

Community Support Journal



Volume 15, Issue 7

July 2022

Montgomery County
Community Support Program Committee

Homeless men and women moved to hotels after County shelter closes

Everyone deserves a h me!



Penny Johnson at rally. Copyright MediaNews Group, reprinted with permission.

By: Kathie Mitchell, Newsletter Editor

NORRISTOWN – Quietly, without a lot of fanfare, the men and women gathered their belongings and left the county shelter as the doors were locked for the last time.

On July 1st, the Coordinated Homeless Outreach Shelter known as CHOC, closed its doors to make way for the transfer of the state property to the Borough of Norristown.

There is no other shelter available in Montgomery County so the former residents of CHOC, operated by Resources for Human Development (RHD), are being moved to hotels. For how long? Nobody knows.

A coalition of human rights advocates say it will take a community – everyone coming together - to put housing supports into place so that people who lose their housing or can't afford it, will have options like everyone

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“Good people, good times, good food” Campers enjoy Green Lane Park

By: Ameika Malcolm, HopeWorx

Twenty-three campers enjoyed the great outdoors on a June weekend at Green Lane Park, setting up tents, kayaking, taking morning hikes, grilling food and sitting by the campfire.

Many individuals, like Roderick, had never slept outside before going on the annual outings for the past three years.

“I thought... no I am not sleeping outdoors,” Roderick said. “And let me tell you... I not only enjoyed it, I loved it so much, I am going on my 4th camping trip in September.”

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else. A place to call home.

On June 29th, over 80 people attended a rally on the steps of the Montgomery County Courthouse to launch “[The Campaign to Protect the Unhoused in Montgomery County](#)” asking the community to join them in the effort to find temporary housing until a permanent shelter is reopened.

A project of the Here for Us Coalition, the Campaign focuses on community partnership to urge the State or the County to provide a safe, clean, legal space for those who have no other place to stay. Rally participants carried signs with messages like “Everyone deserves a h  me!”, “Housing is a Human Right”, and “Poverty is not a Crime.”

Penny Johnson, Program Supervisor for the Community Satisfaction Team at HopeWorx, Inc., told the group that she knew firsthand what homelessness was like – once living outside and sometimes sleeping on a bench in the very spot they were holding the rally.

“I know what it’s like to worry about where to sleep and be safe,” Johnson said after the rally. “If the shelter closes we are subjecting individuals to the elements and victimization. It’s not just a human right to have housing but also a human right to be treated with dignity and respect!”

Bill England, Campaign Director for the Here for Us Campaign, said he was grateful to everyone who joined the rally to raise awareness about the closure of Montgomery County’s only year-round shelter for individuals.

England is urging everyone to sign the petition to ask state officials to support housing, long term and short term. To sign the petition go to: <https://www.hereforus.org/petition>.



Bill England speaks at rally

Other speakers at the rally were: Sunanda Charles, Executive Director of the Norristown Hospitality Center, Reverend Peter Martin from the First Presbyterian Church of Norristown, Angelique Hinton, the President of the Norristown NAACP, Kayleigh Silver, Administrator of the Montgomery County Office of Housing and Community Development, Abby Grasso, Executive Director of NAMI Montgomery County, Marsha Eichelberger, Executive Director of Family Promise of MontcoPA (which runs family shelters), and Mark Boorse,

Continued on next page

Coordinator of the #WEBELONG Movement.

Boorse has been busy along with numerous community organizations in Norristown, Pottstown and Lansdale, gathering support for a safe and legal, temporary place for the unhoused to live. He is promoting the use of pallet shelters – sturdy 10 x 10-foot portable shelters that have air conditioning, heat and locks on the doors.

Sue Shannon, Executive Director of HopeWorx, said the county has committed to purchasing the pallet shelters if they can find some place where they will be allowed to place them. She said the state would not agree to allowing the pallet shelters on the state hospital grounds.

