



Celebrate

As we experience the holiday season and the start of a new year, let us all remember to find something or someone to be thankful for each day, and in fact celebrate each day as if it were a holiday.

Wings Across Alabama is thankful for our friends, family, and other supporters, our wonderful staff and volunteers, and our members who help make Wings possible. We celebrate the recovery, sobriety, and health of ourselves and all the lives we touch throughout the year.

“Celebrate the happiness that friends are always giving, make every day a holiday and celebrate just living.”

Amanda Bradley

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Drop-In Centers

Our Place

205 Max Luther Dr NW
Huntsville, AL 35811
Mon., Tues., Wed., & Fri.
10:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Thur. 1:00 PM to 8:00 PM
Darlene Berry, ED

Clearview Center

308 Chisholm St
Montgomery, AL 36110
334-239-7448
Open Tuesday & Thursday
12:00 PM to 5:00 PM
Ben Arthur, ED

Cahaba Center

302 Franklin St
Selma, AL 36703
334-418-6525
Open Monday-Friday
1:00 PM to 6:00 PM
Lewis Fincher, ED

Friendship House

505 19th Ave
Tuscaloosa, AL 35401
205-345-1534
Open Monday-Thursday
8:00 AM to 2:00 PM
Sandra Ryder, Manager

The 1920 Club

1920 10th Ave S
Birmingham, AL 35205
205-933-6955
Open Monday-Friday
10:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Vickey Pierson, Ed

SO-MI Center

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



MONTGOMERY'S CLEARVIEW DROP-IN CENTER RELEASES ORIGINAL ALBUM

By Ben Arthur

Pictured left is Ben Arthur, Executive Director for Clearview Center located in Montgomery, Alabama.

After much soul searching and good times the Clearview Center has just released their new album *Art from the Road*. It is a compilation of songs written, produced and performed by members of the center. Also known as *The Fatback Project*, the album has had the support of our board of directors as well as the Wings Across Alabama organization, to which we are all grateful.

I have been writing songs for a long time and this is the first time I've ever gotten any financial support for a project like this. There are so many people to thank but I'll try to mention as many of you as I can. Mike Clark helped me to write some of the album over the course of many years. Our composition "The Big Lie" was written in 1996. It sat in a drawer for twelve years before we recorded it from cassette to CD. I felt obliged to include it on this album because of the recent focus on gambling and corruption here in Alabama. Mike wrote the song because these same issues made front page news in the Montgomery Advertiser many years ago.

Morgan Sanders plays keyboard on "Hard Woman to Love" recorded at the Center live. Morgan shines on this amazing song in which he surprised us all with his new found talent. Matt Crowe sings backup on "Pretty Lies." His vocals blend seamlessly with mine on this poignant love song. Next Pam Robinson also helps with the vocal arrangement with "So Many Hours" and "If You Believe." She and Myenza Jones did a great job singing along. Renee Capuano also sings a spirited version of "Top of the Hill" with me. I am thankful for all their contributions and support. Last but certainly not least Danny Davis represents with his rap songs "Corrections" and "What Kind of Man Would I Be?" Danny is one to watch, as he is in production of a solo album.

We all hope you enjoy our efforts, but mostly we would just like to take a bow. Clearview poured their heart and soul into these songs and we hope you enjoy them all. Arthur Clark and the Clearview Fatback Band's album *Art from the Road* is available at the Clearview Center in Montgomery. **Look to the column on the left of this page for information on contacting Ben Arthur and/or Clearview Center to purchase a CD, which are available at the drop-in center for \$7.**



ALTERNATIVES 2011

William R. Ruff

From October 26 to October 30, the annual Alternatives Conference was held in Orlando, Florida. The weather was beautiful (with infrequent light showers) and everyone was energized. The opportunity to meet and greet new peers, acquaintances, colleagues and old friends, while exploring virtually every alternative treatment available, was invigorating.

Sheila Scott represented APSA and Wings, I represented NAMI-ALABAMA and APSA, and Robert Hermes represented Wings Across Alabama at the feat sponsored largely (but not solely) by SAMHSA. We really had the bases covered. All enjoyed learning and socializing together and with others. Every accommodation conceivable was provided, from translators for the deaf and other languages to wheelchairs and psychiatric service dogs. Europeans, Asian-Pacific Islanders, all ethnic groups and various creeds were in attendance. A veritable sea of consumers were educating, socializing, and networking with one another.

