

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

SPRING IS IN THE AIR, which usually means cleaning out, airing out, fixing up, and sprucing up of our homes, and even our outlooks on life. Coming out of winter and into the promise of spring, somehow offers us the promise of a clean slate and a new canvas on which to paint our lives for the next few months. In a way, this kind of describes what's happening at PTH, for we are looking to the future and ways in which we need to change.

One of our changes happened last September with the hiring of a new Administrative Assistant, Ann Palmer. She is amazing and is a definite fit for the office (and for me, as she's very calm). You can read more about her inside.

Since our fall newsletter, we held our Third Annual Golf Tournament at Prairie Highlands Golf Course in October, which was a great success, with thanks always due to Maurice and his great golf committee. In November, we held our Second Annual Night at the Movies at the Ritz Charles and it was amazing, thanks in a large part to Rosanne Power and her committee of ladies who worked tirelessly to insure its success. Then in January, we did something new and held our first Winter Dance at the Ball Conference Center, which was delightful. It was ballroom dancing, with a live band and exquisite hor d'oeuvres provided by Lana and her crew. The Ball Conference Center crew were wonderful and a pleasure to work with - the perfect place for our first dance. Thank you to the Dowd's and the Shrum's for all of their organizing expertise!

Blake House experienced its first Christmas, made more special with decorations provided by Ruth Cousins and a group of her friends. They bought a tree for the house that is beautiful and can be used for years to come. The residents enjoyed decorating the tree and the house. Thank you to everyone who helped to make this a beautiful Christmas.

We have hired a grant writer who has written a grant to secure a part-time person for Blake House. We want someone who can work Monday through Friday, from about 3:00pm to 9:00pm, to provide some structure to the house.

Due to some restructuring, we have some new Board members. Cindy Allen works for the American Concrete Paving Association Lobbying/Design for Missouri/Kansas as their Administrative Coordinator. She is also willing to serve as our Treasurer, for which we are grateful. Peg Carlson is the Community Director of Development for the American Cancer Society. Welcome to both of you and thank you for being willing to serve Pathway To Hope in this capacity.

This is our last newsletter in paper form. From now on, our newsletters will come by email, so be sure that we have your email address. As always, they will continue to be on our website. You will also notice in this newsletter that we are asking for donations to Pathway To Hope. I trust that you will consider what you can afford and give generously.

Yes, change is in the air, but the one thing that is not changing is the quality of service that we offer to our families and survivors. I am consistently amazed at the challenges that they face daily and the grace with which they face them. Our support groups are growing, with the survivors forming a council to provide leadership for its programs and activities.

May God richly bless each of you as He continues to give you just what you need for each day.

Sharon Lawrenz

WE ARE GOING PAPERLESS AND NEED YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS!

We are trying to cut as many administrative costs as we can and need your help. This is our last newsletter in the paper format. Our next newsletter will come to you via e-mail.

In order to do this, we need for you to send an e-mail to ann@pathwaytohope.org or call the office at 913-397-8552. If you do not have e-mail, but would like to continue receiving our newsletters, please call Ann at the office, so she can make sure you will continue to receive it.

If you got this newsletter, but it was mailed to the wrong person/address, please let Ann know, so that she may update our mailing list.

FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS

If you are dealing with a loved one who suffers from a brain-based disorder such as: ADHD, autism, bi-polar disorder, depression or borderline personality disorder, you are not alone. The National Association for the mentally ill (NAMI) estimates that one in ten families is touched by mental illness. As a caretaker of a loved one with these illnesses, you can become frustrated and overwhelmed by just dealing with the day-to-day challenges of living with the illness. Pathway to Hope offers a weekly support group where you can network with others who face your challenges.

SUPPORT GROUP SCHEDULES

Call Gloria for more information - 913.782.5040

Family Support Groups

(for family members with a mentally ill loved one)

College Church of the Nazarene in Olathe:
- Every Thursday, 7:00pm
Room S115

St. Thomas the Apostle Episcopal Church
- Every Tuesday, 7:00pm

Survivor Support Groups

(for individuals with a mental illness)

College Church of the Nazarene in Olathe:
- Every Thursday, 7:00pm
Room S121

PTH BOARD

Chairman:
Larry Zimmerman

Vice Chairman:
Maurice Bowersox

Treasurer:
Cindy Allen

Executive Director:
Sharon Lawrenz

Peg Carlson
Larry Dowd
Jan Graham
Lana Lynn
Ron Shrum
Bob Slattery
Joyce Smith
Charlsie Wilson

PATHWAY TO HOPE ANNOUNCES...

