



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

May 2014

Tomorrow Starts Today



What's inside?

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Knoxville Graduation Encourages Healthy Lifestyles by Cassidy Bryant, Knoxville Peer Wellness Coach

Success! Participants in a six-week Chronic Disease Self-Management workshop at Friendship House in Knoxville learned a lot about healthy eating and the importance of physical activity. Led by Peer Wellness Coach, Cassidy Bryant, and co-facilitated by Katie Lee, the workshop concluded with an exciting graduation celebration.

The celebration began with a healthy meal that included turkey and ham sandwiches served on nine-grain wheat bread with lettuce and cheese. For dessert participants enjoyed a tasty fruit salad.

A hula hoop contest followed and everyone competed to see how long they could hula hoop, using either their hips or arms. Some participants even had some tricks up their sleeves and could switch arms while hula hooping.

They all were amazing and very talented participants. Each wore a graduation cap and walked to the front of the group to receive their certificate of completion, a *My Health, My Choice, My Life* t-shirt, followed by a group picture with the coaches. Each participant also had their picture taken individually with their certificate and t-shirt.

"I really learned from this class over the past six weeks and in the future I believe it will help me out with my chronic health issues. The graduation celebration was fantastic!" said Scott Harvey, participant.

Watch Out for the Next Issue!

West Tennessee had its first-ever Championship Games event on Tuesday, May 6 in beautiful Milan City Park in Milan, TN. In the next issue, we'll have a recap of the events, as well as some photos from the day. Stay tuned for more!



Meet Miki: Her SMALL Changes Made a BIG Difference

After a heart attack, *My Health, My Choice, My Life* helped this woman get on track to a healthier life.

by Tiffany Claiborne, West Tennessee Peer Wellness Coach

When I first met Miki Ferrell at MidSouth Sober Living last October, she had recently returned from a trip to the hospital for a heart attack. Also, COPD required that she function using an oxygen concentrator. So, she crocheted while sitting in an armchair with a range only as far as her oxygen tubing would take her.

"I had COPD and congestive heart failure, and I didn't know I had high blood pressure, but I did," she said. "My heart attack was a real motivator for me." Many of the emotions that Miki felt after that episode were what ultimately brought about some of her lifestyle changes.

"I felt scared, powerless, desperate and willing to make changes to avoid it

again," she said.

The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program offered by *My Health, My Choice, My Life* helped her develop coping skills, chart changes in her diet, improve her communication with others, and learn to participate in healthier activities.

Miki has switched to a low-sodium, heart-healthy diet and has started making a lot more healthy foods at home. In the five months since I've met her, the physician who treats her has taken her off of her blood pressure medication as well. She has also lost 16 pounds and three inches from her waist. In her case, a change of diet did the trick.

Miki is also working on quitting something she's been doing for 42 years – smoking.

"I have spent way more of my life smoking," she said. "I started when I was 11. I can barely remember a time when I wasn't smoking."

She says sometimes the cravings are so severe she "could chew nails." But with the use of nicotine patches, she is confident that she will be able to quit for good.

This change has led to her ability to move from regular breathing treatments to a rescue inhaler, and she no longer needs a concentrator or an oxygen tank at all times. Now, she only takes a small, portable tank with her when she leaves the house.

These days, Miki can make it all around town, thanks to the Memphis bus



system and the fact that she can now walk a few blocks without becoming out of breath. Before, she said, she couldn't walk across the street.

"I thought I was going to be housebound because I felt so restricted physically," Miki said.

"Now I just snatch my portable oxygen and just roll with it ... I have a lot more freedom today."

This freedom has even transferred to a rekindling of her professional life. Miki has now entered a vocational rehab program and is going back to college for a business degree. Miki is proof that lots of small changes can make a big difference in many aspects of your life.

For those like Miki who want and need to reduce their sodium intake, she has one tip: "Read labels. A lot more things have sodium than you'd think, like eggs or Cheerios." Miki has also started eating organic cereal offerings because they tend to have less sodium.

