



CONNECTIONS

From the Executive Director...

Congress Moves Closer to Mental Health Bill

Transitional Residents Enjoy Rafting Trip
page 2



Ninth Annual Golf Outing Set for Sept. 22
page 6

New ALSP Apartments Opened At Fairview
page 7

Currently, new requirements for insurance plans to equalize mental health benefits with those for other medical illnesses are being seriously considered in Washington, D.C., by both the Senate and the House of Representatives. This represents the latest step in a six-year battle to pass so-called “mental health parity legislation.” The Senate approved such a bill last fall and the House passed its version of a mental health parity bill last month. The House and the Senate differ over which mental health disorders insurers would have to cover and how the new federal requirements would interact with state laws and other provisions.

Under the House bill (HR1424), health care plans that provide mental health benefits would face new requirements to cover all mental health and substance abuse disorders listed in the American Psychiatric Association Manual. The House, by including this provision, obviously aimed at preventing diagnosis related discrimination by insurers. The Senate bill (S558) requires plans to comply with existing state and federal coverage standards.

To offset the estimated \$4.3 billion, 10-year cost of the House legislation, its plan calls for \$2 billion to be raised by increasing the amount pharmaceutical companies pay the government for prescription drugs dispensed through the Medicaid program. Another \$2.4 billion would come from increases from physician-owned specialty hospitals. Congressional budget rules require such offsets. The Senate bill did not include offsets to fund this new legislation. This is another point to be negotiated between the House and the Senate.

The movement by the Senate and now the House has not been well-received by business groups who have stepped-up their opposition to the recent actions of Congress. They state that this new legislation would impinge upon employer discretion on coverage decisions. More recently,

pharmaceutical companies, such as Eli Lilly, criticized the House bill for raising Medicaid payments from the drug makers.

As expected, advocacy groups all across the country applaud the introduction of the mental health parity bills. They claim this legislation would finally end discrimination against people with mental health and substance abuse disorders and require equal coverage on a par with general health insurance. Many say that the bill closes long-standing gaps in the law that limit people’s access to needed mental health care. Others point out that the bill would bar discriminatory financial arrangements and treatment limitations for both mental health and substance abuse disorders.

The mental health community also praises the work of both the House and the Senate to finally take action to resolve an inequity that has existed for many, many years. Historically, consumers receiving mental health care and substance abuse treatments were literally robbed of healthcare coverage for which they should have been entitled. They and their families have endured both severe emotional and financial pain as a result of being denied quality care due to the imposed limitation of insurance coverage.

Much work is ahead for both the House and the Senate if the provisions for mental health parity are to become law this year. The House bill (favored by advocacy groups and the mental health community) must be reconciled with the Senate-approved version (favored by health insurers and business groups). Both bills are being considered by committees at this time. We encourage our readers to contact their Senators and Representatives and urge passage of this legislation as soon as possible. We will all benefit from this long overdue law.


Peter Scerbo, LCSW
Executive Director

CBH Care Transitional Residents Enjoy Delaware River Rafting Trip



On an Indian Summer Sunday last November, the seven residents of CBH Care’s Transitional Residence in Lyndhurst abandoned their usual weekend activities to go rafting down the Delaware River. After returning to Lyndhurst, Ed Deren, LCSW, Program Coordinator for the Transitional Residence, prepared this detailed report of the one-day trip which was a unique and enjoyable experience for both residents and staff:

“Taking only their lunches and some wet weather gear, the group drove up to the starting point near Port Jervis, NY. They were then transported by van to a remote spot marked by large cliffs and waterfalls. There the residents traded their bus for a rubber raft and a few paddles. Their objective: the Matamoras Bridge some six miles downstream. For the next three hours, they traversed the same world as the first Dutch explorers—woods and white water, with only the sound of the birds, wind and water against their paddles.

“As they had done in the past for camping trips, the group

began their planning weeks in advance. They saved money left over from communal food shopping in order to be able to rent the rafts from Kittatinny Canoes. The residents discussed among themselves their own feelings of security (and insecurity) regarding the trip. Some had never had swimming lessons, while others were concerned about being away from modern plumbing for a long period of time. The rafters who finally assembled on the shores of the Delaware had each made a personal decision about what he or she could handle and what each might encounter as we floated downstream.

