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WHAT'S INSIDE

Letter From the Editor / 3

Spotlight on Mental Health:
Holiday Mental Health
Guide / 4

From MN DHS:
Beginning a New Chapter
for Behavioral Health in
Minnesota / 5

Gift Guide / 8-9

Recovering Parents Value
Project CHILD / 10

Autumn Leaves / 12



JOHN H. DRIGGS, LICSW

Love Is Stronger Than Hate

So many of us are afraid that this national election will not turn out right and that we will be stuck electing a leader who both promotes hate and decries democracy. With good reason, we endlessly obsess about national polls and the latest news regarding the election. We lose a lot of sleep over this election, so much so, that many of us live in a state of continuous trauma over this election. Indeed, the rhetoric of prejudice and hate which invades our media is way over the top. Some of us are losing faith in our fellow Americans as we vilify their political beliefs and wonder how others can even have beliefs that are so discrepant from our own. The whole reaction to this election is like living in a continuous trauma state where neighbors cannot trust neighbors and all there is to life is continuous gloom and doom.

Well, I am here to tell you to take heart. All is not lost by this election. We have already lived through heavily contested elections before in our history and we will do so again, perhaps learning from our ordeal and even coming out for the better afterwards. We've already gotten through a Revolutionary War, a Civil War, and two World Wars. We will get through this cultural war as well. How do I know this? First, I know that when you're in a trauma state you will not do your clearest thinking. Most of us forget that love is stronger than hate during trauma. In fact, the most important human need of all is the need to attach and love one another. All mammals are wired for love and attachment, no matter what our circumstances are. You will see that the party that has more humanity will easily win this election and we will all be safe and eventually cuddle with each other. So, rest easy, our humanity will eventually save us from ourselves.

WHY IS LOVE STRONGER THAN HATE?

Just ask yourself, "How do I feel when I really love someone and how is it different when I hate that person?" Notice how elated you feel when you're close to a beloved person and compare that mood when you're near someone you resent. Most of us are on cloud nine when we cuddle with our beloved and feel alienated when we are near someone we despise. So, love is more desirable than hate on a feeling level. And we desire to be near someone who is closer to us. Joy and relaxation are the common reaction to being with

LOVE IS STRONGER to pg 5

GIVING BACK WHILE IN RECOVERY

How Serenity Kennel is Helping Recovery Community Pets

by Sharon Chapman / Photos by Tracy Walsh

When Frank Schmidt met Evan Jandl at The Retreat Recovery Center (Wayzata, MN) in the spring of 2024, neither had any idea about the journey that they would begin together. A casual conversation about the difficulty in finding someone to care for their dogs while pursuing recovery treatment led to the founding of a project that might be the first of its kind in the country, not just the state of Minnesota.

"Our main thing is to take away that worry for people going to treatment. There are enough barriers in the way. We don't need more. Dogs are like little family members, too," Frank told me, explaining the basic principle behind their new non-profit business venture. "We don't want people to have to worry about

their dogs while they are in recovery. We want recovery to be their focus. Taking care of one's animals is a gift to us and we want to make sure that we take care of them like they're our own."

Both Frank and Evan have their own personal stories on how they arrived at where they are today. Frank, in his early 50s, and Evan, in his late 20s, have different experiences, skills, and perspectives, but together they have found their "passion project." Frank explains, "This [project] blends in all the things that we are passionate about: Recovery, animals and pets, service work [and] fellowship."

That "passion project" is Serenity Kennel, a non-profit organization that

SERENITY KENNEL HELPS to pg 6



SPOTLIGHT ON RECOVERY

Project CHILD Helps Recovering Hennepin County Parents

We had a Q&A with Hennepin County behavioral program manager, Alexandra Kraak, about this successful program supporting mothers living with substance use. Project CHILD offers services that can support them now and in long-term recovery.

Read the article on page 10



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The Gift of Humanity

by Sharon Chapman

“Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive.”
DALAI LAMA



Frank and his dog, Mia / Photo by Tracy Walsh

It seems like it takes an existential crisis in modern times to bring people back from the brink of humanity. Despite the chaos of the current world, when an unprecedented hurricane hit the mountains of North Carolina, people pulled together in unimaginable ways. In the face of tragedy and trauma, neighbors who had never spoken, people who had never met, and people who had lost *simply everything*, found ways to help each other in the basic need to survive. The same is true of many others hit by recent hurricanes and weather-related events – but not with the same force – across the south-eastern states, including Florida, a place which is no stranger to such weather.

