We’ve been there. We can help.

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

2008 ANNUAL REPORT
We are...
... living with depression and bipolar disorder.
... supporting our peers.
... moving toward recovery.
... improving the lives of people living with mood disorders.

We’ve been where over 21 million other Americans have been.
We know their struggles.
We know their hope.

HOPE

We’ve been there. We can help.
Dear Friends of DBSA,

DBSA ended 2008 with an operating surplus—the organization’s first in two years. We were able to achieve this milestone, despite the challenging economy, thanks to a vigilant team of volunteer board members, a dedicated staff, and the generous investments of our community. Throughout our quest to end the year “in the black,” we maintained a firm commitment to judicious use of our resources: an impressive 79 cents of every dollar donated in 2008 was spent directly on empowering programs and services, wellness resources, and educational materials.

As in past years, DBSA’s 2008 financial statements were audited, and we continue to comply with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and the Sarbanes Oxley Act. The board of directors reviews monthly financial reports and ensures responsible operations. DBSA respects and maintains the privacy of its participants and supporters and subscribes to the “Donor Bill of Rights.”

These honest, transparent, and inclusive managerial principles form the foundation for serving 5,000,000 people nationwide. In 2008, DBSA maintained a network of 400 chapters across the country; provided peer-based, recovery-oriented programs, services, and educational materials; and facilitated groundbreaking training for consumers, providers, and systems. To ensure these programs’ continuation and strength, the DBSA leadership remains focused on diversifying its revenue streams, so that the organization is dependent upon no one sector for its continued operations.

Even as we refine our programs and diversify our revenues, DBSA’s strength remains within the individual: those people whose lives have been affected by mood disorders and who seek recovery for themselves, their loved ones, and members of their communities. These individuals participate in our support groups, attend our national conference, seek information and hope on our websites ... and make contributions that support our continued ability to improve the lives of people living with mood disorders. Indeed, DBSA is saving lives every day. Whether gifts of $5 or of $50,000, investments in DBSA truly make a difference, allowing people with mood disorders to lead hopeful, productive lives and achieve their goals and dreams. Please renew your support in the coming year so that we may sustain and improve upon our important work.

We look forward to continuing the journey of wellness and hope with all of you.

Stephen Propst

Peter C. Ashenden
DBSA is the leading patient-directed national organization focusing on the most prevalent mental illnesses.

The mission of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) is to provide hope, help, and support to improve the lives of people living with depression or bipolar disorder. DBSA pursues and accomplishes this mission through peer-based, recovery-oriented, empowering services and resources when people want them, where they want them, and how they want them.

DBSA fosters an environment of understanding about the impact and management of depression and bipolar disorder by providing up-to-date, scientifically-based tools and information written in language the general public can understand. DBSA supports research to promote more timely diagnosis, develop more effective and tolerable treatments, and discover a cure. Founded in 1985, the organization works to ensure that people living with mood disorders are treated equitably.

Assisted by a Scientific Advisory Board comprised of the leading researchers and clinicians in the field of mood disorders, DBSA has more than 400 chapters and 1,000 peer-run support groups across the country which serve nearly 70,000 people each year.

DBSA’s home website, DBSAAlliance.org, is home to a wealth of educational information, as are our affiliate sites:

- DBSAlianza.org provides Spanish-language resources.
- FacingUs.org offers interactive wellness tools.
- RebeccasDream.org promotes compassion and understanding through a moving personal story.
Building Networks of Support

No one with depression or bipolar disorder has to feel alone. That’s why DBSA offers—free of charge—over 1,000 peer-directed support groups and 400 chapters. We serve close to 70,000 people a year. Our groups are also online and around the world in places like Australia, Estonia, Mexico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. People consistently say their support groups

- Provide them with interpersonal support.
- Help them cope with problems and crises.
- Help them make better decisions.
- Help them understand medications and treatment.

