

Recovery Support Specialist Newsletter

Issue 27—March 2010

Camp Wellness — Way to Go!

It wasn't so long ago that I completed certification as a Recovery Support Specialist (RSS) through the University of Arizona's RISE program. Since then, I've advocated for a number of individuals either formally or informally.

In November, I learned of a new program being developed called Camp Wellness another program developed by RISE and conducted at their new dedicated Health & Wellness Center on Alvernon. On January 29th I finished the eight-week course of classes, thanks to an encounter with two friends (also RSS's) who encouraged me to apply. Having this experience has called attention to some shortfalls in my personal life and how I can round out those areas, which in turn will serve to enhance my value as an RSS.

The Camp Wellness curriculum approaches health from a holistic stance; it addresses the physical, mental, and emotional needs of the person, thereby encouraging a more balanced lifestyle. Rotating classes in exercise, stress management, mindfulness, nutrition, and health education provided some new information and useful tips that apply in my own life, and that I can now share with others. An example that comes to mind is the opportunity I was given to lead my class in an exercise of my own creation that demonstrated "mindfulness." I introduced a technique known as "trespasso" In turn, I was exposed to meaningful exercises shared by my classmates.

Had Camp Wellness been available when I completed the RSS Institute in February 2006, it would have been a significant way to add to the clinical knowledge I obtained as an RSS graduate. The combination of caring and enthusiastic instructors, or "Heath Mentors," (also RSS's) and a group of motivated and insightful classmates made for a valuable if sometimes challenging experience. I believe that all of us - staff and students alike - grew from these eight weeks. I know I did.



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Just wait 'til our new
issue comes out in
June!

Recovery thru Integration, Support & Empowerment
(RISE) is located in the
Department of Family and Community Medicine at the
University of Arizona.

10th Annual Recovery and Wellness Family Conference

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CRSS

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CRSS

Ken Rogers
CRSS, CPRP

Patricia Porras
CRSS

Dan Steffy

Community Partnership of Southern Arizona's Long Range Public Education Coalition (The Long Rangers) is proud to present the 10th Annual Recovery and Wellness Family Conference (formerly the Family Forum). We are excited to be able to offer the conference on a Saturday this year to provide an opportunity for more youth and families to attend. Please plan to join us on Saturday, May 22, 2010 from 8:30 am – 3:00 pm at the Holiday Inn located at 4550 S. Palo Verde Blvd. (Irvington/Palo Verde) in Tucson.

The conference is **free of charge** and continental breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack will be provided. There will be a resource fair; an inspirational key note speaker; educational workshops; entertainment; and cash and other prizes. Child care will be available for children ages three to ten; youth older than this may attend the event.

Registration information will be available in mid February. If you would like registration pamphlets mailed to you, please contact the Education Committee at (520) 318-6994. We hope that you and your family will join us in celebrating our tenth anniversary of this important community building event.

CPSA receives funding from the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Beth C. Stoneking, PhD, MSW, CPRP

Beverly McGuffin, RN, MSN, CPRP

Andie Burke

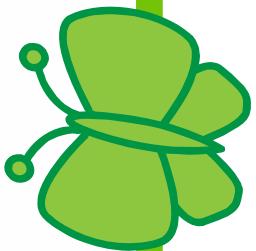
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March Newsletter

SPRING
RENEWAL
RECOVERY
RISE
BUTTERFLY
EMPOWER
WINGS
LAUGHTER
POSSIBILITIES
EMPOWERMENT
TENACITY
CHALLENGE
FACILITATOR
ALVERNON
HOPE
PERSONFIRST



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STRESS FOR SUCCESS: PLAYING MORE CAN HELP AVOID BURNOUT

Jacquelyn Ferguson • February 16, 2010

Is "free-play," spontaneous versus structured play such as sports, genetically programmed into us? Is it a survival skill?

The animal kingdom sheds light on this. Do young animals play? If you've ever had puppies or kittens, seen animals in the wild or watched squirrels in your yard you know the answer's a resounding "yes."

Play may be a very ancient evolutionary development. Rats that had their neocortex removed, the brain region in humans involved in executive thinking, still engage in normal play, suggesting that the urge to play originates in the brain stem, a portion of the brain that preceded mammals. "This means that the core, genetically-provided circuitry for play is situated in the very ancient regions of the brain," explains Jaak Panksepp, now of Washington State University, who led this experiment in 1994.

Research over decades has shown that children who experience substantial free-play develop more normal social, emotional and cognitive skills. They become better adjusted, smarter and less stressed.

Play is also important to adults. It's one of the best ways to stave off burnout, which is very important because burnout is difficult to defeat, especially when it's advanced.

In the 1980s I burned out quickly after only two years in the mental health field. I could barely get out of bed on Monday mornings. Again, in 1998 I became burned out after caring for both of my parents with their respective end-of-life illnesses. I lost virtually

all interest in my work, which was highly unusual for me because I've always loved my present profession.

