

The Wellness Gazette



From The Director's Desk by Mary C.

Welcome to our bi-monthly newsletter! Happy Mental Health Awareness Month! Spring is a great time of renewal and we are excited about many upcoming events! We had our first Community Resource Series in March and it was a huge success. We will be announcing the next one soon. We are going to the On Our Own conference in June! June is also LGBTQIA Pride Month. We will be at Baltimore Pride June 17th and 18th.

May will be the start of our Spring/Summer programming schedule. We will host a Japanese culture class, relationship group and a new Dual Diagnosis group. The Dual Diagnosis group is for anyone who experiences mental health and substance-use issues. Laura, one of our volunteers, has recently completed the C-CAR training which gives her more insight into substance use and mental health. This is important because many people used drugs or alcohol to self-medicate. If we do not treat both substance dependency and mental illness, our recovery becomes impossible.

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Transgender Day Of Visibility by Tea S.

Do you see what I see...? Transgender people are everywhere! Television, music, film, and fashion... Amazingly, transgender people are not a new species, although, the history books of the world will tell you differently. There have always been trans people living in the world. Since, the beginning of time transgender people have been known as some "thing". Maybe, some "thing" other-worldly? Maybe, some "thing" special?... Inhumane treatment comes to extra special people, rather easily. Mainly, because it's easy to misunderstand, and mistreat people that are "different", in general, quite frankly. Kindness and understanding takes a bit of patience. Blacks, Muslims and Latinos are just some of the types of people that know the details of inhumane mistreatment first hand. And, the history books proves that any of the people that were successful in any field (that weren't white) were NOT, admittedly gay or trans. However, it's apparently a 'new day'. A 'Day of Visibility', March 31st, is a new holiday of sorts, a day of celebration. It began in 2009. What Black History Month is to African-American people, 'Day of Visibility' is to Trans people.

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Words In The World Editorial By Roxanne S: Bullying and Prejudice

In all these years between then and now in the LGBTQ community homophobia and transphobia has become more extremely toxic in society. That comes from oppression and hate which begins bullying in school and the social media that attacks gay and transgender people which leads gay and transgender people to die by suicide. Wellness and support is always the solution support from your family, friends, your peers and your loved ones will lead you to a brighter life as well as wellness with your self-love and support groups in the LGBTQ community. Maryland has become more tolerant and very supportive for the LGBTQ community. When it comes to hate crime with murder, Maryland does not accept it. And that's my words in the world.



International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia by Nic J.



The lesbian, gay, bi+, transgender, queer, questioning,

intersex, asexual people (LGBTQIA) including others of sexual and gender diversities are a great many people. As a member in the LGBTQIA+ community, my experiences lead me to see homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia in day-to-day life. Homophobia is the unreasoning hatred, hostility, aversion, or prejudice against homosexuality (attraction to the same gender) and homosexuals (gays and lesbians). Also, unreasoning hatred, hostility, aversion, or prejudice against transgender people is called transphobia. In case you do not know, transgender people are people who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. Many bisexual+ people are those who attracted to people of their own gender and other gender(s). Bisexual+ people know biphobia to be the unreasoning hatred, hostility, aversion, or prejudice against bi+ people. Homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia are prevailing issues outside of and within the LGBTQIA+ community. There is even internalized homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia whereas people take on the phobias as their own.

Homophobia may come in the form of heterosexism or the discrimination and prejudice against homosexuals on the assumption that heterosexuality is the only correct sexual orientation. Saying things like "no homo" or other derogatory phrases and words are in no way affirming. Saying derogatory things is hate speech and committing harmful actions are acts of violence. With internalized homophobia, lesbians and gays take on and personalize stigma in their thoughts and lives. Gays and lesbians, like lots of heterosexual people, might think there is a correct way to be lesbian or gay which is immensely false. Gay and lesbian people, and bisexual or pansexual people, come from all walks of life in their races, economic statuses, beliefs, etc. In the midst of all our wonderful diversity, there has been tragedy.