The English word *humanity* is derived from the Latin word *humanitas*, meaning *human nature* or *kindness*. Human kindness shines in the face of destruction. You might group it with the basic survival skills of food, shelter, and warmth. A *strange thought*. Or is it?

In the face of adversity, people have a need to hold onto the belief and hope that everything’s going to be okay. And with that, love and kindness emerge. An act of kindness can not only help another, but it can also make us feel good about

ourselves. And not only that, but it also puts into perspective our own troubles. There is a belief that, despite whatever we are going through, someone out there is struggling with much worse. Even if we *are* the ones staring disaster, grief, or hopelessness in the face, many of us find the compassion to reach out a helping hand to others. It’s these kinds of acts which will pull us through such crises.

In an ego-centric world, it’s easy to slip into a self-centered approach to life. But in this season of traditional giving, think about something or someone else. And I mean, *really* think about them and what you can do. Love and kindness cost nothing. But they could mean the world to someone who is struggling. When I was going through trauma in my own life, it was the random act of kindness from a stranger, a stray compliment from another, or the ability to truly *see* me that helped me step away from the edge.

You never know the true price of a gift until it is given.

Restoring my faith in humanity, one person at a time,

Sharon



The Phoenix Spirit

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SPOTLIGHT ON MENTAL HEALTH

2024 Holiday Mental Health Guide: Featuring Signal Award Winning Podcast Hosts Gabe Howard and Dr. Nicole Washington

by *Seth Perry*

Every holiday season, you'll find articles like this—designed to set you up for mental health success during the festivities. As you navigate this year's celebrations, remember that one of the most important mental health relationships to maintain is the one between a medical professional and a client. This is why this holiday mental health guide features both a psychiatrist and an individual in long-term mental health recovery. For the 2024 holiday season, I checked in with Signal Award-winning podcast hosts Gabe Howard and Dr. Nicole Washington of Healthline Media's Inside Bipolar podcast. Dr. Nicole is a board-certified psychiatrist, and Gabe is a podcaster, speaker, and author who lives with bipolar disorder. Every week, they provide practical, applicable mental health advice on their podcast, and this holiday season, their experience can serve as an invaluable gift to you.

Growing up in a family facing mental health and addiction challenges, I often wondered why the holiday season seemed to amplify our problems. Gabe Howard offers a clear reason why the holidays can feel like a pressure cooker of stress and crisis: "There's all the financial stress, physical health stress, lack of sleep, family issues, and it's all hitting at the same time." This isn't privileged or hidden knowledge; it's widely understood that the holiday season can challenge even those with solid self-care practices. Howard reminds us that over the holidays, "some of the hard and fast rules that you would never break in June are suddenly not that important." As he does regularly on the podcast, Gabe reminds us that effective coping strategies exist—even if they're not as often discussed as the familiar trope of a dysfunc-

tional and chaotic holiday season.

Howard provides a foundational tenet for preparing for the most triggering time of the year: "I manage expectations. I let people know what I can and cannot do. I have no problem saying 'No.' It's a difficult thing to do." Listening to Gabe, it's clear that his greatest passion is sharing his lived experience of coping with and managing his bipolar symptoms. However, his experience with mental health recovery is so vast that you might think his advice is easy to employ. One thing Gabe emphasized throughout our interview is that, to develop boundaries, manage expectations, and uphold coping strategies, he had to establish a strong protective factor against mental health relapse. Listening to Gabe's various podcast ventures reveals that most of what he preaches about his own mental health is grounded in bona fide psychiatric advice. Consulting a good mental health professional is an excellent place to start when preparing for the holidays.

Enter Dr. Nicole Washington, Gabe's cohost, whom he refers to as "Dr. Nicole." Dr. Nicole's most compelling insight is her observation that the holiday season affects everyone differently. When working with clients preparing for the holidays, she says, "I usually start by asking them what the holidays are normally like for them: 'Is this your fun time of year, where you feel great?'" As Dr. Nicole suggests, if November through mid-January aligns with good mental health, then the holidays might be a season to embrace. That said, she explains her approach to a patient with a history similar to my own: "For the person who absolutely hates the holidays, and it's a horrible time of year, and their mood tanks every year around the holi-

days, I try to dig into what it is about the holidays that takes them down." Knowing what to expect and reflecting on past patterns around the holidays is crucial to maintaining steady mental health through the season.

