

Thursday, July 8

Workshop A: 12:45 – 1:30pm Eastern;
9:45 – 10:30am Pacific

ALTERNATIVES 2021 WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS AND BIOS—Each workshop session has multiple choices of workshops to attend. Register for the conference to receive the links to join each event.

Forensic Peer Mentors: Ready4Reentry and Beyond!

George S. Braucht, Lindsey Sizemore, Gena Garner

Since 2016, Certified Peer Specialists specially trained as Forensic Peer Mentors have served returning citizens in Georgia's prisons, jails, reentry facilities, day reporting centers, and recovery community organizations. Learn about the prosocial, living-informed, initial 40-hour training and the monthly Learning Community that celebrates successes, including with our allies, and understands challenges!

George Braucht's applied community psychology experience focuses on professional and peer workforce development plus continuous program quality and outcome improvement in the behavioral health, crisis management or resilience and criminal justice fields. He co-founded the Certified Addiction Recovery Empowerment Specialist (CARES) Academy and the Forensic Peer Mentor Ready4Reentry training. His website is brauchtworks.com

Lindsey Sizemore, CPS-MH & CPS-AD, is the Forensic Peer Mentor Training Director with the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network. Expanding the peer workforce allows her to support returning citizens and other peers in living lives of meaning and purpose.

Ladji Ruffin, NCPS, CPS-MH, CPS-AD, CPRP and CEO of Authentic Braille Masters LLC, is a Forensic Peer Mentor with the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network. Ladji's journey so far includes transitioning from 23 years of incarceration to successful living as an entrepreneur, public speaker, and recovery champion.

Gena Garner, CPS-MH, CPS-AD, WHAC & MHFA, is the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network's Double Trouble in Recovery Director. Gena has not used a mind-altering drug in over 20 years. Furthermore, she has lived a very productive life since receiving a mental health diagnosis at 12 years of age.

Awe: Healing Through Spoken Word/Poetry/Journaling and Letter Writing

Lydia Theon Ware-i

Words heal. Words can also wound, but the power of healing words outweighs the wounds if used with passion, empathy, and commitment. This presentation will offer participants the ability to use their voice to say what cannot be said, to write what cannot be written, to speak their truth, their story.

Lydia Theon Ware-i is a published poet. She is a Certified Peer Support Specialist and has spoken at five JTP's Community Education Film Series. Lydia has taught summer "Intensives" called "Cartless," with the Riverside, California homeless population, in partnership with Inlandia Institute and Poets & Writers.

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Adversity and Resilience

Amela Sandra Dzurlic

Come learn about a recovery wellness plan that Amela Sandra LLC offers. The recovery wellness plan is developed using SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats) analysis, developing coping skills and evaluating recovery wants and needs using SMART (Specific Measurable Attainable Relevant Time-based) goals. This workshop describes how behavior is learned and mental illness is a health diagnosis, not your character. The workshop teaches adapting resilience skills through mindful coping strategies, goal-setting methods, and a holistic mindset.

Amela Sandra Dzurlic is a community health outreach specialist that works to encourage homeless families to seek quality of life through referrals to programs. She also provides peer support to women and men of all backgrounds and status who receive a listening ear, support, and hope for recovery. As someone with a mental health diagnosis, she knows that anyone with a SMI can still strive to achieve their goal for a better, healthier quality of life. She is currently studying counseling and plans to complete her Bachelor's degree in Psychology.

Redefining Youth Peer Support Across the States

Tymer Hudson and Shayn McDonald

The Youth MOVE Change Initiative (YMCI) is a program designed to enhance and expand the peer workforce, with a specific intention to work in the field of mental health to address the unique needs of youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth. YMCI fellows and youth leadership council members invite you to join a panel discussion exploring how expanding opportunities for diverse communities through youth peer support will empower the current and upcoming generations of leaders.

Co-presenters will be a group of 3-4 young people with lived experience across systems currently serving as peer fellows or as members of the youth leadership council for the Youth MOVE Change Initiative. All members are between the ages of 16-22 and represent young people within LGBTQ+ and/or BIPOC communities.

Tymer Hudson (they/ them) is a Black, Non-Binary trauma survivor with a passion for using storytelling and multimedia to inspire change. They are deeply committed to creating opportunities for young people to lead and engage within the field. Tymer's passion is informed by their lived experience within systems and their professional experience supporting LGBTQ+ youth serving-organizations.

Shayn McDonald (they/them) is a young, queer trauma survivor with a passion for youth advocacy and social justice. They are particularly invested in education and advocacy around LGBTQ+ communities, and seek to highlight and address the impact of trauma and oppression to create greater change. Their experience in the mental health system motivates them to spread awareness around the diversity of human experiences, the importance of community, and self-determined support.

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Advocacy 101: Nothing About Us Without Us

Ginger Phillips

Come learn what every peer advocate needs to know to create change and have their voices heard. Participants will learn the basics of advocacy in local, state, and federal levels of government. It is time to empower ourselves with knowledge so as not to be overlooked while learning some unknown tools of the trade in advocacy. You will learn the challenges you may face as a mental health advocate. How do you create legislation in a non-partisan way and work with both sides of the aisle? You will learn to do the hard things to create legislation that will affect you and your peers in the long run. Lastly, this workshop will cover a “how to” on "Speaking even if your voice shakes" and "Doing it...Afraid."

Ginger was chairman of the Task Force comprised of peers and professionals who designed the Medicaid billable peer support program as it came to Utah. She was the co-founder of Operation Shine America, a nation-wide non-profit that raised awareness of homeless youth; and she founded the group “Advocates Gone Rogue,” made up of independent advocates who speak truth to power. She has been a legislative advocate for 12 years and has helped create pieces of legislation that will better the treatment of her peers in the mental health system.

Youth Peer Advocates (YPAs) Are Here To Stay!

Robbie Lettieri, Tiara Springer-Love, LMSW

This presentation will offer information on what it means to be a Youth Peer Advocate (YPA), the benefits of joining the Youth Peer Movement, and steps needed to become a credentialed YPA. After we review beneficial information regarding the work of YPAs, we will hear directly from YPAs working across New York State during a live panel discussion.

Robbie Lettieri is a national public speaker and advocate who is passionate about creating a more inclusive and supportive society. Growing up in both the health care and mental health systems, Robbie is dedicated to advocating for others who have endured both similar and abstract hardships. Robbie has years of experience in the mental health field offering individual and group support, facilitating and coordinating trainings and events, and managing a state-wide workforce for the NYS YPA Credential.

Tiara Springer-Love, LMSW, (she/her), is an ambitious leader, mental health advocate, and a community organizer who is dedicated to ensuring the voices of youth and young adults within underserved communities are not only heard, but also recognized and used as a driving force for change within all child-serving systems. She is driven by her own lived experience with the foster care and mental health systems, and her goal is to advocate for access to quality care for those within marginalized and oppressed communities. In addition to her primary job functions as the Director of Youth Power at Families Together in NYS, Tiara is also an alumna of the Silberman School of Social Work at CUNY Hunter College.

Thursday, July 8

Workshop B: 3:15 – 4pm Eastern; 12:15 – 1pm Pacific

The Evolution of Consumer and Family Advisory Committees in North Carolina

Wes Rider

North Carolina has worked to include people with lived experience in the design and implementation of Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder service policies. This workshop will discuss Consumer and Family Advisory Committees (CFACs), which began strictly as advisory committees and over time evolved to include governing roles.

Wes Rider self-identifies as being in long-term recovery. As a member of the Community Engagement and Empowerment Team of the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services, he has worked in support of Consumer and Family Advisory Committees since 2004.

Fostering Youth Empowerment During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond

Kate Barrow, Rachael Landau, Whitney Rosenblatt

This session will provide information on the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Teen Town Hall in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to elevate youth voices through a youth-focused and community-driven planning process. By the end of the session, participants will be able to: 1. Describe the community partnerships and process of developing leadership and advocacy opportunities for youth and young adults. 2. Modify and adapt methods for the inclusion of Youth Peer Supports in ethical engagement of youth in advocacy. 3. Design and develop future opportunities for ongoing efforts to elevate youth voices within their own communities.

