Loren Eiseley



CHAIRPERSON'S NOTES

By Peggy Lounsbury



Robert & Peggy Lounsbury

In 2022, the SCCCMH Board of Directors decided to have public forums to increase people's awareness of issues, conditions and problems impacting people living with mental illness. The Board decided to call these forums, "Changing the Lens on..." It really started because homelessness in Saratoga was a "problem" political leaders felt needed to be solved. It appeared they were working hard on solutions without a deeper understanding of the condition.

During the Board's discussion at the time, some of us realized that we didn't understand the multi-faceted condition of homelessness and we realized we needed to look at the situation through a different lens. In other words, a lens that allows us to look deeper into the situation without judgmental assessments or opinions. This new lens allows us to be understanding and demonstrate empathy. It is with this revelation that "Changing Lens Series" was born. Last year our, the first "Changing Lens" program was on homelessness.

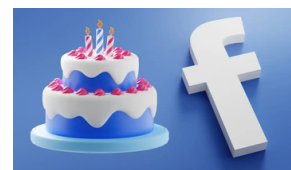
This year, as you will see later in this newsletter, our program, "Changing Lens on Substance Use" was presented March 13, 2024 at the Saratoga Springs Library. For this program we assembled a panel of experts to lead the public discussion.

The hope of the "Changing Lens" programs is to stamp out stigma and develop empathy for the people impacted by the condition. Next year, the "Changing Lens" program will be on mental illness.

Our major fundraiser is April 20th. After the pandemic, we decided to make our fundraiser into a fun maker, too! The Mental Health Matters Benefit is held in the Heritage Banquet Room at the Saratoga-Wilton Elks Lodge. The food buffet is provided by Simply Food by Maura. Our DJ is Mike Rafferty and he plays great dance music.

There is a fun photo booth for friends to gather and use props for silly group photos. To enhance our fundraising we have raffles and a live auction. So, make reservations for this fundraiser & fun maker. The reservation form is attached to this newsletter. Space is limited so make your reservation soon!

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.

A VIEW FROM HERE

My name is Jessica, I prefer to go by Jess though. I'm a thriving 26 year old. I have battled my whole life with mental health and addiction. Whether that be myself or my closest friends and family members. I believe the two go very closely hand in hand together.



Jess & her friend, James

I grew up in Daytona beach Florida. When I was 4 years old I lost my mother. She passed from breast cancer and she was 37. While my dad was devastated, I never knew my mother. I don't remember much of her. Just stories that were told from family members.

My father started using drugs and drinking heavily. Smoking 3-4 packs of cigarettes per day. I told myself, when I got a little older, I would never be that way, and do those things. Little did I know I was in for a wild ride myself

At 8 years old my dad introduced me to my first beer. I would sneak the beers he had open and drink them. While he thought nothing of it, thinking he just finished one and opened a new one.

My dad battled with alcoholism and drug use. He would have women and his drug dealers at the house. He was trying to cope in the way he knew how to do. Instead of coping he was masking his pain, which is exactly what I started doing after he passed away. At the age of 12, I lost my dad. He lost his battle. He was 46.

Soon after my father died I was shipped from Florida to Delaware. I didn't know my aunt and uncle who took me in from Adam. After that they got me into counseling but I wanted to talk on my own terms. I wasn't ready to talk yet. And the counselor I had was prying a lot.

I met someone who introduced me to marijuana. I smoked a LOT of pot, cigarettes and drank liquor. I made some "friends" who were older than me and hung out with them a lot. Which also in turn, made it easy for me to get anything and everything I wanted at the time. I used substances to self medicate myself. I didn't want to feel, I wanted to numb the pain. I just lost both my parents and I was not dealing with anything, just knew how to do what my dad used to do from watching him. I was heading down that same path.

A lot of things happened within these 7 years and finally I got kicked out of my aunt and uncles house on Christmas Day. While I was 19, I was still in school and working at a grocery store as a cashier. I panicked. I packed up my room, all in a matter of about half an hour. Packed my car full of my stuff and called my best friend at the time, Hannah. I asked her if it wouldn't be a bother for me to come there.

While I lived there, I partied a lot. Drank and used drugs. I wasn't doing well in my mental health at all. It was a vicious cycle.

Continued on Page 5.

A View From Here Continued from Page 4

I finally made a decision. I saved up some money from working and told my brother and sister in law, I needed a fresh start. (My brother lives up here.) The day I graduated from high school I took a road trip in my Elantra, not turning back. I followed my brother and sister in law who came for my graduation and graduation party, all the way from Delaware to Upstate New York.

