



MHAST ANNUAL REPORT

2020



MHAST

Mental Health Association
of the Southern Tier, Inc.



www.MHAST.org

President's Welcome

The Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier has been around for a long time – a really long time. In 6 years from now, the agency will celebrate its 100th year of caring for individuals with moderate to severe mental illness.

Think about it like this, in 1930 when The Great Depression hit, people jumping out of windows, confessing it was the end of the world, total economic collapse – MHA ST was there to help the community bear the weight of that emotional and mental burden. When the dust bowl came in 1935, and food sources became scarce – MHA ST was there. When the nation and community was rocked by the news that our sailors were buried alive in the waters of Pearl Harbor – MHA ST was there. In fact there were many local families that had their young men/women serving in Pearl Harbor at the time. When the Holocaust began in 1940, and families that emigrated here to the upstate area heard the news – MHA ST was there again. Through WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Afghanistan and Iraq – the agency was here. During the Civil Rights era and the continuing struggle – still here. At 9/11, MHA ST was present and involved in all those families in the community that were directly affected by that tragedy. Multiple floods that have ravaged our community - MHA ST worked tirelessly to assist all those in need. In recent years, the ACA shooting, leaving many in shock at the loss of life right here in our own town - MHA ST was there providing assistance to families, translation and other services to help those in need. And now, we have a global pandemic to add to that list.



I think we all felt the world crumble around us, when our economy, jobs and stores shut down. We quarantined, we isolated ourselves, we followed all the precautions. In the last 14-16 months, we saw economic and social disruption, loss of life. Personally, my aunt succumbed to the lasting effects of Covid. We watched in horror as morgues overflowed in NYC. Health systems, food systems and work systems were all heavily strained. We are approaching 600k deaths in the US, the highest of any country. Of the 18k cases in Broome County, we lost 363 individuals to Covid ourselves.

Now that the dust is settling on the economic, political and societal impacts, there is another impact that the world is trying to measure, the impact on our mental health. Anxiety, depression, loneliness, PTSD all at record highs in our country and community. At the height of the pandemic in 2020, 14% of Americans were experiencing serious psychological distress, more than triple the rate in 2018. Those older in years faced greater health risks, while those younger in years faced a greater mental health impact, due to loss of work and disruption of life.

For the seriously mentally ill, the impacts were even worse – could not get to treatment, access to regular counseling, medication and regular programs.

The Agency saw a direct reduction to its funding, cuts to its programs, a near total restriction to hold services and fulfill program duties consistently. The Agency resorted to phone appointments, video conferences, and any other methods it could use to maintain contact with the vulnerable population of those mentally ill in our area. We had a lot of meetings and brainstorming sessions trying to do the most with the limits in place. It was frustrating and at points disheartening. We canceled all of our events for 2020 including Men Who Cook.

Its easy to lose sight of what's important when events like this happen. Its easy to forget who we are and why we exist. Let me take a moment to read a newspaper statement:

The headline reads: "Community Approach Needed to Combat Mental Illness"

The article is about a group of local community leaders including Dr. Ulysses Shutzer, the President of MHA at that time, coming together to address the issues around Mental Illness. Here is what he had to say.

"Mental illness today offers a greater challenge to our civilization than any of the other unsolved medical problems." "Psychiatry, a relatively new science, has not made the spectacular advances seen in other branches of medicine in the past half century." "But a new community approach to mental illness, extensive new research in the mental health field, intensive treatment of hospitalized patients and a liberalization of institutional policies will shortly cut the heavy toll of mental illness in the near future."

I found this article in the Endicott Bulletin in the year 1958. Honestly, this article could have been written last week. There is still so much stigma around mental illness, there is still a huge gap between physical medicine and psychological conditions.

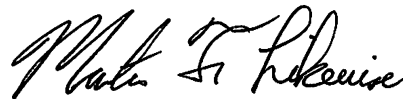
There is still a large community of people living in poverty, misunderstood, abused and outcast by society. This is our reason for existing.

In this time, its not about fundraisers, or funding, or programs or whether or not the government is going to bail us out – its about people – our people. No longer are they suffering being chained to beds and hospital walls, but the chains still exist – social chains and economic chains.

