



The Mental Health Recovery Roundup

Mental health recovery is not only possible, recovery happens every day

Volume 3, Issue 3 - 2010

“Mental health recovery is a journey of healing and transformation enabling a person with a mental health problem to live a meaningful life in a community of his or her choice while striving to achieve his or her full potential.” - From the National Consensus Statement on Mental Health Recovery

Essentially, recovery means remembering who you are and using your strengths to become all you were meant to be.

The King County Mental Health, Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division (MHCADSD), in partnership with the mental health agencies in King County, and the people who participate in services, is building a recovery oriented system. The fundamental components of recovery include empowerment, peer sup-

port, strengths-based, holistic, non-linear, person-centered, self-direction and individualized, respect and responsibility, and, perhaps most important, hope and resilience.

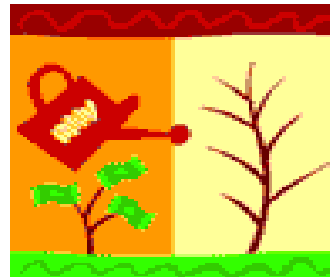
Like living with an illness such as diabetes or asthma, mental health recovery requires a person to become an active partner in finding and maintaining their own wellness. As people continue on their recovery journey, many report their symptoms decrease and they learn ways to cope with remaining symptoms.

Mental health recovery is about wholeness-not just getting meds in check and symptoms reduced. It is not the same as “cure” and getting the “old life” back. Recovery is a healed life with mental illness-a new “normal” with new direction

and different dreams. To reach recovery and healing, each person with mental illness should be cared for as a “whole person,” which means addressing the needs of mind, body and spirit.

<BREAKING NEWS>

King County mental health services are receiving new grants to address the health impacts of tobacco use and trauma in the people who participate in mental health services. See page 2 for more details!



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2010 - Employment as a key to recovery

People who have a mental illness and who work report feeling better about themselves, having fewer symptoms, and more money in their pocket. Making a contribution, meeting new people, and having a reason to get up in the morning can open the door to recovery.

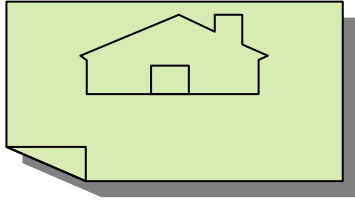
King County is focusing on employment in different ways to address barriers to people getting back to work.

- “Recovery—Make it work” A conference for consumers and those who support them on employment. See pages 2 and 3 for confer-

ence information and a registration form.

- Shifting incentives for employment to the # of people getting jobs
- Providing 2 retreats for agency senior management about work
- A recovery retreat for prescribers about work

- Setting a long range goal for 40% of people who want to work having jobs.
- Recovery Celebrations and the Recovery Poster Art contest include the key of employment
- Involving consumers on fidelity review teams for Supported Employment



Recovery begins at home

Having safe housing is critical to recovery. King County, non-profit providers and other government agencies on the [Committee to End Homelessness](#) have a [Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness](#). They are putting large sums of money and effort into creating new housing units.

Combining affordable housing with supportive services that build stability and recovery, Valley Cities Counseling and Consultation officially opened the Landing on August 27, 2010. Located in Auburn, Valley Cities Landing is a new 24-unit housing project designed to help people with persistent

mental illness find and keep a home of their own.

The project will house and serve people who are homeless, have very low incomes, and are living with a serious mental illness. Twelve of the units are dedicated to housing veterans and four have been specially designed to be fully accessible for persons with disabilities. King County contributed over \$4.6 million to help build this housing, including funds from the Mental Illness and Drug Dependency Action Plan, Jump Start, and the voter-approved Veterans and Human Services Levy.

If you need housing, ask your case manager to see what housing you qualify for **and** ask how to get on the wait lists. Contact non-mental health affordable housing providers to get on their wait lists. The Seattle Housing Authority and King County Housing Authority have temporarily closed the Section 8 wait lists but you can get on their wait lists for public housing.

