

# The Wraparound Bulletin

Family driven. Youth guided. Community Based. Culturally Competent.

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From the Desk's of:

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Thank you for your support and participation in this year's "Erie County Children's Mental Health Awareness Day." We appreciate your support and partnership with Erie County to help raise awareness for children, youth and families struggling with mental health challenges; and for attending this luncheon to help us celebrate their successes.

This is a great opportunity and time in Erie County for us to work together to help address the needs of our communities. This year's theme was "Thriving in the Community." We celebrated the successes of our children, youth and families in our communities through a luncheon held on May 8<sup>th</sup> at the Buffalo Convention Center.

At this luncheon, we honored those in the community who have done the most to increase attention to the needs of children in Erie County with serious emotional and behavioral

challenges, and who exemplify the teamwork central to the service philosophy of Family Voices Network - *family driven, youth guided, community based and culturally competent* to the needs of our families.

Collectively, we had over 100 parents and youth in attendance at this event. Youth & parents were involved throughout the planning process. They distributed bookmarks to schools and in the community, helped with planning, registration, table decorations, and participated in the day's activities.

➤ 95% of those in attendance thought the event worked to move forward mental health awareness in our community.

We want to say, "thank you," to the youth and parents for their participation and contribution.

## Erie County Children's Mental Health Awareness Day: Celebrating our Successes in Life



"...What an awesome event! ...I thought it was just a magnificent day! I know what hard work and organization went into it all - you are to be heartily congratulated. Nice job."

This newsletter highlights the activities at this year's luncheon. In attendance were 450 people representing children, youth, families, service providers and general supporters. At the luncheon there were 86 organizations represented. This included for-profit and not-for-profit organizations; schools, faith-based community, service providers, non-traditional support agencies, colleges, diversity groups, and non-Erie County representative.

The day's activities included Kevin O'Connell, WGRZ-2, as the Emcee; Reggie Witherspoon, Head Coach, University of Buffalo, Men's Basketball Team was the presenter of this year's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Most Valuable Voices Awards along with our system partners (Phil Endress, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health, Michael Weiner, Commissioner, Department of Social Services, and Vicki McCarthy, Executive Director, Families CAN). Parents, youth and the Erie County communities participated in the planning of this celebration.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Most Valuable Voices Award Nominees



The kick-off to this year's event started by recognizing those from the community who have done the most to help raise awareness for children with mental health needs through our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Most Valuable Voices Awards. There were 31 people nominated, each received a gold "2007 MVV" lapel pin as recognition for the community work they perform. All awardees exemplify the teamwork central to the service philosophy of Family Voices Network - *family driven, youth guided, community based and culturally sensitive* to the needs of our families.

### Results from the Survey:

➤ This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of this award and responsiveness is increasing each year. We encourage parents, youth and the community to recognize those who are helping families.

Parents & Youth assisted with Registration



Snapshot of our audience





## Harvey Austin, BPS #97: After-School Drill Team



### Results from the Survey:

- 42% of those who responded to the survey indicated they enjoyed the youth involvement in this event.
- 37% of those who responded stated they enjoyed viewing youth creative works on display at this event.

## Individual Performances: Recognizing Youth Strengths



We thank the Buffalo Public Schools for their participation and support in this year's Erie County Children's Mental Health Awareness Day. As part of the celebration *School 97's After-School Drill Team* participate in this year's activities. They performed one of their numbers and ended with a split (as seen above). The team was in-sync, organized and performed exceptionally well.

There were two other youth performances as well. Andrew

Hawkins, currently attending *Sweet Home School*, read a poem he wrote entitled "*Understanding.*" Sweet Home School annually participates in Green Ribbon Day (Bookmark) with students tying the green ribbon on the bookmarks and distributing throughout the school. Heather Armstrong, currently attending *Charter School of Technology* played two songs on her flute - *Chariots of Fire* & *It's a Small World*. These students demonstrated their talent before an audience of 450 people.

## The Creative Nature of our Youth



*We were honored!* This year we had the opportunity to view youth creative and artistic work. Many of our youth in Erie County have creative talents, and their talent was exhibited. This event celebrates the artistic works of children experiencing mental health challenges and those youth with exceptional creative and artistic skills.

Being creative is an easy way to express emotions that range from sad to happy. It helps us to view the world differently. What better way to do this than to look at a finished product of one's creative talents and know their work is admired and appreciated by others.

