

MUCH NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2020

KIVA, INC.

VOL. 4

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
— Margaret Mead

Georgia O'Keefe. Abstraction Blue. 1927, MoMA

In her article "Defining Peer Support," Shery Mead provided her definition of peer support.

"Peer support is a system of giving and receiving help founded on key principles of respect, shared responsibility, and mutual agreement of what is helpful. Peer support is not based on psychiatric models and diagnostic criteria. It is about understanding another's situation empathically through the shared experience of emotional and psychological pain. When people find affiliation with others whom they feel are "like" them, they feel a connection. This connection, or affiliation, is a deep, holistic understanding based on mutual experience where people are able to "be" with each other without the constraints of traditional (expert/patient) relationships." (Mead, 2003, paras. 1)

Given this definition, this newsletter aims to expand statewide knowledge about upcoming trainings, events, and information that can enhance our ability to provide support and our philosophy.

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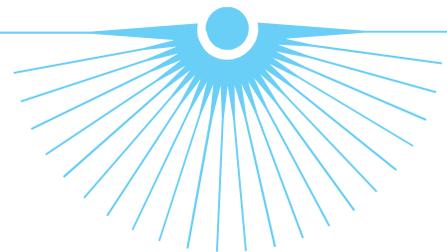
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UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming Certified Peer Specialist Training

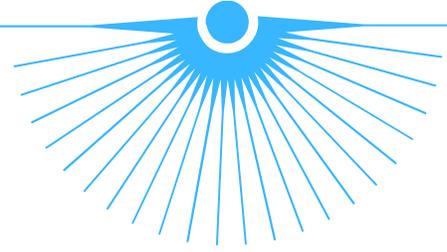


Please schedule an interview as soon as possible [here](#)

Urban Edge: Roxbury, MA
Training Dates: May 28,29 June 4,5,12,18,19,25,26,30

Economic Development Center: New Bedford MA
Training Dates: June 1,2,8,9,15,16,22,23,29,30

Boston City Hall Plaza Renovation



The Boston Disability Commission will be holding a discussion on accessibility of the upcoming Boston City Hall Plaza renovation project. Members of the public are invited to attend a presentation on the proposed changes and to provide feedback at the next Boston Disability Commission meeting.

After 5:30pm, attendees will need to enter City Hall from the Congress Street entrance.

ASL provided. For additional accommodation requests, contact the Boston Disability Commission at disability@boston.gov or 617-635-3682.

<https://www.boston.gov/public-notice/11561271>

When: Wednesday, March 11, 2020, 5:30pm - 7:30pm

Where: Boston City Hall, City Council Chamber, 5th Floor, 1 City Hall Sq, Boston, MA 02201

Christopher Morawski, Staff Support Specialist
Mayor's Commission for Persons with Disabilities
617.635.4996 (w)
617.635.2541 (tty)

UPCOMING EVENTS

State IL Education Day at the State House



Statewide Independent Living Council Members, staff and consumers of the 10 Independent Living Centers across Massachusetts will be at the State House to discuss the valuable services provided by Massachusetts Independent Living Centers. For communication access or other accommodations, please contact MASILC at: info@masilc.org

When: Thursday, March 12, 2020

Where: Massachusetts State House, Boston

Schedule

Registration: 10:00AM

Speakers: 11:00 AM

Lunch: 12PM

An Afternoon of Healing for Women and Men who are Survivors of Sexual Abuse or Assault



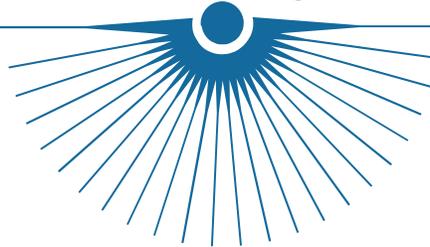
Join us as we celebrate the resilience of the human spirit and share our journey of recovery through art, music, and our stories of healing. Whether you have experienced sexual abuse or sexual assault in your family, your faith community, your school, the military, your workplace, or elsewhere, we welcome you and those you support you. This Afternoon of Healing will provide a space for survivors of all genders to join together in lifting the veil of secrecy and shame. By bringing the issues of sexual abuse and assault out from the shadows, we hope to create an opening for increased awareness and recognition that healing is possible. Please join us! Women, men, and survivors of all genders and the people who support them are welcome! <https://takingbackourselves.org/>

