You’re dirty,” “You’re a drunk,” “No, I can’t hire you,” and “If I give you money, you’ll just spend it on alcohol or drugs.” These are a few stigmatizing and hurtful things that are said, and there are many more.

I come from a background of being homeless. When I was 18, I decided to leave home. I was out on the streets, in motels, and couch surfing. I was heavy into my addiction of methamphetamines, and there was nothing anyone could tell me that would change that. I thought I knew everything. This was the first time I also had an episode of mental illness, although I didn’t realize I had a problem. I was in a motel room all alone and coming down off drugs. It was close to Christmas, and I was severely depressed. I decided I would be better off not here anymore, so I took a handful of pills. I ended up in a mental hospital for three days on a suicide watch, which I was able to talk my way out of and be released before I was evaluated.

Later on down the road, I ended up in two abusive, drug-related relationships where I found myself homeless again. By this time I was almost 30 years old. I slept in my car and then eventually in a camp in the Martinez Marina. I would hear screaming at night, and I heard and saw people get beat up in their sleep. I also heard someone in San Francisco got set on fire because he was homeless. I couldn’t get a job because no one would hire me without an address. I eventually got into a shelter. After one and a half years of being in a shelter and couch surfing, I decided to quit using drugs. I was diagnosed Bipolar I and I started taking medication. I was asked to join the Consumer Advisory Board where I started making a difference. Most people out there are just like me, and deserve a chance to make a difference themselves.

If you see someone on the side of the road or in a park, talk with them or get to know them, or maybe buy them a coffee or a burger. You never know what a difference you could make in their lives. Stop stigmatizing and start caring.
WRAP® (Wellness Recovery Action Plan®)
By Hillary Bowers

Several Community Support Workers with Contra Costa Behavioral Health Services recently attended a one week training to become certified WRAP® facilitators. WRAP® is an evidence-based practice used by people with behavior health challenges to achieve and maintain wellness. The great thing about WRAP® is that anyone can use it. For example, WRAP can be used by consumers, caregivers and families to help with mental health challenges, alcohol and drug addiction, homelessness, diet, exercise, and other health issues such as diabetes and quitting smoking.

During the training, staff learned about the values and ethics of WRAP®. As a WRAP® facilitator, one must agree to follow the values and ethics of WRAP. A few examples are honoring the participants, reminding the participants there are no limits to anyone’s recovery, validating experiences, and giving participants a sense of hope. The values and ethics of WRAP set the foundation for the group. When issues or questions arise, facilitators are taught to return to the values and ethics of WRAP.

Creating a WRAP® plan allows participants to have an active role in their recovery and learn from their choices.

ethics of WRAP.

During a WRAP® group, facilitators work together with group participants to develop a plan called WRAP®. The key elements of WRAP® are a wellness toolbox, daily maintenance plan, identifying triggers and a triggers action plan, identifying early warning signs and an early warning signs action plan, identifying when things are breaking down and a when things are breaking down action plan, crisis planning, and post crisis planning. Participants choose what to include in their WRAP® plan. Creating a WRAP® plan allows participants to have an active role in their recovery and learn from their choices.

Contra Costa County Behavioral Health now has 11 trained WRAP® facilitators. The new facilitators are very excited to bring WRAP® into the County clinics and the community. If you are interest in participating in a WRAP® group or would like to see WRAP groups at your clinic or agency, please contact Susan Medlin at (925) 957-5104. For more information regarding the WRAP model, please visit www.mentalhealthrecovery.com/

SPIRIT 2014
Applications Now Available!

The Service Provider Individualized Recovery Intensive Training (SPIRIT) is a nine-unit, college accredited course offered through Contra Costa Behavioral Health Services in partnership with Mental Health Consumer Concerns (MHCC) and Contra Costa College in San Pablo. SPIRIT teaches consumers how to be Peer Support Providers. Although applicants must currently be receiving or have previously received mental health services, many students who participate also have experienced homelessness and/or alcohol and other drug addiction and recovery.

SPIRIT classes begin annually in January and end in late July. The program includes a six-week internship at participating behavioral health agencies in Contra Costa County. Upon completion, students are awarded a certificate of achievement that is recognized and valued by many mental health service providers in the county.

The curriculum includes:

• Expert speakers on mental health and community resources
• Comprehensive rehabilitation and recovery training
• Support programs for consumers who want to work as peer providers in the mental health field
• Classroom instruction with on the job experience through an internship at a local behavioral health organization
• Wellness tools for addiction and mental health recovery

The application deadline for the SPIRIT program is:
Friday, October 11, 2013

Completed applications should be sent to:
Contra Costa Behavioral Health Services
Office for Consumer Empowerment
1340 Arnold Drive, Suite 200
Martinez, CA 94553.
Fax: (925) 957-5156

For more information or to obtain an application, contact Stephen Boyd, Jr. at (925) 957-5147, or email Stephen.Boyd@hsd.cccounty.us.
**Crossroads**
A Poem by Roberto Roman

Sometimes the darkest roads
Are the easiest to travel.
No need to worry
About where I’m going—
I can’t see anything anyway.
If I roll into a ditch,
There’s no one to see me
Push out of the mud.
If I get a flat,
No one to see
How clumsily I change tires.
If I run out of gas,
No one to tell me I should have filled up
At the last station.
But if it starts raining,
No one to lean against
While waiting for the tow truck.
If the battery goes out,
No radio to listen to.
No music.
No words.
No light.
Nothing.
Just silence.
As the sun’s first hue
Caresses the eastern sky,
I leave the jalopy behind and set off afoot.
After a while,
I stumble onto a crossroads:
Roads leading as far from each other
As my eyes can traverse.
Do I go right?
Left?
Do I keep going the way I’m going?
It’s too far to go back.
What do I do?
In the midst of my confusion,
A figure emerges ahead of me.
She looks as weary as I am.
“Where did you come from?” I ask.
“Long story. Where are you going?”
“No clue.”
A conversation ensues
As we walk along the only road that
Daylight seems to be grasping.

