

# Out Loud

## 2013 Annual Agency Update

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### College Plus Alumni

Sharon, a College Plus student from 2008, stopped by the Voice and Vision office on 7/31/13 to say "hi" and "thank you". Her written testimony says it all:

"Hi, my name is Sharon and College Plus was instrumental in me returning to college and obtaining my license as a practical nurse (LPN). When I joined Voice and Vision I had no idea that the college course they offered me would inspire me to continue on for my Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree (BSN). Never underestimate the influence of loving and caring people. The people that work at College Plus are phenomenal, if you give the program a chance - there's no telling how far you can go, I'm a living testament."

## Encouraging results from our H.A.N.D. initiative

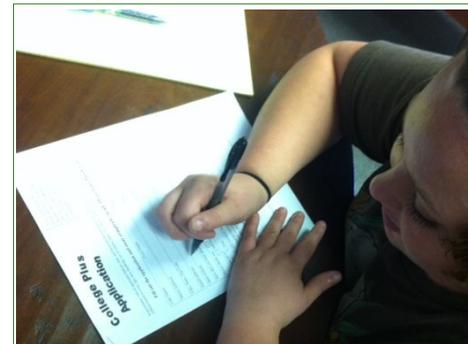
*By Karen Plummer*

In 2013, we completed our pilot phase of H.A.N.D (Hope and New Directions).

H.A.N.D., a unique person centered planning model, combines peer support and a planning tool that encourages young adults to envision their future and identify goals that are addressed through simple manageable steps. Peer support is offered by skilled young adults who have experienced mental health and/or addiction challenges and who can offer the: "I have walked in your shoes" perspective. Much focus is given to finding the strengths the young adult possesses and using them to overcome the barriers they encounter in living out their goals.

An independent evaluation of the H.A.N.D. pilot showed encouraging results and revealed the five participants reached some if not all of their short-term goals, and all were continuing with longer-term goals.

With each aspect of the pilot, we identified barriers and developed ways to overcome them, causing us to revise components of the model. H.A.N.D.'s overall simple, supportive



H.A.N.D participant completing a College Plus Application

approach has proven to be creative, effective and life-changing.

We continue to be part of the lives of the H.A.N.D. pilot participants and offer ongoing peer support to four of the young adults. We are also supporting two young adults and completing three "Mini-H.A.N.D." plans as part of a grant awarded to us from Foundations Community Partnership. Anyone wishing to find out more information about H.A.N.D. should call us or visit our website.

## College Plus continues to help students succeed

*By Caren Noonan*

Nineteen new students joined College Plus in 2013! Adding these students to the previous alumni, a total of 94 students have been supported by College Plus since its inception in 2008. College Plus, a peer-support initiative offered to Bucks County Residents with mental health challenges and/or co-occurring disorders, funds the student's first course and books and offers support through peer support groups, individual outreach, and via a warmline. The groups are held every other week in Lower, Central and Upper

Bucks County. Mentoring and support are provided by College Plus throughout the student's entire college experience based on the student's needs.

At least one student each semester is supported with funding from the Joseph Jocelino Gaskill Education Fund of The Philadelphia Foundation. This grant can fund more than one course per student. Two College Plus students benefited from the grant for a total of three semesters in 2012 and 2013.

**We are currently accepting applications.**

## Chester County team continues to hear the Voice of the people

**By Kelly Frizén**

The Chester County Consumer and Family Satisfaction Team (C/FST) worked diligently throughout 2013 to gather the voice of stakeholders, consumers and family members about the mental and behavioral health services they have accessed for themselves or loved ones. Results collected from our survey work are assessed and directly fed into multiple Chester County and Community Care quality management initiatives to support the overall health and wellness of our great community. This year we have accomplished the following:

- Finalized and reported findings from the Family Based Services survey of parents/guardians and youth.
- Developed a survey tool to collect the voice of people 30 days after discharge from Halfway House services. This project will continue throughout 2013.
- Designed and developed Peer Support Specialist and Peer Support consumer survey tools and spoke with people in recovery and Peer Specialists to obtain their perspective on how the programs are going in Chester County. Results were presented in August.
- Designed and implemented two telephone surveys to interview people receiving both Crisis Intervention and Crisis Residential services to assist Community Care in

their Quality Management efforts for Crisis services. Staff input was also solicited through a Survey Monkey survey. Results were made available to Community Care in October.

In 2013, the team was fortunate enough to be able to attend trainings on topics such as improvement of co-occurring MH and D&A treatment services; Hearing Distressing Voices; Peer Services; Crossing Systems; and Supporting Confidence, Competence, and Wellness for people with mental illness.

The team could also be found around town serving at a few community events focused to improve health and wellness for the people of Chester County such as the Chester County Youth Summit, the Peer Center Recovery Day, and the Holistic Approaches Event. Chester County C/FST also participated regularly in the local Community Support Program (CSP) meetings.

We also look forward to some exciting new projects moving into 2014. Our best wishes to all for a lovely holiday season!



Bob doing some grilling at the Peer Center Recovery event

“MH/DP Advisory Board members expressed appreciation for the report and a lively discussion ensued.”

## Independent Monitoring for Quality (IM4Q) Trend Results

**By Sue Benzie**

In June, the IM4Q Coordinator presented a report on trends observed from the IM4Q interviews conducted from October 2012 to June 2013 to the MH/DP Advisory Board. The following strengths and considerations were highlighted:

### **Strengths:**

- People are generally satisfied with the services they receive.
- Provider staff are generally perceived as caring, supportive, and helpful.
- Efforts are made by some providers to engage individuals in community activities and to include things they are interested in into their daily routine.
- Some providers are incorporating sensory stimulation, massage, music & art therapy and other innovative strategies into people's overall support plan.
- Residential settings are often in typical residential neighborhoods and many residences have a true home-like atmosphere.