Alternatives is truly an appropriate name. Topics and therapies covered were too numerous to mention. A highly condensed list of these workshops would include: Sleep Therapy, Gardening Therapy, Laughter Therapy, Prescription Drug Toxicity and its Production of Side Effects, Peer Support, Peer-Run Respite Centers, among countless others. I felt like a peer in a consumer candy store!

Also too long to list were the luminaries that were keynote speakers, workshop presenters, and trainers. However, I would like to drop the names of Charles Willis, Sherry Jenkins-Tucker, Peter Ashenden, Mary Ellen Copeland, and Peter Lehman.

It was an elegant and tasteful event in a luxurious setting in an exciting area of Florida. Somehow we were busy, educated, inspired, and invigorated, and exhausted when the conference ended. I highly recommend you plan to attend next year.



From the Executive Director

Wings Across Alabama is a peer-run, recovery driven, state funded organization that leads the way in Alabama for peer recovery. Our main objective is to move Alabama from a medical model to one that is recovery focused and peer led. Not only are we engaged in the serious business of decision making on the state level, but we are also delivering wellness and recovery training statewide. Our activities range from working independently with individuals to working with the state in their efforts to merge our state mental illness and substance abuse divisions into one more adept at dealing with co-occurring disorders.

The focus of our statewide consumer network grant is to establish a network of partners and affiliates across the state in mental health centers, peer led groups, and state hospitals. Our main activity is facilitating WRAP groups for consumers, peer specialists, and mental health staff. We chose to conduct WRAP training for these groups because in the future lives of these individuals, skills to face life's challenges will be essential for them. The truth is that most of the time what is most disabling about a mental health diagnosis is that what is accepted as truth is not what one is truly capable of. We want to provide the individuals with a shift in thinking, where they learn to accept that that a label of diagnosis does not mean they are incapable of doing what their heart really wants.

WRAP addresses the needs of consumers by empowering and educating them in a self-directed curriculum that focuses on hope. It puts the needs of the consumer first by modeling recovery and by demonstrating that recovery is real through the use of trained peers. It prepares those that are ready to engage with the system, so that the system works for them instead of focusing solely on medication compliance and long stays in rehab programs. Consumers know what is best for them and are encouraged by peer leaders to delve deeper into what they really want out of life. It takes courage to change but someone who has been there before can sometimes be the catalyst for that change to occur.

We focus our efforts on large scale high population areas, but we have also worked in more rural areas where this type of training is not easily accessible. In 2010 we trained 288 consumers and in the current year we have trained close to 300. Most of our efforts have paid big dividends, for instance, in year one of our grant we had a 90% success rate of keeping people out of the hospital. These statistics were collected close to a year past the time of trainings. We also have obtained scores in the upper 80's with quality of life statistics.

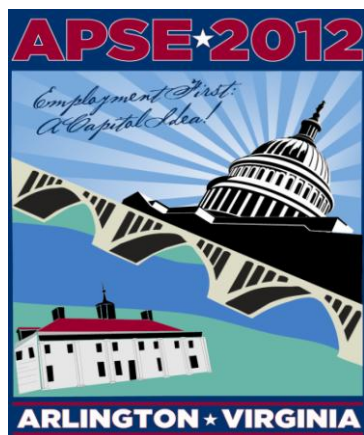
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EMPLOYMENT FIRST

Sheila Scott

Supported Employment (SE) was the topic of this conference by Alabama Program for Supported Employment (APSE). Trainers Valerie Brooke and Jennifer McDonough led the group through a detailed workbook from the history of SE to current best practices. Exercises helped attendees truly understand the needs of persons receiving services and SE coaches. The highlight came when a group of individuals on SE gave a forum presentation and answered our questions. Attendees networked during the conference and this will ultimately benefit peers in Alabama.

I would encourage anyone on public assistance thinking about employment to contact Social Security and Vocational Rehabilitation (VRS). Social Security will work with you and inform you on the amount you can earn without penalty. VRS can assist you along your employment path with multiple types of supports. Supported Employment has a set of qualifications to be accepted. To learn more about SE call **1-800-441-7607** or go to **www.rehab.alabama.gov**. I wish to thank Byron White of the Alabama Department of Mental Health for holding this superb conference.



Executive Director cont...