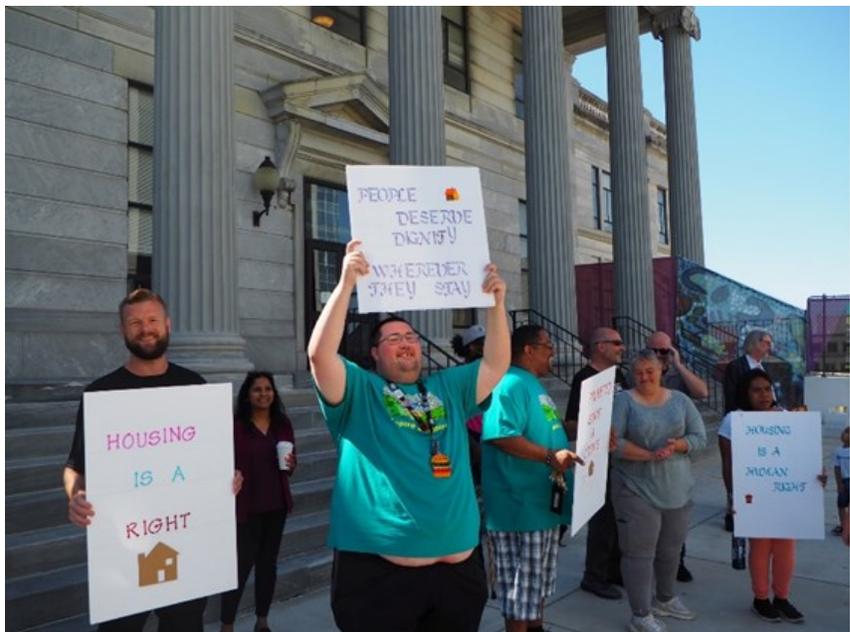
To find out more about [#WEBELONG](#), you can go to their Facebook page [here](#), or read the CSP Blog by going to: <https://www.montcopacsp.org/blog>. And, there is a new page on the CSP website under advocacy called [Housing the Unhoused](#).

For more information or to get involved with Here for Us, please call Bill England at 215-874-7136 or email Bill@pahealthaccess.org. The Campaign to Protect the Unhoused is a project of the Here for Us Advocacy Coalition and partners.



To read more about the shelter closure and the coalition in the Times Herald, go to: <https://www.timesherald.com/2022/06/29/housing-is-a-right-advocates-rally-ahead-of-montgomery-county-homeless-shelter-closure/>.

*People deserve dignity
wherever they stay.*



FROM #WEBELONG Facebook Post on July 11, 2022

Did you know?

By: Mark Boorse

Reflections from the rally. Truth #1. This is a crisis.

Last week, 450 heads of households in Montgomery County were actively enrolled with the Homeless Street Outreach team. That means that they met the HUD criteria for Category 1 homelessness; they were sleeping outside or in a place “not meant for human habitation”. Included in that number were 59 families, with 110 children. The entire county shelter system has 27 family units, all of them already full.

We cannot hope that the service system will keep up with this. It is already stretched beyond capacity.

This will take all of us.



For more information, go to the [#WEBELONG](#) Community Page on Facebook.

Homelessness: A life and death discussion

Mark Boorse speaks at “Protect the Unhoused Rally”

Boorse, the coordinator for the #WEBELONG movement, welcomed the crowd to the rally on June 29th, a beautiful day in June.

“It doesn’t seem like it today, but really, winter is coming,” Boorse said.

Every December 21st, there is a memorial service called “The longest night.” People gather to remember friends who lost their lives to homelessness throughout the year. Each time there are people on the list who Boorse has known well and he grieves the loss.

“I say this today because I want us to have real clarity that this is actually a life and death discussion,” Boorse said. “The experience of homelessness is relentlessly hard and it’s dangerous.”

Boorse referenced the Stockdale Paradox, which says that the best chance at success in seemingly impossible situations lies in the ability to look unflinchingly at the hard realities at hand because that leads us to clear-headed action.

“I would like to offer us three truths in three minutes, three things we need to be entirely committed to if we are going to make significant headway in addressing homelessness in Montgomery County.”

Truth #1. This is a crisis.

Boorse said these are not just hard times. While Hurricane Ida and the CHOC closure brought the issue of homelessness to the forefront, other forces like rental costs increasing double digits, gap between wages and cost of living spiraling and the loss of sustaining affordable housing...have forced us past the tipping point.