Masses of transgender people have been murdered or seriously injured as a result of the widespread transphobia against transmen, transwomen, and genderqueer people. Simultaneously, many cisgender people who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth make the false assumption that gender and sexuality are the same. However, gender identity and sexuality are unrelated and are not the same. If someone is transgender like a transman (female-to-male transitioning/transitioned), does not mean that he is automatically homosexual or same-gender-loving. He is not automatically a lesbian if he is only attracted to women. Also, he is a he. Calling someone incorrect pronouns is extremely disrespectful. Even if someone has disclosed that they are of the transgender experience, outing someone's gender identity is not only disrespectful, it is very dangerous. It is unfortunate that transgender people have to deal with internalized transphobia's nasty relative which is called gender dysphoria. Paraphrasing from WebMD, gender dysphoria is known to be the strong feeling of not identifying with their physical sex based on their gender identity. By the way, it is never okay to ask a transgender their sex. Asking that is creepy.

As for bisexual+ people, biphobia may look like saying that "bisexual means binary" or "bisexual is limiting in that it only refers to genitals." Many bisexual+ people would define their sexuality as bisexual+ activist Robyn Ochs would. For Robyn Ochs, "bisexuals are people who acknowledge in themselves the potential to be attracted – romantically and/or sexually – to people of more than one sex and/or gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree." The only proper response to the stigmatizing statement about genitals is that love is love. Bisexual+ people hear untrue statements like "you're too feminine or masculine to be bi" or "it's just a phase" and bi+ people will personalize stuff like that into internalized biphobia.

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International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia (Continued) by Nic J.

These are only a few examples of homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia. All of these phobias are detrimental to mental and overall wellness. If someone's self-worth is diminished, will they even care about sexually transmitted infections, reproductive health, or other disparities in the LGBTQIA+ community? I think there should be something done about that and apparently I am not alone.

On May 17th every year is International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia (IDAHO) and this internationally recognized campaign is a celebration of sexual and gender diversities. IDAHO was conceived in 2004 to raise awareness of the violence and discrimination experienced by LGBTQIA+ people internationally. According to dayagainsthomophobia.org, May 17th is a galvanizing and mobilizing effort to gain the attention of policymakers, opinion leaders, social movements, the public and the media on a worldwide scale. What are you doing for International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia this year?



“If someone’s self-worth is diminished, will they even care about sexually transmitted infections, reproductive health, or other disparities in the LGBTQIA+ community?”

Five in the Morning by Christina M.

Five o’ clock in the morning
Sleep is for those who are not plagued with poetry.
Coffee, my elixir, my saving grace
As daylight draws ever closer.
My mind, full of thoughts I must write
Typing furiously at the keyboard
As my fingers try to keep up with my always racing mind.
I pause, to smoke a cigarette being neglected in the ashtray.
Slowly, I inhale and then continue to type once more,
Rapidly clicking upon the keys, trying desperately to write
Thoughts into words, feelings into phrases, love into poems,
Anger, sometimes mixing into my musings.
Then, after all is done, no editing desired, for my feelings
Speak volumes only to those who care and to myself,
I publish, in the hopes, someone will understand.



From The Director's Desk (Continued) by Mary C.

In addition to the aforementioned groups, we will continue some favorites like Art Therapy and the Transgender Support group.

May 5th we celebrated our members (old and new). We enjoyed great music from Instruments of Healing. Lunch was served. We appreciate all of you!

May 12th will be Guy's Night. Come join Ken and other members after hours for wings and "guy talk." Ladies Night will be in July. We look forward to an exciting Spring and Summer.

Mary Chirico

"The Community Resource Series is held at Hearts & Ears every few months, with a new series planned for June."

Positive Thought

Think of this positive affirmation and repeat to yourself or out loud.

A river of compassion washes away my anger and replaces it with love.

Community Resource Series by Ken J.

Hearts & Ears held its 1st Community Resource Series and it was a great success. On March 17th, the center hosted a community information conference focusing on law enforcement and mental health. Invited presenters included Laura DePalma (FreeState Justice), Merrick Moses (Baltimore City States Attorney's office), Elizabeth Wexler & Sgt. Azalee Johnson (Behavioral Emergency Services Team), and Sgt. Kevin Bailey & Ofc. Darren "Shaggy" Belechto (Baltimore City Police Department). The Community Resource Series is held at Hearts & Ears every few months, with a new series planned for June. It was created as a result of a group discussion with members, about their concerns with city agencies how they are treated.



