

AMI INC. Newsletter

This month, we are excited to introduce a newsletter that encompasses all of the programs here at AMI. We are expanding upon our previous version, which was Psychiatric Rehabilitation focused, to include achievements and developments from the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program, Certified Peer Specialist Program, Peer Mentoring Program, Psychosocial Program, and the Drop in Center.

Member of the Month: Liz H

Elizabeth started off in peer mentoring services. She has always lived on her own and worked part-time. She decided that she wanted more for her recovery and enrolled in the Certified Peer Specialist program. Elizabeth's first step was to complete a Wellness Recovery Action Plan. Since then, she achieved many small goals that she made for herself with the help of her CPS. However, something was missing for her. She wanted a support dog and friendships in her community. Step by step, Elizabeth continued to work toward her goal and became more optimistic about her recovery. She recently achieved her new goal. Today, she is woken up by her support dog Scottie, goes to work, and comes home to make dinner. Almost everyday, she shares these dinners with a couple of women in her apartment building that she created relationships with. Elizabeth continues to grow on a daily basis and can't wait to see what her future holds. She still has obstacles that she must deal with and overcome, but still stays optimistic. Elizabeth has become a stronger person and continues to want to improve herself to meet her next goal. We, at AMI, wish her the best on her continued success!



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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.



Outstanding Community Organization: Chicco Baccello

AMI would like to recognize Chicco Baccello the Outstanding Community Organization this month. Chicco Baccello recently received the Chris Chambers Exceptional Community Partner Award at AMI's annual Art Show. They received this award because of their commitment to our community, and their passion for helping others. Kim, a staff member from AMI's Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program visited Nancy and Lisa at Chicco Baccello, for more insight into their business.

Walking into Chicco Baccello, there is a small-town vibe. Chicco Baccello is a coffee and deli shop, with locations in Washington and Canonsburg, that offers a variety of coffee drinks, fresh baked goods, soup, and don't forget about their delicious sandwiches served on fresh bread that is baked and delivered daily. I walked in and immediately was greeted by guests and employees. The walls are filled with mugs with regular customers' names on them. A regular will come into the coffee shop, ask for their mug, grab a coffee and go sit on a couch or at a table. I had the pleasure of sitting with Nancy and Lisa to get more insight into their coffee shop. "We offer everything but dinner." Lisa shared the mission of Chicco Baccello is so much more than just serving coffee and food. Their goal is really to make a positive impact on their community, and to bring people together. "We have Pastors who come in and work on their weekly sermon, we have moms that stop by to get their coffee on the run, we had Judge Shapiro stop in last week, we have students that stop in on their breaks." Chicco Baccello has become a central hub where community members come together and take a breather from the daily hustle and bustle.

The employees consist of a mix of people that have been there from the start, and also younger people that temporarily work at Chicco Baccello, and then leave to further their education or move on to their chosen careers. "We try giving anyone from community members to employees a helping hand."

When asked how Chicco Baccello impacts the community Lisa said "positively". Both women shared stories about the regulars becoming a part of their everyday lives. Nancy expressed "It's like the show "Cheers." I know everybody." Lisa shows me a table with a beautifully carved heart in the center. She goes on to tell me that table was used for a first date of a beautiful couple who are now married. Heart warming stories like this one consumed our conversation, and I left Chicco Baccello with a feeling of warmth, unity, and peacefulness. Both women agree that the best part of their job is getting to know so many people and talking with all the customers.

My experience was a 10 out of 10. I couldn't help it but to sit in the chair and enjoy my cup of coffee. I am grateful for businesses like this that make our community a happier place to live.



Taking a Break from the News

With the increase in the use of technology, we are seeing more and more news every day. Whether it is on the television, social media, computer, or phone, news is everywhere, and it is not always pleasant.

News of the pandemic, crime, war, and political turmoil can feel depressing. A recent study has confirmed the negative toll that hearing these news stories can have on our mental health. Research reported a good way to manage anxiety and depression was to unplug and take a break from the news. Give it a shot, take a break from social media, watching the news, reading the news updates on your email, and see for yourself if this is helpful for your mental health.



**“The less you respond to negativity,
the more peaceful your life will be.**

Anonymous



A Story of Growth in Recovery

The person this story is about wished to stay anonymous, and chose to be recognized by their initials, D.B.