Finances are a trigger for mental health, and the holiday season is often when we spare no expense. This is why Gabe says, "Before the holidays come up, I start setting price limits. We're not allowed to spend more than a certain amount of money." This may sound simple, but when it comes to mental health, if you fail to plan, you truly plan to fail. During our brief conversation, Howard provided numerous financial fail safes that hold him accountable and keep him safe. "My wife and I, we have a no-gift policy, so that helps. In the early days, I wasn't allowed to have credit cards. The credit cards were taken from me." Some may see this as a loss of autonomy, but as someone in long-term recovery from bipolar disorder, I can say that restrictive financial measures might very well have saved my life. Planning ahead for the holidays isn't just a novel practice; it is a vital mental wellness habit.

Reflecting on a previous discussion with Dr. Nicole, Gabe shared, "You know, she said something once about how it's not December that worries her—it's January, because that's when everybody crashes." As the discussion progressed, Dr. Nicole offered Gabe and me a bird's-eye view of November, December, and January from a psychiatrist's perspective. During the holiday rush, Dr. Nicole observes certain patterns: "I think what I see most is people kind of brushing off their visits. You know, it's the holidays. They feel more comfortable canceling a visit. They run out of meds. They just feel more comfortable not being as aggressive or active in their treatment." Dr. Nicole's observations might as well describe twelve consecutive Christmases in my early adulthood, prior to finally embracing mental health recovery. A few missed appointments can start a domino effect, leading to a mental health relapse.

After speaking with Dr. Nicole and Gabe, I realized they were two people who did not buy into the holiday hype. Both agreed that one of the most important things to consider over the holidays is providing a healthy environment for those struggling with mental health. Dr. Nicole said, "We need to make sure we

Planning ahead for the holidays isn't just a novel practice; it is a vital mental wellness habit.

are creating an environment that allows that person to be successful and thrive. So, if we know there are certain topics that maybe we should avoid because this person is new and fragile in their recovery, then we don't have to go there. I think it's okay for us to avoid those topics. We don't have to have all the deep, heavy conversations at Thanksgiving."

Gabe made a crucial parallel between how we treat recovery from physical health crises versus mental health crises. "You know, if the family matriarch or patriarch had a heart attack or fell down the stairs and broke both legs, we're canceling the holidays immediately. If someone gets diagnosed with bipolar disorder or schizophrenia and just had a seven-day hospital stay, it's like, 'Well, we're back to normal. You're good now, right?' 'No, we're not!' So, you need to take this seriously as well.' And that might mean canceling or rearranging some plans."

The holidays are supposed to be a time for family and friends when we reflect on what is truly important—or at least that's what this year's Hallmark movies will tell you. Gabe and Dr. Nicole have shown us that, in order to do this, we must plan time for self-care, plan ahead, stay connected to professionals, and encourage our loved ones to make space for the healing we need.

Seth Perry (he/him/his), an ELCA Pastor, devotional blogger, and mental health recovery educator, embraces his journey of living well with Bipolar Type 1. He works to reduce stigma where faith, mental health, and personal growth intertwine. Pastor Seth currently serves Elim Lutheran Church in Scandia, MN. His website is: www.ourstigma.com.

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FROM THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

Beginning a New Chapter for Behavioral Health in Minnesota

by *Teresa Steinmetz*

Minnesota winter / Photo by Adam Davis / Unsplash



Minnesota is facing several complex issues that affect Minnesotans' ability to get timely, quality, and culturally relevant behavioral health services. Addressing those issues with compassion is the top priority of the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). Now, for the first time in department history, there is an entire administration dedicated solely to behavioral health.

This past summer, DHS began some significant transitions. Several youth-focused programs became the basis of a new agency, the Department of Children, Youth and Families, while the department's Direct Care and Treatment programs also took initial steps to become their own agency in 2025. While these larger transitions were happening, it gave DHS an opportunity to look at how our remaining programs are structured, and how we can better organize our work to improve programs for partners, providers, and the people we serve.

On July 1, 2024, DHS launched the new Behavioral Health Administration (BHA). The creation of this new administration will put enhanced focus on the increase in behavioral health needs Minnesota has experienced coming out of the pandemic. It will also streamline our work with DHS' Central Grants and Contracts team to redesign grant processes and will help us work with the department's Health Care Administration on new Medicaid waivers and State Plan Amendments that affect behavioral health services.

In the months and years to come, BHA will be working with partners to:

- Shore up the workforce so providers can hire staff to operate at full capacity
- Secure funding to expand our programs to underserved areas of the state
- Ensure our programs are providing services that are equitable and inclusive
- Increase our numbers of culturally specific providers
- Expand early intervention options to better meet community needs.

