



A newsletter about the *My Health, My Choice, My Life* initiative across the State of Tennessee.

Tomorrow Starts Today



December 2014

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My Health, My Choice, My Life Receives 2014 Model Project Award at NAMI Conference

By Lindsey Johnson, West TN Peer Wellness Coach

In September, *My Health, My Choice, My Life* received the 2014 Model Project Award at the annual NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Tennessee Conference held at Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville. We are extremely thankful to NAMI for such a great honor.

During the conference, members of the *My Health, My Choice, My Life* team led a breakout session titled, "Don't Worry, Be Happy: Boosting Your Mood with Wellness Tools". Two specific areas addressed during our presentation were the growing awareness of the effect of food and physical activity on mood.

It is becoming more evident that eating breakfast not only increases our energy level; it improves our memory and creates calmness as we begin our day. There is also a growing body of evidence linking lower physical activity levels to major depression.

Approximately 225 people attended the conference that hosted a variety of keynote speakers, breakout sessions and activities.

NAMI, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization, remains dedicated to advocacy work focused on bettering the lives of individuals affected by mental illness. NAMI is steadfast in its commitment to raise awareness and build a community of hope for those in need.



Recovery Fest Pasta Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 box of whole wheat pasta, cooked
- 2 cucumbers, quartered
- 1 large white onion, diced
- 2 green peppers, diced
- 2 red peppers, diced
- 1 container of cherry tomatoes, sliced
- 1 large can of olives, sliced (optional)
- 1 bottle of light Italian dressing

Directions:

1. Cook pasta as directed on box.
2. Cut up vegetables while pasta is cooking.
3. Mix together pasta and vegetables in a large bowl.
4. Add ½ a bottle of dressing to salad and mix well.
5. For best results, cover and refrigerate overnight.

Serves 15

Fourth Annual Recovery Fest Provides Hope and Helpful Resources

By Stephanie Wallingford
Frontier Health Peer Wellness Coach

For the past four years Frontier Health's Victory Centers in East Tennessee have hosted a Recovery Fest to observe Mental Illness Awareness Week. This special event is a time for people to come together and not only celebrate recovery but also promote community outreach and public education concerning mental illness.

This year, staff, mentors and members of the Johnson City Victory Center planned the event for months, meeting once a week to brainstorm interesting activity ideas as well as community groups that could provide helpful resources. After that, the real work began.

Members collaborated with outside community resources, made posters for booths, and assembled grab bags and affirmation necklaces to distribute to everyone. On the day prior to the event, they prepared pasta salad to serve for lunch.

"The members, mentors, and staff worked together as a team to make Johnson City Recovery Fest a large success. There was something of interest for everyone to do or see." - Scarlett

All of the planning for the Fourth Annual Recovery Fest definitely paid off. Representatives from NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), *My Health, My Choice, My Life*, Blue Care, and Recovery Within Reach handed out information and answered questions. There was an arts and crafts booth available where participants created sand art projects to take home with them.

Several local massage therapists also gave free chair massages and a magician wowed everyone with his hand-is-quicker-than-the-eye



tricks. The crowd enjoyed playing games of corn hole in teams of two, practiced yoga and meditation exercises indoors and danced to some energizing music.

"I loved the music and enjoyed meeting new people from other Victory Centers. I also loved the arts and crafts." -Sharon

"I enjoyed Recovery Fest because it gave me a chance to see how a different Victory Center was laid out. It also gave me a chance to meet new people." - Janeen

"I enjoyed Recovery Fest because I met old friends; it was a great meeting for all the centers and a great time." -Larry

As the celebration ended everyone gathered on a small hill beside the Victory Center. Each individual held his/her own balloon and released it into the atmosphere with the whole group.

It was powerful and inspirational to end Recovery Fest by watching 100 or more participants let go of balloons representing either some aspect of their life that no longer serves them or something they want to attract into their world.

Wellness Coaching Leads to Big Changes at Group Home

By Julie Fann, Frontier Health Peer Wellness Coach

For residents and staff at Laurel House, a group home in Johnson City, preparing healthier foods and encouraging physical activity hasn't been a top priority. But focused help through wellness coaching has changed all that.