Game Review of Final Fantasy by Jawan S.



Video game controller

Final Fantasy has been around for a long time and it just celebrated its 30-year anniversary. The game started out with a company called Square Soft. The company was failing so they wanted to create a game one last time. They created a game known as Final Fantasy where the story

was a self-contained story. The game was so successful that they continue to create the game and it saved the company. It has continued that way to this day 30 years later. Final Fantasy is mostly on PlayStation and it is one of the most popular console games ever to be created.

The most famous of the Final Fantasy games are Final Fantasy VII, Final Fantasy X, Final Fantasy X 2, Final Fantasy XIII, and Final Fantasy XIII 2. Final Fantasy has also helped create a gameplay mode called MMO or Massive Multiplayer Online gaming when the game first came out. It was a miserable failure because it was touted as one of the most horrible video game ever created. So, Square Soft got rid of the game, started the game over and created Final Fantasy Realm Reborn.

Now, Final Fantasy Realm Reborn is one of the most popular MMO games that has ever been created. This summers Final Fantasy Storm Blood will be the third expansion to be released. So if you get a chance to play a little Final Fantasy whether it be on console or online, you should play!

Joke of The Day

Doctor! Doctor! I think I'm going crazy. I have a carrot growing out of my ear.

Amazing ! so you have.
How could that have happened?

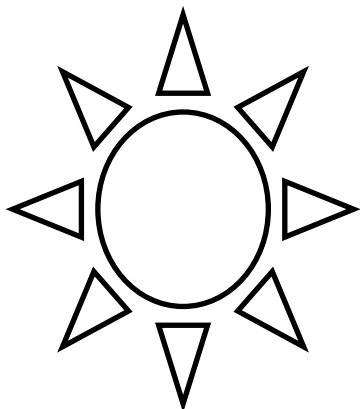
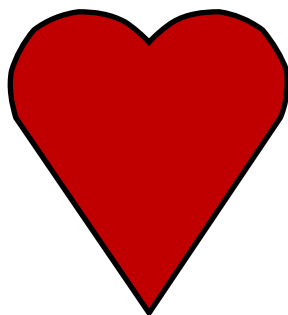
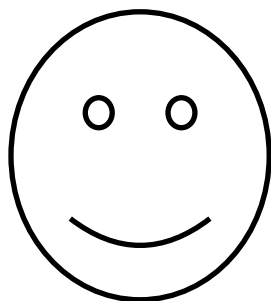
I can't understand it either,
because I planted cabbage!

Art Therapy by Hearts & Ears Members



Affirmation

**KEEP CALM
AND LOVE
YOURSELF**

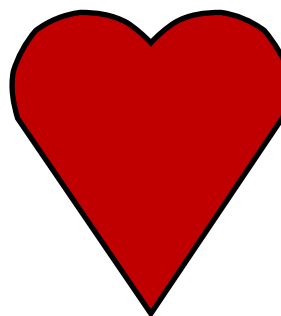


Number 45 and the Mental Health Perspective by Members of Hearts & Ears

The shock and desperation of the Trump presidency is still affecting many of us to this very day. With new executive orders against the very humanness of people whether it be of Muslim faith or LGBTQIA+ identity. Anxiety spikes, sleep deprivation, depression worsens, bipolar anger heightens, paranoia ensues, and other triggers as well as symptoms are extremely active. You don't have to have a mental health diagnosis to experience these feelings induced by the election and the presidency. Here are some ways to take care of yourself.

1. Limit how much you watch the news.
2. Enjoying the nice spring weather and sunshine.
3. Finding ways to make a difference by volunteering or donating items and money to a local cause.
4. Don't forget to have fun.
5. Meet with friends.
6. Change coffee break to exercise break.
7. Take deep breaths and let it all out.
8. Talk a walk.
9. Get active in local politics and make a difference.

10. Find people to talk to.
11. Go to museums.
12. Listen to music.
13. Do one thing at a time.
14. Be gentle with yourself and others.
15. Practice good sleep hygiene.
16. Meditation, prayer, and/or Reiki.
17. Get a massage.
18. Treat yourself to something nice like a manicure, haircut, or a nice meal.
19. Stretch or do yoga.
20. Take a Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP) class at a wellness recovery center like Hearts & Ears.