We are still here and our work is far from complete. This is not a job, it's a passion for people. Its not just an agency, it's a place where people can feel understood and that they matter in this world to someone.

The economic recovery is breaking loose everywhere in the world and the world itself is getting ready to fully open up. Its time to roll up our sleeves, put on our boots and put our passion into our purpose. We are MHA ST and we are still here.

Sincerely,



Martin Likewise
Board President,
Mental Health Association

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Mission & Vision

The Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier (MHAST) is a private non-profit organization founded in 1927 and is the oldest continuously operating Mental Health Association in New York State.

MHAST is a United Way agency and an affiliate of the National and New York State Mental Health Associations and we are one of 300 Mental Health Associations nationwide.

Our organization is devoted to enhancing the lives of ALL community residents by improving their mental health and wellness.

Our goals are achieved through advocacy services, educational presentations, prevention programs, information, and resource referrals.

The Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier, Inc. helps unite recipients of mental health services and their families with mental health professionals, service providers and advocates to create collaborations, generate action, and combat the devastating stigma of mental illness.

Leadership

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Hogan, Sarzynski, Lynch, DeWind & Gregory, LLP

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Grey Goose Graphics

Maria Korchak, Treasurer
Lockheed Martin

Dr. Asa Brown
Speaker, Consultant, Author

Michael Taylor
Broome County Security

Kristin Saunders
United Health Services

Teri Chamberlin
Certified Psychiatric/Mental Health RN

Deacon Tom Picciano
St. Vincent de Paul Blessed Sacrament Church

Senior Leadership

Keith Leahey
Executive Director

Heather Nower
Director of Operations

Dee Kline
Finance Director

Angela Lynch
Director of Crisis Services

Noah Cooper
Director of Peer Services

Wendy Hitchcock
Director of Family & Peer Support



Staff

Ashley Blewett, Peer Support Specialist
Mobile Crisis Services

Ashley West, Warm Line Specialist
Crisis Respite

Cheyenne Bowen-Holgash, Team Lead
Crisis Respite

Vanessa Moppert, Peer Specialist
Crisis Respite

Kathy Korba, Human Resources Assistant
MHA ST

Tara McPherson, Recovery Specialist
Sunrise Wellness Center

Megan Morris, Recovery Specialist
Sunrise Wellness Center

Melissa Fowler-Reynolds, Family Peer Advocate
Family Peer Support Services

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MHA ST

Crystal Williams, Peer Specialist
Crisis Respite

Sandra Westgate, Team Lead
Mobile Crisis Services

Nicole Addicott, Finance/Billing
MHA ST

Amanda Day-Heath, Family Peer Advocate
Family Peer Support Services

Jennifer Walsh, Peer Specialist
Crisis Respite

Executive Director's Message

As our nation and the world experienced the fears, isolation and uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic, MHASt quickly realized that our mission, support and services would be more 'essential' than at any time in our organization's history. According to a recent study conducted by the American Psychiatric Association, "43% of adults in the United States said the pandemic had a serious impact on their mental health in 2020, and close to half of families with children reported serious mental health problems with one or more child." To make this stark reality even harder to digest, the simple truth is, as a nation, we were ill-equipped to address the mental health impacts of this colossal public health emergency. In my 20 years at MHASt, I have first handedly witnessed the decades of erosion to mental health funding, services and supports that provide both early identification and intervention, and proper community-based services for those seeking recovery from a mental illness. I feel qualified to say that the mental health 'crisis' in our region was here long before Covid-19. If we, as a nation, had the foresight and commitment to adequately fund behavioral health services, I'd like to think our response to the pandemic would have had a noticeable impact on mitigating the long-term, mental health effects of our communities.

Despite these truths, MHASt rose to the challenges the pandemic placed in front of us. For many of our services, we were able to efficiently transition from face-to-face appointments to telephonic and virtual telehealth services. This was made possible by funding from Care Compass Network, a local organization helping to improve our regions health outcomes. Our mobile crisis program and crisis respite house continued to provide face-to-face services throughout the pandemic – and these "essential services" and our "essential employees" deserve to be recognized for the potential risks they faced while ensuring our most vulnerable citizens had a place to turn to for support when other resources could not be accessed. I sit here extremely proud and humbled by the compassion, dedication and passion all



employees of MHASt exhibited throughout this crisis – I respect them as people of strong moral character and perseverance, and as emulating the very definition of what it means to be a professional. We have all learned through this experience. And, I firmly believe we have become a stronger and better organization as a result.