When: Saturday, March 14, 2020, 2 to 4 pm

Where: Codman Square Public Library 690 Washington St., Dorchester 02124

UPCOMING EVENTS

Starting the Conversation: College and Your Mental Health



The move to college is a time of significant transition and can be both positive and challenging. As many as 1 in 5 students experiences a mental health condition while in college. For some, the stress of college and greater independence may impact mental health, making it difficult to manage the daily demands of school. Others begin college already aware that they live with mental health challenges.

On Monday March 16, The Gallery at Villageworks, 525 Mass. Ave, Acton, will generously host the panel presentation “Starting the Conversation: College and Your Mental Health” from 7:00 - 8:30 PM. The Acton-Boxborough United Way is sponsoring the event which is presented by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Central Middlesex affiliate.

The presentation is appropriate for both students and their parents/guardians. The panel of college administrators and a former student who experienced mental health challenges during college years will encourage families to start conversations about mental health before students leave home. It is prudent to understand privacy laws, what can be shared by college administrators, and that colleges differ in supports. These conversations are important even if a student doesn't experience a mental health condition. They may see a friend in distress and be better equipped to assist.

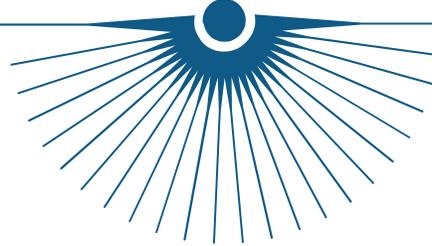
The event is free and open to the public. For more information, go to <http://namicentralmiddlesex.org/> or speak with Jennie at 978-692-2908. Snow date March 23.

When: Monday March 16, 2020 7:00 - 8:30 PM

Where: The Gallery at Villageworks 525 Mass. Ave, Acton

UPCOMING EVENTS

Trauma Informed Peer Support Training



Trauma Informed Peer Support (TIPS) is a training designated to inform group facilitators on how to hold trauma informed support groups. Training participants are required to shadow seasoned facilitators at the completion of training for one full day.

Date: March 18 & 19

Timing: 10:00-3:00 pm

Where: 5 Randolph St., Canton, MA 02021

Large conference room 2nd floor (Donavon Building)

Registration *required* contact:

Jasmine Quinones at (774) 289-2240

or at jasmine.quinones@centralmassrlc.org

NYAPRS Cultural Competency Committee Webinar Series Event



NYAPRS is delighted to announce that our next Cultural Competency Committee webinar, “Cultural Humility and Repressive Systems,” will be held on March 18th between 1:00 to 2:15 pm. This webinar will briefly review the impact of the social determinants on personal and population health; We will especially focus on 2 specific areas in NYS - Veteran Services and the Criminal Justice System. Our presenters, Marguerite Gayle, Jeffrey McQueen, and Victor Pate, will provide a dynamic program that will inform, inspire and review and further discussion and action.

The Link between Cultural Humility and Repression Wednesday.

March 18th 1:00 pm - 2:15 pm

Register today at <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/2337272954227271949>

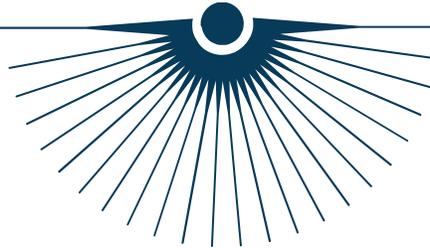
Marguerite Gayle (Transitional Services for NY, Inc.)

Jeffrey McQueen (Mental Health Association of Nassau)

Victor Pate (Campaign for Alternatives Solitary Confinement)

Hosted by Luis O. Lopez ACT Institute/Center for Practice Innovation

Western Mass Peer Network Meeting



WM Peer Network

The Western Mass Peer Network (WMPN) is made up of people working in peer roles throughout the Western Massachusetts region. Although the Western Mass RLC provides technical support and facilitation to the Western Mass Peer Network, the Network itself is made up of and led by people connected to a variety of organizations. WMPN is dedicated to:

- Supporting and offering a sounding board to fellow people working in peer roles throughout Western Mass (and, at times, beyond!)
- Acting as a leading voice and influence in the development and integration of peer roles throughout our region (Click [here](#) for a sampling of past projects)
- Supporting Providers to understand and successfully implement meaningful peer roles via consultation and training

Interested in becoming a part of WMPN?

