Peer Counselors offer hope and strength through personal experience

Peer Counselors are individuals who have experienced mental health challenges, either personally or with a family member, and are inspired to help others in their recovery. Peers receive extensive training and must pass an exam to become certified by the state of Washington. They then work in partnership with therapists to offer support and perspective from someone who’s “been there, done that.” Peers may work in the community, in the schools, or in individual sessions. They allow people to see, firsthand, the possibility of recovery. People like Viola.

Viola had survived significant abuse and trauma in her life. She had been in and out of homelessness, and had lost hope that life could ever be better. “I felt like I was trapped in a box, way underground, and I was just going around and around,” she said. “There was no light. There was no hope. I just wanted to die. But I came to Greater Lakes, and I’m glad I did. My therapist told me ‘I’ll give you everything I have, to help you through this.’ I couldn’t believe she cared that much, and that’s when I saw a little light coming into the box. It made me believe I could get better.”

It was a lot of work, but with the help of her therapist, Viola did get better. But it was when she was assigned a Peer Counselor that she really began to grow. “When I talk with my Peer, I listen in a different way,” she explained. “It’s like he’s using his power to help me tap into my own.”

Viola now has stable housing, and is working on her AA degree, and hopes to someday be a Peer Counselor herself. Her life continues to have its ups and downs, but she now has the tools to cope and continue growing. “I’m just so glad I came here,” she said. “It saved my life.”
Each year, staff member/volunteer Kathy Sweeney and volunteer Joan Eisenhardt organize a Winter Warmth Giveaway for Greater Lakes clients. This year, community members were recruited to knit and crochet, and within a few months they had produced more than 400 hand-made hats. Matching gloves were then purchased, as well as additional sets of hats and gloves. Volunteers assembled them into attractive packages, and by the time the cold weather set in more than 1,500 sets were ready to distribute.

Therapists helped their clients choose what they needed from bright displays placed around the agency, and many clients expressed their gratitude, especially for the hand-made items. Staff were thankful as well. “I’m always surprised how many of my clients don’t even have a pair of gloves,” remarked one therapist. “It’s really nice to offer them such a basic comfort. Especially when it’s so cold!”

Hats can be made and collected throughout the year for the next Winter Warmth giveaway. If you knit or crochet and would like to help, please contact Kathy Sweeney at (253) 620-5081. She can provide you with details, and even skeins of yarn.

Thank you to all the volunteers, staff and community members who work hard to ensure everyone has what they need to stay warm!
Report from the Board President

A lot has changed since 1965, when Greater Lakes was first founded as a community-based mental health agency. Treatment models have improved, the stigma associated with mental illness has decreased, and more people than ever are able to find the help they need. As an agency, we have become larger and more complex. But one thing has not changed: our focus on community.

Greater Lakes provides mental health services, but we do more than that. We are part of a safety net that extends beyond healthcare, beyond clinical treatment, to support each individual within their network of friends, family and neighbors. Our Emergency Needs Fund is a good example of that. This past summer one of our clients, Sarah, lost work due to an injury, and was having trouble paying her bills. Her neighbors brought groceries, her church arranged for transportation, and her friends stepped in to help financially. But it wasn’t quite enough. So the Emergency Needs Fund covered the remainder of her late rent, and she was saved from possible eviction. Not because of one friend, or one neighbor, but because of a network of people who cared. That is the heart of what Greater Lakes is all about.

The board of directors is proud to be part of this community-based, compassionate organization. Our thoughtful, dedicated, creative staff and volunteers truly work as a team to solve problems, embrace opportunities and provide the best possible care to those in need. And we are grateful to you, for your loyal support and generosity, which is what makes our work possible. Thank you!

Service Volumes
This chart shows the number of individuals served at Greater Lakes by program.

Emergency Needs Fund
This chart shows the number of individuals or families helped.

Financial Report
Year ending June 30, 2018

EXPENDITURES AND SURPLUS $23,786,409

REVENUES $23,786,409
Report from the President & CEO

What an exciting year! We have always been proud of our ability to respond quickly to changes and challenges, and this past year we’ve had plenty of opportunities to show how flexible we can be. One of our biggest opportunities in 2018 was the chance to partner with MultiCare Health System to provide integrated physical and mental healthcare. We knew it would be a leap into the unknown, but we also knew it would greatly improve the quality of care for our clients. We decided to take that leap, and we are very glad that we did.

It’s been almost a year since we formed this partnership, and we have been busy! I continue to be the CEO of Greater Lakes, while also serving as the COO of the Behavioral Health Network, which includes Greater Lakes, Navos in Seattle, and MultiCare’s Historical Behavioral Health in Puyallup. Together, our three agencies are working to streamline efficiencies and develop initiatives to help clients receive the best care possible across the entire Puget Sound region.

As a network, our goal is to provide the highest quality care for our clients. We are working on improving access to care so that people can quickly find the right services at the right facility, no matter where they live. We are developing collaborative models to provide seamless transitions between various services, whether for behavioral health or physical health. Later in 2019, we will be implementing a common software program for sharing health records and information across agencies, and we are exploring initiatives to improve the overall health of our community.

It’s a big task, and sometimes it feels like moving a large ship through thick fog. We know where we want to go, but we can’t always see what’s ahead. It’s challenging, but it’s also an honor to be part of a team that cares passionately about those we serve. You are very much a part of this team, and we are grateful for your support on every step of this journey. Thank you for travelling with us into this new, uncertain, but hopeful new world.

Terri Card, President & CEO

Delivering Joy

LeMay Inc, a Waste Connections Company, donates 30 bicycles to children in need.

Tisha knew her eldest child longed for a bicycle, but it wasn’t on his Christmas list. He knew that family finances were tight, and with three children to provide for, bicycles were out of the question. So Trisha was overjoyed when her therapist told her that Le May Inc., a Waste Connections Company, had donated 30 bicycles for Greater Lakes clients—and she could have three of them! “I couldn’t believe it,” she said. “We just moved to a place where it’s safe to ride bikes, but I never thought we’d be able to get them!”

Not only did the company donate new bicycles, they also used their trucks to deliver them to each client’s home in time for Christmas morning. We are especially thankful to Waste Connections employees Gordon Wheeler, Nick Perry and Patrick Sayan for their hard work and generosity in brightening the lives of so many of our clients!

Tisha was thrilled receive bikes for all three of her children.

www.glmhc.org
Greater Lakes Mental Healthcare is proud to partner with Lakewood's Promise in efforts to strengthen our community.
Join Us For
GREATER LAKES MENTAL HEALTHCARE’S
VISION OF
HOPE
FUNDRAISER

Wednesday, May 22
The McGavick Center at Clover Park Technical College
4500 Steilacoom Blvd. SW
Lakewood, WA  98499

5:30 p.m. – Hosted bar, buffet & socializing
7:00 – Brief presentation

The event is complimentary, but please RSVP
to Margueriter@glmhc.org or 253-620-5184

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