Hearts & Ears Member Appreciation Luncheon by Ken J.

On Friday, May 5th, Hearts & Ears hosted its 2nd annual member appreciation luncheon. The luncheon was started a year ago as a way to let members know that they are appreciated. Many people come to the center looking for help and support in dealing with mental health and recovery as well as having a space to socialize. Center activities and trips also allow members to get out and have fun. Our entertainment guests this year were the Instruments of Healing, who provided a fun day of music therapy.



Member of the Month: Laura H.

Hi, my name is Nic. The member of the month for this edition's newsletter is Laura H.

Hello. I'm Laura.

Hi! So, we're interviewing you for member of the month. Were you surprised?

I was surprised. I was shocked! Wasn't sure why exactly.

So, tell the readers a bit about your interest in Hearts & Ears. Why were you first interested in Hearts & Ears? And, when did you first get involved?

I had been hospitalized at Union Memorial and a social worker there who was on the board of Hearts & Ears referred me. And, it was on Biddle Street and Reneé was still the director. I started coming a little bit here and there. Then, we moved to West Chase Street. I started volunteering and that made me feel really good about myself like I was doing something. I remember just really getting to know people, having friends - gay friends. That was really important to me.

I remember times when I was so depressed. Really, really depressed. I've gone through so much depression in my life and for a lot of times thought it was absolutely hopeless. I remember I was alone in my apartment, hadn't showered or anything, and couldn't get myself to shower or anything. I just kind of rolled over, rolled out of bed, and walked over to [Hearts & Ears]. I kind of like plopped on the couch. It was a homeless woman who came to me and said, "it's going to be

"It's like if this person who was homeless can say it's going to be alright, it's going to be alright."

alright, Laura." And I was like what the hell like I feel like crying now. It's like if this person who was homeless can say it's going to be alright, it's going to be alright. I always hold on to that hope and I've always felt like I needed Hearts & Ears to be here for me.

I need it to be open and I got on the board. We came to a point where we almost closed again and I was like this isn't going to happen. [We had someone] leave as the president. ...I was like please don't leave me with these people. [The people who were in leadership] weren't interested in what Hearts & Ears really is. I needed it to be here. So, I was bound and determined that it was going to be here. And, me and [my colleague] Mary kept it open basically for a while. Then, we had to rebuild up our board. Here we are today. I think we have really increased our numbers. We're about ready to pop out of this space. This is a bigger space than we've had and we're about ready to move out of this space [for capacity reasons] when this lease is up.

I took the CCAR training and I'm volunteering [500 hours at Hearts & Ears] to become a Peer Support Specialist. I never thought that would happen to me. I never thought I would be able to help other people or I'd come in a position where I could be employed potentially.

Yeah. So tell the readers about the CCAR training. What is it? And, how was the training experience?

Okay. It stands for Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery but it [basically means] recovery coach training. It's more to do with the substance use side [of peer support]. And, [my colleagues] Mary and Ken are peer support mental health side. I really am too. I know a lot about mental health. The [peer support] training is about all of it. But, at some point Behavioral Health Systems of Baltimore (our funding source) is going to require us to have [all behavioral health] under one roof. So, I will be in line to take the position as substance use and then there's Mary and Ken for mental health. It's kind of why I'm doing one-on-ones with people. I learned a whole lot. I was a nurse before and I made goals for people. I mean I said, "this wound is going to heal in two weeks or something." But, with the peer training I've been trained to ask people what are your goals. It has nothing to do with me. It's like what do you want to do. Can I help you do that? What is it you think you need to do to get there?

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Laura H.

Laura H. and wife DeAnn



Member of the Month (Continued)

And, I kind of help that way. I don't give my opinion. It's a whole new way of looking at things.

Yes. That's cool.

And, I have a little of over two years of substance use recovery, drug and alcohol-free.

Congrats!

Thank you!

So while we're on the topic of recovery, how

would you define success in recovery?

