



Newsletter of the

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

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MISSION

The mission of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) is to improve the lives of people living with mood disorders.

WORK YOUR WELLNESS ON THE WEB!

Use the DBSA Wellness Tracker to track your mood, blood pressure, sleep, medication, etc., and create reports to share with your provider. Do all this at www.DBSAAlliance.org/Tracker.

Helping Design a "Blueprint for Hope"

Some of you know Paige Hemmis as the talented designer and self-taught carpenter on ABC's Emmy Award-winning television show, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*. You might be surprised, though, to learn that she has degrees in psychology and theology...and that she has worked as an emergency medical technician (EMT), teacher, and wedding planner. But you might be even more surprised that she shares, with millions of Americans, the experience of depression.

Paige is now speaking publicly for the first time. "Dealing with my depression," she says, "meant working with my doctor to create a 'blueprint,' or plan... much in the way that blueprints guide the creation of the homes on the show." For her plan,

Paige has drawn on her home improvement experience: starting small to avoid getting overwhelmed and working on do-it-yourself (DIY) projects. But as she says, "Just like every blueprint for a house is different, every person diagnosed with depression will have a different 'blueprint' for treatment."

Through Blueprint for Hope, a new national campaign, she, along with DBSA, hope to encourage others to seek help for their depression and to work with their health care professional to build a personalized "blueprint" (wellness plan) to manage the illness. DBSA is deeply honored to partner in this campaign, working alongside Paige and Dr. Jesse H. Wright, a psychiatry professor and director of the Depression Center at the University of Louisville and medical director of the Norton Psychiatric Center. And this summer, DBSA is helping to bring Blueprint for Hope events to six communities across the country: Houston, Philadelphia, Denver, Atlanta, Cleveland, and Sacramento. You can learn more about this campaign and these events at www.DBSAAlliance.org/BlueprintForHope.

Through these events, DBSA hopes to help people better understand the resources available and to

reinforce, as DBSA President Peter Ashenden explains, that "individuals need support not only from their physicians but also from their peers, loved ones, and communities. It often takes a broad support network to help people stick to their treatment plan and maintain their journey."

At the Blueprint events, a local DBSA chapter representative and a local mental health care professional provide information about support groups and additional resources for managing depression. And to inspire and motivate others, Paige shares her story and demonstrates some of her DIY projects. Kevin Siembor, DBSA's national office repre-



Blueprint for Hope spokesperson Paige Hemmis of ABC's Extreme Makeover: Home Edition with DBSA President Peter Ashenden

sentative at the Houston event, said it was a "gift to see such eager eyes, hungry for the chance to connect with someone else living a full and meaningful life." This personal connection helps so many people realize that there are others, like Paige, who understand and have found recovery on the "other side."

In honor of Paige's efforts to use her personal experience to shatter stigma, raise awareness, and educate the public about depression, she will receive the 2009 Legacy of Life Award. The Rebecca Lynn Cutler Legacy of Life Foundation and DBSA are privileged to present her with this award at the 4th Annual Rebecca's Dream Gala in Chicago this fall on November 7, 2009.

This March, a National Institutes of Health (NIH) publication noted "that stigma can be reduced when people with mental illness are portrayed as 'a person like any other.'" Sharing her story openly, Paige is doing exactly that...letting the general public know that she has faced depression like so many millions of other Americans...and that neither she nor they are any different than "other people." This echoes what we at DBSA say every day: You are not alone. We've been there. We can help.

President's Outlook



Peter Ashenden

Finding My Voice

I was someone who couldn't decide what he wanted to be when he grew up. I wanted to do something to "give back," but I couldn't seem to find my voice. Never did I think that, one day, I'd be helping others find their voice through a national organization like DBSA. But it has been a long, hard road.

After high school in New York State, I worked in the human services field, providing direct care to individuals with severe handicaps. The work was rewarding but also very challenging emotionally. The same was true in my personal life. I married at 19 and was still very young when my wife left, making me a single dad to two wonderful children. That was in my late 20s, around the same time that I got my MBA... and was diagnosed with depression.