Kate Barrow joined the Community Engagement and Empowerment Team in December 2018. She brings her experience of navigating the world with ADHD and co-occurring anxiety, postpartum maternal mental health issues, and parenting children with developmental disabilities that include Autism Spectrum Disorder and Sensory Processing Disorder. She is a passionate advocate for children, youth, and families.

Rachael Landau (she/her) serves as the Statewide Youth and Young Adult Coordinator for the Healthy Transitions Initiative in North Carolina. She is a qualified mental health professional and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Old Dominion University. Rachael draws from her personal lived experience and her 10 years of professional experience in the mental health care field to effectively advocate for policies that promote community inclusion and elevate the voices of youth and families at all levels of decision-making.

Whitney Rosenblatt (she/her) is a Youth and Young Adult Peer Support Specialist for the North Carolina Healthy Transitions Initiative. A passionate chef-turned-mental-health-professional, Whitney takes a holistic approach to youth peer support by elevating the voices of people with lived experience, advocating for improved services for youth, and community engagement.

Thursday, July 8

Workshop B: 3:15 – 4pm Eastern; 12:15 – 1pm Pacific

How Does a Peer Specialist Dialog About Spirituality, Faith, or Religion?

AJ French

Are you a Peer Specialist who wants to better navigate conversations about spirituality, faith, or religion? This session will demonstrate how our recovery values guide us to safe and healthy conversations about matters which are important to so many. You won't want to miss this one!

AJ French serves as CEO for Gift of Voice, a mental health training and technical assistance center operated by people in recovery. Having survived numerous suicide attempts, she attributes her mental health recovery to encounters with the Divine. This led to development of a curriculum addressing the spiritual dimension of wellness.

MadFreedom: Political Power and the Path to Liberation

Wilda White

In this interactive session, MadFreedom founder Wilda White will explain (1) why psychiatric survivors as a group need to acquire political power if we are to ever transform the mental health system and/or end the discrimination and oppression that we experience in all realms of our lives, and (2) how to acquire that political power.

Wilda White is an attorney, Mad activist, and founder of MadFreedom, a national human and civil rights advocacy organization whose mission is to end the discrimination and oppression of people based on their perceived mental state. She lives in Vermont.

Conflict Resolution Skills to Prevent Crisis

Dan Berstein

What if you had the tools to resolve a conflict with less escalation so it never became a crisis? Conflict resolution best practices can help people feel heard and empowered as they listen to alternatives to resolve their conflicts. Learn to listen, share challenging information, and reach agreements to de-escalate.

Dan Berstein combines his expertise as a mediator, his academic background in mental health and public health, and his lived experience with bipolar disorder to create innovative conflict resolution programs used by peers and organizations around the world.

Thursday, July 8

Workshop B: 3:15 – 4pm Eastern; 12:15 – 1pm Pacific

Art For The Heart

Andrea Mannila

Andrea Mannila will share how she discovered the power of creativity in expressing painful thoughts and emotions, in order to attain a greater level of peace. She will then guide participants in using creative mediums to explore a difficult moment to personally experience the benefits. Andrea encourages participants to have the following materials on hand: paper or a canvas; a pencil and eraser; and some sort of colour medium (e.g., gel pens, paint, pencil crayons). This way you will be able to personally experience the benefits of using creativity to express difficult emotions.

Depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideations have been part of Andrea Mannila's life for decades. She discovered that painting the dominant images of her suicidal ideations brings immediate relief, easing the power of those thoughts. She is a retired teacher with 31 years of experience. She recently completed a professional speaking program.

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Thursday, July 8

Workshop C: 4:15 – 5pm Eastern; 1:15 – 2pm Pacific

Resilience and Historical Trauma Among African Americans

Flora Releford

African American historical trauma is the collective spiritual, psychological, emotional, and cognitive distress that perpetuates intergenerational harm from multiple inhumane experiences beginning with slavery and continuing to the present day. As sociology professor Dr. Rosalee Martin, LCSW, states, “Racist-driven violence has caused fear passed down through generations in the form of toxic stress and altered DNA. An individual does not have to experience the event but is still deeply affected by it.”

Flora Releford has over three dedicated decades of experiential wisdom, knowledge, and education in whole health and emotional wellness. She transformed her multiple racial traumas into treasure, and pain into power, by shifting her heart and mindset to have a purposeful and fulfilled life. Flora is an eCPR trainer/coordinator, Reiki Master, Life and Recovery coach, CHW, PRSS/ICPR/PM, MCSE, and NLP.

Come the Wild Weather: A Musical Conversation

Karen Webber

Music as a catalyst for conversation? Questions are paired with songs drawn from musical theatre, folk, and country music genres, creating a safe space for participants to share. A demonstration, with discussion of the model to follow, inspires participants to replicate it in peer wellness and senior centers and in eldercare facilities.

Karen is a Teaching Artist and person in recovery diagnosed with bipolar depression. She crafts innovative music/theatre pieces performed in colleges, eldercare facilities, and community centers. She is a peer facilitator at the Mental Health Association of Maryland and a peer mentor at Johns Hopkins for a study of older adults with depression. She will receive peer certification this summer.

Why Can't I Sleep: Tackling Insomnia

Sean Bradrick

We'll be addressing the top five reasons we can't get a good night's sleep. We'll learn mental exercises to reduce over-thinking and racing thoughts. We'll address pre-sleep thought patterns and distraction techniques. Lastly, we'll learn how to use modalities such as mindfulness, yogic breathing practices, and guided meditation to address insomnia and anxiety.

Sean Bradrick lived most of his life with undiagnosed and untreated bipolar disorder. He fell into the trap of treating the symptoms of these with alcohol, which became an affliction in itself. He took Peer Support Specialist training in 2012 and began using holistic methods to cope. He has been a student of these techniques since childhood, and has taught veterans, seniors and people with addictions and mental illnesses for five years.

Thursday, July 8

Workshop C: 4:15 – 5pm Eastern; 1:15 –2pm Pacific

Expanding Equity

Chris Johnson, Roslind Hayes

This workshop will present the findings from a listening session on “Racism as a Barrier to Recovery” hosted by the Southeast Mental Health Technology Transfer Center. The presenters will identify actions peer support providers can take to recognize and remedy barriers. They will describe a grant proposal they put forward with the Fulton County, Georgia, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to create a culturally responsive, trauma-informed, peer-led community behavioral health center.

Roslind D. Hayes, BS, CPS-MH, CARES, WHWC is the Statewide Director of Peer Services and Training for the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network, where she has worked since 2010. Roslind oversees Georgia’s Peer Support, Wellness, and Respite Centers and directs the trainings for Georgia’s CPS-Mental Health workforce.

Chris Johnson, MFA, CPS-MH, CPS-AD, is the Director of Communications for the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network, where he disseminates information about recovery and wellness opportunities to behavioral health peers and providers. Both Roslind and Chris are in long-term mental health and substance use recovery.

Creating Space for Myself

Sean Perry, Miranda Todt

Join us to learn about We R H.O.P.E.'s approach to building leadership among youth, with a specific focus on the importance of self-care for youth leaders. Sean Perry and Miranda Todt will describe how youth leaders can be encouraged to create space for themselves, thereby building resilience and connection.

Sean Perry has two decades of coaching experience and working with youth. He’s the President/Co-Founder/Executive Director of We R H.O.P.E. and host of We R H.O.P.E. Breaking The Stigma Through Change on the VoiceAmerica Empowerment Channel. He’s a certified Life Coach, Cognitive Behavioral Coach, Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Specialist/instructor, certified in Childhood Trauma. He is also an Exposure Response Prevention Specialist and Signs of Suicide Prevention trainer. Sean hopes to create change in the public schools by bringing support at a much younger age and breaking the stigma of mental illness.

Miranda is a youth leader and advocate. She is currently studying for her nursing degree in New Hampshire. She's helped to develop the Youth Emotional CPR curriculum and has been a trainer as well. Her hard work and dedication to her fellow humans shines through in all of her work.

Thursday, July 8

Workshop C: 4:15 – 5pm Eastern; 1:15 –2pm Pacific

Public Policy: Ready for Prime Time

Kevin Fitts, Laura Van Tosh

The workshop will provide practical information to embed peer support and peer principles into local and state policy-making. The speakers will utilize behavioral health care trends as a backdrop for the workshop. Practical skills will be demonstrated that bring to scale state or local policy making opportunities.