Truth #2. This takes all of us.

Boorse said we can no longer assume that the service system will be sufficient to solve this. We need to embrace the idea that homelessness is a community level issue and that the resources to address it lie in the community itself.

Truth #3. This is really about justice.

During the pandemic, there was an outpouring of generosity to provide relief to our neighbors living outside. Boorse said, “We cannot charity our way to housing for all.” To provide justice, the community needs to decide two things. First, that it is inherently unjust that some people have no means to the basic human necessity of housing and second that each of us and all of us act justly.

Boorse said there are other communities who are successfully tackling the issue. They are using creativity, innovation and collective will. “We need to act out of a full measure of these things.”

With the closure of CHOC, there is no place in the county where it is okay to be. So the ask is that there be legal, safe places in Montgomery County to be. Places where they can live with dignity instead of fear because everyone #BELONGS. To watch the YouTube video, click [here](#).

FROM #WEBLONG Facebook Post on July 15, 2022

Did you know?

By: Mark Boorse

Reflections from the rally. Truth #2. This takes all of us.

In the last reflections from the rally post, the numbers of people experiencing homelessness, including the number of families and children, bring home the point that there is no way that services in the county can adequately respond to this crisis.

Which brings us to a truth that has been there all along; homelessness is actually a community issue, not a service issue. The fact that every single community has folks in it who are living outside has always been true, whether we noticed it or not. The current crisis has brought it to our attention.

The good news is that the resources to address this lie in the community itself. What that requires of us is to decide to work in 2 ways: collectively, so that we can leverage up our capacity, and in alignment with each other, so that we can be efficient and effective. These actions can be summed up in the motto “Find the gap. Don’t overlap”. This requires us to ask, “who else is doing something about this in my community, and how can I support that?” followed by, “what needed thing is not being done and how can I start doing that?”

The first picture below is an example of that working well; a recent trash clean-up of an encampment. It was an effort that included many different parts of the community in a collective effort that benefitted the community as a whole

The second photo is an example of a struggle to do this. It is a meal being served by a church for its neighbors. A debate that has emerged as to whether they should do this is unfortunately missing a bigger picture; that in the community we are interdependent on everyone doing what they can towards the common good.

It takes all of us.



Camping at Green Lane Park *(continued from page one)*

Roderick said people are a lot of fun to hang out with and he loves to cook. Now, he is the honorary camp chef.

“This makes me happy...from never going camping before this, to camp chef!! One more thing about this group of people... I promise if you come join us you will never find a more supportive group of people... hands down.”

Roderick said the HopeWorx camping trip is a must, where you will find “good people, good times, and good food. I am going back again so come hang out with us and you will be hooked like I am now.”

Summer, another camper who enjoyed the trip, said she hadn’t been camping in a while. She was glad to be outdoors and in the company of very supportive people.

“I thought this camping trip would be something fun and to get me out of the house,” Summer said. “I felt supported on this trip, because while we were hiking, another person and I were unable to follow the trail as it was a bit difficult for us to walk. Another person took the time to take us on an easier path.”

Also, Summer was able to catch up with someone from high school she had not seen in a while. She said she will be going to the next trip, and will invite some of her family members. She said the planning and organizing of the trip was very good and she recommends it to anyone who’s interested.

“Not everyone can handle it, because you will be sleeping outside in a tent with a sleeping bag on the ground,” Summer said. “But it is fun, and I had a good time.”

And just for the record, this was not Glamping, said Danny.

“I enjoyed the camaraderie of everyone just helping each other,” Danny said. “This was my first time camping and I would do it again.”

However, Danny may think twice before going again because he’s not a fan of sleeping on the hard ground or being in the rain. But overall, it was a fine experience where people provided a lot of support although he did go immensely prepared.

“We had a blast,” Danny said. “It was a lot of fun and it opened my eyes and my confidence has gone up.”