“The staff, as always, tried to imagine every conceivable problem that might occur. They made several trips to the area ahead of time to look at the river, gauging its speed and the cold air as autumn came to a close. Partial Care Counselor Antonio Rivera, a former soldier with amphibious training, was a welcome addition to the group. I had previously made



Both staff and consumers in CBH Care's Transitional Residence in Lyndhurst enjoyed the rafting trip down the Delaware River last November.

In photo at top left, Program Coordinator Ed Deren (second from left) poses with residents before the trip.

several trips down the Delaware and I offered the staff this sage Buddhist maxim: 'You never step in the same river twice.'

"The residents took a little time learning to steer and propel the raft through the current. Everyone remarked on the cleanliness of the water and how quiet things were away from the South Bergen area. Each twist and turn in the river brought some new adventure. We learned to avoid large rocks and logs that occasionally appeared. Amazing geological formations and cascading water could be seen on both sides. It seemed at times as if we were actually paddling downhill!

"In midstream, we were able to rescue a canoe that had turned over, spilling a young man and woman into the river. The residents helped by holding onto the craft until its unlucky passengers were able to paddle up with their friends in another canoe. After that, the group agreed that rafts were twice as good as canoes—and somewhat safer.

"When we reached our destination, we were tired, but

also sorry to have to leave our trusty paddles and the beautiful river behind us. Each of us, however, felt that we took a little of the river home with us, in the memory of things we accomplished and an appreciation of the natural world."

Peter Scerbo, CBH Care Executive Director, points out, "This successful river rafting trip is an excellent example of the many activities arranged for consumers in CBH Care's Transitional Residential Services Program each year. These community-based facilities house consumers who have had a recent psychiatric hospitalization, but who have the ability to develop skills for independent living. The residents of the seven-bed home in Lyndhurst participate in a full range of psychiatric rehabilitation services and activities while residing in a quiet residential neighborhood. We are pleased to be able to provide these services to the citizens of our community."

Partial Care Program Moves to New Setting On Grounds of Greystone Hospital

The Partial Care Program which serves consumers from both the CHAMP and Partnership Programs, has just completed a move to a new, more spacious setting on the grounds of Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital in Morris Plains, NJ. As stabilized patients are discharged from Greystone, they go to live in either the CHAMP Program (a more progressive setting for higher functioning consumers) or the Partnership Program (a more relaxed setting for consumers who have been hospitalized longer and need more intensive services). Both CHAMP and Partnership Programs are operated collaboratively by CBH Care and Community Hope (a Morris County based agency) in houses and “villas” on the grounds of Greystone.

The Partial Care Program is the next step in the transition back to independent living in the community. During the past few months, it was housed temporarily in one cramped

CHAMP residence, but the Partial Care Program just completed a move to Villas 5 and 6 of the Partnership Program. Consumers who are able go to part-time jobs or to other programs (such as CBH Care’s Partial Care Program in Hackensack) during the day and return to the villas where they reside in the evening.

Michael Torchia, M.Ed., Coordinator of the Partial Care Program, reported that consumers assisted staff in making the move to the new location and were excited about the new quarters. Mr. Torchia says, “As we continue to grow and change, we are making these temporary programs home to the consumers we serve. Since our move, the social workers, residence managers and other staff have all noticed an improvement in our consumers who appear to be much happier.”



On opposite page:
Staff work with consumers
in many activities in the
Partial Care Program including
preparing meals, taking
medications, making
appointments and other
activities of daily living.

In top photo:
Matt DeRogatis,
Partial Care Specialist,
and Sandy Masciandro,
Mental Health Worker,
(both standing) assist residents in
planning the day's schedule.

Above and at right:
Villas 5 and 6 are
now the setting
for the
Partial Care Program
which serves both the
CHAMP and Partnership
Programs.



Primary Care Physician Named to Treat Residents In CHAMP, Partnership Programs



Arnold P. Schoen, MD

Arnold P. Schoen, MD, a solo practitioner in general internal medicine in Hackensack, NJ, has been named as the new primary care physician to provide care to consumers in the CHAMP (Care and Hope at Morris Plains) Program and the Partnership Program, both operated collaboratively by CBH Care and Community Hope (a Morris County based agency). These two programs serve stabilized patients being discharged from Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital at Morris Plains, NJ, who go to live in residences and “villas” on the grounds of Greystone.

