

BERGEN COUNTY PROUD TO BE STIGMA-FREE

THE STIGMA FREE ZONE NEWS OF NJ Bringing the Mental Health Conversation to New Jersey

SHARON MCKENNA OF AAH-ONLINE MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY-
NJ MENTAL HEALTH COALITION FORMS- GOTTHEIMER ON THE
ACA-
YCS ART EXHIBIT-QUICKLINKS-SENIOR COALITION BRAIN FAIR

SHARON MCKENNA, ALWAYS A JUNE BRIDE

I don't think Sharon McKenna takes much for granted. Born at St. Mary's Hospital, and raised in Montvale, this Bergen County native has roller-coasted a lot of gain and loss; her mental health, her finances, sobriety, and especially the most important part of her story, love of her life and husband, Bill.

I saw Sharon at a friend-raiser for AAH of Bergen County, an agency that permanently houses the homeless. Sharon is both a recipient of the agency's services (she lives in one of their group homes) and now, a Board Member. I heard her speak so eloquently about how the agency had turned her life around by housing her, and teaching her to manage her money after a bankruptcy (from \$70,000 of medical bills) and finally gave her the opportunity to help



lead, I wanted to hear more.

We met at Hackensack's Chit Chat Diner mid afternoon. It was a frustration getting there, I don't know how I missed the loud building façade but I had to turn around twice to navigate parking. Crossing the busy road took 20 minutes as cars whizzed by, too fast, with nary a friendly wave to help me back.

As we sat, Sharon remarked she was a regular Chit Chatter, and I took in her soft, friendly eyes, her short spiky hair and her self-described "impish grin". "I was here the night before my husband, Bill died", she told me matter-of-factly. "He died, right up the road after a car T-boned us while I was driving us home from here", she said, pointing up the hill from whence I had just come. I nodded, stunned, in complete comprehension.

The interview began.

'The first year after the accident I was so angry', she began. "At everything, every one...especially God". "I lost weight, I withdrew, I knew if I didn't take care of myself, Bill was gonna kill me'. She led me straight to her rock bottom; mentally ill, hospitalized, angry, 18 months after her mid-life marriage to Bill had ended.

"My husband died in my arms" she said. I could see the sadness was still with her, but this was what she wanted to share. Figuring the SFZ News readers would understand, I asked her to continue.

The couple met at mental health provider, Vantage, in Englewood, NJ.

Bill was a strapping 6'4", a Jewish Air Force vet and ham radio aficionado, quiet, humble, and sometimes, ill. They both helped in the Vantage kitchen before "group". Friends first, their love blossomed



over years and they “proposed to each other” at the Spanish bakery a few blocks from Vantage one afternoon. Sharon waxed on for a spell, about this love, a friendly, supportive funny love, shared. A life together at home, at Vantage, how they created comedy skits and performed together at COMHCO (a NJ mental health consumer coalition), and how life just purred happily along.

“I called him Sylvester”, she reminisced, “and of course, I was Tweety”. “Every morning Bill woke me up with a meow”, she informed me in a very good rendition of the little yellow fellow. “I had him wapped around my finger”. Her smile was soft and sad.

Sharon talked about the community shared at Vantage. “We had our wedding there.” They filled the day room with 150 guests, a beautiful cake, and their case managers stood up for them during the civil ceremony. Sharon remembered her beautiful blue dress, and how the ceremony was filled with yellow flowers. “They call them Rose of Sharon”, she said. Bill wore one as a boutonniere.

Sharon feels Bill wants her to stay well, and to be happy. But he haunts her just a bit. His mezuzah still hangs on their door jam and she touches it going in and going out. When she can, she rides her bike down to visit his grave and tend to it. She leaves a little rock on the headstone to mark every visit.

She used her life savings to purchase his headstone.

Coming out of her reverie, we discussed her life now. She has volunteered at Friendship House, at NAMI, is still solidly in recovery, and can't believe she now leads an agency that services her. She cites



AA and Bergen non-profit leaders such as Tom Toronto and Michele Hart-Loughlin for maintaining her health and recovery. But most of all, she credits God; “Who found me, big-time”, she insists, “We all work together.”

