

Expect Recovery (Make It Happen)

Published Quarterly

For consumers and staff interested in Recovery

Northern Lakes CMH Recovery Definition

“Recovery is a personal journey of hope, purpose and growth. It is the process of setting our own directions in life. We accept the responsibilities of meeting challenges, using our own abilities, strengths and determination.”



It's Not Everyday.

Ever since I began working here, I always had the notion that Peer Support Specialists could change people's lives by telling other people that they are not alone in both the illness and the wellness part of their lives. Peers share the common knowledge that they do know how other people are feeling when they have a diagnosis; they do care about them genuinely; they are there to help them in every step they may need help with; and they do understand the feelings suppressed inside.

In this edition, you will see that three (and soon to be four) Peers have been hired full time with benefits, a Peer has been recognized for his hard work and dedication throughout the years he has been employed here by our Board of Directors and also by the State Recovery Council, as well as many more powerful things that will help us on our daily walk of Recovery.

All it takes is one simple smile and a caring thought that you can do what you set your mind to do, to make good things happen in your life. During my time at Northern Lakes, I have seen many changes. To me, change occurs by putting out a hand and saying, "I'm just like you!"

Continue to work hard and believe in yourselves and you will have the life that you have always dreamt of!

~Mary Beth Evans, CPSS, NLCMH Recovery Coordinator

Mini-Grant Application Status

The NLCMH Mini-Grant Program is designed to provide the means and structure to harness the energy of localized groups of people recovering from a mental illness who have motivation and passion to work together on recovery projects. Our intent with the mini-grant program is to help transform the public mental health system to one based on recovery principles by **strengthening consumer choice and enhancing personal recovery**. We received 9 mini-grant applications and details will be announced in December on the *Virtual Recovery Center* at: <http://www.northernlakescmh.org/blog> Here you will also find information on many other initiatives occurring at NLCMH.

Also remember to visit our *Health Education Answers* section at the bottom of: <http://www.northernlakescmh.org>

“Consumers can do a lot if just asked!”

~ Ernie Reynolds, CPSS

Northern Lakes Community Mental Health and Disneyworld: Common Goals

Submitted by: **Rosemary Rokita**, *Customer Services Specialist / Grievance & Appeals Coordinator*

What do Disneyworld, Chemical Bank and Northern Lakes Community Mental Health all have in common? An interest in providing excellent customer services! Whether you are strolling through the Magic Kingdom, opening a checking account with Chemical Bank or participating in a DBT group in Cadillac, we are all alike in wanting you to be 100% satisfied with the services you received.

Customer Services is provided by all Northern Lakes Community Mental Health staff and occurs throughout your experience in receiving Northern Lakes CMH services. From the Customer Service Representative that greets you at the Reception desk to the Emergency Services staff you may have contact with at midnight, all Northern Lakes CMH staff is expected to provide services that benefit you and are provided in a respectful and professional manner.

There is also a department at Northern Lakes CMH called Customer Services. **Leslie Sladek** in Traverse City (231-933-4907) and **Rosemary Rokita** in Cadillac (231-876-3246 or 800-337-8598) are available to take your calls in our six-county region. You can call with questions, concerns, request an accommodation, and/or make a grievance or request to appeal a service decision that you do not agree with.

All service activity provided by Northern Lakes CMH staff has a common goal – your Recovery. Everyone has their own “journey of hope, purpose and growth.” The role of “customer service” is to help you in that journey.

Action Group Meetings

The Action Group Meetings are for people who want to ‘Do’ things at NLCMH. It’s a time for people to jump in and see what everything is all about here – a chance to get involved. These groups are designed for everyone – staff, consumers, and the public – to come together to offer opinions and assistance on Recovery and Anti-Stigma.

January 11 (TC, Cadillac, and Grayling)

February __ (Unknown at this time)

March 14 (TC, Cadillac, Grayling)

April 11 (TC, Cadillac, Houghton Lake)

May 9 Walk-A-Mile In My Shoes Rally in Lansing

June 13 (TC, Cadillac, Grayling)

July 11 (TC, Cadillac, and Houghton Lake)

August 8 (TC, Cadillac, and Grayling)

September 12 (TC, Cadillac, and Houghton Lake)

August 8 (TC, Cadillac, and Grayling)

September 12 (TC, Cadillac, and Houghton Lake)

October 10 (TC, Cadillac, and Grayling)

November 14 (TC, Cadillac, and Houghton Lake)

December 12 (TC, Cadillac, and Grayling)

Meetings are held from 10AM-12PM.

