

TDMHDD Update

VOLUME 13, NO. 2

SPRING 2009



Art for Awareness Day Promotes Consumer Recovery and Creativity

Artists from Across the State Gather in Legislative Plaza

On May 4, 2009, the Fourth Annual Art for Awareness Day held at Legislative Plaza featured the works of 35 artists in recovery from mental illness. The special event was co-sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities and the Middle Tennessee Mental Health and Substance Abuse Coalition.

“As an artist myself, I truly appreciate the works that are displayed in my office each year for Mental Health Month,” said Governor Bredesen. “I congratulate the artists on their recovery and participation.”

Governor Bredesen, TDMHDD Commissioner Virginia Trotter Betts and several members of the General Assembly were presented a unique piece of art created by mental health consumers to display in their offices throughout the month of May in recognition of Mental Health Month.

“Art is truly a vehicle to recovery from mental illness, and I am so delighted that we have the opportunity to recognize these wonderful artists from across the state,” commented Commissioner Betts. “I admire

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Jane Baxter and Commissioner Betts at Art for Awareness

May IS MENTAL HEALTH Month

In recognition of Mental Health Month, the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities is encouraging Tennesseans to increase their awareness of mental health and mental illness by understanding the fundamental nature of mental health to overall health as well as the destructive nature of stigma in our society.

Mental health is the successful performance of mental functions resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with others, and the ability to adapt to change and to successfully cope with adversity. Mental health is essential to overall health and indispensable to lifelong personal well being.

“Mental disorders are highly prevalent in our society and seriously effect families and communities,” said TDMHDD Commissioner Virginia Trotter Betts. “Mental illnesses are real illnesses for which there are treatments and solutions. Mental Illnesses are just as diagnosable and just as successfully treatable as other physical illnesses.”

On the other hand, mental illness as a health condition that is characterized by alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior, is mediated by the brain, and is associated with impaired functioning/ways of talking, feeling, and acting.” Yet, many individuals living with a mental disorder do not seek care because of the stigma surrounding mental illness. Stigma is the single greatest barrier to people getting the treatment they need.

“The greatest weapon against stigma is knowledge and interpersonal acceptance of mental illnesses as real and mental health treatment as effective,” said Betts. “We hope with the many activities and information available this month, people will learn more about mental health and mental illness. We must enhance community understanding and empower those who are especially vulnerable in these stressful times to seek help.” ■

Art for Awareness...cont.

the courage and commitment of every artist who participates in Art for Awareness Day.”

This year, MTMHSAC’s Jane Baxter was recognized with a certificate from Governor Bredesen for her efforts in Tennessee’s Creative Arts Project. Because of Baxter’s hard work and dedication, mental health consumers from across the state are finding recovery through art. ■

TDMHDD Celebrates National Nurses Week May 6-12

TDMHDD honors its nurses during National Nurses week for their compassionate work and dedication throughout the year. This year, the theme “Nurses: Building a Health America” truly represents what nurses do on a daily basis—put patients’ health first. A salute to nurses during National Nurses Week gives visibility to the importance of this profession to our society, our healthcare system, and to the public’s health.

Annually, National Nurses Week begins on May 6, marked as RN Recognition Day, and ends on May 12, the birthday of Florence Nightingale, founder of nursing as a modern profession. During this week, registered nurses throughout were recognized. Traditionally, National Nurses Week is devoted to highlighting the diverse ways in which registered nurses, the largest health care profession, are working to improve health care and make a difference. ■

National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day

“Thriving in the Community” was this year’s theme for National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day, May 7, 2009. Child-serving agencies and organizations that partner with children’s mental health initiatives will play a significant role in identifying children and youth whose achievements have enriched schools, neighborhoods, and the greater community in which they live. The overall message of Awareness Day is that children and youth with mental health needs and their families are thriving in the community.

