



**Our mission is to empower families raising children with mood, behavioral and emotional disorders, by providing support, training and advocacy skills and collaborating with community partners to improve the system of care for children.**

### Welcome to National Mental Health Awareness Month!

*Dianne Shaffer, Executive Director*

May is Mental Health Month and specifically, May 3<sup>rd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> is **National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week!!!**

Though most of us think about mental health on a daily basis, Mental Health Month gives us an opportunity to bring awareness to the needs of children and youth with emotional, behavioral and social disabilities and their families across America, and decrease the stigma associated with mental health challenges.

**In this issue,** you will find information about how to access services for your child, tips for staying healthy, signs to look for depression in teens, and personal stories regarding how mental illness can affect families.

Mental health problems affect *one in every five young* people at any given time. An estimated two-thirds of these young people and their families are not getting the help that they need. In Kalamazoo County, there will be a number of

special events taking place. Please make sure you look at the calendar on page 3 of this issue. We would love to see you!

I am very excited to report that we had a successful kick off event in March for both of our advisory groups, Parent Advisory Group (PAG) and Calling All Youth (CAY), the youth advisory group. PAG then co-hosted a training event in April called ‘Becoming a Voice for Your Cause’. Parents and other community members received training, teaching them to become an advocate for their cause and to speak to elected and public officials effectively and persuasively. They also had dinner with local and state level directors, legislators, and decision-makers in order to practice their skills. We had a fabulous turnout!

**Don’t forget that ASK offers free parent support groups** for any parent or caregiver raising a child with a mood, emotional or behavioral challenge. These groups are a wonderful way to meet other fami-

lies who are dealing with similar issues, and share and learn new information. We have a general group that meets on the first Monday of each month at the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. We also facilitate a group that specifically targets the needs and concerns of families involved in the community mental health system. Please see our Events Calendar to determine what group would best suit your needs, or call us at (269) 343-5896 for more information. *Free child care and snacks are provided.*

**On May 5,** voters in Kalamazoo County will be asked to approve a tax levy of 0.4 mills to support public transportation. Many of the families we work with at ASK rely on public transportation to get to appointments, jobs, school, etc. **Please remember to get out on May 5 and VOTE YES to support public transportation.**

Remember, raising kids can be tough. If you need help, just ASK!

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### Is Your Child Struggling?

*By Christine Eckrich*



Is your child struggling at home and school? Is he or she struggling in social settings? Is it impossible for you or him/her to manage their behavior in any setting? You may benefit from receiving services from Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services for Families and Children (KCMHSAS).

If you feel you need help, one of the first steps to take is to call the Access Center at (269) 373-6000. Upon calling, you will be asked general information and asked to tell a little part of your story. If the Access Center feels you may qualify or benefit from their services, they will refer your information to an Intake

Specialist at KCMHSAS. An Intake Specialist will turn your call for a more extensive phone interview. After gathering additional information, they will talk about possible services for your child and you may be asked to meet in person for an “intake” appointment. No one will be denied services because of an inability to pay.

When you go in for your intake, don’t be afraid! KCMHSAS is there to help you help your child!! One of the most important things to remember during an intake is to be honest. The more information you provide, the better equipped they will be to refer you to the services that will specifically help your family. I am living proof that if someone in your

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### STAY HEALTHY!

*By Kathy Howard*

Now is a good time to talk about the correlation between mental health and physical health. We all know that these are very stressful times that we are living in. Everyday stress is normal for everyone, but when we suffer from mental illness, it is very important to stay healthy. Staying healthy is a big part of recovery, whether you are an adult with mental illness or a caregiver of someone with mental illness, this all applies to you.

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## Mental Health and Poverty: A Personal Story

By Gisela Lawson

I was raised in a single-parent home with four siblings. My mother dropped out of school in the ninth grade and moved to New Jersey from Puerto Rico, in order to escape her strict upbringing. My mother often spoke to us about the environment she was raised in, how her father watched her walk to school and back to be sure she would not get involved with boys. Her uncle was racist and often shared his dislike for anyone that was not from Puerto Rico. She also shared the physical and sexual abuse she experienced at the hands of her male partners, and the struggles she eventually faced regarding her being a lesbian.