Call 211 or go to www.211kingcounty.org Also go to: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthServices/MentalHealth/Services/Housing.aspx>

King County awarded a grant to develop trauma informed care

The Mental Health, Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division (MHCADSD) has just received notification about a Transformation Grant award in the amount of \$734,500 per year to develop trauma-informed care in the mental health system. This is a federal Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) grant that is awarded for five years.

There were five strategic initiatives that applicants for the Transformation Grant could choose from to focus on. MHCADSD developed a plan to implement strategic initiative #2:

“Implement Trauma Informed Care (TIC) as the framework for the practice/service chosen and implement trauma screening, assessment, and recovery support.

Within a TIC framework, services are organized and delivered in a manner

that meets the unique trauma-related needs of consumers/survivors, and safety, as identified by the service recipient, is the primary concern.

The practice approach emphasizes consumer empowerment and the consumer as the driver of services, adopts universal precautions in asking about trauma, builds organizational capacity and knowledge of TIC through on-going training, and policy review to ensure do no harm practices.”

MHCADSD was interested in TIC as the focus of the grant because, as many know, studies have shown that over 90% of the population of individuals served in an urban public mental health system have experienced trauma.

MHCADSD will partner with Community Psychiatric Clinic and Valley Cities Counseling and Consultation to fully implement the model, and Asian

Counseling and Referral Service will evaluate the model’s applicability to the Asian Pacific Islander populations. Plans are to infuse trauma-informed care into the rest of the provider network over the life of the grant.

The practice approaches MHCADSD will implement are: 1) *Risking Connections*, a clinician implemented trauma informed model of care, and 2) *Essence of Being Real*, a peer to peer structure intended to address the effects of trauma. Both of these approaches were developed by the Sidran Institute.

These approaches were selected because they focus on transforming how all care is provided, keeping in the forefront the impact that past and current trauma experiences have on individuals who are receiving mental health treatment.

TIC contributes toward our journey to provide recovery oriented care.

King County receives a grant to address nicotine dependency

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death in the nation and almost half of these deaths are people with mental health and substance use disorders.

Life itself is the most basic and obvious requirement for recovery. One of the fundamental components of recovery is wholistic health.

Public Health—Seattle and King County recently received a federal stimulus grant through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Titled the Seattle & King County *Communities Putting Prevention to Work* (CPPW) initiative, this grants a total of \$25.5 million to reduce chronic diseases related to obesity and tobacco use.

The King County Mental Health, Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division (MHCADSD) is proud to announce that with the support of the community, King County

was chosen as a grantee of the CPPW Initiative. MHCADSD received 35 letters of support from the provider community to include in the grant application.

The grant of \$167,000 will allow the county to support community efforts to address nicotine dependency among the client population served under the contracts with King County.

The deliverables required for this grant are the following:

- Developing a provider survey targeted to program administrators and line staff to assess provider knowledge and receptivity to change nicotine policy.
- Purchasing and distributing one carbon monoxide (CO) monitor for each contracted agency and nicotine replacement therapy supplies for residential agencies for use in clinical practice.

- Identify and integrate in practice a universal nicotine screening tool and curriculum for addressing nicotine dependency.

- Updating county policies to support the provision of tobacco-free campus contract requirements in 2012.

Not only is MHCADSD a grantee but King County overall was designated as one of three Hallmark Sites in the nation, making it a high profile, countywide project.

The CPPW initiative ends in April 2012. There are several milestones over the next 18 months—partnership is critical to this important initiative.

Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAP) — Agency news

Navos and Valley Cities Counseling and Consultation have invested in increasing the availability of WRAP classes in King County.

WRAP is a guide to wellness. WRAP was developed by Mary Ellen Copeland as part of her recovery journey. A WRAP is practical, helping people identify what helps them be well, how to recognize early warning signs of illness, and steps to take to return to wellness. WRAP is all about hope, personal responsibility, self-reliance along with help from others, and education that helps people move toward wellness, happiness, and better lives.

The two agencies funded two peer specialists to travel to and participate in a 5 day Copeland Center training to become WRAP Facilitator trainers. Helen Nilon and Catherine Hawks Bryson are now certified to train people to become WRAP Facilitators who will then be certified to lead 5 day WRAP groups.