### **Considerations:**

- Approximately half of all interviews were with people who had limited or no verbal communication ability. This is an area where increased efforts to identify communication strategies and staff training may significantly impact quality of life.
- Over 40% of individuals interviewed had no family involvement. For individuals living in residential settings, this percentage is much higher. Increasing ways to maintain connections with family members are important to an individual's well-being as well as a help for the DP system.
- While some programs are able to connect individuals with their community, there still are programs where even the ability to leave the group home setting is very limited. This is often due to inadequate staffing and/or regulations as well as the high physical demands on staff when people have various physical disabilities in addition to the intellectual disability.

## A need to grow: Community Center update

By Valerie Melroy

Many activities have taken place this past year to bring our vision of establishing a community center in Central Bucks County closer to a reality. We are excited to report we entered into an agreement of sale on the St. James Lutheran Church in Chalfont. Offering at least 13,000 square feet of diverse space, the building is conducive to move our offices and current services there, offer new services over time and partner with Bucks County NAMI to educate and provide resources to help people in the area get the help they need.

In December 2012, we attended the Chalfont Borough Council Meeting and prior to the meeting hosted an information session with neighbors to introduce ourselves. In

September, October, and November 2013, we attended the Chalfont Planning Commission Meeting and a Zoning Hearing that lasted for three months. We had some discouragement at the hearings when the only neighbors who spoke out were those who vehemently opposed Voice and Vision coming to their neighborhood. However, we are already serving people who live in Chalfont and have had calls from other Chalfont neighbors who privately expressed their wishes that we open the community center. For that reason, we continue on with hope as we await the Zoning Hearing outcome due to be provided by the middle of January 2014. Please visit our website blog and Facebook for updates in 2014.

**Contact us for information on how you can partner in this new venture.**

## Peer Companionship: Veteran to Veteran Matches

By Valerie Melroy

Voice and Vision's Peer Companionship Services expanded in 2013 when a case manager from the Coatesville VA Medical Center requested that Voice and Vision make a peer match for a lonely veteran with mental illness who resided in Horsham and seldom left his apartment. We were ready and happy to meet this need as Voice and Vision had a veteran on staff that served in Vietnam and was experienced in helping veterans at his church. This vet-to-vet match, two gen-

tleman in their 60s, has developed into a friendship through taking more than 18 trips into the community and by rekindling past interests like playing pool and tennis, listening to music, exploring historical sites, connecting to other veterans at the VFW and more.

We are committed to helping veterans and expanding this program in 2014. Please let us know of possible veteran volunteers for this program and/or veterans who want or need a veteran friend. Thank you!

## Hello Facebook!

By Graham Sayles

Voice and Vision has made the bold move of diving into social media. We launched our Facebook page in July and are up to 152 likes! We use our page to update people about what Voice and Vision is doing such as conferences we attend, upcoming events, or new blog posts on our website. We also share things we find inspiring or informative

like the "Find Your Anchor" movement aimed at suicide prevention.

You can check out our Facebook page at [facebook.com/voiceandvision](http://facebook.com/voiceandvision). If you have a Facebook page yourself please be sure to like us.



### BOARD MEMBERS WANTED

This is an exciting time to join the Voice and Vision Board of Directors to help shape the organization during our significant expansion.

If you are interested in joining the Board, please call or email Valerie Melroy at: [Valerie@voiceandvisioninc.org](mailto:Valerie@voiceandvisioninc.org).

Recent research by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimates that 22 veterans commit suicide every day across the USA – almost one veteran is lost per hour. Bucks County has about 50,000 veterans making it the County with the fourth highest population of veterans in Pennsylvania.

### Updated Website coming soon

Our website is receiving a facelift and updated information regarding our programs and services. Our new website will have a responsive layout, which means it will be easily viewed on any portable device, such as iPhone, Android, iPad, or Kindle Fire. Please stay tuned as it will be rolled out soon.

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www.facebook.com/voiceandvision

We recognize that many people need help to overcome the struggles of life. Our mission is to give those that need it a helping hand, an encouraging word and the necessary resources to thrive in spite of difficulties.

IM4Q, CFST, and College Plus are operating with funds provided through the Bucks County Department of Mental Health/Developmental Programs. Chester County CFST is funded by the Chester County Department of Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities, and Community Care Behavioral Health.

Annual Donation Appeal

Voice and Vision believes there are limitless possibilities and inherent gifts within each person. These beliefs help to shape the unique services we develop and have contributed to our successful track record of working with families, youth and young adults. The increased needs and cries of people in our community mandate our need to expand now! The expansion of our services will allow more families and youth to see struggles with hopelessness turned into lives filled with hope and resiliency, and lost dreams turned into renewed vision and fulfilled goals.

Please partner with us as we meet the demands of our community and plan for the future. Your generous gift will allow us to:

- Provide for the development and implementation of a H.A.N.D. (Hope and New Directions) Plan with youth:
• Help students go to college for one semester - Tuition, books and peer support:
• Provide peer support to youth:
• Provide peer support to families:
• Provide peer support to veterans:

Your Gift: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ or make an online donation at www.voiceandvisioninc.org

( Please Print ) Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Voice and Vision, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that is partially funded through Bucks and Chester Counties. Additional funds come from private donations, grants, and managed care organizations. All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law.

Please make check payable to "Voice and Vision, Inc."

Mail to: 600 Louis Dr, Ste. 106; Warminster, PA 18974