MHASt will continue to have an important role to play in our community. We will continue to work with our local and state partners to improve the mental health of all and for all. We will look ahead and continue our work to design and build a better, more accessible, and more compassionate models of behavioral healthcare services, to include the expansion of services that appropriately and humanly respond to persons in emotional crisis.

Good bye 2020 – Here we come stronger than before 2021.

Respectfully,
Keith W. Leahey, MSW
Executive Director

Program/ Operations Highlights



No summary about the year 2020 would be complete without some reference to the impact that the global COVID -19 pandemic had on both the organization and the community. Specific to the organization, MHA ST was forced to think fast and create a path to deploy staff to work remotely and still continue to provide services in ways we had never done before. The organization had to get creative in order to continue to provide both 1:1 and group services via a number of telehealth options. Part way through the height of the crisis, we were able to: 1) deploy a video/audio telehealth platform embedded in our electronic medical record, and 2) acquire and deploy electronic devices and data plans that were issued to service recipients in order for them to access telehealth services within the organization. This unprecedented situation also resulted in the agency cross-training a few employees to work and offer support in other programs.

A few of the group services that were provided over the course of 2020 would include: dietary/nutrition education, bullet journaling, care making, creating vision boards, poetry expression, "Chalk the Walk", scarecrow

decorating, and working with families on how to navigate remote learning with students learning at home.

Two programs that did not transition to remote work during this crisis were short term crisis respite and mobile crisis. Employees in these programs continued to provide in person services. Over the course of 2020, mobile crisis personnel rendered 417 services to a total of 232 unique individuals. In that same time, short term crisis respite provided a total of 494 bed days to 84 unique individuals. Housed within the crisis respite program, is our 24/7 Warm Line that experienced a significant increase in calls as a direct result of COVID-19. Staff (across 4 agency programs) answered a total of 11,350 Warm Line calls.

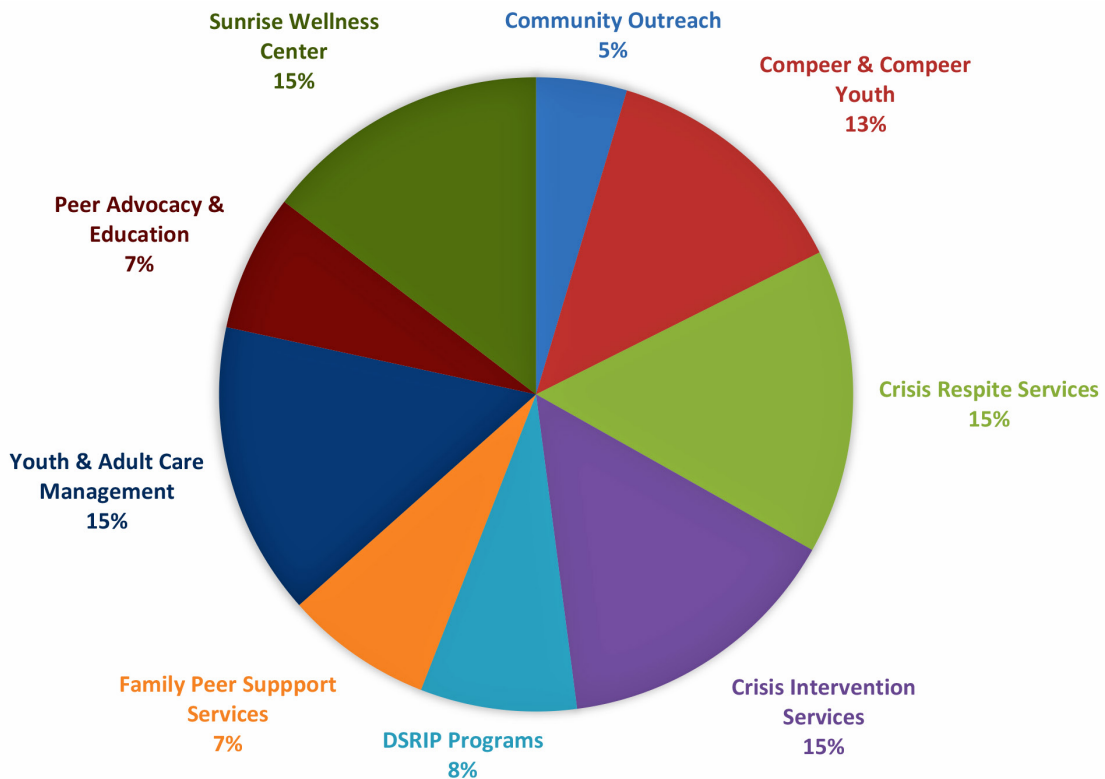
That being said, COVID-19 was not the only "talk of the agency" in 2020. Other agency highlights would include: MHA ST was designated by the NYS Office of Mental Health as an approved provider for both crisis intervention (mobile crisis) and Family Peer Support services for youth up to the age of 21. In addition, MHA ST submitted an application seeking NYS Office of Mental Health licensure for our short-term crisis respite program. Lastly, all MHA ST programs were brought up and running in the agency's electronic medical record by year end which has allowed for improved documentation and electronic billing/payment for services.