"Information we've learned through the Chronic Disease and Diabetes workshops held here and the help we've gotten from our wellness coach has made a big difference in how we address healthy behaviors here now," said Leisa Wells, site director at the home. "Our Peer Wellness Coach has helped us see how important it is to read food labels and pay attention to what's in our food. We now make time to do that when we shop for the clients here. We buy food that is more nutritious and we've learned ways to prepare it that are easy and that still create variety."

Residents at Laurel House now eat more fruits and vegetables at each meal, and staff work to control portion sizes and make sure ingredients are rich in nutrients. "We eat foods that are low fat and low sodium and we don't eat white bread anymore. I really like the turkey wraps we have for lunch sometimes," said Donald, a resident of the home. Donald also said he uses the deep breathing technique he learned through the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) as a way to relieve anxiety.

Connie, another resident, was struggling with extremely high blood sugar levels due to her diabetes. Now that staff have the knowledge they need to keep the amount of carbohydrates she consumes to no more than 60 grams per meal, Connie's blood sugar levels have dropped significantly. "I know I need to eat healthy now because I have diabetes. I need to keep my blood sugar down," Connie said.

Residents at Laurel House are also walking more and have learned simple stretching exercises they can do in their rooms to increase the amount of

physical activity they get during bad weather and also when they don't feel strong enough to leave the home. Through taking the CDSMP workshop one resident realized, though, that her tendency to hibernate was making her battle with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Multiple Sclerosis (M.S.) worse.

"I've been working hard on getting out of the house more instead of staying inside trapped in my mind," said Amy. "And I try to do some kind of exercise."

Eight residents live at Laurel House, which sits at the base of the Appalachian mountain range in the far corner of East Tennessee.



Connie, a resident of Laurel House group home in Johnson City, lives with diabetes. With help from her peer wellness coach and the *My Health, My Choice, My Life* program, Connie now has the knowledge she needs to make changes to improve her health.



When It Comes to Smoking, It's Cool to Be a Quitter

My Health, My Choice, My Life Classes Help Man
Reduce Smoking

By James Pincham, Ridgeview Peer Wellness Coach

David Earl Hill, a recent participant of the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program through My Health, My Choice, My Life at Ridgeview, has used smoking as a way to cope with symptoms of depression and anxiety for years. Through attending the CDSMP, David has decreased his smoking and is determined to drop the habit completely.

Over the years, David had developed breathing problems causing his asthma to worsen. He was eventually prescribed an inhaler he used four times a day to help with his symptoms. As his breathing problems persisted, David tried several times to quit smoking, including using nicotine gum, but had been unsuccessful.

When David took the CDSMP in September, he became more aware of his overall health and how important it was for him to make healthy choices. David says one particular skill he learned was Decision Making. Typically after eating, David wants to smoke, but now when he craves a cigarette, he weighs the pros and cons of the choice to smoke. By not smoking, David says he gets the immediate health benefits like easier breathing. Another motivating factor for David is spending time with his mother. Spending quality time with his mother, like going on walks, reminds him why his choosing to cut down on his smoking and increase his chance for a longer life.

David has now reduced his smoking to only a few cigarettes a day, down from a pack, and he's determined to stop smoking completely. He is already breathing much easier and feeling much more energetic. He hasn't needed to use an inhaler and is enjoying the money he's saving from buying fewer packs of cigarettes.

David wants others to hear his story so they will feel encouraged to stop smoking and make healthier lifestyle choices.

Wellness Celebration Focuses on Many Areas

By Mark Bresee, East TN Peer Wellness Coach

During SAMHSA's National Wellness Week in September, My Health, My Choice, My Life partnered with United HealthCare, Blue Care, and Amerigroup to host five Wellness Celebrations across the state, including Athens, Nashville, Jackson, Memphis, and at the AIM Center, Inc. in Chattanooga. Over 450 peers attended and participated in team games like kickball and dodge ball, tug-of-war, dance competitions, getting health measurements, yard games, art projects, board breaking, and even massages!

