



MHA Matters

NEWSLETTER



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Giving Tuesday

Black Friday. Cyber Monday. **Giving Tuesday.**

Nonprofits like MHA follow the shopping chaos of Black Friday and Cyber Monday with Giving Tuesday—an opportunity for us all to improve our communities by supporting organizations focused on making life better. In 2019, Giving Tuesday was December 3rd and MHA overachieved, exceeding our giving goal for the day. Woo-hoo!

To everyone who donated to MHA or asked family, friends and co-workers to pitch in, we say **THANK YOU** for validating the impact of our work. **With your generous support, MHA is helping the people we serve to live their potential, in their community, every day.**

Thank you

#GIVINGTUESDAY™

Enhancing APptivity

Recently, four Occupational Therapy interns, all master's degree candidates at Springfield College, conducted a research study for MHA they called Enhancing APptivity. Their research focused on smart phone, tablet and computer apps that can be used by people with an acquired brain injury (ABI) to help improve memory, problem-solving and emotional regulation, all areas that can be impacted by a brain injury. "Anything a person needs in terms of equipment or technology, my team must be able to show why that matters," said Sara Kyser, Vice President of Acquired Brain Injury Programs for MHA. "The students' research is supporting the folks MHA serves every day at the Resource Center, our day program for persons with ABI."

"The students' research is supporting the folks MHA serves every day"

The team's creativity, energy and professionalism are helping to better position MHA for future grants and equipment acquisitions."



Staying Hopeful for Housing

Being homeless is exhausting. Beyond finding something to eat, people are constantly trying to manage danger and not become a victim. It's worse at night, and even worse when it's cold. Assuming they make it through the night, they have to wake up and do it all over again.

Someone in that position isn't focused on "How do I get over to the substance abuse program today?" or "What time is my appointment at the health clinic?" They're focused on staying alive.

MHA knows it's much easier to work on recovery or mental health or job training or education when you have a place to live.



Read the feature story here:
www.mhainc.org/staying-hopeful-for-housing/

Community Conversation About Recovery

Since issues of substance use and mental health are often interwoven, MHA emphasizes both areas of need. In late fall MHA helped lead a community conversation about recovery, with community agencies teaming up for a panel discussion and small table discussions with the public at Gateway City Arts in Holyoke.

The event was sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and supported by nonprofit agencies, including MHA. The event brought together supportive communities for people experiencing emotional distress and issues of substance use. Being together in such a supportive environment helped promote greater understanding and progress in recovery.

“Being together in such a supportive environment helped promote greater understanding and progress in recovery”



A Different Kind of Love Story

Joan and George have been friends since they first met in the 1970s, when they both lived at Belchertown State School. They moved out at the same time and, being good friends, they stayed in contact despite each living in different residential programs. What they really wanted was to live right next to each other. With some coordination, they found themselves living in side-by-side apartments. The landlord, recognizing their special friendship, agreed to add a door between the apartments, much like adjoining rooms in hotel, so they could move easily between their separate units. For many years it was a perfect solution.

MHA's Megan Therrien met Joan and George in 2014 when she was assigned to provide outreach support to each of them. Megan helped them to live in the community by taking them to the store, doctor's appointments and social events. She helped them manage their money, pay their bills and stay organized. Over several years, she developed a good working relationship and a fondness for them. In time, advancing age and health issues meant Joan and George could not live independently any longer. The state Department of Developmental Services began looking for solutions so each could have their own needs met. But Megan realized a fundamental part of meeting their needs was for them to be together. Megan so enjoyed her regular interactions with Joan and George, she wondered whether she could provide the right opportunity.

She approached MHA and asked to explore the possibility of becoming a Shared Living provider. MHA's Shared Living Program matches persons with developmental disabilities to individuals and families who welcome them to live in their home and experience everyday family and community life. Building caring relationships within a family and within the community is the essence of Shared Living. There were detailed discussions about Megan's role and how her background in outreach support could translate into success as a Shared Living provider.

Find out the rest of the story by reading it here: www.mhainc.org/joan-and-george/

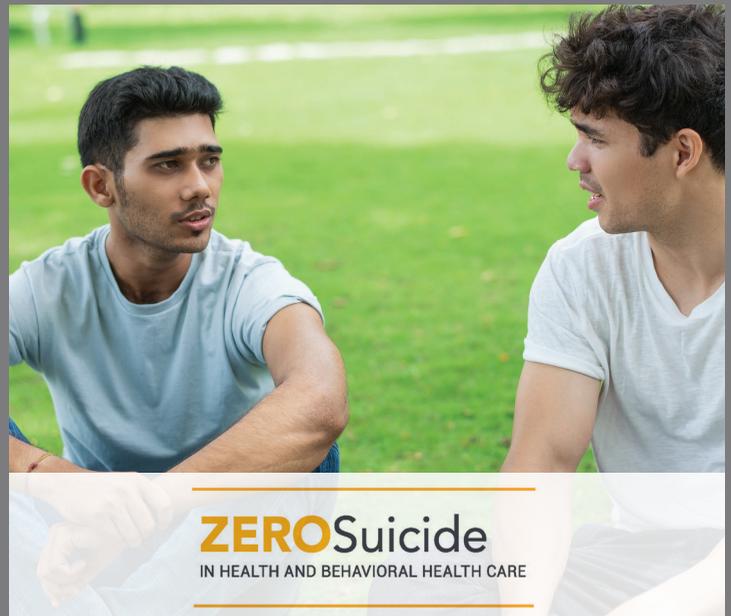


MHA Moves Forward with Zero Suicide

Zero Suicide is a toolkit specifically designed for health and behavioral health care. An MHA team applied to attend the Zero Suicide Academy and was trained to implement Zero Suicide at MHA. A Zero Suicide kick-off event, **“Recognizing Suicide Prevention: Allies in Arms,”** took place at MHA’s main office to coincide with World Suicide Prevention Day.