This rich resource will profoundly increase the accessibility of WRAP for many consumers. Their first 5 day training is scheduled for October 2010. The cost of the training is \$600 plus \$150 for materials.



If you are interested, contact:

Navos: Helen Nilon
206.439.2625
Helen.Nilon@Navos.org

Or

Valley Cities Counseling::
Catherine Hawks Bryson
253.235.0201

King County & South Seattle

**A Conference on
employment for
mental health
consumers and those
that assist them**

**Recovery - Make
It Work!**



Date: Friday, 10/22/2010

Time: 8:30am—1:00pm

Conference is Free

Free lunch provided if

Conference Workshops - A Sampler

Disability Benefits and Work, Julie Morgan, DESC & Kristi Lebow, Harborview MHC—Learn the basics about work's impact on disability benefits. Work incentives allow you to explore the responsibilities and rewards of the "working world" while increasing your current income!

Disclosing Your Disability & Requesting Accommodations, John Evans, DVR — You need not hide your mental health disability from employers. Learn strategies for disclosing a disability and requesting reasonable accommodations.

Discovery, Janet Arthur & Dianne Graham, SMH—Thinking about going to work? Wondering what interests & skills you bring? Explore, find, and proclaim the contributions you offer an employer!

Employer Panel — A group of employers will discuss their experiences interviewing, hiring and supervising consumers. Gain important insights from the employer perspective. Audience participation and questions will be welcomed.

Work Resources for Ex-Offenders, Terry Weber, Program Coordinator, Employment Offender Services — A prior criminal record does not close the door to employment. Terry will discuss the assistance and opportunities available to those with criminal histories.

Consumer Panel — Hear the stories, struggles and successes of working King County consumers. Though not always easy, these folks demonstrate that work is not only possible but life changing.

Keynote Speaker: Mark Ragins, MD

Mark is Medical Director at the MHA Village, an award winning model of recovery-based mental health services in Long Beach, CA. With more than 20 years of clinical work, Mark has presented nationally and internationally on recovery oriented topics. His writings were featured in Steve Lopez's book, *The Soloist* and include "A Road to Recovery" and "A Guide to Mental Health Transformation on a Personal Level".

King County mental health consumers are making work a part of their recovery !

Though recovery may not always include employment, work is an important step for many consumers toward independence, empowerment and hope. Here are just a few of the jobs obtained by public mental health consumers in the past months.

- Office Asst, 22 hrs/wk
- Staff Accountant, 40 hrs/wk
- Grocery Clerk, 40 hours/wk
- Certified Nursing Assistant, 31 hrs/wk
- Dietary Aide, 25 hrs/wk
- Machinist, 40 hrs/wk
- Nanny, 40 hrs/wk
- Cook, 25 hrs/wk
- Floor RN, 35 hrs/wk
- Medical Technician, 32 hrs/wk
- Accounts Pay/Receivables, 40 hrs/wk
- Peer Specialist, 20 hrs/wk
- Home Care Aide, 18 hrs/wk
- Call Representative, 21 hrs/wk
- Stocking Associate, 8 hrs/wk
- Occupational Therapist, 32 hrs/wk
- Janitor, 20 hrs/wk

Registration

Space is limited No conference fee. To guarantee a free lunch you must register by **OCTOBER 12**. You can register by mail, email or phone.

Last Name: _____

First Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Agency _____

Consumer Provider Other

If consumer, please describe your current situation.

Employed Want to Work

Not sure about working

To register, mail the attached form or contact:

Melisande Noe
401 5th Ave, Suite 400
Seattle, WA 98104
melisande.noe@kingcounty.gov; 206.263.8987

Getting back to work can power your recovery...

Most people with a mental illness report wanting to go back to work. Virtually everyone who has a mental illness can work with the right support. The best indicator for success is wanting to work.

Having benefits like Medicaid, help with housing and food are also critical to recovery, especially in the beginning. Understandably, people are concerned about the impact of earning money on their benefits. The good news is that it's possible to work and **keep your benefits**. All of the mental health agencies provide benefits counseling, just ask.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) provides employment assistance to people who have disabilities, including mental health challenges.