The Wellness Celebration at the AIM Center, Inc. specifically highlighted how various dimensions of wellness make a difference in the lives of people at AIM. For example, members and staff from the Art Unit shared the impact participating in artistic creativity has on their lives.

The Housing Unit, which oversees the operation of approximately eighty homes and apartments, showed how providing attractive living environments makes a difference in the lives of people who need a better place to live. The Member Support Unit provided healthy snacks, happy dancing, and a whole lot of fun.

A month after National Wellness Week, promoting wellness at the AIM Center, Inc. continued into October at the AIM Center, Inc. Halloween Social. Veggies and dip turned into a skeleton; chocolate chips became facial features on bananas; and one-eyed marshmallows topped monster smoothies.

Here's to continuing to promote wellness and fun!



Donald's Moves of the Month

By Donald Williams, Middle Tennessee Peer Wellness Coach

Straight Leg Lift

Target: Quadriceps and hip flexors

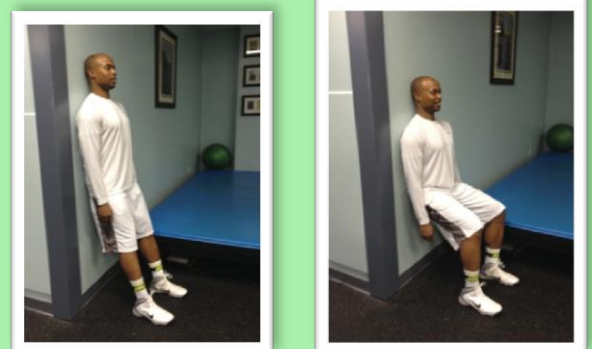
1. Lay on your back with your right leg straight and extended. Your left knee should be bent with your left foot flat on the floor.
2. Contract your right thigh muscles to straighten (but not lock) your knee. Slowly raise the leg until knees are parallel, then lower.
3. Repeat 8 to 12 times with the same leg.
4. Do this routine with the opposite leg.
5. Work up to doing 2 sets on each side.



Wall Sit

Target: Hamstrings, quadriceps, gluteal muscles, and abdominal muscles.

1. Stand with your lower back against the wall, keeping feet shoulder width apart.
2. Keeping your upper body straight, slowly bend your knees until your thighs are parallel to the floor. Keep your knees above, not in front of your feet.
3. Hold this position for 15 seconds and slide back up.
4. Repeat 3 to 4 times, working up to 30 seconds.



Centerstone Fall Festival Connects People Together with Physical Activity

By Donald Williams, Middle Tennessee Peer Wellness Coach

Fun that included physical activity led by Peer Wellness Coach, Donald Williams, made Centerstone's annual fall festival in October an opportunity for members to learn more about wellness.

During the celebration, held at Ed Warner Park on Oct. 17, Donald led the group in a competitive game of kickball to raise everyone's heart rate and help them focus on teamwork.

Those who attended the festival participated in other games like badminton and volleyball. Food was also provided.

Members received awards for categories like Member of the Year, Best Attitude Toward Recovery, Most Helpful and Most Improved.

One client said that increased physical activity has helped him decrease the amount of cigarettes he smokes as he focuses on his goal to quit the habit completely.

Directors and staff from Peer Support Centers in Clarksville, Nashville, Dickson, Columbia, Shelbyville and Tullahoma organized the festival.

Morristown Championship Games Promote Physical Activity and Fun!

By Cassidy Bryant, Helen Ross McNabb Peer Wellness Coach

Because reward is an important part of achievement, mental health, and plain old-fashioned fun, the *My Health, My Choice, My Life* team holds Championship Games events for peer support and recovery centers across the state. September's games, held at Panther Creek State Park near Morristown, were a huge success.

"The smile of confidence and pride on a person's face after they receive an award for winning a competition is amazing," said Peer Wellness Coach, Julie Fann. "These events encourage members to enjoy being physically active, which is really important for mental health."

