



## Hope

The last couple of months have been exciting and optimistic for the Wings' office. In January, Charles Willis and Sherry Jenkins Tucker from Georgia Consumer Network trained seven Wings' representatives in WRAP facilitation. The tools provided in the Wellness Recovery Action Plan have proven to be a vital tool in a successful recovery. Charles and Sherry are both a wealth of knowledge and we are extremely thankful for their time and support. Not only is it important to have the proper tools for recovery, but acceptance and hope for a brighter future are essential. Listed in the newsletter is an article on our Huntsville affiliate, Our Place. The article demonstrates just how effective fellowship and support is to consumers. Sister Lucindia Claghorn also speaks out on behalf of consumers regarding the stigma associated with mental illness. With everyone involved in the Wings' community, we hope to provide a brighter future for consumers.

We are always grateful to our members, board members, & staff. Without you, our mission would not be possible.

*Understanding is the first step to acceptance, and only with acceptance can there be recovery.*

*~Joanne Kathleen Rowling~*

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## Our Place Drop-In Center



Pictured above is Darlene Berry, Executive Director for Our Place. Darlene serves as Secretary to the Executive Board of Directors for Wings Across Alabama. Darlene has been a dedicated board member since January 2010. She has a strong compassion for consumers and is an asset to our organization.



Our Place Drop-In Center



Our Place is a drop-in center where adults with chronic mental illness come together to experience peer support, socialization, and recreation in a non-clinical environment. The consumer-run drop-in center was created, incorporated, and received its 501(c)3 non-profit status during 2001. We are now located at 205 Max Luther Drive, Huntsville, AL.

Here at Our Place, we enjoy many things. Our regular schedule includes:

Mondays: sewing classes and jewelry making

Tuesdays: arts and crafts, alternating with Karaoke

Wednesdays: Book Club, in which we read a book or watch a movie that has been a book.

Thursdays: we enjoy Ball Room Dancing, a movie in the evening

Fridays: Devotion led by Keith Cook, the Chaplain for Faith and Mental Illness.

Additional activities are added as they are offered to us.

This schedule includes a daily lunch, except on Thursday's when we open later at 1:00 P.M. and share an evening meal together. We have an average of thirty participants per day. We have quarterly birthday parties, which provide birthday cards to individuals and birthday cake for all. We sing Happy Birthday also.

There are no fees charged for all this fun and we are always ready to welcome new "family members."

The following are some heart-felt words from a few of our precious participants:

- Our Place has given me friends that are similar to hang out with, when I had few or none before.
- At Our Place, I've found great friends who accept me as I am without judgment. A place to hang out and be myself. I love it!
- I have found that "Our Place" has given me a place to go to share my time with individuals who are just like me and I am grateful for having somewhere to go so I can do it.
- I receive strong peer support and positive influence from others. I get educated about my own mental illness, as well as others.
- At Our Place I found fellowship and understanding...a warm meal when I can't even decide what to eat for days on end...laughter and the freedom to talk openly about my illness to those who can relate. We sometimes take small trips that allow some form of vacation, that I would not be able to afford. Our Place works together to share information and knowledge on how to survive the tangled web of disability. Our Place is a solution to loneliness and isolation.

We look forward to meeting you soon and breaking the lonely habit of isolation.

Contributing Editors: Darlene Berry, Jan Bush, Margaret Forrest

## All Wrapped Up!

On a cool day in January, a fantastic event began in the board room of WINGS' main office in Montgomery. Seven peers gathered to absorb the concept of the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (or WRAP) formulated by Mary Ellen Copeland. With good fortune, by the end of this course they would become Nationally Certified WRAP Facilitators and Wellness Educators.

The course was exceptional due to the extensive expertise of Sherry Jenkins Tucker and Charles Willis from the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network. In fact, Sherry actually studied under the famous Mary Ellen Copeland. These two fine facilitators, trainers, and educators delivered a massive amount of information and insight in less than forty hours. Their style was effective, motivational, and highly instructive. They made a perfect teaching/training team and instilled a curiosity and hunger in each student that would lead to a complete understanding of how to maintain wellness.

