



## Growth

“There is no growth in the comfort zone.  
There is no comfort in the growth zone.”

*Ike Powell, Certified Peer Specialist Trainer and Consultant  
for Appalachian Consulting Group*

*To wish you were someone else is to waste the person you  
are.*

*~Sven-Göran Eriksson~*

### Contents

Growth	1
Letter from Ben Arthur	2
Letter cont.	3
From the Executive Director	4
Cross-Cultural Bonding & Hope	5
News, etc.	6
AL DAN	7
Wings' Membership Form	8

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

**The 1920 Club**

1920 10<sup>th</sup> 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



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

## Executive Director?

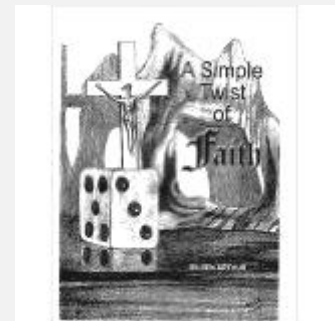
I am still somewhat stunned by the news. I was asked to be the Executive Director of the Clearview Drop in Center about 2 weeks ago. While this may not be that amazing to some, it is a pivotal moment for me. As many of you know I've been a volunteer at Clearview off and on since it opened almost 2 yrs ago. I have seen a lot in that time, good and not so good. As with any organization, we have had our ups and down, but we're still moving forward. I plan to continue to try and teach our members the importance of artistic expression in their efforts to recover from mental illness. Art, in all its forms, has been such an invaluable tool for me, not only to cope with the stresses of schizophrenia but also to express the very real joy of achieving a higher level of recovery. Seems like the more I am able to communicate, the better I feel about the world around me. Consequently I am evolving and changing the things that once made me so ill. Lately I've been learning what it is like to

live with the reality of a certain amount of notoriety. I have published a book, met and sang for the Governor, been written about in newspapers and newsletters, won several awards and sold a few paintings. Folks this is so much more than a personal ego trip. This is a testament to what I believe recovery is all about. There was a time when I was phobic about going to the grocery store or being seen in ANY public situation because I was so afraid someone would know that I was mentally ill. Having overcome so many fears to get where I am is nothing less than a miracle to me. When I think how close to death it's self I've come in this journey, I can't help but be so very thankful to God and the kind people He has used to get me this far. It is for this reason I am a proud volunteer for a place like Clearview. By the grace of God, I'll be able to help someone get beyond their fears and help me break down the walls of stereotypes and stigma of mental illness. Yes, there IS hope and you can overcome your fears. I hope some of you who read this will feel free to come and join us. Thank you for reading this; it has been my pleasure to write to you.

Sincerely, Ben



Artwork created by art students at the Clearview Drop-in Center.



## *From The Executive Director*

### **Merger of Mental Illness and Substance Abuse Divisions**

The mental illness division and the substance abuse division of the Alabama Department of Mental Health are merging. The reason for this is that most people who access their services have what is called co-occurring disorders. They have both a mental illness and a substance use disorder as well. The commissioner says that 80% of the people they serve have co-occurring disorders and that treatment for one disorder without treating the other would be foolish.

I am on a team of people who are tackling the merger of the two divisions. It is only the second time we have met but I can tell, and it should be obvious, that the devil is in the details. Co-location and cross-training will come into play. Many of the people at the department know only their specific jobs and those walls need to come down.

When someone goes into a clinic there should be trained staff that can recognize and diagnose either disorder. Plus, there need to be qualified people to treat consumers for any mixture of mental illness and/or substance abuse.

No one in the country has successfully fully integrated their divisions. Some of the reasons follow as is best quoted by someone on the committee:

**To integrate things is to put them together to turn something new. It also means that the things you put together keep their individual characteristics or features. The important thing about integration regarding this merger is that both the mental illness and substance abuse prospective needs to be welcomed and accepted for what they are. There is respect for the practices, beliefs and values of both sides.**

This merger makes great sense but will obviously take some time to work out. The best service for our consumers is what the commissioner is all about.



Robert Hermes, Executive Director

# Cross-Cultural Bonding & Hope

*William R. Ruff*

Not often enough do we get to participate in cross-cultural advocacy, support, and education. Of course, these are very important moments that must be grabbed when they present themselves. Luck, serendipity, or the will of a higher power are not sufficient to our success. We must be prepared for these moments so we will be ready, should an opportunity appear.

