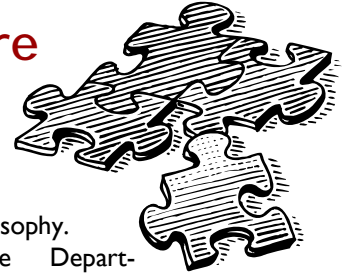




Minding Your Health

Chester County's System of Care



Chester County
Commissioners:
Terence Farrell
Kathi Cozzone
Ryan Costello

**If you or
someone you
know is in a
mental health
crisis call
Valley Creek
Crisis
Intervention
610-280-3270
Or
877-918-2100**

Tracy Johnson gets quite a bit of feedback when she explains the vision of Chester County's System of Care (SOC).

The number one response? "We already do this!"

But while it may seem intuitive to promote a unified system that maximizes all resources and encourages all service providers to communicate and collaborate to best help individuals and families reach their goals, it still doesn't always happen.

"In human services we're good at responding to people's needs, but we're not so good at reaching out to (possible partners)," said Johnson, Chester County's System of Care Coordinator.

To help integrate the county SOC vision into everyday practices, Johnson and other SOC champions have been holding free day-long SOC Facilitator

Trainings each month since July. "So far, every class has been full," Johnson noted.

A wide range of front line professionals have participated in these trainings, including case managers, supports coordinators, juvenile probation officers and staff from provider agencies. To date, all of these day-long programs have been held at the Government Services Center in West Chester, but Facilitator Training, which will be only offered once a quarter after June 2012, is currently mobile. Not only can the training be taken to different sites, it can easily be tailored for various groups.

Johnson, whose background includes almost 25 years as an educator, also offers a one hour "SOC 101" presentation for schools or other groups as a way to introduce the county's SOC

philosophy.

The Department of Human Services is so committed to the vision of SOC, the following related skill-building opportunities have been developed and will be available in 2012 for those who have completed the Facilitator Training:

- Best Practice Trainings
- Meeting Planning
- Meeting Dynamics
- Natural Supports
- Troubleshooting / Practice

For more information, to register for the Facilitator Training, or schedule an on-site training, call Lori Young at 610-344-6640.

"Common Ground" Goes Mobile

For a person who has a psychiatric disorder, the monthly medication checks with their psychiatrist are a critical part of the recovery process. Unfortunately, these 15 to 20-minute appointments don't usually allow time to discuss issues and make treatment decisions.

Common Ground®, the web-based application created by Patricia Deegan, PhD & Associates was developed to help with this challenge. It provides a number of practical and easy-to-use tools to help mental health consumers prepare before their monthly appointments.

Since August 2010, the Common Ground® application has

been available for individuals to use at Community Crossroads Peer Support Center in West Chester. Since June, two additional mental health providers have introduced the application as well. Fellowship Health Resources in Phoenixville and Holcomb Behavioral Health in Exton now have on-site computers for consumers utilizing their services to access Common Ground®.

Now, in an effort to provide Deegan's tools to even more mental health consumers throughout the county, Community Crossroads is expanding their reach by going mobile. Recovery Support

Coordinator, Dawn Altemus, has been traveling to county-funded service providers to introduce Common Ground® and work one-on-one with individuals who want to learn how to use the tools.

Provider agencies interested in scheduling an on-site visit from Altemus, also featured in the Spotlight section, on page 3, should contact her at Community Crossroads, 610-429-1702. For more information about Common Ground® visit www.patdeegan.com and look for the logo, below.



Inside this month:

- Opportunities to support mental health programs
- Spotlight on Dawn Altemus

Administrator's Diary:

I want to wish everyone a safe and joyous holiday season. This is a perfect time to reflect and to give thanks for all the wonderful gifts we receive throughout the year. As the weather turns colder, we can also warm our hearts by supporting those who are in need, or those who are having difficulties. A simple phone call, a holiday greeting or a card can brighten a person's day and be a precious a gift. Share with others your joy and gratitude during the holidays.

Looking ahead to 2012, I'm pleased and energized at Chester County's commitment to a unified System of Care for families, and the ever-expanding reach of Patricia Deegan's Common Ground® initiative. Both are helping us reach for higher standards of care for our community. As we move forward, we will continue to strive for excellence.

— Gary Entrekin, Administrator, Chester County MH/IDD

Change For The Better

On November 22, Governor Tom Corbett signed into law Senate Bill 458 which amends the 1966 Mental Health and Mental Retardation Act, replacing the term "mental retardation" with "intellectual disabilities."