All four Department of Mental Health's Regions were represented. This was intentional. Among the trainees were Ameya Scanlon, Darlene Berry, and WINGS' Executive Director Robert Hermes. Rounding out the roster were Sheila Scott, Sister Lucindia, Pat Forrest, and myself. Kim Butterbaugh and Lisa Boyles of WINGS were their usual efficient selves and they coordinated the course's logistics. WINGS ACROSS ALABAMA is beginning a state-wide initiative to deliver WRAP workshops throughout Alabama which will benefit peers and non-peers in their recovery.

Mary Ellen Copeland was a consumer troubled by mental health virtually all her life. Eventually she grew tired of repeating the hospitalizations, releases, and out-patient treatments, followed by another hospitalization. She became convinced that the knowledge of many souls could be compiled and shared, perhaps finding similarities and correlations among those interviewed, and thereby, common solutions might be identified.

Mary Ellen succeeded. She, friends, and associates developed the Wellness Recovery Action Plan. It is an evidence-based program, proven effective by years of study.

Why is it important to create a WRAP? The plan offers an array of options to maintain wellness at its highest level for the longest possible time, regardless of our health problems. Whether we have high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, or other illness, WRAP affords a technique that can benefit every individual. Maintaining wellness and improving recovery rates is the target. Health costs are reduced and productivity increased. Self-esteem is heightened and positive goals are reached.

One key is taking responsibility for your own health, your wellness, your Self. In other words, SELF-RESPONSIBILITY. Each WRAP, self-created by each individual, is unique and customized to what that peer wants to do and not do. Each is customized to maintain the peer's health, and how best to recover it should a rough patch be encountered. It enables you to take charge of your life. The process is both motivational and inspirational.

WINGS is taking an active role in spreading WRAP, a program designed by peers for peers. A program coming soon to a community near you. If you wish to learn more about WRAP, call the WINGS' office.

Nine people in a room, all working for a common goal as an essential element of the current consumer movement. All networking, bonding, becoming one team and establishing close friendships, glad to be part of the opportunity, each with their own special skills to offer. Seven peers and two dynamite instructors.

Good times.

William R. Ruff, CWF, CPS



Pictured above is William Ruff, CWF, CPS. William is very active and valuable in the mental health community. Thank you William for this wonderful article. This was an amazing week!



Pictured back row from left, Ameya Scanlon, Robert Hermes, William Ruff, Sheila Scott, & Charles Willis. Front row from left, Sister Lucindia Claghorn, Pat Forrest, Darlene Berry, and Sherry Jenkins Tucker.



Pictured above are Sherry Jenkins Tucker and Charles Willis from the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network.

## From The Executive Director Recovery

What exactly is recovery? In my job I see it all the time, but it's hard to nail down even still. These are some things that I see when we say someone is in recovery: hope, purpose, and meaningful relationships.

Let me tell you that I have experienced some of the worst days of my life without these things. I spent long hours either in day treatment or holed up in my apartment staring at the walls. I had long thought that my life was over when I was diagnosed. I was taught to be compliant and the only thing I had to do was to take my medication and stay out of trouble. While these are essential to maintaining a balance that stopped me from being badly affected from any symptoms it left me kind of dead inside. The big difference in my life was when I saw people who had a mental health diagnosis who were doing things with zeal and a happiness that I thought was unattainable. It took me years but I started to notice these people who would pass through. They passed through but I knew that they were headed for better things.

I had a chance to become friends with one such person and continued to watch and listen. This person became a peer specialist so he stayed around me for a long time. It was the fact that he did not accept what I had accepted and that he was not afraid to reach out to others and talk about his mental health. I say "mental health" because he was always talking about overcoming the loss and stigma he had experienced not dwelling on the bad stuff.