The launch of the BHA is more than an organizational change; it is a heartfelt commitment to enhancing the support

available to everyone in our communities. We are working to ensure that individuals facing behavioral health challenges receive the compassionate care they deserve, whether they are seeking prevention resources, treatment options, or recovery support.

As the new assistant commissioner of BHA, I am honored to lead this work. I understand the wide-ranging impacts of substance use disorder and mental illness, but I also know the strength and resilience that individuals and families demonstrate every day. Together, we can build a brighter future for people seeking recovery in Minnesota.

In my previous role as director of Wisconsin's Bureau of Prevention, Treatment and Recovery, I focused on fostering collaboration among community partners, health care providers, and individuals with lived experience. This collaborative spirit will guide our work here in Minnesota as we strive to build an integrated system that truly meets people's needs. Your experiences and insights are invaluable as we shape policies and programs that reflect what is most important to those in recovery.

I'm also excited to share that as part of this reorganization, we are expanding our focus within BHA in areas such as crisis transformation, peer and recovery supports, and school-based behavioral health. To build out these teams, we are hiring individuals who are passionate about behavioral health and committed to supporting recovery. If you or someone you know is interested in making a difference, I encourage you to explore these opportunities on the state of Minnesota's jobs webpage at mn.gov/mmb/careers.

I am excited about the journey ahead and the opportunity to support individuals and families in our state. The Behavioral Health Administration is here to champion people in recovery, and to support all pathways that get people to where they want to be. Thank you for your courage, resilience, and support as we work together to build a brighter future for behavioral health in Minnesota.

Teresa Steinmetz is assistant commissioner of the Behavioral Health Administration at the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Driggs from page 1

our beloved. Whereas we feel alienated, lonely, and perhaps resentful, when we are with a disliked person. Most of us desire to feel relaxed, elated, and less lonely and hence we value the power of love and are less fond of hate as a motivator or reason for connection. It's how humans are wired for love over hate that makes love stronger than hate. When you leave a rally of hateful persons you feel less motivated to join them, whereas when you are with compassionate people you will likely feel relaxed, hopeful, and more self-forgiving. These states generally continue even when you leave your social group, and you tend to have favorable recall of your social encounters. Hating others is a failed attempt to project our own self-hate onto others. However, blame never relieves our self-hate and only causes us to look for more people to hate. Loving others has the potential to lessen our self-hate especially when we are accepted by others despite our flaws. Once again love is more powerful than hate.

HOW DO WE LEARN TO LOVE OURSELVES?

A friend of mine once told me his story of how he came to love himself through connections to others. He started by reading self-help books on improving self-esteem. He became more intellectually smart on how he could feel more self-regard but he really didn't feel better about himself. So, he went to a therapist. Again, he discovered many reasons from his past that might lead him to dislike himself but he found no current tools to reverse that trend. What really worked for my friend was being in a room with other men in a 12 Step Alanon group where he could really share the dark side of his people-pleasing and loss of self. He felt accepted, not judged and less alone in his sharing. His identity strengthened, he found the ability to set limits with others and genuinely felt a budding love for himself and his fellow group members. He became less ashamed of himself and actually looked forward to going to meetings. The stunning regard he felt from his group mates was palpable and spiritually moving beyond what he had ever experienced before in his life. For the better he was a changed man. He experienced what James Baldwin called the "miracle of love."

"I have always felt that a human being could only be saved by an-

other human being. I am aware that we do not save each other very often. But I am aware that we save each other some of the time. The miracle on which one's unsteady attention is focused is always the same, however it may be stated, or however it may remain unstated. It is the miracle of love, love strong enough to guide or drive one into the great estate of maturity, or to put it another way, into the apprehension and acceptance of one's own identity.

JAMES BALDWIN, 1964

MY PERSONAL TALK WITH MY MAKER

Often when I am in great distress, I have a talk with my Maker before going to sleep. I start with the 23d Psalm, which I've memorized:

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his namesake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil. For thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil. My cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever. Amen.

What I find is that often the Lord answers me in my dreams. He consoles, encourages, and challenges me and explains what is going on. In the morning when I wake up, I often shares His words with my wife. We both marvel at what I am being told and we treasure His messages. I awaken way more relaxed. This dialogue has gotten to be a precious routine and feels like a gift and miracle.

John H. Driggs, L.I.C.S.W., is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in private practice in St. Paul and co-author of Intimacy Between Men. He can be reached at 651-699-4573.

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from page 1

promises to be more than just a kennel facility. Frank and Evan, who are both in a continuous recovery program, would also like the kennel to be used as a weekly meeting place for people to attend with their dogs. Frank adds, “There are so many people that like to go to meetings but can’t bring their dogs.”