Kevin Fitts is the Executive Director of the Oregon Mental Health Consumers Association and advocates for the needs of consumers at mental health service and advocacy planning meetings in Oregon and Washington, D.C. Kevin has created funding and membership recruitment plans for grassroots advocacy organizations and peer support at Oregon State Hospital.

Laura Van Tosh brings stakeholders together with Washington Legislative and Policy Advocates. WLPA is a nonpartisan educational forum founded in 2019 for Washingtonians to increase their awareness and become engaged in legislative advocacy statewide and locally. She has held policy positions in three states and at the national level.

Changing Hearts, Changing Minds: Teaching Others to Treat Us Right

Robyn Gantsweg

Inaccurate assumptions and negative beliefs fuel society's stigma and discrimination against people with mental health disabilities. Harmful stereotypes lead to miscommunication, misunderstanding, and mistreatment of peers in our community. To empower us to create change, we will learn strategies for teaching others how to effectively and respectfully relate with us.

Robyn Gantsweg has worked with Disability Rights California's (DRC) Peer Self-Advocacy Program since 2002. A person with lived experience, she knows the harmful effects of mental health stigma and discrimination. She presents trainings to peers in facilities to teach them their rights and how to advocate for themselves.

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Saturday, July 10

Workshop D: 12 – 12:45pm Eastern; 9 – 9:45am Pacific

Confronting the Enemy Within After Military Service

Sherman Gillums Jr.

This presentation will provide an in-depth exposition on issues of American “socio-military” culture and experiential self-reflection within the context of the most commonly missed mental health condition — depression — and overlooked childhood trauma among service members before service, during service, and after service, as narrated by the presenter.

Sherman Gillums Jr. served in the United States Marine Corps for 12 years, joining at age 17. He has been awarded two Navy/Marine Commendation Medals, a Navy/Marine Achievement Medal, a Global War on Terror Service Medal, and a Marine Drill Instructor Ribbon. A widely sought voice for veterans, Gillums has testified before Congress as an expert witness on veterans’ benefits, health care, and suicide prevention. For this work, he was selected one of HillVets’ 100 most influential leaders in 2014. His alma mater, the University of San Diego, also inducted him into its Alumni Hall of Honor in 2016.

Integrating the Intentional Peer Support Model into Multidisciplinary Clinical Teams Through a Lens of Shared Power

Danny Kochanowski, Randy Morrison

This workshop will explain the integration process of the Intentional Peer Support model in several different interdisciplinary clinical teams in Maine. Often, the peer support role is misunderstood or co-opted in these settings. Workshop presenters have developed a structure to minimize the likelihood of these perils with a focus on provider education and comprehensive support for peer support staff through a lens of shared power and intersectionality

Danny Kochanowski (he/him) practices peer support at Maine Behavioral Healthcare as a program manager. He has worked in peer roles since 2015, including at inpatient units, peer support centers, a peer respite, and many apartments and street corners in Western Massachusetts and Southern Maine. He envisions communities more fully embodying autonomy, curiosity, and love. He thoroughly enjoys mosh pits, mountain summits, and that feeling in your body when you are fully seen and heard.

Randy Morrison, Director of Peer Services (he/him) came to Maine Behavioral Healthcare (MBH) after working as a Peer Support Specialist with people experiencing homelessness and other vulnerable life circumstances in the Portland, Maine area. Randy oversees the development and implementation of peer support programs at MBH. Currently, MBH has over 50 peer support positions working across a number of settings, including emergency departments, youth programs, case management programs, and peer support centers.

Saturday, July 10

Workshop D: 12 – 12:45pm Eastern; 9 – 9:45am Pacific

How the ReAwaken Model Can Lead to Connection, Compassion, and Meaningful Action in Your Community

Oryx Cohen, PJ Moynihan, Matt Ball

Inspired by the film “Healing Voices,” the basis of the ReAwaken concept is that our society is asleep in many ways. We have been growing more and more disconnected from each other and the environment and are now in some sort of collective psychosis. The purpose of the first ReAwaken gathering, ReAwaken Australia (April 2019), was to bring leaders from the mental health, trauma, and addiction fields to have an open and honest dialogue about where we are at and where we should be going. In this workshop, two of the organizers of ReAwaken Australia will present on the model and suggest ways that you can make the themes of the gathering — connection, compassion, and meaningful action — come alive in your community.

Oryx Cohen has his own lived experience with extreme states and is the Chief Operating Officer of the National Empowerment Center, as well as a co-producer and subject of the award-winning social action documentary “Healing Voices.” He is also a writer, Emotional CPR trainer, and Hearing Voices trainer.

PJ Moynihan is the Founder/CEO of Digital Eyes Film (Northampton, Massachusetts), an Emmy-nominated producer, and an award-winning writer/director. He is the director/producer of “Healing Voices,” as well as the forthcoming documentary “Recovering Addiction.”

Matt Ball has his own lived experience with extreme states and is a Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, psychotherapist, trainer [MOUI] and Co-Director at the HUMANE (Hope, Understanding, Meaning, Acceptance, Noos [Human Spirit], Acceptance) Clinic. He is interested in “psychosis” and trauma and human-to-human responses to personal distress and meaning. Matt was awarded 2017 Australian Mental Health Nurse of the Year for his work in this area.

The Ongoing Journey of The Friendship Project

Dan Frey

“I am just a middle-aged man with a mental health diagnosis seeking to do good for my community. I know that many of my peers are isolated and lacking in friendship support. The Friendship Project was conceived to connect more isolated peers who are experiencing challenges to peer volunteers who can offer the gift of friendship. This workshop is about the journey of TFP from idea to conception.”

Dan Frey has been a mental health advocate since 1998, when the late Ken Steele, a powerful mental health advocate, agreed to mentor him. Ken gave Dan the opportunity to write and share his lived experience with others, to run support groups, and to serve a damn good cup of coffee. After Ken died in 2000, Dan continued to develop the City Voices media and community-building projects. The projects went virtual during COVID. City Voices’ website is cityvoicesonline.org and its Facebook page is facebook.com/groups/cityvoicesforpeers.

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Workshop D: 12 – 12:45pm Eastern; 9 – 9:45am Pacific

Five Pillars to Facilitating Safe Spaces in School for Youth

Aime Hutton

One in five teens experiences mental health crises. Combined with stresses including not feeling safe in school for girls and LGBTQ+ youth, schools are at a turning point. It is time to be preventionists, not interventionists. This workshop will provide tools on how to facilitate safe spaces today.

Hailing from Calgary, Alberta, Canada, Aime Hutton is a phoenix. She lives with anxiety and PTSD due to the severe bullying she experienced in school for six years. She was not safe at her school. As a Youth Diversity Advisor, Aime turned that pain into helping schools today have safe spaces.

Creativity and COVID: A Lived Experience Perspective

Karin Jervert

This talk draws upon the artwork and personal narratives about surviving the emotional impact of the pandemic featured in Mad in America's online exhibition "Creativity and COVID: Art-Making During the Pandemic." Curator Karin Jervert will explore the arts as a way to transform suffering and trauma, individual as well as collective. We'll talk about how art-making can be a container for altered states, suffering, anger, and trauma, how we can make art more accessible to psychiatric survivors and those in withdrawal, as well as how creativity can help us create social change in public and private spaces. We'll also explore the question, "How can art-making help us come out of this pandemic a better people?"

Karin Jervert is a fine artist, writer, and psychiatric survivor. Her work explores empathy, normalization of suffering, and the power of art-making to transform trauma, particularly trauma inflicted by the psychiatric industry. Karin works for Mad in America and curated the online exhibition "Creativity and COVID: Art-Making During the Pandemic."

SHARE! Collaborative Housing: Propelling People into Self-Sufficiency

Maria Gonzalez

SHARE! Collaborative Housing is a SAMHSA Promising Practice that propels people into self-sufficiency. It is easily replicable and inexpensive permanent supportive housing. The 400 residents are free to make their own rules and self-direct their lives. Twenty-six percent of homeless people with serious mental illnesses get jobs within a year, and 41% move in within 24 hours of first contact.

Maria Gonzalez is the Housing Program Manager for SHARE! Collaborative Housing (www.shareselfhelp.org), a public-private partnership providing affordable, permanent supportive housing to disabled people in single-family houses throughout Los Angeles County. She is a member of the Neuroticos Anonimos support group, which helps any person who experiences mental and emotional illness.

