

Around the Sound



A publication of the North Sound Regional Support Network for the Mental Health Community
Volume 11: Fall 2002



The View From Here

*Michael Shelton
Island County Commissioner
NSRSN Board of Directors*

CONFRONTING STIGMA

As a member of the NSRSN Board of Directors for the last ten years, I have witnessed many changes in public mental health and in the way we deliver services to our people who suffer from mental illness. My opinions have been shaped by the system, but even more importantly, by the people who are part of the system. Clients, advocates, professionals, members of the Advisory Board, and fellow members of the governing board have all played important roles in shaping my attitudes toward mental illness and the way we treat it.

One thing I have been guilty of (and I suspect many others have as well) is forgetting to celebrate our successes. It is so easy to focus on the shortcomings of the mental health system, though I do believe our RSN is the most effective delivery system in the State. Does that mean we should rest on our laurels and not do our best to improve?

No. But it does mean that committed people have made a very complicated process work for the benefit of the people we serve.

One of the successes I want to talk about is the stigma associated with mental illness. Though a disease of the brain manifests itself differently from diseases affecting other organs of the body, there should be no difference in the way society views this disease.

Unfortunately, in the past we have attempted to ignore or distance ourselves from people suffering from mental illness. In our region, we have addressed the problem head-on, recognizing that society suffers as much from this attitude as the mentally ill. People with mental illness are important members of our community and contribute much to our success.

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Consumer Digest

NORTH SOUND REGION MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY CONFERENCE DECEMBER 4, 2002

“All people in the North Sound Region affected by mental illness can recover. Recovery does not necessarily mean that the illness has been cured or the symptoms eliminated. Rather, recovery is a process by which a person with mental illness can recover self-esteem, self-worth, dreams, pride, choice, dignity, and life meaning.”

For stakeholders in North Sound Mental Health, the Recovery Conference is the Not-To-Miss event of the year! This annual conference is a major forum for consumers, advocates, family members, and providers. It’s also an opinion-gathering opportunity for the NSRSN Board of Directors, who begin their annual retreat immediately following the conference, and whose direction for the coming year is strongly influenced by the event.

Last year, for example, the Board went immediately into retreat, and formally endorsed the Recovery Concept, summarized as follows: *All people in the North Sound Region affected by mental illness can recover. Recovery does not necessarily mean that the illness has been cured or the symptoms eliminated. Rather, recovery is a process by which a person with mental illness can recover self-esteem, self-worth, dreams, pride, choice, dignity, and life meaning.*

If this doesn’t seem revolutionary to you, then you haven’t been involved long in public mental health systems. Not too long ago, people diagnosed with mental illness became almost non-persons. Mental health professionals and institutions assumed control and decision-making power for their clients’ lives. This didn’t change until consumers, family members, providers, and other advocates began demanding change.

Today, consumers help build their own treatment plans to fit their unique needs. Peer support is available, as well as training programs for families. There is education to help people understand their illnesses, and strength-based therapy greatly increases self-esteem. Consumer drop-in centers multiply opportunities for socialization. Many

consumers hold down jobs--and do them very well. Some are working on their college degrees. Today, mental illness means that life may be different--not that it’s over.

*Today, a diagnosis
of mental illness
means that life may
be different--not
that it’s over.*

This is what the Recovery Conference is about. It is for consumers, their families and friends, other advocates, providers, county and Tribal human services staff, law enforcers, corrections, court staff, and anyone else with a stake in mental health in the North Sound Region.

This year’s Recovery Conference is being held in Mount Vernon at the Cotton Tree Inn. Transportation to the Cotton Tree will be provided from the following pickup points: Holiday Inn on Exit 128 in Everett, Tulalip Inn in Marysville, and the Best Western Lakeway Inn in Bellingham.

We look forward to seeing you there!



Untitled 1

*How could I see the Morning,
If I hadn’t seen the Night,
And when you meet the Creator,
Would you not be surprised
If he was doe-eyed
And very, very young?*

--Kate Crawford
From **If I Played My Life**
Poems by people with schizophrenia
Kate Goldsmith, editor

Drum Beats

CIRCLES OF SUPPORT

A Workshop for Tribal Communities on Stopping and Healing Violence Against Women, by Diane Vendiola, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community Elder, and Karen Andrews, Associate Director, Skagit Valley Rape Relief and Domestic

Historically, Native American women and men fulfilled roles of equal honor and importance. For example, in the Lakota Nation, the rare man who assaulted his wife was considered insane, and barred from responsible social roles, like hunting and defense. He was shunned by other men, and could be required by his wife to leave her lodge. His own family was duty-bound to help their daughter-in-law escape his violence. Such a woman was respected for taking action to protect herself and the values of her community.