Supported Employment (SE), an evidence-based practice, provides supports people need to move into the job market quickly and keep a job. Eight mental health agencies in King County provide SE services in partnership with DVR to help consumers find competitive, integrated jobs.

Hero House, a free standing clubhouse, has recently begun developing a Supported Employment program as

well. Interested? contact Bill Wilson at BillR.Wilson@kingcounty.gov

The WorkSource Centers are a resource for all citizens. WorkSource helps people find jobs, including creating a resume, interviewing skills, and financial assistance for some kinds of training. WorkSource is a part of the Washington State Department of Employment Security.

For more information and resources, go to:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/MentalHealth/Services/Employment.aspx>

The 2010 Recovery Poster Art Contest winner is Valera Corliss!

The theme of this year's poster art-contest was Three Keys to Recovery: Love, Work, & Laughter. The 2010 Recovery Poster can be seen on the next page.



The artist of the winning artwork for the 2010 King County Mental Health Recovery Poster was Valera Corliss. She received a \$150 gift card to a store of her choice and a framed copy of the 2010 Recovery Poster that incorporated her artwork.

The 2010 Recovery Poster was un-

veiled at the 2010 Exemplary Services Award ceremony on September 30, 2010. In her comments for the unveiling, Valera said:

"I want to thank you for choosing my work for this year's poster. The legacy of mental illness, abuse, and addiction is passed from generation to generation and these destructive forces destroy the potential of many.

The Three Keys Of Recovery play a "key" part in freeing those imprisoned

by giving them the needed tools to change their lives. When the whole self, mind, heart, and body, gets what it needs to heal, a metamorphoses can occur.

There were many beautiful and poignant images in the 17 pieces of poster art that were submitted for 2010. The judging committee selected three other artists for honorable mention including, Brian Root, Moz Benado, and Renee Klaus Pond. (Renee won the contest in 2009.)

2010 Recovery Celebrations—Love, Work and Laughter

The theme of the Recovery Celebrations this year is "Love, Work, and Laughter—Keys to Recovery." These events are free and include lunch.

The first event, on May 14 in downtown Seattle, was attended by 75 people. Forty people came to the second Recovery Celebration in Auburn. At Wallingford House, 25 people participated and at Hero House, 60 folks showed up.

We talked about healthy relationships, learned about the impact of work on benefits and the benefit of work for recovery and felt the healing power of laughter together.

On October 6, 2010, we will be at Consejo Counseling and Referral Services from 11-3:30 pm for the last Recovery Celebration of the year.

To download a copy of the flyer announcing the celebrations, go to:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/MentalHealth/Recovery.aspx>.

Look in the upper right corner of the Web page.



2010 Exemplary Service Awards

King County Mental Health, Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division annually awards individuals and organizations that provide exemplary services. The awards ceremony was held on Thursday, September 30 from 4:30-6:30 at St. Marks Cathedral Bloedel Hall. The ceremony began at 5 pm with opening remarks by King County Executive Dow Constantine. It was a wonderful celebration of the

great work being done by the community. Recipients of the 2010 exemplary service awards include: Advocacy and Social Inclusion: Jim Adams, NAMI South King County and NAMI Washington Direct Service: Michael Buchert, Sound Mental Health - Forensic Intensive Supportive Housing Program Systems Integration: Veterans Services Program, Valley Cities

Counseling and Consultation Service Innovation: Tobacco Free Campus Initiative, Navos Mental Health Solutions Peer-to-Peer Support Program: Valley Cities Peer-to-Peer Support Program, Valley Cities Counseling and Consultation Peer-to-Peer Support, Individual: Kimberly Mays, King County Superior Court - Parent to Parent Program Director's Award for Lifetime Achievement: Barbara Mauer, MCPP Healthcare Consulting

"Mental health recovery is a journey of healing and transformation enabling a person with a mental health problem to live a meaningful life in a community of his or her choice while striving to achieve his or her full potential."