A New Support Group Location!

A weekly meeting place for families with loved ones of all ages who suffer from the emotional, physical and psycho-social impacts of living with mental illness.

New Location: St. Thomas the Apostle Episcopal Church
Antioch and 123rd Street

Overland Park, KS. (North east corner across from the Point Royale apts.)

New Day: Tuesdays from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

If you have been looking for a support group that meets in the Overland Park area, this is your answer! Questions? Contact Tracie Hume (home) at 913 685-4160.

MENTAL HEALTH PARITY

Your support for mental health parity helped propel the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act, H.R. 1424, to a historic vote in the House of Representatives where it passed 268-148 on March 5, 2008. This first-ever House vote on a comprehensive mental health/addiction parity bill gives our cause new momentum.

But even with this victory, there is still more work to do. The House-passed measure must now be reconciled with a parity bill already passed by the Senate, S. 558. A final version will have to be approved by both chambers and signed by the President before people living with mental illnesses will finally have the same rights under their insurance plans as individuals with other health conditions.

Mental disorders are the leading cause of disability for people ages 15 to 44, and they are the driving force behind 90 percent of the 30,000 suicides and 650,000 suicide attempts each year. Studies show that suicide rates drop sharply when more mental health resources are available, barriers to treatment are lowered and more people receive mental health treatment. Providing those resources and removing those barriers to treatment requires legislation mandating mental health parity.

We must elevate the importance of mental health to that of physical health and grant equal access to mental health benefits. And that will only come when our health insurance policies grant mental health true parity. For far too many people, mental health coverage still remains subject to the whims of their employers and insurers.

Take Action! We must urge Congress to act this year!

Write your Senators and Congressmen and urge them to push for enactment of a strong parity bill this year. You can make the difference in delivering that message to your elected officials! Be on the lookout for further updates and opportunities to help us win this long fight.

STEP UP By Sharon Lawrenz

Across the hall from us here at Center of Grace is a diploma completion program called Step Up. They offer educational opportunities to adults who didn't finish high school the first time around. This is not a "watered down" education; all classes meet local graduation requirements. They are open extended hours so adults can still meet their obligations while earning their diplomas. Students get to work at their own pace on their own schedule. They hold a graduation ceremony every May and each graduate walks away with a high school diploma from the participating area high school. This is better than a GED, because more and more employers are requesting that employees have a high school diploma, as I learned in a meeting I attended today. I wanted to let you know about this phenomenal program and its great staff. Call 913-254-0482 if you desire more information or check out their website at stepup@greenbush.org.

2008 SUPERBOWL PARTY

The Shrum home hosted the 4th annual Super Bowl Party. This event is usually more about the food and fellowship. However, the game was very exciting as well (the food was AWESOME)! We had newcomers from our group and everyone enjoyed themselves. It is an honor for us to host this event and look forward to it every year. Please consider attending this next year. We will continue to improve the food products but the fellowship needs no improvement.

ANN'S BIO

My name is Ann Marie Palmer. I have been Sharon's administrative assistant since September 2007. I live in Gardner with my husband, Phil, and our dog, Roxy. My daughter, Amanda, is 19 years old and moved to Bellingham, Washington after graduating from High School. I miss her more than I can express.

I enjoy spending time with family and friends, working in my yard, cross-stitch, crochet and motorsports racing (drag racing and NASCAR). I am also an Independent Beauty Consultant with Mary Kay Cosmetics.

I was born in O'Neill, Nebraska and moved to Gardner, Kansas with my family when I was 10 years old. Johnson County Kansas will always be home to me.

I come to Pathway To Hope with 20 years of accounting and customer service background. For the last 10 years I worked for a local after-market automotive manufacturer and before that I worked in the wholesale satellite industry.