He had a purpose in life and that was consistent with what he must have done at one point in his life. He must have thought that despair and loneliness was not the default lifestyle of someone with a mental illness, but knew the joy of everyday life. With his friendship and a little hope, I emulated him. I engaged others and I look for opportunities when all I knew was failure. I learned to accept myself. With this I learned that everything was not as dire as I had imagined. I reflected back on some things I had done and some people I had known and rediscovered that my past was not as bad as I thought. The light was beginning to dawn. Soon I was looking for more. Recovery is like a virus; once you catch it, it overtakes your life.

I soon found that I was volunteering. It was difficult to battle those inner demons of negativity and doubt. People, even if they knew nothing of mental illness, were great to be around and even fun. I began to relax and not think that I was going to relapse and lose control. Having something to do everyday sort of got me out of myself and I wanted to participate even more. Joy is seeing someone come out of their shell and look at the world in a different and affirming way. It had always amazed me when I entered into recovery. It took a long time and there were plenty of bumps in the road, but well worth it.

Your story may not be my story, but watch, look, and listen for those people that like to engage others in dialogues about their stories. Our community's wellness is based on getting people who are in recovery out there telling their stories. That is the way we become whole and connected. That is the way our community grows, from stories that impact people in a profound way that inspire and make us think differently.

Robert Hermes

## Sister Lucindia's Letter to the Editor



I was very saddened to hear of the shooting of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords of Arizona. My heart goes out to her family, friends, staff, and to the victims of this tragedy. There are no words to express the deep pain that those people feel. This act of senseless violence is further compounded by the fact that the perpetrator, Mr. Loughner may have suffered from a major mental illness. Unfortunately, many members of the general public often equate major mental illness with violence. This unwanted stigma attached to mental illness is perpetuated. With proper medication and treatment: major mental illness can be controlled and managed, in the same way diabetes can be managed. I know this fact from my own personal experience. I have Schizophrenia. I have been treated for forty years at AltaPointe. During that time period, I have graduated from the University of South Alabama, Cum Laude. Since graduation, I have become a valuable community volunteer. I have received the 2007 Clifford W. Beers Award for Mental Health America and the 2009 Heart of Gold Award for Volunteer of Mobile. I know, from first hand data, that a person with a major mental illness with proper medication and treatment can lead a normal life.

Thank You!

Sister Lucindia Claghorn, SFO

Published in the *Montgomery Advertiser*, *Mobile Press Register* and *Birmingham News*.

### **Wings' Executive Board of Directors Elects a New President**

The Executive Board of Directors met this month and elected Ameya Scanlon as their new President to the Executive Board of Directors. Ameya has been a very valuable and active board member since January 2010. She is employed by AltaPointe as a Peer Support Specialist Supervisor and is a representative for Region IV.

### **Important Dates**

Mental Health Legislative Day originally scheduled for March, 10, 2011 has been postponed until sometime in April. Check our website and facebook page for updated information.

2011 Recovery Conference will be held April 5, 6, & 7, 2011 at Shocco Springs Resort. See inside for additional registration information.

**Drop In Centers****Our Place**

205 Max Luther Drive  
 Huntsville, AL.  
 Mon., Tues., Weds., & Fri.  
 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM  
 Thursday 1:00 PM to 8:00 PM  
 Darlene Berry, ED

**Clearview Center**

308 Chisholm Street  
 Montgomery, AL. 36110  
 334-239-7448  
 Open Tuesday & Thursday  
 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM  
 Suzanne Rhodes, ED

**Cahaba Center**

302 Franklin Street  
 Selma, AL.  
 334-418-6525  
 Open Monday-Friday  
 1:00 PM to 6:00 PM  
 Lewis Fincher, ED

**Friendship House**

505 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue North  
 Tuscaloosa, AL.  
 205-345-1534  
 Open Monday-Thursday  
 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM  
 Sandra Ryder, Manager

**The 1920 Club**

1920 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  
 Birmingham, AL.  
 205-933-6955  
 Open Monday-Friday  
 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM  
 Vickey Pierson, ED