THE JOURNEY

Evan grew up with two dogs and currently has two dogs of his own, Maggie and Buck. Frank started out with cats but now has a dog named Mia, so between them they have the experience of caring for animals.

Frank explains more about the challenges he had getting into recovery while caring for Mia, a problem he didn’t know existed until he was confronted with it. “My own personal story is that I couldn’t find a place for Mia and kept putting it off. It got worse for me and Mia”. He continues, “The window of opportunity for someone to go into treatment is pretty short. When they decide to go, we really want to take away barriers for that decision. It’s a big decision, an overwhelming decision, and it’s hard to ask for help. We figure that a sober owner is a better pet owner.”

Frank has a different mindset these days than when he was younger. In his words, he “dabbled in treatment,” but he offers the following reflection: “This one is a whole different story for me. I found the contentment and peace that they talk about. I was a skeptic, but I believe it now. A lot of my journey has been through service work.”

Evan’s story is also one that many contemplating treatment can probably identify with. It took him a couple of years to get into treatment due to the difficulties he had in trying to find someone to care for his dogs. He recalls, “I looked across the entire country [for someone to take care of Maggie and Buck]. I found one place in Texas, a guy who wasn’t a business. The guy was just nice enough to let you use his farm and he would go out and feed them. But it was the one place that I could find that was even remotely close. Otherwise there really was no option other than finding someone who was willing to watch the dogs.”

In talking about founding a kennel for those in treatment, Frank and Evan checked into options in the area. Their research just confirmed their own difficulties about finding a place to care for their



The window of opportunity for someone to go into treatment is pretty short. When they decide to go, we really want to take away barriers for that decision. It’s a big decision, an overwhelming decision, and it’s hard to ask for help. **We figure that a sober owner is a better pet owner.**

dogs while attending treatment. “People won’t come [to treatment] as they can’t find spots for their animals. They had to move mountains in some people’s cases to find suitable lodging for their pets. A real good friend of mine had to surrender his dog because he couldn’t find anything,” Frank said and stressed that “Mia’s been part of my recovery journey too – always happy to see me, helps me go on walks and get outdoors.”

Evan expands, “There’s places that will set up foster care but there’s no facility. The closest thing is The Humane Society. [They] will give you sixty days to watch your dog or cat for a hospital stay, etc., and treatment is one of their umbrellas, but it’s not their main focus. When I called myself to try to get into treatment and have someone watch my dog, they were full as they have other things going on.”

That’s when they both decided that they wanted to be of service to this un-

derstood community. “We are starting this mainly for service to others. If that’s what people need, that’s what we want to provide,” Frank confirms.

THE NAME

One of the most important things for a new business is its name. I wanted to know how they came up with an appropriate name for such a unique project. Frank answered with: “Finding a name that tells what we do.”

He turned to the Serenity Prayer for inspiration. “The Serenity Prayer is a big part of what I go to when things are stressful, and things are piling up. Serenity and peace of mind is what we want to provide as a kennel for those that are pursuing their treatment and their health. We were driving around visiting different kennels and it just popped up there!” Fortunately, the name was not registered, and they managed to get something that “was really unique for us.”

THE CHALLENGES

However, setting up a non-profit organization is not without its challenges. Neither Frank nor Evan have done this before. Yet they have done all of the initial legwork themselves: from researching other kennels, scouting locations, building a website, launching a Go Fund Me campaign to help with initial costs, and designing the logo of the company. Evan is the go-to guy who can fix things and run operations; Frank has a background in sales. Like any small business, being able to multi-task and learn new skill sets is part of the job description.

“It’s continuous,” Evan admits. Frank laughs and adds, “We’re not done yet!” Evan continues, “I know a lot more. We learned a lot together that I thought I would never know. And every time we start to dig further into an idea, three, four more questions pop up. It’s challenging just to make sure that we do everything right and we cover all of our bases

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RALLY FOR A RECOVERY-ORIENTED SYSTEM OF CARE

from page 6



Previous page (from left to right): Frank and his dog Mia; Evan and his dogs, Maggie and Buck. This page: Frank gives Mia a handshake, while Mia gives the side-eye (Photos by Tracy Walsh)

so that we can do what we want to do.” Frank states, “The main part was putting aside those fears of opening up a big bag of who knows what!” Frank and Evan intend to follow some of the best practices of current kennel operations. They have done research about this with other kennels. For example, dogs who don’t socialize well with others will have their own area. To start with, they intend to have about twenty kennels for dogs. Depending on how things go, they may eventually accept other animals, but initially the focus will be caring for dogs, with which they both have experience.

