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New Board Members

Gail Johnson, R.N., B.S., Simmons College. Retired registered nurse. Civic Leadership Positions: Hillsborough Heritage Museum Board Member, Farmsteads of New England Board Member, Past Board Member of Hillsborough Visiting Nurse Association, Past Board Member of Concord Visiting Nurse Association, Past Advisory Board Member of Contoocook Valley Counseling Center, Board Member of Project LIFT Literacy Program. Resident of Hillsborough. Joined Riverbend Board in 2007.

Meg Miller, R.N., B.S., Franklin Pierce College. Executive Director of Peabody Home. Civic Leadership Positions: Northern New England Homes and Services for Aging, Past Member of Lakes Region Rotary Club, Franklin Rotary Club, Canterbury Housing Association, Ombudsman Advisory Council, T.R.I.P. Advisory Committee, Franklin Savings Bank Trustee and Lakes Region General Healthcare Trustee. Resident of Canterbury. Joined Riverbend Board in 2007.

Randy Hayes, MD, Tufts Medical School. Physician at Concord Family Medicine. Was the founding Chair of the Concord Hospital Ethics Committee. Is currently the Medical Director of Havenwood and Co-Medical Director at Harris Hill Center and Pleasant View Retirement. Resident of Canterbury. Joined Riverbend Board in 2007.

Dear Friends,

5/31/07

Welcome to the summer issue of Currents.

Many people in our community are struggling with powerful mental-health issues, including depression, addiction, schizophrenia and other diseases. The staff at Riverbend Community Mental Health, Inc. remains dedicated to serving those in need in our community. We're proud to offer a variety of programs and services to help them overcome adversity and improve their lives.

We're thrilled to be opening the new Susan McLane Memory Wellness Center this summer, and this new program will offer support and treatment for people struggling with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of memory loss, as well as assistance and encouragement for their families. The program, based at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Clinic, will host an open house in early fall.

People with severe mental illnesses have drastically shorter life expectancies than those in the general population, so we have partnered with the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center and the YMCA to study how the InSHAPE program can improve health outcomes.

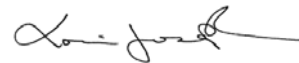
Our Vocational Program is making great strides to improve the lives of our consumers, as we're helping them secure competitive jobs in integrated settings. By joining the workforce, our consumers enjoy greater independence, as well as increased feelings of self-confidence and self-worth. And through this program, we're breaking down barriers and reducing the stigma associated with mental illness by demonstrating that people with mental illness can successfully assimilate into the workplace. Our staff hopes to expand this dynamic program by recruiting more local businesses to participate.

Along with our fellow Board members, we are pleased with Riverbend's efforts to increase our philanthropic efforts, and we're working with Riverbend leadership to become one of the top local charities in our community. We're making a difference. And with the community's continued support, we will provide quality services for those in need, offering treatment, support and hope for a better tomorrow.

Sincerely,



Brad Smith, Chairman of the Board



Louis Josephson, President/CEO



Vocational Program

People with a mental illness can—and want to—work.

“Our goal is to help people with a mental illness find and keep competitive jobs,” explained Sue Ellen Bagnardi, MS, Vocational Services Coordinator at Riverbend.

“We try to help people find jobs with competitive pay in integrated settings,” Sue Ellen continued.

The program helps with all aspects of finding a job—including writing a resume, identifying consumers’ strengths and weaknesses, improving their interview skills and coordinating services with state agencies such as New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation.

The staff works with a broad spectrum of consumers, ranging in ages from high school students to elders. Hours of work and salaries vary, too. Some consumers work five hours per week, while others work full-time.

Since everyone’s personal situation is different, the process must be individualized for each person.

“Individuals with disabilities differ from one another in terms of the types of work they would like to do, the nature of the support they need and want, and the decision whether or not to disclose their disability to the employer and co-workers,” Sue Ellen explained.

“The focus is on helping individuals to become as independent and self-reliant as possible,” Sue Ellen said.

While this program benefits consumers, it also helps our community by providing much-needed education and “stigma-busting” around the topic of mental illness.

“As people in the community see individuals with disabilities working, consumers are less stigmatized for their mental illness and they become more socially acceptable,” Sue Ellen continued. “And when consumers are working, they feel more accepted, and feel better about themselves.”

The Riverbend staff works with a variety of local businesses, including grocery stores and restaurants, and they hope to increase the number of employers that participate in the program. Riverbend’s Vocational team encourages local companies—especially those in downtown Concord—to consider hiring Riverbend consumers for part-time jobs, even for just a few hours per week.

Part of Riverbend’s role is educating businesses about mental-health issues. If a consumer wishes to disclose their disability, the consumer, along with Riverbend’s staff, educate the employer

about this particular disability.

