

RECOVERY MONTH & ALTERNATIVES UPDATE

Nebraska OCA Newsletter!!

November 2014

Got To Find Me An Angel by Sharon D. Wise

My name is Sharon Denise Wise but my family called me Angel, as well as some other awful names. I was diagnosed with a mental illness at a very young age.

As a little girl, I was resilient and creative. My parents absolutely didn't know what to do with me. I knew early on that there was something in my artwork that made people feel happy and sad at the same time. I remember being hospitalized for the first time at the age of five years old. I was taken to a hospital in the evening time and remember lying on the back seat watching the trees go by and then seeing tall buildings.

I began running away from home at nine years old. I didn't know what I was running to but I knew what I was running from. My home was filled with abuse and violence, and I never felt loved so I would run to friends' homes and to the streets. It was in the streets that I learned how to take care of my personal hygiene and how to be resourceful. I would eat scraps off the tables of out door restaurants and sleep in abandoned buildings and cars. I would rather sleep under a bridge with other addicts and trash than go home.

At eighteen years old, I was a teen mother of two, living on the streets and by then, I had been hospitalized for depression, anxiety and three suicide attempts. I also had become a drug addict and remember smoking drugs while pregnant with my daughter until my water broke. I still didn't want to go to the hospital because I didn't want to stop getting high. Both of my children ended up in foster care.

I felt hopeless and full of despair. I didn't feel that anyone loved me and used to intentionally seek people out that would not care for me and that would abuse me. My family and friends called me "Angel" but many times *I felt I needed an angel.*

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Sharon D. Wise is a Certified Wellness Recovery Action Plan Facilitator located in Washington, D.C. Sharon has over fifteen years in the mental health consumer movement and has operated the first 100% consumer-run organization in the Washington DC metropolitan area. She was successful in winning one of the first major contracts from the D.C. Department of Mental Health in consumer-run history.

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Tyler J. Smith Purple Project by Kali Smith

Tyler J. Smith purchased a legal substance known as cherry flavored incense at the local gas station a block from the high school. Believing it was flavored tobacco; he smoked it and was immediately hooked. While Tyler was in the care of a physician and counselor, no one had any idea what he had smoked. Tyler was tested several times, all of which came back negative for not just K-2 but all drugs. In a short amount of time, 4 days, Tyler became extremely ill and visible change in his demeanor and attitude was present. Tyler ended up taking his own life after ingesting the cherry flavored incense on a September 29, 2012. Synthetic drugs are drugs that are equal

opportunity, they hit hard and often times take lives, or leave people with broken lives. Tyler was a compassionate, non-judgmental, caring young man who wanted to make the world a better place, because he recognized the hurt and suffering in people, and in recognizing that he became their friend, their brother and the one person they could rely on.

Synthetic marijuana or K2 was first developed in the 1980s by Clemson University scientist John W. Huffman. The development of this drug was at first an attempt to utilize resources from the marijuana plant to develop remedies for illnesses such as HIV/AIDS and cancer. What resulted from the testing and experimentation was a perversion of the original chemical compounds that are found to be 1-800 times more powerful than THC. In recent years this, was marketed to consumers as a “safe” “alternative” to marijuana. K2 signs started popping up all over town and word quickly spread about the legal substance that allowed users to get the high they were chasing, but not have the consequences that marijuana brought with it. Synthetic marijuana continues to be marketed as a substance that is affordable and safe for smokers who are looking for a good time and do not want trouble. It especially appeals to individuals who are involved in the court system and cannot use their drug of choice, and are not receiving assistance for recovery.

We founded the Tyler J. Smith Purple Project to raise awareness of the dangers of synthetic drugs, and also prevent the first time use and ongoing use of synthetic drugs. We wanted to spread awareness and education to prevent another life from being lost in honor of Tyler, but we also wanted to continue what he started. Try to make a difference in the world. We passed Tyler’s Law in Nebraska

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Dan Jackson of Nebraska Family Support Network (left), Tom Adams NAMI Nebraska (back), Mike Smith (brother of Tyler J Smith) of the Tyler J. Smith Purple Project (right)

Waiting for the great Sharon Wise.

Ryan Leiting and myself had the honor of picking up Sharon Wise in the airport. During our wait, I learned a little about Ryan Leiting! Not only is Ryan is celebrating 4 years of sobriety, he is also the single father of a 4 year old little girl, Ryanna. Ryan is an individual with lived experience with mental health and substance abuse services. He is shares his experience, strength, and hope with different treatment centers in the great state of Nebraska. He is passionate about sharing with hope and bringing out the success of others.

—Carol Coussons de Reyes



Carol Coussons de Reyes of the Nebraska Office of Consumer Affairs (left) and Ryan Leiting (right)

My childhood was filled with traumatic experiences, molestation and neglect. As an artist child I would turn to drawing pictures and painting to try to tell the world what my world looked like. People responded differently to what they saw in my artwork. Some thought it was beautiful but my mother called it “evil” and said I drew monsters.