**Make It Happen**
By Brandon Freeman

Make It Happen
One Day at a time
Do Something Productive
Ask For Help
Make It Fun
Accept Your Weaknesses
Embrace Your Strengths
Love Yourself
Do What You Love
Love What You Do
Do Your Best
Go With The Flow
Take A Break
Be Yourself
Attitude Is Everything
Laugh With Yourself
Be Patient
Learn
Experience New Things
Give 110%
Make A Difference
Dream Big
Hope Is Always There
Enjoy Life

Because at the end of the day, you’re
the one who looks back at you from the
mirror. What matters most in life is what
matters to you. There are many people
in the world. All of different creeds,
races, beliefs, and lifestyles. And they all
have one goal. Live. If you believe in the
things you do, then the world is at your
fingertips. Life is an experiment. Trial and
error are constant. But when you fall, you
pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and
keep moving. I have lived long enough
to know these things. But knowledge is
different from application. I’ve picked
myself up more times then I can count.
But I never quite shrug off all the dirt.
Not because I can’t, but because I wasn’t
willing to. Can’t isn’t an answer. It’s an
excuse.
There are many unspoken rules in life.
I may only know a few, but I believe
in one in particular with all of my being.
That the truth to
one’s existence is not to be learned, but
to be made. I make my destiny. I’ve
been blind to that truth for a long time,
and I’ve made many mistakes because
of that blindness. But rather than learn
from those mistakes, I cursed them for
happening. More than that, I cursed
myself for letting them happen. From
now on, I am the best I can be. It’s time to
seize my life, and do something I’ve never
done before. Make myself proud.

### NAMI Connection

NAMI Connection is a free support group for people with a mental health condition that would like to get support, share their experiences and learn from each other. It takes place in a safe and supportive environment, where trained facilitators, who themselves are living successfully with mental health struggles, ensure that a safe environment is maintained at all times.

**When:** Saturday from 12:30pm until 2:00pm.

**Where:** John Muir Behavioral Health Center, 2740 Grant Street, Concord, CA 94520
Group held in Lecture Room near cafeteria. Ask at front desk if you need directions.

**Additional Information:**
Roberto.Roman@hsd.cccounty.us, or (925) 957-5210
Submit Your Work to Peer Perspectives

We are looking for stories of recovery, poems, artwork and wellness tips from consumers and family members. Email or mail your articles and images to the address below.

This newsletter is presented to you by the Contra Costa Behavioral Health Services Office for Consumer Empowerment.

Email articles to: roberto.roman@hsd.cccounty.us

Mail articles to:
Contra Costa Behavioral Health Services Administration
Office for Consumer Empowerment
1340 Arnold Drive, Suite 200
Martinez, CA 94553
Tel: (925) 957-5210

Hillary and Camille read the first issue of Peer Perspectives.

Artwork by Suzan Imani

Artwork by Jerud Dewsbury

Artwork by Alita Van Hee

On a Saturday Morning
A Short Story by Devon Roberts

She rushes to the mailbox to find a check that was in her name – which was worth 175,000 dollars. After she yelled out in a muffled scream, she immediately headed inside of her house. The door slammed backwards into her and while she had a slight pain on her back because of it, she quickly called her husband and also called her three kids, Sasha, Elizabeth and John, from where they resided inside the house. After she managed to calm herself down, she told the four of them to sit down on the sofa and she told them the good news that she had found inside of her mailbox.

OCE Team Lead Embarks on New Journey

With heartfelt appreciation and gratitude, the staff of the Office for Consumer Empowerment (OCE) congratulates our Team Lead, Jennifer Tuipulotu, on her new position with Contra Costa Behavioral Health Services as Family Services Coordinator for Child/Adolescent Mental Health. Before joining OCE in 2010, Jennifer worked with Older Adult Mental Health, Child/Adolescent Mental Health, and Children and Family Services. Since becoming part of our team, she has been instrumental in supporting fellow staff and collaborating on numerous projects, both promoting and embodying the values that guide OCE. Jennifer has devoted immense time and effort to such projects as the 2011 Recovery and Resiliency Conference and the 2012 Celebrating Aging Conference. Her extensive work on the Committee for Social Inclusion has included coordinating the PhotoVoice Project and the County’s Speaker’s Bureau, Wellness and Recovery Education for Acceptance, Choice, and Hope (WREACH). She has provided essential insight and encouragement to her colleagues and peers.

Jennifer transitioned from OCE to her new position on May 15. While we all will miss her very much, we also rejoice in all she has achieved and the vast opportunities for further accomplishment and growth that lie ahead. Thank you, Jenn, for your dedication, wisdom, and kindness.