When we looked around the room there were several youth in attendance. Here is a quote from one of the youth:

*"I really just wanted to tell you how great the luncheon ... I really enjoyed it...I liked hearing the parent's stories because even though I'm the kid I understand how he felt and how wraparound changed things for the better. I liked hearing Andrew's poem and hearing from the basketball coach and his demonstration with the mom. It was really fun, really enjoyable, not something boring to sit through. I thought it went really well."*  
Megan, Orchard Park, NY



## Mental Health: Real Lives. Real People.

*A Families' Success Story with Wraparound -- by Raymond, Father of 6, Buffalo, NY*



When Raymond described how much wraparound had helped him and his family of 6; and what he had learned as a father, he received a standing ovation from the audience.

Child Protective Services referred me to Mid-Erie for wraparound services. They told us they have recommended other families that had been successful and thought it would be a good fit for my family.

I had my doubts as a father and a man about the services working. I felt my son Patrick was passing on from program to program and felt what is this going to do. Patrick is 13 years old. I started seeing a change in Patrick while Mark at Child & Family Help of America was working with my son. Mark was his mentor and skill-builder. As Mark worked with Patrick, I noticed he had a lot of ambition and really cared about making something work in his life and setting goals. That is what caught my attention, that Mark, the skill-builder was making a difference in my son's Patrick life.

Mark wanted me to have a session with him. As my family were seated in a meeting, I realized that there are things I do not know about myself as being a father. Some of the things I was doing with Patrick were wrong. By going to these meetings, he started showing me what I was doing wrong with Patrick; and I started to learn how to deal with Patrick. This is something many fathers do not know, how to deal with things with their children. *Parenting sure does not come with a manual.*

I have six children that are also involved in the Wraparound Process and my other children are receiving mentors and skill-builders. Jackie at Child & Family Help of America where we are receiving help for Patrick said it simply one day, she said *"In order to understand how mentor and skill-building works, we'll be able to understand how counseling works."* Her statement actually got my attention. After our meeting, a mentor and skill-builder was assigned to

- Results from the Survey:**
- 70% of all those who filled-out the survey rated the *"Family sharing experiences"* as helpful. This is shown in the actual comments of those who completed the survey; and 85% of parents who filled-out the survey agreed with the general audience.

Erie County Children's Mental Health Awareness celebrates the successes of children, youth, and families with mental health challenges. The personal experience shared by Raymond indicates that wraparound works and supports the role of service providers who work with our families.

Patrick (my son); and she wanted to know if other members of the family were in need of a mentor and skill-builder and I agreed. Therefore, every member of my family has a mentor and skill-builder. All the mentors and skill-builders are present when we meet as a family.

*Women have all the burden of the family. How does a father know when something is broke in the family? Little hearts get broke so easily when Dads do not keep promises. If a window is broke you can see it, but you cannot see when a heart is broken.* Me as a man must learn how to put my broad chest down and pick up a heart of feelings and understanding. A man is not a mind reader and children do suffer and feel pain. In addition, as a father, I need to know how to deal with my child's pain and suffering. This is how the wraparound process has helped me.

By me sitting at the table and looking at the blessings that me, my wife and children are receiving, out weigh all the money in the world. I am blessed to have people who are working with my family who do not give up. Kids like Patrick can be a headache and everybody that worked with Patrick gave up. However, **wraparound is positive and it demands to move on to help families.** My family values are really improving and I feel blessed for that. I have three brothers in Buffalo, one is blind and in jail, he's not blessed to be with his family; my other brother just got separated from his wife and kids; he is unfortunately unable to be with his family and here I am **blessed with my freedom and I'm not taking my family for granted or the services.** *I am going to take everything I can learn as a tool and I am going to make sure I make every effort not to make the mistakes my brothers have made. I am going to learn how to be a better father and better husband because nothing can hit harder than that.*

### *Responses from Survey/Attendees of Erie County Children's Mental Health Awareness Day Luncheon:*

- *"The program was very good, in supporting parents and other community agencies, for continued services in the future here in WNY." (A parent's comment).*
- *"The father that spoke from the heart was most meaningful. His message needs to be heard by everyone! Great choice in families to share experience."*
- *"...involvement with youth and involvement with adults."*
- *"...I was most impressed with the diversity of culture and service providers that were in attendance and focus of the event. So, great job."*
- *"...This was professionally done and very inclusive. I can't imagine all the hours and sleepless nights you must have put into this so.... congrats to you and your team...!!"*
- *"...most impressed with the diversity of culture and service providers that were in attendance..."*