Respectfully,

Heather R. Nower, LCSW
Director of Operations and Program Excellence

Financial Report

SUPPORT AND REVENUE		EXPENSES	
United Way Allocations	56,350	Salaries & Benefits	1,242,259
Office of Mental Health	1,160,427	Other than Personal Services	174,090
Other Grants	48,962	Occupancy Cost	61,365
Contributions & Misc. Revenue	53,626	Equipment	73,253
Program Service Fees	359,854	Depreciation	84,717
Fundraising Revenue	14,986	Support Services	219,203
Inkind Support	2,790	TOTAL Expenses	1,854,887
COVID - 19 Related Revenue	268,704		
TOTAL Revenue	1,965,699	NET Income	110,812



The above graph represents the operating expenses percentages for each program in relation to the organizations total operational budget.

Sponsors & Contributors

Financial Supporters

Broome Winterworks	New York State Office of Mental Health
Broome County Mental Health	Tim's Memorial Golf
Broome County Youth Bureau	UHS Medicaid Health Home
Care Compass Network (DSRIP)	United Way of Broome County
Mental Health Association in New York State	

Contributors & Friends

2020 A Junior Achievement Co.	Greater Binghamton Association of Realtors	Phil Otto
American Legion Post 1700	Greater Binghamton Chapter Unico	Jody Pangburn
Ascension - Lourdes Auxiliary	Greek Orthodox Church Annunciation	Carole Petley
Linda Baker	Mary Gregory	Erin Reyner's Miles for MHASt Run Supporters
Binghamton University Foundation	John & Pamela Guth	Richard & Diane M. Rigotti
Booster Club	Leslie Prechtl Guy	Jim Rollo
Bothar Construction	Harvey and Elizabeth Charitable Foundation	Robert Serardarian
Susan Boucher	Hatala Orthodontics	Jeffrey & Jeanne Smith
Dr. Elissa Brown	Ann Hujar	Gregory Subtelny
Tina Caswell	Innovation Associates	Susquehanna Valley Volleyball
Cider Mill	Johnson, Lauder, & Savidge LLP	The Harvey and Elizabeth Charitable Foundation
Coughlin & Gerhart	Klossner Valenta Agency	The Star Group, Inc.
Marcia Craner	KC Construction	Susquehanna Valley - DIFD
Davidson, Fox & Company, LLC	Phyllis Leavitt	Tim's Memorial Golf
Georgina Dake	Levene Gouldin & Thompson, LLP	United Health Services Community Relations
Robert Duthie DDS	M&T Charitable Foundation	United Methodist Church
Marilyn Eck	Charlotte MacLatchy	VFW Ladies Auxiliary
Sally Elliott	Barbara Narozny	Visions Federal Credit Union
Elmira Amateur Baseball Club	Matco Electric	Linda Watson
Empower Federal Credit Union	Matthews Auto	Wegmans-Johnson City
Judith Ennis	Maureen McPhee	CS Young
Cheryl Finch	M&T Charitable Foundation	Various Anonymous Donors
GHS Federal Credit Union	Darcy Nelson	

Crisis & Project UpLift



Short Term Crisis Respite Services

Short term crisis respite is a residential (home) like program offering a few days of respite support for individuals who are experiencing symptoms of mental illness, psychiatric crisis, or are experiencing challenges in daily life that create risk for an escalation of psychiatric symptoms that cannot reasonable be managed in the person's home/community environment without onsite supports, and do not pose likelihood of serious harm.

