



# CONTACT: WINGS ACROSS ALABAMA

“One person can have a profound effect on another. And two people... well, two people can work miracles. They can change a whole town. They can change the whole world.”

- Diane Frovlov & Andrew Schneider

Spring 2009

Volume 4 Number 2

### IMPORTANT DATES

- April 28–30—The 17th Annual Recovery Conference at Shocco Springs.
- August 24–28 —WRAP Facilitator Training.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

The Director’s Message	2
The Art of Forgiveness	2
The President’s Message	3
Stand Up for Mental Health Participants	3
Life is Wonderful	3
From One Storm to Another	4

Thank you to Yvonne Jones, William Ruff, and Hazel Moore for helping with the Board Retreat at Camp ASCCA.

## Laughter can change the world... One chuckle at a time.

During the last week of January, Contact: Wings Across Alabama hosted two comedians from Stand Up for Mental Health. Their visit from Canada was part of our participation in the Campaign for Mental Health Recovery. This program is designed to reduce the negative perceptions associated with a mental health diagnosis for 18 to 25 adults.

Alex Winstanley and Kim Van Dyk are two young men with schizophrenia who have been trained by counselor and comic David Granirer to reduce the stigma associated with mental health diagnoses through stand up comedy. Mr. Granirer uses stand up comedy as a form of therapy to build self-confidence and self-esteem for people who have received a mental health diagnosis.

Alex and Kim gave stand up comedy routines, as well as their

recovery stories. A question and answer session followed the programs. Performances were held at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, the University of Alabama, and Troy University. All three events were attended mostly by students, but faculty, staff, and consumers also attended.

The student counseling centers with each university were invaluable partners in helping us organize and promote these events. We would like to thank Susan Hart, Lee Keyes, and Fran Scheel for their hard work and commitment to make these events a

reality. We would also like to thank the mental health organizations that participated in the Recovery Fair. Twenty organizations or agencies participated in at least one of the three events. Their assistance was invaluable in educating attendees about available services.



Kim Van Dyk & Alex Winstanley during the question and answer session.



From the Director:  
Ronald Hunt

Well, Spring has arrived, and I must say that I am not too sad to say goodbye to Old Man Winter. I am thrilled that the sun is shining, the day are growing longer, and the flowers are blooming.

This time of year is also a time when our movement begins to take root and

show progress. We all enjoy the Recovery Conference that leads into May, which is Mental Health Awareness Month. This year we will have national consumer advocate Larry Fricks educate us about health and wellness. We simply must learn that taking responsibility for our lives includes taking responsibility for our physical health, as well as our mental health. As this year's conference theme states, we must "Thrive and not just survive."

I challenge each of you to set a goal for your personal well-being. A better diet, more exercise, and quitting smoking are all examples of goals we could set. Then, seek out other people who are interested in accomplishing similar goals. Together we can move mountains, but remember it starts with a shovel of dirt.

## The Art of Forgiveness

Forgiveness, Spiritual Forgiveness, Forgiving Others, Forgiving Ourselves...What are these and what are some of the basic components they entail? Why should we forgive? Why is it important and how does that help us, as consumers' recover? Why is forgiveness a gift? How long does it take? Is it supposed to be easy to forgive? What about forgiving and forgetting? How can we learn from forgiving? Sometimes we have to ask for forgiveness and sometimes we have to give it.

Examples and discussions of the above questions will be explored at a concurrent workshop led by Wings Board member Sara Parfait during the Recovery Conference. Personal experiences of forgiveness and how helpful, yet hard, giving or receiving forgiveness can be will be shared by workshop presenters. Time will be allotted for questions at the end of the presentation. A folder on the topic of forgiveness will be given to each attendee.

Check out [www.wingsalabama.org](http://www.wingsalabama.org)

### Membership Application

Mail completed application to:

**Contact: *Wings Across Alabama***  
**PO Box 211286 Montgomery, AL 36121**

**Phone: 1-888-WINGSAL**

Phone: 334-395-7616 Fax: 334-395-7618

E-mail: [rghwings@bellsouth.net](mailto:rghwings@bellsouth.net)

### Become a Member of *WINGS*

We need your help to grow. You are an important part of our team. *WINGS* success depends upon combining the strength of consumers and other supporters throughout Alabama. Together, we are more effective, efficient, and powerful. We need everyone's participation to achieve our mission. We invite you to become part of an organization that appreciates what you have to offer. Consumers on disability can join for \$2.00. Those not on disability can join for \$10.00, and non-consumers can join for \$20.00.

Membership Form—Check One	Dues	
<input type="checkbox"/> Consumer on Disability	\$2.00	Name _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Consumer Not on Disability	\$10.00	Address _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Consumer	\$20.00	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Organization	\$50.00	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Donation	\$	Phone Number _____
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$</b> _____	Signature _____

We want to thank the University Counseling & Wellness Center at UAB, the University Counseling Center at the University of Alabama, and the Save Project/Counseling Center of Troy University for partnering with us on the Campaign for Mental Health Recovery.



