

THE FRONT DOOR

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana Newsletter

Spring 2016

Mentally Ill and Homeless: A Difficult Reality



Image courtesy sharepowered.com

We've all seen the victims of homelessness. While going about our day, we've all seen people who have fallen into homelessness and may never get out of it.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, there are 610,000 homeless individuals in the United States. An astounding 1/5 of these individuals have a severe mental illness.

Often times, these individuals get caught in an endless cycle of hospitalization or incarceration that ends with people back on the streets. Without proper intervention, this expensive cycle perpetually continues. It costs taxpayers billions of dollars a year, money that could be going towards housing and treatment for this population instead.

As in the rest of the country, homelessness is a major issue in our community. According to the 2015 Point-in-Time count, there are 586 homeless persons in our area, Region 3. 70 people reported having a serious mental illness.

What can be done to reduce these numbers? How can we help keep individuals with mental illness safe and off the streets?

In his USA Today article, Rick Jervis describes two up-and-coming strategies meant to do just that: housing first and permanent-supportive housing. Housing first gets the homeless off the streets and into housing before treatment for mental illness begins. With this strategy, the individual has stable housing that is conducive to the recovery process. The second strategy is permanent-supportive housing, where housing is combined with access to counseling and medications.

Both strategies require political support and proper funding to be viable, which is often the tricky part. But according to Jervis, both strategies work when they are implemented correctly. Their viability has been shown all over the country, from New York to Texas.

Right here in Fort Wayne, the success of such approaches are made obvious with Cedars Hope. The women at Cedars Hope have stability and a caring group of women who understand what they are going through. With time and advocacy, we can only hope that more support will be garnered for these kinds of programs, and we can stop losing people with mental illness to the chaos that is homelessness.

"If I have any message for others, it is to go for help early and not be a resistant patient."

- Patty Duke, 1946-2016

Don't miss our events in May!

Thursday, May 12, 2016

Hotel Fort Wayne

Legacy Breakfast: 7:30 AM

Evening with Paul Gionfriddo: 6:00 PM

See page 3 for more information.

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FRONT DOOR

We Offer Hope

From the Executive Director



Review: *Losing Tim: How Our Health and Education Systems Failed my Son with Schizophrenia*

Like being a parent isn't already enough of a challenge, having a child with a mental illness can be incredibly difficult as well as physically and mentally draining for the child and the family. Yet there are millions of parents across the country who live this struggle every day, including Paul Gionfriddo. Paul is

the President and CEO of National Mental Health America, and his son Tim struggled with a diagnosable mental illness throughout his childhood.

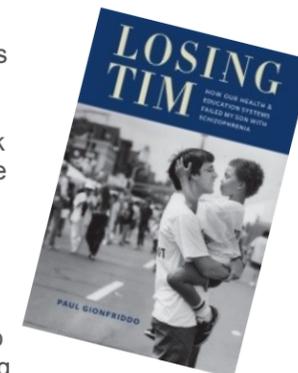
Paul writes about his family's experiences in his book *Losing Tim: How Our Health & Education Systems Failed my Son with Schizophrenia*. The book details Tim's journey and struggles with mental illness from a young age. Paul's frustration with the system that cannot adequately help his son is palpable through the entire book. Most of this frustration stems from the difficulty of fully integrating Tim's mental healthcare with his educational program.

Due to these issues, Tim struggles throughout his entire educational career. Once he reaches middle school, his undiagnosed mental illness worsens. He starts getting into trouble in school, which leads to suspensions. Tim's lack of education becomes a theme in the book. He spends the rest of his educational career in and out of multiple schools, never quite receiving the education he needs.

Paul's story is not unique but poignant in the fact that he openly admits that he is partially to blame for the difficulty he faced. Before leading multiple non-profits, Paul was a member of the Connecticut General Assembly and mayor of Middletown, Connecticut. He knows that the public policy work he did in those positions helped shape the system into what it was.

Paul will be visiting Fort Wayne to talk about this experience. Please join us for the *Legacy Breakfast* and *An Evening with Paul Gionfriddo* on May 12th. More information can be found on page 3.