WMPN is currently holding meetings on a quarterly basis. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, March 20th, 2014 from 11:30am to 2:30pm @ the Western Mass RLC's Holyoke Center, 187 High Street, Suite 303.

Pizza and salad are generally served for lunch.

A typical meeting includes:

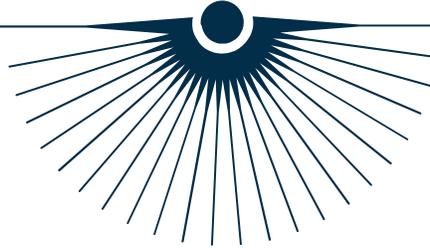
- Announcements and introductions
- Open time for anyone to talk about something they're struggling with in their job (just to be heard or for feedback)
- Whatever else people in the network want to bring to the table!

WMPN also produces a quarterly newsletter. Read the first issue [HERE!](#)
Sign up for the newsletter by e-mailing wmpn@westernmassrlc.org.

The Western Mass Peer Network has also developed and supported several projects related to peer-to-peer roles.

Contact the WMPN by e-mail or phone at wmpn@westernmassrlc.org or (413) 539-5941 ext. 325

Psychiatric Survivor History Workshop



The Psychiatric Survivors Movement (more broadly known as the consumer/survivor/ex-patient/ex-inmate movement) is a social justice movement that has emerged and manifested in many different forms throughout recorded human history. This movement has been foundational in shaping how survivors support each other and rally against systemic injustices today. This monthly workshop will concentrate on historical groups and/or figures who supported or led the shaping of this movement and philosophy. Join us as we discuss the importance of sharing our history and connecting with our roots!

Contact: Vesper Moore

Call (508) 751-9600

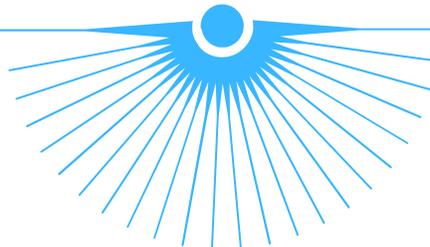
Email: Vesper.Moore@centralmassrlc.org

Location: Kiva Center (209 Shrewsbury St. Worcester, MA 01604)

Date: March 24th

Time: 3:30-6:30pm

In Our Own Voice Training



NAMI Mass will be running 2-day trainings for In Our Own Voice (IOOV) this spring. People with lived experience of a mental health condition, trauma, and/or substance use who are interested in sharing their stories should complete the application form here: <https://namimass.org/nami-in-our-own-voice-presenter-application/>

Please contact Michelle Ward at mward@namimass.org with any questions.

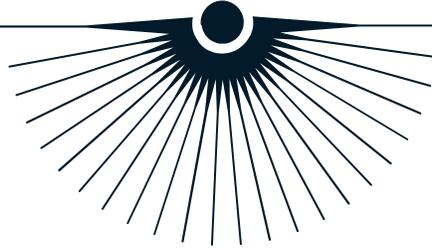
Date: Saturday & Sunday, March 28 & 29

When: 9 AM - 4 PM

Where: South Shore

**UPCOMING
EVENTS**

Webinar on Recovery Supports for Older Adults



SAMHSA's Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale Technical Assistance Center Strategy (BRSS TACS) invites you to join national experts in a conversation about how treatment and recovery services can best meet the unique needs of older adults. With a growing population of older adults in United States, it will be important for mental and substance use disorder providers to adapt services to best meet this group's unique needs. Older adults with mental health issues or substance use disorder face many barriers to care, including misdiagnosis, lack of knowledge, and challenges to accessing services. Through outreach, screening, and client engagement strategies, organizations can adapt the best practices they already use to engage older adults in treatment and recovery support services. Presenters will describe the changing landscape of treatment and recovery services for older adults, highlight best practices emerging across the field, and share how recovery support services, such as peer services, can improve client outreach and engagement. Join us for this free, interactive virtual event moderated by Lonnetta Albright, BRSS TACS Subject Matter Expert.