Both bouts of burnout required drastic changes of me. The first episode pushed me to quit working for others and start my own business. The more recent spate motivated my husband and me to sell his business and our home to travel the country for a year in a motor home.

A much better prescription for avoiding burnout to begin with is to get enough play. Without it, your lifestyle's frenetic busyness can wear you down.

Here are three ways to increase adulthood play. To be effective, make sure there are no time pressures and goals to accomplish:

- Physical play requiring active movement;
- Object play using your hands to create something you enjoy; and
- Social play has you joining others in social activities from conversations to games.

Do something that's fun for you. What did you enjoy doing as a kid? Can you do that again in your current life? Spend time with kids who are playing. Don't wait for work to lessen because it doesn't. Schedule time for play or you won't do it.

Don't worry that it's wasting time since it will make you more productive at work. Splurge by doing something fun at least weekly. Use it or lose it; have more fun or you'll lose the ability.



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John

When I first stepped into COPE's office in 2005, I was depressed, homeless, unemployed, and living in my car in the parking lot of the Salvation Army. I had begun using marijuana again and was dabbling in methamphetamines. I felt like I had failed myself, my family, and my faith. I had very little self-esteem and hope was all but lost for having anything like a normal life.

The support and encouragement that I received from the people I met at COPE was not just a catalyst for my recovery, but also inspired me to make a meaningful and lasting impression on the community and my peers. Even on the streets I often pointed out to others struggling with homelessness and unemployment the various resources I had used to get my own needs met.

As a Recovery Support Specialist I have continued to grow in my recovery and have had the unique privilege of working with some of the most interesting and dynamic individuals it has been my pleasure to meet. The staff here at COPE has been awesome to work with as well. The skills I learned and was able to develop through my attendance and completion of the RSS Institute certification program have been invaluable to me in my endeavor to support, encourage and advocate for persons with mental illness and substance abuse issues.

This past December I was given the opportunity to expand my endeavors to a new and exciting level in the capacity of Lead Recovery Support Specialist for COPE Community Services. In this new role I have the opportunity to work with COPE's administrative staff to develop and implement programs designed to utilize the unique strengths and abilities of Recovery Support Specialists to improve the quality of services offered at COPE. With the support of administrative personnel, I have already created six new RSS positions here at COPE, and I am dedicated to the continued growth and expansion of the RSS program and the role of RSS staff throughout the behavioral health system of care.

In addition to developing the Peer Support program at COPE, I will be involved in advocating for issues related to mental health and substance abuse issues in the community and anywhere else the voice of recovery needs to be heard to the best of my ability. When I was working as a financial analyst I asked God to show me the people that need help the most and to give me the tools to help them. I believe this prayer is being answered, in some ways quickly and in some ways slowly.

John is on the RSS Newsletter Advisory Committee.

John McElroy, CRSS

Blogging

Sometimes, I am slow to adapt to new ideas and forums. Blogging is one of those things I just was not interested in because I was scared by it. I tried to get involved in a news website that has its own blogging forum. It was interesting at first, communicating with others of like mind about important subjects that would change the world! What could be more important? Then, I found trolls, those who respond to information in a rude and sometimes venomous fashion. They are not interested in civil exchange. That got old fast and I realized I was doing little more than getting upset and wasting my time, in the main.

Now, I am in a Community Psychology class that requires blogging as part of the course work. I was not very excited about this. My past experiences did not excite me about this process. Why would a professor want students to blog? To my surprise, this is a forum that is becoming more popular with the education sector. In this forum, one's opinion must be backed up with fact. Adding web links to articles and videos that back up one's opinion is a must. Research on the topic, while not as intensive as a research paper, is a must as well, to find those links to articles and videos. Comments from other students are encouraged and can create conversations that might not happen in the class room because of size and time

limitations. As long as the subject can be related to the learning objectives in the class, almost any subject can be blogged about. So, as I must blog to earn a good grade in the class, I have embraced the blogging forum as a place to encourage and educate others about recovery and advocacy for those with substance use and mental health disorders. It is a place where I might be able to model the changes we would like to see in others, such as the use of person first language and the idea that people can and do recover. Recovery is what I do. I hope recovery is what I am, as well. It is the way of life I choose every day. Recovery is why I am back in college. So, as slow as I can be, sometimes, to adapt to new things, I am using this new forum to encourage others to think about recovery and maybe change how they view the process.

If you are interested in following my blogging efforts, feel free. Your comments are welcome and encouraged by me and my professor. It cannot hurt my grade. My blogging site is
<http://cynthia28.wordpress.com/>



✉ Cynthia Aspengren, CRSS

In the ebb and flow of life, an old proverb says the only things a person can be sure of are death and taxes. Logically, this would then imply that change is both constant and inevitable, a theory that I happen to subscribe to. Very few things on this planet are impervious to change. Everything from geology and civilization to science and technology has been in a state of change since the beginning of time.