In my short time here, I have learned so much about the Mental Health issues that our community and our country face. I have seen the good things that can happen to people who are able to access the programs and support groups that are available not only from Pathway To Hope, but also from State and County organizations as well. I have also seen the tragedy that happens when someone who is mentally ill does not get the care they need/deserve.

I believe that I am at the place where I am supposed to be in the "Big Plan" and look forward to many years of working with and getting to know all of you.

KEEPING UP WITH THE TIMES

On a Saturday in early January of this year, our PTH Board and some key stakeholders met at Lana Lynn's beautiful country home with Paula Schumacher, a professional in many areas of the nonprofit realm. She led us through a day of assessing our organization and identifying ideas and tools that we can use to enable PTH to keep up with the trends in our arena. Then in February, she returned and worked with our Board after they had a chance to prioritize the areas that they wanted to focus on. Since then, our Board members have been busy serving on various committees to give us a timeline and hone in on our top priorities for this year. Thank you to all of you who helped financially to make this such a success. It was money well spent!

COLLABORATING

By Sharon Lawrenz

Over the past two years that I have served on the Johnson County Board of Directors (JCMH), it has been my privilege to get to know Howard Snyder, our JCMH treasurer. To say he is an amazing man is an understatement, for he is a tireless advocate for the mentally ill. Howard has helped to bring Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) (40 hours of training) to Johnson County, to train our law enforcement personnel about persons with mental illness. He has been a member of Families for Mental Health for too many years to count. He and his wife, Lou, had a son with mental illness that lived independently in Lawrence, but unfortunately, passed away a few short years ago.

Just recently, their organization underwent an unexpected reorganization that they all handled with dignity and grace. They are a non profit corporation whose mission is to improve the quality of life of individuals and families affected by mental illness through support, education and advocacy. Sound familiar? It is a lot like PTH's mission statement. They meet the third Thursday of the month at the Village Church at 67th & Mission Rd, in Prairie Village, at 7:00pm. For more info, call 913-676-7171.

Perhaps you are asking yourself why we would advertise another group's meeting when it meets the same night as our meetings do. The answer is simple – we are all in this fight to advocate for our loved ones with mental illness and to erase the stigma that goes along with this terrible disease. As Howard and I have talked over the past couple of months, we feel that we need to collaborate when possible, and combine our resources to make us more productive and strong. PTH will extend our hand to Howard's group so they can participate in our activities and meetings, if desired.

One of the things that they miss since the reorganization is the loss of a communal gathering place for survivors called The In Place, located in Merriam, behind what used to be called Breakthrough House. It was open Friday through Sunday and was a place where their survivors could get a hot meal, play various games, sit and visit, and just "hang out!" They have all really missed it and as Howard and I were talking, I realized that this idea is just what some of our survivors have been discussing for our group. Howard said they received grant monies and other donations and it cost them about \$55,000/year to run, including staff to be on hand. Needless to say, this is definitely on our wish list for the next year. Wouldn't be cool to have a place big enough to accommodate both groups and provide an atmosphere of safety and camaraderie?


2007 PTH GOLF TOURNAMENT

The Third PTH Golf Tournament on October 8th, at the Prairie Highlands Golf Course, was another great success. The rain ended early, the sun came out, and fun was had by all participants. There were 17 Hole sponsors, 88 players, and great awards and prizes. Approximately \$8,000 was raised to help continue our mission of advocating for those affected by mental illness.

We give a special thanks to this year's hole sponsors: Platinum: BNSF-KC Diversity Council, Liberty Fruit Co., J.B. and Anne Hodgdon, Wilson & Co. Engineers, Research Psychiatric Hospital, McDonald's Corporation, and Ron Shrum American Family Insurance Agency. Gold: Olathe Health System, Will & Trust Center, URS Consulting Engineering Corporation (2 holes), TKDA Engineering, and Lynn Realty. Silver: Superior Acura, Harlan C. Parker State Farm Insurance Agency, Sir Speedy Printing and Copying, and Dick Schweitzer (in loving memory of Heather Marie Gustafson 7/2/86-6/4/05).