- National Consensus Statement on Mental Health Recovery



King County Mental Health, Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division
24 hour Crisis Line
Mental Health Ombuds
King County Mental Health Web site

206-263-9000
206-461-3222 (local) OR 1-866-4-CRISIS
206-205-5329

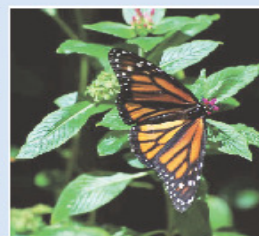
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/MentalHealth/Recovery.aspx>



Valera Cortliss is the winner of the 2010 King County Mental Health Poster Art Contest. The judging panel found this to be a striking and powerful illustration of the theme of Love, Work, and Laughter. King County congratulates Ms. Cortliss on this accomplishment and thanks her for sharing her creativity.

"The Mind, Hands, and Heart are symbols of the connection that the cycle of laughter, work, and love have on the whole being. The reversal of hands shows an integration of the creative and intellectual abilities brought by these healing forces. The keys and keyholes represent the unlocking of potential that is often imprisoned by mental illness and addiction. And the Monarch butterfly, the only one that migrates, is a symbol not only of growth and transformation of self and circumstances in the process of recovery, but also shows the impact the long journey can have on future generations."

- Valera Cortliss



Recovery Incentives - Measuring what matters

Why is King County using incentives?

Research into successful system transformation efforts across the country and consultations with experts led MHCADSD to develop a plan for financial incentives.

An Incentive Implementation Workgroup made recommendations to King County about what measures would lead to the outcomes sought by consumers and family members:

Children

- Developmental assessments
- Collaborative contacts with allied systems
- Parent peer supports

Adults

- Employment
- Peer support
- Face to face service w/in seven days of hospital or jail release

Older Adults

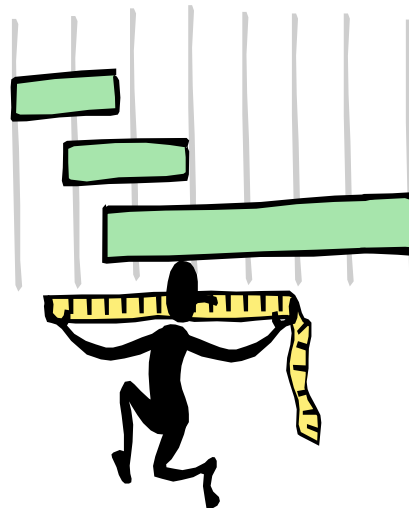
- Goals to increase meaningful activity
- Care plans that include client voice & choice

Incentive payments began in 2007 to mental health agencies to develop the

structures and processes that will lead to identified outcomes. For example, agencies serving children earn the incentives on the measure of providing developmental assessments by participating in training and implementing guidelines for assessing development. The phase of building structures and processes is nearly complete for this measure.

Recovery Incentives have begun to shift to actual outcomes. For the employment incentive payments, all adult serving agencies will be eligible to earn incentives based on the number of people actually getting jobs in 2010.

An ad hoc workgroup identified employment barriers and made recommendations about strategies to address barriers. From this came the employment conference for consumers and people who support them, described on pages 2 and 3. Another strategy was to provide more information to executive management about the critical importance of work. From this came the first CEO Retreat on Employment on June 10, 2010. A follow-up CEO retreat with Mark Ragins, M.D. is set for October 21, 2010, 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the



Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission at 19010 First Ave South, Burien, WA 98148 Room C-151

Another strategy to address barriers in employment was to educate prescribers. King County will have a recovery retreat for prescribers about recovery and work (also with Dr. Ragins) on October 22, 2010, 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Chinook building, 401 5th Ave., Seattle, Wa 98104.

King County will be reviewing services this fall to learn whether or not agencies earned the incentives for 2011 for peer services and whether client voice, choice, and meaningful activities are include in planning for older adults.

ICCD Clubhouse - "recovery for the whole person"

People who have mental health challenges and live in King County are fortunate to have two clubhouses certified by the International Center for Clubhouse Development (ICCD). Hero House, a free-standing clubhouse, is located on the eastside. In Seattle, Wallingford House, part of Community Psychiatric Clinic, welcomes clients of any agency. Both welcome visits from people interested in learning more.