In 2008, we brought more of these life-changing benefits to more people. Here are some highlights:

- Established 92 new chapters, including 20 new support groups specifically for families.
- Awarded grants to 23 chapters for educational events to reduce stigma through personal stories from “real people.”
- Launched real-time online support groups for those without access to in-person groups or who prefer more anonymity.
- Fostered support groups in correctional facilities for the many incarcerated individuals who live with a mood disorder.
- Trained over 150 individuals to assist new support groups by facilitating group discussions and helping participants focus on recovery rather than illness.
- Gathered 100 chapter leaders for Chapter Leadership Forum (CLF) where they exchanged ways to foster team development, raise funds, serve those at different recovery levels, cultivate new group leaders, and promote whole health.
- Launched monthly teleconferences for chapters to discuss ways to promote legislative advocacy, develop strong leaders, and work with difficult group participants.

In August 2001, I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and began my journey of recovery. It was also the month and year that I found DBSA. I also discovered the word “bipolar.” I’d been treated for depression, but I became more impulsive, irritable, and full of rage, switching from dark despair to grandiose plans that went nowhere. My loving wife suggested seeing a psychiatrist. While pondering (and dreading) that, I went online and found some screeners for mania and depression on DBSA’s website. I saw that I’d answered yes to 75 percent of the questions! Thanks to DBSA’s website and my wife’s encouragement, I found a psychiatrist who confirmed my suspicions: a classic case of bipolar I. Finally, I could name this monster that was making my family and me so miserable.

On DBSA’s site, I also found—thankfully—a nearby support group. People there listened, shared their stories, answered my many questions, and made me realize there were others who understood what I was going through. I was not alone!

By 2005, I’d progressed in my recovery and began volunteering in our chapter’s outreach program. In 2006, I was invited to join the chapter’s board of directors and, in 2007, I became president. My DBSA colleagues are among my closest friends. My peers on our board are my support group. We care for each other in ways I’ve seldom seen outside of DBSA.

Steve Bell
Chapter President
DBSA Colorado Springs
DBSA firmly believes that consumer- or peer-providers are essential to the mental health workforce. Our unique recovery-oriented peer specialist training, technical assistance, and consultation bring an understanding of the peer perspective to providers, private health care systems, and government-funded programs. Through these efforts we work toward transforming the entire U.S. national mental health system.

Expanded the range of our peer specialist training program

- Delivered the highest annual number of peer specialist training courses to date
- Provided first Spanish-language training in San Juan, Puerto Rico
- Instituted an online continuing education (CE) program
- Offered faith-based training with State of Tennessee and Magellan Health Services
- Developed online English and Spanish training courses with Magellan Health Services

Provided peer-focused assistance and consultation at the national level

- Selected and funded by Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) to offer consultation to U.S. states and territories
- Collaborated on NIMH-funded grant researching patient-centered interventions
- Served on panel at workforce conference sponsored by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)

Advocated for veteran peer services

- Awarded approval by U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Mental Health Services for peer specialist core curriculum and certification process
- Continued service on Consumer Liaisons Council to VA’s Committee on Care of Veterans with Serious Mental Illness (SMI Committee)
- Participated in invitation-only CMHS dialogue with veterans, and government, provider, advocacy, research, policymaking representatives
- Contributed—one of only 2 non-VA attendees—at VA national mental health conference
- Awarded $100,000 Veteran’s Cash grant by Illinois VA Department to develop veteran peer services
Over 15 million Americans live with depression and nearly 6 million with bipolar disorder. If we are to meet our mission—to improve the lives of these individuals—it is critical to provide education and promote awareness about these life-threatening illnesses. DBSA does this in many ways but especially through our informative, accurate, and easy-to-understand online resources and publications. Our goal is to bring knowledge and understanding to the general public; the provider community; those who have been just diagnosed; those who are living with a diagnosis; and the loved ones, friends, and family of these individuals.

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**Online Resources**

**Rebecca’s Dream Family Center**
This center is designed to help families and consumers enhance their relationships and communication. It offers information about DBSA in-person and online support groups as well as a wide range of family-focused tools such as podcasts, books, personal stories, and educational workshops.

**DBSAlianza.org, Spanish-Language Website**
This site offers a Spanish version of some of DBSA’s most critical resources. These tools include educational brochures—in both audio and print form—for consumers and families, as well as guidelines for finding support. Resources designed for providers are also available.

