

# NEWSLETTER

MAY 2021

YOUR LOCAL RESOURCE FOR ADVOCACY, EDUCATION & SUPPORT



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## A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR:

### The Importance of Conversations

by Kim McDevitt

Recently I had the pleasure of visiting with a college friend and her husband, a supervisor in the respiratory health department of the second largest hospital in the country. I noticed that he seemed sidetracked, disoriented, and was enjoying one too many glasses of wine. I pulled his wife aside and asked how he was doing. "He is definitely traumatized by the lives lost under his care, the current unknowns of COVID. I think he may even be suffering from PTSD" she remarked and continued "I don't know how to get him connected to the care he needs".

How can we convince someone they don't need to struggle alone or in silence? If anything good has come from this past year, it is that we have opened the conversation about mental health. Why then are people still resistant to getting the care they need? Although we have made great strides in providing access through telehealth services, we have a lot of work to do to increase education, reduce stigma, and provide financial resources for care.

The pandemic and economic burden have negatively impacted many people's mental health. During the pandemic 1:2 adults in the U.S have reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder, up from 1:4 from the year prior to the pandemic. Furthermore, every single individual has been impacted by the mental health struggles of family members, coworkers, friends, or neighbors. There is hope as we look to the future of lessened restrictions. However, we must not forget the lessons learned. We have learned to take care of one another, and the importance of connectedness. We have redefined self-care by recognizing the importance of personal time and our own limitations. We have had time to reflect on what is valuable to us. We have learned to slow down, and to recognize importance of personal time. As we approach year two of pandemic, we must not return in haste to life as we knew it. Let us emerge from our cocoons with deliberate caution into a new world where we continue to take care of one another.



### **BEING THE DAUGHTER OF A TEACHER...**

... I have always held respect for them. I watched my mom for thirty plus years be one of the last teachers to leave school every night, and then bring papers home to grade. She didn't just teach about the 50 states, she would turn it into a play with a song (consequently how I learned the 50 states in alphabetical order). She always gave it her all and was well loved because of it. For this reason, I always knew the compassion, hard work, and dedication that goes into teaching.

Then Covid happened and teachers needed to change everything they have ever done. We all know that with Covid teachers needed to be more flexible, more patient, and way more creative. We knew these things fundamentally, but did we really know what that meant? Have we all walked a day in their shoes to really know what this entails?

Recently, I was asked to train 9th graders in a suicide prevention training called QPR which stands for Question, Persuade, Refer. This was a new training location for me, and I was very excited to conduct the training with a brand new school. It was set up to be three 80 minute class periods over two consecutive days for 5 different health classes. I would not be in person, but over Zoom, as is becoming the new normal. So, what that meant for me is that I was teaching with a Power Point Presentation to 20-45 students per class who are either in or out of school, but all of them (Including the teachers) are on their personal laptops on the Zoom call with me. I am able to share my screen with everyone involved, but can only see my own screen and 2 of the students. As I sat in my office and it was like I was doing a presentation for my computer screen. Usually, when I train in person, I am an interactive presenter walking all over the classroom randomly calling on all the students. I like to watch and pay attention to their non-verbal body language. This all goes out the door with Covid and Zoom.

At the end of the two days, after the presentations were over, I was reflecting on how the presentations went. I had just taught 6 classes in two days and I was so mentally drained. I might have said 10 times "oh, this is so hard I'm talking to my screen all day." Then I stopped and really thought about it. This is what teachers have been dealing with, not for two days but one year. They are teaching students, both in person and virtually. They are being held to the same high standards, needing to be able to change everything at the drop of a hat. They are putting themselves and their family in danger. They are doing this all while being forced to make the content relevant and entertaining. I will say this again... I only walked two (partial) days in their shoes and it was tough, I can only imagine how hard it would be to walk a year in their shoes.

This article is your reminder, if you know a teacher or have teachers in your life please thank them a million times.

My mother has been retired for quite a few years now, and she has repeatedly said that she couldn't teach during Covid. Knowing what I know about her as a teacher and a mom, I know She would have been fine.

*Your Time  
Your Space*



*Your Way  
Your Place*

**May 8th, 2021**

**This year, MHALC invites you to participate in an experience like never before. While we will not gather in person, you can still ensure mental health advocacy, education & support reaches your community.**

**Medals for the following categories:**

- **Most 'Engaged to Our Page'** - Share your pictures and posts about your 'Walk Your Way' experience to our Facebook, Instagram & Twitter pages
- **Most 'On Message'** - Did you represent mental health while you were 'Walking Your Way'?
- **Most 'Inventive' Individual** - In what special way did you walk?
- **Most 'Creative Use of Teamwork'** - If walking in a group of 2 or more, how did you get creative about your walk and still stay safe?