Sue Ellen is impressed by the “perseverance of consumers in wanting to get well and viewing themselves as workers and valuable members of society.”

“Our aim is promoting hope, helping consumers in their effort to take personal responsibility for health and life choices and supporting consumers in getting on with life beyond illness.”

If your business has a job opening please contact Sue Ellen Bagnardi at (603) 225-0123, ext. 2238. Riverbend has many consumers who are wanting and waiting to work.

Concord-area businesses employing Vocational Program participants include:

- YMCA of Concord
- Rufo's Florist
- The Racquet Club of Concord
- The Friendly Kitchen
- Papa Gino's
- Sonshine Preschool/Daycare
- NH Commodity Supplemental Food Program

Memory Wellness Program

In a few weeks, Riverbend Community Mental Health, Inc. will open the doors of the Susan McLane Memory Wellness Center, a resource for people suffering from memory loss and dementia.

In a few weeks, Riverbend Community Mental Health, Inc. will open the doors of the Susan McLane Memory Wellness Center, a resource for people suffering from memory loss and dementia. The program will operate at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Clinic on Pleasant Street in Concord, which donated the space.

This new program will work with individuals and their families, offering assessment, short-term counseling, support and education in an outpatient setting.

Clients will be referred to the center by their primary care physician.

The center will offer flexible services that are designed to meet the complex needs of individuals with dementia, and those who care for them. The center assesses needs, provides education and facilitates referrals to insure coordinated care. Our professional staff is comprised of an LICSW, ARNP, psychologist and geriatric psychiatrist.

Individuals and families can rely on the center to complete a detailed needs assessment. This assessment will include gathering historical and current information, determination of formal and informal support systems and areas or contributing stressors.

Consultation with the psychologist for diagnostic clarification or with the psychiatrist for medications is arranged as needed.

We hope to create an atmosphere of support for individuals and their caregivers.

“Getting the diagnosis right is an important first step,” said Louis

Josephson, CEO and President of Riverbend. “We’re also providing education and support for family members. That’s a need we’ve heard from the community.”

The Memory Wellness Program staff believes being located at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Clinic will make it comfortable to seek support for individuals and families.

“We’ve been receiving more referrals to elder services with requests for evaluation of memory loss”, said Carrie Hughes, Director of Elders Program at Riverbend. “We feel there is a need in the Concord community for a comprehensive approach to assessment and treatment of people with memory loss.

“We need to look at the illness and the impact it has upon the systems, including family, caregivers, the acute-care system, as well as the financial impact,” Carrie continued. A major benefit to this program is the high level of support and encouragement that the Memory Wellness Program team will

provide to the family.

The program will support the client and their caregivers, connecting family members with community services that will help meet their needs. These services may include adult-day care, respite care and referral for assistance with Medicare and Medicaid eligibility application (s), among others.

“We’re a resource, not a long-term care provider,” Carrie explained, adding that they plan to see consumers and their families for three to seven visits and then share their findings with the client, their family and their primary-care physician.

The program will integrate services and form relationships with the consumers’ physicians.

Because of the complex issues surrounding memory loss and dementia, Carrie said she is excited about the opportunity to collaborate with Patti Nichols from Concord Hospital on this project, and applauds the valuable resources they will bring to the center.

Patti Nichols said she is also looking forward to the launch of the Memory Wellness Center.

“This program will be one more resource in an area where there are limited resources for pro-active assessment, treatment and education for dementia and other memory problems,” Patti explained.

Patti will provide consumers and their families with information about valuable resources—such as support groups—in our community.



Continued from previous page

“We’ll develop a plan to make this process a little less confusing, frightening and chaotic for patients and their families,” Patti continued.

“It’s so frightening for people faced with memory loss. Their worlds are turning upside down and their relationships are changing,” Patti said. “These people and their families feel so powerless and so out of control. We help them identify areas where they do have some control.”

The team predicts that the highest percentage of consumers seeking these services will be seniors, but the program will be open to anyone of any age.

Susan McLane, after whom the program is named, was a dedicated public servant who served in the NH Legislature

for 25 years. She was a strong advocate for health issues, including mental illness.

She was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and lived with this condition until her death in 2005. Her daughter, Ann McLane Kuster, wrote *The Last Dance: Facing Alzheimer’s with Love and Laughter*, a book about their family’s experiences with the disease.

Susan McLane was a Concord resident and her family has been extremely enthusiastic and supportive about starting this program in her home community.

The Concord Susan McLane Memory Wellness Center is similar to a program in Manchester.

Riverbend Invests in Fundraising Efforts

As a non-for-profit organization, Riverbend Community Mental Health, Inc. is committed to serving the greater-Concord community. Funds donated to the organization are crucial in delivering exciting new treatments and needed mental health services beyond what is covered through reimbursement from insurance.