Lisa Smith, Executive Director



Mental Health Month

Tips for Maintaining Good Mental Health

May is Mental Health Month, which makes it a good time to think about your mental health. What can you do to maintain good mental well-being?

- 1. Connect with others.** Having a strong support system can help you vent and work through problems in times of stress.
- 2. Get physically active and eat well.** Physical and mental health go hand-in-hand. Having a healthy body can help you keep a healthy mind.
- 3. Help others.** Whether its random acts of kindness or regular volunteering, helping others can give you a feeling of happiness and a sense of purpose.
- 4. Get enough sleep.** Adopt good sleeping habits, such as sticking to a regular bedtime, avoiding caffeine later in the day, and relaxing before bedtime. If you almost always have trouble sleeping, see a doctor in case there is an underlying issue that needs treated.
- 5. Get professional help if you need it.** It is extremely important to have any mental health issues investigated and treated if need be. Your mental health should not be neglected.



Image courtesy myfitstation.com

**Legacy Breakfast &
Evening with Paul Gionfriddo**
Thursday, May 12, 2016

**Paul Gionfriddo, Mental Health America CEO, President, and author of
*Losing Tim: How our Health & Education Systems Failed my Son with Schizophrenia***



Paul Gionfriddo

Legacy Breakfast at 7:30 AM—9:00 AM

Please join us as we honor members of the community who have made mental health a priority and hear from Paul Gionfriddo about his family's journey regarding mental illness. \$15/ticket

An Evening with Paul

Contact us or visit **Eventbrite** for tickets

Gionfriddo at 6:00 PM

Thank you to our sponsors



A Rewarding Internship at MHANI



Bailey Hapner started her internship with MHANI in August 2015. During her time at our organization, she worked alongside staff members to develop a support group for teenagers with emotional and mental health struggles. The support group continues today, in no small part due to her efforts.

We asked Bailey a few questions about her internship.

What did you like most about interning at MHANI?

The best thing about interning at MHANI was what I was able to figure out about myself through doing so, and also the relationships I was able to build.

What was your personal reason for helping us establish the Youth Support Group?

My personal reason was to try and help myself while helping others.

What are your career aspirations?

My career aspirations are to go to school for Criminology (Forensics) and Psychology all the way through my doctorate. I am not sure at this point exactly where I am going to go with these things, but I know it is what I want to study. I can challenge myself while helping the community.

What are your hobbies?

My hobbies are studying, working, adventuring to new places, and challenging myself in ways I never thought possible.

What is Cedars Hope?

Cedars Hope offers safe, affordable, and supportive housing for homeless women living with mental illness. Cedars Hope's supportive housing is organized into a group living environment that encourages peer support and community engagement.

Our goal is to help the 15 women we serve break the cycle of psychiatric crisis and homelessness, increase self-sufficiency, and learn to self-manage the symptoms of their mental illness and physical health challenges. Training and assistance with daily living skills, interpersonal skills and increased community involvement through employment, volunteering, education, or other therapeutic activities is an important part of the residents' life at Cedars Hope.

Cedars is located at 527 West Berry Street and 813/815 Fulton Street in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Serving 15 residents.

CEDARS HOPE

Finding joy in sobriety

"If you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got."

- Albert Einstein



Gena is one of the residents at Cedars Hope, and the quote above is her favorite one. She has been living there for almost 4 years. In her spare time, she enjoys watching movies, taking pictures, and spending time with her friends and parents. She also likes volunteering at the Third World Shoppe and Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana.

Gena is hard working and always willing to help others. She is a caring individual and shows compassion to others when they need it most. Certainly her hardworking nature helped her when she was fighting for sobriety. She was addicted to alcohol and drugs for over 20 years and was able to overcome the addiction. Gena is extremely proud of herself for this accomplishment, and we are too!

It takes a village...

The majority of people in the United States probably don't know what it's like to care for an individual with mental illness. The level of compassion and understanding needed to work with this population is astounding. We interviewed Lisa and Laurie of Cedars Hope for some insight into this job.