D.B began attending on site programming at AMI after a mental health hospitalization. He was unsure about his surroundings and his peers. D.B kept to himself because he believed that people were talking about him. He would not allow himself to trust others. D.B found himself struggling with managing his frustration in social situations resulting in negative thinking, anger outbursts and loneliness. Ultimately he didn't know how to get along with others, and did not believe in himself. After isolating during COVID-19, he decided to recommit to his recovery. D.B focused on himself and what he needed to do to find relief. He began to see that his negative thinking patterns lessened as he continued to be hands on in his recovery, and open minded to feedback and suggestions. Today, he helps his peers, welcomes new individuals, and is a leader in the group setting. D.B has friends now. “I feel better today mentally and physically than I did a year ago.” He is a story of hope and recovery, a leader and a mentor.

HIP HIP HOORAY

Congrats To Melanie for Obtaining her GED

Melanie, a group member from AMI's Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program obtained her GED in February, and was able to attend her graduation ceremony this month.

After a year long process of preparation, studying, and taking the various tests for the GED, she achieved her goal of completing and passing all four sections! Melanie worked with a CPRP through supported education individual sessions to help her in her process. When asked about how she felt about her accomplishment, she shared, “I feel awesome and accomplished! I'm proud of all of my hard work, it paid off!” Melanie is the first individual who worked through the supported education program at AMI to obtain her GED, and she hopes she can be a beacon of hope to others who want to further their education that with hard work and belief in yourself, anything is possible!

Social and Peer Picnic

AMI recently hosted a picnic for Social and Peer Members. The picnic was held at Simmons Farm. Staff started with a meet and greet, which gave participants from different programs an opportunity for socialization and a chance to practice interpersonal relationship skills. Staff then had a discussion on what goals they were working on. For most participants, a common goal for them was to develop coping skills. This was great because this gave individuals a common bond



and sense of relatability, which opened the door for more communication. At first, many of the participants had anxiety, but by the end, people who weren't talking in beginning became comfortable with conversing and interacting with others. People came together and offered a helping hand to others. The day continued with activities, Bingo, Halloween themed games, and a wonderful lunch. Tracy, a staff member of AMI who helped lead the efforts shared, "It was amazing. People who were afraid to leave their homes, afraid to be around people they don't know, all stepped out of their comfort zone and had a great time together." This picnic was a huge success and AMI and the peers are looking forward to more opportunities for this. One peer shared, "It's great to be around people that I can relate to." Thank you Kat & Tracy for putting together such a nice gathering.



Beacon Health Options Adult Leadership in Recovery Winner

Congratulations to Paulette for being the winner of the Beacon Award for Leadership in Recovery! Paulette was nominated because of her perseverance in overcoming obstacles in recovery and continuing to push forward to achieve her goals. Recently, she has started volunteering in her community. Paulette is always available as a support for others, and always keeps a positive attitude We are so proud of you Paulette!

Lisa Milan, Deputy Administrator, and Mary Jo Hatfield, MH Program Director from Washington County BHDS with Award Winner Paulette

Impact that Socialization has on Recovery

Socialization in recovery can bring on an increased sense of fear and anxiety. For some people, even thinking about talking with others prevents them from trying. Many of the individuals we serve avoid going out into the community, going to the grocery store, and attending social community events, because of these fears. AMI's group services provides an opportunity for individuals to practice socialization skills in a safe and supportive environment, to help them overcome these barriers. One group member shared, "When I first started coming to AMI, I didn't talk to anyone for my first week. I didn't know anyone, I was afraid to talk to people, I didn't think people would be friendly. Once I got comfortable and kept coming, eventually I saw the positive impact being around people had on my life."

AMI has started to host monthly social gatherings to offer individuals additional opportunities to practice their social skills on a larger scale. The goals of these events are to help participants build their confidence in talking and interacting with others, while learning to have fun in recovery. One peer shared, "being in a group and around positive people has helped me build my confidence." Another peer shared that since she has been in the group setting, she has been able to talk with others, which is making her feel more comfortable with herself because she is accepted by others. In addition to these benefits, group members identified more positive outcomes of coming to group, and attending these social events, including: increased amount of supports, friendships that are extending outside of group, less fear when talking to people in and out of their group setting, and increased self-esteem in the job search.



Goal Getters!

AMI loves to celebrate and acknowledge accomplishments from participants in all programs. See below for a full list of recent goal accomplishments by individuals in our various programs!

- "I moved into my own apartment."
- "I've taken more steps towards being healthier, working out more, eating healthier!"
- "I went to a church meeting. I haven't been there in 3 years because of COVID."
- "I started a housekeeping job."
- "I've lived in my own apartment, and kept up with my living space for a year straight!"
- "I got a job!"
- "I've gotten better talking to people, and reaching out to people outside of group."
- "I've paid all my bills this month!"