Camping in the great outdoors! 2022



“I would recommend this camping trip to first timers; the community is awesome, and you are not going to get the laughs you get at camping.” - Danny



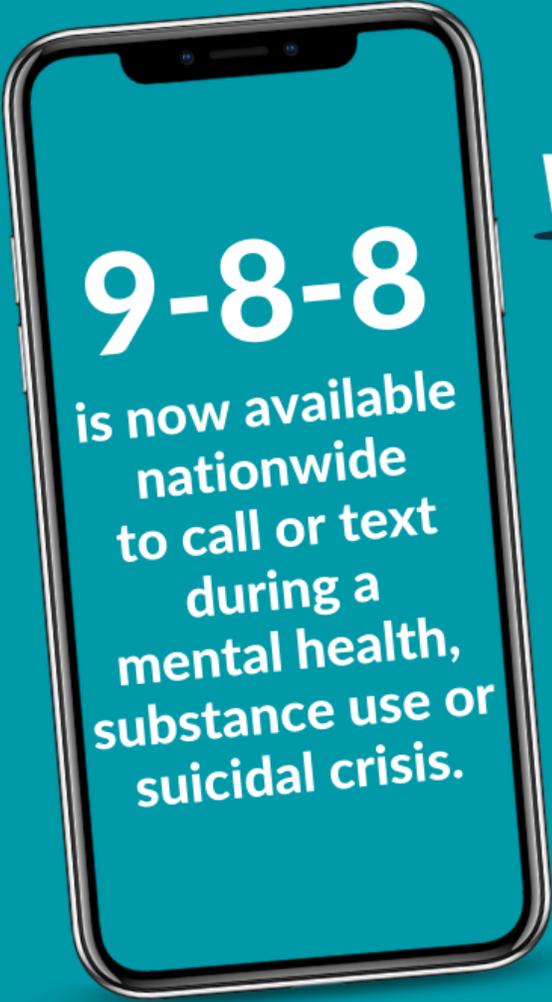
Breakfast by Ameika!

Sitting by the fire...



988 is Now Live: What Does It Mean?

Beginning Saturday, July 16, people across the country can call or text 988, the new three-digit number for mental health, substance use and suicidal crises, to connect directly to mental health support during a crisis. This new, shorter dialing code will help people more easily connect to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline network — over 200 local crisis call centers — for support during a crisis.



9-8-8
is now available
nationwide
to call or text
during a
mental health,
substance use or
suicidal crisis.

*What does this mean
for you and your
family?*

*Learn more at
nami.org/988*

 **NAMI**
National Alliance on Mental Illness

 **NAMI**
National Alliance on Mental Illness

To learn more, click [here](https://nami.org/988).



988: Reimagining Crisis Response



Starting Saturday, July 16, every person in every community nationwide can dial “988” to reach trained crisis counselors who can help in a mental health, substance use or suicide crisis. Learn how [988](#) can help you in a crisis and what it might mean for your community with these [FAQs](#).

988 is the first step in reimagining our crisis response, but there’s more work to do to ensure everyone receives the help they need — and deserve — in a crisis.

Too often, people with mental illness do not receive a mental health response when experiencing a mental health crisis. Instead, people in crisis often come into contact with law enforcement rather than a mental health professional. People in crisis deserve better. The lack of a robust mental health crisis system leads to tragic results. One in four fatal police shootings between 2015 and 2020 involved a person with a mental illness, and an estimated 44% of people incarcerated in jail and [37%](#) of people incarcerated in prison have a mental health condition — and people with mental illness are booked into the nation’s jails around 2 million times every year. Millions more end up in emergency departments that are often ill-equipped to address mental health crises, often waiting hours or days to access care.

NAMI is committed to advancing efforts to reimagine crisis response in our country. We believe that every person in crisis, and their families, should receive a humane response that treats them with dignity and connects them to appropriate and timely care. NAMI is calling for a standard of care for crisis services in every community that includes — 24/7 call centers that answer 988 calls locally, mobile crisis teams and crisis stabilization programs — that end the revolving door of ER visits, arrests, incarceration and homelessness.

In 2020, the nation took a significant step forward with the enactment of the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act, a bill NAMI advocated for that created a nationwide three-digit number (988) to assist people experiencing a mental health or suicidal crisis. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) determined that this number would be available — by both phone and text — in July 2022, and is now available in communities across the country.