Although I had the mindset of wanting to change my life the actions didn't prove that, and I was in the vicious cycle again just in another state. People, places, things, and mindset all influence you. I changed the people, I changed the places and things, but not the mindset.

My mindset was to use to "cope," with the losses I had. It wasn't long before I got wrapped up in the people that used here. Soon enough, I got a DWI. I was drinking and driving and blew a 1.0 during my breathalyzer. They suspended my license and I went to court. I just did the biggest mistake of my life. They offered to drop it down to an ACOD IF I completed treatment. (This was in 2019, two years after I came to New York.)

I had to pay multiple thousands of dollars in fines, do Center for Recovery, and staying sober was my ultimate goal.

Sometimes it takes a hard knock back to realize you have a problem. But admitting you do have one is the first step. To anyone and everyone struggling with addiction I want you to know it is possible.

I've been in and out of homeless shelters, the Wait House, Shelters of Saratoga and living motels. I've lived at Milestone Manor, a Community Residence, rebuilding my foundation and coping skills.

I want to give a big shout out to Dawn Daum, program manager of Milestone Manor. She and the other staff there have helped me overcome so many obstacles. While living at Milestone, I put in work in Reflections PROS, (a psychiatric rehabilitation outpatient program) and I can see how far I'm coming from where I started when first coming to PROS.

I put in so much work and effort in while at Milestone Manor, and now I'm living in a RISE apartment through PSAP. I'm living independently with my best friend! I'm in therapy and I am taking my meds as prescribed. I've had my set backs and relapses. As of today, I have 10 weeks clean from marijuana. As of 2019 I have almost 5 years clean from spice, cocaine. Alcohol I had a couple relapses since 2019 but I haven't drank in three years. We do recover. (If you put the work in.)

Healing Springs in Saratoga is an amazing resource for those who need support. They have all different kinds of meetings for all kinds of different things. That was one of the first meetings I had ever been to. PROS is another amazing resource for people who need help, they have several groups where you're able to discuss things that are on your mind but also learn coping skills and build your own foundation for yourself to stand on.

So many amazing things they have to offer. So many great resources in this area, it's about how you seek them out or what you do to put the work in. You are loved, you are supported, cared for, and you got this!

But nothing changes if you do not change your people places and things. Along with mindset. End the vicious cycle. Break the cycle.

Thank you.

CHANGING THE LENS ON SUBSTANCE USE

A public discussion on substance use and its impact
on mental health in Saratoga County

On March 13, SCCCMH hosted the 2nd Annual “Changing the Lens” series. This year the focus was on changing the lens on substance use and its impact on mental health. You can review a recording of the event on our [Facebook Page](#).



The event was moderated by **Victoria Furfaro, CASAC-T**, RISE Housing and Support Services.

The panel of experts leading the discussion were:

Sam Halajian,

PA at Community Health Center,

Dr. Joshua Zamer, MD

Saratoga Community Health Center

Lauren Kelly, CASAC

Saratoga Community Health Center

Julianne Thomas, CASAC-A

RISE Housing and Support Services

Nicole Smarro, CASAC-P

RISE Housing and Support Services

Ben Deeb, CRPA

Healing Springs Recovery Community Center

Meghan Riihimaki, LMHC and CASAC

Saratoga County Addiction Services (SCAS)

Brendan King, CRPA

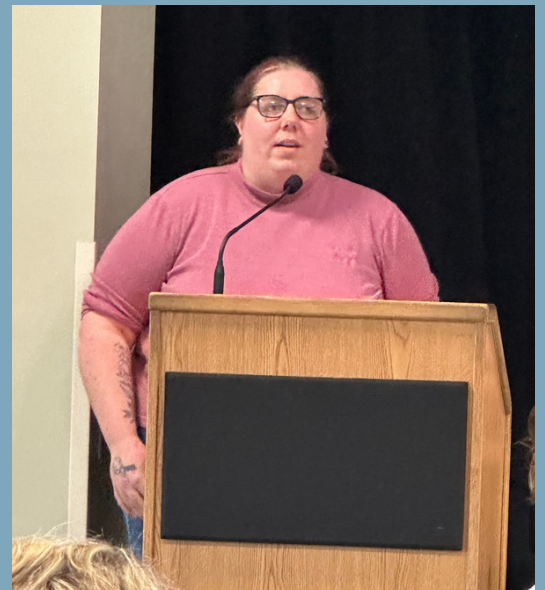
Healing Springs/Saratoga Hospital

Kate Evanico, LCSW

Saratoga Hospital

Angela Wolfe

Family Member



Saratoga County First Responder Peer Support Team

While we hope we'll never have to do so, it sometimes becomes necessary to call on First Responders to provide us critical assistance during moments of need.