We finished our apple pie, hugged a strong hug and parted ways. I passed her complex on the hill on the way home, and thought to slow down just a bit. When I went home, I visited her Facebook page and saw the wedding photos she cherishes.

Rose of Sharon, you are as strong as you are beautiful. Happy Anniversary.

[READ MORE ABOUT AAH](#)



Save the Date!

60th

Anniversary Gala

THURSDAY

November 2, 2017

Season's
Washington Township, NJ
6-10pm



VANTAGE
HEALTH SYSTEM
vantagenj.org

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Stigma Free Zone News of NJ,

Let's stop blaming people who struggle with mental illness for their own symptoms by assuming they didn't take their medication. Yes, medication can absolutely help people with mental illness. Anyone who has a health problem is dependent on getting the right medication. Please empathize with someone who is not doing well and not assume it is their fault...

Have a message of hope that you can get better with the right medication, therapy and support groups.

**Sarah Adelson
Stigma Free Zone, Mahwah NJ**

Greetings,

Writing to report on the wonderful "Stigma-Free Zone" launch event in North Plainfield on 4/6 and our sister city Plainfield on 4/8. Both events were attended by 30 plus each. In North Plainfield the NP SFZ Ambassadors hosted a 2 hour event with representatives from the library system, borough council, two mental health service provider agencies. School district representation was promised but did not materialize due to scheduling

conflicts. Additionally we had one person with a lived experience tell her story and a Text Crisis Hotline staff member share his perspective.

It was a most successful evening as evidenced by a 30 min Q & A.

We had to shut it down and they still were asking questions.

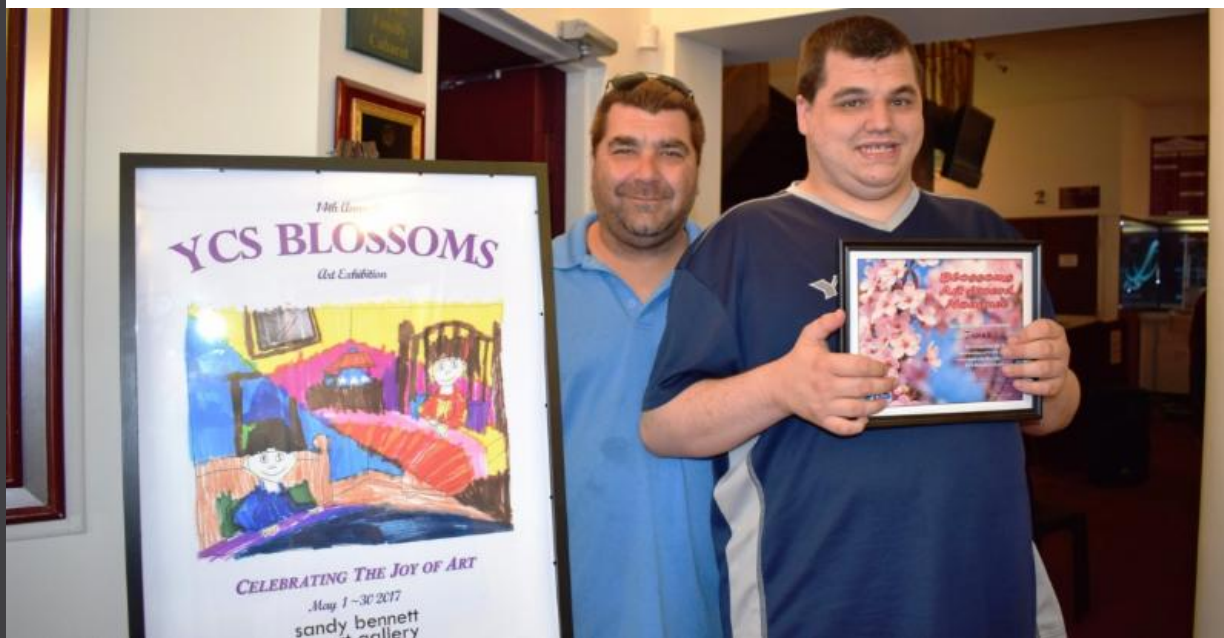
- Printed resources
- Green Mental Health StigmaFree bracelets
- Power Point presentation
- Anti-Stigma Videos

“It is not lost on me that we are, at last, having a conversation about this social construct called race. Yet, we remain ineffective in our efforts to talk about the biological realities of mental illness. Perhaps this is the true last frontier”.

