

May, 2022

# VOICES



## Upcoming Events

### 2022 Potter Park Zoo Event

Save the Date!  
September 10, 2022



### 2022 Walk a Mile Event

Walk a Mile in My Shoes Rally: Live, In-Person  
Save the Date!  
September 15, 2022



### Unite to Face Addiction Michigan Rally

Rally event date is Thursday, May 19th from 10AM to 4PM.  
Goal is to eliminate addiction stigma, improve access to treatment and support prevention while promoting recovery through advocacy, education, and outreach.  
Register here: [www.ufamichigan.org](http://www.ufamichigan.org)

## Need Help?



Do you have any questions or need help accessing any part of this newsletter? Contact Customer Service at 517-346-8244 or [customerservice@ceicmh.org](mailto:customerservice@ceicmh.org)

## Writing Submissions



We are still taking submissions for our Writer Spotlight! Do you have a story that you think could be shared in a future issue of this newsletter?

Make submissions to Customer Service at 517-346-8244 or [customerservice@ceicmh.org](mailto:customerservice@ceicmh.org)

For news and information from CMHA-CEI, visit our website at [www.ceicmh.org](http://www.ceicmh.org) and Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/CEICMH](http://www.facebook.com/CEICMH).

# Vocational Services Shares Success Stories: Meet Wendy.

Vocational Counselor Alexis North walked into McDonald's and was greeted with Wendy's warm smile and she said "It's good to see you! I'm ready [for the interview]" Wendy and Alexis worked together when Wendy was in the Work Services Program through the Vocational Services Department at Community Mental Health Authority of Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham Counties. Wendy and Alexis worked on resume building, interview preparation and practice, going through an interview and normal hiring process, and job coaching. "Well you know I'm going to be at McDonald's 9 months now," Wendy exclaimed. Wendy had worked with the Vocational Services Department at Community Mental Health Authority of Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham Counties to assist in obtaining and retaining community based, competitive, and integrated employment. Wendy stated she had a "wonderful" time with the Vocational Services Department and "it was a very structured program and you were very easy to get a hold of. I appreciated all your help. I think the way you guys are doing things now and changed the program are great and I liked the one on one help from you. You guys are really stepping your game up." Wendy laughed and said "I wouldn't change a thing I think you all are doing great things. I wanted to share my story so others can see what they can do." Wendy works part time at McDonald's running the cash registers/front counter, both drive through windows, stocking supplies, cleaning and sanitizing equipment, making desserts and smoothies, and "one of my favorite things, making the yummy coffee drinks." Wendy stated "my favorite thing about having a job is I get to earn money and pay my bills and I make friends. I've gone to the movies twice with my co-workers.



My last job, I was just there for work; but here I have friends." Wendy stated some of her past jobs she did not feel accepted or understood, and here at McDonald's "I'm not treated like the worker with a disability. I am treated like any other worker and I feel supported and very accepted here. People need to understand that God made us and we are born this way and we shouldn't be paid or treated differently. We need to be accepted and paid a normal wage. We are people too."

Employers can reach out to the Vocational Services Program by contacting Scott Belanger at [belanger@ceicmh.org](mailto:belanger@ceicmh.org) or Alexis North at [northal@ceicmh.org](mailto:northal@ceicmh.org). Those interested in joining workforce training under Vocational Services may contact our Access Center at 517-346-8318 or email at [access@ceicmh.org](mailto:access@ceicmh.org).

# First Place for the Disability Rights Coalition Essay Contest

## Tina Bertram

Tina, won first place in the Disability Rights Michigan (DRM) Annual Essay Contest in honor of an outstanding disability rights advocate, Ernie Reynolds, who passed away in 2012. The essay was asking for motivating stories about people with disabilities who have successfully overcome barriers and achieved success while advocating for themselves or others.

My name is Tina Bertram and I am a confident, working and active participant of my community. It was not always this way. Becoming disabled at the age of nineteen was not what I had planned for my life.