Her favorite snack from the six-week CDSMP workshop is cowboy caviar. You can reduce the sodium content even more by making your own tortilla chips if you know how.

Cowboy Caviar Recipe

- 1 14.5-ounce can of black beans
 - 1 14.5-ounce can of yellow whole kernel corn
 - 1 10-ounce can of mild Ro Tel
 - 2 14.5-ounce cans of petite diced tomatoes
 - 1 bunch of green onions, chopped
 - ¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
 - 1 jalapeno, seeded and diced
 - Garlic powder (to taste)
 - Salt (to taste)
 - Pepper (to taste)
 - 2 bags of tortilla chips
1. Drain and rinse black beans
 2. Drain corn
 3. Drain RoTel and diced tomatoes
 4. Chop green onions and cilantro
 5. De-seed and dice jalapenos
 6. Mix all ingredients in a large bowl
 7. Season with garlic powder, salt and pepper
 8. Chill in the refrigerator
 9. Serve with tortilla chips



Miki now makes most meals at home to help with monitoring her sodium consumption.

Getting a Good Night's Sleep

by Libby Byler, Amerigroup Wellness and Recovery Lead

“But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep.” –Robert Frost

Are you too busy to get a full night's sleep? You might want to re-examine that.

More than half of people who live with depression have insomnia. It is nearly always on the list of symptoms. A new report, completed by a team at Ryerson University in Toronto Canada, reveals that 87 percent of patients who resolved their sleep problems in four bi-weekly talk therapy sessions also experienced a decrease in their symptoms of depression after eight weeks, either with an antidepressant or a placebo.

Doctors have long considered poor sleep to be a symptom of depression. “The relationship is bi-directional—that insomnia can precede the depression,” said Rachel Manber, a professor in the Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences Department at Stanford University.

The most common therapy used to treat insomnia is called Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Dr. Andrew Krystal, who conducted a sleep study at Duke University, said, “The body has complex circadian cycles, and mostly in psychiatry we've ignored them. Our treatments are driven by convenience. We treat during the day and make little effort to find out what's happening at night.”

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for insomnia teaches patients to develop regular times to get up, get out of bed during waking periods, and avoid activities like watching



television in bed. They suggest that napping be eliminated.

The American Board of Sleep Medicine has certified only 400 practitioners in the United States to practice Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for insomnia. It seems that there is a lot of catching up to do. Meanwhile, those with depression can work with their own doctors to establish better sleeping habits.

Besides combating depression, there are other advantages to developing healthy sleep patterns. In a Carnegie Mellon University study conducted by Sheldon Cohen and colleagues, among 153 participants, those who slept less than seven hours were three times more likely to get the cold virus than those who got a full eight hours of sleep. Jane Brody, personal health columnist for the *New York Times*, said, “People who are well rested are better able to learn a task and more likely to remember what they learned.”

So, be mindful of your sleep patterns. It might just make a big difference.

“Sleep Therapy Seen as an Aid for Depression,” by Benedict Carey, THE NEW YORK TIMES, November 18, 2013.

“Sleep Therapy is Expected to Gain a Wider Role in Depression Treatment,” by Benedict Carey, THE NEW YORK TIMES, November 24, 2013.

“Cheating Ourselves of Sleep,” by Jane Brody, THE NEW YORK TIMES, June 17, 2013.





By James Pincham, Ridgeview Peer Wellness Coach

Individuals who live with chronic illnesses often feel hopeless. However, peers at Ridgeview Behavioral Health Services in Knoxville have experienced dramatic improvements in their overall health due to attending classes and participating in one-on-one wellness coaching through *My Health, My Choice, My Life* and working with Peer Wellness Coach, James Pincham.