I think it's not that all your symptoms and everything in recovery go away. I think it's that - for me - I learn how to deal with them. Like I get really anxious and I've taught myself to take deep breaths or I'm going to color a picture. I'm going to take some time to be just quiet or to meditate. All kinds of people have taught me all these different techniques and it's using those techniques to get me through a hard time, to not panic. I'll panic when I get in a hard time and that gets me into the hard time. But I can, we can.

[Both laugh]

What has surprised you most about working with Hearts & Ears?

There's all kinds of people that come in. A big thing is that Mary and Ken have expertise working with specific types of people. I'm fine with working with certain people. I can't be able to talk to every single person. Together as a team it works better.

Seems cool. Time for a game! This is the rapid fire game. You're in the hot seat! You have three seconds and at the end of the three seconds we'll move on to the next question.

What color is your toothbrush?

Blue

What is your favorite summer activity?

Beach, not Ocean City

[Both laugh]

What is your favorite color?

Pink

What is your favorite smell?

Umm... Food!

If you could be any flavor of ice cream what ice cream flavor would you be?

Pistachio



Laura H. at CCAR training



Contribute To The Center

As a small 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, Hearts & Ears, Inc. often finds itself in the situation of having to do very much with very little.

You can help give back to the community and help us fulfill our mission of serving our predominantly low-income member population in a number of different ways.

- YOUR TIME

Whether it is pitching in by running a group, teaching a class or just lending your time you can make a major impact and give someone a much-needed helping hand.

- SUNDRIES

OR MATERIALS

If you have clothes or a pantry of canned food items you can spare, your gift could provide the assistance someone so desperately needs it.

- MONETARY GIFTS

Even a small amount can make a huge difference in someone's life.

If you would be interested in contributing to the Hearts & Ears mission in any of these ways please contact us by phone at (410) 523-1694 or by emailing info@heartsandears.org.

Hearts & Ears, Incorporated

Hearts & Ears, Inc. offers peer support for mental health consumers in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual community. Activities, groups, educational forums are geared towards specific needs of GLBTQIA+ consumers.

We're There For You

At Hearts & Ears Inc., we believe recovery is very much possible through hope, personal responsibility, education, advocacy, and support. Not only do we offer resources but we also offer support in a friendly and inviting environment sensitive to the issues concerning the LGBTQIA community. At Hearts & Ears, members can meet new people, share their experiences with others who understand, regain a sense of involvement and belonging in the community and have the opportunity to build a healthy support network with others.

Hearts and Ears Inc. hopes to offer referrals to resources that will range from information on LGBTQIA friendly doctors, therapists, transgender transitioning, housing, food and clothing assistance, medication management and illness education. We also hope to foster a whole host of other information that will aid individuals to make well informed decisions on the road to recovery.

Warmline Available During Operating Hours

One-on-one peer counseling with a staff member or volunteer offered over the telephone. Discuss your concerns with a peer support advocate who you can relate to.

Hearts & Ears, Inc.

611 Park Avenue,
"Suite A"
Baltimore, MD 21201

Website: www.heartsandears.org

Phone: 410-523-1694

E-mail: info@heartsandears.org

[Facebook.com/HeartsAndEars](https://www.facebook.com/HeartsAndEars)

The Center is open on

Wednesday through Saturday

10am-6pm. We are closed on

Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays.

Wednesdays

<i>Wellness Check-In</i>	12p-1p
<i>Art Therapy</i>	2p-3:30p
<i>Dual Diagnosis Group</i>	3:30p-4:30p

Thursdays

<i>Wellness Check-In</i>	12p-1p
<i>Creative Expression</i>	1p-2p
<i>*Current Events/</i>	2p-3p
<i>*HIV Support</i>	
<i>Japanese Culture Group</i>	5p-6p

Fridays

<i>Wellness Check-In</i>	12p-1p
<i>Relationship Group</i>	2p-3p
<i>Smoovies n' Movies</i>	3p-5p

Saturdays

<i>Wellness Check-In</i>	12p-1p
<i>**SOFFA Group</i>	2p-3p
<i>Support In Transition</i>	3p-5p

Monthly Groups/ After Hours

Akanni (Black Transmen Inc.)
3rd Tuesday of the month
7:30p-9p
Beginner Japanese Class
Every Thursday
7p-9p

**This group rotates each week*

***SOFFA is a support group for love ones of transgender individuals*