You can reach the 988 Suicide and Crisis Line by calling 988, texting 988 or [chatting via Lifeline’s website](#).

To learn more about 988: Reimagining Crisis Response, you can find it [here](#).

WHAT IS 988?

988 is the new nationwide **three-digit number now available for suicide and mental health crisis, available to everyone in the U.S.**

This easy-to-remember number will route callers to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline network, where compassionate, accessible care and support are available for anyone experiencing a mental health-related emergency – whether that is thoughts of suicide, a mental health or substance use crisis or any other kind of emotional distress. People can also dial 988 if they are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support.

What to expect when you contact 988

The goal of the 988 Lifeline is to provide free, 24/7, confidential, immediate crisis intervention and support. Here's how it works:

- 1  If you call 988, **you'll hear a message that you've reached the Lifeline.** If you are a veteran, you can press "1" to reach the Veterans' Crisis Line or "2" to reach Spanish-speaking crisis counselors for the Lifeline.
 - 2  If you don't select either option, or if you text or chat, **a trained crisis counselor will answer.** (For texters, you will be prompted to text 838255 if you want to reach the Veterans' Crisis Line.)
 - 3  **Spanish crisis services are available for callers to 988,** and translation services are available in more than **150 additional languages.** TTY is available for deaf or hard-of-hearing callers by dialing 711 then 988.
 - 4  The counselor will engage you to **understand how you or your loved one is impacted** and what help you might need.
 - 5  The counselor will provide **support and share resources and referrals.**
- * In some communities, the crisis line may be able to connect you to additional services or follow up with you to ensure you've connected with care (note: not all communities currently have this capacity).

Additional resources

There are additional resources if you are not experiencing a crisis, but seeking information, referrals and support:



NAMI Helpline (1-800-950-6264) is a free peer-support service providing information, resource referrals and support for people living with a mental health condition, their family members and caregivers, mental health providers and the public. While the NAMI Helpline allows you to speak with a peer who can connect you to NAMI resources, it is **not a hotline, crisis line, or a suicide prevention line.** It is available M-F from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M. ET.

Regional CSP News - Sharing knowledge and laughter at the SE Regional CSP Conference

By: Brenda Lewis

My name is Brenda Lewis and I was one of the facilitators for the Southeast Regional CSP Conference on June 6, 2022 via zoom.

The conference was amazing, filled with so much knowledge from the presenters around mental health. I loved their own sharing allowing us to see personal experiences then and now knowing that we have persons out there still making sure our voices are still being heard on the forefront.

I truly enjoyed David Gardner from Stand Up for Mental Health comedy show.

I couldn't stop laughing at the reality jokes that are truly life experiences having the opportunity several years ago myself to help bring awareness to the concerns and my own personal experiences from an entertaining fun way.

My workshop was such an amazing life changing eye opening experience for myself and those who attended. One of the ways I attempt to allow the participants to relate both visual and verbally is using art work.

It was truly unexpected for anyone to relate on such an incredible amazing personal level so fast after sharing my analogy which was using a shoe and sharing that even though we all may be traveling the same road, same size, same destination, it still is going to be a different effect on each of us. No one can ever experience the others pain and reason from their struggle.

Not everyone is a verbal expresser. So using these techniques really has brought much awareness to the mental health communities across the country allowing minds and doors to open up embracing others using the arts for expressions.

I truly appreciate the opportunity to bring hope for the future artist. Love to connect with others again and appreciate you all.

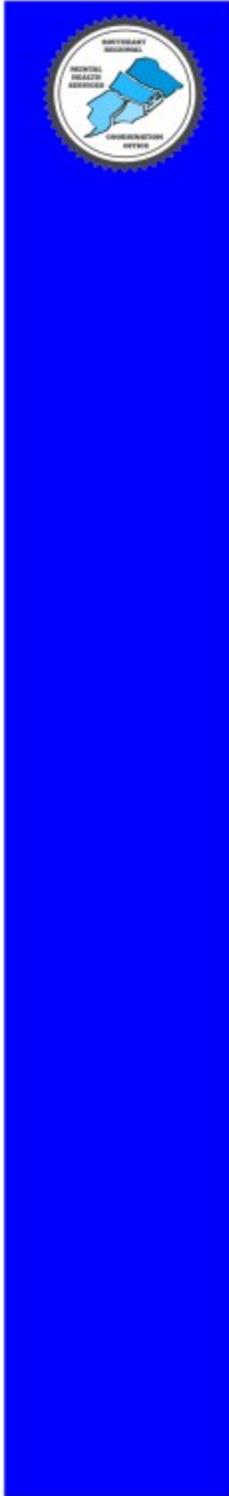
Thank you CIC Montgomery County
blewis4451@yahoo.com