TC will meet in Room 219, Cadillac will meet in the Training Room, and HL/Grayling will meet in the Board Rooms. For more information please call Mary Beth Evans at (989) 366-2950. Hope to see you there!!!

The following answers were given at the local action group meetings when asked. . . .

What Does Recovery Mean To You?

- * Feeling better and having more energy
- * Learning to make decisions for myself
- * Being able to quiet my thoughts and being aware of my whole self
- * Standing up for myself and making friends
- * Striving to do better than the day before
- * Working in the community; attending Club
- * Taking one day at a time
- * Not being isolated at home; getting out
- * Attending conferences, education and learning opportunities
- * Finding accountability partners to help me monitor how I’m doing
- * Making people connections and planning to help avoid a crisis
- * Taking responsibility for myself
- * Helping others recognize their own progress in recovery
- * Sharing reminders
- * Recovery is an individual journey; no person’s journey is the same
- * No self-stigma
- * Accepting who I am
- * Making change as much as you can
- * Being nicer and kinder to one another
- * Learning to love yourself
- * No stigma attached to my name
- * A journey to wellness
- * Living each day

Meet NLCMH's Peer Support Specialists!!!



Kelly Milbrandt, based out of the Cadillac office, has worked for NLCMH for 4 years and was recently hired as a full time Peer. Previously she was a homeless prevention assistant. She currently is working with Emergency Services and the Supportive Housing Program until the other full time position can be filled. She is a MI-PATH (Michigan Personal Action Towards Health) facilitator as well as a WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) facilitator. Kelly knows her boundaries when it comes to taking care of herself first; which is a hard skill to obtain. Kelly is a Certified Peer Support Specialist through the Michigan Department of Community Health.



Susan Bonanni, based out of the Traverse City office, has worked for NLCMH for 5 years and was recently hired as a full time Peer. She is a MI-PATH facilitator, runs Journey groups, is a WRAP facilitator, and hopes to begin peer-led smoking cessation groups soon. She is working with the Access department at NLCMH to provide peer services to consumers that are new to NLCMH. She is also providing transitional support to consumers coming from the hospital to a crisis residential setting. Susan has also been meeting with new employees to watch the 5 Stages of Recovery orientation video with them and assist them with any questions they may have about Peer Services or Recovery in general. Susan is a Certified Peer Support Specialist.



Martha LaPointe, based out of the Houghton Lake office, has worked for NLCMH for 4 years and was recently hired as a full time Peer. Martha is certified to run Financial Literacy groups, runs Pathways to Recovery groups in both the Houghton Lake and Grayling offices, has helped create a follow-up peer-led smoking cessation support group, is a WRAP facilitator, runs a peer-led depression support group every Monday and Tuesday, advocates and assists others to complete community forms to help with resources, and she also assists with the indigent medication program to help consumers receive their medications. Martha is a Certified Peer Support Specialist.



Christine Hickson, based out of the Cadillac office, has worked for NLCMH for a little over a year. She runs a crochet group, assists people with going back to school and filling out forms that can sometimes be deemed scary, and drives people to get assistance of various sorts. Christine states that she loves her crochet group because they make lap throws to give to local AFC homes and also make hats and scarves for Project Christmas (a program in Cadillac that helps residents during Christmas time). Christine hopes to be a Certified Peer Support Specialist in the near future.



Ernie Reynolds, based out of the Grayling office, has worked as a Certified Peer Support Specialist for NLCMH for four years. Previous to his employment at NLCMH, he was the founder and Director of the Chat Room Drop-In Center which is now called New Beginnings. He has done advocacy work for over ten years and continues to do so throughout our communities. It has been said that whenever someone has a problem they can't fix or need help with, to go find Ernie because he's always willing to help anyone and everyone. Ernie currently facilitates Pathways to Recovery groups, has run Men's group in the past, and has served on numerous boards and committees throughout Michigan and the nation. One huge thing Ernie supports is the need for mental health parity. Ernie's famous words are he will not go down without a fight!



Brandalyn Morris, based out of the Traverse City office, has been working for NLCMH for 8 months. She helps advocate for the needs of the people she serves by ensuring their goals are met in their Person-Centered Plan. Brandalyn states that whatever hopes, dreams, wishes, and goals are listed on the PCP, she helps to facilitate and make those things happen. She looks to start co-facilitating some groups within the next few months. She is currently working towards the goal of becoming a Certified Peer Support Specialist in the near future.



Christa Smith, based out of the Traverse City office, has been working for NLCMH for almost four years. She currently co-facilitates the MI-PATH and Journey groups, assists with consumers who are struggling with dual disorders, and is a Certified Peer Support Specialist. Christa used to be an RN in the Pediatric ICU at U of M. She states that, "Paying it forward is so cool!"