My mother was often depressed and I attributed this to her negative experiences, her struggle with making ends meet and the internal dilemmas she faced. I also thought if she would just get an education, a better job and some therapy, she would be normal. What I didn't realize until much later in my adulthood was that my mother suffered from

several mood and emotional disorders and that her environment only exacerbated, not caused her problems.

Living in poverty is miserable. You often worry about when and what you will eat at your next meal, whether the power will be turned off again, or whether you are going to get evicted again. However, when you add a mental health disorder into the mix, you are likely to end up with a cocktail of destruction and that is exactly what happened.

Because of the many struggles my mother faced, we were all placed in foster care while she received inpatient-treatment at a mental health facility. Though she eventually left the program, and we returned home to her (5 years later and after several bouts with group homes), her struggles continued. She struggled with maintaining employment and faced many evictions and more involvement with the juvenile justice system and child and family services.

Honestly, I don't know what she needed. I do know that what she had was not working. I don't believe that her situation was worse than those who are better off financially, but I do know that the added stress of her financial situation intensified the problems.

Today, my mother continues to struggle. Her resistance to therapy and medication makes it difficult for me to maintain a healthy relationship with her. As she continues to struggle financially, battle with the pain she felt after being disowned by her father when she shared about being gay, and the constant worry she has because all but one of her children continue to have dealings with social services, the courts and financial strains, I wonder if she will ever be "normal". I often wonder if she didn't have to deal with all of this, would she be better off mentally. As these tears escape my hold and the heart ache haunts me, I realize I will never know.

## The Secret No One Talked About

By Mary Beth Mapes

I grew up in the suburbs of Minneapolis, Minnesota. We were a solidly middle class family, the same as others in our neighborhood. We went to church every week, to the doctor as needed, to the dentist every 6 months, attended school and went to work, but we had a secret...

When I was about 5 years old my mother had a "nervous breakdown". Her only care was from our family physician who told her it was in her head and she needed to snap out of it. I now realize that my mother had bi-polar disorder and must have been having a particularly difficult time. I suffer from chronic depression and have for as long as I can remember. All of my daughters are affected to some extent with

depression, ADHD, OCD and my youngest has bi-polar disorder.

My oldest daughter has been doing our family genealogy and has discovered more "secrets" going back many, many years. Hidden were suicides, alcoholism, a favorite older cousin of my mother's who just disappeared as a young man (she always wondered what happened to him). We know now he was committed to a mental institution for the rest of his adult life.

My family really wasn't unusual, we looked like everyone else. We mostly acted like everyone else. I often wonder how many of the people we knew had the same struggles we did, hurting and yet feeling the need to hide their "secrets".

How much better would life have been for everyone, if we had been able to share those secret burdens?

Thank heavens that as a society, we are becoming more aware that mental illness doesn't mean we are crazy, it just means that we need help like anyone else with a disease. Mental illness runs in my family just the same as brown eyes, blonde hair and diabetes. It's not a secret anymore and for that I am grateful.

## Stay Healthy! cont

These are some strategies that my family and I have used to stay healthy:

**We surrounded ourselves with friends and families that were educated on my daughters challenges..** Surround yourself with friends and family. They can be very supportive when you are going through rough times. Build your natural supports whether that is a friend, relative or even someone from a community service. Hang-out, watch funny movies, play cards, or play games. One of our favorite games to play as a family is Pictionary.

**If you feel that things are getting too overwhelming, call someone and let them know, see your doctor as soon as possible, and slow down.** Many times we try to do too many things at once. If you don't get everything done that is ok. Take the time to do one thing at a time. Figure out what needs to be done first and work on that. If you are not sure ask a friend to help you. Most people that are close to you will know what you are going through and will be willing to jump in and help.

**Here are some more simple stress relievers that have worked for us:**

- Blow Bubbles
- Take a walk in the park or even just around the block
- Take quiet time for you and read a good book
- Call a friend
- Take a candle light bath with bubbles and music

**Make sure that you get plenty of rest. Eat well and exercise. Walking is a great way to exercise. Take a deep breath, don't give up hope, build up supports and hang in there!**



Funding by Greater Kalamazoo United Way, Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and contributions from members and friends.





