

Regional CSP Minutes

Date: January 9, 2023

Attendance: Julie Whitmore, Donna Giordano, Sophia Lucente, Marvin White, Joann Johnson, Eric A., Akilah Williams, Sean Brinda, Emmett, Justin Chamrin, Marissa MacKeverican.

1. **Welcome** – Chair Julie Whitmore welcomed everyone including new members.
2. **Speaker** – The presentation by Nikki Holcroft from Genesis Housing was not on Zoom. It was the 2nd of a 4-part presentation. Today was Understanding Credit Part II. The next two presentations will be on money management. Nikki can be reached at nikki@genesishousing.org.
3. **Review the December Minutes** – Members reviewed the minutes. Minutes approved.
4. **Budget** – Julie said new funds were not received yet but they are expecting it. Marvin – This is the old budget. We allocated \$10,000, \$1,760.45 carried over from previous year.
 - a. **Allocated \$2,500 to subcommittees:** Advocacy subcommittee spent \$250 in May for the CSP Regional Conference with balance of \$2,250. Annual Conference and Retreat was allocated \$2,500 we used \$2,500 for the conference and leaves a zero balance.
 - b. **Seed grants** – On Feb. 22 we gave \$500 for a Mindfulness event in Philadelphia, \$500 for motivational cards for the incarcerated on Nov. 22 – holiday cards, two for annual feed the community \$500 each, on Nov. 22 storytellers allocated \$500. Balance is Zero.
 - c. **Scholarships/Events** – We allocated \$1,600 and spent those funds on technical assistance.
 - d. **Supporting local CSPs** – Allocated \$1,000. Allocated on Dec. 22 \$500 to seed grant Succorm coat drive. Balance: \$500.
 - e. **Advocacy/Travel Misc.** – Allocated \$400 and spent funds on technical assistance. Total technical assistance was \$2,100.
 - f. **Overflow** - \$1,760.45 – Used \$102.54 for Ellen’s plaque which left \$1,657.91
 - g. **Total spending for the year is \$10,176.54. Total Left: \$4,407.91.** There’s money in advocacy, supporting local CSPs and overflow. Julie said we are expecting the new money at the end of January. Joann said during the executive meeting Sheila mentioned the conference committee could use some additional support. Karleen said more money is great, but more important right now is securing the venue and making plans. Joann asked Karleen to come up with an amount that she might need.
5. **Member storytelling** – Akilah Williams shared her story. She described her childhood as a pretty good one: We went to church every Sunday, family vacations, road trips. My mother would brag about me to people in public but on the inside things weren’t as good as they looked on the outside. There would be random, explosive episodes of rage and violence that would come out of nowhere, but we never talked about it. We were raised to keep family business in the family. It was a confusing way to grow up. We were fed, clothed, we had shelter. I learned to be hypervigilant; really pay attention to my mom’s moods and tone of voice to try to minimize these episodes. I numbed my emotions and acted differently than I felt. When I was 12 we moved from Michigan to

south Jersey. That's when the bullying started and I had my first episode - what I now know is depression. I didn't tell anybody because I thought there was something wrong with me and I didn't know what the reaction would be. But I think my mom noticed I was isolating and that I was different. She tried to point things out. She started telling me I was crazy and defective and needed professional help. That made me isolate more. It wasn't talked about like it is now. Celebrities and sports figures talking about their mental health. After I graduated, I met my first love. He wanted me to move in. I thought, "he must really love me and care about me." I moved into an abusive relationship. I stayed in that relationship for 5 years. It didn't feel great but there was something familiar. I thought love was elusive, hard won. I didn't have enough self-esteem or love of self and stayed until I got pregnant. That helped me make better decisions for my life. I moved back in with my parents and enrolled in trade school to learn about EKGs and to be a phlebotomist. On the outside I looked successful, but inside I suffered from depression. I felt this pit of despair and didn't tell anybody about it. I decided that maybe this life didn't have anything for me. I called someone to come stay with my daughter. I didn't know who to call so I dialed zero for the operator. I was able to open to her. This woman took the time to listen, she didn't think I was crazy and said people could get better and I could have a fulfilling life. That started me on this road to recovery which I'm still on today which allows me to work with you fine people. Every day I'm just grateful that she answered the phone and I'm still here because so many wonderful things have happened to me since that time.

Committee members gave affirmation, describing Akilah as awesome and resilient. They appreciated her honesty and parts of her story resonated with some members. There was a feeling that her story showed that we are more alike than different and that people in recovery come together as one to help get better. It was noted that it took courage to talk with the operator at that moment in time. They said they were grateful that Akilah was doing this work.

6. **Conference Committee** – Karleen reported that the committee wanted to give awards, what the application would look like and how awards there would be. Still working on venue and reaching out to agencies who would want to participate. Need to know how much funds are available. Julie said the theme is: "Celebrate Your Recovery." Julie said we'll have workshops and what it means to celebrate your recovery. Asked people to start thinking about good resources. Marissa added that they identified the keynote speaker would be Nick from Bucks County also known as NAMI man.
7. **Advocacy** – Akilah said they talked about the last audit of NSH. We decided to continue monitoring that to make sure it doesn't fade away. We talked about the bus trip to Harrisburg in March. Do we coordinate for all the counties or does each one do it themselves? We need to hold elections for co-chair of advocacy subcommittee. Email Julie if you are interested or know someone who is interested.

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8. **Elections** – Julie said they will hold elections next month.
9. **County Reports** – Bucks County – Marissa said the committees are meeting in person and virtually every month. For December, we're working on building out the engagement for CSP. Get the word out about CSP, what it is, how it can be a benefit. We have a welcoming subcommittee to connect with the community in person, do presentations and outreach. In 2023, we are looking at having presentations and will ask agencies and providers to come out to have discussions around advocacy issues. We are gearing up to have the advocacy subcommittee back up and running. We are planning our Bucks CSP picnic for Friday, May 12th.
10. **Announcements** – Eric said DE County hasn't been present at regional meetings for a long time. We readjusted groups where there was conflict with the regional meeting. Our CSP has been struggling. There's a consistent 5 people who have been volunteering for years. We just returned to our first in person event since COVID. We anticipated having 46 and we had 44. So it went very well. We used to meet at Welcome House but can't return. We found Tree of Life Church in Springfield. We will hold our monthly meetings there on the 3rd Monday of the month. We're excited. I have this renewed feeling about CSP. We have CCBH instead of Magellan and they are contributing quite a bit to our virtual meetings. Thanks to you all for staying on point and staying together.
11. **Next meeting:** February 6 – Nikki will be talking about part I of money management.
12. **Future Storytelling** - Justin volunteered for March and Eric volunteered for February.
13. Meeting adjourned