



CONSUMERS HELPING  
OTHERS IMPROVE  
THEIR CONDITION BY  
ENDING SMOKING

Spring 2009

Volume 3 Issue 1

# CHOICES Celebrates 4th Anniversary

June 2009 will be the four year anniversary of the CHOICES program and newsletter!

We thought this was a good time to reflect on the many changes we have seen during the last 4 years.

1. CHOICES is bigger and better than ever before - We have now visited 20 of the 21 counties of New Jersey to spread the message to consumers that we care about their smoking and want to help them access treatment to try to quit smoking. In that time, CHOICES Consumer Tobacco Advocates have met with over 10,000 consumers who smoke, and have made over 280 community site visits. This newsletter is now mailed to more than 950 people!

2. CHOICES has employed 7 consumers who have worked in our program at different times. Each has brought their own unique voice and perspective to the program and we value all the contributions that Yasmin, Wayne, Kathy, Diane, Bill, Eric and Deidre have made. Having the privilege to know and work with each of these special people has also given me a greater understanding on the therapeutic value of work in people's recovery. I want to thank our CHOICES partners, the Mental Health Association in NJ (MHANJ) and the NJ Division of Mental Health Services (NJDMHS), for their commitment to and continuing support of our

program. MHANJ has been especially helpful in the employment of mental health consumers. NJDMHS has provided ongoing funding that supports CHOICES.

3. We have seen many changes in the state of NJ that will help consumers to better address their tobacco use. The NJ Division of Mental Health Services is committed to helping consumers get help to quit smoking. All of the state psychiatric hospitals will soon be tobacco-free and patients in these hospitals now have better access to counseling groups and tobacco treatment medications than they ever had before. I hope future generations of hospital patients will never have to say that they started smoking in a psychiatric hospital because there was "nothing else to do".

4. In the last 4 years a new medication treatment to help people stop smoking has become available. This prescription medication called varenicline (Chantix) may be more effective than prior treatments in helping people stop smoking. One of the ways varenicline (Chantix) works is by taking away the pleasure that people get from smoking. Many nicotine treatments are available for free to people who have NJ Medicaid insurance. Talk to your doctor about which treatments may be best for you.

*Story continued on Page 5*

# Feature Articles

## Dear CHOICES,

My name is Theresa A.K.A. "Songbird" Sessions and I am a vocalist and soloist singer. Yes, I am a smoker and have been smoking for thirty plus years. I find it harder to stop smoking when there is a severe or chronic pain, physical mostly then emotionally. That's where I stand in the "need to quit" statement. It's a month-to-month problem. I am now fifty years of age, and, out of about half the people I know that have stopped smoking, at least three quarters of them have started up again. Is there another common sign other than the Stop? So that's the pattern I see me going through. Month after month and year to year. Here is a little something extra I would like to share.



Peer Pressure, Don't be its Guest. Not Sure? You're good, pretty and strong. Don't be a follower for we all have the authorization and the right to question if something seems wrong. You live and you learn. What I learned is peer pressure equals physical pain. What else other than putting a cigarette in your mouth to help is the pain an exchange.



Thank you!  
T.S.S.

**I was thirteen** when I took my first puff of a cigarette. I aggressively inhaled and ended up coughing, yet I continued to puff.

Today I am severely addicted to nicotine. I think about it most of the time. I want to stop, but the circumstance I am in does not allow me to stop. I will try to do everything I can to attend Nicotine Anonymous in the outside world so that I will be able to escape this miserable monster, nicotine. I really want to get nicotine out of my system; that way I can think and feel like I used to before my first cigarette.

Thank you,  
N.R.



**Today I feel nervous** because I have stopped smoking. My body is used to a certain level of nicotine in my system because I have smoked for a long time.

I'm taking one day at a time. I don't have cravings anymore but I just feel nervous from the withdrawals. I had also realized that smoking won't take my problems away. Smoking will just make more problems for me.

T.D.

## Hi, My name is Shirley.

I am 68 years old. I smoked cigarettes for 56 years.

I started smoking when I was 12 years old, in the Saturday Matinee ladies room. I'd get bored because I was in the movie theater from 1:00pm till 6:00pm when mom would be finished working. In the ladies room older girls gave me cigarettes and taught me how to inhale. I remember choking on the cigarette smoke. I'd smoke in my parents' upstairs bathroom then spray my dad's aftershave to cover the smell. All of my friends smoked, that was the in thing.

I got married, had two children, and continued smoking. I smoked in every room of the house. "An ashtray in every room and a filled ashtray in the car". Smoking became my best friend. I'd go to sleep at night thinking first thing tomorrow morning I'd have my cigarette. Then with coffee; then all day. Nothing was known at that time about the dangers of smoking.