Mark T. Williams

Stigma Free Zone, North Plainfield

YCS YOUTH CONSULTATION SERVICES ART EXHIBIT SEES STUDENTS BLOOM



James Hagy, a student at the YCS Sawtelle Learning Center, and his father, Scott Hagy, proudly display the award James received for his colorful painting at the 15th Annual YCS Blossoms Art Exhibit. Youth from several YCS special education schools and therapeutic residences exhibited more than 50 pieces of art in the Sandy Bennett Art Gallery at the Bergen PAC in Englewood during May. The exhibition concluded with musical performances by the students and an awards ceremony for more than 100 family members and guests.

“Being able to showcase our students’ artistic talents and celebrate their musical abilities in such a prestigious institution is beyond words,” said Richard Mingoia, YCS President and CEO, adding, “Our children are often excluded from mainstream events because of their special needs, but everyone at the PAC welcomes them warmly and acknowledges their

unique gifts.”

Youth Consultation Service (YCS) is a statewide behavioral health and social services agency that serves approximately 7,000 children and families each year in its special education schools, therapeutic group residences, home care programs, and community-based prevention programs across the Garden State.

In 2018, YCS will celebrate its 100th anniversary. It also marks the 26th anniversary of the establishment of YCS Sawtelle Services: programs for children affected by autism and co-occurring behavioral health challenges.

For more information, please visit YCS.Org



Meet The Professional Presents

[Dr. Steven Silverstein](#)

**Professor of Psychiatry at Rutgers
Robert Wood Johnson Medical School**

**Director, Div. of
Schizophrenia Research at Rutgers
University Behavioral Health Care**

**Co-Director of the Rutgers-Princeton Center
for Computational Cognitive Neuropsychiatry**

What Do Changes in Visual Perception Tell Us About Schizophrenia?

**Approximately 2/3 of people with schizophrenia
report changes in visual perception
(brightness, color, depth, shape of objects)
especially early in the course of illness.**

**How are we to understand all of these changes?
How are they related to symptoms?
Is assessing for visual changes useful clinically?**

7 pm, Tuesday June 20, 2017

**[Bergen Regional Medical Center Auditorium](#)
[230 E. Ridgewood Ave. Paramus, NJ](#)**

**(Main Entrance, proceed right, auditorium at the end of the
corridor) This event is FREE and Open to the Public**

[SFZ Ambassador in Chicago for Health Advocacy](#)



Your SFZ News Editor, Cynthia Chazen, of the Demarest and Paramus SFZs was recently awarded an all expenses paid trip to the 2017 Health EVoices Online Health Advocates Conference, sponsored by Janssen Pharmaceuticals, of Johnson & Johnson of NJ in recognition of her work on Twitter under the moniker "The Mental Health Editor" @cynchazen.

Over 100 health advocates representing all health conditions convened in Chicago from as far away as Brazil and Taiwan to discuss how to effectively advocate online for better healthcare. Pictured above are some of the 15 advocate attendees representing mental health. Facebook and YouTube were among the presenters.

Through these introductions our newsletter readership has now expanded globally !

[Read More About Health EVoices 2017 from Founder of PsychCentral](#)

Quicklinks to News

[NJ SPOTLIGHT: Rutgers Discovers New Use for Lithium](#)

[PASSAIC COUNTY: End The Stigma !](#)

[NJ SPOTLIGHT: NJ Gains Post-Partum Treatment Center](#)



New Jersey Community Mental Health Coalition

**NJ Community
Mental Health Coalition**

Dear Trusted Allies & Advocates,

In response to the potential funding cuts for mental health services in the proposed FY2018 NJ State Budget, CarePlus along with eight other non-profit community mental health organizations have joined together to form the NJ

Community Mental Health Coalition (NJCMHC).

Our goal is to educate and inform policymakers, patients and the public about the realities of a potential mental health crisis in the state if these proposed draconian funding cuts are passed, which would result in tens of thousands of New Jerseyans losing access to proper mental health services and care.