THE MISSION

Frank and Evan came up with a mission statement, after hours of brainstorming:

“Empowering individuals pursuing chemical dependency treatment by providing community-supported dog kenneling.”

This statement provides the framework for their business. Frank explains, “Part of our mission is helping people who can’t afford it. We are going to be setting up something like an endowment or scholarship. That’s where we hope to get donations, not only for start-up, but to continue operations. If money’s an issue for somebody, we want to try to help with that, by reducing their out-of-pocket kenneling costs through scholarship funding.” Although they still have to figure out how to set this up, it is part of their core mission.

Another unique part of their business is to provide service opportunities. People who they’ve talked to about their project are enthusiastic about it and want to take part. They are hoping that some of this service work will lead to professionals wanting to volunteer: for example, a veterinarian visiting once a month to check on the animals, or a dog groomer to help those dogs that need it. Other volunteers for dog walking and general care will be needed and very much appreciated.

HOW IT WORKS

Frank and Evan plan to keep the dogs at Serenity Kennel as long as someone is in a treatment program, regardless of the duration. They plan to run Serenity Kennel like any other kennel facility

where the owner is responsible for vet services and food (although they could provide food if the owner was unable to for any reason). However, they want to help a person with funding if they can’t cover the cost.

Evan explains more: “The standard treatment we figure is thirty days, sometimes sixty days, so that’s kind of the baseline of what we are expecting. I moved into a sober living house for six months; my dog went to a boarding facility, and I paid their fee. It was a large amount of money and so we’ve talked about if we can set them up with a foster or a longer-term situation. Our main focus is the initial thirty days/sixty days for treatment. But I know that I could have benefited from something longer term, and if someone thought that they could be more successful if they did sober living, then we can help.”

Frank adds that he is hoping that they can forge a partnership with an organization that can help with longer-term placements so that Serenity Kennel can keep spaces open for immediate help. One possible candidate is the Pink Cloud Foundation, a place that provides sober living and foster dog assistance.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Serenity Kennel is yet to find a home. They would ideally like to find a suitable location in the Twin Cities or surrounding seven-county metro area. Their goal is to open in 2025. A big opening week celebration is planned, such as an open house, merchandise giveaways, and a fundraising party with live music.

Frank and Evan are thinking about additional revenue streams such as merchandise and dog training classes, to help raise money for the scholarship fund. However, raising initial start-up costs through their Go Fund Me campaign is their primary goal at this stage. They are currently registered as a non-profit organization and working through the paperwork to get 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt status. This, they hope, will encourage more donations and interest from foundations.

Frank and Evan are looking to appoint a Board of Directors of about eleven people, which should help them a lot in overall management; they are looking for people with business, accounting, human resources, legal, fund-raising, and non-profit experience. They current-

ly have an experienced business professional on the Board helping with start-up and structure. Frank says, “We want talented, passionate people who are looking to build this.”

In closing, Frank summed up the whole purpose of their mission: “There are no options for someone to say, ‘I just need a safe place for my dog so I can go get help.’ Either people are having to give up their dogs or they delay or refuse treatment. It’s a bad situation for those people and their pets to be in. It’s a part of the community that we’d like to help support.”

Sharon Chapman is a published author and editor with over fifteen years’ experience. She is the published author of Authentic Aromatherapy (New York: Skyhorse Publishing) and editor in chief for various US publications. Learn more about her freelance writing, editing, and publishing services at www.sedonaaromatics.com/product-category/writing-editing-and-publishing.

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Workaholics Anonymous Meeting

Burning out? Workaholics Anonymous provides steps and tools to break free from non-stop work and activity — or work avoidance. Meeting is currently online via Zoom. Call Pat for link to the meeting or questions: 763-560-5199. www.workaholics-anonymous.org.

SPOTLIGHT ON RECOVERY

Recovering Parents Value Project CHILD's Support



Stock photo / Getty Images

Project CHILD (Community Health, Intervention, Linkage and Development) has been helping Hennepin County residents make a healthier start with their babies since 1990. We asked Hennepin County behavioral health manager, Alexandra (Ali) Kraak to share more about the program.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT PROJECT CHILD?

Project CHILD is a voluntary, multidisciplinary case management service for Hennepin County residents 16 years or older who are pregnant, living with a substance use disorder, and wanting to improve their quality of life.