That's looking at the grand scope of things, but that same concept of change definitely applies to our everyday lives. People's lives are continually changing. We change who we hang out with. We change our major in college. We change girlfriends, boyfriends or both! We change our underwear (hopefully). We even change our mind waiting in line at McDonald's.

For those of us in recovery, I believe it is important to not only accept this change, but to also embrace it.

In many ways, as Recovery Support Specialists in the field of behavioral health we exemplify this theory of change. We have had to change many of the behaviors that had plagued us. Many of us wouldn't be here if we hadn't changed somehow. Some of these changes have come subtly, and some have come violently. Countless times the changes have come in the deepest darkest hours of our lives. How we handle these changes – not the changes themselves – is what determines our paths.

For those of us in recovery, I believe it is important to not only accept this change, but to also embrace it. For better or worse, change is going to happen. Why not use this change for the betterment of one's self? We tend to become contented in our daily routines once we get our feet under us. We try to get back in the groove of "normal life" after

picking ourselves up from the wreckage and dusting ourselves off. Everyday we get up, drink our coffee, and read the newspaper in the morning. Everyday we go to work. Everyday we come home, have dinner, and go to bed in our warm blankets. What would happen if we had that figurative blanket ripped off of us?

I recently had the discomfort of going through one of these "little" changes, and I was able to get through it and keep moving forward because of one thing: support. I had the support of some very special friends who took it upon themselves to have my back. When I was feeling unbelievably disheartened, I had people that were still in my corner fighting to make sure that I ended up OK. Luckily, I had the support of my family and the love of a good woman who also helped with getting me through the low points.

So I ask you to look around. How strong is your support system? Who are some of the people that are in your corner? It may be time to reinforce those healthy relationships you have. How ready for change are you? Because your support system needs to be your constant in a world of change. Believe me, it's coming.



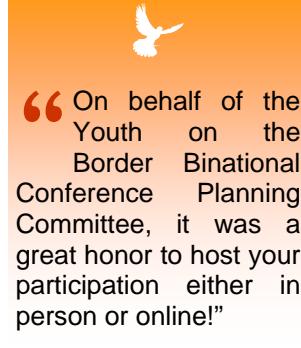
✉ Fernando Duran, CRSS

Fernando has moved to CPSA as a Member Advocate Assistant.

Changes

The Third Annual Youth On The Border Binational Conference

Presentation by Arnoldo Aguila, SEABHS CRSS and Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence Case Manager along with Michelle Ramirez, SEABHS CRSS .



Diabetes, and Health & Fitness and presenters included law enforcement agents, medical and behavioral health professionals, media representatives, youth presenters and political leaders from each country.

The activities were truly binational with one conference occurring simultaneously in two countries—a live broadcast that was accessible via the internet. This event was sponsored in Mexico by Centro de Informacion para la Salud (CISAL) in the State of Sonora; activities addressed the same topic areas and took place at the same time.

Congratulations to Arnoldo and Michelle!



Arnoldo



Michelle



Martha

H ave you ever felt like your life is about to become a major motion picture? There are all kinds of drama going on within you, your family, your friends, and work. You slowly begin to feel like everything is caving in on you. You're choked up, stressed out and totally exhausted.

Many of us find ourselves trapped in an unsettled state of mind. With a constant upheaval within our soul and our spirit, we let circumstances and situations rule over our lives.

Do you yearn for peace in your day to day life? Even a peace that surpasses understanding? It is achievable if we accept it. Just changing the way we think about ourselves and the situations that surround us is a good start. Meditating on our blessings ceaselessly pushes old thinking patterns out of our mind. Peace means wholeness and total well being in spirit, soul and body.

To become physically well, we need to be touched spiritually, starting with our mind. I've found that allowing God to restore my soul, mind and emotions have helped heal me physically. Oswald Chambers observed, "Our stamina is sapped not so much through external troubles surrounding us, but through problems in our thinking." I've slowly been learning to allow God to bathe my mind and spirit. If I focus on a higher power, everything changes. A peaceful heart gives life to the body.

No longer about to become a dramatic motion picture of epic proportions, I have a new direction for my life. It's taken awhile, but I'm a work in progress. I am listening to God to direct my life, and I'm playing my part as best I know how.

• **Martha Evans, CRSS, La Frontera Center**



Everyday Peace

Recovery Support Specialist Institute 20—GSA 3



The 2nd GSA 3 Institute

The largest GSA 3 RSS institute where all graduates are employed in the behavioral health system.



Past GSA 3 Graduates (*left to right*)
Cynthia Aspengren, CRSS
Bud Blanchard, CRSS
Tina Jones, CRSS



**Congratulations
Graduates!**

Top Row (left to right):
Michelle Cummins
Kent Clonts
Neale Harmon
Kellie Babb
Craig Hiestand

Middle Row (left to right):
Regina Autry
Randy Sainz
Nicole Martin
Miguel Sierra
Kathlene "Susie" Gonzales

Front Row (left to right):
Margaret "Louise" Roberts
Michell Bailey
Tina Reid
Amy Phillips
Barb Kern