

CHOICES

Consumers Helping
Others Improve
Their Condition by
Ending Smoking

Spring 2010

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ADVOCACY ALERT

NJ in Last Place among States for Funding Tobacco Control

By Jill M. Williams, M.D.

As of July 1, 2010 Governor Christie is planning to remove \$6 million from the state budget that currently pays for tobacco programs that help the people of New Jersey. This means that almost all of the NJ QuitCenters will close including the two UMDNJ Tobacco QuitCenters in New Brunswick and Mercer County.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that New Jersey spend \$119 million on tobacco control which includes both prevention and treatment programs. This amount is based on the large population in NJ. Even when NJ was spending \$7 million on tobacco (which may sound like a lot of money) this is only 7% of what the CDC recommends, putting our state 38th in terms of funding for tobacco control. If all the money is cut, then NJ will be in last (50th) place compared to all other states.

This is certainly not a good place for our state to be. What is most ironic about the lack of money to fund

tobacco prevention and treatment programs in NJ, is that our state has one of highest taxes on cigarettes. NJ charges \$2.70 per pack on taxes which brings in more than \$700 million per year to the state budget. Isn't it reasonable that some of this money be used to help smokers, as is done in other states?



Maybe it's time that we let our state leaders know that funding for a Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program in NJ is important. Every smoker should have access to face-to-face counseling to support their efforts to quit. For more

information about how to send a letter to one of your state representatives go to the Mercer County Tobacco Program Spring 2010 Newsletter <http://mercercountytdp.com/newsletter.htm> or NJ GASP at http://www.njgasp.org/alert_budget.htm.

My Remarkable Journey with CHOICES



In 2005 who could have imagined that CHOICES would grow into a nationally recognized peer outreach program addressing tobacco in the NJ mental health community. As Program Director, I have been privileged to work with a remarkable team. Dr. Jill Williams, Marie Verna and Margaret Molnar provided guidance and support which have been the underpinnings of the program's success. Nancy Szkodny has assisted CHOICES from the beginning and makes our newsletter possible. Special thanks to NJ Division of Mental Health Services for their support

By Martha Dwyer, MA, LCADC, CTTS

and funding of CHOICES.

The Consumer Tobacco Advocates (Yasmin, Wayne, Deidre, Diane, Eric, Bill and Kathy) brought the program alive through their dedication, hard work and willingness to tackle whatever challenges came their way. It is inspiring to see the impact the Advocates have made with both consumers and providers. By providing tobacco education, sharing their own experiences, and meeting with consumers individually, the Advocates have increased awareness of the importance of addressing tobacco in a journey of wellness and recovery and have instilled hope in their peers that it is possible to

quit. I have watched the Advocates grow in their own recovery as they reach out to others. All of the CHOICES team should be proud of our accomplishments.

During my time as Program Director, I have gained a greater appreciation of the serious problem of tobacco use in the mental health community and of the power of peer support in addressing this critical issue. CHOICES provides individuals with the opportunity to make their own educated choices.

As I move on, I am confident that CHOICES will thrive under the stewardship of the new Program Director, Patricia Dooley, MA, LPC, CTTS. While I will not be actively involved with the program on a daily basis, I plan to spread the CHOICES message.

CHOICES CTAs WISH MARTHA THE BEST !

Martha Dwyer was a very good person to work for. She was very caring and listened to me and helped me become better at my job. We would have good talks where she would help me understand the nature of addiction and also how to talk and network with people. She was very organized and that helped me be more organized. When she was in the office, I could work better than when I was alone. Even though she did not have a mental health background she understood that I had times when I felt good and could take on more responsibility but that there were also times when I had to scale

back. She would give me reassurance that I was still doing a good job. When we first started at CHOICES, she would come with Wayne and I to do the survey study, it was very nice to be in the car with her. She would talk about things going on in the news and Wayne would try out his jokes. She would talk with the administrators and help answer questions if someone asked us something we did not know. Sometimes I would get discouraged that we were not able to offer people enough help and Martha would tell me about her experiences working with tobacco and how systems change

takes time. Martha did a lot of work to get administrators to let us come to their programs. She was very humble. She did a lot of work to make the program successful that we did not know about or would even know how to do but she always made time for us and she gave us the credit for the program being a success.