Susan Devlin, Director of Residential Services for CBH Care, announced the appointment of Dr. Schoen who began in his new role on March 3 and is working eight hours a week. Ms. Devlin says, “Many of our residents in the CHAMP and Partnership Programs had been hospitalized for many years and have significant secondary diagnosis such as diabetes, heart conditions, and vascular issues, in addition to their severe and persistent mental health needs. We had spoken with the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and asked for additional funding for a primary care physician to help better coordinate the care we provide our residents. They agreed and provided us the resources to offer Dr. Schoen the position.”

Ms. Devlin reports that currently 55 residents in the CHAMP and Partnership Programs will be seeing Dr. Schoen as their primary care physician in his on-site office.

Dr. Schoen is a graduate of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City and has practiced internal medicine in New Jersey, first as a solo practitioner in Ridgewood and then with Medical Diagnostic Associates, a large multi-specialty medical group in Summit. He currently has a solo practice in Hackensack primarily based in acute care, skilled nursing and assisted living facilities.

Ms. Devlin says, “Dr. Schoen has already made quite an impression on both our staff and consumers. We are so pleased to have him as part of our team.”



Save the Date!

Wild Turkey



Foundation Schedules Ninth Golf Outing For September 22 at Wild Turkey

The CBH Care Foundation has announced that its Ninth Annual Golf Outing will be held at Wild Turkey Golf Course in Hardyston, NJ, on Monday, September 22, 2008.

Wild Turkey is one of several golf courses attached to the Crystal Springs Resort in Hamburg, NJ. It was named one of the top golf courses in the state by New Jersey Monthly magazine, and is described as a “basin and ridge” course combining the expansive Ramapo Mountain basin with the rugged mountain ridge.

Co-chairs of the Golf Outing will again be CBH Care Foundation President Helen Kuruc (who is Professor of Mathematics at Essex County College) and CBH Care Honorary Board Member Gabe Ambrosio (who is a Lyndhurst attorney and former state senator). Both are urging all friends and supporters of CBH Care to put this important benefit event on their fall calendars.

A donation of \$225 for each participant

will include a noon luncheon barbecue, golf carts, green fees, practice range, and a gourmet dinner at the clubhouse following the afternoon of golf. All golfers will be eligible to win any of the special contests (hole-in-one on each par three, longest drive, closest to the pin, straightest drive, and gross and net) and raffle prizes.

The CBH Care Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization formed to support the non-profit charitable services provided by Comprehensive Behavioral Healthcare. All contributions to the Foundation are tax deductible. The Foundation is seeking sponsors for all the special contests and prizes as well as a large turnout of golfers.

For further information about the Foundation’s Ninth Annual Golf Outing, registration and/or sponsorship, contact James M. Cooney, Associate Executive Director, or Jan Damiano, Executive Secretary, at 201-935-3322 or log on to the website at: www.cbhcare.com



CBH Care CONNECTIONS

is produced by:

Comprehensive Behavioral
Healthcare, Inc.
516 Valley Brook Avenue
Lyndhurst, NJ 07071
201-935-3322
www.cbhcare.com

Executive Director:
Peter Scerbo, LCSW

Staff Contributors:
Jan Damiano
Ed Deren, LCSW
Susan Devlin, M.A.
Michael Torchia, M.Ed.
Cheryl Tormo, LCSW

Editor:
Anne R. Warner
Public Relations
Consultant

Design: SHK/Stark Creative Services
Printing: Otis Graphics, Inc.

Alternative Living Supervised Program Opens New Apartment House in Fairview

CBH Care's Alternative Living Supervised Program (ALSP) has expanded with the opening of a newly renovated apartment house in Fairview, NJ.

ALSP serves consumers who are ready to move from 24-hour residential care to a family home, an apartment or boarding room. CBH Care continues to provide support services through a unique outreach program that includes a full range of services to enhance consumers' quality of life and decrease the risk of future hospitalizations. Trained counselors supervise participants from one hour a week to several times a day as needed. They provide face-to-face supportive assistance with medication, budgeting, meal planning and shopping, as well as linkage to benefits, legal services, mental health care and the medical community. ALSP is built around "a person-centered approach" to providing care, actively involving consumers in every step of their treatment and recovery.