Recently I had the privilege to present a talk to the Ninth Episcopal District of Pentecostal African Methodist Episcopalian (A.M.E.) in Birmingham. I was nervous and unsure of what to prepare. So, I decided it did not matter because we are all peers, and we understand the common ground we stand on. I attempted to relate on a one to one basis as much as possible, and see how that worked.

There were over seventy attendees and several staff. Some were as young as 17, while the various ages represented climbed beyond the 60's. I was pleased with the genuinely warm reception I received. These folks were hungry for mental health topics and eager to learn. After citing differences in mental health statistics between Caucasian Americans and African Americans, I presented concepts that both groups had in common, hoping to forge a bond between our equal humanity. The group was excited to hear that a peer is a peer, like any other peer.

Finally, I discussed how the theory of W.R.A.P. could benefit them. They all wanted to take a W.R.A.P., and now! We ended as friends and peers. What could be better? I wish to express my gratitude to the Ninth Episcopal District and all members of the A.M.E. churches for their gracious invitation and generous hospitality. I look forward to many such experiences.

Hope leads to success.

## Recovery Month Activities

Gadsden – Sept 10<sup>th</sup> @ 3pm – 10pm

### **5K Run and Ride Rally for Recovery**

*Gadsden Sports Complex*

*1420 W Meighan Blvd*

Contact: Ava Gregory or Dana Williams  
256-492-7800

Mobile – Sept 13<sup>th</sup> @ 8am – 11am

### **Mobile Recovery Breakfast/Rally**

*Mobile Government Plaza*

Contact: Virginia Guy 251-478-7855

Decatur – Sept 15<sup>th</sup> @ 9:30am – 5:30pm

### **4<sup>th</sup> Annual WALK FOR RECOVERY**

*Delano Park, Large Pavilion*

Contact: Michele Moore 256-353-9116

(Alternate Rain Location is Somerville Place  
1316 Somerville Rd SE Decatur, AL)

Montgomery – Sept 18<sup>th</sup> @ 2pm – 8pm

### **Montgomery Recovery Rally**

*4210 Virginia Loop Rd*

Contact: Brenda Allen 334-284-7502

Montgomery – Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> @ 5:30pm-7:30pm

### **5K Recovery Run/Walk**

*Capitol Steps*

*600 Dexter Ave*

Contact: Marion Johnson, Jr. 334-353-7446  
or marion.johnson@mh.alabama.gov

Birmingham – Sept 24<sup>th</sup> @ 10am – 2pm

### **Birmingham Recovery Fair**

*Virginia Samford Theatre adjacent to  
Caldwell Park on Highland Ave*

Contact: Janet Richards 205-617-7461

Montgomery – Sept 25<sup>th</sup> @ 11am – 2pm

### **Recovery Sunday**

*1724 Hill St*

Contact: Marion Johnson, Jr. 334-353-7446  
or marion.johnson@mh.alabama.gov

## **Wings Across Alabama Welcomes New Board Member and Staff**

In August, the Board of Directors met and elected Jim Hickman to represent Wings in Region I.

Wings would also like to welcome Emily Giles as our new administrative assistant.

Jim and Emily are both huge assets to our team and we would like to take the time to say welcome and thanks to both for their hard work.

## **AlabamaPeer.org is Online**

The Alabama Peer Specialist Association (APSA) is online. A website is now running at the following: [www.AlabamaPeer.com](http://www.AlabamaPeer.com). In the research for the website, I was surprised how little "Peer" was found on the Internet referencing mental health issues and services. When "Peer" is typed into a search engine, it will bring up our website as a choice. This will maximize exposure and creates easy access.

Plans for the website are exciting. A forum will provide a conversation on our issues and give support to Certified Peer Specialists. The website will inform members, those we serve, and the public. Check for updates often and tell others about [www.AlabamaPeer.org](http://www.AlabamaPeer.org).

## **News, etc.**

*From the desk of Byron White...*

The Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) was recently awarded a grant from the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) to address the impact of the economic downturn through employment development for consumers with a mental illness and/or a substance use disorder. The activities of the grant include the completion of a cross systems needs and resource assessment to determine what supported employment services currently exist in Alabama as well as the perceived barriers to consumers' ability to obtain competitive employment. Further, the agency plans to develop an Employment Advisory Committee (EAC) & Strategic Plan to guide the development and expansion of employment services. Specialized Train the Trainer MI Peer Support Specialist and training for individuals to become SAREcovery Support Specialist is included. Finally, the grant will sponsor statewide training programs for consumers and family members, EAC members, DMH staff, community providers, and other stakeholders to expand knowledge regarding supported employment. For more information email Byron White at [byron.white@mh.alabama.gov](mailto:byron.white@mh.alabama.gov).