In helping us, these Responders are themselves repeatedly exposed to risks, sights, sounds, and emotions that may lead to chronic and/or acute Post Traumatic Stress. It has been widely documented that First Responders suffer higher rates of depression, anxiety, divorce, alcohol/substance abuse, illness, suicide, and shorter life expectancies than the general population.

To address this emerging issue, the Saratoga County Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services partnered with the Saratoga County Office of Emergency Services/EMS Council and New York Law Enforcement Assistance Program trainers to establish a Saratoga County First Responder Peer Support Team.

The Team is comprised of 75 individuals representing State and local law enforcement agencies, the fire service and EMS, and was trained in the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation models for work with individuals (basic and advanced), groups (Critical Incident Stress Management) and persons at risk for suicide.

During its first year of operation, the Team provided support to 121 individuals during the course of nearly 300 support sessions. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing was offered on ten occasions, to 113 individuals in total, following suicides and other "bad calls". Referrals to higher levels of care were made on 22 occasions, when the needs of individuals receiving support exceeded the skill set of Peer Responders to address. The Team also provided education regarding Responder wellness to local agencies on five occasions.

The partnership between First Responders, Peers and trained mental health professionals continues to grow, in service to Responders themselves and in furtherance of providing the best possible care to our community.

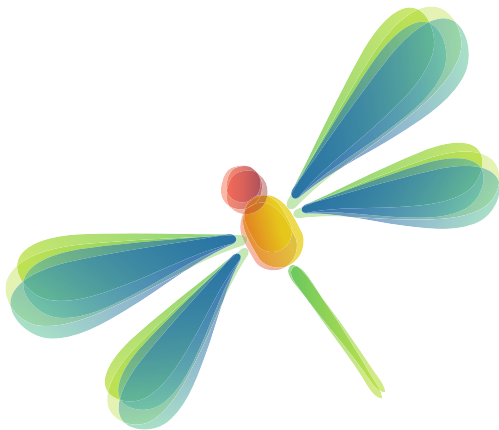


Submit Mental Health Articles to the Newsletter

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.

Spring is Here!



Help improve your mental health by getting outside and enjoying nature

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.

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 is a 5-step action plan that offers 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/>



MHANYS
Mental Health Association
in New York State



MENTAL HEALTH

AWARENESS MONTH

JOIN SCCCMH!

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!**

Help SCCCMH Increase Awareness: Follow our Facebook Page!

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

The 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 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



Saturday, April 20, 2024

Saratoga-Wilton Elks Lodge

6:00 – 10:00 pm (Reservations Required)

Honoring Citizen of the Year:

**Jennifer Myers, Program Director
of Northern Rivers Family of Services.**

Buffet Stations – 6 to 7:30 pm, Cash Bar 6 to 10 pm, Program 7:30 to 8 pm,
Photobooth 6 to 10 pm, Dancing 8 to 10 pm, Raffle Drawing & Live Auction 8 pm

DJ Music Entertainment, 6 to 10 pm, provided by Michael Rafferty

Basic Reservation is \$45.00 per person

Discounted Reservation is \$15.00 per person (if needed)

Consider one of these special reservations to help SCCCMH reach our goal:

Honorary Committee: \$100.00 per person

Advocate: \$55.00 per person Friend: \$65.00 per person

**Honorary Committee, Advocates and Friends will be recognized at the Benefit.
Value of goods and services \$30.00**

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Number of Persons Attending: _____ Amount Enclosed \$ _____

I am unable to attend but enclosed is my donation of \$ _____

**RSVP by April 10, 2024 by sending reservations and check payable to:
SCCCMH, PO Box 820, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.**

**For questions or more info,
Call SCCCMH Chairperson, Peggy Lounsbury, at 518-583-8371 or
e-mail: info@SCCCMH-Saratoga.org**



For more information, contact:
Chairperson: Peggy Lounsbury
Phone: 518-583-8371 Email: plounsbury@saratogacare.org
Or visit our website: SCCCMH-Saratoga.org and check out our Facebook Page!

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM

Revolving Membership for one year from the date you join SCCCMH

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

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____ Prefix/Suffix: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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

Email 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. Please 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!!