# May/June 2009

ASK provides refreshments and CHILDCARE during all ASK support groups, doors open at 6:15!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	SEE BACK SIDE for details regarding listed events. <b>Post &amp; Share this Calendar!!!</b>				1 PBLs Workshop w/ Karen Childs	2
3	4 ASK Parent Support Group 6:30-7:30pm	Vote for Public Transportation! <b>PAG/CAY</b> 6:00-7:30pm	6	7 Free screening of <i>Including Samuel</i> w/ guest speaker Keith Jones Radisson Plaza Hotel 7-9pm	8 <b>Children's Mental Health Awareness Day Events</b> 9:00am—7:00pm <i>See back for Details</i>	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19 <b>PAG/CAY</b> 6:00-7:30pm	20	22 <b>Star Power Rally!</b>  ASK Parent Support Group 6:30-7:30pm	23	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1 ASK Parent Support Group 6:30-7:30pm	2 <b>PAG/CAY</b> 6:00-7:30pm	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 <b>PAG/CAY</b> 6:00-7:30pm	17	18 ASK Parent Support Group 6:30-7:30pm  <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <b>SIB SHOPS Workshops</b>            Informative Session 6/18            Learn to Facilitate 6/19         </div>	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

**ASK Parent Support Group** with a general focus is held on the **1st Monday of each Month** at **Prince of Peace Lutheran Church** ~ 1747 W Milham Rd, Portage

Kalamazoo Wraps Parent Advisory Group (**PAG**) & Kalamazoo Wraps Calling All Youth (**CAY**) Meet the **1st & 3rd Tuesday of each month** at **Bronson Gilmore Education Center**, 7 Healthcare Plaza, Kalamazoo

**ASK Parent Support Group** focused on supporting families receiving Community Mental Health services is held on the **3rd Thursday of each Month** at **First Presbyterian Church** ~ 321 W. South Street, Kalamazoo

Please contact ASK at (269) 343-5896 with questions regarding updates, cancellations, or alterations to this schedule  
Or visit our website, [www.askforkids.org](http://www.askforkids.org)

**PARENTS! Looking for Summer Opportunities???**

Kalamazoo County offers many summer program opportunities for youth with Severe Emotional Disturbances, call these programs for more info:

**Family & Children Services**  
Chris Magnan 344-020

**Community Participation Initiative**  
Allison Hammond 387-7423

**Catholic Family Services**  
Ben Moe 381-9800 x229

**ROI**  
Andrea 343-3731 x214

**City of Kalamazoo**  
Steve Youngblood 377-8320

**Eastern Service Area (High School aged)**  
Marianne 553-8137 or Gerielle 553-8040

**Are you a parent or caregiver of a child with a mood, emotional, or behavioral challenge?**

**Are you passionate about improving the system of care for children's mental health?**



**Consider joining Kalamazoo Wraps Parent Advisory Group!**

*Childcare and Refreshments are provided*

For more information, contact Gisela Lawson at (269) 343-5896

You're Invited to a **Free Screening of Including Samuel**  
With Special Guest Speaker **Keith Jones**  
**Thursday, May 7th ~ 7:00pm**  
At the Kalamazoo Radisson Plaza Hotel  
For more info contact **Community Advocates @ 269-342-9801**

Free Valet Service for those who need it!

For availability of on-site childcare contact Jayne @ P2P by May 4th! (269) 345-8950

**Star Power Rally!**

**Thursday, May 21st at the State Capitol**  
Meet with legislators to talk about the importance of early childhood programs and services for all of Michigan's children  
**Register online @ [www.kresa.org/gscrally](http://www.kresa.org/gscrally)**

**CALLING ALL YOUTH!**

Are you a young person between the ages of 11-17 who feels like life is happening around you?

Calling All Youth (CAY) is your chance to speak up and be heard by adults, teachers, government, therapists, counselors, juvenile justice, schools and all of the other authority figures in your life.