## **APSA Making Progress**

*Sheila Scott*

The Alabama Peer Specialist Association is advancing toward our goals. The website ([www.AlabamaPeer.com](http://www.AlabamaPeer.com)) is running, a newsletter will be published soon and meetings are scheduled through 2011. A Board Meeting is planned for September 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Prattville Bass Pro Shop. It will be an open meeting; but the Board will be able to make decisions and move us forward. The CPS Training in August and October will create new graduates and potential members. A statewide APSA Meeting is planned for December 1, 2011. It will conduct our business, offer support and hear our voice on issues. APSA is grateful to be recognized as a stakeholder group to participate in the August 31, 2011 "Vision Day", promoted by Dr. Peacock, DMH Associate Commissioner. It is good to have a seat at the table. In all, APSA has the evidence of progress.

# AL DAN

## People with Disabilities Building Bridges Across Alabama

By Beth Blalock

First, I would like to thank Wings Across Alabama for the opportunity to be included in this edition of the newsletter. Next, I would like to say "Hello!" to all my Wings friends. I miss getting to see you! Many of you played an important role in my recovery. Thank you! Because of the support and friendship that I received from those at Wings and the Department of Mental Health, I have been able to achieve more than I expected after my diagnosis in 2002!

I finally graduated in May 2010 with my Masters Degree in Social Work from the University of Alabama. Last October, which is coming up on a year, I began employment as Project Director with the Alabama Disability Advocacy Network – AL DAN. It has been a wonderful but hard year. Getting back in the work routine after 6 years was a challenging adventure, but most exciting to know that I could go back to work and live on my own again.

My first year of employment with AL DAN has been a whirl-wind. I have met so many new people from across the state, especially those with disabilities; some with mental health issues, but also a wide variety of other disabilities. It has been interesting to hear how people meet the challenges of their disabilities. Most importantly, I have learned how much PWD (People with Disabilities) have in common. We ALL want lives that are more fully integrated in society and free of stigma. Lives equal to those without disabilities are desired. How about you?

Have you ever thought what strength would come if all people with disabilities from across the state were to come together to advocate –UNITED in one voice? There are over 925,000 PWD in Alabama according to the 2000 census. Would policy makers and society leaders hear us?

AL DAN invites you to become a part of an exciting cross-disability movement that is taking place in Alabama. For many years, many Alabamians have sought to have a united voice, connecting all individuals in the disability community. A little more than a year and a half ago, that dream moved a step closer to reality when AL DAN was formed with a grant from the Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities.

AL DAN is a non-partisan, grassroots, cross-disability, consumer driven network advocating for systems change in Alabama for people with disabilities and their families. The purpose is to serve as an umbrella organization for advocacy that connects individuals with a disability, families, friends and advocates across Alabama. Our desire is to work in conjunction with Wings Across Alabama, People First, Alabama Association of the Deaf, National Federation of the Blind, and similar organizations as often as we can.

Our goal is to provide an opportunity for individuals to come together to advocate for positive change on issues of common concern across the state. We believe that strong systemic advocacy begins with strong self advocacy and personal responsibility. We want our members to know how to most effectively advocate for change, and how to create opportunities for themselves and others with disabilities to become fully integrated in the community.

AL DAN is consumer-controlled, and the advisory board is led by people with disabilities. People with disabilities set the priorities and do all of the advocacy. Currently AL DAN focuses its efforts on transportation, housing, education, and healthcare.

In October, AL DAN will be hosting regional meetings in the northern, central, and southern Alabama regions. The focus of the meetings will be advocacy training and issue development in preparation for the 2012 Legislative Session. To learn more about AL DAN activities, please visit [www.aladan.org](http://www.aladan.org), or call the state headquarters at (205) 251-2223 ext. 113. The organization is headquartered in the Independent Living Resources Center of Greater Birmingham. AL DAN also works closely with the Centers for Independent Living in Montgomery and Mobile. AL DAN Representatives are available for presentations; we accept donations, and welcome NEW MEMBERS ANYTIME!

### **CONTACT:**

Beth Blalock

Alabama Disability Advocacy Network (AL DAN)

Cell: (205) 251-2223 ext 113

Email: [beth.aldan@bellsouth.net](mailto:beth.aldan@bellsouth.net)

Website: [www.aladan.org](http://www.aladan.org)



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