**SO-MI Center**

4351 Midmost Drive  
 Mobile, AL. 36609  
 251-342-0261  
 Open Monday-Friday  
 7:00 AM to 2:30 PM  
 Terance Brown, ED

## Governor Bentley Appoints New Commissioner

Wings Across Alabama would like to take this time to say welcome to Commissioner Baugh. Zelia Baugh was appointed Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Mental Health by Governor Robert Bentley. Commissioner Baugh has experience in both clinical and administrative practice in psychiatric care and substance abuse. Commissioner Baugh's background in mental health displays her devotion to ensuring a better quality of life for consumers. With her compassion and drive to provide prompt care to consumers in need, she will be a valuable asset to the mental health community. Per Governor Bentley, "Helping ensure the mental health of our people is one of the most important services Alabama can provide for our citizens. Ms. Baugh is eminently qualified to guide our mental health system." Congratulations Commissioner Baugh and we look forward to working with you.

### Best Wishes and Sincere Appreciation to Former Commissioner John Houston

On behalf of consumers and Wings Across Alabama we would like to say thank you for all your hard work and dedication. It truly has been an honor working with you.

Mr. Houston has benefited consumers greatly during his appointment as commissioner. We wish him great success with all his endeavors and know you will be missed!

### Director of Community Programs, Molly Brooms, Retires

Everyone at Wings would also like to wish Molly Brooms the best of luck with her retirement. We are very thankful for all of her hard work and support. Thank you again for everything! We will miss you!

### Wings Mission Statement

**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.**

# 2011 Alabama Recovery Conference

## April 5, 6, & 7

### Shocco Springs

## Registration

### Scholarships are available to consumers only.

Scholarships are awarded and rooms are assigned on a first-come first-serve basis.

Indicate roommate preference on your registration. Otherwise you will be assigned a roommate.

Attendees must provide their own transportation to and from the conference.

### Cost of Conference

Full Conference	
(3 days, 2 nights)	\$90
1 day (no lodging)	\$25
1 day (with lodging)	\$45
Full Conference, no lodging	\$50

**All scholarships require a \$10 non-refundable, non transferable registration fee.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone(\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

Roommate \_\_\_\_\_

(Roommate will be assigned if one is not indicated.)

Are you a smoker? Yes No

I would like to be in the Talent Show. Yes No

My talent is \_\_\_\_\_. (no dancing in Chapel please)

### Please Register Me As Follows:

- I am a consumer and requesting a consumer scholarship. Please check appropriate choice below--\$10.
- Entire Conference-including all activities, all meals and all lodging-- \$90.
- All conference activities, meals, but no lodging--\$50.
- All activities and meals on Tuesday, but no lodging--\$25.
- All activities and meals on Wednesday, but no lodging--\$25.
- All activities and meals on Tuesday and lodging Tuesday night--\$45.
- All activities and meals on Wednesday and lodging Wednesday night--\$45.

### Make Checks payable to: WINGS

**Mail to:** Recovery Conference  
c/o Consumer Relations  
P.O. Box 301410  
Montgomery, AL 36130-141



Visit our website at

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

Consumer Information line available

Monday- Friday

334-395-7616-local

888-946-4725-toll free

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

800-273-8255

Community and Human Services

(Crisis Line)

211

## Membership Form

Wings would like to invite you to become a member or renew your existing membership. Our office would be proud to have you as a member and would like to take the time to renew memberships for existing members. Please mail the completed form to Wings Across Alabama-P.O. Box 211286, Montgomery, AL 36121.

Please check the appropriate box

New Member  Renewal

Membership Dues:

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| <input type="radio"/> Consumer on Disability     | \$2.00  |
| <input type="radio"/> Student                    | \$5.00  |
| <input type="radio"/> Consumer Not on Disability | \$10.00 |
| <input type="radio"/> Non-Consumer               | \$20.00 |
| <input type="radio"/> Organization               | \$50.00 |
| <input type="radio"/> Donation                   | \$_____ |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Wings Across Alabama  
P.O. Box 211286  
Montgomery, AL 36121