One client, Michael O., has worked to lower his blood sugar, which is now in the normal range, and he has also lost 30 pounds since November, 2013. Michael said when he began working with James to control his diet in November, his blood sugar remained consistently in the 400 range (70-130 is considered normal). Michael then began working with James one-on-one, almost once a week. Michael learned how to read food labels and James encouraged him to make dietary changes.

Knoxville Peers Experience Successes

Thanks to one-on-one coaching and classes, several peers in the Knoxville area have made some big strides.

“Now, my blood sugar remains in the 100s nearly all of the time,” Michael said.

After four months working with James, Michael has continued to lose weight and said that the greatest benefit he has received from coaching is greater self-esteem. Prior to his weight loss he was not employed, but now that his self-confidence has improved, he feels empowered to look for work and has a greater sense of self-worth.

Another client, Diane, has battled several chronic conditions, including diabetes, and was one of the first clients who signed up for peer wellness coaching in December 2013, stating that her chief concern was that she couldn’t lose weight even though she believed she ate

very little on a daily basis. Diane began keeping a food log and, with James, reviewed healthy eating habits and healthy and inexpensive meal planning, all while watching her blood sugar levels.

“In December my blood sugar was often 300 plus; today my blood sugar is consistently below 150, thanks to the tips I’ve learned in wellness coaching,” she said. Diane went to the doctor recently and was surprised to learn that she has lost 20 pounds in the last two months. “I feel great,” she said. “Between learning how to read food labels and healthier meal planning I have more energy than I’ve had in a long, long time, and I’m losing weight,” she said. Diane also now exercises three to four times weekly, mostly consisting of short walks, which she began in December, and she said this has greatly improved her self-esteem.

Stephanie's Moves of the Month

by Stephanie Wallingford, Johnson City Peer Wellness Coach

I was joking with my friend recently and told her that I felt like I had pretty much gone into "Hibernation" this winter. I would get up and go to work, but when I got home, all I wanted to do was curl up on the couch and watch Netflix.

Although I enjoyed catching up on some of my favorite shows, I didn't like the way my body felt. I was always tired, and would get short of breath just by walking up my steps. I knew something had to change, so I decided to join one of the local gyms. I walked in to sign up and was excited about starting a new exercise program, but before too long, I noticed that a whole month had gone by and I hadn't stepped foot in the gym. It wasn't because I

didn't want to go, but I didn't know what to do or where to start. This seems to be true for a lot of people. While doing workshops I hear people say that they want to be more active, but many don't go through with it because they either don't know what to do, don't know where to start, or are afraid they may get hurt.

Do you ever find yourself in an exercise rut? Do you want to add more physical activity into your daily routine but don't know what to do or where to start? Are you afraid you might get hurt? Check out these low-impact strength exercises.

Sideways Leg Lifts

1. Rest your hands on the back of a chair for stability.
2. Slowly raise your left leg to the side as far as is comfortable, keeping your back and hips straight. (Avoid tilting to the right).
3. Slowly return to the starting position.
4. Repeat with your right leg.
5. Hold each lift for up to five seconds.
6. Repeat five times with each leg.



Leg Extensions



1. Rest your hands on the back of a chair for stability.
2. Standing upright, slowly raise your left leg backwards, keeping it straight. (Avoid arching your back as you take your leg back. You should feel the effort in the back of your thigh and bottom).
3. Slowly return to the starting position
4. Repeat with your right leg.
5. Hold each lift for up to five seconds.
6. Repeat five times with each leg.

Art for Awareness Showcases Art as a Recovery Tool

by Julie Fann, Frontier Health Peer Wellness Coach



Photo courtesy of the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

During the Ninth Annual Art for Awareness celebration held Tuesday, March 18th, in Nashville, peers from across the state enjoyed seeing their art, which included drawings, paintings and mosaics, displayed in the Tennessee Tower. State Commissioner for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Doug Varney, and Deputy Commissioner, Marie Williams, attended.

