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Our Mission

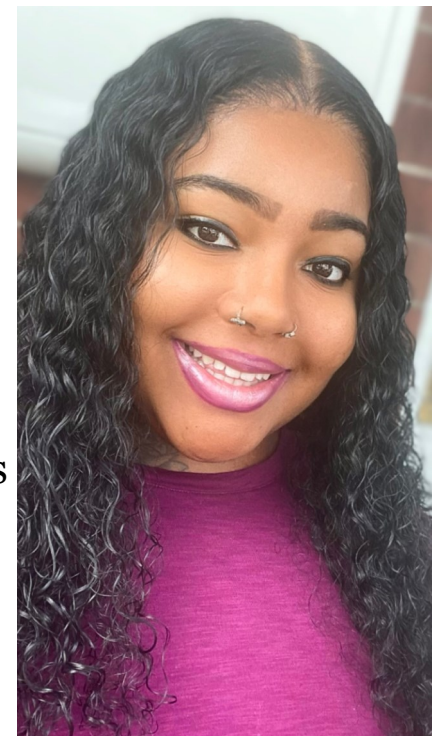
- AMI Inc. of Washington-Greene Counties provides an array of recovery oriented services to individuals who experience mental health challenges or co-occurring disorders. Our services are based on each individual's strengths and their desire to achieve personal goals. We accomplish our mission by inspiring hope, encouraging self-advocacy and assisting in the development of natural supports within each person's community.

The AMI Lion

We are excited to bring you another issue of the AMI Lion. This month, our focus is on the Holidays, the excitement it can bring, along with the stressors and how to cope. AMI is also excited to announce a new branch of our Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program. AMI will begin providing Supportive Housing services starting January 1st. We are looking forward to focusing the Psychiatric Rehabilitation model towards individuals in need of housing supports. Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and Happy New Years.

Member of the Month: Susan H

This month, Susan H was chosen for Member of the Month because of the growth she has shown in her recovery. Susan enrolled in CPS services in 2020. Since then, she has had her ups and downs with her mental and physical health. Through all of her downs, Susan kept pushing forward. She stayed connected with her mental health services and never gave up. Susan has been hospitalized for blood clots, lupus, and mental health multiple times. Through this, she got stronger. Today Susan is enrolled in college to become a music therapist. This year, she recently received the Leadership in Recovery Award, given by Carelon Behavioral Health. In addition, Susan has just become AMI's newest board member and achieved her goal in CPS services. After being homeless, residing with family, and in group homes, she is now in her own apartment! Susan is a representation of resiliency, hope, strength, and recovery!



Outstanding Community Member: Grishma Solanki



This month, we would like to highlight Grishma Solanki as the outstanding community member. Grishma is a clinician in Washington, PA who has done so much amazing work to support individuals through their mental health journeys! Grishma provides services that are focused on empathy, understanding and overall wellness for the individual. AMI's Psychiatric Rehabilitation group interviewed Grishma for more insight into her life and her work.

How long have you worked in the mental health field?

I have worked in the mental health field since I graduated from college in 1998. I have been directly working in the field for the past 18 years.

Why did you decide to go into this line of work?

I had friends growing up who had a lot of difficult times. I was drawn to being a support for others from a very young age. I had a lot of success helping my friends and family members, which is what promoted my interest in this field. Initially I was thinking about going to medical school and becoming a Psychiatrist but when I went to medical school, it just wasn't what I wanted to do so I decided to pursue Psychology. I thought why not actually do the real work and meet with people and be able to talk with them and help them through whatever difficult challenges and times that they might have. When I did my internship at an RTF, I worked with boys ages 5-15 and I had this experience working with this 5 year old boy that confirmed my decision to work in this field. Seeing the experiences that he had in this short amount of time he had on this earth and the terrible things he went through, seeing what a bright shining star he was, and then being able to support him, his goals, and his journey to try to figure out why the world treated him the way that it did was really eye opening for me. I was able to follow him from the age of 5 until 8 when we were able to transition him into his forever home. This helped define me and confirmed that this is what I want to do with my life.

What change would you like to see in the mental health community and why?

I think one of the biggest priorities that our State really has to look into is how we can find funding for folks who experience mental health challenges. There really is not a lot of money that is dedicated to do the work that is needed. I think that it's not just the people who are in services who experience mental health challenges, it's everybody who navigates our world on a daily basis. So, if we could dedicate more time and more money to truly provide support to folks who are currently in the field so that they continue to stay and do the amazing work, that would be one of my best things that I could ask the State to provide.

What steps can we take to support your vision?