Meet AMI's Peer Services Staff

We would like to use this issue to introduce our dedicated staff who make Peer Services at AMI engaging, fun, and successful. AMI has a Certified Peer Specialist program, where staff are trained to assist the people they serve to improve their own lives, develop coping skills, and build supports. Our Peer Mentoring program is a supportive service for individuals with mental health challenges that may include a social or recreational component as well.

Monica Goblesky
Peer Mentor Supervisor



Katherine Ranko
Peer Services Director



Tracy McElhone
Peer Services Supervisor



"I love Peer Services because helping people with recovery goals and seeing them reach their goals is an amazing experience!"

"Peer services is everything to me! It taught me to embrace my lived experience instead of hide from it. Peer Services challenges me daily to empower others through my challenges and successes."

"I love Peer Services because it affords me the opportunity to advocate, mentor, and inspire."

Danna Walters-Miller
CPS, Peer Mentor



"I love Peer Services because it lets me help others learn how to cope with their mental health. It also reminds me how important the support I give and receive are."

Carly Grice
Peer Mentor



"I love how sharing my own experience can help another person succeed in their hopes and dreams."

Marrah Winters
CPS, Peer Mentor



"I love Peer Services because I am able to help other people through their trials and tribulations and remind them that they are not alone."

**Malerie Smith,
CPS, Peer Mentor**



"I enjoy helping people and letting them know they are never alone in life. A lot of my peers teach me new things and give me a different perspective. I just love to see people thrive in their journeys!"

**James Smith
CPS, Peer Mentor**



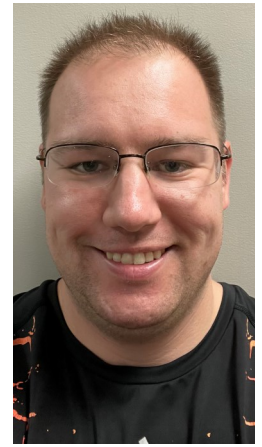
"I love Peer Services because it gives me a chance to help people help themselves."

**Graham Grey
CPS, Peer Mentor**



"I love Peer Services because of the connections I make with my peers and the empathy that we share for one another in our community. Knowing that I'm not alone and that I can inspire hope in others helps me stay positive in my own mental health recovery."

**Mike Donovan
Peer Mentor**



"I love seeing my peers achieve independence and watching them break the stigma."

**Richard Royal
CPS, Peer Mentor**



"I like Peer Services because I get to help people progress in life."

**Jeramiah Roberts
Peer Mentor**

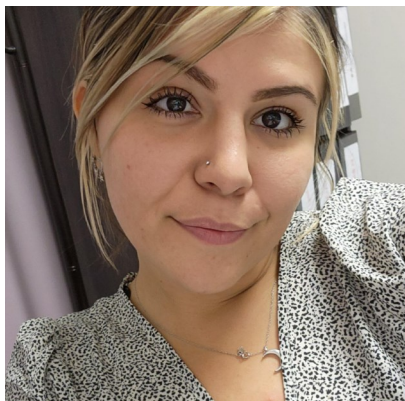


"I love working in peer services because I feel like I have a purpose in helping people that go through the same stuff I do"

**Danielle Markham
CPS, Peer Mentor**



**Rachel Antoinette,
CPS, Intake Coordinator**



"I love Peer Services because I get the opportunity to get to know peers on a level that others may never get to see. I often get a "thanks for asking about me" from them. Sharing our stories of struggle and success is something we all want and

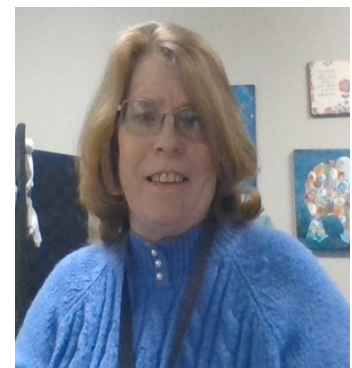
**Kim Hay
CPS, Peer Mentor**



"I love being a CPS and working with all of the peers. We have fun watching each other grow!!!!"

"I love Peer Services because it gives me a chance to return the support I received from AMI to others who need it. Watching them succeed and being there to help when they need it helps me in my own recovery as well."

**Danielle Mikula
CPS, Peer Mentor**



"I love peer services because me and my peers grow together!"