As an organization we recognize that Alabama has changed and will continue to change in many ways, mostly because of lack of funding. However, we will continue to work within our organization and statewide to ensure that the community will serve as the caregivers and supporters of the new collaborative system that is being developed. The fact that peer specialist services are growing and that we are training our own trainers is a positive step forward. A leaner department of mental health and substance abuse with collaboration and cross training will bring with it a new way of looking at service delivery. These are interesting times for sure.

Robert Hermes

Wings Across Alabama Staff Receive Awards

Robert Hermes, Wings' Executive Director, was awarded Consumer of the Year by NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) and was presented with a plaque at the Wings' quarterly board meeting on November 5. Robert is extremely honored to receive such a prestigious award.

William Ruff received the Advocate of the Year award 2011, also from NAMI. William works tirelessly as a certified peer-specialist for Wings as well as working for NAMI-Birmingham. We congratulate William for being thus honored and are proud to have him as a part of our team.

Congratulations go to...

Sister Lucindia Claghorn, President of the Wings Across Alabama Board of Directors, was one of the speakers at the Mobile Meet and Greet with Commissioner Baugh on Tuesday, November 29. She was awarded for her many years of service to the mental health community and also for forty years of continued treatment at AltaPointe, her local mental health clinic. Sister was presented with an engraved watch by the CEO of AltaPointe, Tuerk Schlesinger.

Attention Members

Please take a moment to check your address label for your Wings Across Alabama membership renewal date. If your renewal date has passed, please send in the renewal form on the back of the newsletter so that we can update our records.

If you have any questions or concerns about this, feel free to call our office. We are available Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm.

334-395-7616-local
888-946-4725-toll free

News, etc.

Meet and Greet w/Commissioner Zelia Baugh

Alabama Department of Mental Health Commissioner Zelia Baugh, area advocates, and stakeholders hosted a series of Meet and Greet town hall-style meetings across the state to discuss key issues facing the mental health system in Alabama. The meetings began October 19 and continued into December. They provided consumers, family members, local officials, and mental health service providers the opportunity to discuss issues such as waiting lists and underserved populations. Attendees were able to share their stories, present ideas, and express concerns. Public officials were able to ask questions and listen to their constituents in an informal setting. Commissioner Baugh made comments on challenges and opportunities facing the public mental health system.



Creating the Life You Want

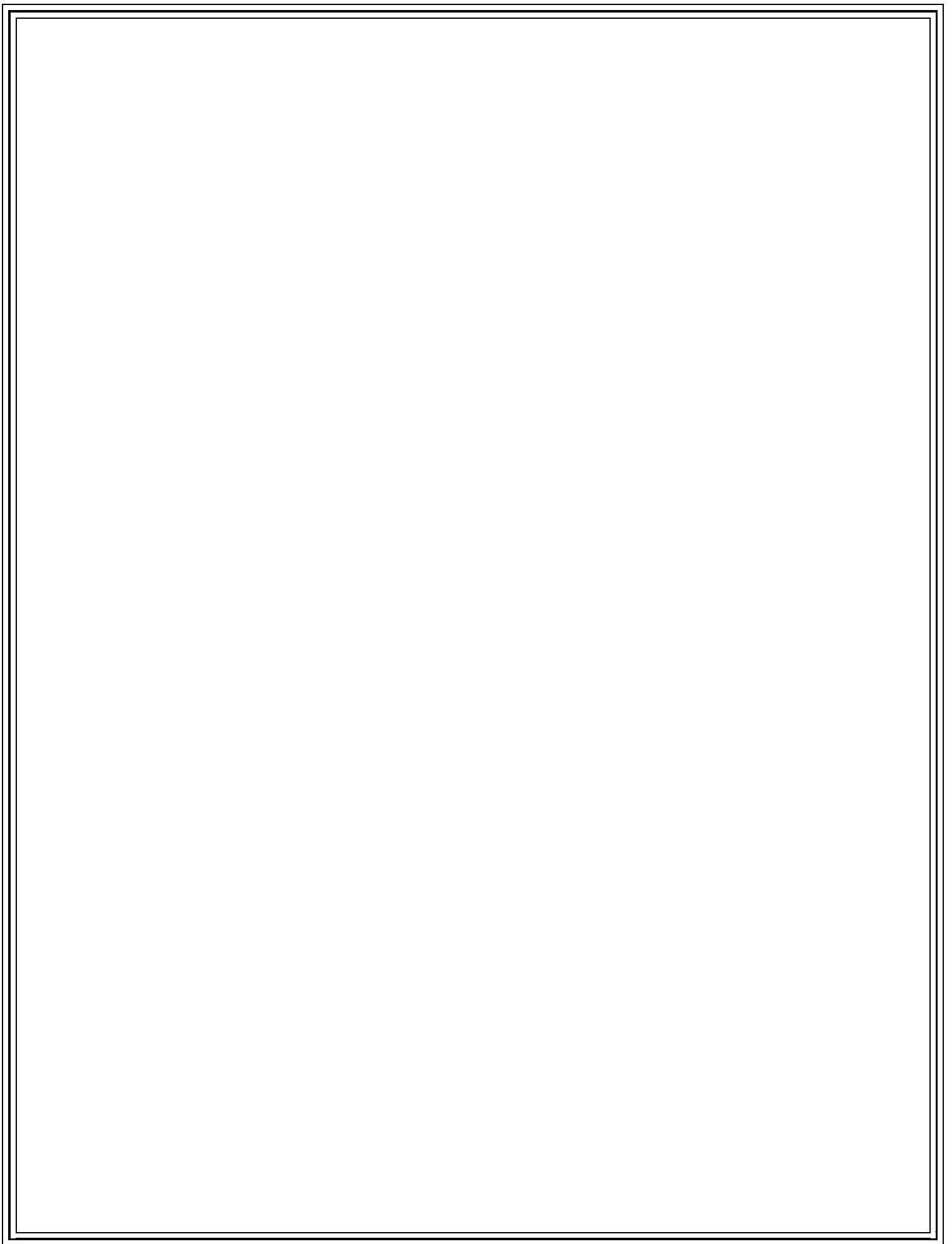
Jo Morris Sherer, CPS, M.Div.