I think we have to speak out. We have to let people know that this is truly a service that is needed and that people want to have. It can be challenging to get a good therapist or even get started quickly in services because there is such a long waiting list, so if we can dedicate more time and effort to using our voices to truly let legislative folks know the importance of funding our programs and making sure that people go to school for mental health and wellness, I think that would be a way for us to demonstrate the importance of needing this support.

What do you love most about working in mental health?

The best part of the experiences that I have working in this field is getting to know the people that I get to work with, both coworkers and the individuals I have been able to support throughout the years. Also, the teams that I have developed to help them to advance and grow as well so that they can take on that great work.

Who supports you and your goals?

I have a really strong ties with my family. They have helped me go through college and also allowed me to make choices and decisions that got me to where I am today. They have been a support that has allowed me to grow, figure it out, and help me to understand what it is that I wanted to do when I grew up. I also have a really strong friend group who has encouraged me throughout the years to stick with it and have taught me to be a better clinician.

Since you spend so much time helping others, what do you do to support your own wellness?

I have a really great support system with my family and friends. I like to hang out with them, spend time with them just playing games, doing things that are relaxing. That allows me the chance to decompress which is really important. I also like to read a lot, but I do read a lot of stuff about research and mental health and wellness to try to continue my growth and development at the same time.

Welcome to Hires and New Board Members!

We wanted to introduce the newest members of AMI. Recently we have welcomed new staff and board members to the team, each with their own unique skillset and abilities to help continue to enhance the services we offer at AMI. We are grateful for each new individual. Welcome to the team!



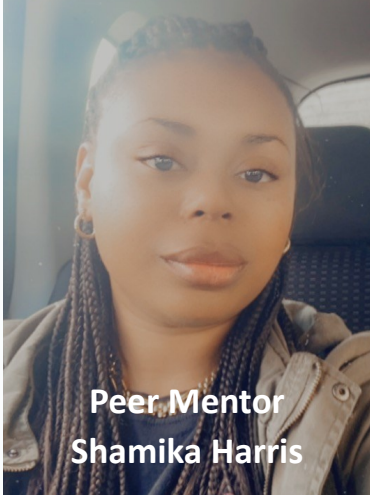
AMI Board Member
Susan Habboushi



AMI Board Member
Sheila Namy



AMI Board Member
Dana Merante



Peer Mentor
Shamika Harris



Accountant
Justin Mankey

Coat Drive

AMI staff recently supported group members in visiting the Salvation Army to get coats, gloves and hats to help keep them warm for the cold winter season. Members were so grateful to have the opportunity to lean on a community resource.

This was a great way to show people the benefits of community integration in action.



SIGN UP TO RECIEVE OUR NEWSLETTER!

Know of someone who would like to join our mailing list for the newsletter?

Visit us at hope4wellness.org to be added to the list!

Jefferson Café Serves at the Art Show

AMI's Art Show this year was such a success! There were so many amazing artists that submitted beautiful artwork. Over 200 community members were in attendance. AMI was truly able to continue its mission of breaking stigma associated with mental health through showcasing amazing art work from individuals in recovery. At this year's Show, AMI's Supported Employment members were able to bring the work of Jefferson Café into the community.



Jefferson Café is a tool utilized in AMI's Supported Employment program to help teach job skills to individuals who attend. This year, members were able to serve drinks from the café to patrons of the Art Show. Members were able to utilize the skills they have been practicing on site in a community setting. They showcased their ability to take orders, handle stress associated with employment, and practice customer service, communication, multi tasking, organization, and teamwork. Members were given the opportunity for complimentary haircuts before the event from PRW Carly, to prepare them for the day of the show. Members were proud of the work they were able to do. These types of events further prepare individuals for success in a community based employment setting.



Jim Gleason: Outstanding Community Member

Jim Gleason was chosen as this year's winner for the annual **Chris Chambers Outstanding Community Member Award!** Each year at AMI's Art Show, in memory of Chris Chambers, we choose one member from the community who excels in helping others and caring for members of their community. Jim was chosen for the work he does to support mental health services and recovery. Jim is an active member in NAMI, and an advocate for mental health services in Washington County. Jim is a shining example of AMI's mission, Advocate, Mentor, Inspire.