Presenters:

Cathi Valdez, Director, Certified Older Adult Peer Specialist Endorsement and Certified Peer Support Worker Instructor, New Mexico Office of Peer Recovery and Engagement
Rob Walker, External Consumer Engagement Liaison, Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, Office of Recovery and Empowerment
Cynthia Zubritsky, Director of Policy Research, Center for Mental Health Policy and Services Research, University of Pennsylvania.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/recovery-live-supporting-the-peer-workforce-in-advancing-treatment-and-recovery-supports-for-older-tickets-92093491111>

When: March 26th
Time: 2:00-3:00 pm



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Statewide Peer Networking Awards Banquet

SAVE THE DATE

**Friday, May 8, 11am to 2pm @ the Castle of Knights,
1599 Memorial Drive, Chicopee, MA**

The Western Mass Peer Network, Eastern Mass Peer network, and Central Mass Peer Network have come together with people in peer roles across the state to plan the first Statewide Peer Networking Awards event. The event will include food, networking opportunities, a keynote panel of speakers, and AWARDS!

8 awards will be given in total, and that's where YOU come in. We need nominations!!

Make your nominations by March 13 here: www.surveymonkey.com/r/PNAwardNoms2020

!!! EVENT REGISTRATION DETAILS COMING SOON!!!

INTRODUCING OUR KEYNOTE PANEL:



Daryl McGraw

Daryl is the President and Founder of Formerly Inc, Connecticut's first criminal justice consultant agency, staffed predominately by formerly incarcerated individuals. He also works with C4 Innovations, providing technical assistance around the country. When not traveling, he spends his time as a Reentry consultant with the Institute for Municipal Policy and Research at Central Connecticut State University, toward bettering the Reentry process for other formerly incarcerated individuals. In 2007 Daryl experienced a life changing event, when he was arrested for a probation violation, and sentenced to serve 4 years in prison. This was not his first time in prison although it would be his last. Daryl used every second to create what he now calls his five-year plan for successful reentry. In 2010, he was released from prison with a GED and six composition notebooks containing the blueprint for that plan, which was just the starting point of how he found his way to success.



Chacku Mathai

Chacku is an Indian-American, born in Kuwait, who became involved in consumer/survivor/ex-patient advocacy and peer support when he was 15 years old. Chacku's personal experiences with trauma, suicide, and disabling mental health and substance use challenges, including being diagnosed with psychotic disorders, launched Chacku and his family towards a number of efforts to advocate for improved services, social conditions, and alternative supports in the community. He has since accumulated over thirty years of experience in a variety of roles including youth leadership, community organizing/advocacy, direct service, training, and program leadership in Community Mental Health Centers, residential programs, and peer support, as well as international, national, statewide, and local board governance and executive leadership roles.



Martha Barbone

Martha is a mother of three who spent twelve years in the Air Force before being sidelined by a diagnosis of depression and PTSD. After several years that included multiple hospitalizations, medications and other treatments, she was introduced to peer support. This brought newfound hope and discovery of inner strength, ultimately leading her to serve as the coordinator of the MA Certified Peer Specialist Training for three years. Martha is also a facilitator for WRAP, Alternatives to Suicide, Hearing Voices, and SAMHSA's Recovery to Practice Next Steps. She also facilitates Alternatives to Violence workshops in several state prisons. Martha has worked providing peer support in an inpatient unit, for the Western Mass RLC, and for the Veterans Association. Her passion today is sharing what she's learned with others and working to reduce the trauma associated with inpatient psychiatric treatment.

Community Spotlight

Below is a song titled “Where You Belong” by Kari Kimmel. The lyrics for this song have been altered slightly by Kiva community member, Ally Vause, as she believes they truly represent the importance of the work that we do.

If you're feeling down or weak
you can always count on us.
We will always pick you up.
Nothing's ever gonna hold us back.
Nothing's getting in our way.
We will always hold you.

