

A Daily Experience



This May is Mental Health month. In response, some faith communities have wondered, "so what are we supposed to do any differently this month?" Perhaps a place to start is to reflect together on the reality that this month is an annual

reminder of what is actually a daily experience for many. Therefore, while faith communities would do well to publicly address the area of mental health this May, they would do better to address it throughout the year for the sake of those in their congregations attempting day after day to walk with God in every area of their life, including their mental health.

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Job Opportunities

Full Time Therapeutic Support Staff in Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania

Provide supports to children utilizing safe crisis management techniques, emotional support and positive reinforcement.

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Be Ready to Offer Help

What can you do when someone you know is hurting – perhaps approaching a crisis point or considering suicide? We can't all be therapists, but each of us can reach out to that friend, family member or co-worker and offer help.

Access Services offers training sessions, such as QPR, for your workplace, church or

community group. QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) training will give you the tools to identify:

- the warning signs of suicide
- risk and protective factors for suicide
- how to help someone in a mental health crisis

Be ready to offer help to those around you. It can make all the difference!

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ACCESS SERVICES

Creating better ways to serve people with special needs

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Program Highlights

Everyone's Walk is Different



Ariana Brown has journeyed with cerebral palsy and autism for 22 years. For Ariana, some of the challenges she has had to overcome are seemingly small things: getting dressed, making food, and even tying her shoes. However, for Ariana she has not let her disability get in the way, "Just because you have a disability you shouldn't let it hold you back from doing anything you want."

Morgan, a TIP facilitator, stepped into Ariana's life last year to help her work towards independence. Morgan shares that when she first started working with Ariana, she was very unsure about what she wanted to accomplish. However, now "she has a clear-cut idea of what she wants to do, and she is really determined to achieve it." Morgan was motivated to nominate Ariana for a Personal Achievement Award for her persistence and resilience, "She's had adversities since the day she was brought into this world. She should

be extremely proud of everything she has gone through."

After interviewing Ariana's parents, it is evident just how much Ariana has overcome, "Ariana was

born at 24 weeks at 1 pound 7 ounces," mom shares, "We were painted the worst possible picture. We didn't know what she would be able to do – if she would ever walk, talk, breathe on her own. What her learning capabilities would be." Her parents shared how proud they are of Ariana for proving the medical community wrong. Although her walk has been different than most, she has fought hard for everything she has accomplished. Her mom shares, "She never ceases to amaze me. She keeps striving and figuring out a way how to do things."

This year, Ariana hit a huge milestone: tying her shoes independently! Morgan beamed when she told us, "I felt like a proud parent!" adding that now Ariana does not have to worry about buying specific shoes that accommodate her. Ariana shares that she also uses dictation software to pursue her passion of writing and is working on getting her driver's permit. Congratulations Ariana on your 2019 Personal Achievement Award!

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We Are Expanding



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We are excited to share that The Bucks County Commissioners approved an expansion of mobile psychiatric rehabilitation services that will cover the central and lower parts of Bucks County. Currently, Access Services operates a similar

program in Montgomery County known as "Starting Point", a program serving adults with mental illness. The program is focused on recovery and planning, offering personalized support and guidance.

Jessica Fenchel, Vice President of Adult Behavioral Health shares, "We are grateful for this opportunity to serve individuals in Bucks County through this recovery-oriented program and to partner with the social services community." The program will launch this summer, with a goal to serve about 100 individuals.

We are currently seeking to hire full time case manager/practitioners to support this program. Visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/accessservices to learn more about upcoming hiring events.



ACCESS SERVICES

Creating better ways to serve people with special needs

Access Services, a 40 year-old nonprofit organization, operates in ten Pennsylvania counties, offering services for children, adults, and families. The mission of Access Services is to empower and serve people in need of specialized supports by providing innovative services that improve their ability to live fulfilling lives in the community.

May 2019

Journey to Recovery

"In 2016 I tried to commit suicide. I was hospitalized for 78 days that year. In 2017 I was hospitalized for 70 days. In 2018 it was 121 days. In 2019, since receiving support from Access Services, I have spent zero days in hospitalization."

Lori Hoff has been overcoming trauma and adversity for most of her life. She is transparent about her battle with abuse, mental illness, homelessness and suicidal ideation.



Lori's perseverance and resilience are what inspired her team at Access Services to nominate her for the Personal Achievement Award, a yearly award that is given to an individual supported by our Adult Behavioral Health services who has overcome adversity. Jeff Walsh, Assistant Director of Starting Point, shares, "Lori has had a lifetime of trauma. Some of the things that Lori has faced would cause a lot of people to give up. It seems as though every time Lori has a hurdle put in her place, she fights that much harder." He continued to share that Lori is the most courageous person he has ever met, and that one of the first times he met Lori she openly shared, "I've spent a lifetime destroying relationships and now you're asking me to build relationships and that's really hard for me." And, even though it has been hard Lori has continued to develop and maintain relationships.

For Lori, letting people walk alongside her in her journey was critical to her recovery. She affectionately refers to Jeff as her, "little bro," sharing that Jeff stepped into her life when she was at one of her lowest points and experiencing frequent thoughts of suicide. During this time Jeff stood by Lori's side – as she was hooked up to a ventilator fighting for her life. Since that time, Jeff has helped Lori thrive in her mental health recovery. Lori shares, "He's opened up services to me, he's shown me that people have faith in me, and he has helped me with my journey."

Lori has also found support through her church family. In 2009, Alan, who was involved with a furniture ministry through Hope Community Church, met Lori for the first time. After delivering her furniture Alan asked if Lori would like to come to church. Since then Lori has been attending Hope Community Church and created a lasting relationship with Alan and his wife, Barb. Together, Alan and Barb have been able to provide a number of supports to Lori, ranging from helping her move to managing her finances to advocating for her in the mental health system to providing regular encouragement and scripture verses to hold onto.

Alan and Barb were excited to be part of recognizing Lori for her Personal Achievement Award. Alan shares, "The thing about Lori is that she is a survivor. She's been through so much and she's still here." Barb shares, "Recoveries have their ups and downs, but she is fighting through those. I think she needs to be recognized for her perseverance and seeing a goal and going after it. She's conquering the obstacles."

Lori encourages others who may be walking through similar challenges, "Don't let failures rule you. You can turn those failures around. You can believe in yourself. You don't have to suffer anymore. There are people out there who are very willing and open to help you. You just have to have trust that things can change, that life can change."

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The Power of Relationships



May is Mental Health Month. When I read Lori's story, I was struck by many things, but what stands out most to me is the power of relationships. In the Starting Point program, along with many other mental health programs at Access, we recognize relationships as the

vehicle for change when it comes to recovery from mental illness.

The relationship I am referring to doesn't always have to be a professional, helping relationship. There is immense power in natural relationships and community connections as well. In Lori's case, she has a relationship with both Starting Point and connections within her church, all of which are equally important. It wasn't necessary for the church members to be experts in mental health to be able to connect with Lori. But their willingness to offer something as simple as a ride to church had a transformational impact.

SAMHSA recognizes the relationship as one of the 10 guiding principles of recovery. They share, "An important factor in the recovery process is the presence and involvement of people who believe in the person's ability to recover; who offer hope, support, and encouragement; and who also suggest strategies and resources for change." (SAMHSA)

Doesn't everyone need relationships in order to thrive? As we move through Mental Health Month, let's normalize this common human need for connection. Let's also recognize the powerful tools we as individuals, service providers and communities all possess - the ability to come along side someone who may be struggling and offer them hope and encouragement through a relationship.

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