Despite the unique challenges faced in 2020, crisis respite services was able to adapt fairly quickly and remained open and operational to provide quality respite services to the community for the entirety of 2020. Strict adherence to safety protocols resulted in NO COVID-19 related closures for this program in 2020.

In 2020, crisis respite served a total of 84 unique individuals from a broad variety of situations and backgrounds. In serving these individuals, the program provided respite support for a total of 494 bed days.

In 2020, there was a tremendous increase in the number of calls received by the Warm Line. This increase was likely a direct result of the pandemic crisis. Over the course of 2020, crisis respite staff answered a total of 11,350 Warm Line calls (up from 4,911 calls in 2019).

Our staff continues to bring their own personal experience and passion to their work, and we've seen guests blossom with their support. Thank you for your support of the work that we do! It remains a privilege to serve the community with this program.

Crisis & Project UpLift

Mobile Crisis Team

The Mobile Crisis team provides the local community with on-demand services for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis. The Mobile Crisis service is designed to help de-escalate crisis situations on site; and help avoid the traumatic and often unnecessary transport to the emergency department.

With strict adherence to any/all safety precautions, Mobile Crisis continued to work through the entirety of the COVID-19 pandemic. Services were provided via telephone, telehealth platform(s), and in person when necessary.

In 2020, working closely with Broome County 9-1-1, many of the local law enforcement entities, and community providers in Broome County; our mobile crisis team provided a total of 417 services (including both initial intervention and follow up) across a total of 232 unique individuals. In 65% - 70% of the initial calls, the team successfully de-escalated and stabilized individuals with no need for hospitalization.



Crisis Intervention Team

The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program works on building relationships between community providers and law enforcement, while reducing the stigma surrounding mental illness. CIT assists Broome County Emergency Services (911 dispatchers), all Broome County police agencies, and the Broome County Jail to bring expert training to officers and dispatchers to utilize when dispatching or responding to calls involving people in emotional distress. The program works to better equip officers and dispatchers to assess individuals in crisis and deploy appropriate resources. It maintains an overarching goal of utilizing community services while encouraging the reduction in transports to local emergency departments, and diversion from the criminal justice system when appropriate. In addition, several of the training programs focus on self-care and awareness for officers and dispatchers specific to work related stress, underlying PTSD, and where to turn when in need of assistance. Our goal continues to be reducing stigma around mental illness and ensuring a mental health crisis receives a mental health response when possible.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, CIT provided 2 Mental Health First Aid training programs early in the year. As a result, there were a total of 30 first responders newly certified.

Crisis & Project UpLift



Project Uplift – Non-Medicaid Case Management

Project Uplift serves individuals in need of case management services who are not eligible for Health Homes because they are without Medicaid. The expectations of non-Medicaid Case Management mirror those on Health Homes as outlined by the New York State Department of Health. Case managers work closely with individuals striving to understand their specific needs, creating a person-centered plan of care, and connecting them to appropriate community resources in support of maintaining an independent lifestyle in their community. Support, encouragement, and direction are regularly provided through interactions either face to face or telephone calls. Coordination of care is provided via collaboration with appropriate community providers. Needs of the individual may include housing, food, clothing, financial assistance, legal assistance, medication access, trans-

portation assistance, vocational/educational support, linkage to medical and/or behavioral health providers, and volunteer opportunities.

In 2020, Project Uplift served a total of 38 unique individuals through close to 1400 contacts. This included three individuals that received representative payee services via oversight of their financial decisions.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in this program (like many others) having to get creative in the way that services were both offered and provided. As was the case with many other programs, Project Uplift was able to provide services via a new telehealth platform, and/or via a telephone call.