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Workshop E: 4:15 – 5pm Eastern; 1:15 – 2pm Pacific

SHARE! Recovery Retreat—A Recovery-focused Peer Respite

Camille Dennis

The SHARE! Recovery Retreat is a two-week stay where residents design their futures and learn skills to succeed. Each cohort of residents decides on their own rules and the consequences for breaking them. They make decisions about all aspects of the Retreat and come out as empowered, self-driven people.

Camille Dennis is the Program Manager at SHARE! the Self-Help And Recovery Exchange—a peer-run agency where all staff are mental health consumers. Camille oversees the SHARE! Recovery Retreat—a peer-run respite—and two peer-run centers. She directly and indirectly supervises 18 Peer Specialists.

Catching New Giants

Jim Rye, Kristina Kapp

Nothing about us without us! Know this by knowing your past. Take a trip through the tumultuous past of the CSX movement as chronicled by legendary activist Pat Risser, using a timeline as only he could see the mental patients' liberation human rights movement led by legendary giants like Howie the Harp, Judi Chamberlin, Leonard Roy Frank, George Ebert, Joseph Rogers, David Oaks, and more. We will experience the Ebert Values Exchange challenging the beliefs of the audience, culminating in an agreed-upon call to action. Let's draw on the passion of the past activists, resiliently commit to our common bonds and step up as new giants to revitalize the mental patients' liberation human rights movement. "We will take action to make these words real and will not rest until we do."

Mr. James J. Rye, MA, CPSS, served on boards of directors nationally, statewide, and locally. He earned a Bachelor's of Science from Central Michigan University and a Master's Degree in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Manhattan, New York. He is the Executive Director of The Empowerment Center in Mt. Vernon, New York; board chair of the Mental Patients Liberation Alliance, and founded New Direction Peer Support Center.

Ms. Kristina Kapp, MBA, CPSS, is the Executive Director/Trainer of the Beliefactory and Resiliency Manager of Optum Health, Texas. She is a Certified National Trainer, on the Executive Advisory Board of Via Hope, and earned her MBA from Western Governor University. She is a member of the Alabama Mental Health Commissioner Advisory Board Council, Executive Director of Wings Across Alabama, and founder of Empower Consulting Group LLC. She founded The Beliefactory in the Midwest. She is the recipient of many awards and accolades.

Saturday, July 10

Workshop E: 4:15 – 5pm Eastern; 1:15 – 2pm Pacific

The Intersection of Uncertainty, Possibility, and Creativity

Jenn Cusick

Uncertainty is scary, and we avoid it at all costs. This last year has stirred up an epidemic of uncertainty, fear, and decreased mental health. Research says that building tolerance for uncertainty supports resilience. Choosing to lean into uncertainty creates opportunity for possibility and creativity, because creativity always involves risk.

Jenn is from Canada. She wrote the British Columbia Peer Support training curriculum and managed a peer support program for years before launching Luminare Wellness, where she facilitates WRAP and creates curriculum and workshops. Jenn is very familiar with the fear of uncertainty, and uses creativity, WRAP, and self-compassion to support her well-being.

Transformative Peer Support

Becky Brasfield

“Transformative Peer Support” addresses the need for a paradigm shift in mental health recovery that fully reflects the values of peer support, new advocacy, and empowerment. Consumers have historically led the way for structural change in the mental health field. This presentation reviews currently accepted practice for needed change.

Becky Brasfield is a Certified Recovery Support Specialist (CRSS) and Certified Psychiatric Rehabilitation Practitioner (CPRP) in Chicago. She is a mental health advocate and writer. Her works explore a variety of topics in mental health recovery and popular television and film, as well as race, gender, and class studies.

Training Peers to Better Understand and Advocate for LGBTQ+ Clients

Beth Bloom

LGBTQ+ clients are still marginalized and remain fearful of self-disclosure in many medical, mental health, and substance use disorder treatment programs. This fear prevents clients from fully disclosing vital information to providers, which means that LGBTQ+ clients’ needs are not fully met. The workshop will provide peers with tools to best negotiate a safe working relationship with LGBTQ+ clients. They will learn about the LGBTQ+ population and best ways to understand and navigate while serving them with an open mind and heart.

Beth Bloom has worked as a Peer Mentor at East House in Rochester, New York, for 17+ years. She works with clients who struggle both with mental health and substance use disorders. Beth specializes in working with LGBTQ+ clients throughout the agency and provides agency-wide Safe Zone trainings several times a year.

Saturday, July 10

Workshop E: 4:15 – 5pm Eastern; 1:15 – 2pm Pacific

Tools for Boundaries and Safety with Self and Others

Moriah Williams

Mainstream society discourages us from connecting with ourselves and supporting consent, especially for marginalized people. In this workshop we will explore some simple tools for connecting with yourself, understanding your internal signals, tracking and voicing consent for self-advocacy and community care, as well as skills for providers to support client consent.

Moriah Williams is a white genderqueer autistic writer and somatic practitioner who has a history of complex trauma and eating disorders. Their work centers the relationship between healing self and society in the context of neurodivergence and various marginalized and centered identities. They offer remote sessions and education. Their website is www.moriahjwilliams.com

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Saturday, July 10

Workshop F: 5:15 – 6pm Eastern; 2:15-3pm Pacific

Peer Power: How to Be an Effective Systems Advocate

Joseph Rogers

Using time-tested advocacy skills—including strategic planning, bold tactics, creative negotiating, and diplomatic follow-up—peers can protect human rights, combat discrimination and prejudice, and become catalysts for systems change. The presenter, a longtime national leader of the peer movement for social justice, will illustrate how to be an effective advocate.

Joseph Rogers, who has lived experience, is founder and Executive Director of the National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse. An internationally known advocate and a leader of the consumer/survivor/ex-patient movement, he has won numerous awards, including the Heinz Award for the Human Condition (2005) and SAMHSA's Lifetime Achievement Voice Award (2013).

Crisis de Salud Mental: ¿Planificar con Anticipación nos Ayuda a Decidir qué es lo Mejor! Mental Health Crisis: Planning Ahead Helps Us Decide What's Best

Maria Garcia and Senobia Pichardo

This workshop will be in Spanish.

Iniciar la conversación sobre la crisis de salud mental con nuestros seres queridos y profesionales de tratamiento es un proceso importante y a menudo se pasa por alto. Hay ocasiones durante una crisis de salud mental en la que no podemos hacer nuestras propias decisiones. La comunicación es el elemento clave en la creación de un plan de intervención y prevención en una crisis de salud mental. Desarrollar nuestro propio plan nos brinda la oportunidad de expresar nuestros deseos para cuando no podamos tomar decisiones. Conozca la diferencia entre una crisis y una emergencia y como evitar que una crisis se convierta en una emergencia.

Starting the mental health crisis conversation with our loved ones and care professionals is an important and often overlooked process. There may be times during a mental health crisis when we are not able to make our own decisions. Communication is the key element in creating a mental health crisis prevention and intervention plan. Developing our own plan provides us an opportunity to express our wishes for when we're not able to make decisions. Learn the difference between a crisis and emergency and how to prevent a crisis from turning into an emergency.

Maria Garcia es una persona con experiencia vivida. Desde hace 14 años ella trabaja para Disability Rights California. Como asistente de abogacía en la Oficina de Derechos del Paciente de California ella aprendió a abogar por los derechos de los pacientes y por sus derechos. El año pasado se unió al Programa de Auto-Abogacía Entre Compañeros, como coordinadora.

Senobia Pichardo es una entrenadora del Programa de "Auto-Abogacía entre Compañeros" (PSA Unit) con Disability Rights California. Ella ha estado facilitando grupos de Auto-Abogacía por 17 años a través del condado de Los Angeles. Tanto en la comunidad como en las clínicas de cuidado intensivo. A Senobia le gusta poder ofrecer apoyo de varias maneras y así se siente reconectada con sus raíces. Ella es una aprendiz de por vida y siente que nunca se cansa de aprender, crecer y expandirse.

Saturday, July 10

Workshop F: 5:15 – 6pm Eastern; 2:15-3pm Pacific

Swimming In/Against It: Capitalism and CSX Leadership

Walter Wai Tak Chan

We will explore the complexities of consumer and survivor leadership, focusing on the difference between organizations led by the poor compared to organizations led by middle-class and wealthy people. How can poor people become leaders in a field dominated by middle-class leaders?