“Circles of Support” seeks a return to these historic values. Diane Vendiola and Karen Andrews presented this workshop on August 2 at Swinomish, in response to popular demand. The initial training (Year of the Tribal Generations, April, 2002) was received enthusiastically, as shared by attendee Kate Bowditch, (see “Within the Circle,” by Kate Bowditch, *Around the Sound*, July 2002). Exit interviews were unanimously positive, with such comments as “A training that meets our needs,” “Thank you for focusing on this issue in Indian Country,” and “Most important training I have attended in years.” The purpose of the workshop, says Diane, is to help Tribal human services workers and other members of Tribal communities to mobilize together against domestic violence. Sharri Dempsey, NSRSN Tribal Liaison, says, “This is one of the finest trainings we have ever sponsored. I highly recommend it.”



Diane Vendiola, CMHS Tribal Mental Health Coordinator, and Elder, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community.

To arrange this training for your Tribal community, call Sharri Dempsey at 360-416-7013.



Another Statistic

I don't wanna be another statistic,
Some suicidal teen
Who makes the choice to kill herself
When the world just seems too mean.
She can't go on with her life
Or so to her it seems.
Reality has fallen short
And so have many of her dreams.

I don't wanna be another statistic -
Some stereotypical teen.
I'm gonna make a difference.
I'll start with my dreams.
I won't end up pregnant,
On drugs or dead.
I won't drop out of school
Because I'll use my head!!

Copyright 2002, Heather Marie Williams

POEMS FROM INDIAN COUNTRY

Thirteen-year-old Heather Williams, a Puyallup Tribal member residing at Nooksack, is Around the Sound's newest poet. Great work, Heather! We look forward to hearing more from you!

Don't Be A Coward

Don't be a coward, fearful and weak.
Be the last one to quit, and the first one to speak.
Don't hide your face from the light of day.
Be courageous in life and stay that way.
No need to run from trials, troubles, and problems.
Have confidence in your step as you reflect how to solve them.
Yet if you happen to fall, don't lie there and die,
Get up without a thought, and hold your
Head up high.
Be wise, courageous, strong and brave,
And life will be worth living, from your
Birth to your grave.

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Spotlight on Recovery



**RECOVERY
IN ACTION!**

Jere LaFollette
Chief Executive Officer, APN

The principles of Recovery are not new in the North Sound Region. Consumers and advocates, the NSRSN, counties, and providers are working together to expand alternatives and opportunities. Here's what's going on, even as you read:

- *The Rainbow Center* in Bellingham is a consumer-operated clubhouse for consumers, sponsored by the Whatcom Counseling & Psychiatric Clinic. Drop in for lunch and introduce yourself.
- *Cookie Creations* in Clinton is a consumer-owned and operated bakery business, supported by Island Mental Health. Cookie Creations is the home of the best cookies in the land, bar none! Standing accounts include the Eli Lily Foundation, Jeff Nelson (Mariners Pitcher), and the NSRSN. On Whidbey Island, they're available through Star Store, Langley; Payless Foods, Freeland; Prairie Center Family Grocer, Coupeville; Soccer Center at Camp Casey, and various espresso stands and food marts. Everywhere else, you can order your cookies by calling 360-341-4226.
- *Alchemy Upholstery*, Oak Harbor, is another very successful consumer-owned and operated business, supported through Island Mental Health. "They do beautiful work," says Mike Page,

NSRSN Quality Specialist from Island County and satisfied Alchemy customer. If you've been thinking of having a chair or sofa recovered, call 360-679-0507 for an estimate.

- *The "Farm Project."* Next spring, when you're trying to find out what vegetable seeds grow best in Skagit Valley, that information will be available, thanks to a group of volunteers from Community Mental Health. They've joined the Washington State University Agricultural Experiment Station in Mount Vernon to make this project possible.
- *The Supported Education Program* at Skagit Valley College helps consumers go back to school and pursue college degrees. For more information, call 360-416-7705.
- *The Bailey Center* in Snohomish County, supported by Compass Health, provides a hot breakfast and lunch for consumers, with food prepared with the help of volunteer consumer chefs.
- *The Educational Resource Center* in Marysville offers classes on job preparation and resume writing. The Educational Resource Center is supported by Compass Health.
- *The Edmonds Consumer Group* members are publishing their own newsletter, using computers for skill building and professional results.