**IT'S TIME YOU HAD A VOICE!**

For more information contact Mackenzie Hunter

At (269) 343-5896



**MAY is MENTAL HEALTH MONTH!**  
**Celebrate all of the events on May 8th!**

**KCMHSAS Annual Mental Health Breakfast**

9:30am—11:00am

Radisson Plaza Hotel (corner of Rose & Michigan)

**RSVP to 553-8000**

**Mental Health Awareness Festival**  
**"Recovery for All"**

11:00am—3:00pm

Radisson Plaza Hotel (corner of Rose & Michigan)

**Snacks, Raffle, Mental Health Speakers, Music, Open Mic & over 30 Booths featuring local Mental Health related programs!**

**4th Annual Kalamazoo Wraps Children's Mental Health Awareness Day Carnival**

4:00pm—7:00pm

Kalamazoo County Fairgrounds

**Free to the Public featuring:**

**Food, Entertainment, Games & Prizes & much more!**

For More Info, contact Renee Huff @ 269-553-8123

**AND on Tuesday May 12th!**

**Walk A Mile in My Shoes**  
**State Capitol Grounds in Lansing**

For More Info, contact Joan Keilen @ 269-553-8053



**Engaging Families with Positive Behavior & Literacy Supports**

A **FREE** Workshop for those who work with Families and Youth  
*Featuring*

Karen Childs, M.A., Co-Author of Parenting with Positive Behavior Support.

Thursday, May 1st

**8:30 am-12:00 pm**

**KRESA, 1819 E. Milham Rd, Portage**

This Event is open to the public!

RSVP to [lhiga@kresa.org](mailto:lhiga@kresa.org) or 269-553-9310



For info about referrals to summer programs, call the Access Center at 373-6000.  
For a schedule of summer activities, call Stephanie Thompson at 553-8143.

**SIBLINGS NEED SUPPORT TOO!!!**

**SibShops** blend information and education w/ recreational activities to make **SIBLINGS** of youth w/ mood, emotional, and behavioral challenges feel less alone and less burdened.

This workshop is for parents, caregivers, teachers & professionals

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SIBSHOPS WORKSHOPS, CONTACT**

**Rebecca Clore**  
**(269) 553-8110**



**Is Your Child Struggling?**  
Cont

family has been diagnosed with a mental illness, the entire family is affected. Try not to leave out any details that may help the Intake Specialist. Make sure you bring the following with you to your appointment:

- Your child about whom you are concerned
- Your child's social security number
- Your child's insurance cards
- Any forms that KCMHSAS has sent you to fill out prior to your appointment
- Any other information that you feel may be beneficial to your Intake Specialist (school reports, other assessments, etc.)

Once you arrive at your appointment, you will be escorted into one of KCMHSAS comfortable intake rooms by their friendly Recipient Rights Advisor and an Advocacy Services for Kids (ASK) Family Support Partner. The Recipient Rights Advisor will go over the required paperwork and get the needed signatures that will allow the Intake Specialist to do the assessment. ASK'S Family Support Partner will then tell you a little about what services and support they can provide to you, the parent or guardian. They will also offer to sit in on the intake procedure with you.

Once all of the paperwork is completed, the Intake Specialist will come in and perform an in-depth interview. Although some of the

questions may seem personally invasive, remember it is very important to be honest – KCMHSAS wants to refer you to the services that are going to best fit your family's needs. This procedure is very informal and can be done at your pace. From start to finish the intake process can take anywhere from 1– 2 hours.

At the end of your intake, the Specialist will be able to tell you a couple of different options that they think may be appropriate for your family. However, they may not know exactly where you will be placed until they are able to compile the information that you provided to them in the proper formats for eligibility. There are many factors that go into recommendation for services. They are as follows:

**Diagnosis**

**Functional Impairment:** Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS)

The CAFAS examines your child's behavior in the following areas:

- School
- Home
- Community
- Behavior Towards Others
- Moods/Emotions
- Self Harmful Behavior
- Substance Abuse
- Thinking

**Duration:** How long have the challenging behaviors been going on?

**Prior Service Utilization:** What services have been employed thus far?

**Insurance Coverage:** Remember,

no one is denied services because of an inability to pay. However, if you do have coverage for some services, CMH may not be able to provide the aforesaid services.