Walter, a survivor of childhood abuse, is co-chair of the National Network for Mental Health (Canada). He currently lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The New York City Justice Peer Initiative: A Model for Activating Justice-Involved Peers in Our Communities

Helen 'Skip' Skipper, Frank Barretto, Jeanette Toledo

In the landscape of needed criminal justice reform, a movement has started in New York City focusing on the need for Justice Peers. Currently, peer support workers are firmly integrated into mental health and behavioral health systems in NYC (and the workforce has been growing at a steady pace since certification and Medicaid reimbursement began in 2012), but peer support workers are underutilized within the justice system. The time is now in NYC: We have an initiative working towards three separate but cohesive priorities designed to increase inclusion for justice-involved peers.

Skip has worked in peer support since her 2007 release from incarceration. She is the Manager of Peer Services at the NYC Criminal Justice Agency, where she intentionally creates space for individuals with lived experiences. A Columbia University Beyond-the Bars Fellow and Justice-in-Education Scholar and a rising Junior at St. Francis College, she is the first post-prison participant to join the Honor classes. She lives by her mantra: "I've been around the block a time or two on my tricycle; I use those lived experiences to color my world while advocating for those caught up in the broken criminal justice system!"

A disciplined and dedicated proponent of change, Frank Barretto is an experienced NYS Certified Peer Specialist and Recovery Coach. He is the Peer Coordinator with the New York City Criminal Justice Agency and an Executive Member of the NYC Justice Peer Initiative. Prior to this role, Frank worked with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene as a Peer supporting young adults. Frank currently attends Touro College with the goal of becoming a social worker, and is a proud United States Army veteran who is passionate about using his lived experience to support and advocate for others who are negatively impacted by the criminal legal system.

Jeanette Toledo is majoring in Criminal Justice at St. Frances College, where she is the President of the International Cultural Club and a student leader. She serves on two Executive Boards: the NYC Justice Peer Initiative and the NYC Peer Workforce Coalition. She is a Howie the Harp graduate and worked as a Peer Intern with the Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES), and was Valedictorian for AmeriCorps - Peer Corps.

Saturday, July 10

Workshop F: 5:15 – 6pm Eastern; 2:15-3pm Pacific

Creativity Is In Us All: Expressive Arts in Peer Settings

Kimberly Mittendorf Hensley

This workshop's most important objectives are to help each attendee realize that everyone possesses creativity and that it is fun and easy to lead peer groups in expressive arts games and activities. Kimberly will introduce the topic with a bit of history and definitions. Then she will discuss possible activities involving art, dance, improvisation, and theatre games. A Maya Angelou poem will be examined as an example of using the expressive arts for social justice purposes. Please bring paper, a writing instrument, and crayons or colored pencils for an activity.

Because of mental health issues, Kimberly was never able to pursue her passion of theatre arts but has found it very meaningful to share creative activities with children and peers dealing with mental health issues. Having an interest in using theatre for social justice and exploring spirituality through the expressive arts, she went on to study teaching and counseling; this has added to her strengths as an Ohio Peer Recovery Supporter. Her desire is to share with her peers how cathartic, healing, and plain old fun these expressive arts activities can be, as well as how easy they are to lead.

Next session of workshops begins on next page

Thursday, July 15

Workshop G: 12 – 12:45pm Eastern; 9 – 9:45am Pacific

Hope from Behind the Walls and Serving a Life Sentence

Lee Horton, Dennis Horton, Mary Ellen Copeland

This workshop will demonstrate the value of holistic peer support and artistic expression in prison as tools of rehabilitation, reducing violence, and fostering healing by brothers who became Certified Peer Specialists, Wrap Facilitators, producers, play writers, and creators of reentry programming. Journeying to freedom, they worked with hundreds of incarcerated men creating positive change.

In 1993, Lee Horton was arrested and later sentenced to life without parole for a murder he didn't commit. Leaving behind a family, he spent 28 years fighting for freedom. On February 11, 2021, Pennsylvania's Governor Tom Wolfe commuted sentences.

Dennis Horton, engaged to be married at the time, was likewise sentenced to life for a murder he did not commit. He too spent 28 years in prison fighting for freedom. His sentence was also commuted on February 11, 2021, by Pennsylvania's Governor Wolfe. Besides being CPSS and Wrap Facilitators, both are organizers for Pennsylvania's Lt. Governor Fetterman's Senate campaign.

Mary Ellen Copeland is an author, educator, and mental health advocate. When Copeland was a child, her mother spent 8 years in a state mental institution; later in life Copeland was also diagnosed with a mental health condition. Copeland then studied the coping and wellness strategies of people who have experienced mental health challenges. Copeland's work led to the creation of the non-profit the Copeland Center for Wellness and Recovery, which continues her work through trainings around the world. In 1997 she worked with a group of peers to develop the well-known and widely used Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP), which is now an evidence-based practice. She has received many awards and written many books describing WRAP and its use in different circumstances. She is now working with Dennis and Lee to develop resources for people who are incarcerated.

Whole Health Employment Support and Training

Sadie Thompson, Danielle Smith

WHEST (Whole Health Employment Support and Training) is a strengths-based program built to lift marginalized people into economic empowerment. With a specific, peer-driven model, the curriculum is supported by relationships that provide leadership skills and mentorship for its participants. The program is being researched to develop a new evidence-based practice.

Sadie Thompson is the Chief Implementation Officer of Wellbeing Initiative Inc. She is co-author of the Periodical Nebraska Peer Support Curriculum, a state and nationally certified curriculum. Sadie believes recovery is possible for anyone, and peers are some of the most amazing, resilient people in our community. She is a proud peer.

Danielle Smith is the Chief Visionary Officer of Wellbeing Initiative Inc. She is co-author of the Periodical Nebraska Peer Support Curriculum, a state and nationally certified curriculum. Danielle supports a sense of belonging for peers, and hopes to empower, connect, advocate, and provide education for all peers in the state of Nebraska.

Thursday, July 15

Workshop G: 12 – 12:45pm Eastern; 9 – 9:45am Pacific

Revolutionizing Young Adult Peer Support: Empowerment, Advocacy, & Leadership

Vesper Moore

This presentation will discuss the components of Young Adult Peer support as they currently exist, challenges with the present structure, and efforts to revolutionize the work. Topics that will be discussed include understanding young adults as a social class, problems with tokenizing youth within services, and how to properly advocate with youth and young adults, all with an emphasis on youth liberation. There will be an opportunity for questions and discussion.

Vesper is the Senior Director of Organizational Equity & Young Adult Supports for the Kiva Centers in Massachusetts. Within their role, they are the Kiva Centers Director of Equity, the Zia Young Adult Access Center, and the administrative oversight for Karaya Peer Respite. Vesper is a community activist, survivor, trainer, and writer. They have brought the perspectives of survivors to national and international spaces. They have experience working as a consultant for both the United States government and the United Nations in shaping strategies around trauma, intersectionality, and disability rights.

Una Guia de Animales de Servicio y Apoyo Emocional A Guide to Service and Emotional Support Animals

Senobia Pichardo, Maria Garcia

Muchas personas con discapacidades de salud mental encuentran que tener un animal de servicio psiquiátrico o de apoyo emocional mejora su vida diaria, su salud mental y bienestar emocional. Conozca la diferencia entre estos animales de asistencia y sus derechos con respecto al acceso público y las adaptaciones razonables. Y cambios en la ley de viajes aéreos.

Many people with mental health disabilities find that having a psychiatric service or emotional support animal improves their daily lives and supports their mental health and wellness. Learn the difference between these assistance animals and your rights regarding public access and reasonable accommodations and changes in the law on air travel.

Senobia Pichardo es una entrenadora del Programa de “Auto-Abogacía entre Compañeros” (PSA Unit) con Disability Rights California. Ella ha estado facilitando grupos de Auto-Abogacía por 17 años a través del condado de Los Angeles. Tanto en la comunidad como en las clínicas de cuidado intensivo. A Senobia le gusta poder ofrecer apoyo de varias maneras y así se siente reconectada con sus raíces. Ella es una aprendiz de por vida y siente que nunca se cansa de aprender, crecer y expandirse.