In August 2007, CBH Care purchased a large, well-maintained five-family house located in a residential neighborhood in Fairview. This house was purchased with a grant from the New Jersey Housing Mortgage and Finance Agency (HMFA)



and funding from the CBH Care Foundation. The house has four apartments that will house two consumers in each and an additional apartment for one consumer.

Susan Devlin, MA, Director of Residential Services for CBH Care, says, "We have 66 consumers in the ALSP Program now, mostly living in their own apartments. CBH Care has two apartments in Lyndhurst and now this apartment house in Fairview."

Cheryl Tormo, LCSW, Program Coordinator for ALSP, reports, "The first two consumers moved into a Fairview House apartment in January, 2008, and two more moved into the house in early April. It is our hope that the remaining apartments will be fully occupied by additional consumers by the fall of this year. We will receive referrals from the Project for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) and individuals who are ready to move to independent living from New Jersey Department of Mental Health Services contracted facilities."

For more information about the ALSP services call Ms. Tormo at 201-646-0333.

Health Tip

Exercise---Good for Mind, Body and Spirit

Now that spring is here and warmer weather is eagerly anticipated, we can start planning more activities out-of-doors—including regular physical exercise.

The American Heart Association and the American College of Sports Medicine recently released new guidelines recommending 30 minutes per day, five days a week, to help keep us healthy and ward off many physical ailments. Some of the best outdoor exercise includes walking, cycling, running or jogging, swimming and other moderate-intensity aerobic activities.

Regular exercise:

- Reduces your risk of developing heart disease
- Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints
- Helps control blood pressure
- Helps manage weight
- Builds muscular strength and endurance
- Lowers risk factors for colon cancer and type 2 diabetes
- Increases flexibility and range of motion in joints
- Helps improve quality of sleep
- Reduces stress and feelings of depression and anxiety
- Promotes psychological well-being and self-esteem

Studies have shown that regular exercise is extremely helpful in preventing injuries, increasing stamina and managing many health conditions. If you have not been exercising during the winter, spring is a perfect time to begin an exercise program. Just remember to start slowly and gradually work up to your goals in terms of intensity and total exercise time. A very moderate spring exercise regime can be the prelude to a more vigorous summer exercise program—and to better health overall!



Health Tip

How to Minimize Springtime Allergies

Springtime allergies can range from a few sneezes and watery eyes to constant sneezing, tearing and coughing and severe fatigue. These symptoms occur when histamine is released as the body's immune system encounters an allergen like pollen or mold. Such allergies can develop at any age and can disappear at any time.

If the symptoms are severe, you should visit your primary care provider or an allergist for advice and treatment. However, for those with mild symptoms, here are some tips on how to manage them.

If you are allergic to pollens, mold and other outdoor substances:

- Keep outdoor activity to a minimum in the early morning and early evening
- Stay indoors when the pollen counts are at their highest
- Keep car windows closed while driving
- Do not mow lawn, rake leaves or work in the garden—these activities stir up pollen and mold.

Indoors, these steps can be taken:

- Keep windows closed at home and use an in-home air-filter
- Vacuum carpets frequently
- Avoid drying bedding or clothes outdoors where they can collect pollen and mold spores
- Get rid of old magazines and newspapers which collect dust and encourage the growth of mold
- Avoid wall-to-wall carpeting in bedrooms (and stuffed animals in children's bedrooms)

More than 40 million Americans suffer from nasal allergies each year and experts report the numbers are growing. Most people start out fighting the symptoms with over-the-counter medications, though these products are not very effective for many people. Antihistamines, decongestants and nasal sprays can help but also may produce side effects (such as drowsiness, dry mouth, increased blood pressure, insomnia, anxiety, etc.) Be sure to read the labels on all over-the-counter medications before buying and using them. If symptoms persist, a visit to a physician is recommended.



Comprehensive
Behavioral Healthcare, Inc.
516 Valley Brook Avenue
Lyndhurst, NJ 07071

Non-profit
US Postage
Paid
Rutherford, NJ
Permit No. 332



United Way of Bergen County

Address correction requested

Printed on recycled paper