Within a day or two, the Intake Specialist will get back in touch with you to let you know what services you have been referred to. Some of these services may include any of the programs listed below in order from least intensive to most intensive:

**Outpatient Therapy:** Traditional outpatient therapy in a therapist's office – usually seen every week or every other week.

**Outreach Therapy:** Therapists meet with children and families outside of the office – usually at home or school on a more frequent basis than traditional therapy.

**Case Management:** Case Management can schedule and coordinate multiple needs within the family, encouraging the family to participate within the community and its resources. They oversee and “manage” the different services that have been put into place.

**Wraparound:** This is a program that brings together many of the family's supports of their choosing to become a “team” for the child. This team implements a plan to best help the youth throughout their involvement in school, medical settings, community and of course, home. Everyone on the team is responsible for holding each other accountable to stay on track of the plan, or to suggest changes throughout the process if the original plan needs adjusting.

**Co-Occurring:** Co-Occurring treatment centers on both mental health

and substance abuse issues.

**Home Based:** This is one of the most intensive therapies. It involves meeting with therapists for a minimum of two hours a week, at various locations, and centers around the entire family.

Along with any of the above services, you may also be referred to some other services that may include seeing one of KCMHSAS's psychiatrists if medication should be considered, respite services, and occupational therapy just to name a few.

It is also important to know that Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services partners with many different agencies within Kalamazoo County. Family and Children's Services and the Elizabeth Upjohn Healing Center are a couple of the agencies with which they contract. Depending on availability, your services may be provided at one of these or other locations.

**Above all you must remember, open communication is the key to ensuring your child's success and stabilization.**

**You have already made the first and most important step; opening their world to the help they deserve and can receive. The journey to security and stability will not be easy, but attending to mental health needs is far more advantageous in the short term and the long term.**

**A healthy mind is the gateway to a healthy body, happy relationships, and a productive life. Good Luck!**

**Teen Depression: 10 Early Warning Signs**

By Mackenzie Hunter

Teen depression is often mistaken for 'normal teenage moodiness'. While low mood can be a temporary response to stressful situations, changing hormones, or increased responsibility, we must be careful not to overlook changes in mood/behavior that are symptomatic of depression. Here are a few things to look for if you are concerned that a teen you know may be suffering from depression:

- Low mood
- Inactivity and/or loss of interest in previous enjoyable activities

- Feelings of self worthlessness, self-hate or excessive guilt
- Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- Recurring thoughts of death or suicide
- Sleep disturbances—trouble sleeping or excessive sleeping
- Appetite disturbances—dramatic weight gain or loss
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue and lack of energy
- Agitation, restlessness, and irritability

These symptoms will typically result in noticeable changes in school performance and interactions with friends and family. Seeking

the necessary professional help is the first and most important step towards recovery. A good first step generally includes contacting a general health provider for information and advice.

**Don't let your child go undiagnosed if he or she is in need of professional help.** If you have further questions about teen depression please contact Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (269-373-6000), Gryphon Place's 2-1-1/Help-Line (269-381-HELP), or a Family Support Partner here at ASK (269-343-5896).





advocacy services for kids  
 414 East Michigan Avenue  
 Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

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## BECOME A MEMBER!!!

Please consider becoming a member of Advocacy Services for Kids.

Membership entitles you to voting rights at the annual meeting, and the fellowship of others who advocate for children's mental health.

Membership dues help fund parent support groups, newsletter costs, and one-to-one support for families.

Joining is easy.

- 1) Fill out the form
- 2) Make checks payable to: Advocacy Services for Kids
- 3) Mail to the address shown.

**COMING SOON!!!** ASK's website will be updated to include an **Opt-In** feature for our electronic mailing list and a **Paypal** feature for Credit Card donations ~ visit [www.askforkids.org](http://www.askforkids.org)



advocacy services for kids

414 East Michigan Avenue

Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

PH (269) 343-5896 ~ FX (269) 978-0287

[mail@askforkids.org](mailto:mail@askforkids.org)