An intake specialist, case managers, a nurse, and a peer recovery support specialist comprise the team which provides wraparound support. We also offer weekly peer led-recovery groups on Tuesdays in our peer space at 1800 Chicago Ave. in Minneapolis.

Our goal is to support healthy pregnancies by providing individualized harm reduction and trauma-informed services.

HOW DID IT START / HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN HELPING MOTHERS?

34 wonderful years! In 1990, the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) put out a request for proposals (RFP) centered around programs focused on family preservation where parental substance use was present. Project CHILD and Mothers First, a similar Ramsey County program, launched and both continue to provide services today.

One thing that's remained constant is our recognition that while recovery looks different for everyone, everyone deserves recovery support anchored in hope, connection, acceptance, and nonjudgment.

WHAT CAN A PARTICIPANT EXPECT TO RECEIVE WHEN THEY ENTER THE PROGRAM?

Each participant decides what supports and services they want to receive. There are no specific requirements to complete the program.

Project CHILD offers:

- Substance use assessments, treatment services, case management and counseling for up to six months after delivery
- Prenatal care referrals; health assess-

ments and individualized care planning with a nurse

- Help with basic needs, including transportation, housing, and baby supplies
- Peer recovery support specialist services – people with lived experience in substance use and recovery
- Prenatal and postnatal support groups – learn about parenting and baby's development while building community with other parents. We offer support for all caregivers.

While all participants have access to the same supports, each participant sets their own pace for how often they meet with the Project CHILD team and what resources or referrals they wish to move forward with. There is a strong emphasis on individualized goals and plans centered around the birthing parent's specific needs and values in their recovery. This allows us to be culturally responsive and effective!

While the peer group is optional, it is a well-attended group because the rapport and community Project CHILD participants have created with one another is so powerful in recovery.

"I really feel like I'm coming just to hang with a bunch of my friends with my baby," said one participant of the weekly groups. "It helps to come here and have other moms who can relate. We can trade off information or lift each other up."

DO YOU HAVE ANY SUCCESS STORIES THAT YOU CAN SHARE WITH US OF PARTICIPANTS GOING THROUGH PROJECT CHILD?

Tara had her first run-in with Child Protective Services (CPS) in 2010. Her two oldest children were taken away because of concerns around her ex-husband, and Tara began to use substances to cope with the loss. It kicked off a painful cycle that ultimately resulted in Tara losing custody of nine children.

After many years, it was time for the cycle to end. Tara committed a year of her life to a treatment program and found success! She has been sober for nearly two years. But her history has stayed with her. When Tara found herself pregnant with her current significant other, she knew CPS would be involved. She was referred to Project CHILD for support.

Thanks to her involvement in the program and ongoing sobriety, the judge dismissed the case before it even began. Now that Tara has full custody of her daughter, she's planning to go to school for psychology and getting involved in social work to support women like her.

WHAT TYPES OF SUPPORT WILL A PROGRAM RECIPIENT RECEIVE AFTER GOING THROUGH PROJECT CHILD?

Project CHILD and the participant work together to determine when Project CHILD will close to our services. Because our work with the parent is centered around recovery, participants are often well-connected with the services and supports they need to maintain recovery and wellness without intensive case management.

Project CHILD alumni are always welcome to continue attending the Project CHILD peer groups. Alumni participation is a powerful influence and encouragement for others who may be earlier on in their recovery efforts.

DOES PROJECT CHILD OFFER CHILDCARE SUPPORT, IF A PARTICIPANT IS IN TREATMENT?

Project CHILD helps birthing parents get connected with resources and supports to achieve their goals. That would include planning for childcare when needed, safe and sober caregiver planning, or finding treatment where their children can attend with them.

HOW CAN SOMEONE REACH OUT TO PROJECT CHILD FOR HELP?

There are several options to get connected with services. Folks can call (612) 879-3609, email us at projectchild@hennepin.us, submit a referral at www.hennepin.us/projectchild, or come into 1800 Chicago Ave. in Minneapolis, Monday-Friday between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.




Alexandra Kraak / Photo provided by Kraak


nepin.us, submit a referral at www.hennepin.us/projectchild, or come into 1800 Chicago Ave. in Minneapolis, Monday-Friday between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Our thanks to Lauren Kewley and Alexandra Kraak for helping to facilitate this Q & A.

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Autumn Leaves

by *Mary Lou Logsdon*



“Autumn demands that I release what I think is important to do and returns me to the only thing which matters that I remember—to love and to allow love to sculpt me, even as it breaks my heart.” — CHRISTINE VALTERS PAINTER

Autumn. The closing of a year. The last burst of color and abundance as we slip into the quiet grace of winter. The days’ sunlight diminishes, welcoming me with gifts of shadow, dark, and rest.