Together we are advocating for continued, comprehensive treatment and care for mentally ill adults and children throughout New Jersey. Our mission is to give a voice to each person suffering from mental illness and ensure that they have continued, uninterrupted access to the proper treatment and long-term, ongoing care that they desperately need.

We are writing to you today to urge you to engage with us on social media and show your support by "following", "liking", and/or "sharing" the NJCMHC's pages and posts to help spread our message and stay up-to-date on the latest news on this important issue.

New Jersey Community Mental Health Coalition

[Connect Here on Facebook](#)



**BERGEN SENIOR COALITION JUNE 15 BRAIN HEALTH FAIR
SPONSORED BY HACKENSACK MERIDIAN**

PLEASE JOIN US! BRAIN HEALTH FAIR

PREVENTION, WELLNESS & TREATMENT
Thursday, June 15, 2017 from 4-8 p.m.

HackensackUMC Fitness & Wellness
Community Education Room
87 Route 17 North, Maywood, NJ 07607

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC !

4:30 p.m. Hot Topics in Brain Health
5:30 p.m. Communication and Dementia

PLUS:

Workshop: Medicaid Application Process
Nutrition: Cooking Demonstrations, Food and Nutrition Resources
Healthy Aging and Caregiver Resources
Exercise, Home Safety and Fall Prevention
Financial Resources and Home Care Options
Transportation and Safe Driving

For more information, please contact the Health Awareness Regional Program
at HARP@hackensackmeridian.org or 551-996-2038

A Note to a Congregation

by Jay Yudoff, NAMI NJ

A congregational leader recently reached out asking how to be more stigma free.

A letter...was prepared by a local anti-stigma advocate in response:

Thank you for your inquiry.

As a first step, we would recommend making sure there is nothing in your congregation's literature, postings, etc., which could be stigmatizing. One of us visited a congregation a few years back where there was a rack full of various brochures on dealing with aging relatives, financial stress, end-of-life decisions, and the brochure on families dealing with mental health issues was entitled "When Madness Comes Home."

You might work with the congregation, clergy, and other arms of the organization to schedule a program. Some clergy members are very comfortable talking about the visibility of mental health issues in our faith tradition. If you have a program for visiting the sick, you might want to see that it calls on people in psychiatric hospitals and psychiatric units of local hospitals.

There are many things your congregation could do. Host a community awareness event, like the [NAMI In Our Own Voice](#) program. Dedicate a bulletin board to mental health awareness, with a focus on "we will not let people with mental health issues feel alone." Do an awareness and fundraiser in support of a special ed school with a mental health population. Form a mental health committee; it is likely that there are psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers in the congregation, and ensure that people who disclose mental health issues are included. Reach out to an

agency with some residential care, and see that residents who wish can be invited into a home to celebrate the holidays and holy days. Partner with a local social service agency or the town stigma-free zone initiative to have a general awareness fair, or a program on a specific issue in our community, like drinking, gambling, or opiate addiction. Schedule a training of [Mental Health First Aid](#), or a training and distribution of Narcan kits.

Good luck in your holy efforts to reduce mental health stigma and discrimination.

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515



JOSH GOTTHEIMER, 5TH DISTRICT NJ
213 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-4465

May 2017

Thank you for contacting me to express your concerns with H.R.1628, the American Health Care Act (AHCA).

Since House leadership first tried and failed to bring the AHCA to the House floor, this legislation went from bad to worse. Tens of thousands of Fifth District residents would still lose coverage. The "Senior Tax" would remain in place, charging older Americans more than five times for health care. The bill's cuts to Medicaid would not only hurt long-term care for seniors and people with disabilities, but bring deep cuts to our state's budget and potentially create a new \$4,000 tax on New Jersey families. Fifth District hospitals would lose resources needed to provide quality care to families, support good-paying jobs, and invest in research.

Under the latest version, which came to the House floor without a score from the non-partisan, independent Congressional Budget Office, states could opt-out of critical consumer protections that prevent charges for pre-existing conditions or an unlimited "Senior Tax." It could also eliminate essential health benefits like prescription drug coverage and mental health treatment, which could mean reinstated lifetime and annual limits for more than 600,000 Fifth District residents with coverage through large employer plans. There's plenty of room for improvement in our healthcare system, and I'm ready to fix the Affordable Care Act (ACA). But the AHCA remained a bad deal for New Jersey, which is why I voted against H.R.1628 on May 4, 2017.