Gillian Sohlt is based out of the Traverse City office and is fairly new to our agency. She started at the end of October and has already begun to ensure that the consumers she is working with are active in the community and participating in different things. She has already proven to be an attribute to our agency. Gillian is looking forward to becoming a Certified Peer Support Specialist.



Leslie Sladek, based out of the Traverse City office, has been working for NLCMH for almost 8 years. She is a Certified Peer Support Specialist who works in the Customer Service Department. She was among the first group of peers to be trained and certified in the state of Michigan. She states that Customer Service is the welcoming/resource/navigation for people when they first call the agency with questions that reception can not help with due to time. She helps consumers with their Advance Directives and assists with getting consumers the services they may be lacking. She assists people in

(Leslie continued) navigating the CMH system when they have questions or concerns and also assists with the grievance and appeals system. She is involved on the Communications and Public Relations and Quality Improvement Committees. She is active in the recovery movement at work and in the community. She also creates the New Directions Newsletter for consumers.

2012 MINI-CONFERENCE SCHEDULE 10AM – 3PM

Set 1

Thursday, January 19 - TC
Thursday, February 16 - Cad
Tuesday, March 20 - HL

Registration Deadline

Friday, Jan 13
Friday, Feb 10
Thursday, March 15

Set 2

Thursday, April 19 - TC
Thursday, May 17 - Cad
Tuesday, June 19 - HL
July - NONE

Registration Deadline

Friday, April 13
Friday, May 11
Thursday, June 14

Set 3

Thursday, August 16 - TC
September – NONE
Wednesday, October 24 - Cad
Tuesday, November 20 - HL
December – NONE

Registration Deadline

Friday, Aug 10
Recovery Celebration TBA
Friday, Oct 19
Thursday, Nov 15

Topics for **Set 1** of the Mini-Conference include a Storytelling presentation by our new storytelling coaches, confrontation avoidance techniques, how to communicate with family members, container gardening, and a mindfulness activity on anger (possibly one on smoking cessation as well).

Topics being planned for **Set 2** include a guest activity on making Castaways (a way to transform junk into treasure), storytelling performances by consumers, conversation skills practice, mindfulness walking meditation, self-massage, freshening your house.

Questions? Contact Cindy Petersen (231) 935-3099 or Mary Beth Evans (989) 366-2950 or marybeth.evans@nlcmh.org



Ernie Reynolds with the Deputy Director of the Michigan Department of Community Health, Elizabeth Knisley, while receiving an award from the Michigan Recovery Council for his many years of hard work and successes.



Ernie Reynolds receiving special recognition for his outstanding work at the agency and his many years of advocacy from NLCMH Board of Directors Chair Melissa Fournier. Ernie plans to retire in March, 2012.

Colleen's Recovery Corner

Being Happy in the Holiday Season

Most people look forward to the holidays. Days that are filled with color, surprises, food and gifts. Days filled with family and friends. Well, maybe. For someone of us getting through the holidays is just that. Getting through. All the hype about joy, celebration, and spirits is just that, hype.

For some of us: the holidays can emphasize the opposites. Lack of family and friends and money and good spirits. It is days of watching the commercialization of Christmas on TV where people have unlimited money, dressed in the highest of fashion. And they are all good-looking and skinny.

But is that reality for us? For individuals with mental illness? Our days can be filled with sadness and depression and anxiety. We are like the children in the Christmas Carol looking at all the riches of the happy people decked out in their fancy holiday clothes as we watch from the cold weather outside their lighted windows. What about us? We ask ourselves. Why don't I feel happy? Isn't everyone happy during the holidays?

Well, I have had my sad holidays also. I remember lying on the floor in my living room, just crying and crying on Christmas day. I had no place to go, no one in my family called, and I felt left out and hurt. I had my own little self-party on Christmas day.

What I didn't remember is that I DID have a place to go. And I had gone to this "place" for the past 15 years. It was the consumer-run drop-in center. I helped put on the Christmas Dinner, serving usually over 100 consumers. I felt good afterwards. I was able to be helpful to others on the holidays and I was grateful for everyone that allowed me to be helpful to them. They did not realize that the greatest gift I had for Christmas at the drop-in was the individuals who came and got a good meal and some presents (which I had helped wrap). They had given their appreciation, which was the greatest gift of gratitude to me. I was the lucky one, and I have good and happy memories of every holiday dinner at the Drop-In. (And remember the Clubhouses too!) Have a good holiday season. Be kind to yourself.

Colleen Jasper, Consumer & Director of the Office of Consumer Relations at MDCH