**DBSA Clinicians’ Portal**
Designed for mental health professionals, this portal helps foster the patient-provider partnership that is absolutely crucial to the best treatment outcomes, particularly for the depressive phase of bipolar disorder—bipolar depression. It provides links to research, publications, clinician training, and patient tools.

**DBSA Real Recovery Podcasts**
Our free podcasts offer listeners the opportunity to hear from a diverse group of people, ranging from award-winning researchers to stand-up comics. In 2008, our seven podcasts addressed the following topics: helping a loved one who is depressed; the relationship between genetics and bipolar disorder; laughter as a recovery tool; the benefits of online support groups; stigma-busting strategies; recovery and family dynamics; and living with PTSD.

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**Educational Publications**

**Generic and Brand Name Drugs**
Straightforward and reviewed by both consumers and physicians, this brochure explores the similarities and differences—and pros and cons—of brand name and generic drugs. It also offers guidelines to consumers on how to make smart, informed decisions about medication with their providers.

**Finding a Mental Health Professional: A Personal Guide**
This major revision of an important DBSA resource provides invaluable information for consumers seeking professional help. Readers will find guidelines on where to look for that help as well as the questions to consider before choosing a mental health provider.

**Mood Disorders and Different Kinds of Depression**
Written in collaboration with Joseph R. Calabrese, MD—a leading bipolar disorder researcher at Case Western University and a DBSA Scientific Advisory Board member—this publication discusses bipolar disorder’s depressive phase. It explains how it differs from unipolar depression and why bipolar disorder is difficult to diagnose.

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**Our 2008 Web Stats**
- 22 million hits
- 1 million unique visitors
- Over 35,000 e-news subscribers
DBSA shares the goal of promoting mental health with many different communities—consumers, providers, families, legislators, and researchers. We also share the mission of the Rebecca Lynn Cutler Legacy of Life Foundation: to promote awareness and compassionate understanding of mood disorders as real diseases. A special gala is hosted by the Foundation in Chicago each fall. Funds raised at the event allow DBSA to connect communities across the country with crucial support and mental health information.

3rd Annual Rebecca’s Dream Gala

On November 8, 2008, the 3rd Annual Rebecca’s Dream Gala welcomed 225 guests to the Chicago Cultural Center. The celebration raised $251,000 to support the shared missions of the Foundation and DBSA and enable DBSA to produce and offer crucial programs. Thanks to these funds, we were able to offer a special institute at the DBSA 2008 National Conference, “At Home with Wellness: Families and Recovery,” featuring mental health expert and best-selling author Julie Fast. The gala’s success also allowed us to develop and launch the online Rebecca’s Dream Family Center.

The gala honored Illinois’s then-lieutenant governor, Pat Quinn, with the Legacy of Life Award. Every year, this award is given to someone who has actively spoken out—in the public arena—about mood disorders to educate, raise awareness and understanding, and eliminate stigma. Past honorees include Academy Award-winning actress Patty Duke and Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy (D-RI).

Established in 2005, the Rebecca Lynn Cutler Legacy of Life Foundation and its annual gala have raised over $1,000,000. With this incredible show of support, DBSA reached over 15,000 people directly … and thousands more online through the Rebecca’s Dream websites.
Recovery happens when the illness stops getting in the way of life. And the key to recovery is self-empowerment. That means getting the information needed to make informed decisions and chart a personal road to recovery. The first step down that road is impossible without a compass—tools that help peers direct their own recovery:

**Find-A-Pro Search Engine**
By peers and for peers, this database lists mental health providers and facilities recommended by consumers to help others in the often confusing, overwhelming process of finding treatment. At [www.DBSAlliance.org/FindAPro](http://www.DBSAlliance.org/FindAPro), consumers can both recommend, and search for, providers and facilities in their local community.

**“Facing Us” Music Contest**
This contest recognized peers who use their original music and lyrics as a recovery tool and to inspire and empower others. The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners, along with the 16 finalists, are featured on a special CD and in the media room of the Facing Us Clubhouse at [www.FacingUs.org](http://www.FacingUs.org).

