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MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY CONFERENCE IN PUTNAM
Area mental health providers collaborated to inspire a new vision for recovery

Mahopac, NY – On May 12, 2016, Putnam Family and Community Services, Inc. (PFCS) joined forces with MHA of Putnam, WPILC/PILS, PEOPLE, Inc., NAMI Putnam, Search for Change and NYAPRS to bring a first of its kind conference discussing Mental Health recovery to Putnam County. “Redefining Mental Health: Perspectives on Wellness and Recovery” was the theme for presentations by acclaimed national and state leaders in mental health, all striving to inspire new ways of looking at recovery and to prove that recovery from mental health issues is possible.

Over 100 people representing mental and physical health professionals, peers, and interested residents from 11 counties in the area attended this all day conference at the Putnam County Golf Course. After opening remarks by Michael Piazza, Commissioner of Putnam County’s Department of Social Services and Mental Health, Harvey Rosenthal, Executive Director of the New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRS), set the tone for the day’s breakout sessions, identifying the unprecedented challenges and opportunities in the field of mental health treatment and recovery.

“We have some amazing leaders in the recovery movement right here in our own area,” stated Alison Carroll, coordinator of the conference and Vice President of Strategic Initiatives at PFCS. “There is a lot of great work going on in support of reducing the stigma associated with mental health issues and meeting the challenges presented by changes to the mental health systems. We have a ways to go still, as does the rest of the state and the rest of the world, but I think we’re ready for it...and there were some great people in attendance that will help bring the mission forward.”

The Key Note speaker for the day was Gina Calhoun, National Director for Wellness & Recovery Education at the Copeland Center for Wellness and Recovery in Brattleboro, VT. Her inspiring story of transitioning from long-term institutionalization to active community citizenship highlighted the importance of hope-inspiring relationships, including the essential role of peer support. She went on to examine three ways to support others to believe in their own abilities to succeed.

Breakout sessions in the morning and afternoon provided the opportunity to gain new perspectives from leading experts on the issues facing people receiving mental health services and mental health providers. Presenters included: Pablo Sadler, MD, MPH, Medical Director of the Bureau of Mental Health, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Stephanie Orlando, Executive Director of YOUTH POWER!; Paul Margolies, Ph.D., Associate Director for Practice Innovation and Implementation, Columbia University; Kathleen Herndon, BA, Director of the Clear Door Recovery Center, MHA Putnam; Edye Schwartz, DSW, LCSW-R, Director of System’s Transformation, NYAPRS; Phyllis Vine, Ph.D., Historian, Author, Activist; Wendy Brennan, Executive Director or NAMI-NYC Metro; Steve Miccio, CEO of PEOPLE, Inc. A panel of speakers who discussed their real-life mental health struggles and recovery successes helped to evidence that the philosophies and practices of recovery do work.

“People deserve to have dreams, have happiness, have a life. Providing the hope of those things from the beginning of services is crucial to engagement and success,” said Alison. “ Providers must believe in recovery in order to instill such hope in those they serve. My hope is that by continuing the dialogue through events such as this, we can help to strengthen that belief in recovery.”

More details about this conference including copies of the presentations offered can be viewed at www.PFCSinc.org.

About Putnam Family and Community Services, Inc.

Putnam Family and Community Services, Inc. (PFCS) is the only private non-profit agency providing recovery-based mental health, chemical dependency treatment and prevention services in Putnam County, NY. PFCS offers hope and healing to people of all ages through a comprehensive range of services including individual and group counseling, care coordination, family advocacy, parenting education, community outreach, psychiatric rehabilitation, and medication management. For more information, visit www.PFCSinc.org or www.Facebook.com/PFCSinc.