After a lifetime of smoking, the bad effects of smoking came out. People everywhere were warned of the dangers of smoking, that smoking affects every part of the body. Little by little smoking was no longer permitted in public places. My life of smoking was no more fun. I tried to stop smoking but could not, I could quit for two days then back to smoking. It seemed cigarettes had a life of their own. The cigarettes seemed to control me.

(continued on Page 3)

One year ago, I'd had some minor facial surgery and the doctor warned that smoking would affect my stitches badly. I did not listen and continued to smoke even more. The stitches did not hold. The doctor was right. It was then I really got serious about stopping smoking. I'd attended the Tobacco Dependence Program at one time a while back, but smoked again. This time I went back to the program. I knew I wanted to stop smoking more than anything else. The clinic helped me. They taught me about the methods they had to help my withdrawal from nicotine. I attend meetings once a week. I chew the Nicorette gum. They have many ways of helping people who want to stop smoking—patches, pipes, nasal spray, and lozenges.

Well, I am 15 weeks free of nicotine smoking and plan not ever going back, one day at a time. Thanks for listening,  
Shirley S.



**Don't smoke** — when you smoke you cough and choke. If you smoke you can get lung cancer and breast cancer from smoking can kill you and die from smoking. Smoking is not good for you at all and I smoke about one pack of cigarettes a day and I hope that I can stop smoking soon. When people smoke they can learn how to control smoking and you cough up mucus. It is not good for you when you smoke.

By A.G.

## Client of the Month: George S. Interview by Justin L.

J.L.: How do you feel about being the client of the month?

G.S.: I worked hard with a lot of effort to improve. It feels good to have an accomplishment.

J.L.: How did you feel about being in AAMH when you first started versus being in AAMH now?

G.S.: I was at first scared to open up. I am now connecting to people and learning a lot from them. As a result of this program I continue to stay stable.

J.L.: What are some of your achievements in AAMH?

G.S.: 2.5 months nicotine free and I successfully discontinued an addictive medication. I have also learned from others' mistakes that they kindly shared.

J.L.: Where do you see yourself in the next five years?

G.S.: Tough question. I could see myself in my own apartment with a fulfilling job. I would like an education to improve my writing skills.

J.L.: Is there any particular person/persons in AAMH that you would like to acknowledge in helping you to achieve your goals?

G.S.: I would like to thank the counselor Bob and the clients, including my friend Justin.

J.L.: Please tell me some of the unique ways you use to cope with stress?

G.S.: I like to read, journal about my feelings, pray to a higher power, play chess and substitute candy for cigarettes.

J.L.: You appear happy and content quite often. What is it that helps you feel this way?

G.S.: I feel I have everything I need and I am quite content. Accepting things as they are, reading the Bible and my higher power helps. Since I quit cigarettes, I feel I can do almost anything within reason. Acceptance of my illness has also been important.

J.L.: What can you say to the clients that just started in AAMH?

G.S.: Keep an open mind in therapy. Be patient and give it time. We are all here for a reason.

J.L.: Thank you George and congratulations.

Source: Association for Advancement of Mental Health Princeton, NJ, Horizons, Partial Care Program November 2008 Newsletter



## PEER INCLUSION

by Susanne Mills

Went through most of life simply  
Existing  
Didn't realize there was anything  
Missing  
You see, I only became alive  
Early in the year 2005  
I had spent a lifetime living in fear  
Always hoping my end was near.

So my life is just 4 years old  
It is not so bad, truth be told  
Came closer to death than I like to admit  
Gave up on this world, wanted to quit  
Being a peer has changed my life for  
Good  
Couldn't fathom that anything else  
Would

I represent A screening center with 16  
Peers  
Success being measured over 4 great  
Years  
As peer advocates we can help add  
Hope that our consumers never had  
We follow up on those consumers too  
To give them a boost, and see them  
Through  
While they wait for aftercare  
We let them know someone is there

Soon I hope that you will see  
How important employing peers can be  
Consumer employees not so sure  
Listen closely, you might want more  
Before you are forced to comply  
We simply ask that you try

Mental illness ruled my life  
Work and wellness twice as nice  
Working as a peer paved the way  
To this world of wonder I live today

Peer advocates in all their glory  
Sharing wellness and recovery stories  
Peer specialists at their best  
Stand strong and tall among the rest  
Having such an amazing group to lead  
Has become wonderful for me indeed  
Supervising among this group of peers  
Has helped me take away the stigma and fear

The Drenk Center has helped blaze a  
Trail  
That our best practices will always  
Prevail  
Peer specialists being certified  
To mental health providers far and wide  
The Division of Human Services knows  
When allowed to develop, peer inclusion  
Grows and grows  
Thanks to all at MHANJ  
For bringing us together on this, our  
Special day!