As the sun wanes and leaves fall, bare trees stand, stark silhouettes in diminishing light. In summer, like the fully leafed trees, my life is crammed with activities, distractions, energy. As autumn descends, these distractions diminish. I am reminded of the bareness in my life; I don’t have eternal summer either. When I am less busy, it is harder to keep sorrows at bay. Former friends, past hurts, unresolved issues find a place in my ruminations. It is harder to resist knowing this precious life, too, will end.

November brings the reminder that life is full of endings—the last of migrating birds glean from empty farmlands, songbirds disappear from feeders, summer annuals’ dried remains linger in the garden. Endings.

This transition from abundance to quiet is not a move into scarcity, though it can feel that way. Rather it is a move toward simplicity. How might I reduce the distractions, remember what I value, focus on gratitude for the life I have?

November serves as a bridge from the high energy of summer to the quiet of

winter. I look forward to the seclusion of a snowstorm, the solitude when temperatures turn frigid, the calm of fallow time. Late autumn is the liminal space that holds us for what comes next, even when we don’t have any idea what next might bring.

We all go through similar passages at various points in our lives. The transition from child to adult, single to partnered, parent to empty nest, employed to retired, married to widowed, illness to health, active addict to sobriety. We leave behind one way of life and embark on another, not sure how it will turn out. Not even sure if we want to go there.

In these transitions, losses loom large. I see in the diminishing light what is gone, what is dying, what was and is no longer. I cannot yet see what is to come.

I wonder if we do not need to sit in our Novembers for a while. We live in a culture where sorrow is not welcome. Change is suspect. The future needs to be glossy and inviting. We want to move on, but we may not be ready for what comes next. Not yet anyway. It is hard to feel sad. It is uncomfortable. Who wants to be uncomfortable? Yet, sorrow lingers after hurts, losses, disappointments. Suffering permeates life, the Buddhists remind us.

The question isn’t how to avoid the losses and sorrows, the question is how

to be with them, engage them, learn what they have to teach.

Here are some things that help me. I spend time with the sorrow, feel it in my body, sit with it for a time. I might take an hour or a morning or days. I welcome it as a visitor, knowing it cannot become a permanent resident.

I hold it. Talk to it. Go on a walk with it. Name it. I journal about it. I notice how it feels in my body. My shoulder aches, my throat is dry, my heart beats fast. I picture it—a load of bricks, a dark veil, a whirling wind.

And then I let it go. That is enough for now. It may come back. Then I will welcome it again, for a time. Each time it returns I learn a little more. Each time it is a little easier to let go.

Finally, I move into gratitude. Not for the hurt or pain or sorrow, but for all the other blessings that fill my life. I recall the people I love, the beauty of the day, the amazement that I am alive.

This autumnal quiet time is perfect for taking a gratitude inventory, like a 10th step of the last year. I choose to look at what was life giving, at the joys and goodness of the year. For what am I most grateful? What do I appreciate as the year draws to a close? Eckhart Tolle says, “Acknowledging the good that you already have in your life is the foundation for all abundance.”

I can do this month by month, reviewing my calendar. Or I can look at my year in photos, noticing what delights me—a beautiful sunset, a heron rising from the water, a selfie with a dear friend. I might sit quietly to notice what comes to mind—sorrows wrapped in loving memories, tears shared with a family member, music that echoed in my ears weeks after a concert, sacred time shared in community.

The question isn’t how to avoid the losses and sorrows, the question is how to be with them...

I recall encounters with seeming strangers who turned out to know someone I knew. I remember the excitement of being in a crowd with a shared experience. I recollect engaging conversations with colleagues.

I am grateful for necessary sorrows—remembering my brother who died this year, the joy of playing ping pong with him, and his delight in beating me even with his compromised health.

As I look back, I see a parade of images—people, places, and things that brought me delight.

I remember that this liminal time will end. Even in the dying of November, I trust in spring. This year I planted four dozen daffodil bulbs, I noticed the buds on the rhododendron, I tucked away lawn chairs, protecting them from winter’s harsh winds. I prepare for the renewal of spring.

There are no beginnings without endings. There are no endings without beginnings. May this liminal time be filled with graces for you and those you love.

Mary Lou Logsdon is a Spiritual Director in the Twin Cities. She teaches in the Sacred Ground Spiritual Direction Formation Program. She can be reached at logsdon.marylou@gmail.com.

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