Family Services

Non-Medicaid Case Management (NMCM) (Formerly known as Rural Bear)

Non-Medicaid Case Management services have been provided by MHA ST for over 15 years. Our client coordinator offers innovative care coordination to children and youth residing in Broome County, who have a mental health diagnosis and are experiencing emotional/behavioral difficulties in the home, school or community settings. Examples of the work being done in this program include: crisis intervention, supportive counseling, transportation, home visits, wraparound services, support, advocacy, education, and community referrals.

In spite of the struggles 2020 presented as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, the needs of the youth were still met by the care coordinator through the use of telephonic and telehealth means. The implementation of these modes of communication allows the client coordinator to provide services while developing one on one rapport. The impact of this relationship includes the reduction in the need for a higher level of care, as well as improved academic performance, school attendance, reduction in the need for crisis intervention, and the introduction of community resources to the child.

In 2020, 6 families, with an average length of stay of 5 months, were served by this part time position.



Family Services



Family Peer Support Services (FPSS)

The Family Peer Support Services Program supports families whose children have emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs. The Family Peer Advocates who provide this support are dedicated knowledgeable caring and supportive individuals. The relationship between the Family Peer Advocates and the families they serve is dynamic, with a sense of trust and connection knowing that each has experienced similar emotional circumstances. Together, they navigate community resources, providers, and access services based on the needs of the child. They also work with schools to promote the child's academic and social success. Through this partnership, families are able to recognize the strengths that families have and build on them. In 2020, 36 families were served by this program.

The Family Peer Advocates also offer events and support groups to foster a sense of commonality among the families they serve. In 2020, they were forced to become creative in addressing those social, emotional and mental health needs by providing support using out-of-the-box thinking due to the COVID- 19 pandemic. They provided fruit and veggie packages; or when deemed more practical, small denomination grocery gift cards for families in need, along with recipes. Additional virtual activities offered to their families included a virtual Family Feud game, a self-care virtual discussion, a summer journal and supplies giveaway, a virtual talent show, virtual scavenger hunt, and a virtual discussion about the impact of the Winter Solstice and Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Family Services

COMPEER

The goal of the Compeer program is to provide companionship, friendship, and a much needed support system to individuals receiving mental health services.



Referrals made by mental health professionals to this nationally recognized program assist our staff with empowering individuals to combat the effects of their mental illness including loneliness, isolation and self-worth through friendships. National studies have shown that Compeer programs have proven that these matches save healthcare dollars by reducing hospitalizations and crisis visits.

Compeer matches a supportive community volunteer to an eligible person so they may establish a healthy relationship in hopes of boosting self-esteem. Volunteers are fully trained and receive ongoing support and supervision from Compeer staff as they spend time with their match doing things they already enjoy.

Normally, enrolled participants are encouraged to take part in weekly activities offered by Compeer staff, regardless of their match status. Past activities included trips to tourist sites, picnics and movies. Again, the pandemic limited the feasibility of such activities in 2020. However, Compeer staff maintained contact through regular telephone calls and by sending monthly “happy mail” to participants. In 2020, Compeer served 51 unduplicated individuals.

Family Services

COMPEER YOUTH MENTORING

Referrals come from mental health providers, school counselors and case managers for youth who are at risk of developing social, emotional and behavioral issues. The Compeer Youth Mentoring Program provides a platform for these youth to build self-reliance, self-confidence and healthy relationships. By involving the youth in one-to-one mentorships, innovative programming and regular positive social contact, these goals are achieved. Matches are made with sensitivity to the interests and availability of the youth and the volunteer.

Compeer Youth Mentoring Staff typically provide regular activities as a way to increase engagement. The restrictions put in place as a result of COVID 19 severely impacted the ability of staff to provide the quantity, as well as quality, of events offered in the past. As an agency, MHASt partnered with BC Safe as they kicked off their Chalk the Walk campaign by offering prizes for an art contest for the best images, raising awareness for suicide prevention. Compeer Youth Mentoring took advantage of this sidewalk chalking to create a two-day youth event at the agency. They also offered activities through Zoom and joined the Family Peer Support Services staff in their virtual Family Feud game and virtual talent show. Twelve youth were enrolled in the program at the end of 2020.

The benefits of this program include increased school attendance, healthier relationships, improved communication skills and an increased interest in pursuing higher education.