In 2006, SAMHSA reported that 21 percent of youth aged 12 to 17 received treatment or counseling for emotional or behavioral problems in the previous year. This year’s Awareness Day honors those who have received these types of services because they will be more likely to have positive outcomes in the community such as better grades, higher rates of education, and are less likely to have negative outcomes such as involvement with the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

Children’s mental health initiatives promote positive youth development, prevention, recovery, and resilience and the goal is to transform the mental health service delivery system for those with serious emotional disturbances and their families.

Throughout Tennessee, events were held around National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day. The Tennessee Voices for Children in conjunction with the TDMHDD planned Children’s Mental Health & Wellness Celebrations in Nashville, Jackson, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Gray, and Loudon County and The Mule Town Family Network’s Youth-IN-Action youth group and several area youth organizations participated in a symbolic balloon release at Fairview Park in Columbia. ■

Building Strong Families Grant Project Advances Collaboration

The Building Strong Families grant project accepted the challenge from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to advance collaborative practice. The project invited its sister grantee, *New Beginnings*, to share information and network with the BSF Collaborative Council and other interested parties. Both BSF and *New Beginnings* provide services to children and families, though in uniquely different ways. Neither services nor service populations overlap. Together, the two projects make services available to high-risk children and their parents that abuse methamphetamine and/or other emerging drugs in one fourth of the counties in the state.

New Beginnings is one of many projects operated by Child & Family Tennessee in the eastern part of the state. Kathryn O'Day, President and Chief Executive Officer for the agency, and Rebecca Kelly, Director of Client Services for the project, served as presenters during this collaborative effort. *New Beginnings* primarily serves pregnant mothers and mothers with children up to three years of age. The project will, however, provide services to mothers who have children as old as 12 years of age. Because of the nature of the grant, mothers must be users or abusers of drugs. The mothers stay on "campus" with their children. Younger children are cared for in a therapeutic nursery while their mothers start or resume the process of recovery.

Nearly 20 persons concerned about the safety and well-being of children and their families participated in the collaborative effort. Participants other than BSF Collaborative Council members included representatives from Nurses for Newborns and the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. The presentation was held at the Centerstone Research Institute in Nashville.

It should be noted that this collaborative effort operates at the lowest level of collaboration, exchange of information. The effort was an attempt by the two projects to get to know each other, which is typically the way "real" collaboration begins. It is anticipated that this effort will eventually lead to system change, the highest level collaboration. Research supports better outcomes when collaboration is involved.

Like *New Beginnings*, BSF is an ACF- funded project. It provides direct services to children and families in eight counties in rural, southeastern Tennessee: Bedford, Cannon, Coffee, Franklin, Grundy, Lincoln, Moore, and Warren. The project uses the HOMEBUILDERS model, an intensive, time-limited family preservation and in-home program. BSF focuses on engaging parents and families so they can acquire skills that help make them better parents. The new skills include strategies designed to assist parents in acknowledging and/or working on their substance use or abuse issues. In addition, families are connected to wraparound services. The primary goal of the BSF project is to prevent the children from entering or re-entering state custody.

BSF operates through a partnership of five agencies, including TDMHDD, Tennessee Department of Children's Services, Governor's Office of Children's Care Coordination, Administrative Office of the Courts, and Centerstone. TDMHDD is the lead agency for BSF.

For more information on BSF or refer a family to the project, contact Cindy Cothran, Project Director, at (931) 393-5942. To contact *New Beginnings*, call (865) 524-7483. ■



TDMHDD staff receives two awards at the State of Tennessee Employee Assistance Program Awards Ceremony: Outstanding Participation and EAP Supervisory Training.

Left to Right: *Vickie Graham, Pamela Curtis, EAP Representative Carol M. Boone, Debra Jordan, Commissioner Betts, and Melissa Harper.*

TDMHDD Update
**Tennessee Department of Mental Health &
Developmental Disabilities**
Volume 13, Number 2, Spring 2009 Issue

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Published online at <http://www.tennessee.gov/mental/index.html>
by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health & Developmental
Disabilities. Publication Authorization #339454.