We would also like to acknowledge Smokin Joe's BBQ for the delicious meal they provided that evening.

A big thanks goes to the PTH Golf committee: Larry Zimmerman, Ron Shrum, Lana Lynn, Craig Power, Maurice Bowersox and many other wonderful volunteers. Mark your calendars for this year's tournament on October 6, 2008. Come out and join the fun.

 **DID YOU KNOW** ... why we do not have more state and county funds available for our local mental health center? It is because you, the people of this county and state, want more and better jails to take care of the bulging prison population. Therefore, monies for mental health will always take a back seat for the jails! I learned this at a meeting I attended and I could not believe my ears.

Now, before I got really upset, I talked with David Wiebe, our Executive Director for JCMH, and asked him if he knew the reasoning behind this statement. He said that, as he's travelled to various county, state, and national functions, the constant theme is always that people want to feel safe in their communities. David said that Chairman Surbaugh has organized a Criminal Justice Task Force to study the burgeoning jail population here in Johnson County and to make recommendations to make it more efficient and bring it more under control. So, I take my hat off to the Board of County Commissioners and Chairman Surbaugh for addressing this need. However, it still leaves the mentally ill in the community at the bottom of the pile, so to speak.

A gentleman has told me on numerous occasions, that the reason we in the mental health community do not have the funding and the laws in place is because we are too nice. We sit and take whatever the government agencies spoon feed us and are so grateful for the pitiful morsels that we receive. We need to get mad and get organized and let those in power know that we are not going to allow our loved ones to consistently be at the bottom of the budget pile. This is exactly what those with Autism have done and they are making great strides. So what are you and I going to do about making our voices heard? Let me know what you think we should do.

ANNUAL FLOAT TRIP

Pathway To Hope is planning our 4th Annual Float Trip. It will be the 2nd week of June. Every year the ones who go always have a great time. This is roughing it – tents, sleeping bags, campfires (with s'mores), canoes, tall tales and lots of nonsense. The float trip is open to both family members and survivors. Make your reservations early by calling our office and talking to Ann. Start saving now.

GARAGE SALE FUN

Blake House will be having a garage sale May 16th and 17th. If you have donations please drop them off May 15th from 3:00 to 7:00 pm. Volunteers are needed to set up and work the sale. Please call the office to sign up.

MEDICATIONS & MONEY

What would you do if you had to pay \$140 and \$400 per month for two of your mental health meds? How would you find the money to pay for it when you are on a limited income, such as disability and you have no health insurance (such as Medicaid) because you make too much money from your disability incomes? Well, this is the plight that a few of our survivors find themselves in every month or so.

Then we have other survivors that have Medicare with the HMO option and it pays very well until October, when they reach the cap for their medications. Because psych meds are so expensive, it happens a lot. They do not have the money to pay for their meds for the rest of the year and either have to put them on a credit card (which is not good) or look for other resources for securing the medications. PTH helps as much as it can, but we cannot take care of the needs of our growing survivor base.

Another plight of our survivors on Social Security disability with Medicaid is the issue of 'spenddown'. The spenddown is the person's or family's share of the medical cost and is much like an insurance deductible. It has to be met before medical bills are covered. Now, this is where it gets confusing, so hang in here with me as I try and explain it.

The spenddown is different for every person and is based on countable income, which is compared to the standard limit and the rest is for spenddown. The standard limit and the income varies. For our survivors, the monthly spenddown income limit is \$495 for one person. Extra disregards are given for earnings and wages and over half of the wages are not counted. The spenddown period is usually six months and starts when you apply.

So, if one of our survivors has a monthly income from Social Security Disability Insurance of \$625/month and his monthly spenddown income limit of \$495 is subtracted from that, then his spenddown is \$130 x 6 months = \$780 total spenddown. He has to meet that \$780 total spenddown BEFORE the medical card starts to pay his medical expenses. How would you like to have to live like this for your health care needs?

This is why your donations are so important to PTH – so that we can continue to provide the services that our survivors need. We do not want any of them to have to make a choice between having the meds or going without!