My life was turned to treatment and doctors and hospital after hospital in the early years. I began to doubt if my life could be normal in any way. Being told you would never work or go to school was devastating. I began to sabotage any goal I created and stopped taking care of myself. It was not until my late twenties that I heard about a group in the community that taught self-advocacy to people with disabilities that I learned that I was important and there were resources out there that I could reach out to help me with what I wanted in life. I was active with this group for two years and moved in to leadership roles. The group disbanded but now I had some skills to move into advocacy groups at Community Mental Health.

I was accepted into the recipient rights commission and two other consumer advocacy groups there. I quickly took on leadership roles and my confidence grew. I worked these jobs seriously for five years with the support of staff. I learned how to communicate in discussion groups and how important it was to advocate for the consumers I represented, to learn the issues that affected consumers and address them with the staff at CMH.

Ultimately I also moved to training in social injustice issues and joined groups in the community that advocated for people with disabilities. I had finally found my calling.

At 52 now I continued to advocate for people with disabilities. Recently I got a job in the community working in a café about twenty hours a week. It was a new experience and my caseworker set me up with a job coach through MRS.

Now that I have someone to bounce issues off I may have on the job, I look forward to a steady community job that at one point thought I would never be able to do.

Advocacy taught me that everyone matters. Being involved gave me the skills and confidence to become a part of my community and a regular job that I am very proud of. I think back to those early years and realize there is hope for everyone with a disability to have the life they want.



# “Finding Voice In the Storm”

By Daniel Arnold



Mental Health Consumers live with extreme giftings and deficiencies. There can be abrupt shifts from genius to outright liability. Is there a safe place to foster professionalism?

Since 2006, the determination was made that I am eligible for disability income. In 2013, I attempted employment for 5 months and overstressed to the point of stopping. In 2015, I applied for the CMHA-CEI Recipient Rights Consumer Advisory Council position. An Advisory Council presented itself as just the right option.

What kept me there for the whole six year term? We had quarterly meetings four times a year and I was compensated. We had the opportunity to attend a conference. In & Out of psych wards I went, yet somehow I managed to make meetings!

CMHA-CEI Recipient Rights and Midstate Health Network Consumer Advisory Councils became my resume and identity. I was intrigued by Recipient Rights initially after I attempted a complaint in a hospital.

Now I was building. I'd like to say I was stable and headed for immediate achievement, but medicine non-compliance caused me to keep spiraling out of control. Beginning to understand rights and advocacy, I pushed ahead. I began speaking at City of Lansing, Michigan - Government Council, Lansing Police Department Board of Commissioners, CMHA-CEI Board of Directors Meetings.

I started inviting my friend Dianne Shorter to speak up. I invited the Mayor at the time, Virg Bernero, & other professionals to Justice in Mental Health Organization Drop-In to interact with consumers in advocacy meetings.

Life was beautiful, but also fractured. Writ-

ing books, switching churches repeatedly and losing friends, continued as I periodically refused medication. These councils were the currency I had to hold onto. Today I have close ties to my family. I have served six year terms in two advisory councils. I have been out of the psych ward for 3 years. I have an alternate life that does not involve employment; I am at peace with this.

I continue to speak at government meetings, visit 8 government properties a day 5 days a week building relations with local, state, federal security/police. I have now written 18 books. Taking what I believe to be the lowest therapeutic dosage of medication is working for me as I've reached a compromise for three years. I am serving Midstate Health Network until they find a replacement for me-- even though my term has ended.

I love my church. I am thankful for mental health services. My family is a great support system. My God extends me grace for so many years.

# “Finding Voice In the Storm” By Daniel Arnold

## Continued...



I see consumer advisory councils as crucial opportunities to give mental health consumers dignity even when they are not well. Accommodations are key; CMHA-CEI Staff are flexible to meet diverse needs when helping consumers advisory council members thrive.

I have now spoken at conferences, government meetings, and applied the advocacy skills I have learned in real life grievances. I have stepped outside myself to learn about positive, negative, and neutral professional communications. I have completed Lansing Citizens Academy, Lansing Police Department Citizens Academy and recently received a college scholarship to begin Criminal Justice Studies.