As this repeal bill moves to the Senate, I remain committed to working with anyone—Democrat or Republican—to improve the ACA with fixes, such as repealing the Medical Device and Cadillac Taxes, and keeping the parts that work. I will continue fighting to expand access to care, increase affordability, and improve quality of care for seniors and families in New Jersey.

Thank you again for contacting my office. Please keep in touch with any additional questions or comments by emailing me [here](#). If you would like to receive regular updates from me, please visit <https://gottheimer.house.gov/forms/emailsignup/to>

sign up for my e-newsletter.
Sincerely,

Josh Gottheimer
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

A Recovery Forum for Community Leaders

Held by New Jersey Recovery Advocates (NJRA)

When:

Monday, June 19th at 7 p.m.

Where:

Hackensack University Hospital
at Pascack Valley
250 Old Hook Road
Westwood, NJ 07675

Why:

To provide a common meeting
ground for everyone whose lives
have been touched by addiction.

Please RSVP, as seating is
limited:

lisagladwell@newjerseyrecoveryadvocates.org

NJRA is a 501-3c non-profit organization dedicated to providing a common ground for sufferers of addiction disorder, families, and treatment professionals alike.

Our signature event is the statewide New Jersey Recover Rally, held this year on Saturday, Sept. 16th at Liberty State Park's "Freedom Field".

Come help us make our event the biggest, best yet!

For more about NJRA:

Web: <http://www.newjerseyrecoveryadvocates.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NewJerseyRecoveryAdvocates/>

FAMILY EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

Workshops are for families with an adult relative with a mental illness.

**Family Education meets from 7 pm to 9 pm at:
BERGEN REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER: Behavioral Health Building, Room
E218
230 East Ridgewood Avenue, Paramus, NJ 07652**

To register contact Intensive Family Support Services: (201) 646-0333

WEEK 1: June 6, 2017

PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATIONS

Learn about medications that treat mental illness from a medical professional

WEEK 2: June 13, 2017

CO-OCCURRING DISORDERS: MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

**Presented by Regina McKenna, LCSW, LCADC, Substance Abuse Clinician
Discussion of Widely Abused Substances and Treatment for Mental Illness and Substance Abuse**

WEEK 3: June 20, 2017

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

**Presented by Raymond Falcon, Attorney at Law
Discussion about Psychiatric Advance Directives, Trusts, Power of Attorney, Medical Proxy, and Guardianship**

WEEK 4: June 27, 2017

COORDINATED SPECIALTY CARE

Learn about this new, early psychosis intervention program that helps young adults within their first two years of exhibiting symptoms

NO WORKSHOP JULY 4, 2017

WEEK 5: JULY 11, 2017

PENDING CRISIS?

**Presented by Dawn Cerruto, LCSW of the Wellness and Support Center
Learn where your loved one can go to in order to avoid a crisis situation.
Various programs & resources discussed to familiarize you with the mental health system.**

WEEK 6: July 18, 2017

DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY (DBT) FOR FAMILIES

**Presented by Jacqueline Kim Szabo, LCSW
Enhance your understanding of personality disorders and learn DBT skills you can use in your daily life.**

WEEK 7: July 25, 2017

JOURNEY OF WELLNESS AND RECOVERY*

**Presented by Valerie Fox
Valerie Fox is a person in recovery, a published author, and mental health advocate. She will share her story of living with a severe mental illness and address how families and the mental health system can help those in need.**

***Consumers welcome**



The Paterson Stigma-Free Task Force recognized Rebekah Leon, Mental Health America of Passaic County Associate Executive Director, for the Growing in Grace “ Advocate of the Year Award” on May 18th 2017 in Haledon.

Congratulations Rebekah!!!

Making us proud !!!!

Let’s Celebrate

!!!

Joanne Green, MHA Passaic

[Visit SFZ News on FaceBook](#)

ALL OF OUR LINKS ARE LIVE !

STAY CONNECTED

