



Jefferson Center
for mental health

Community Connection



Welcome to Spring!

As we observe the first anniversary of the federal health care reform law, we still face many unknowns. But one thing I do know, it is that we continue to work hard to make sure that mental health is included as an integral part of health care reform. On page 3 you will read a story of a father of two children with mental illness and how important mental health services were to keeping their family together. Most of us know someone who will be affected by a mental health issue this year—a neighbor, sibling, spouse or co-worker. When treatment is not accessible, we all pay through higher hospital costs leading to higher insurance rates, increased homelessness, more jails and lives lost to suicide.

May is Mental Health Month. We applaud the efforts around the country to increase awareness and provide education and services to those with mental health needs. At Jefferson Center we will continue these efforts through the programs we provide, services we offer, and community collaborations we build, beyond May and throughout the rest of the year.

Harriet Hall, PhD



With daylight savings comes longer days and the feeling for renewal and new beginnings. Such a treat to put behind us the dark, cold days of winter and look ahead to longer days and warm nights. Just step outside, take a big breathe of fresh Colorado air, and observe the bright pink blossoms of the Red Buds and the yellow daffodils poking through the soil.

May is Mental Health Month, which began in 1949. We've come a long way but still have work to do. One of the themes for May is Mental Health Month is "Do More for 1 in 4", which is a call to action for Americans to help the 1 in 4 adults who are living with a diagnosable, treatable mental health condition. The other theme is "Live Well! It's Essential for Your Potential". This theme encompasses the notion of balance in one's life among the mental, physical and emotional elements of health.

And what better time of year to Live Well than spring time! In addition to the spring cleaning you might be doing (or thinking about) in your home and garden, it's a wonderful time to do some spring cleaning of your own mind, body and spirit. Now's the time to take a walk, reconnect with friends and neighbors who have been hibernating all winter, and even try something new – maybe plant some flower pots, take a class or enroll in that program you have been thinking about for several months. With a new season comes new adventures. Take advantage of this time.

At Jefferson Center, we are kicking off May is Mental Health Month with our spring benefit, A Night at the Aquarium, on April 12th. Be sure to join us!

We'll look forward to seeing you there.

A Night at the
Aquarium
A BENEFIT FOR JEFFERSON CENTER
FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Tuesday, April 12, 2011
5:30 ~ 8:30 PM

Downtown Aquarium
700 Water Street, Denver

For more details:
(303) 432-5144
or visit www.jcmh.org

Cultural Competency: Celebrating the Journey

As our community's demographics become increasingly diverse, so do the demographics of Jefferson Center's client base. Last year an estimated 22% of our clients were Hispanic/Latino and 22% were non-Caucasian. Being responsive to the changing needs of those who turn to us is an integral part of our mission. Four years ago Jefferson Center began a focused effort to identify and reduce health disparities and create an organizational culture of increased awareness of, and respect for, cultural differences which enables the best, most appropriate care. This is reflected in the values statement adopted by the Jefferson Center Board of Directors: *"We embrace the diversity in our community and are committed to providing culturally and linguistically competent services."*

While we recognize that cultural competency is an ongoing journey, Jefferson Center's Cultural Competency Task Force (funded in part by the Colorado Trust, Equality in Healthcare Initiative) is proud of our accomplishments so far.

The Task Force is now developing strategies to infuse cultural competency throughout the organization and continue to attract and retain a diverse workforce. We hope that through this work Jefferson Center will become an even more valuable resource to our community in supporting mental health and wellness!

- Increased the number of bilingual clinical staff members and developed an agency-wide language policy
- Reviewed and modified numerous organizational policies to further institutionalize cultural competency
- Heightened awareness of cultural competency, health disparities, and the role of culture in a treatment setting and provided extensive staff training
- Translated all critical client materials into Spanish
- Increased community outreach efforts and interagency collaboration
- Improved signage and other changes within our physical office environments to make them more welcoming and inclusive

March Admissions... Demand continues to grow

The record demand for services initiated with the economic downturn continues into 2011. At the half-way point through the month of March, Jefferson Center had opened 276 new clients. When March data is complete, we estimate 529 new clients will be opened to Jefferson Center, which will shatter the previous record of 482 set in January 2011. We have never reached the 500 monthly admission thresholds before, but it seems a virtual certainty for March.

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Volunteer Spotlight – Millie DeSmet



Millie DeSmet

As an SPC, volunteers make personal visits to up to three seniors every other week or more, as needed or requested, while continuing to meet with other SPC's and a staff clinician for supervision.