The nation-wide Recovery movement is moving in the North Sound Region. Look for more, exciting programs and opportunities designed to help people with mental illnesses find opportunities for employment, socialization, and life enrichment right here at home.



The Poison of Stigma

The stigma of mental illness is real, painful, and damaging.

Stigma discourages people from getting help.

Stigma keeps people from getting good jobs and advancing in the workplace, despite the legal protections of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Stigma leads to fear, mistrust, and violence.

Stigma results in prejudice and discrimination.

Stigma results in inadequate insurance coverage.

From the USDH Center for Mental Health Services web site at <http://www.mentalhealth.org/publications/allpubs/SMA96-3118/>

Voice of the Advocate



"Dream Castles" by Grace Marshall of Bellingham, Winner 2002 Ombuds Poster Contest Winner

Annual Ombuds Mental Health Poster Contest: "What Gives Me Hope"

Shirley Conger and Chuck Davis, Mental Health Ombuds for the North Sound Region, sponsor this annual contest to help combat the stigma of mental illness. The finished posters also help publicize the fact that people with mental illness are recovering. They hasten to add, "This doesn't necessarily mean the illness is cured or that symptoms vanish. It *does* mean that a person with a mental illness can recover self-esteem, self-worth, dreams, pride, choice, dignity, and life meaning."

To get on the Poster mailing list, send a *written* request to:

POSTERS, North Sound RSN
117 N. First Street, Suite 8,
Mount Vernon WA 98273

You may also send your request via email: posters@nsrsn.org

Please mention whether you want the 2001 poster, the 2002 poster-- or both.



THE BATTLE AGAINST STIGMA Ten Ways to Fight

1. **Go Beyond Stereotypes.** Recognize that a diagnosis of mental illness tells little about the person. A label doesn't tell us about a person's specific symptoms or potential for recovery, temperament, character, accomplishments, creativity, intelligence, or capacity for friendships.
2. **Learn More About Mental Illnesses.** The better informed we are, the better we are able to reject inaccurate negative stereotypes. Begin by visiting the web sites of the National Mental Health Information Center, <http://www.mentalhealth.org>, and the National Institute of Mental Health, <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>.
3. **Learn About Prejudice and Discrimination.** A good place to start is a book, *Telling Is Risky Business*, by Otto F. Wahl. Visit Dr. Wahl's web site for a resource list: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~owahl/INDEX.HTM>. The Anti-Stigma Home Page, <http://community-2.webtv.net/stigmanet> also lists links to many organizations that fight stigma.
4. **Listen to People Who Have Experienced Mental Illness.** Learn from firsthand accounts how psychiatric vulnerabilities affect people's lives. On the Web, use Google Search to find "stories about mental illnesses."
5. **Monitor the Media and Respond to Stigmatizing Material.** Work to change the negative ways people with mental illness are portrayed in films, television shows, and sensationalized news reports that reach huge audiences daily. Write or email the responsible editor, film maker, TV producer and sponsor. Call 1-800-789-2647 for a free handbook, "Challenging Stereotypes" (SAMSHA publication #SMA 01-3513).
6. **Speak Up About Harmful Language.** When someone you know misuses a psychiatric term, tactfully correct the inaccuracy and educate them about the correct meaning. When someone tells a joke that ridicules, or makes disrespectful comments about a person with mental illness, let them know that this is hurtful and that such comments are offensive and off limits.
7. **Re-Examine Common Terms and Expressions.** Most of us, including mental health professionals, thoughtlessly use disrespectful, prejudicial terms and slang expressions. For example, we should not label an individual by a diagnosis (i.e., "a schizophrenic").
8. **Talk Openly About Mental Illnesses.** The more mental illnesses remain hidden, the more people believe they are shameful and need to be concealed. Help others see beyond stereotypes and accept people who have mental health needs as valued friends, neighbors, and coworkers.
9. **Support Organizations that Fight Stigma.** The effectiveness of organizations advocating better treatment and greater acceptance depends, to some extent, on the support of the mental health community and the concerned public.
10. **Demand Change from Your Elected Representatives.** Policies that perpetuate prejudice and discrimination can be changed if enough people let their public officials know they want such change. Keep informed on key mental health issues and policies, and voice your concern and protest to government officials.