# Make A Note!

**CHOICES**  
has a new  
**telephone number**  
**732-235-8232**



# Don't Smoke

By B.S.

When you smoke, you choke  
 I'm know joke that's why  
 I don't smoke them cigarette  
 On the Block I drop my Hip Hop  
 My wordz rhymes threw your  
 Ears don't smoke, don't smoke.

----- !

Yo when you smoke you die  
 why  
 Bye man it kills lungs tha Body  
 I can rock tha party I'm Hard  
 On my enemies yes who's tha  
 Best time to take a rest  
 I use Zest Body Wash  
 Yeah I take bath, Let  
 Me get Back to Don't Smoke.

----- !

Ya'll people want to die  
 Just keep on smokin' see  
 Not me ski going to smoke  
 That's why I'm no joke  
 I want my life so Don't smoke,  
 Don't smoke, Don't smoke,  
 Don't smoke.

-----

## Are you interested in quitting smoking?

If you live near the Central New Jersey area, you may be eligible to earn some extra money by participating in one of our research studies. Our office is only 3 blocks from the NJ Transit train station in New Brunswick. Call us at 732-235-4341.



## Continued from Front Page

5. We continue to conduct many research studies at UMDNJ to better understand smoking and mental illness. If you have been a participant in one of our research studies, we want to thank you. We value very much your important contribution to our research that we hope leads to new advances in knowledge and treatment for tobacco addiction.

6. CHOICES has now become a model program for other states. This is not surprising to us since CHOICES incorporates many aspects of a patient-based and recovery oriented program. We have always believed that consumers will make the right choices for a healthy life if they are given access to all the information and resources. Sharing that information with a peer instead of a health professional can make it easier to talk openly about smoking.

7. The CHOICES Program owes a debt of gratitude to pioneers, Marie Verna and Martha Dwyer. Marie is a tireless advocate for people with mental illness and her dedication to the CHOICES program was crucial to its early success. Martha is known for her nurturing and organizational skills and is the heart and soul of the program on a daily basis.

Nancy Szkodny is also devoted to the CHOICES Program and developed our website and newsletter. Finally, we hope to be doing this work for a long, long time. In order to be successful, CHOICES needs to hear from you. The writings done by consumers are the best part of this newsletter. We encourage all of you to keep sending us your stories and experiences! We look forward to hearing from you soon...

Dr Jill

## We welcome your input and suggestions

Please write to us and send us your story, poem, recipe, etc. If you send in a submission to our newsletter and it's published, **we'll send you a free phone card.** You don't need to be from New Jersey!

**E-mail:** [dwyermh@umdnj.edu](mailto:dwyermh@umdnj.edu)





c/o Martha Dwyer  
 317 George Street  
 Suite 105  
 New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
 732-235-8232—dwyermh@umdnj.edu

**STAFF**

Jill Williams, MD  
 Medical Director & Co-Founder  
 UMDNJ-RWJMS  
 Director, Division of Addiction Psychiatry  
<http://www.rwjms.umdnj.edu/addiction/>  
 Marie Verna—UMDNJ-UBHC  
 Advocacy Director & Co-Founder  
 Martha Dwyer, MA, LCADC, CTTS  
 Program Director  
**CHOICES Consumer Tobacco Advocates:**  
 Eric Arauz            Wayne Holland  
 Diane Beck            Bill Newbold  
 Yasmin Halim        Deidre Stenard

**Join our FREE MAILING LIST— Please Print:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

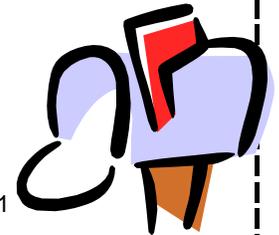
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Send this form to:

**CHOICES**  
 c/o Martha Dwyer,  
 317 George Street, Suite 105, New Brunswick, NJ 08901



**The CHOICES team will come to you!**

The **CHOICES** team of peer advocates will visit your group or program in New Jersey and provide mental health consumers with education about the consequences of smoking and tobacco products along with information regarding treatment resources available to make quitting easier. Call us at 732-235-8232 to set up a date and time.



*CHOICES is a partnership between UMDNJ-RWJMS Division of Addiction Psychiatry, the Mental Health Association of New Jersey (MHANJ) and the NJ Division of Mental Health Services and is funded by the NJ Division of Mental Health Services .*