



Supporting Persons in Making Their Preferred Future a Reality

The Alexandria CSB sponsored a training titled *Universal Enhancement: Overcoming Life's Obstacles*, by nationally recognized trainer and clinician, Tom Pomeranz, Ed. D.

With nearly forty years of experience in the health field, Dr. Pomeranz is familiar with state hospitals that used to abuse persons with disabilities— chaining adults to walls and locking children in cages. With pain and conviction, Dr. Pomeranz recalled the abuses and said that as a former hospital director, “I created the time out rooms that were painted red to hide the blood.” He emphasized how we don’t see things that are part of our reality as abusive until we look back later and say, “What in the world were we thinking?” Dr. Pomeranz has dedicated his life to teaching others how to enhance the lives of persons with disabilities and assist them in creating lives that anyone would want for themselves.

Although these large institutions have closed, Dr. Pomeranz emphasizes that “Institutions are found in our behavior and can exist in small group homes where schedules are planned and organized by others.

An institution is not a place; it is a state of mind.

You cannot prove that someone cannot learn; you only demonstrate that you are unable to teach.

People with intellectual disabilities are not broken, they do not need to be fixed.

Support people at the level they are capable or willing to participate.

Nothing about me without me.

Where providers make no eye contact, where people are continually kept waiting for a prompt, waiting for a spoon to be raised, waiting to go out, waiting to live.”

How can providers realize now when they are treating people in ways that later may be perceived as harmful? Dr. Pomeranz uses the acronym GEM, Good Enough for Me. He recommends that providers see themselves in the person with disabilities and ask themselves, “Would this be good enough for me?”



Dr. Pomeranz speaking to CSB staff.

Over 100 CSB and other providers attended the training and learned about:

- Promoting valued relationships between the person disabilities and the provider.
- How the institutional mindset damages quality of life.
- Creating supportive community inclusion.
- Understanding the influence of self determination for adults with disabilities.

Staff recognized that providers with the best intentions can have blind spots and need to see their actions from a different perspective. Allyson Coleman, Director of Intellectual Disability Residential Services, said that “most guests found the training to be thought provoking and inspiring. We are implementing Dr. Pomeranz’ system into our services.”

Notice of Public Hearing

The Alexandria Community Services Board is holding a public hearing to receive comment on the needs of Alexandrians with mental illness, intellectual disabilities or a substance dependency. The public hearing is on Thursday, May 1, 2007 at 7 pm at 720 North Saint Asaph Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. To sign up to speak, call 703.838.4455, ext. 208. Email comments to will.thompson@alexandriava.gov or fax to 703.838.5070 .

The Recovery Model: Transforming Lives by Transforming Systems

Over 150 staff, consumers and family members attended a two-day training on the recovery process for persons with mental illness or substance dependency and how treatment systems such as the CSB can facilitate that process. Matthew Federici, M.S., CPRP and Crystal Edwards, B.A., of the Institute for Recovery and Community Integration presented on recovery, peer support and community integration as the catalyst for transforming individual lives *and* mental health systems. Both presenters have been consumers and providers of mental health services.

The principal of “recovery” seeks to establish personal empowerment, attitudinal change, skill building, self-determination, self-help and community integration as the foundations of mental health treatment. The effectiveness and value of peer support and peer-operated activities were emphasized. At the CSB, a Peer Support Specialist began working with the West End Club and the Case Management Unit in 2007. Craig Pearson is a person in recovery who works with consumers to provide education,

advocacy and support. Craig has formed a Recovery Committee, facilitates support groups and assists consumers with developing wellness recovery action plans (WRAP).

This event was paid for by the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services through grant monies administered by Pathway Homes.



Trainers Matthew Federici and Crystal Edward with the five recovery concepts displayed in the background: hope, personal responsibility, education, self-advocacy and support.

Depression in the Later Years

Becoming depressed as you age is not natural. Seniors often experience losses in later life such as declining health and the death of friends and family. While it is common to be sad for a short while, depression is not a normal part of aging. “I’d be depressed too” is a common refrain, but seniors can continue to grow and enjoy life like anyone else.

One in five Americans over age 65 has a mental health problem, but less than one-quarter of them get help.



Geriatric Team Therapist Lillian Vagnoni visits a consumer at his home.

Because mental and physical health are integral, depression leads to increased medical problems. Seniors have the highest suicide rate of any age group, despite the

fact that over half of those who commit suicide visited a doctor in the month prior to their death. Depression may lead a person to withdrawal and have little interest in getting help. Depressed persons may need guidance to seek treatment. It is one of the most successfully treated of all medical illnesses. Rhonda Williams, LCSW, Supervisor for the CSB’s Geriatric Team, says that “therapists trained in aging issues help many seniors when life gets them down.” Therapists work to “help seniors live a rich, fulfilling life.”