Feeling Anxious, Anyone?

The cover of the December 5, 2011 issue of **TIME** was devoted to an article by Alice Park. "The two faces of Anxiety." provides information on both the positive and negative effects of anxiety.

The bottom line— although some anxiety can increase performance, too much may lead to serious health issues. Anxiety disorders are common, affecting about 40 million American adults.

Anxiety has also been linked to heart attacks ▪ strokes ▪ immune disorders ▪ obesity ▪ infertility and other health concerns.

DON'T FORGET YOUR WRAP!

A FREE 3-Day WRAP™ Training for anyone interested in developing their own

Wellness Recovery Action Plan

January 24, 25 & 26

From 8am—4pm each day

At the Coatesville VA Medical Center

Space is limited!

To register, contact Audrey Hall

Audrey.hall2@va.gov

610-384-7711, x5669

Support Mental Health Programs with a Holiday Song ~



Joyce Cooling, guitarist, vocalist and songwriter, is supporting mental health with the release of a new holiday single, "It's Feeling Like Christmas," available to download. 100% of the proceeds from the download will go to two organizations: NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) which has a Chester County Chapter located in West Chester, and Fellowship Health Resources, which has a location in Phoenixville. Download at: <http://www.joycecooling.com/music.php?iid=10>

Cooling's connection to mental health programs began when her brother was diagnosed with schizophrenia at the age of 21. Since then, Cooling says her brother's illness has been the "single most pressing element in my family's universe." Groups such as NAMI and Fellowship Health Resources have provided much help and support, which is why she strives to give back.

Download "It's Feeling Like Christmas" and support these programs today!

Spotlight: Dawn Altemus, Mobile Outreach



Dawn Altemus has racked up quite a bit of life experience in just 43 years. An advocate who has served in leadership roles for a number of local mental health organizations, Altemus has also had a positive impact through her work at Community Crossroads Peer Support Center. But her first 10 years of work experience was in a different “helping field,” as a paramedic. She only embarked on her second career in mental health after a knee injury.

“I was told not to lift,” Altemus recalled. “A paramedic who can’t lift isn’t much use. The stretcher alone weighs 50 pounds.”

While trying to find her way back to secure employment, Altemus struggled with her own mental health issues. A case manager was key in helping her decide which direction she would take. In 2006, she returned to school and earned a degree from Drexel

University in behavioral and addictions counseling. Soon after, she earned a Master’s Degree in psychology from the University of Phoenix, met her partner Robin, with whom she is adopting a child, and put down roots in Chester County.

Now the “go-to person” at Community Crossroads for Patricia Deegan’s web-based application, Common Ground®, Altemus is energized about her new outreach in the mental health community.

“I’ve always been a fan of Pat Deegan,” Altemus said of the renown advocate who was diagnosed with schizophrenia at 17.

As she introduces Common Ground® at sites throughout the county, Altemus has developed a greater appreciation for all that Deegan put into the multi-faceted application. From the reliable and up-to-date resources included, to

the tools that help with such issues as benefit and prescription assistance, Common Ground® covers many bases.

Altemus’ favorite Common Ground® feature: the library of videos, where individuals tell their own personal stories of courage and recovery.

Her one-word description of Deegan: “Incredible.”

Any adult with a mental health diagnosis who would like to learn about Common Ground® may contact Altemus at Community Crossroads Peer Support Center in West Chester at 610-429-1702.

More information about Common Ground® is on page 1.

Stepping Stones Clubhouse FUNdRAISER

For the entire month of December—*until 12/31!!!*

Five Below, which carries a variety of inexpensive merchandise, will donate 10% of total dollars spent by Stepping Stones supporters, that bring the approved FUNdRaiser flier, from the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program.

To get the approved flier to take when making purchases, contact Stepping Stones Clubhouse in Coatesville at 610-384-6058.

Five Below is located in the Brandywine Square Shopping Center
1078 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown



WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY TROMBONE ENSEMBLE

Annual Concert to Benefit Chester County COMPEER

This 20-piece ensemble is under the direction of West Chester University Trombone Professor Haim Avitsur

Monday, December 5, 2011: 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Asbury Hall, Grove United Methodist Church (Boot Road west of Rt. 100)

Admission is \$10 ■ Children under 12 are free ■ Limited seats available ■ Checks payable to Compeer 9026 ■ To reserve a seat, call 610-399-7058

Have you checked out Chester County's Refer Web?