From The Anti-Stigma Home Page, National Stigma Clearinghouse Web:

<http://community.webtv.net/stigmanet>.



North Sound RSN News



MICHAEL S. WHITE **Employee of the Quarter, April - June, 2002**

On a consistent basis, Michael sets aside his own important tasks to fill the technological support needs of the staff. These requests sometimes come in the shape of panicked pleas for help accompanied by tears, as well as those requests made when an employee is ready to throw a shoe at the computer monitor. In addition to all duties related to his title of NSRSN webmaster, Michael has a keen understanding of statistics, databases, and information included in client records. He is able to pull valuable reports for other NSRSN departments, and has been a key resource in the acquisition and implementation of the new software system. The NSRSN is fortunate to have Michael as a team member.

Note: Michael S. White is also the sole recipient of the coveted NSRSN Knight in Shining Armor Award "for unstinting generosity with great technological knowledge and skill; for consistently coming to the rescue of damsels in distress; for routinely dropping everything to help; for never patronizing those with less technical expertise; for kindness, sympathy, understanding, and daily chivalry above and beyond the call of duty."



Island County Commissioner Michael Shelton: Confronting Stigma, continued from page 1.

Distance needs to give way to embrace. Fear needs to give way to understanding. Acceptance needs to replace rejection.

In the past ten years we have made great strides forward in this region. How do I know? Because of the transformation in me.

Ignorance creates unwarranted fear. It is important for us to build upon the great start we've made in eliminating the stigma associated with mental illness, not only for the benefit of those with the disease, but also for society in general. Those of us who have committed ourselves to this goal need to reach out to those around us.

Many people with decision-making roles in mental health have never involved themselves with the mentally ill.

Many times I have testified before the legislature about the needs of the

*We are moving in the
right direction, and
the only thing that will
stop us is
lack of resolve.*

RSN, often without success. This is partly because the funding formulas for

the system are so complicated that few people understand them. Perhaps even more important, however, is that most people don't understand that the system is designed to allow people to live productive lives in their communities rather than miserable existences in hospitals.

It is not enough to educate ourselves. Instead, we must change society's attitudes, especially among those who make decisions and allocate resources.

We are moving in the right direction, and the only thing that will stop us is lack of resolve.



Classifieds

The Bad News: 1 person in 4 will have a serious mental illness.

The Good News: Today people are RECOVERING!

For help, call toll-free: 1-888-693-7200.

Las Malas Noticias: 1 persona entre 4 tendrá una enfermedad mental seria.

Las Buenas Noticias: ¡ Hoy la gente SE RECUPERA!

Si necesita ayuda llame gratis al 1-888-693-7200.



S-t-r-e-t-c-h mental health dollars! Get your issue of *Around the Sound* at our Web Site: <http://nsrsn.org>

To get on or off our hard copy mailing list, call 360-416-7013.

Confidentially, how satisfied are you?



| Meeting/Event | October | November | December |
|---|---------|---|----------|
| NSRSN Advisory Board Tue. 11/12, 1:00 PM | | Tue. 10/15, 1:00 PM Tue. 12/3, 1:00 PM | |
| NSRSN Board of Directors rs 11/14, 1:30 PM | | Thurs. 10/24, 1:30 PM Thurs. 12/5, 1:30 PM | |
| Toll-Free 800-684-3555 ❖ Fax 360-416-7017 TTY 360-419-9008 | | | |
| Island County MH Advisory Board Mon. 11/19, 10 AM | | Mon. 10/7, 10 AM | |

We're **YOUR** Ombuds, Free and Confidential, and **WE'RE LISTENING!**



Complaints?

We're listening!

If you aren't satisfied with the public mental health services you get in Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, or Whatcom County, contact Ombuds today!