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Thursday, July 15

Workshop G: 12 – 12:45pm Eastern; 9 – 9:45am Pacific

Transcending the Aftermath of Abuse: Moving from Victim to Expert

Rosie Anderson, Joel Glenn-Wixson

Learn that by recognizing the far-reaching effects of the aftermath of abuse, the victim can reclaim their individuality, life, and dreams. Using the knowledge of someone who has experienced verbal and emotional abuse and transcended the aftermath, along with learning how this was accomplished, participants will learn how this form of expert knowledge can be received and shared in ways that facilitate the reclamation of descriptive agency. By doing so, people previously described as victims reclaim their ability to describe their experience in non-victim terms that acknowledge how their hopes, dreams, and desires are expressed in their individual response to trauma.

Rosie Anderson is a survivor of a verbally and emotionally abusive marriage, and an advocate for the verbally abused. She wrote “Relearning How to Fly,” a paper, soon to be a book, documenting the effects of emotional and verbal abuse from a survivor’s perspective. She has done multiple presentations, several to graduate psychology classes at Lesley University. Rosie has been a Reiki practitioner and a hospice volunteer for 10+ years.

Dr. Joel Glenn Wixson is a singer/songwriter, Certified Addictions Specialist, Licensed Clinical Psychologist, and a Narrative Therapist. His intention in everything he does is to embody an invitation to everyone to reclaim their descriptive agency.

The Garden as Spiritual Practice

Joann Calabrese

Consciously connecting with the green world is a spiritual practice leading to healing, resilience, and understanding. It provides insights about our place in the world and meaningful choices going forward. You don’t have to be a gardener to attune to the garden as a spiritual doorway. Bring a journal/notebook.

Joann is a lifelong gardener and author of “Growing Mindful” (Llewellyn Press), a book on gardens and spirituality. She has used garden mindfulness to help manage depression and anxiety. She is also the lead trainer and co-developer of the Colorado Mental Wellness Network’s Peer Professional training.

Next session of workshops begins on next page

Thursday, July 15

Workshop H: 4:15 – 5pm Eastern; 1:15 – 2pm Pacific

I Laugh, Therefore I Am: The Healing and Connecting Power of Laughter

Anna Lubarov

Come explore the healing and connecting power of laughter and its positive effects on mind and body. Laughter can significantly improve one's emotional wellbeing, physical health, and quality of life and create increased stress resiliency. Laughter is one of the most unifying forces in our society. It has been proven to help us connect with each other, across ages and cultural differences and even transcends language barriers. This workshop incorporates Anna's personal experiences as a new immigrant in the US and shares an account of how laughter helped her combat severe PTSD, depression, and anxiety; and how she uses laughter as a wellness tool in a support group she is facilitating. We will include both comedic material and laughter exercises to demonstrate the healing power of laughter.

Anna Lubarov has used over 28 years of her personal struggles with depression, anxiety and PTSD as fuel for her passion to improve the quality of her life and the lives of her peers. She was trained as a peer-provider. She worked as a SPIRIT Lead Instructor/Coordinator at Contra Costa Community College, San Pablo, California, and has over 15 years of experience as a Peer Support Specialist. She is currently working on a certification in "Peers for Compassionate Crisis Services" and facilitates weekly Wellness Support Groups.

Peer Support for Empowerment and Recovery from Borderline Personality Diagnosis (BPD)

Paula Tusiani-Eng, LMSW, M.Div., Rachel Hay, Hannah Fox

Emotions Matter leaders will demonstrate how BPD support fills a gap in peer services. Attendees will learn about the real-world experiences people with BPD face accessing care, and Emotions Matter's empowering approach to promote social connection and recovery. Presenters will speak from their lived experience facilitating groups and about their journey.

Paula Tusiani-Eng is co-founder and Executive Director of Emotions Matter Inc. (www.emotionsmatterbpd.org), a non-profit organization to educate, support, and advocate for those impacted by borderline personality disorder [MOU1] (BPD). She received her Master's in Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in 2001 and her Master's in Social Work from Adelphi University in 2014. She lost her younger sister, Pamela Tusiani, who suffered [MOU2] from BPD, at the age of 23 in 2001. Her passion for BPD education, resources, and advocacy is in her sister's memory, to help people survive and manage BPD.

Rachel Hay is an Emotions Matter peer facilitator from Texas. She enjoys spending time with family and friends, playing her ukulele, watching YouTube videos on growing indoor plants, traveling to different states, and helping others who struggle with anxiety, depression, and BPD.

Hannah Fox has been a Peer Facilitator with Emotions Matter for two years and recently moved into the role of training new facilitators. She is currently studying psychology in college, with the goal of eventually becoming a clinical psychologist. Hannah is also a huge animal lover! Some of her passions include art, reading, and advocacy work, specifically for the LGBTQ+ and disability communities, both of which she is a member of!

Thursday, July 15

Workshop H: 4:15 – 5pm Eastern; 1:15 – 2pm Pacific

LGBTQI2S Gender-Nonconforming - People Empowering People

K. Kozi Arrington

Attendees will share stories of what it's been like to be who they are and where they are/have been during the pandemic, and how they were affected, infected, defected, inspected, dejected, rejected, and/or neglected. We will talk of resilience and how we are dealing with the loss of so much.

Kozi Arrington, a gay man from the Bay Area, is passionate about music, spirituality, and social justice/equality. He advocates for others like himself who experience mental health challenges and have extraordinary perceptions. In 2013, he co-founded the Sexuality And Gender Alliance Committee, nestled under the Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services umbrella.

Green Disability: Peer Support Unites the Mental & Physical Disability Movements

David Oaks

How can peer mutual support in both the physical & mental disability movements help humanity prepare for disasters, including the climate crisis? Our society seems too complacent, but peer support is a practical way for groups to respond to future disasters, and to defend vulnerable communities threatened by disasters such as pandemics.

This is David Oaks' 45th year as a psychiatric survivor and human rights activist. Raised working class, he graduated from Harvard, despite being put in psychiatric institutions five times and experiencing forced drugging. In 2012 he became quadriplegic and started a green disability consulting business, Aciu! Institute. His wife and he live in Oregon.

The Transmutation of Emotions: The Alchemical Process of Change

Diana Catherine Bella

For centuries, initiates of mystery school traditions learned the art of “transmuting emotions” into their higher spiritual counterparts: learning to change the energy, the negative into the positive, fear into courage, blame into forgiveness, sorrow into joy, etc. This is a spiritual alchemical process that can be shared and practiced.

Diana Catherine Bella is the founder of Doors of Light, a spiritual consulting organization providing “soul-to-soul” assistance for healing from psychological imbalances and helping people connect to their deeper essence and truth. Diana weaves in her lived experience, ageless wisdom and creativity to guide others in embracing their soul Self. www.doorsoflight.org

Thursday, July 15

Workshop H: 4:15 – 5pm Eastern; 1:15 – 2pm Pacific

Helping Youth on the Path to Employment (HYPE)

Emily McCaffrey, M.Ed., Debbie Nicolellis, Carlos Teveras

This workshop will describe HYPE (Helping Youth on the Path to Employment), an innovative model for supporting the career development of young adults with lived experience and new virtual courses that use elements of this model to help young adults to choose careers and prepare for work and school.

Emily McCaffrey is the Research Coordinator at UMass Medical School, Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research (Transitions ACR). Emily is a YA (25 years old) with her own lived mental health experience. Emily is co-facilitator of the HYPE Course, training organization (YA) staff in order to prepare them to teach the three courses provided through HYPE.

Debbie Nicolellis is the HYPE Training Director at Transitions ACR. Debbie almost failed out of college her first semester because she did not have the skills that HYPE teaches. She is excited to help bring HYPE Courses to young adults and to teach a sustainable model for agencies.

Carlos Taveras is Transition Facilitator at Vinfen Enhanced Young Adult Program, and co-facilitates the HYPE Course. Carlos brings years of experience implementing domains included in the Transition into Independence Process Model, and brings enthusiasm and thoughtfulness to the HYPE Course to engage young adults in considering and planning vocational goals.