After fifteen hospitalizations, jails and other institutions, I was relocated by force to the Washington, Metropolitan Area. I found myself at a homeless and battered (place) again. I ended up at a shelter for Battered Women called, “My Sisters Place”. It was there I had a re-birth. I got clean from drugs and alcohol and settled into a mental health center that offered a glimpse of hope.

Unfortunately in a couple of the hospitals I ended up in trying to address my trauma history I was secluded and restrained three times, two of the incidents ended with me having broken bones and bruises. Although I was disappointed and hurt by getting beaten up by those that were suppose to help me, and it was no different than what happened to me as a child, youth and adult, I continued my path to recovery.

Art saved my life and my vibrant colored self-portraits illustrate my traumatic experiences and journey. I also use the butterfly to tell my story, coming on stage draped in a cocoon, struggling to break free from the confines. When I come out of the cocoon, I spread my wings and become a beautiful butterfly. I then dance a ballet of freedom significant of recovery. Many of those who have watched the dance tell about their emotional experience of weeping as the butterfly moved around the stage.

As a testimony to my recovery, I have earned a Masters degree and am a PhD candidate in developmental psychology. I also travel around the country speaking to government officials, educators, legislators, students and others in the community, sharing my experiences, strength and hope. I am also studying to be an independent filmmaker and documentarian.

I have won several distinguished awards, one of them being the 2008 VOICE Award in Los Angeles. I am also the 2008 Joy Evans Award recipient, Legacy Award for Community Services and most recently the 2010 Consumer/Crisis Intervention Team Award. My love for the arts has helped me recover and survive on my journey to Peace. The Pillows of Unrest that is a traveling work-in-progress keeps me grounded. Presently I consult with the National Center on Trauma Informed Care and I am writing my third book. I now have both of my children back in my life.



Paige Hruza of Omaha, NE

CPSWS Conference by Paige Hruza

Through the generous support of our funding source, Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska (BHECN), I have been blessed to help coordinate and organize the bringing together of Nebraska Certified Peer Support and Wellness Specialists through the annual conference held in September, 2014. This year's conference was exemplary of the overwhelming interest of the movement and growth of Peer Support across our state as evidenced by an attendance that doubled in size from our first conference held in 2013. This conference has been created for the purpose of networking, educating, and supporting the Peer Support workforce, where cohesiveness and communication is often a challenge due to the nature of such a rural state population.

The conference was kicked off with a phenomenal keynote speaker, Beth Filson. Beth shared her special knowledge and experience of developing trauma informed relationships through the lens of Peer Support. Beth was accompanied by a variety of fabulous workshop presenters who shared and educated us about the dynamics of co-occurring relationships, vicarious trauma/self care/self expression and healing, domestic violence, Peer Support credentialing, forensic peer support, homelessness, whole health and other topics.

Through my personal lens while attending the conference, the atmosphere was one of excitement, comfort, laughter, and interest. While observing those attending, I saw people connecting with others that we, otherwise, would not have had an opportunity to come to know. We shared personal and work related experiences, listened, heard, supported, and learned from one another, proving the value of peer relationships. The level of enthusiasm seemed to gain momentum from hour to hour as people became more excited with each workshop they attended. In the workshops that I attended, there was a crowd of very attentive participants and all were very interactive and eager to learn and share more.



Ken Timmerman of Safe Harbor (right) and Judie Moorehouse of Region 1 BH Systems (left)



Jennifer Ihle of Community Alliance (left) and Lisa Cassulo of Magellan (right)



Jonathan Koley of Region 6 (left) and Nancy Rippen of Region 2 (right)



Mellissa Lemmer of Nebraska Mental Health Association (left) and Marlene Sorensen of Nebraska VAMC (right).

in 2013, and an update in 2014. We have held conferences and presentation in many states and have worked with many lawmakers at the federal level to combat synthetic drugs. We are encouraged that we will win this war, not just for Tyler, but for all those who have been and are being affected.



Nebraska Certified Peer Support and Wellness Specialist Conference Keynote Beth Filson



The Nebraska peer movement is organizing at an incredible time. With so much to learn from other states, they can make choices based on what is working well, and avoid what is not. They also have the advantage of the growing awareness of the central role trauma plays in the development of later life mental health and wellness challenges -- and the power of our relationships to aid in mutual healing. No doubt, they will also create what will be known as uniquely *Nebraskan*. During my keynote and subsequent workshops, I met an incredible group of people whose vision is informed by what still needs to be accomplished in healing, recovery, and peer support.

- Written by Beth Filson



Jon Koley of Region 6 BH Systems (left), Kevin Degoey of Safe Harbor, Carol Coussons de Reyes of the Office of Consumer Affairs, & Mary Ahern of Community Alliance(right)

My Recovery Month Story by Jonathan Koley

I want to share a Recovery Month story. This September I had the opportunity to plan an event celebrating Recovery Month. We arranged for a panel of individuals in recovery from behavioral health challenges to speak about their recovery journeys. The planning went well, right until two of our four speakers were forced to cancel just 15 minutes before the start of the event. With half of my recovery panel missing, and a room quickly filling with audience members I suddenly found myself volunteering to tell my own recovery story.