Come what may,
Don't look back.
Forget yesterday,
Forget yesterday.
It's not where you come from,
it's where you belong.
Nothing we would trade.
We wouldn't have it any other way.
You're surrounded
By support and you're wanted.
So you don't feel on the outside
You are home with us.
Right where you belong.

I know sometimes you're feeling lost.
It's hard to find your place in it all,
But you don't have to fear
Even when you've mess up
You always got are support.
We are right here.

Oh, 'cause

Anything, come what may,
don't look back.
Forget yesterday,
forget yesterday .
It's not where you come from,
it's where you belong.
Nothing we would trade.
We wouldn't have it any other way.
You're surrounded
By support and you're wanted.
So, you don't feel down
You are home with us

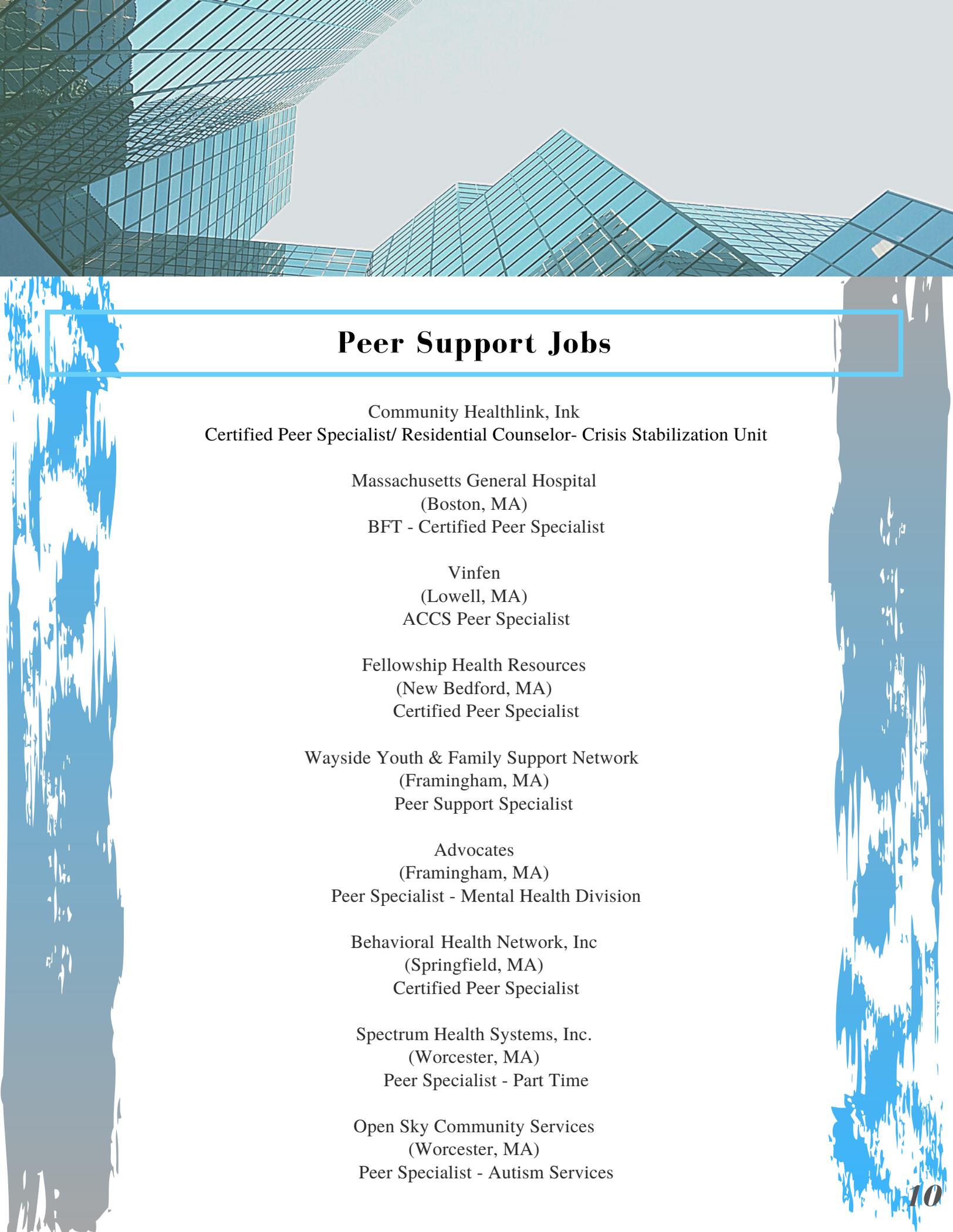
Right where you belong.