BLAKE HOUSE

Living in a family like setting, house residents are learning to strengthen their skills of cooking, daily chores, consideration of others, while having a feeling of independent living. One of the first residents has been able to move to an apartment and is doing well. We are so proud of her.

Blake House has had a successful first year. We would like to applaud all the volunteers that gave of their time and talent to improve the Blake House this past year with basement room repair, new driveway and front walk, lawn and garden clean up, wonderful Christmas tree and ornaments, beautiful bookcase built and given by an Eagle Scout and household items and supplies.

2008 WINTER DANCE

January 19, 2008 was a night to remember. Pathway To Hope sponsored a dance at the Ball Conference Center in Olathe. The program was from 7-10 pm. We used this as a fundraiser and exploration for future dances. The dance was a success. We had soft drinks and other beverages to complement a bevy of snacks. We engaged Ed & Tina Lamm, who offered a dance lesson at the intermission. A local group of musicians headed by Ed Smith provided the music for dancing pleasure. All those present enjoyed themselves. A decision on future dance events has not been made at this point in time. We would like to thank everyone who donated time, food and decorations.

SURVIVORS GROUP

By Lynelle Vondergeest and Sean Dermigny

I have been attending PTH Survivor Group for one year and Sean for eight. The group has benefited both of us in many ways. We have found that the group helped us identify with our illnesses and become comfortable with it. We have made many friends whom we associate with both in and out of group. Members of the group have formed great bonds with each other and some have made lifelong friends. PTH has helped us realize that we are not alone in our struggle with mental illness. It has given us a security to know that people care.

In group we discuss such things as depression, suicide, cutting, mania, and coping skills as well as other symptom related topics. Each member is given the opportunity to discuss their week and issues that might be concerning them, or things that are going well. PTH also provides valuable resources for many of the problems that face the mentally ill.

The group has grown exponentially since its inception. The group consists of all ages and races with 25-30 people usually attending. Because of the growth in size the group often divides into 2 groups so each individual is given a greater opportunity to share.

Survivors' group has recently developed a council made up of facilitators of the group, survivors, and family members. In this forum we discuss how we can help improve the survivor group and its functions.

All in all PTH is an invaluable organization providing a needed service to survivors, family members and the community. We are always looking for and welcome new participants. Thank you for your support.

PTH OFFERS MANDT SYSTEM TRAINING TO PTH FAMILY MEMBERS & PROFESSIONAL

April 26 & 27, June 21 & 22, Sept. 27 & 28

PTH now offers the Mandt System training for individuals and agencies in the Metro area. The system is based on the philosophy that all people have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. The Mandt System teaches a system of gradual and graded alternatives for de-escalating and managing people, using a combination of interpersonal communication skills and physical interaction techniques designed to reduce injury to all participants in an encounter/crisis. Lisa Young, who is a certified Mandt Trainer, will teach the course or PTH during the next year. There will be a fee to cover the costs of materials for these trainings. If you are interested in taking this course or would like more information call the PTH office at 913-397-8552 and check out our website at www.pathwaytohope.org.

PTH TO HOST THE MANDT SYSTEM TRAIN THE TRAINER TRAINING

Have you ever thought about becoming a trainer for the Mandt System?

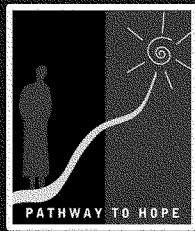
To register for the week long training session, please visit the Mandt System website at www.mandtsystem.com and go the Schedule tab and sign up for Event# U08040.

5 Days April 28th through May 2
Relational/Conceptual/Technical Level

The cost is \$1195.00 each for a 2-year recertification. At the end of the first two years, and every two years thereafter, a recertification is required at a cost of \$895. Expired certification is \$1,050. and must attend all five days.