Consumer Advisory Council positions have been a catalyst for me to become a better person and community member. Thank you for the opportunities.

## May is Mental Health Awareness Month

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, thank you to the all the CMHA-Consumer Advisory Council members for all their valuable contributions and advocacy efforts around Mental Health and the services provided by CMHA-CEI.



# Consumer Poems and Artwork

Hey there, it's me,  
The Little boy blue on the moon  
With me, my kitten and the piper make three  
We're eating tuna with a spoon  
While the piper plays his tunes  
Dare I say the ambiance is nice  
While my cat is chasing space mice

Just remember my name Little boy blue  
On a clear night day while gazing at the moon  
This is Little boy blue signing off  
Hope to hear from you again soon  
My kitten says mew.  
By: Kami

**Artwork by:  
Monique and RAP**



# Join a Consumer Committee!

CMHA-CEI is looking for new members to serve on the:

- CMHA-CEI Consumer Advisory Council (meets monthly)

And

- Mid-State Health Network (MSHN) Regional Consumer Advisory Council (meets every other month)
- Advocate for all consumers living with mental illness or substance use
- Meet new people
- Share your voice
- Compensated for time
- Learn more about the services and programs that CMHA-CEI offers.

Contact Customer Service for more information or to request an application at 517-346-8244 or via email at [customerservice@ceicmh.org](mailto:customerservice@ceicmh.org)

The graphic features the text "Join a Consumer Committee!" in large, bold, yellow and green letters. To the right is the logo for Community Mental Health, which includes a circular emblem with three overlapping shapes in blue, green, and yellow. Below the emblem, the text reads "Community MENTAL HEALTH CLINTON • EATON • INGHAM Together we can." Below the main text is a photograph of a group of people standing in front of a banner that says "STAND UP 2 STIGMA". To the right of the photo is a yellow box with a list of benefits: "• Advocate for all consumers", "• Meet new people", "• Share your voice", "• Compensated for time", and "• Learn about the agency".

## Consumer Advisory Council

**PURPOSE:** To inform policy and practice decisions throughout CMHA-CEI, and assist in the planning and implementation of a behavioral healthcare system that is person and family centered.

**DETAILS:** Meetings occur monthly on the 1st Thursday of the month from 3:30pm to 5:00pm at 812 E. Jolly Rd., in the Atrium and/or virtually. Two (2) year term (October 1st to September 30th).

## Recipient Rights Advisory Committee

**PURPOSE:** To protect the office of recipient rights from pressures that could interfere with the impartial, even-handed, and thorough performance of its function.

**DETAILS:** Meetings occur on the 1st Thursday in March, June, September, December at 5:30pm. Terms are for six (6) years (June 1st to March 30th).

## Mid-State Health Network (MSHN) Regional Consumer Advisory Council

**PURPOSE:** To inform policy and practice decisions throughout the MSHN Region, and assist in the planning and implementation of a behavioral healthcare system that is person and family centered.

**DETAILS:** Meetings occur every other month on the 2nd Friday of the month from 12:30pm to 3:00pm in Alma County or virtually. (Transportation is provided from Jolly Road to the meeting and back). Two (2) year term (October 1st to September 30th).

Contact Customer Service for more information or to request an application at 517-346-8244 or [customerservice@ceicmh.org](mailto:customerservice@ceicmh.org)

Work with CMHA-CEI to make a difference!

Visit

<http://www.ceicmh.org/employment>

to view the latest job postings.

A portrait of Jessica, a woman with dark hair, smiling. To her right is a quote in white text on a dark blue background: "They definitely give you the time and the space to improve and grow in your career. They support your education to get there as well." Below the quote is her name and title: "Jessica, Coordinator".

For news and information from CMHA-CEI, visit our website at [www.ceicmh.org](http://www.ceicmh.org) and Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/CEICMH](http://www.facebook.com/CEICMH).