Local media covered our Zero Suicide launch event as a great example of how MHA creates awareness, shares resources and encourages people to Start Talking About Mental Health.

Read the feature story here:
www.mhainc.org/zero-suicide/



Human Resources Mentoring

MHA’s leadership wants each new employee to feel supported. Now, in addition to their supervisor in the field, new hires also have a mentor who is their direct contact with Human Resources in MHA’s main office. During orientation, each new hire is matched to an HR mentor they can contact any time for any question. HR mentors also check in regularly with each new hire they are assigned to.

“People who choose the HR field tend to be focused on helping others, so being a mentor is a natural fit”

“People who choose the HR field tend to be focused on helping others, so being a mentor is a natural fit,” said Cheryl Cormier, VP Human Resources for MHA. “I’m confident that HR mentoring will help transition more new hires into long-term employees.”



Read the feature story here:
www.mhainc.org/hr-mentoring

Safe Haven Nutrition Workshops

Addiction is hard on your physical health as well as your mental health, so MHA wanted to add a nutritional aspect to our program to help with physical effects of recovery.

Residents of MHA's Safe Haven program are taking a series of Nutrition Workshops led by Stacy Garvey, a Licensed Dietician/Nutritionist with Wellpoint Health Solutions. These hands-on workshops in the Safe Haven kitchen are meeting every other week through May 2020. The Safe Haven Nutrition Workshops are funded in part by a \$2500 grant from the City of Westfield and a \$500 grant from Health New England. Safe Haven offers transitional housing support to people served by the Department of Mental Health who are experiencing chronic homelessness, including those in recovery.

Read the feature story here:
www.mhainc.org/safe-haven-nutrition/



Bestlife Support Groups

The support provided by a group of people who've had a similar experience is **powerful**. Through shared experience, Bestlife support groups help members build a healthy, positive lifestyle through participating and understanding. Bestlife now offers support groups for LGBTQ+ individuals in two age ranges (ages 12-17 and 18-26) and also for military veterans. Family members are also welcome.

Outcomes for support group members can include:

- Feeling less lonely, isolated or judged
- Gaining a sense of empowerment and control
- Improving coping skills and sense of adjustment
- Talking openly and honestly about feelings
- Reducing distress, depression or anxiety

bestlife
Emotional Health & Wellness



Learn more about our programs here:
www.mhainc.org/bestlife-wellness-center/

MHA THANKS **EVERSOURCE** FOR ITS GENEROUS GRANT THAT MAKES THESE NEW SUPPORT GROUPS POSSIBLE.

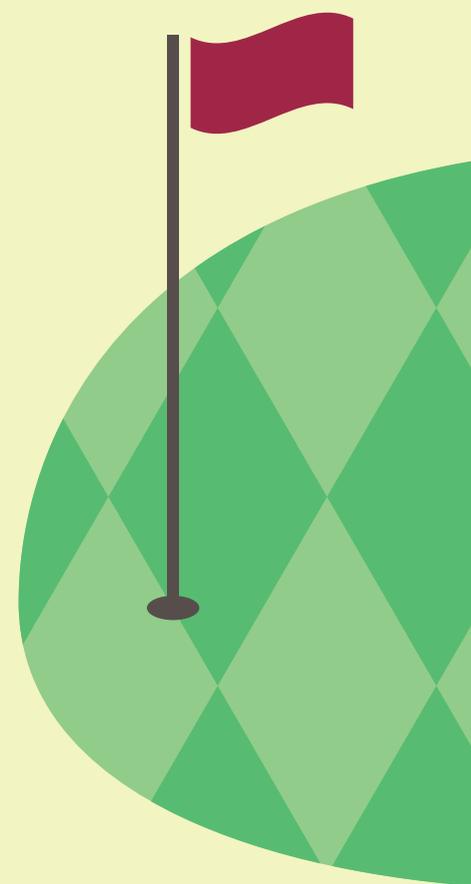
SAVE THE DATE! JUNE 5, 2020

23RD ANNUAL



**WELLNESS
CLASSIC**

GOLF BENEFIT



WELLNESS ON THE GREEN

“IF THERE’S
ANYTHING
I CAN DO ...
PLEASE ASK.”

How many times have you spoken these words to a loved one facing physical or emotional challenges? And yet, despite our best intentions, our sincerest words so often come back empty.

This spring, there is something you can do to truly make a difference ... and have a great time doing it!

Support this year’s MHA Wellness Classic – as a player, sponsor, or both – and you’ll be supporting the essential programming and care that MHA brings to those in our communities facing challenging times.

They need us – and we need you!

TO OFFER YOUR SUPPORT, CONTACT KIMBERLEY LEE AT KLEE@MHAINC.ORG OR 413.233.5343

JUNE 5, 2020 / WILBRAHAM COUNTRY CLUB

RECEPTION AND RAFFLE
GIVE-AWAYS AND CHANCES TO WIN
FOURSOME PLAY
SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES





“Look at me now. I’m clean and sober. With help from Samantha and people she connects me with, I will be able to do more for myself. I’m going from impossible to I’m possible.”

Most people in Safe Haven have had a lifetime of mental health issues, but Dan’s began as an adult. His mental health challenges started with PTSD, after seeing his wife killed. It even progressed to a suicide attempt. It can be hard for adults to accept that they have a sickness that is chronic. It took Dan some time, but he made the choice to stay clean and sober and to get help for his mental health. He’s accomplished so much.

Read the full story here: www.mhainc.org/dan-hall/

MHA MATTERS

MEET DAN HALL

GET TO KNOW US

- 1050+ participants annually
- 518 full & part-time employees
- 35 residential sites