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Thursday, July 15

Workshop I: 5:15 – 6pm Eastern; 2:15 – 3pm Pacific

Creative Connections Campaign

Emily Vaianella, Melissa Wettengel

During this workshop, we will explore the unique ways we can connect with our community when feeling isolated. We have all faced loneliness and isolation during the global pandemic, and many of us may have experienced these feelings long before the world shut down. Our communities in psychiatric institutions have been isolated, disconnected from community, and without basic human rights; because of this, and with inspiration from *Madwomen in the Attic's* "December Letters Project," we imagined the Creative Connections Campaign at Hands Across Long Island. The purpose of the Campaign is to reach our community in institutions through letters and art to express that we love, we care, and we stand with our community; to reimagine the ways we can connect with others through art and letter-writing; and to bring awareness to the challenges our community faces. After exploring and navigating the barriers our community faces, we will create art that you can donate to our campaign, which we will deliver to someone held in an institution.

Emily Vaianella (she/they) is a psychiatric survivor and New York Certified Peer Specialist. After having been committed to a state institution and forced to undergo electroshock, Emily has been a passionate advocate against carceral responses to emotional distress. Emily works at a peer-run agency, attends college with the goal of furthering their knowledge and ability to advocate for the protection of human rights, and supports actions against institutionalization.

Melissa Wettengel is a proud mom who hasn't traveled too far from the NYC suburbs...but it still feels like it's been a long, strange trip. Running from a diagnosis that seemed to define her worth, she's chased various identities as a headhunter, dot-commer, secret shopper, marketer, and teacher. She found an alternative approach in the peer movement about 10 years ago, entering with vague ideas about mental health advocacy. What she learned instead was a transformative way of connecting with others, taking back her own narrative, and accepting vulnerability. Melissa is honored to lead Hands Across Long Island (HALI), a peer-run organization founded by psychiatric survivors and humbly hopes to strengthen its legacy for years to come.

What I Learned about Resilience from Underserved Voices During COVID-19

Paul Iarrobino

While implementing physical distancing is an essential step in reducing transmission of a deadly virus, there were unintended consequences for people with pre-existing mental health conditions. Our session will explore an innovative peer-based approach for addressing isolation, anxiety, and loneliness through a virtual platform.

Paul Iarrobino is a community activist, speaker, and documentarian with over three decades of human services experience. He developed virtual social support groups for older adults and people living with HIV/AIDS to safely connect and support each other during the pandemic. He recently led a grant-funded initiative that helped connect underserved, low-income older adults with technology and supports. You can follow his work at <https://www.ourboldvoices.com>

Thursday, July 15

Workshop I: 5:15 – 6pm Eastern; 2:15 – 3pm Pacific

Youth Peer Generation

Ryan Tempesco, Amey Dettmer

This workshop was developed for youth and emerging adults to create and design their own self-empowered system to support their journey toward a self-identified life of wellness and resiliency. Participants will explore and overview the Peer Generation Training and have an opportunity to interactively participate in a fun, engaging & experiential section of the Peer Generation Curriculum.

Ryan Tempesco is a transgender national youth leader invested in the growth of youth peer support and wellness in the lives of young people and LGBTQIA youth. He is currently the National Youth Program Coordinator for Doors to Wellbeing National Consumer Technical Assistance Center (TAC), a program of The Copeland Center.

Amey Dettmer is a person with lifelong lived experience with mental health challenges, starting from a young age. She is currently the Program Manager for Doors To Wellbeing National Consumer TAC, a program of The Copeland Center. Amey's work focuses specifically on peer specialists, youth leadership development, and peer-led recovery education.

Shifting Attitudes and Beliefs that Lead to Provider Stigma

Katy Welty

The stigma that permeates every aspect of behavioral health care is doubly menacing when carried out by providers under the guise of treatment. Today we will learn how to define, recognize, and work to eradicate provider stigma.

Katy Welty has spent 20 years working in peer support and has received widespread recognition for her groundbreaking work to end provider stigma. Katy manages a large team of peer supporters at West Yavapai Guidance Clinic in Northern Arizona.

HELD: Parishioners Showing Up for Each Other's Mental Health

Barbara Meyers

This workshop will discuss how members of religious congregations can be supportive to those living with mental health problems and their loved ones in the congregation and in society at large. We will address the fundamental elements of spiritual support with stories from real life situations. There will be suggestions for advocacy in congregations.

Rev. Barbara Meyers is a Unitarian Universalist minister with a mental health ministry in Fremont, California. She is assistant director of a peer support center, and the author of a mental health curriculum for congregations and of a book "HELD." She is the President of the Board of the UU Mental Health Network.

Thursday, July 15

Workshop I: 5:15 – 6pm Eastern; 2:15 – 3pm Pacific

Intersectionality of Mental Health/Substance Use and the LGBTQ Community

Sarah Humble

We will explore the intersectionality between mental health and substance misuse in the LGBTQ community with special emphasis on gender and gender ID.

Sarah Humble has been a Peer Support Professional since 2014. She is a trainer and content developer for the Peer Support Professional training in Colorado. She is a person with a mental health and substance misuse condition and is part of the LGBTQ community.

The Effectiveness of Peer-Led Suicide Attempt Survivors' Support Groups

Eduardo Vega, Stephen Marks

Following a TED-talk type presentation on the effectiveness of peer-led suicide attempt survivors support groups, the workshop continues with a discussion of poll-driven summations. These summations might arrive on, among other potential conclusions, the benefits that PLEASE ASK-type support groups would have for their community and how the formation of these groups might come about.

Stephen K. Marks PhD is a suicide attempt survivor, Vice Chair of the Marin County (California) Mental Health Board, former Program Director of HOPE with Heart & Soul Inc., Education and Evaluation Director of the Mental Health Association of San Francisco, Director of Education with MHCC, and a frequent presenter of workshops and webinars for recovery and peer-led organizations nationwide.

Eduardo Vega is an internationally recognized thought leader in recovery-oriented programs and policy, consumer/patient rights, stigma reduction, and suicide prevention; his work continues to drive the forefront of change for public health and mental health worldwide. He is the founder and CEO of Humannovations, a consulting and training firm providing innovative solutions for mental health and suicide prevention internationally, fueled by social justice and the “lived experience” of people who have been there.

Next session of workshops begins on next page

Saturday, July 17

Workshop J: 3:15 – 4pm Eastern; 12:15 – 1pm Pacific

The History of the Consumer/Survivor Movement

Sally Zinman, Gayle Bluebird

This workshop will provide information to help psychiatric survivors understand the origins of the consumer/survivor movement and for peers to learn about their roots. The focus will be on the philosophical/political aspects as well how the arts contributed to change. Participants will be encouraged to think about how they continue to make history as they face barriers and challenges today.

Gayle Bluebird, a retired RN, has been active in the consumer/survivor movement since the early 1970s. She has served in many roles as a peer supporter and director of programs. She is best known as an arts networker finding ways for artists to "tell their stories" through art. With funds from SAMHSA she wrote a manual on the arts, "Reaching Across with the Arts," still relevant today.

Sally Zinman has been a pioneer of the mental health peer movement since the mid 1970s. Sally's commitment to the rights of people with mental health challenges came from her own horrendous experience in the mental health system. After this experience, she connected with the burgeoning ex-mental patient movement and found a community of people like herself, a family, who inspired and supported her for the next 40 years. Sally founded some of the earliest consumer-run drop-in centers in the country. Currently, she is the Executive Director of the California Association of Mental Health Peer-Run Organizations (CAMHPRO), a statewide organization that provides advocacy, outreach, and training services to California's consumer community.

Alternatives Therapies: The Experiential Approach Can Transform Lives

Gene Katz

Based upon the presenter's years of work as a psychotherapist, university professor, yoga instructor, and recreational rehabilitation practitioner, grounded in the work of pioneers such as Satir, Hahn, and Rogers, this workshop consists of an educational component, combined with simple, hands-on, participatory exercises of various simple experiential techniques used to address conditions such as stress, anxiety, depression, and other emotional concerns, that attendees can do right in their seats.

Gene Katz, Associate Professor at Colorado Tech. University, brings over three decades of experience as counselor, peer advocate, human service provider, community program coordinator, and educator, in addition to an earlier successful career in broadcasting. He holds an MS in Family Therapy and board certification as a Sex Therapist. He has taught courses, workshops and seminars in a wide variety of education venues, including colleges. He has worked in hospitals, prisons, psychiatric wards, youth-at-risk facilities, advocacy centers, and for programs designed to help homeless families. He identifies as a Mental Health Peer and a person who has experienced homelessness.