North Sound Ombuds

117 North First Street, Suite 8
Mount Vernon WA 98273
Toll-Free 888-336-6164 ❖ Fax 360-416-7020
TTY 360-419-9008

We're **YOUR** Ombuds,
Free and Confidential,
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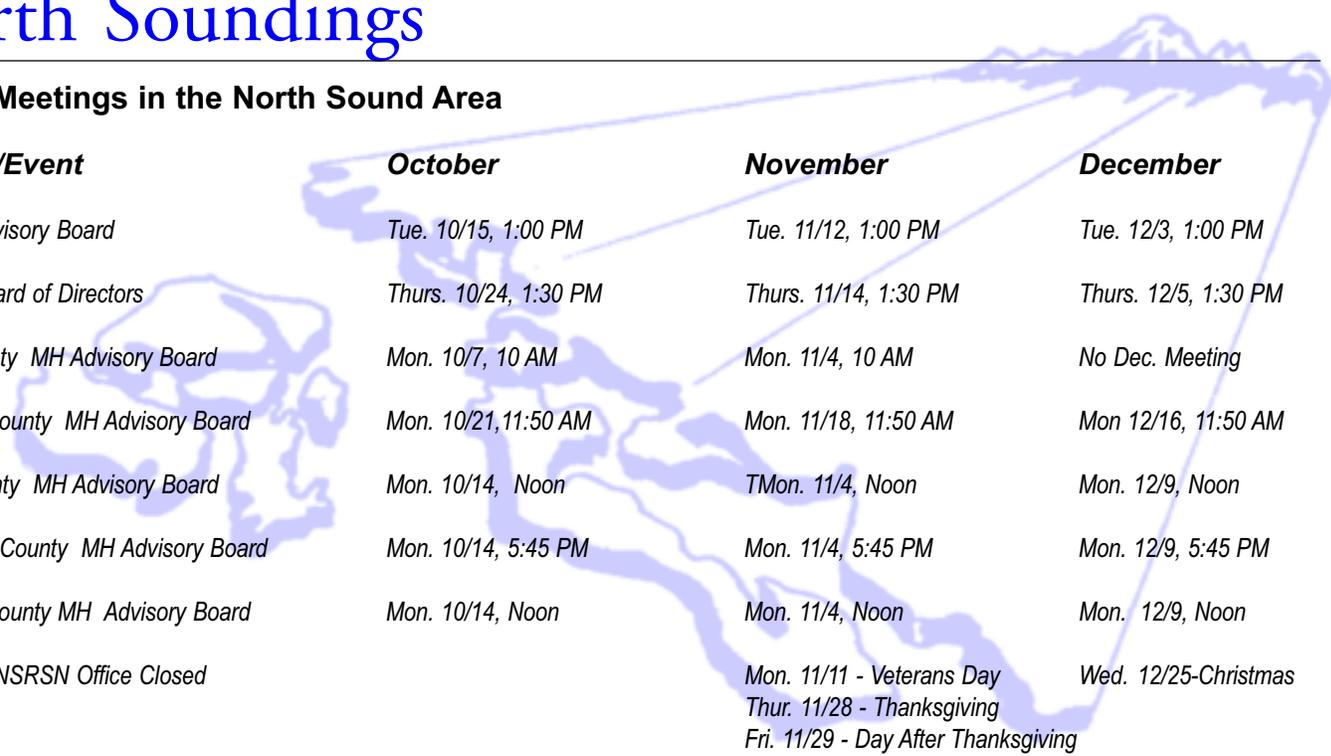
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North Soundings

Public Meetings in the North Sound Area



| Meeting/Event | October | November | December |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|----------------------|
| NSRSN Advisory Board | Tue. 10/15, 1:00 PM | Tue. 11/12, 1:00 PM | Tue. 12/3, 1:00 PM |
| NSRSN Board of Directors | Thurs. 10/24, 1:30 PM | Thurs. 11/14, 1:30 PM | Thurs. 12/5, 1:30 PM |
| Island County MH Advisory Board | Mon. 10/7, 10 AM | Mon. 11/4, 10 AM | No Dec. Meeting |
| San Juan County MH Advisory Board | Mon. 10/21, 11:50 AM | Mon. 11/18, 11:50 AM | Mon 12/16, 11:50 AM |
| Skagit County MH Advisory Board | Mon. 10/14, Noon | TMon. 11/4, Noon | Mon. 12/9, Noon |
| Snohomish County MH Advisory Board | Mon. 10/14, 5:45 PM | Mon. 11/4, 5:45 PM | Mon. 12/9, 5:45 PM |
| Whatcom County MH Advisory Board | Mon. 10/14, Noon | Mon. 11/4, Noon | Mon. 12/9, Noon |
| Holidays – NSRSN Office Closed | | Mon. 11/11 - Veterans Day Thur. 11/28 - Thanksgiving Fri. 11/29 - Day After Thanksgiving | Wed. 12/25-Christmas |

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