More than 50 members arrived in the early morning of Tuesday, Sept. 16, from Cherokee Health Systems, Frontier Health, Helen Ross McNabb, TMHCA, and Peninsula.

Before the games began, participants explored the area around the pavilion, socialized, played outdoor games – like Velcro ball toss - just for fun, and hung banners they created to represent their centers.

"Everyone loved the background music we played while they got to know other people from other locations and prepared for the

competition," said Peer Wellness Coach, Stephanie Wallingford.

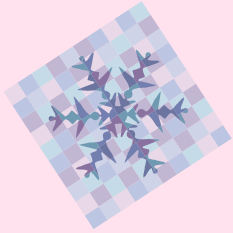
Categories for competition included tug-of-war, a water relay race, men and women's 50-yard-dash and walk, a tennis ball throw and kick ball.

In addition to certificates awarded to individuals and the teams that won each event, *My Health, My Choice, My Life* honored the center that showed the most team spirit as well as the center with the most creative banner. The Best Banner Award went to Cherokee Health Systems and the Tennessee Mental Health Consumers Association received the award for Best Team Spirit.

Afterward, members enjoyed lunch, and the day ended with dancing, much celebration, and feelings of accomplishment.

The *My Health, My Choice, My Life* team would like to thank United HealthCare, Amerigroup, and Blue Care for their sponsorship and support. The day wouldn't have been a success without their support.





Winter Health and Safety

By Febe Wallace and Stella Melton, Cherokee Health Systems

Tennessee has already seen some bitterly cold temperatures this fall. Very cold weather can expose us to some health and safety concerns. Some of these cold weather concerns can be quite dangerous. It is important to think about our surroundings and our resources so that we can lower the risk of getting sick or hurt in relation to winter weather conditions.

Here are a few health and safety risks that we may face in the winter, and some tips for dealing with them.

RISK: Hypothermia is a condition that occurs when the body simply gets too cold to function properly. Internal systems slow down. Thinking becomes unclear so there may not be an awareness of being too cold. Excessive shivering may happen and movements may become clumsy. Sleepiness may be a symptom. If this happens, the individual needs to get warm as soon as possible. Covering up with blankets or other warm material – even body heat from another person can be helpful. Wet clothing should be removed. Warm drinks other than alcohol can help. Emergency medical attention is necessary if the individual isn't alert. The very young and the elderly are at higher risk for get hypothermia.

PREVENTION TIPS: Dress warm. Dress in layers. Wear warm, waterproof footwear. Avoid getting wet. Plan where you can go inside to get warm. Come inside frequently if you are doing outdoor activities in cold weather. Keep track of weather forecasts in cold weather so that you are aware of what temperatures to expect.

RISK: Frostbite occurs if a part of our body tissue actually freezes. This is most likely to occur to the head or limbs: nose, ears, fingers, toes, chin, and cheeks. The tissue may become

numb, so there is no awareness of anything being wrong. If the tissue is numb and also looks too pale, or gray, or yellowish, or feels hard to the touch, then frostbite is a possibility. It is important to move to a warmer place and get medical attention as soon as possible. Resist the temptation to heat up the frozen part of the body quickly, which will cause more damage. Also avoid movement of the tissue (for example, don't rub it, and don't walk on a frostbitten foot), because this will also cause more damage. In severe cases, tissue will need to be amputated.

PREVENTION TIPS: Be aware of what the outdoor temperatures are. Do not stay outside for prolonged periods. Wear warm, layered clothing. Pay close attention to covering for your head, face, hands, and feet.

RISK: Falls also occur frequently during winter. Icy steps and sidewalks are dangerous. There is a risk of breaking one or more bones, or hitting the head and losing consciousness. There are also risks of hypothermia and frostbite if help doesn't arrive quickly after falling.