Saturday, July 17

Workshop J: 3:15 – 4pm Eastern; 12:15 – 1pm Pacific

Building Plural Safe Spaces: One Body, Many Activists

The Rings System, The Alexandrite System

This workshop will seek to give attendees a basic knowledge of plurality, the experience of many people in one body. It serves to illustrate why supporting this community is crucial to disability activism, and how to make plural folks feel safe and comfortable existing authentically in your spaces.

The Rings System is a plural system of 40 people. Together, they've engaged in disability justice since 2018, co-coordinating two disability self-advocacy groups. They seek to reduce violence against and build community for those living with dissociative identity disorder, often called multiples or plurals. They are community organizers and content creators on multiple platforms. The Alexandrite System is a plural system of 25 people living and working together in one body. As intra-community educators, activists, and content creators, they aim to provide a completely honest look at what being a system is like, as they speak to aspects that tend to go unspoken.

Disruption, Discovery, and Balance

Greg Parnell

Come take a visual journey of Greg Parnell's recovery and see how disruption from wellness leads to discovery and the need for balance. In this colorful workshop you will have an opportunity for self-reflection and maybe identify areas in your life you may want to address, shift, or enhance to create intentional balance for living your best life. Please bring paper and something to write or draw with. I hope you will join me on this adventure within!

Greg Parnell, Heath & Wellness Facilitator at Crestwood Behavioral Health, has spent his whole life around addiction and mental health issues. Greg is the corporate Zumba Instructor, mentoring employees who are now licensed to teach Zumba to staff and people they serve. Greg's work mainly consists of W.R.A.P. and Zumba, two of his passions. He is leading the way in F=LBC (Fun = Lasting Behavioral Change). "If you can't figure out your purpose, figure out your passion. For your passion will lead you right into your purpose."

The California Peer-Run Warm Line

Peter Murphy

Participants will have the opportunity to learn how the Warm Line keeps its callers out of crisis. Peter Murphy will discuss how language matters in discussing mental health and how this is reflected on the California Peer-Run Warm Line and in the training for counselors and coordinators. The role that the California Peer-Run Warm Line can play in eliminating stigma will also be discussed. Peter will share his own recovery story as an example of how Peer Recovery works and how peers may support each other. We will also discuss efforts to place peers with lived experience in the workforce and the importance of compensating peers for their valuable work.

Peter identifies as an alcoholic and addict and is clean and sober through 12 Step Recovery. He also has a lifetime of working on his mental health challenges. Peter currently works as the Outreach Manager for Mental Health Association of San Francisco, but began there in 2015 as a coordinator on the San Francisco Peer-Run Warm Line.

Saturday, July 17

Workshop K: 4:15 – 5pm Eastern; 1:15 – 2pm Pacific

During Covid-19: Virtual Peer Support Group (VPSG)

Clarence Jordan, Lisa Kugler

Due to COVID-19 quarantining and other mandates, more and more individuals are experiencing detrimental effects on their behavioral health. Beacon Health Options responded to the crisis by modifying services to make them more accessible, including a virtual peer support group.

Clarence Jordan, VP of Wellness & Recovery for Beacon Health Options is responsible for various initiatives to operationalize Beacon Health Options' commitment to recovery-based principles. Jordan's journey is chronicled in NATCON Magazine's "50 Years, 50 Stories of Recovery" special issue to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Community Mental Health Act.

Lisa Kugler, PsyD. is VP of Beacon Cares. Dr. Kugler was head of the behavioral health and physical health integration team for Center for Treatment of Addictive Disorders at the Pittsburgh Veteran's Administration. Dr. Kugler provided services to adults, veterans, inmates, adolescents, and children. Dr. Kugler has presented locally, regionally, and nationally.

Human2Human Understanding: A Culture of Resiliency

Kristina Kapp (KK)

By redefining our community and the cultures around us; by not seeing each other as race, culture, diagnosis, or disability; by viewing an individual's impactful life experiences not as obstacles but as opportunities; and by believing in the Human Potential 4ALL, we unify our community.

Kristina Kapp, better known as KK, burst onto the scene of this world on December 31st. Yes, on New Year's Eve. Her mother had always told her that "the celebration and fireworks exploded all over the world just for you." Humorously enough, KK believed it! She strives to bring that energy, excitement and "New Year's" resolutions into all environments that she enters. KK was born with an intellectual and developmental disability and her parents are immigrants. She has worked in the behavioral health field for 22 years. Without hesitation, she very proudly lives her life out loud.

Perceiving Identity: What Make Me Different is What Makes Me, Me

Jennifer Randal-Thorpe

This workshop will take a candid look at the definition and the perception of identity. This workshop will provide the attendees with the tools needed to recognize individuals by their worth and by the content of their character, rather than the color of their skin.

Jennifer Randal-Thorpe is a 58-year-old African American female with 39 years of lived experience. She attended schools in Louisiana at the inception of desegregation. She has experienced racial desegregation firsthand as her white counterparts were deemed more academically inclined than she. Living at the time of desegregation was a lesson learned—a lesson she was familiar with. She believes everyone has capabilities but may lack exposure.

Saturday, July 17

Workshop K: 4:15 – 5pm Eastern; 1:15 – 2pm Pacific

Emotional CPR by and for Youth

Shira Collings, Miranda Todt

This workshop will discuss how Emotional CPR, a program designed by people with lived experience, has been adapted to meet the needs of youth. The presenters will share their own personal experiences of engaging in eCPR as youth and taking leadership with developing the eCPR for Youth curriculum. Participants will gain an understanding of the principles of eCPR and how they can be applied with youth during times of personal and collective crisis.

Shira Collings (she/they) is the Youth Coordinator for the National Empowerment Center. She is passionate about advocating for peer-led services developed by and for youth. She has been an Emotional CPR trainer for several years and is thrilled to bring this training to youth peer specialists and other young people.

Miranda Todt is a youth leader and advocate. She is currently studying for her nursing degree in New Hampshire. She's helped to develop the Youth Emotional CPR curriculum and has been a trainer as well. Her hard work and dedication to her fellow man shines through in all of her work.

The Art of Wellness

Alexia Jones, Cassandra Bingaman

The Art of Wellness Is an interactive workshop that identifies art as a tool to maintain wellness, and adopting art as a language through which recovery can be understood and applied in our everyday lives. This workshop integrates the principles of recovery with the power of creativity to increase wellbeing, enhance coping skills, communicate deep-rooted trauma, create safe spaces for inner healing, and share powerful stories of resilience.

Alexia Jones celebrates 25 years in long-term recovery, is the founder and Executive Director of R2ISE Inc., a nonprofit RCO (Recovery Community Organization) in Atlanta, Georgia, and holds a BFA in Dance from Florida State University, and an MBA from Phoenix University. She is a certified addiction empowerment specialist (CARES) and certified peer specialist (CPS), a trainer of trainers for trauma informed care, and currently studying to become a certified drum circle facilitator.

Cassandra Bingaman is a certified public speaker and national spoken word artist with over a decade of professional working experience serving teenage youth in foster care. She combines her professional training in direct care work with her artistic gift and dedication to the youth, engaging youth in a creative approach to personal empowerment and self-awareness. She has created and facilitated experiences that incorporate writing, affirmations, poetry, and visual art for young people from recovery programs in metro Atlanta, to public schools in Chicago, and youth groups in rural communities. Cassandra has worked with R2ISE 2017 presently in the capacity of Artistic Program Coordinator.

Saturday, July 17

Workshop K: 4:15 – 5pm Eastern; 1:15 – 2pm Pacific

“With All I’ve Been Through, I Could Write a Book”: A Workshop on Writing and Publishing Your Story

Sarah Elisabeth Brown, Lexi Mohny

Have you ever wanted to write your story and share it? We’re living in a time when it’s never been easier to self-publish your own book and sell it on Amazon. This workshop explores approaches to writing, stressors to avoid, and how to get it out there.

Sarah Elisabeth Brown is an award-winning playwright and screenwriter who has used creative writing as the primary tool in her wellness toolbox all her life. She’s been leading Creative Journal Writing workshops and more within the peer recovery movement since 1997.

Lexi Mohny is the co-founder of Courage Publishing. She is an award-winning author and loves to coach other writers.