From the  
President:  
Ann Jenkins

Recently, as I was being admitted to Gadsden Regional Hospital for physical health problems, my son, granddaughter and I shared a forgotten memory of another

visit to this hospital 15 years ago... for mental illness.

As the nurse asked the routine questions, she asked if I had ever had a heart attack. I said *no*, but my granddaughter said yes. We looked at her dumbfounded, and asked, "When?" She said when I was a patient here last time. At that time, she was 9 or 10 years old. I looked at my son, and it looked like a light bulb went off in his head. He said he and his wife had told her I was in the hospital because of my heart.

As memories returned, I thought of the anti-stigma events Wings recently did and how we are trying to break the cycle of stigma that surrounds mental illness. We were well received at some of the universities, and I will say that if we only reached one person at each

location, it was a success. Those people who learned that it is okay to have a mental illness and not be ashamed of it made the hard work we did seem worthwhile.

From this trip to the hospital, I learned a valuable lesson again. Mental illness never really goes away, and when you try to hide it, at some point it comes back to bite you in the butt.

The nurse asking the questions was very kind and gentle until we agreed I had not had a heart attack. When she discovered I was there 15 years ago for mental illness, her attitude changed. She questioned me about my MI meds. She asked whether I was taking them and whether I had symptoms. She asked these questions many times. I did not mind the questions as much as the way she treated me. She became distant and at times harsh. She no longer acted like a "wonderful caring" aid giver, but a person who seemed as if she could catch mental illness just by being near me. Stigma is alive and well.

There is an ending to this story. As I talked to my son and granddaughter about mental illness, I learned that my granddaughter and her friends thought I was just an eccentric, funny lady anyway.

**We want to welcome Robert Hermes, Hazel Moore & William Ruff to the Board of Directors.**

### Thank you for participating at the Recovery Fair(s) associated with the Stand Up for Mental Health comedy events:

- Eastside Mental Health Center
- JBS Mental Health Center
- Fellowship House
- Piper Place Day Program
- Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program
- Visionary Guild for Mentally Ill Artists
- Project Health
- The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance of Tuscaloosa
- NAMI-Tuscaloosa
- Mental Health America in Tuscaloosa County
- Community Mental Health Task Force
- Indian Rivers Mental Health Center
- North Harbor Psychiatric Pavilion
- Social Work Association for Cultural Awareness
- Whatley Health Services
- NAMI-Wiregrass

#### Life is Wonderful

There will be brighter days	Envy the flowers As they bloom
Do not frown	Look for the good
See, Spring is coming	In your moment of gloom.
Stop looking down.	
Watch the weather change	If you can see the beauty
Feel it warm	Then you will know
See the sun shine	Life is wonderful
Enjoy the storm.	And there is a heavenly glow.

Gina N.

**MISSION STATEMENT :**

**CONTACT: WINGS ACROSS ALABAMA IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION FOR CONSUMERS OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES WITH A DEDICATION TO MAKING POSITIVE CHANGE IN THE LIVES OF CONSUMERS THROUGH EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, TRAINING, SERVICES, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AS WELL AS THROUGH BUILDING A STRONG NETWORK OF CONSUMERS ACROSS ALABAMA WITH THE RECOGNITION THAT INCLUSION, PEER SUPPORT, TRUE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION, SELF-EMPOWERMENT, AND QUALITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ARE KEY INGREDIENTS TO RECOVERY.**

## From One Storm to Another

By Hazel Moore (New Board Member from Region I)

We were all excited about going to Camp ASCCA for the Board Retreat during the last weekend in February. We wanted to get some work done and have some fun by just being with each other.

However, it wasn't in our agenda to be in front of a tornado on Friday. It was raining so hard that it was hard for us to drive. When we pulled in the parking lot at Greil Hospital, the tornado sirens were going off. We hurried inside. Ann Jenkins gave the recovery presentation to consumers at the hospital. We stayed until the storm had passed, and it was safe for us to leave.

Our time frame was shot. We didn't get anywhere on time. However, we finally made it to the camp. It was a long day, but we were in good company. That made it okay.

On Saturday, the weather was great. We did have a morning shower, but then the sun came out. It turned out to be a pretty day. However, as the day went on, the temperature dropped pretty fast, and the weatherman said it was going to snow.

Sara Parfait wanted it to snow, and her prayers were answered. An early riser woke the rest of us on Sunday morning with the announcement, "It's snowing." It started with flurries and turned into a snow storm.

So there we were driving home in a snow storm. It doesn't matter how the best plans are made; they can sure be changed. So that is why I shared this story; we went from one storm to another.

*P.S. The Board got a lot of work done as well.*

Return Service Requested

Montgomery, AL 36121-0286  
P.O. Box 211286



Larry Fricks will speak at the Recovery Conference that will be held April 28-30 at Shooco Springs.

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage Paid  
Montgomery, AL  
Permit No. 257