**When: Now until May 8th**

**Where: Anywhere You Choose to Let Loose**

**Time: Whenever You're Free to Have Fun**

**How: Walk, Run, Bike, Hike, Skate, Swim, Boat, or Float;  
get as creative as you wish**

Go to  
**[www.mhalancaster.org](http://www.mhalancaster.org)**  
to register or donate today

## MHA LAUNCHES ANTI-STIGMA CAMPAIGN

With a generous grant from Lancaster Cares, MHALC has put together a committee to tackle a much needed topic, the stigma around mental health issues. This committee is prepared to launch a campaign that will run through the course of this year.



'We Need to Talk About Mental Health' may sound like a simple call to action, but for many it is a hard topic to discuss. MHALC is launching this campaign throughout Lancaster County with the hopes of starting the conversation and allowing the community to know it is a safe discussion to have. Along the way, MHALC will also be providing access to resources for those individuals who need to extend those discussions to support groups and mental health professionals. At MHALC, we know that, just as having the ability to talk about mental health is important, having a safe space to talk in is just as important.

None of this can happen without first starting the conversation, with ourselves, with each other, within the Lancaster community.

So, keep an eye out for the 'We Need To Talk' logo around Lancaster County this year or share it on your social media. Use it to begin a conversation. You never know who may need to talk,

The campaign will launch with a progressive art walk through downtown Lancaster running for the Month of May as a way to celebrate mental health awareness month. Join us on May 1st as we begin to celebrate regional artists and their fight to reduce the stigma of mental health through different mediums. Go to [www.mhalancaster.org](http://www.mhalancaster.org) to download a map from the anti-stigma campaign page on our website or for more information about upcoming events.



## SAYING A FOND FAREWELL TO OUR PEER EDUCATOR

In the world of mental health services, one of the goals is provide guidance, knowledge, and strength, so that individuals can move forward and grow to be better versions of themselves. The efforts we make aren't meant to put a bandage over a challenge someone is currently facing, but to help individuals learn coping skills to make changes for bigger, brighter futures.

One of the best ways to teach this skill is when it comes from someone that has been there. Over the last 5 1/2 years, MHA of Lancaster has been lucky to have an individual on staff who was open and willing to share her story in groups and to individuals as well as listen to others and walk along side of them helping with their journey. Sue Tushingham's calm nature quickly puts anyone she meets at ease and allows them the freedom to open up to her both in one on one sessions and in support group settings.

When Sue came to MHA she quickly found her niche with speaking to older adults at local senior centers and personal care homes. As soon as the pandemic hit last March she realized that many of the folks that she saw in those groups were all alone so she began having one on one phone sessions with some of them weekly. Looking back on the past year we recognize even more now that this was so incredibly important to those seniors and their mental health.

In addition, Sue's passion for change in the mental health world has given her a voice within Lancaster County through the Community Support Program. She was not afraid to step out of her comfort zone and speak with Legislators on behalf of many individuals who live throughout the county to ensure that there continues to be money for mental health services in Lancaster County.

Now as we say goodbye it is now Sue's turn to grow and take the skills she learned at MHALC to make changes for her bright future, just as she has helped so many do. We will all miss her calming presence and smiling face in the office, but know that she will still be supporting our mission even if it's not alongside us.



"I HAVE LEARNED A GREAT DEAL AT MHA, AND HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP AND INSPIRE COUNTLESS INDIVIDUALS. I HAVE APPRECIATED WORKING FOR AN AGENCY THAT IS A LEADER IN MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANCE IN LANCASTER COUNTY, AND IS TRULY A SUPPORT IN SO MANY INDIVIDUALS' LIVES. I WISH CONTINUED SUCCESS AND GROWTH TO MHA, ITS PROGRAMS, EMPLOYEES, AND VOLUNTEERS."  
SUE TUSHINGHAM

## COMMON GROUND

Since September 2020, Common Ground is a bi-monthly peer group that meets on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month from 10:30-11:30am via zoom. MHA's Peer Educator facilitates the group and sends the participants a self-help article prior to each group. During the group, all participants read the article, while the facilitator shares recovery-oriented ideas on the article. Participants then share and ask questions during the group. The group closes with a designated time for sharing. Participants can choose to share or not. Each member of the group keeps the focus on his or herself and does not engage in cross talk, which is talking out of turn or giving advice. The participants have found the group enlightening and helpful. They learn self-help tools and connect with others in the group.

The focus for the facilitator is to give the participants more self-help ideas to promote empowerment, and to help them to connect with others in an effort to reduce isolation and loneliness. Some of the group topics have included meditation, relationships, practicing self-care, resiliency, reducing anxiety, practicing positive self-talk, and laughter.

If anyone is interested in attending Common Ground, please reach out to [mha@mhalancaster.org](mailto:mha@mhalancaster.org). After your email is received, the most current article will be sent to you, along with the zoom link for the next scheduled group. If it is preferred, article can be sent in the mail. The group is open to anyone. Participants can join the zoom group by computer video or phone.



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events, programs and services available to support you and your family.**

**Sign up at [www.mhalan Lancaster.org](http://www.mhalan Lancaster.org)**