Peer Support Services

PEER EDUCATION

Our Peer Education Program works hand in hand with all agency programs and community partners to cultivate community education from a peer perspective. Programs are facilitated by a Certified Peer Specialist who provides informative programming to individuals and their family within the community.

In 2020 our Peer Education Program was the first program to feel the impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic. In March of 2020 all tabling events, educational workshops, and other in-person programs were put on hold or canceled all together. Simultaneously, the 24/7 Peer Support Warm Line was seeing an increase in callers needing Peer Education services. Our Peer Educator, and Certified Peer Recovery Specialist, provided support over the phone to

480 callers seeking new coping skills, stress reduction techniques, and resources.

The Peer Education Program provided 25 groups, 12 community presentations, and 6 tabling/marketing events. Programming and Presentations included Promoting Mental Health Awareness, Suicide Awareness for Teens, Positive Self-Discovery, How to Cope with Feelings of Isolation and Depression, Mental Health First Aid Trainings, Coping with Anxiety, Self-Care for Teen Girls, Gratitude Scavenger Hunt, Your Vote Matters Wellness Re-imagined, and Mask UP for Mental Health Competition. Program staff also participated in the Broome Tioga Mentor Day Committee for NYAPRS for Community Mental health and the NYSEG Community Networking Meeting.



Peer Support Services

SELF-HELP INDEPENDENCE PROJECT – SHIP

The Self-Help Independence Project (SHIP) offers self-help services designed to provide educational and experiential opportunities for individuals who wish to become active participants in their own self-directed recovery. Two core programs, the Speakers Bureau, and the Day of Recovery help to achieve these outcomes.

The Speakers Bureau provides training in public speaking for individuals interested in presenting their “Story” to the public. Speaking venues are arranged by SHIP staff and include professional, academic, and community (public) audiences.

The Day of Recovery is an annual event open to the community and human service providers. The conference seeks to inform and educate the community on innovative topics relevant to the field of mental health. Providing opportunities to discuss advancements in mental health and the services available in our communities ensures those in with mental health issues thrive in Broome County.



The Speakers Bureau and Day of Recovery events were first postponed and later canceled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Staff remained active using their marketing, networking, and communication skills to encourage community members to remain safe and informed throughout the pandemic. Staff supported other agency staff in maintaining the MHASt website and social media accounts; updating CDC guidance, programming changes, and MHASt Policies and Covid-19 safety protocol.

SHIP staff also assisted the Development Director with the Mask UP Contest, a creative mask design contest encouraging to members in the community to stay safe and promoting mental health awareness.

Peer Support Services



PEER ADVOCACY

The Peer Advocacy Program at MHASt provides individuals with the support and resources necessary to live self-sufficiently. This empowers individuals to take an active role in making decisions which impact their wellness and recovery. The Peer Advocate works with individuals to utilize appropriate community services, complete provider referrals, and provide peer support.

The Peer Advocate can assist individuals navigating the primary care and behavioral health care systems, advocate on the client's behalf with community service providers, and make referrals for needed services, like clothing and food resources. This program strives to provide personalized attention based upon each individual's specific needs and incorporates wellness and recovery while providing these services. Our mission is to incorporate the value of recovery, self-help, and empowerment through education and advocacy.

Our Peer Advocate assisted with 188 advocacy service requests and of those 53 individuals requested assistance in more than one need area. The Covid-19 pandemic led to an increase in the number of individuals accessing the Peer Advocacy Program seeking housing assistance. Our Peer Advocate helped individuals apply for and check the status of their Covid-19 stimulus payments, provided face masks, hygiene bags, food resources, winter clothing, mental health referrals, assisted individuals with getting government issued phones, and provided individuals with peer support.

The Peer Advocate assisted Sunrise Wellness Center staff with making wellness calls to ensure peers had the support and resources they needed throughout the pandemic. This also helped individuals feel more connected and less socially isolated.