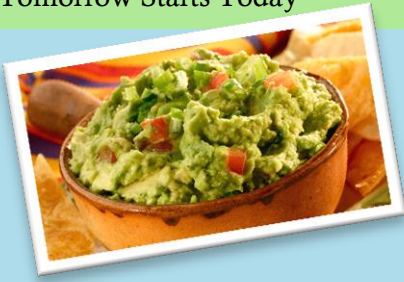
PREVENTION TIPS: Pay attention to porches, sidewalks, doorways and parking lots while outdoors. Home entrances should be kept clear of ice. There are ice-melting products for sale in stores that can be sprinkled on the surface to help with melting. Some people have also used sand, gravel, or cat litter to help prevent slipping. Step carefully when outside, and use handrails whenever they are available.

RISK: In the winter, we all want to stay warm. Lack of heat in the home could lead to hypothermia or frostbite. But problems with home heating systems can also lead to injuries. Dangers include the risk of fatal house fires, electrical shocks, burns from heating

fuel accidents, and carbon monoxide poisoning. Wood stoves and chimneys are major causes of house fires, as are electric space heaters when they are not used correctly or they are not working properly. Any electric heater can be a source for electrical shock. Refillable heating fuel sources like kerosene heaters can lead to severe accidents if they aren't re-filled properly. Heat sources that use combustion (wood or coal, kerosene, propane, natural gas, other heating oil that burns to make the heat) are all possible sources of carbon monoxide poisoning.

PREVENTION TIPS: Have an experienced person examine and provide maintenance work on heating systems every year. Get chimneys and flues inspected and cleaned. Replace cracked flue blocks and don't use damaged stove pipes. Check all heater cords and don't use any heaters that have cuts or frayed electric cords. Do not use extension cords with heaters. Keep all burnable items at least three feet from the heat source. Install a carbon monoxide monitor if the heat source requires a flame to create heat. If the smell of gas or propane (they add a chemical to make it smell) is present do not use any electrical switches or devices; leave the house and call the gas company. Do not use outdoor heat devices (like a grill) to heat indoors.

Febe Wallace MD is the Director of Primary Care Services at Cherokee Health Systems. Stella Melton LPN, BA, CPRP is a nurse who coordinates Cherokee's Psychosocial Day Program and Peer Support services.



Check out this month's puzzler! What's in Guacamole?

Locate the ingredients below to see what all is in this famous dip!

D Y G R R O R A E I T V
 T B D E I B D V S M O L
 O O L D P N S J W A I T
 M R I W E N O K L B J F
 A T M O A V T I S E A T
 T N E P V D O A N G L W
 O A J C O R L I I O A P
 E L U I C T E B Y W P F
 S I I L A I E P A Z E Q
 I C C R D H U I P W N U
 L Q E A O X R J D E O Z
 S U F G S T G T D A P O

Word Bank
 Cilantro
 Garlic Powder
 Jalapeno
 Lime Juice
 Onion
 Pepper
 Ripe Avocados
 Salt
 Tomatoes

Having Fun Getting Fit

Members at Hearts in Hands Peer Support Center in Somerville, TN are finding fun ways to get active!

By Lindsey Johnson, West Tennessee Peer Wellness Coach

On Nov. 19, 2014, Peer Wellness Coach Lindsey Johnson visited Hearts in Hands Peer Support Center in Somerville to see what behaviors they engage in to promote physical health. While she was there, Johnson discovered that the members perform physical activity on a daily basis.

“We desire to be in shape for the sake of our health and well being. We all have various diagnoses, and we see the importance and benefits of being physically active,” said Brenda Robbins, director of the Hearts in Hands center.

During the physical activity, each member has the opportunity to lead the others in a particular exercise. One by one each member leads until everyone has had a turn. Squats, arm circles, and leg stretches are among some of the various activities they perform.

Squats were an obvious favorite for this center, with several of the members choosing this physical activity to lead. Want to know how to perform this activity? Check it out!

Squats

1. Plant your feet slightly outward (not straight ahead) about shoulder length apart.
2. Place both hands on your waist.
3. Bend at the knees, being sure not to let your knees extend beyond your toes. The best way to do this is to pretend like you're about to sit in a chair!
4. Keep your back straight and slowly bend until your thighs are almost parallel to the floor.
5. Come back to the standing position and repeat!