ICCD Clubhouses are proven to help their members move forward in their recovery journeys by providing a built-in peer support network, a place to belong and contribute

while developing self-respect and responsibility. The focus is on member strengths and goals.

The Clubhouses are run jointly by members and staff. Life in the clubhouse revolves around the "work-ordered day" in which members choose to work in the commercial kitchens to provide meals, the business office, the library, or to reach out to absent members, among many other tasks. Clubhouse also includes formal employment programs.

Wallingford House

4120 Stone Wy N
Seattle, Wa 98103
98007
206-545-8642

Hero House

14230 NE 21st
Bellevue, WA
98007
425-614-1282



Peer Support Specialist Services continue to grow in King County

Peer support specialists are people who are on their own recovery journeys and have received training in how to be helpful to others who participate in mental health services. They provide a living example of hope for others with mental illnesses.

The most important credential peer specialists bring to their work is, I.T.E. —"I'm The Evidence" - that recovery is possible.

King County will provide three of the Washington State Certified Peer Counselor Trainings for King County residents in 2010. A class in April resulted in another 17 trained peer support specialists. The next class is just finishing on October 1. The next class is November 8-12, 2010. There will be three classes in 2011. King County provides a test preparation session to people who have completed the course and are waiting to take the exam.

To date, 117 peers have graduated from the Peer Counselor Training in King County.

The state Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery also provides the trainings.



For more information and the training application, go to: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/peer.shtml>

In order to be a certified peer counselor, a person must complete the Peer Counselor Training, pass an exam, and find a job in an agency as a peer. The agency will assist them in applying to the State Department of Health to be an "Agency-Affiliated Counselor"

People who work or volunteer as a peer, have priority for the trainings. Check with mental health agencies and the National Alliance on Mental Illness for volunteer opportunities.

King County created Standards for Peer Support to ensure peer specialists (including peer counselors,) receive appropriate training, supervision and support. King County will be reviewing agency practices this fall to ensure the Standards are working and to learn more about peer services in the mental health system.

King County peer specialists are being recognized for their excellent leadership. Sue Ray, a peer specialist at Sound Mental Health, created a new program to help others build their self-esteem called, "Positively Amazing You". She was invited to present about the program at the statewide NAMI conference. Peers and peer services were recognized at the Exemplary Service Awards (page 6). Helen Nilon and Catherine Hawks Bryson were selected by their agencies to become WRAP Facilitator Trainers (page 3).

For more information about training and job opportunities, go to

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/MentalHealth/Recovery/HavingAvoice/PeerSupport.aspx>

Good news! The Warm Line in King County expands hours of service

The Warm Line added service on Wednesday evenings beginning September 15, 2010. The Warm Line now operates from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays.

The phone number for the Warm Line is 206-933-7001. If that number is long distance, please dial toll free: 1.877.500.WARM (9276) .

A Warm Line is a phone line a person

living with mental health challenges can call when needing someone to talk to, when feeling lonely, sad or stressed --before they are in crisis-- to speak with another peer/consumer.

The Warm Line in King County was created by consumers for consumers.

The future goal of the Warm Line is to be available 24 hours a day every day of the week. As the Warm Line expands to more days and hours of

operation, more volunteers will be needed. If you are interested, send an e-mail to WarmLine@Navos.org or call 206-439-2625.





King County

**Mental Health, Chemical Abuse
and Dependency Services Division**

**Department of
Community and Human Services**

CNK-HS-0400

**Chinook Building
401 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400
Seattle, WA 98104**

**206.263.9000
206.296.0583 Fax
206.205.1634 Fax - Clinical Services
206.205.0569 TTY/TDD**

My Recovery Story...

I am Sue, Mom of Twin daughters & Granny of 2 amazing grandchildren. I love to sing, encourage and inspire others. I can be downright silly at times. I love to meet new people. I love life, believe each day is a gift, and am always looking for the little surprises God has in store for us. I enjoy writing, especially when my brain & fingers cooperate!

I can remember a time I just couldn't seem to get out of bed and, experienced a very deep depression which lasted for 3 long, miserable years.