Peer Support Services

SUNRISE WELLNESS CENTER

The Sunrise Wellness Center is a peer-run program focused on empowering those in all stages of recovery from mental illness. Staff at the Sunrise Wellness Center encourage a self-directed approach to mental health services, and promote mental, physical, and spiritual wellness. At the core of the Wellness Center is the goal of self-driven recovery and self-care. At the Wellness Center, we offer a wide variety of groups, workshops, and act as a gateway for people with mental health challenges to find hope and support in recovery. Peer staff provide peer support and the tools needed to be successful in maintaining their own wellness. Our center functions as a hub, offering a variety of social inclusion opportunities based on personal interests. For more information, individuals can call and speak with one of our Wellness coaches or visit the Sunrise Wellness Center Facebook page. The Sunrise Wellness Center is open and accepts appointments Monday through Thursday from 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM and Friday 4:00 PM.



The Sunrise Wellness Center played an important role in supporting individuals during the covid-19 pandemic scheduling “Wellness Calls” to ensure peers in the program had the support and resources they needed. Programs that were traditionally offered face-to-face were reformatted and made accessible via phone or video conferencing. Staff had the difficult task of staying true the programs and services that the Sunrise Wellness Center is known for while encouraging engagement in this new digital space. Individuals struggled with gaining access to technology and obtaining the skills needed to participate in online activities and programming.

Staff were persistent and in many cases were able to obtain the technology resources and provided support so individuals could access programs and services. When MHASt opened for staff to return the office, but were still not permitting face-to-face appointments as advised by health officials, staff provided monthly “Craft Kits” to individuals so they had the supplies necessary to participate in online Expressive Arts activities offered by program staff. The Sunrise Wellness Center offered a total of 120 groups in 2020 serving a total of 276 individuals with 931 visits.

Programming offered consisted of weekly Peer Support Groups, Bullet Journaling, Workshops, Wellness workshops, social activities and games, recovery-oriented workshops, and self-discovery activities.

Peer Support Services

Sunrise Wellness Center Anonymous 2020 Survey Results

What does Peer Support offer you that traditional counseling and therapies don't?

"I feel I can be more open."

"It's just so different, more understanding. With the therapist I don't feel the same empathy."

"Peer Specialists lend an ear when needed. It's nice to know they ask you what you want and don't tell you what you have to do. No pressure."

How has the Sunrise Wellness Center helped you in your recovery?

"It has helped me a lot because I find it easier to make friends through the groups."

"It has allowed me to speak with like minded people, gave me the freedom to make my own choices with guidance."

How would you describe the Sunrise Wellness Center to a friend?

"I think it is a great program and I highly recommend it!"

"I would tell them the people there are open and listen and there is someone there for everybody."

How did the Sunrise Wellness Center help you cope with the Covid-19 pandemic?

"I did not feel isolated."

"The Center helped a lot!"

"Having the online groups and phone appointments really helped."

Looking ahead...



In 2021, MHAST will provide 40 hours of Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) for an additional 25 law enforcement personnel in Broome County. This will assist law enforcement with learning strategies to better respond to mental health calls.

In 2021, MHAST will work with local stakeholder to create the area's first 23-hour Crisis Stabilization Center.

In 2021, MHAST will expand the capacity of our peer operated warm-line (non-crisis support line). Currently this phone line takes over 1000 calls per month.

In 2021, MHAST will expand its mobile crisis program to provide additional hours of real time, face-to-face, community-based support for persons experiencing a mental health crisis.

In 2021, MHAST will continue to be an active member of the South-Central NY Independent Practice Association (IPA) that will enable our organization to enter into contract with Managed Care plans with other behavioral health providers, and increase our presence and footprint in the southern tier region.

In 2021, MHAST, along with other statewide partners, will advocate for adequate funding to support the mental health needs of all New York State residents.

In 2021, MHAST will again host the "Wings of Hope" walk/run in memory of those we've lost to suicide and addiction. The event will take place on September 11 at Dorchester Park.

In 2021, MHAST will expand its supports and services to children and families.

THANK YOU!

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Senior Leadership staff the Mental Health Association would like to thank our dedicated staff & volunteers, generous contributors and sponsors, community partners and all those who have contributed to providing our valuable programs and services throughout our community in 2020. We are looking forward to 2021.

If you are new to the organization or are interested in helping us fulfill our mission, please contact us to learn about the many opportunities available to support the Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier.



MHA

Mental Health Association
of the Southern Tier, Inc.

"This bell rings for hope... a victory for mental health."

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