BRENDA LEWIS
484 845-8445 CELL PHONE
NUMBER

standupformentalhealth.com



**stand up
for mental
health**
comedy recovery inclusion



SE Regional Mental Health Services and Coordination Office presents:



**Mental Health
FIRST AID**

from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR
MENTAL WELLBEING

NEW SUMMER ADULT AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID CLASSES ARE HERE!

*Be the one to make a difference in someone's life!
Become certified in Mental Health First Aid*

***New Format for the Summer Classes—The classes are two half days rather than one full day as before. We hope this allows for more flexibility for learners who may not want to do a full day. Both half days will be required for certification.

**ADULT VIRTUAL MHFA CLASSES (2 HALF-DAY CLASS) -
FROM 9AM - NOON**

8/9/2022 - FIRST HALF DAY CLASS

8/10/2022 - SECOND HALF DAY CLASS

**YOUTH VIRTUAL MHFA CLASSES (2 HALF DAY CLASSES)
FROM 9AM - NOON**

8/23/2022 - FIRST HALF DAY CLASS

8/24/2022 - SECOND HALF DAY CLASS

**LEARN MORE AND REGISTER AT
WWW.FIVECOUNTYMH.ORG**



Save the Date:
**Harvest,
Hope, &
Healing Day**

**CELEBRATING THE COMMUNITY
TOGETHER THROUGH HEALING, HOPE,
AND HARVEST
FAMILIES WELCOME!**

JULY
SUNDAY | **31** | 1-4 PM
2022

**NORRISTOWN FARM PARK
2500 UPPER FARM RD,
NORRISTOWN, PA 19403**

Subcommittee Reports from June 2022

Advocacy Subcommittee: Kathy talked about Call for Change statewide subcommittee of the Mental Health Planning Council. They are currently working on an updated call for change. Can we add this to the agenda for the next CSP meetings in July, August, and September so she can bring info here to CSP, and we can give feedback and she can take it back to the subcommittee to incorporate into the work that they're doing. We can allot 15-20 minutes per month to this. We also talked about the budget. If you have not looked, please click the link in newsletter to send to legislatures to support increased funding for mental health, living wages, etc. The Norristown State Hospital land transfer is impacting mostly CHOC. It will no longer be an available option as of July 1st, and has stopped admissions. There is currently no homeless shelter for single adults in Montgomery County. We would like to invite Barb O'Mally and or 1 or 2 commissioners to come to CSP next month to give us an update about shelters in Montgomery County, and to let them know this issue is a concern of ours.

CSP MEETING CALENDER 2022

*Meetings are held every third
Thursday, monthly @
Norristown Public Library from
12: 00-2:30pm
The next meeting will be:*

July	21
August	18
September	15
October	20

*Until further notice, these meet-
ings are via Zoom.*

Social Subcommittee: We were not able to vote on gas cards or scholarships but will send that out.

Conference Subcommittee: We touched base about the event, debriefed, and reviewed the budget. 180 people signed in but over 200 people attended. The awards nomination packet will be updated within next month or two so it will be available the majority of the year and so people can nominate people throughout the year. We will update it by next meeting and will send to Kathy. We touched base about getting feedback and suggestions for conference for next year. Suggestion: Food trucks for next year.