I loved my job, but would find myself often headed in the opposite direction, eventually pulled off to the side of the road crying my eyes out. My family didn't understand. My then husband harped on me constantly about the responsibilities I had and was expected to maintain. I was actively seeing a therapist, had been through several unsuccessful trials of various antidepressants prescribed by my PCP yet my life continued to get worse! I felt worthless, as though I was a burden to my family. I considered suicide.

My therapist recommended I see a psychiatrist for ADD. The first medication he put me on was great, I could focus, concentrate, make decisions, and leave a store without buying a thing. Unfortunately it also had some side effects that were most unpleasant. A few other ADD meds were tried, one brought

about some very scary side effects. Feeling unsafe, I found myself in an In-patient Psych Unit at a local hospital. I was then diagnosed with bi-polar II disorder.

The things that I learned during my four day stay in the hospital were invaluable to me, yet I worried about how these illnesses would affect my life. I experienced an immense fear which in many ways gave me the feeling of a rug being pulled out from under me. The years that followed seemed like a roller coaster ride gone wild as my life as I'd known it changed drastically. I found myself unable to work.

I experienced problems with every mood stabilizer available, the last causing some rather serious medical issues, the scariest being vertigo. I would often wake up in the morning to a spinning room. My PCP prescribed a walker. Living on my own, stumbling about, I thought I might end up living in an assisted living facility. I was petrified at the thought.

After a nasty fall resulting in a broken nose, the ER doc determined that the vertigo was most likely due to a medication. Tracking back to when it began, I found that it coincided with the bipolar medication I'd last started and consulted with my psychiatrist. We cautiously decided to see how I did without it. The vertigo disappeared. Just prior to this I began attending a W.R.A.P. (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) workshop which I found very helpful. Not much later, I attended training to become a Certified Peer Counselor.

Looking back, I marvel at where my life has taken me. I recently celebrated my 2 year anniversary working as a Certified Peer Specialist. Many aspects of my life are far from the picture of perfection I'd like them to be but, at each obstacle I encounter, I find the most creative ways to jump over them. One of the obstacles that prevailed was intense anxiety. Looking back over the meds I had been on for bipolar disorder, I recognized that those had seemed to cause more anxiety. I talked to my psychiatrist who prescribed a very low dose of anti-anxiety medication. This helped for awhile and with each struggle I worked my WRAP. Eventually due to some environmental factors, obstacles, road bumps, and such, my anxiety seemed to worsen over several months and I reached a crisis point.

Last February, I hesitantly checked myself into the hospital praying all the way they would be able to take me. This was the same hospital I had learned so much from years prior. My prayers were answered and with the help of the staff there sorted through the changes I needed to make to get me back on track. One thing I learned was a need to become my own cheerleader. A couple of very dear friends when asked, picked up and brought to me during a visit a set of pom-poms. I carry them EVERYWHERE! I changed my service provider to a private practice clinic. Both the therapist and psychiatrist I see now believe the Bipolar Disorder diagnosis was incorrect. I take medication for ADD and anxiety, which has helped immensely. I work my WRAP to help avoid depression.

I enjoy my job immensely as it utilizes all of my natural strengths and abilities. I designed and led a group called Positively You (now "Positively Amazing You") which is now being led by Peers at 2 other sites within the agency and am told it has been a BIG hit. Last November I attended training to become a Certified WRAP Facilitator, and began facilitating WRAP. This past April after sharing the Positively You group at a Recovery Gathering, I was asked to present it at the Mental Health Educational Expo sponsored by the Greater Puget Sound Consumer Coalition. While sharing with another team within our agency about WRAP, the conversation switched to Positively You. One gal held up her little red WRAP book, and said, "think about how this started, and look how it's grown. I'm waiting for YOUR book to come out." I was humbled, awed, and inspired all at the same time.

I'm excited at the doors that are opening, the opportunities that are being presented, I'm pleased to be on such an adventure one that is worth every moment!!!

King County Mental Health Recovery is on the Web! Check it out:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/MentalHealth/Recovery.aspx>

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/MentalHealth/Recovery/KcMentalHealth/KCMentalHealthRoundUp.aspx>