Ooh ooh (ooh)
Don't matter where you've been

Ooh ooh (ooh)
You're here for a reason
Ooh ooh (ooh)

No, it's not where you come from.
It's where you belong.
Nothing we would trade.
We wouldn't have it any other way.
You're surrounded by support and you're
wanted.
So, you feel freely cared for.
You are home with us.
Right where you belong.





Peer Support Jobs

Community Healthlink, Ink
Certified Peer Specialist/ Residential Counselor- Crisis Stabilization Unit

Massachusetts General Hospital
(Boston, MA)
BFT - Certified Peer Specialist

Vinfen
(Lowell, MA)
ACCS Peer Specialist

Fellowship Health Resources
(New Bedford, MA)
Certified Peer Specialist

Wayside Youth & Family Support Network
(Framingham, MA)
Peer Support Specialist

Advocates
(Framingham, MA)
Peer Specialist - Mental Health Division

Behavioral Health Network, Inc
(Springfield, MA)
Certified Peer Specialist

Spectrum Health Systems, Inc.
(Worcester, MA)
Peer Specialist - Part Time

Open Sky Community Services
(Worcester, MA)
Peer Specialist - Autism Services

A Manipulative Narrative

The piece leads off by describing a recent tragedy that began outside Brigham and Women's Hospital in which police shot and killed a man they believed had a gun. Without proof, the author blames events on the fact that the man was labeled “mentally ill” and was probably “off his meds,” reinforcing the popular myth that we are prone to violence.

Second, the article targets legislation that, if repealed, will make it easier to drug, detain, and incarcerate us. Biswas writes: “In ...potentially dangerous moments, psychiatric treatment providers step in to procure medications through filing a request with the courts. However, this process is anything but easy in Massachusetts.” She goes on to criticize the Rogers Guardianship law, designed to protect the legal right of psychiatric “patients” to refuse psychiatric drugs, as putting too many obstacles in the way of forcing someone to take and stay on these drugs. She then warns of scary consequences of delay, including “persistent brain dysfunction and cognitive decline” and even “risk of suicide or violence.”

Third, the op-ed compares what psychiatrists call “untreated psychotic illness” (terms used throughout) to untreated heart or liver disease. This analogy is inaccurate, and the suggestion that all have potentially fatal outcomes is blatantly false. As a colleague of mine put it, “How sweet that they'd compare ‘untreated mental [illness]’ to ‘untreated heart disease’ while failing to mention that ‘treated mental [illness]’ has seen zero improvements in outcomes and a widening morbidity gap over decades while ‘treated heart disease’ (along with cancer, etc.) has seen plenty of improvement in outcomes.”

Yet another manipulative narrative in Biswas' piece is her use of a disorder called “anosognosia” in connection with mental health problems. Her central argument is that “a patient's refusal of medication may reflect their underlying disease state. Paradoxically and poignantly, it is a symptom of psychotic illness to believe you do not have an illness.” The medical definition of anosognosia, a word of Greek origin that roughly translates to “without knowledge of disease,” is “an inability or refusal to recognize a defect or disorder that is clinically evident.” In the mental health realm, you may also hear it called “lack of insight.”

While anosognosia is a legitimate medical diagnosis as applied to people with Alzheimer's Disease or who have had strokes, it can't simply be taken from that realm and shoehorned into the world of psychiatry simply because medical professionals wish for a neat way to negate a patient's disagreements with their doctor. Within this context, the term “anosognosia” is not only insulting but also can be used as a tool to force people to comply with “treatment” even when they have evidence that such interventions have not or will not be useful to them. That seems to be Biswas' point: Without a belief in anosognosia, the mental health system will not be able to control the people they wish to control.