Keynote speaker, Vik Moore, who is the Peer Recovery Coordinator for the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS), which sponsored the event along with the Healing Arts Project, Inc. (HAPI), provided a slide show presentation of peer art work and spoke about how the process of making art heals the mind and leads to greater self-awareness, self-esteem and self-expression.

He also explained how much of the art work created by famous historic painters like Vincent van Gogh and

William de Kooning, who struggled with mental illness, has expanded our world view and continues to provide us with much needed insight into what it means to be human.

After Vik Moore's speech to the audience of approximately 150, Julie Fann, Peer Wellness Coach for *My Health, My Choice, My Life*, led peers in a drama-related wellness movement using body, mind and voice exercises designed specifically for actors. Individuals creatively visualized what health related goals they would like to achieve and/or struggles they want to overcome while incorporating physical activity.

Leslie Judson, Program Counselor at the Sevierville Wellness Recovery Center, said the wellness movement was fun and gave her new ideas for incorporating physical activity into her work with members at her center.

"I particularly love how the drama-inspired movement encourages us to exercise our voices as well as our

bodies and minds. I am really looking forward to sharing these ideas with the members who were not able to make the trip to Nashville," she said.

Melissa Shedrinsky, a peer who attended Art for Awareness, said, "I learned about art and how it helps the mind. I thought everyone did a wonderful job. Art is not just work or fun; it is a great recovery skill as well. It helps us deal with anger, depression, and stress. And you can learn a lot from art - each color and pattern; each design represents a part of you."

Vik Moore described the exercise as "a blast" and said, "The *My Health, My Choice, My Life* presentation added such a great supplement. The Art for Awareness event is truly an inspirational outlet to recognize both talent and recovery among the peers. I hope to be a part of it for years ahead. Thanks to all involved for their dedication. Thanks also to the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner and staff for their support."

To continue the effort to promote art as an important tool for recovery from mental illness, lawmakers and those who help shape public mental health policy will be able to view all of the peer art work on display in the legislative plaza during the months of April and May.

My Health, My Choice, My Life would especially like to thank Amerigroup and BlueCare for their support of and donations to this important event.

Skin Safety and Heat Exposure

by Febe Wallace, MD and Stella Melton, LPN, BA, CPRP



After a long, hard winter, we all look forward to getting out in the spring and summer sun. It is healthy to be outside in the fresh air, and sunshine is a good source of Vitamin D for our bodies. Sunshine can lift our mood and the warmth of spring and summer days can be relaxing. But excess sun or heat can be harmful to our health.

The sun emits two types of rays that affect our skin. One is the UVB ray that affects the uppermost layer of the skin. The other is the UVA ray, and it affects the skin at a deeper level. These rays can be damaging to the skin, but the damage may not show up for a long time. It can be years before the damage is apparent. One less dangerous outcome of sun damage is premature aging of the skin.

The more worrisome complication of sun damage is cancer: squamous cell carcinoma, basal cell carcinoma, and melanoma. Melanoma is the most dangerous type of skin cancer; it can spread to other organs and can be fatal. Treatments for skin cancer all can cause some scarring, and in the case of melanoma the scars can be quite large.

The good news is that we have ways to protect our skin from sun damage. There are several actions you can take to help protect yourself from sun damage. One option is to avoid sun exposure, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. These are the hours when the sun's rays are most intense. Another helpful habit is to wear clothing that covers your skin: a wide-brimmed hat, long sleeves and pants, and sunglasses. But the most practical preventive tool for many people is to use sunscreen and re-apply it as directed on the label. The recommendation is that you choose a sunscreen with an SPF (Sun Protection Factor) or at least 15, and there has been some discussion that an SPF of 30 should be the baseline.

Some medications can also cause your skin to be more sensitive to the sun.

In addition to skin damage from the sun, the warmer weather increases the risk for heat exhaustion and heat stroke. These two problems occur when the body builds up heat that it can't get rid of by sweating. This can happen due to heat and humidity or a combination of heat and physical activity. Some medications can also cause your body to have difficulty regulating heat, and overheating may occur more easily.