Like most illnesses, the earlier treatment begins, the more effective it is. Depression will not just go away. Most

Symptoms of Depression

- A persistent sad or anxious mood
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Decreased or increased appetite
- Loss of interest in activities
- Restlessness or irritability
- Physical symptoms that don’t respond to treatment (headaches, chronic pain, stomachaches)
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Loss of energy
- Feeling guilty, hopeless or worthless
- Thoughts of death or suicide

See a professional if you have five or more of these symptoms for longer than two weeks or if symptoms severely interfere with your daily routine.

CSB Partners with Criminal Justice Board in Treatment of Offenders

The Alexandria Community Criminal Justice Board (CCJB) is a group of criminal justice and community stakeholders that strive to make effective changes in the criminal justice and human service systems. They aim to promote effective program administration and safety in the City. This Board addresses issues such as drugs, crime, gang prevention, jail space, inmate education, sex offender checks, budgetary constraints and public safety.

Among the CCJB's goals are the expansion of mental health and substance abuse treatment for offenders and the provision of alternatives to incarceration for pretrial persons. To this end, the CSB and Alexandria Criminal Justice Services have entered into an agreement whereby Criminal Justice Services will refer to the CSB any individuals who have committed a crime that is related to substance abuse, or, a crime that raises concerns about the offender's mental health and/or substance use. These persons may be on probation with treatment as part of their requirements, or, they may not have gone to trial yet, but participate in services with the hopes that it will reduce the likelihood of incarceration *and* address any

mental health and substance use problems.

For the one-year period ending in June of 2007, 61 offenders were referred for mental health services and 43 were referred for substance abuse services. The CSB provides screening, diagnoses, and the development of individual service plans including counseling and other treatment, as well as referral to additional services as needed. A substance abuse prevention group is held for persons who do not appear to have a substance dependency problem, but may need support to prevent the onset.

David Ward, Program Coordinator with Criminal Justice Services, said "We have a good working relationship with the CSB. The challenge is keeping people in treatment once they have finished probation. We hope they won't come back." For more information about the CCJB, contact Mr. Ward at 703.838.4547.



Group Home Redesign

Since 2004 the CSB has partnered with the **Art Institute of Washington** in the beautification of residential program sites. Seven sites including group homes and apartments have been redesigned. In 2007 CSB staff and program consumers worked with design students Cheryl Carey-Powell, Carol Donnelly and Angela Miller in the redesign of two apartments for persons living with a mental illness.

Carol Layer, LCSW, Extended Care Director, said, "It is more than creating a nice space. It is part of treatment and provides people with a sense of respect and dignity."

The student designers volunteered to decorate the homes using existing pieces plus additional City funds for residential upkeep. The project included furniture, upholstery, decor, paint, lighting and window treatments. A painting made by one of the program residents was used as the inspiration for the living room design and color scheme (shown right). Mike Gilmore, CSB Executive Director, said, "We can look at where they live and say 'wow,' I would like to

live there." Consumers are sensitive to their environments, and ironically, they are often the least able to create an attractive and harmonious place."

For more information about the redesign projects, please contact Juliette Milushev at 703.838.5011.



Living area of a residence shared by three individuals in the CSB's Residential Program.



Alexandria Community
Services Board
720 North Saint Asaph Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Community Mental Health Month Event

Kay Redfield Jamison, Ph.D will deliver a free community presentation titled *Personal and Professional Perspectives on Depression* on Thursday, May 29 at 6:45 pm at the Minnie Howard School Auditorium, located at 3801 West Braddock Road in Alexandria, 22302.



Dr. Jamison, a clinical psychologist, is a Professor of Psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. She is one of the foremost authorities on manic-depressive illness and has experienced its exhilarating highs and catastrophic depressions first hand. With her unique dual perspective, Jamison will speak from the point of view of both a “healer” and one who is “healed.”

Dr. Jamison has been named one of the “Best Doctors in the United States” and was chosen by *Time* magazine as a “Hero of Medicine.” She is the author of *Manic Depressive Illness* (with Frederick K. Goodwin), *An Unquiet Mind: A Memoir of Moods and Madness*, *Touched with Fire: Manic Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament*, *Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide* and *Exuberance: A Passion for Life*.

Exercise Equipment

Do you have exercise equipment sitting in your home that goes unused? Residents of the CSB’s group homes will put it to good use. To donate exercise equipment to a group home, please call Juliette Milushev at 703-838-5011. Only equipment in good condition, please.



To make comments, suggestions of story ideas or contributions, call Jennifer Cohen Cordero at 703.838.4455, x165.