By Yasmin Halim

My process of working for CHOICES wouldn't be complete without mentioning the Director of CHOICES, Martha Dwyer. Anytime we needed her we could call her and she would be available to help. That included the one time when we were on the way to a site visit and one of our advocates was

CTAs Continued . . .
sick. Martha offered to meet us and come pick him up, so that the rest of us could continue on our way to the site. That was a life-saver, as well as many other times when we needed to call her. Martha was also a great boss and let us do as much or as little as we wanted to, and in our own way. There has been a lot of freedom in working for CHOICES, and it has been a great program to work for. I can appreciate all the hard work that it took developing the structure of the

program, the finances, the paperwork involved, the handouts that we use, and the way we tell our stories based on our experience with quitting smoking, because it wouldn't have happened without Martha. Thanks for a great program!

By Deidre Stenard

I have known Martha for at least five years, and I can honestly say that it has been a pleasure to know her, always friendly, always supportive. She showed a great ability for being

strong and assertive, but sympathetic and understanding. I always valued her viewpoint on things. Throughout the years I have known her, she was like a cross between a sister or surrogate mother, as well as a good friend. I will certainly miss her perspective — I will miss her insight. Although I will miss her, I will always hope that life goes well for her, and that things go well for her, no matter what she pursues in her life. Good bye Martha, and best wishes.

By Wayne Holland



Happy 5th Anniversary CHOICES!

By Trish Dooley, MA, LPC, CTTs

Wow, what an exciting milestone for the CHOICES

program as we celebrate our fifth year in June, 2010. The program has achieved so much in a relatively short amount of time, with our statewide outreach to hundreds of programs and thousands of smokers, not to mention the awards and national recognition we have received.

What an honor it is to be asked to be the new Program Director for CHOICES. As someone who has attended CHOICES presentations both as an audience member at Dr. Williams' 2-day training, and as a member of the team at various site visits, I am always inspired to see the work they do, and the impact they have on the people they come into contact with,

consumers and providers alike.

I look forward to exciting new challenges and opportunities in this role. The former director, Martha Dwyer, will be sorely missed by the team, but she has provided an excellent infrastructure and organized system that makes it easy to pick up and continue the work they have done. I am looking forward to many years ahead with the CHOICES team, as we look to new opportunities and challenges in spreading this critically important message!

DUMONT RECOVERY CENTER PRAISES CHOICES

The Dumont Recovery Center would like to take this opportunity

to thank you for your visit to our community Mental Health Center.

The presentation designed to inform our clients about the negative and costly effects of smoking was very well received. Some consumers were very concerned about the multiple health issues that they could face. Others were surprised by the number of toxins and poisons in cigarettes. For some attendees the financial incentive to quitting was impressive. The possibility of lowered medication dosing was interesting to another participant. The jars of tar and phlegm were provocative and illuminating for the audience members who respond to visual aides.

I look forward to hearing from you and seeing you again.
Sincerely,

Cheryl Eth, R.N., M.A.

Nurse DRC
Dumont Recovery Center



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PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH: The Division of Addiction Psychiatry is located at 317 George Street, Suite 105, New Brunswick, New Jersey. Our researchers are always looking for individuals to participate in our studies **Nicotine Nasal Spray**—If you smoke more than ten cigarettes per day, you may qualify to participate in a study looking at the quit rate of subjects who receive NNS and behavioral intervention compared to the quit rate of the control group who will receive the placebo spray plus same behavioral intervention. Participants are paid \$390 for their participation in the study, which takes about 15 weeks to complete. For further info, or to refer a patient, please contact Dr. Jill Williams at 732-235-4600 or at williajm@umdnj.edu.

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 funded by the NJ Division of Mental Health Services .