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# **Mental Health Matters Benefit**

April 26, 2025

Saratoga-Wilton Elks Lodge

**The SCCCMH Citizen of the Year**



**Southern Adirondack Independent Living Center**

Southern Adirondack Independent Living Center (SAIL) has been named the SCCCMH Citizen of the Year for 2025. SAIL will be honored at the Mental Health Matters Benefit on Saturday, April 26, 2025 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 at [scccmh-saratoga.org/whats-new](http://scccmh-saratoga.org/whats-new).

SAIL empowers individuals with disabilities and advocates for accessibility across 17 counties in New York. Each year, SAIL serves over 7,000 consumers and provides more than 150,000 essential services. SAIL's programs include advocacy, benefits assistance, health insurance enrollment assistance, medical equipment loan program, and community living options, all designed to promote independence and inclusion.

## **CHAIRPERSON'S NOTES**

**By Peggy Lounsbury**



**Robert & Peggy Lounsbury**

In 2023, 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..." Over the past two years we've held Changing the Lens forums on Homelessness and Substance Use - two life challenges that can exasperate mental health symptoms.

During the these past two years' forums our panel of experts discussed the multi-faceted conditions of homelessness and substance use and how they impact mental health in hope of helping others look at these conditions and situations through a different lens. In other words, a lens that allows us to look deeper into the situation without judgmental assessments or opinions. A new lens allows us to be understanding and demonstrate empathy.

**Continued on Page 4**

## **SCCCMH TREASURER'S REPORT**

**By Robert Lounsbury**

***"Faith is Taking the First Step Even When You Don't See the Whole Staircase."***

**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**

This, as in previous years, we continue to deal with the fallout from the pandemic that crippled our great country in 2019-2020. As Treasurer for the Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health, I am pleased to say that we continue to maintain our financial stability through each year while reducing the stigma that faces our mental health community. To this day, we continue to take many leaps of faith, even when we cannot see the whole staircase.

Due to the impact of the economy on all of us, we are continually challenged to provide our regular activities for advocacy and education to support the local mental health community. Fortunately, in our fiscal year of 2024-2025, we approved grants for The Charlton School and The Children's Museum. We are extremely pleased we have remained financially stable even with the challenges that face all of us.

Our committee has minimized expenses and therefore remain a viable non-profit organization for the Saratoga County mental health community. As we move forward in 2025, let us all keep in mind the needs of our mental health community and reach into our hearts and feel the faith that will enable us to continue support the needs of people living with a mental illness in Saratoga County.

Please join SCCCMH and "pay what you will" membership dues - the membership form is attached to this newsletter.

## **A VIEW FROM HERE**

### **How RISE Helped me Recover my Mental Health**

By: Steve Bault

I've always prided myself in being a well grounded and stable man. Throughout my life whenever the subject of suicide and depression came up I usually responded with "That makes no sense to me because there's someone out there who has it worse. And they learn to deal with it."

But then... I allowed myself to be influenced by someone that I never should have.

The shame and guilt overwhelmed me completely and it overtook my mind. Suicidal thoughts were so prevalent that I was looking for different ways to end my life. I even wrote a couple of suicide notes. I hate to admit it, but at one point I was counting down the minutes of shooting myself. Two times after that I thought that taking too many pills was the answer. But that only got me a couple of ambulance rides and stays in Mental Health Units (MHU).

My personal relationship became extremely toxic. I stopped taking care of myself. Laying in bed for as long as possible. Not shaving, bathing and eating to a minimum. My body weight plummeted to 125 lbs. (I'm 6'2).

Over the course of two years I found myself back at the hospital MHU every 6 months or so. With the fear of homelessness, I was crying out for help. At the time I literally thought that I was the most hated person on earth, with absolutely zero friends.

I was diagnosed with major depressive disorder with suicidal ideations and anxiety disorder.

Antidepressants and anxiety meds were prescribed, but I was adamant about not being dependent on a lifetime of pills.

During my last admission to Saratoga Hospital MHU in Nov 2022, I was interviewed twice by Rik Jordan and Ian Vonnice from RISE Housing and Support Services. I was released and taken into Rain House - a RISE community Residence - for respite. Two weeks later I was transferred to Edgewood Community Residence in Malta. Staff and counselors at both homes were beyond outstanding.

Six months later I was accepted into the Progressive Steps Apartment Program (PSAP) another RISE Program. Through the guidance and counseling of Matt Durham and later by Mya Ferguson, I finally got my mental health back on track.

After a year and a half in PSAP, I'm back living independently. My finances are in order. Having two part-time jobs (again thanks to RISE) helps also.

I volunteer at the Adelphi Street Homeless Shelter, mainly because I could have been living there and I feel that whatever I can do for RISE to show my gratitude, I will.

To sum it up, with my faith in God, caring local churches, RISE (from Sybil Newell on down), various therapists, psychiatrists, and counselors, my mental health has gone from dark to light.

My new mantra is to take care of the 4 keys for my life. My physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health. Get those 4 keys at the top of the spectrum and true health and happiness will prevail.