USEFUL WEBSITES:

- National National Alliance on Mental Illness - www.nami.org
- National NAMI E-news - www.nami.org/update/enewslist.htm
- NAMI-Kansas - www.namikansas.org
- World Fellowship for Schizophrenia Publications - www.world-schizophrenia.org
- Johnson County Kansas - www.jocoks.com
- Johnson County Mental Health Center - www.jocoks.com/mentalhealth
- Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas - www.acmhck.org
- Kansas SRS/Mental Health - www.srskansas.org/MHSIP/index.html
- Brain Scan Pictures - www.brainplace.com
- Kansas Department of Aging - www.agingkansas.org
- Social Security - www.socialsecurity.gov
- Kansas Medicaid Managed Care - www.kansashealthsolutions.com
- Amen Clinics - www.amenclinics.com
- Disability Rights Center of Kansas - www.drckansas.org
- Keys for Networking - www.keys.org
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services - www.cms.gov
- Mental Health America Resource Center - www.nmha.org



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NIGHT AT THE MOVIES DINNER/ AUCTION

The 2007 Night at the Movies Dinner/Auction was held on Tuesday, November 29th at the Ritz Charles in Overland Park. Everyone attending enjoyed bidding on the auction items, the scrumptious dinner, and watching/ listening to the clips from movie "Musicals". The event raised over \$12,000 to help PTH continue our services for those individuals and families affected by mental illness.

We give special thanks to our emcee for the evening, Peter Mallouk and his wife, Veronica, for the theme table decorations. Thank you to our auctioneer, Chad Wilson and his wife, Krista for their expertise during the live auction. We want to express a BIG Thank You to Rosanne Power, the Event Committee Chair and her committee of volunteers: Lana Lynn, Sue Shrum, Norma Dowd, Deidra Dowd, Linda Billings, and Gloria Bowersox. We extend heartfelt thanks to all who collected and donated items for the silent and live auctions, and especially to all the merchants who contributed items. We express thanks to all of the volunteers that gave their time and energy to make this event a success. Without your help this event would not have been such a success.

We are looking forward to our 2008 Night at the Movies event on Tuesday, 18th of November. Put this date on your calendar and plan to come enjoy the festivities. Also, start now to collect and/or request items from merchants/friends for the auctions (silent and live) and contact the PTH office at 913-397-8552 if you want us to store them.

WHIM FAMILY WORKSHOPS

With Hope In Mind (WHIM) workshops are presented several times each year by Pathway To Hope. The 8-week classes pack in a lot of information to help families gain understanding of the world of mental illness and how to persevere and advocate in that world with hope and guidance.

The classes are truly a necessity for learning how to take care of yourself while helping your loved one. As one quote from the classes reminds us "It is one of the beautiful compensations of this life that no one can sincerely try to help another without helping himself" (by Charles Dudley Warner).

Our winter classes ended just before Easter and the summer classes are being planned for June with exact dates and locations to be determined. The classes are all free and to sign up or get more information, just call the Pathway To Hope office at 913-397-8552.

Pathway To Hope (PTH) exists to provide education, support, and advocacy for individuals and families affected by mental illness. We teach two educational classes on mental illness 3 times per year, have weekly support groups for both family members and those with an illness, and provide community resources and advocacy as needed. We, also, have a boarding home (Blake House) to provide affordable living for individuals living with mental illness. PTH is a Non-profit 501(c)3 organization and contributions to PTH are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

We are supported primarily by donations through people like you, who believe in our vision of improving the quality of life for those affected by mental illness while building community awareness and sensitivity to mental health issues.

PATHWAY TO HOPE (PTH) **YES**, I want to help PTH fight for the rights of people

affected by mental illness. Enclosed is my contribution:

\$25 \$35 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other ___

Thank you for your donation!

Enclosed is my check made payable to PTH.

OR Credit card donations may be made via PTH's website www.pathwaytohope.org through PayPal.

Many employers have a matching gift program, so please contact your employer to find out if they will match your contribution.

I will make monthly donations to PTH to help further its programs for the mentally ill.

I will designate PTH as my Charity of Choice on my United Way form.

If my employer runs its own workplace giving program, I will check to see if I can add PTH to its list of eligible organizations.

I will consider including PTH in my estate plans and enjoy many tax-saving benefits.

Keep me informed. I would like to receive the PTH newsletter via email.

My email address is: (please print)_____.

You may return your donation by using this page. Just tri-fold this page so the Pathway To Hope address (on the back) is on the outside; tape shut both ends and the middle with your donation check enclosed, attach a stamp and mail.

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

PATHWAY TO HOPE
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