Montgomery County CSP Executive Committee

2021/2022 Tri-Chairs

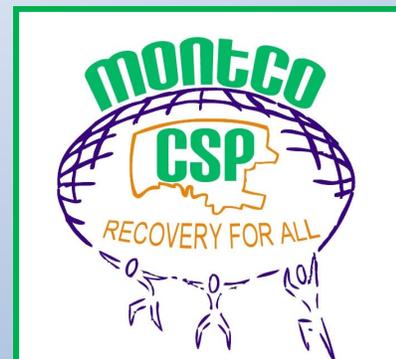
Provider Member: Abby Grasso
Person in Recovery: Danny Kuchler
Family Member: Kathy Laws

2021/2022 Sub-Committee Chairs

Social/Media: Penny Johnson
Advocacy: Kim Renninger, Julie Whitmore
Conference: Erin Hewitt, Stacey Volz

2021/2022 Treasurer

Dion Despaigne, CST Specialist



Fiduciary - HopeWorx, Inc.

ABOUT CSP

CSP Principles

- * **Consumer Centered/
Consumer Empowered**
- * **Culturally competent**
- * **Able to Meet Special
Needs**
- * **Community Based with
Natural Supports**
- * **Flexible**
- * **Coordinated**
- * **Accountable**
- * **Strength Based**

**Join our
Mailing list!**

We have an e-mail list as well as a regular mailing, to join:

Send an e-mail to:
pjohnson@hopeworxinc.org
Or send your contact info to the mailing address below

Meetings:

12:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

**3rd Thursday
of each month**

*Norristown
Public Library Community Room
1001 Powell St.
(at Swede St.)*

Kathie Mitchell, Newsletter Editor

**Montgomery County
Community Support Program**

1210 Stanbridge Street,
Suite 600
Norristown, PA 19401
610-270-3685

Website: www.montcopacsp.org

Mission Statement:

Montgomery County's Community Support Program (CSP) brings together individuals that receive mental health services, their family members, providers and the Department of Behavioral Health in an equal partnership to promote recovery and excellence in the delivery of community-based mental health services.

The committee strives to include a balance of people who use services, people who provide services, family members, and interested members of the community at large.

The CSP initiatives continue to grow state, regionally and county wide. As the involvement increases CSP has become a place that feedback can truly be given to the county from individuals that receive services and information can be given that suits the needs and requests of those that attend.

CSP Subcommittees:

- * **Advocacy Subcommittee**—Works on legislative, policy, communication, budget, voter education and other issues related to mental health services in the county, statewide and at the federal level when relevant. At the direction of the CSP Committee, the Advocacy Subcommittee gathers information on issues, plans advocacy events and creates a monthly newsletter to provide information to the stakeholder network as well as the community at large about the work of CSP. The newsletter also provides updates on new and changing mental health services provided in Montgomery County.
- * **Social/Media Subcommittee**—Works on facilitating opportunities for people in the CSP community to be more involved in the Montgomery County community. This includes implementing the Community Connections grants, which provide funding for people to participate in a variety of activities. The committee also implements transportation grants that provide gas cards and SEPTA day passes to CSP community members. The annual CSP Poster Art contest is also organized by this committee.
- * **Conference Sub-committee** – The conference subcommittee will plan and fundraise for the annual Montgomery County CSP Conference.
- * **Newsletter Subcommittee**—The newsletter subcommittee works to provide information to the public about CSP and mental health advocacy. The newsletter subcommittee is committed CSP recovery principles which is person centered and empowered by stakeholders. Our goal is to provide information through various media avenue and to create a quality newsletter that includes but is not limited to, legislative advocacy, events, services, personal recovery stories and creative writing such as poems. Please feel free to submit articles and stories to enrich our newsletter. Send to the editor: kathiemitchell8221@gmail.com.

Organizations who regularly send representatives to CSP:

- Central Behavioral Health
- Community Advocates of Montgomery Co..
- Consumer Satisfaction Team of Montgomery County
- Hedwig House
- Magellan Health Services
- Mental Health Partnerships
- Montgomery Co. Department of Behavioral Health
- Montgomery County Emergency Services (MCES)
- NAMI Montgomery County
- Norristown Vet Center
- Resources for Human Development
- Salisbury Behavioral Health

We invite all peers, family members and providers/professionals to attend.



If you can't attend the monthly CSP meetings but would like to give your feedback on topics we discuss, please email us at amalcolm@hopeworxinc.org