Many gifts during my 33+ years of living with the challenge of mental illness recovery have helped me view this journey as an opportunity and exciting life adventure, rather than only a difficult challenge. These gifts include life stories of providers, fellow consumers (peers), and fellow peer-providers; WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) training; NAMI (National Alliance for Mental Illness) In Our Own Voice training; therapy, especially group therapy (NAMI Connections); the Health Project; and, most helpful, my training as a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) and Peer Bridger. In this CPS training and work, I learn that our peer recovery journey becomes more efficient as we focus our efforts on the three ingredients necessary for recovery: skills, resources, and support systems. The most helpful and fun tool for my learning and educating these recovery ingredients with peers and peer groups is the CPS training unit, “Creating the Life You Want”.

This skill-builder resource offers ten simple but thought-provoking steps that lead us to plan and to reach each chosen goal. As we commit to achieving these recovery goals with creativity, accountability, responsibility, and transparency, our goal setting becomes an exercise in self or consumer-directed life planning instead of reluctantly doing a chore demanded by our recovery service providers. We learn a necessary recovery skill: how to organize our goal setting and therefore choose, collaborate, and direct our own recovery and our own lives.

We also use this resource with our new skills to move toward interdependence and cooperation in our larger communities. After each peer member shares their courageous encounters with their challenges, goals for the future, planned steps to reach that goal, and the results, the other group members offer feed-back and encouragement. We celebrate attempts as well as victories. We realize that we are not alone in this journey. Instead each peer offers as well as receives education (or leading to the light) from other’s ongoing attempts and victories. We not only belong to a support system, but we recognize that the energy of our support system is synergistic. In other words, the total energy from our shared stories is more than the sum of the energy from our individual stories. We strengthen our peer support community as well as each peer within as we learn how to recover. This positive outcome also encourages us to ‘move out,’ or use other resources to locate and become members of new community support systems like education or work sites. Our peer support system has then become a valuable part of our moving toward successful empowerment and ongoing, lifetime recovery.

I invite you to choose a goal, hopefully first a health goal to combat a health concern, if you have identified one. (The choice of a health goal may add up to twenty-five years to your life.) The unit suggests that goals be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Measured). CPS/Peer Bridgers have demonstrated that their guidance helps peers recover. Find one who will supply you with those 10 steps, then work with you individually or in a group to put fun in your recovery. After all, you are “Creating the Life that You Want”, your own Exciting Recovery Life Adventure!





Visit our website at

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