**Chairperson's Notes continued from Page 2**

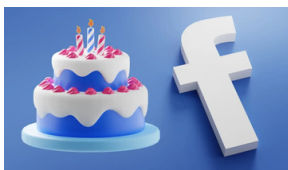
This year, we will be looking at Mental Health itself through this new lens. "Changing Lens on Mental Health" will be presented this fall, on September 25, 2025 at the Saratoga Springs Library. For this program we will be assembling a panel of mental health experts to lead the public discussion.

The hope of the "Changing Lens" programs is to stamp out stigma and develop empathy for the people impacted by the challenges living with a mental health diagnosis presents.

The Mental Health Matters Benefit - the SCCCMH major fundraiser is April 26th. It will held 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.

**The Children's Museum  
SCCCMH Grant Recipient**

The Children's Museum at Saratoga is excited to utilize the funding provided by the Saratoga County Citizen's Committee for Mental Health to benefit the members of our community by supporting and building the foundations for positive mental health practices. The Museum is focusing on youth mental health by developing a curriculum for Mindful Moments programs that will be available in the Museum, visiting schools and preschools on field trips, and providing resources and support to children and their caregivers.

With these funds, Museum staff will access resources to deepen their understanding of mental health and mindfulness. This learning will help promote mental health awareness and mindfulness for children across Saratoga County and beyond and enable Museum staff to develop accessible and accurate curriculum.

The Children's Museum will provide resources for families and individuals that can be done at home or in the classroom. A mental health guidebook will be created with activities to support mental well-being and increase awareness and knowledge about mental health.

These resources will be made available digitally on the Museum's website, social media, and newsletter, making them easily accessible to all. Additionally, mental health and mindfulness curriculum will be offered for in-person learning opportunities.

By offering the opportunity to learn how to care for mental health at a young age, the Museum hopes to foster public knowledge, support, and interest in mental health in fun and accessible ways.



# Advocating for Mental Health



As part of our Mission and our committee's commitment to Advocate for Mental Health In Saratoga County, SCCCMH Board Members, Peggy Lounsbury, Chrissy Hechemy, Heather Wolfe, and Bob Lounsbury met with Assemblywoman Carrier Woerner in her Saratoga Springs office on March 14, 2025. We asked for Assemblywoman Woerner's support for the following priorities outlined in the SCCCMH 2025 Legislative Agenda:

- Provide a 7.8% increase for community-based not-for-profits human services rates and contracts in the FY 2025-26 NYS Budget. Mental Health professions and staff in non-profit agencies that provide services to people living with mental illness need a living wage!

- More money allocated for supportive housing in Saratoga County, especially housing for older adults living with mental illness. There is a shortage of supportive housing is increasing the risk of homelessness and is more likely to result in more costly settings and decreased access to care and support.
- Parity for mental health care in health insurance policies as with other medical care. Also, prescribers prevail law for mental health medication decisions is necessary.
- Continue advocacy for mental health support in schools, including mental health days.

Assemblywoman Woerner was extremely supportive of all our priorities and will do what she can to help support mental health needs and services. It was a great meeting.



**MAY IS  
MENTAL  
HEALTH**  
AWARENESS MONTH

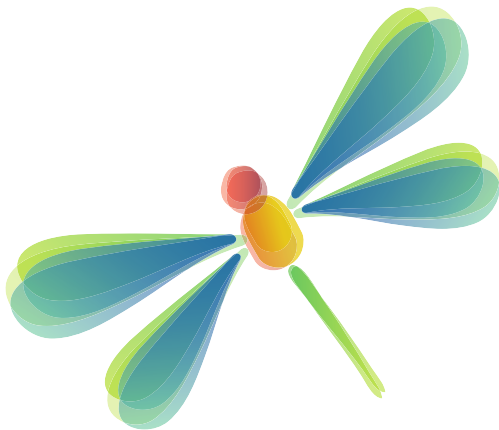


## **Submit Mental Health Articles to the Newsletter**

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](mailto: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/>



**Save the  
Date!**

# CHANGING THE LENS ON MENTAL HEALTH

A public discussion on mental health  
in Saratoga County

September 25, 2025

Saratoga Springs Library  
Harry Dutcher Community Room

## **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](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





**Saturday, April 26, 2025**

**Saratoga-Wilton Elks Lodge**

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

**Honoring Citizen of the Year:**

**Southern Adirondack Independent Living (SAIL)**



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 \$50.00 per person**

**Discounted Reservation is \$20.00 per person (if needed)**

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

Honorary Committee: \$100.00 per person

Advocate: \$60.00 per person

Friend: \$80.00 per person

**Value of goods and services \$35.00 The SCCCMH is a 501(c)3 charity,  
contributions are tax deductible.**

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 18, 2025, registering online at [scccmh-saratoga.org](http://scccmh-saratoga.org)  
or 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](mailto:info@SCCCMH-Saratoga.org)**





For more information, contact:

Chairperson: Peggy Lounsbury

Phone: 518-583-8371 Email: [PLounsbury@saratogahospital.org](mailto:PLounsbury@saratogahospital.org)

Or visit our website: [SCCCMH-Saratoga.org](http://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.**

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### **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!!**