Signs of heat exhaustion include sweating, nausea, weakness, headache, dizziness, and an increased heart rate. You may have dehydration that would be indicated by dark colored urine. If you think you have heat exhaustion, get out of the heat into a cooler place as soon as possible. Drink water or other fluids – but not alcohol or caffeine. Loosen any tight clothing. Wet your skin with cool water.

If heat exhaustion is not treated, or if it does not improve, it can become heatstroke. Heatstroke is very serious and it can be fatal. Additional symptoms may include: internal temperature of 104 degrees or higher, not sweating, vomiting, being very apprehensive or anxious, feeling confused, reddened skin, cramps, disorientation, and even seizures. Individuals in this situation will need emergency medical help. While waiting for help to arrive, get out of the heat and do what you can to cool down (fans, air conditioning, cool cloths, loosen clothing, apply ice packs to armpits and groin areas to speed cooling).

Warm weather can bring lots of opportunities for fun. They don't have to be unhealthy if we know how to protect ourselves from potential risks.

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.



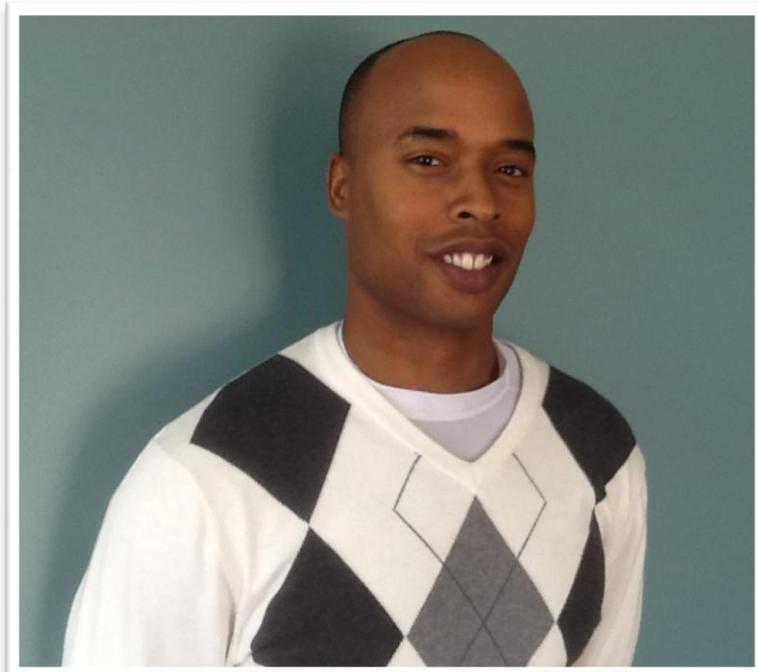
Chasity's Silver Lining

By Mark Bresee, Chattanooga Peer Wellness Coach



It's been said "behind every dark cloud is a silver lining." Chasity is a member at Friendship Circle in Dayton, Tennessee and experienced the truth behind that saying. Chasity attended the My Health, My Choice, My Life workshop last year and a few months later experienced extremely difficult times. The one upside turned out to be eating less food. Three months later she weighed thirty-two pounds less. Life is getting back to normal, but Chasity is determined to pursue her healthy weight goal. She is committed to increasing her physical activity, eating nutritious food, and keeping portions where they need to be.

Introducing Donald Williams!



Donald Williams is the newest Peer Wellness Coach to be added to the *My Health, My Choice, My Life* family. Donald is currently working in Middle Tennessee with Centerstone.

Donald attended Tennessee State University where he earned a Bachelor's of Science in Human Performance Sports Science and a Master's Degree in Exercise Science. He has worked as a personal trainer for the past eight years. Donald is excited to promote the *My Health, My Choice, My Life* to the Middle Tennessee area. In his free time he enjoys working out, cooking and spending time with his family.