It was an unexpected change to be sure, but nothing I couldn't handle. This wasn't my first rodeo – I've told my story several times over the years – but as I took a moment to gather my thoughts I found that this felt different than past experiences. I thought about Recovery Month, and why it mattered. I thought about my fellow panelists and the strength it took for them to come and share personal, private, and sometimes painful challenges. I thought about the power of stories – particularly recovery stories. These thoughts brought to mind a powerful sense of gravity and purpose; I was proud to stand next to my peers and speak, and honored that our audience had come to listen.

In the end, I would say the panel was a success. We heard some powerful stories and answered thoughtful questions from the audience. It was a small event, but it meant something and I'm looking forward to Recovery Month next year.

Patrick Kennedy Spoke at Alternatives

Patrick Kennedy said he has 13 years of lived experience with addiction and 16 years in Congress. He was the sponsor of the Mental Health and Addiction Parity Act. He was the youngest congressional official to sponsor such a bill and he said it fell to him by default, because no one else wanted the bill. The bill passed in 2008, because it was attached to a bill to bail out the banks called TARP, HR 1424. It was the largest bank bailout in American history. He also stated that he supported the current legislation called the Helping Families in a Mental Health Crisis bill, HR 3717, because he hoped his family would hospitalize him if he were to return to a place of addiction.

-Written by Carol Coussons de Reyes



Patrick Kennedy at Alternatives 2014

Paolo Delvechio Introduces Kana Enomoto at Alternatives

Paolo is the Director of the Center for Mental Health Services at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and he introduced Kana Enomoto the deputy administrator for SAMHSA. Kana stated that the voice of lived experience needed to be respected and included in healthcare treatment and support. She stated there are 62 million more Americans with Healthcare after the ACA. She also stated that 10 million had been dedicated to train and expand peer services in the US. She said that people do not recover in a silo and that relationships, like peer support are important in healing. Kana stated SAMHSA developed a trauma concept paper and that trauma is about what happened to you, not what is wrong with you. Peer support complements treatment and services and together we make America a healthier place.

- Written by Carol Coussons de Reyes



Paolo Delvechio at Alternatives 2014



Kana Enomoto at Alternatives 2014



Michael Kalmbach at Alternatives 2014

Michael Kalmbach of the Creative Vision Factory

Michael Kalmbach is the director of the Creative Vision Factory in Delaware. He led a workshop on the work of this organization. He said the Creative Vision Factory is located in an abandoned part of downtown that has had economic hardship since the 1970's desegregation of Wilmington. He also stated that the city is listed as one of the top 5 most violent cities. This area has been formed into the creative district and has had an influx of social services. He stated that art is a movement and that all art is inherently social. Michael said artists can make things happen. He spoke to the social movement that has been created by the Creative Vision Factory. He said the Creative Vision Factory was part of a social movement generated by this clubhouse environment where people can create art. There are artists that get linked with the local art galleries and shows also. The Creative Vision Factory also hosts art nights where the artists of the gallery can show their work. He also said that his organization and team are involved in creative place making, which some people call environmental policing. The concept is to improve the look of

areas of high crime through art to deter criminal activity. The group also is involved in creating murals based on grants or commissions and that the artists are paid to complete the work as a team. There are also benefit dinners or micro-grant fund raising dinners in his community. They use donated produce to create a dinner. The people at the dinner donate money and the group at the dinner listens to different projects and votes where the money goes. He also spoke to the creation of artist housing versus creating group homes. Michael stated that artist housing was far more popular with sponsors than group homes. The take away message I received from Michael was that the possibility in art is endless— pick up a paintbrush! Visit the Creative Vision Factory at

www.thecreativevisionfactory.org

-Written by Carol Coussons de Reyes



Keris Myrick and Tom Coderre at Alternatives 2014

Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Caucus

Keris Myrick and Tom Coderre are new representatives at SAMHSA. Keris works at the Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs in CMHS and Tom works as a senior advisor to the Administrator at SAMHSA. Keris is past president of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Tom is a former senator of Rhode Island. Both are respected for their lived experience and recovery that they share with others.



Leadership at the National Peer-Run Technical Assistance Centers at Alternatives 2014

The current National Peer-Run Technical Assistance Centers Include:

- National Mental Health Consumers Self-Help Clearinghouse

www.mhselfhelp.org

- National Empowerment Center

www.power2u.org

- Peerlink National Technical Assistance Center

www.peerlinktac.org

- Café TA Center

www.cafetacenter.net

- NAMI Star Center

www.consumerstar.org

Artist of the Arboretum

The Office of Consumer Affairs is seeking artists to create a display at the Lincoln Regional Center of Nebraska.

Artists will host art talks with other artisans and aspiring artists on topics from art technique to starting your own business.

Celebrate this summer by applying to be a Featured Artist of the Arboretum.

Art supports the recovery of so many people and you can be a bridge to healing by sharing your artistic insights.

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**THE CURRENT
NUMBER OF
Certified Peer
Support and
Wellness
Specialists
(CPSWS'):

258!**



Scott Loder of the Lincoln Regional Center (left) and Cynthia Harris of the Office of Consumer Affairs (right) at the CPSWS Conference!