Reinforcing Scientific Myths

Let's get back to the idea that the media is being used to spread misinformation and serve corporate needs. In order to remain relevant and for the pharmaceutical industries to continue profiting off the sale of psychiatric drugs, psychiatry needs a tool for fear-mongering, and op-eds like Biswas' serve that role. Although psychiatry thrives largely on the minimal tangible science and broader behavioral classifications it has been able to produce, neurological studies still have not been able to legitimize classifying human thoughts, feelings, and experiences as an inherent “mental illness” or “brain disease.”

Don't believe it? Consider this quote from a peer reviewed journal article, housed in the National Institute of Mental Health's U.S. National Library of Medicine:

To date, there are no biomarkers of any kind available to any of the psychiatric disorders, and perhaps establishing those will be one of the most difficult tasks that medical scientists will ever face. This is due to several reasons: (1) the multifactorial characteristic of psychiatric disorders, (2) these are multigenic disorders in which each gene has a small effect; (3) the environment exerts a heavy influence in the establishment of the disease. **These reasons lead us to conclude that “the biomarker” for a psychiatric condition will never exist** [emphasis added].

But this “illness” narrative has allowed the mental health system to become a conduit for social conformity. The problem is that once we are labeled with a mental health diagnosis, that becomes the only narrative the public believes about us.

Since there are no pre-existing biomarkers that indicate any form of psychiatric “illness” or “disease,” we must recognize that labeling people as such is a reflection of systemic social factors, including class and a culture of ableism and unsustainable expectations. In light of these societal conditions, we should be granted the autonomy and the right to identify with our experiences however we see fit, and not merely to comply with these labels.

Psychiatry has not only created an illness-based narrative it “markets” through the news media, but also has granted its practitioners an almost king-like power. As Bonnie Burstow wrote in her book Psychiatry and the Business of Madness, psychiatrists are the only people in the state who can have anyone locked up without their having committed a crime and can do so with impunity. Psychiatrists are more focused on billing and reimbursement using a list of socially observed “symptoms” than being helpful, and historically, psychiatry has been used as a way to make the oppression of marginalized people publicly acceptable.

A Pattern of Bias

The recent *Boston Globe* piece isn’t the first to reinforce this form of prejudice. A series of pro-forced-treatment articles released in 2016, titled “Spotlight on Mental Health: The Desperate and the Dead” was so bigoted against those labeled mentally ill—again playing the “violent” card— it drew a large number of critical responses and even public demonstrations.

The *Boston Globe* has been building an abhorrent reputation these past few years. In this op-ed, they targeted people labeled with schizoaffective disorder. In doing so, the *Boston Globe* didn’t just depict us as violent; they painted us as incapable of knowing what is best for ourselves. They also made a conscious decision to publish an article by Biswas, who not only serves as the director of the Psychiatry, Law and Society Program at Brigham and Women’s Hospital but also, more importantly, is a forensic psychiatrist at Bridgewater State Hospital. They made a conscious decision to include her charge that “untreated” people with psychiatric diagnoses would suffer “persistent brain dysfunction and cognitive decline.” And they published this piece knowingly leaving out the fact that plenty of studies show that psychiatric drugs are killing people faster and faster. That psychotropic medications are often the cause of the brain dysfunction and cognitive decline Biswas mentioned. But it doesn’t stop there: These drugs also cause liver damage, kidney failure, heart disease, seizures, and much more serious ailments. Psychiatry manufactures the “illness,” sells the “treatment,” and offer barely any information on how to get off these drugs.

And yet here is the largest newspaper in the state joining several other entities influencing the public on psychiatry’s behalf, conveniently ignoring the fact that Biswas represents one of the most oppressive institutions in the state. Bridgewater State Hospital is, after all, notorious for its abuses and unattended deaths, going back as far as the 1980s.

With this essay, the *Boston Globe* continues to promote the psychiatric narratives we are all expected to believe without question. Psychiatry has power and influence over every system and institution with which we interact –education, criminal justice, employment, housing, healthcare, and more. Let’s stay critical of what the mental health system and the media want us to believe.

Special thanks to Sera Davidow, Shayn Mcdonald, and Khalil Power for editing assistance.



Thank you for reading!

If you are interested in submitting to the newsletter
please email Khalil at:
Khalil.Power@centralmassrlc.org