Christmas Word Search

S F H X F U S X I R J O Y E G
 Y J A O X C D S I S A N T A U
 J J E M T M E R R Y N O O L F
 E K L R I C N B F Z S O N Y Z
 X S F E U L H A D S L E I G H
 B L R E P D Y O P L F B V P B
 U D F C C N O G C Y N I B Y E
 L P U H Q S E L Z O W M R T L
 I B O R D N N D P R L D R V L
 G B F I H T M O B H T A K B S
 H R G S N A V R W Z D R T D Z
 T Y Y T S K S G N M A W E E I
 S E Y M P A L I K O A J L E A
 Q G E A N G K L M Y Y N Z C O
 E U B S N R H O L I D A Y S J

Hot Chocolate	Christmas	Holidays	Bells
Rudolph	Snowman	Lights	Tree
Sleigh	Merry	Family	Joy
Santa	Elf		

WE'RE HIRING

Do you have a passion for helping others? AMI is looking for individuals who want to make a difference in their community! We are looking for Peer Mentors and Drivers who can help support our programs. AMI offers a supportive, nurturing work environment, as well as opportunities for growth. If you are interested in working for AMI, please contact Lauren Pope at lpope@hope4wellness.org.



Spreading the Holiday Cheer

Members of AMI's Psychiatric Rehabilitation Groups have been working diligently on forming AMI's first Choir! Members have been meeting weekly for the past several months to prepare for their performances. At these meetings, facilitators have been explaining the benefits that music, singing, and community bonding has on mental wellness. Research has shown that caroling can diminish symptoms of anxiety and depression! Here at AMI, we are passionate about providing individuals with unique and engaging coping strategies that promote mental wellness. Last week, the members were able to perform the songs they have been practicing at various personal care homes in their community. Members will also have the opportunity to share the work of their Choir at the Participant's Christmas Celebration at the end of the month. Huge shout out to our facilitator, Kristy, for all the work she put in to make this possible.



CIT Training

AMI recently had the opportunity to work with Scott Berry from Washington County Behavioral Health and Developmental Services to be a part of the Crisis Intervention Training for Law Enforcement Officers in Washington County. CIT trains first responders to understand people who are experiencing mental health, intellectual/developmental disabilities, and substance use disorder challenges. They learn skills to de-escalate situations, and how to recognize people in crisis so they can get the help they need. It also teaches tools to encourage people who need treatment to access services. AMI staff members were able to share their lived experiences with Law Enforcement officers to help them gain an understanding of what someone with Mental Health might be going through when in a crisis situation. This collaboration was amazing, and allowed AMI staff to share with officers tips and insight into how to approach these situations.

"Unity is strength. When there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved." -Mattie Stepanek

Thank you to the Washington County Sheriff's Department for donating a Turkey to help make AMI's on-site Thanksgiving Celebration a success. Thank you also to all of AMI staff who donated various food items to help provide a delicious meal to our on-site participants. We had over 30 individuals in attendance. It was a fun day where members were able to practice socializing with others, building connections, and celebrating holiday traditions.



THANK YOU TO ALL WHO DONATED TO AMI'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION FOR THE ON-SITE PARTICIPANTS. EACH YEAR, WITH HELP FROM FELLOW COMMUNITY MEMBERS, WE ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUALS WHO ATTEND GROUPS ON-SITE AT AMI WITH A CHRISTMAS GIFT. FOR MANY OF THE INDIVIDUALS IN OUR PROGRAM, THIS IS THE ONLY GIFT THEY WILL RECEIVE. THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO OPENED THEIR HEART TO HELP SUPPORT THIS WONDERFUL CELEBRATION!

**PAPSC
MAC DISCOUNT
KEVIN PUSKARIC
HOLLY CALLENDAR
OLIVE OILS
LORI FRONCEK
WALTER AND DOLORES RUTH
SUSAN LEWIS AND FAMILY
SAM'S CLUB**

Coping with Mental Health Challenges During the Holiday Season

The holiday season can be a joyous time, but it can also be overwhelming. The absence of a loved one can trigger a painful memory. The increased financial burden can be difficult to bear. Travelling, making plans, and the increased socialization can also bring on additional anxieties. In 2014, NAMI found out that 64% of people with mental health challenges reported that the holidays made their condition worse. During this challenging time, it is important to remember that there are things you can do to help maintain mental wellness. You can practice mindfulness techniques. Practicing staying in the moment can help you cope with anxieties about future obligations and events. You can lean on your supports. It is important to talk to other people in your support group, let them know how you are feeling. Get exposure to light. During this time of year there is a decrease in sunlight, and time spent outside. Take 10 minutes out of your day to bundle up and go outside for some fresh air. You can also get a light that is designed to help fight seasonal depression. Whatever your plans are for this holiday season, we hope that you are able to enjoy yourself. Remember too, it is ok to reach out and ask for additional support during this time.





WISHING
YOU & YOURS
a very



Merry
Christmas
& Happy
New Year!



From your
AMI
FAMILY