**Dave’s Spark Creativity Center**
Celebrating the creative spark and its role in recovery, the site, [www.FacingUs.org/Creativity](http://www.FacingUs.org/Creativity), offers empowering tools like these to help peers find their creative outlet: a writing workshop; a course on breaking barriers to creativity; and podcasts with peer artists including musicians and a stand-up comic.

**Online Election Center**
Designed for the 2008 Presidential Election, “MI Vote Counts” was an online center of “Election Resources for People Living with Mental Illness.” It offered consumers voting and educational information including a tool to find polling places; an explanation of the Electoral College; and side-by-side comparisons of the candidates’ positions.

In September of 2008 in Norfolk, Virginia, 350 people gathered to share experience, inspiration, and wellness tools. They left our national conference empowered by their peers to move forward in their recovery. Highlights include:

- Over 15 educational workshops led by consumer advocates, best-selling authors, leading experts
- Peer roundtables on issues like disclosure, rapid cycling, and substance use
- Stand-Up Comedy Night featuring peer comics
- Keynote addresses by world-renowned and award-winning Kay Redfield Jamison, PhD; leading researcher Pat Deegan, PhD; and peer specialist training expert Larry Fricks

“Somewhere in the course of the DBSA conference, I made a paradigm shift from a survival mentality to a recovery model. That changes everything about my future outlook. Instead of merely surviving bipolar disorder, I am now ready to consider thriving despite my diagnosis.”
ADVOCATING

Advocating for the Consumer

DBSA makes every effort possible to ensure that the consumer voice heard. We know—we’ve been there, feeling as if our concerns go unnoticed. That’s why we take critical issues to the forefront. Whether it’s testimony to Congress; meetings with legislators; promoting consumer action through our online Legislative Advocacy Center; or speaking out in the media, we passionately advocate to bring more hope, help, and support to the mental health community.

In the Legislative and Public Policy Arena

Visited the following members of Congress to discuss Mental Health Parity and proposed legislation:

- Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI)
- Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D-IL)
- Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL)
- Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL)

Submitted comments to U.S. Department of Justice regarding issues such as psychiatric service dogs

Submitted comments to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on matching grants

Submitted 44,000 constituent letters to Congress, through DBSA Legislative Action Center, regarding bills such as Mental Health Parity

Sent support letters for the MOTHERS Act to promote awareness of, and services for, postpartum depression (PPD). These efforts were made at the request of the offices of

- Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL)
- Rep. Bobby Rush (D-IL)

Cultivated alliances with Postpartum Support International (PSI) and others to support the MOTHERS Act

Continued collaborations with organizations such as

- Campaign for Mental Health Reform (CMHR)
- Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG)
- Depression is Real Coalition (DIR)

In the Media

ABC.com
Interviewed for the news story, “Bipolar in the Workplace” (past DBSA President Sue Bergeson)

Dow Jones Market Watch
Consulted and quoted in news story, “Passage of Mental Health Parity”

PBS NewsHour with Jim Lehrer
Featured in segment on consumers who will be helped by the enactment of parity

PBS Nova/WGBH
Served as a contributor—along with the Mayo Clinic, SAMHSA, and others—in content development for the documentary, This Emotional Life, airing in January 2010

Psychology Today magazine
Featured in article regarding coping strategies for individuals living with bipolar disorder

Real Simple magazine
Featured stories of the lives of two women, both DBSA spokespersons, who are managing life with bipolar disorder

WebMD.com
Featured in story on parents’ concern that their children may develop bipolar disorder

DBSA is also proud to have been featured by other major media outlets such as the Associated Press (AP) and Google News.
Despite the national economic slowdown, DBSA ended the year with a net gain, showing a 142% revenue increase between 2007 and 2008.
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DBSA 2008 ANNUAL REPORT
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Membership in this special
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investments of $500 or more
to the Rebecca Lynn Cutler
Legacy of Life Foundation.

These listings reflect dona-
tions received from January 1,
2008, through December 31,
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made to ensure accuracy. We
apologize for any errors or
omissions and would appreci-
ate hearing from you with any
corrections. Please contact
the Development Department
at (312) 988-1161.