Recently, Riverbend received a grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation to enhance their philanthropic resources. As a result, Riverbend is working with consultants from Donovan, Slone and Guthrie to develop a strategic philanthropy plan.

As part of their evaluation to prepare the plan, Donovan, Slone and Guthrie have interviewed key internal and external audiences about their perceptions of Riverbend. And, they spoke with Riverbend’s Board of Directors, asking questions about the organization’s fundraising capacity. Finally, they interviewed key local business leaders and stakeholders regarding public perception of Riverbend and the organization’s place in the community.

Armed with that data, they developed recommendations about how Riverbend can increase its philanthropic efforts which they presented to the Riverbend Board of Directors in May.

“Our goal is to be recognized in this community as an outstanding charity—one of the top five that people consider when giving,” said Louis Josephson, Ph.D., CEO/President of Riverbend. “We want to be a place where people are proud to offer their support because of our success in keeping our community healthy and in providing innovative treatments to people from all walks of life.”

Louis recognizes the need for community education as part of the organization’s fundraising efforts, explaining, “People think that we get state funding as a supplement, but that’s not the case. The stigma surrounding mental illness must also be challenged. Anyone can suffer from a mental illness and there is no shame or weakness associated with getting help. In fact, the community should be concerned when someone they know does not go for help.”

Riverbend is developing a strategic philanthropy plan, listing goals and objectives for the next few years, including hiring a full-time Philanthropy Director.

According to Louis, the organization’s leadership is enthusiastic about this latest endeavor, and they are committed to building a successful annual philanthropy program.

Riverbend Gets In SHAPE

Eric Marsh, "InSHAPE"
Coordinator at Riverbend



Studies have shown that people with a severe mental illness have a life expectancy that is approximately 10-25 years shorter than the general population. While experts say that diet and exercise are critical components of a healthy lifestyle, people with SMI may have more difficulty adopting healthy lifestyle behaviors than people without a mental illness.

Mental health programs primarily focus on psychiatric treatment. Few emphasize the importance of physical fitness programs in improving consumers' overall health.

The new "In SHAPE" program has set out to change that.

The dramatic statistics on the reduced life expectancies of people with severe mental illness mean that mental health centers like Riverbend have to work extra hard to improve the health as well as the mental health of the people we serve. When Dr. Stephen Bartels of the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center asked if Riverbend would participate in a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Health Promotion grant, Riverbend enthusiastically agreed.

Eric Marsh, "In SHAPE" Coordinator at Riverbend, explained that the program will compare two different methods of improving fitness and diet.

Program participants will be randomly divided into two groups. The first group will receive a Health Mentor, a certified personal fitness trainer, who will offer motivation and wellness education during weekly meetings with consumers. In addition, "In SHAPE" participants will receive a free one-year membership to the Concord YMCA, advice from a nutritionist, health consultations with nurses, and the opportunity to attend group celebrations and earn rewards for achieving fitness objectives.

The second group will receive a free one-year membership to the YMCA, including instruction on how to use the fitness equipment, and educational materials on exercise and healthy eating, but will not work with a Health Mentor.

"The program will examine if a Health Mentor can help improve overall results, from improved fitness to improved mood, self image and self-esteem," Eric explained.

"Participants in the second group will need to be more self-motivated, and will only have access to the personal trainers on staff at the YMCA," Eric explained.

"Participants in the first group will have regular meetings with a Health Mentor working for the "IN SHAPE" project, who will provide active support and encouragement."

"Program participants have had an incredibly positive reaction to this program," Eric said, adding that he expects to enroll 130 participants into Riverbend's "In SHAPE" program over the next two years.

Typical gym memberships average around \$50 per month, and personal training sessions often cost \$50 or more. All members of the In SHAPE study have access to the YMCA, and half also have access to a dietician and a personal trainer free-of-charge.

"Our Health Mentors will help participants set personalized goals for fitness and healthy eating that are obtainable and realistic," Eric said, explaining that each participant's goals will be assessed once a week and revised, as necessary, to maximize success.

"We've received unbelievable backing from everyone at Riverbend," he said. "People have been incredibly helpful."

Eric is passionate about the program and excited about its potential to help consumers at Riverbend. He said a similar program will open in Boston in the next six months, and, hopefully, will expand to other mental health facilities in the near future.



Sheila and Rose,
at the YMCA

Send us your e-mail address by emailing Susan Cummings, scummings@riverbendcmhc.org

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**and making great improvements to our work
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105 Loudon Road, Bldg #3
Children's Intervention Program

105 Loudon Road, Bldg #4
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3 No. State Street
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