Practically a full-time volunteer now, bringing her expertise as a CPA to numerous non-profit organizations and boards, Millie states that she especially enjoys the opportunity to help Jefferson Center clients directly. With a special heart for children and others in need, Millie has found that the seniors she meets with every other week are impacted greatly by the fact that someone simply expresses concern for them by visiting them, listening to them talk about everyday issues, and befriending them. Aware of her own vitality and good health at 70 years of age, Millie expresses her attitude that, "There, but for the grace of God go I."

Making sense of mental illness: A stepfather's perspective

When I married in 2006, I became a parent of a 21 and 19 year old; both of my new "step-adults" were afflicted with mental illness. Starting a new marriage, becoming a parent for the first time, and adjusting to a life of the illogic of mental illness was a daunting undertaking.

Friends and family questioned if I knew what I was getting myself into? Of course not! However, they didn't know my new wife and kids the way I did. The sweetest family one could have. I thank God for them regularly.

I was 17 when my oldest brother committed suicide. He had never been properly diagnosed, as we couldn't get him to a psychiatrist. Life was difficult for me, not only as a teen in high school, but also being the target of threats and his oppressive presence. His death relieved a massive oppression in the house, but was a terrible loss. I miss him daily.

Twenty-seven years later, I felt the same sort of suffocating presence in our new household. It's hard to comprehend the thoughts and decision-making processes of a mentally ill person, especially a family member that you live with. Home life was stable, but I was continually amazed at how self-absorbed mental and emotional illness can make someone.

Prior to our marriage, my wife found Jefferson Center. She attended their classes while her son was in and out of hospitals. Since he had finally been properly diagnosed and medicated, he was accepted into their program. It was a "God-send!" Jefferson Center provided the possibility for him to live away from home and work his way to independence. The housing program allowed him to grow as he moved through the system and learned to survive, live and grow into everyday life. They provided a structured, loving environment with access to caring professionals who wanted him to succeed.

"Jefferson Center has provided my family hope that our children may one day live typical lifestyles."

He is taking classes and works part time. Jefferson Center continues to work with him, providing the support he needs. He isn't "through the woods" yet, but he is beginning to flourish.

With our son's success, Jefferson Center also accepted our daughter into their program. She has moved into her first residential home. Jefferson Center provides counseling and programs that help her learn to cope with life's everyday pressures. Jefferson Center works closely with her doctor to try and properly balance medications, so she can still be creative and productive.

Living with mental illness, or a mentally ill person is difficult at best. It requires patience and most of all love. Our family bonded and loved, and Jefferson Center made this possible. For that I am eternally grateful. Jefferson Center has provided my family hope that our children may one day live typical lifestyles. Without their resources and programs I'm not sure where our family would be. They have woven logic into an illogical environment.

"Mental illness doesn't just affect those afflicted... it also effects family and friends."



**PUTT
your
STUFF**
for Mental Health

Benefitting *Jefferson Center for Mental Health*

Save the date

July 14, 2011 • 5:00 – 9:00 pm
Putter's Pride
3604 S Kipling Street Denver, CO 80235



Help support mental health services for community members who are uninsured or lack adequate coverage for mental health treatment.

Give a tax-deductible gift to Jefferson Center today at www.jcmh.org.



Search for Jefferson Center for Mental Health and become a fan!



Sign up to receive Center communications by email. Just click on the Going Green link at www.jcmh.org.

Volunteer at Jefferson Center!

**Do you want to make a difference in people's lives?
Are you looking for a way to give back to the community?
Would you like to find a place to share your skills and talents?**

A growing number of volunteer opportunities, both short-term and ongoing, exist for you to contribute your time, talent and experience. Volunteers offer valuable services to the Center such as mentoring youth, providing transportation, helping with special events and much more. You can even create a volunteer position that utilizes your unique interests and skills!

**Contact Mary Jo Starmer, Volunteer & Intern Coordinator,
at (303) 432-5124 or maryjos@jcmh.org.**

Audiences Wanted!

We are pleased to share our resources and knowledge to further the mental health of our community – at civic clubs, church groups, schools, and other organizations in our area.

Our Speakers Bureau provides timely information on a wide range of mental health topics by mental health therapists, executives and other experts in the field.

It's our way of saying "thanks" to our community for more than 50 years of involvement and support!

**For more information or to arrange a speaker, contact
(303) 432-5178 or e-mail normajean@jcmh.org.**



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