Laurie/Photo: Steve Vorderman

Lisa is a resident assistant who helps the women living at Cedars Hope with their day-to-day living.



Lisa/Photo: Steve Vorderman

She provides encouragement, monitors their medication, and helps them with other activities. Laurie is a case manager at Cedars Hope, where she helps with the logistics of running a house like Cedars Hope.

Lisa stated that her favorite part of the job is engaging with the residents, and Laurie enjoys helping individuals who face challenges. Their least favorite part of the job was not having more beds and more space to help more women in the area.

We also asked the staff members, If there was one thing you wished everyone understood about mental illness, what would it be? Lisa said, "That mental illnesses are treatable and with adequate resources, support, and encouragement, many people who struggle with psychiatric disorders do find a lasting path of recovery, stability, and hope." Laurie said, "Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of. Every person is uniquely differently."

Truly, these are messages that we hope to send to anyone struggling with a mental health challenge.

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Donor Spotlight

We want to thank Summitline Industries, Inc. and WOWnet for their generous donations. Summitline Industries generously donated a brand new stove to Cedars Hope. This new stove will help the women at Cedars Hope continue to cook their meals and dine together. Stan Richards, the owner of Summitline Industries, stopped by Cedars Hope. "Cedars Hope is a valuable asset to the community," he said. "I'm pleased to be able to help in any way I can. I also love seeing the donation used by the women who live here. That's not always something you get to see when making a donation."

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana has the honor of being WOWnet's organization of the year. WOWnet is a networking and philanthropic organization comprised entirely of women. The women who attended their Spring WOWnet Connections event generously donated cash as well as arts and crafts supplies to our organization. These arts and crafts can be used by the women at Cedars Hope and the teenagers who attend our youth group.



Thank you to the following donors:

Bishop Luers High School	Edward Koppelman	Sandy Scheer
Virginia Brecount	Scott McAlister	Mary Tomlins Noah
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Special thanks to the angel donor for the new washer/dryer for Cedars Hope.

STOP Suicide Coalition

While they may not talk about it, almost everyone has been affected in some way by suicide. The STOP Suicide Coalition was formed in 2013 to work collaboratively to combat suicide and support families following a loss by suicide. It now has 30 regional member organizations.

To fulfill their mission of support and awareness, STOP Suicide hosts events like the Suicide Survivor Candlelight Ceremony. They also complete special projects for outreach into the community.

One such project is the newly completed suicide toolkits. Members of the STOP Suicide team worked together to draft, design, and construct the toolkits. *Finding Hope* is meant to prevent suicide and offer support after a suicide attempt, while *Help & Hope* is intended to support those who are facing a suicide loss.

These toolkits offer helpful information to people who need it at one of the darkest times of their lives. It answers the questions they may have. The stigma around suicide means that these individuals and families may not know where to turn following the crisis. With these toolkits, STOP Suicide hopes to alleviate fears and help individuals and families process and cope with what is happening.

Toolkits are currently available. Please call MHANI at (260) 422-6441 or visit StopSuicideNow.org to access PDFs of the toolkits.



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New Support Groups!

With the exciting expansion of our Peer Support Services, Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana (MHANI) is now able to host a variety of peer-driven support groups!

The following support groups will become available this summer:

- **Adolescent** Support Group for teens struggling with mental health challenges
- **Parent** Support Group for parent or caregivers of children with mental or emotional struggles
- **Suicide Loss** (Spouse/Partner) Support Group for men and women who have lost a spouse or partner to suicide
- **Adult ADHD** Support Group for individuals supporting each other through the difficulties of ADD/ADHD

If you are interested in attending one of these support groups, please contact MHANI at (260) 422-6441.

Interested in Volunteering?

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana needs your help! If you're interested in volunteering, please contact us at (260) 422-6441 or info@mhaac.com.

We have a variety of volunteering focuses. If you have an interest, we'll put your time and talent to good use!

Contact Us

Mental health advocates offer mental health support and information about local resources in northeast Indiana.

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana
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Visit us on the web at
mentalhealthfrontdoor.org