Find resources on a wide range of services—from employment and financial services, to shelter and legal assistance. Check it out at www.referweb.net/chesco.

- ◆ Every Thurs.— Celebrate Recovery, a faith-based, 12 step recovery group - 7-9 pm every Thursday at The Journey Church, 200 S. Church St., West Chester. For more info call 610-344-9332.
- ◆ Every Thurs. — The Depression and Bipolar Alliance - 6:30- 7:30 pm at the Peer Support Center, 825 Paoli Pike, West Chester. For more info call 610-429-1702.
- ◆ Every Tues. & Thurs. — Double Trouble for those recovering from addiction and mental health problems - 3:30-5 pm at the Peer Support Center, 825 Paoli Pike, West Chester. For more info call 610-429-1702.
- ◆ Every Tues.— Recovery Works a schizophrenia support group - 6:30 – 7:30 pm at the Peer Support Center, 825 Paoli Pike, West Chester. For more info call 610-429-1702.
- ◆ Every Tues. — Celebrate Recovery for a faith-based support - 6pm-8:15pm at Hopewell UMC, 852 Hopewell Rd., Downingtown. For more info call 610-269-1545.
- ◆ 2nd Mon. — Adult MH Meeting - 5:30 - 7:30 pm at the Peer Support Center 825 Paoli Pike, West Chester. For more info call 610-344-6265.
- ◆ 2nd Tues. — Chester County Children's Committee 9:30 – 11 am at Government Services Bldg., 601 Westtown Rd., West Chester. For more info call 610-344-6265.
- ◆ 1st Wed. — NAMI West Chester Family Support Group - 7-9 pm at the Peer Support Center, 825 Paoli Pike, West Chester. For more info call 484-947-5643.
- ◆ 1st Wed. — CSP (Community Support Program) Meeting - Noon to 2 pm, the Peer Support Center, 825 Paoli Pike, West Chester. For more info call 484-239-0687.
- ◆ 1st Wed.— ADHD Support Group for parents and caregivers of children with ADHD - West Goshen Municipal Bldg., West Chester. For more info go to www.chestercountychadd.org.
- ◆ 2nd Wed. — Chester County Suicide Prevention Task Force - 3:30 – 5pm at COAD, 930 E. Lancaster Ave., Exton. For more info call 610-344-6265.
- ◆ 2nd Wed.— Survivors of Suicide (S.O.S.) - 7:30 pm in the Willistown Room of the Paoli Memorial Hospital in Paoli. For more info call 215-545-2242.
- ◆ 3rd Wed. — Participatory Dialogue Committee Noon to 2pm at Peer Support Center, 825 Paoli Pike, West Chester. For more info contact Rob Chisholm at rchisholm@mhasp.org.
- ◆ 4th Wed.—NAMI Paoli Family Support Group - 7-9pm at the Daylesford Abby, 220 S. Valley Rd., Paoli. For more info call 484-947-5643.
- ◆ 1st Thurs. — NAMI Kennett Square Family Support Group - 7:30-9 pm at Friends Meeting House, Rt. 82, Kennett Square. For more info call 484-947-5643.
- ◆ 2nd Thurs. — NAMI Phoenixville Family Support Group - 7-8:30 pm at Penn Psychiatric Center, 601 Gay St., Suite 6, Phoenixville. For more info call 484-947-5643.
- ◆ 2nd Thurs. — NAMI Grief & Loss Family Support Group - 7:30 - 9:30 pm in Downingtown. For location and more info call 610-269-3476.
- ◆ 3rd Thurs.— NAMI PA Chester County General Meeting 7pm at Christ Memorial Lutheran Church in Malvern. For more info call 484-947-5643.
- ◆ 4th Thurs. — MH/IDD Advisory Board Quarterly Meeting - 6pm at the Government Services Bldg., 601 Westtown Rd., West Chester, Room 149. For more info call 610-344-6265. Next meeting is November 17.
- ◆ 4th Friday — Creative Expressions Coffee House—7-9pm at The HOOD, 530 E. Union St., West Chester. For more info, call 610-429-1702.

To keep this calendar up-to-date, we need your feedback! If you know of changes to the above information, please let us know. Email: tbehringer@chesco.org or call 610-344-6265.