With the diagnosis, I felt like a 2nd class citizen; it devastated my relationships, work, and social life. It drove me to the brink of suicide, medication addiction, and a horrible experience with psychiatric hospitalization. For years, I was very resistant to treatment. But a turning point came, at home one night with my kids, when the doorbell rang. On the other side was a man who belonged to a local support group. He invited me to the next meeting...that very night.

For some reason, I went. But I sat on the periphery, not saying a word. I continued to go, week after week, always silent. Once, someone invited me for coffee afterwards with a few others. That night of comfortable, social chit-chat encouraged me, and at the next of what would be many support group meetings, I joined the conversation. This experience helped me find my voice and start my recovery.

Professionally, I stayed in human services, joining the staff of PEOPLE, Inc., which is dedicated to helping those with special needs live more meaningful, independent lives. In that safe environment—with folks that had the lived experience and shared their voices of hope for recovery—I acknowledged my depression...and that I, too, was a consumer. That was almost 10 years after my diagnosis. And for the last 15 years or so, I've dedicated myself professionally to the consumer movement.

After PEOPLE, I worked with MHA of Dutchess County, New York, and then with the state's Mental Health Empowerment Project (MHEP). There, I was thrilled (and honestly, a little surprised) to be offered the leadership role. I did all I could to change the ways consumers received services...and to help them find their voice, as I was continuing to find mine.

In 2007, I came to DBSA, a place where my voice could be heard on a national level. Our mission at DBSA is to improve the lives of people living with mood disorders. Being one of those people myself, and having seen my own life improve, I feel that DBSA is the right place for me, professionally and personally. Here, I've returned to my roots and come full circle to lead an organization that started the same way my recovery started—through support groups.

DBSA AND ME

The other day, I checked out a book from the Consumer Resource Center at DBSA Colorado Springs. I noticed the date on my "library card"—August 2001. That was the year I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and began my journey of recovery. It was also the month and year that I found DBSA.



Steve Bell

That spring or summer, I 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 to find out what this "storm in my brain" was all about. Was it just depression? I needed answers.

I saw a link that led me to DBSA's website and on the site, I found some screening questionnaires for mania and depression. My jaw dropped, when I saw that I'd answered yes to 75 percent of the questions for each disorder! I'd found information that no one had given me before. Thanks to DBSA's website and my wife's gentle encouragement, I found a psychiatrist who confirmed my suspicions about my condition: a classic case of bipolar I. Finally, I could name this monster that was making my family and me so miserable. But I'd need pages to describe the spiritual, financial, and family devastation that resulted from going undiagnosed so many years.

On DBSA's site, I also found, thankfully, a support group in Colorado Springs. I called the number, and the sweet voice of Karen Fallahi (the chapter's founder) answered. She told me about the Resource Center and the library and invited me to a support group meeting. For two years, I visited the Resource Center more often than I did the support groups. There, Karen and two others (Ralph and Mary) 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. I gave presentations, helped at health fairs, and visited the local homeless shelter to talk about mood disorders. 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.

I give my wife and God's loving patience much credit for my recovery. At the same time, I'm so grateful to be part of DBSA's unique community where one is not a diagnosis, but a valuable member of a "family" where unconditional love is practiced week in and week out.

President of DBSA Colorado Springs, Steve oversees the chapter's 10 support groups and activities. He's also cofounder of a new consumer-led nonprofit, BrainStorm Career Services. And he'll be at the DBSA 2009 National Conference this fall, presenting a breakout session titled "The 3 Ts of Community Activism: Touch, Take Charge, and Transform".



Stephen Propst, MBA

Responding to a Relapse

Bipolar disorder and depression are cyclical, chronic, and sometimes unpredictable illnesses. So, even the person who takes all the preventative steps possible could still encounter a relapse. (Believe

me...I've been there!) Knowing where to turn is critical. Here are some options that I've found to be tremendously valuable:

Turn to your recovery professionals. Your doctor and therapist helped you get this far. They know and understand the nature of relapse. Now, more than ever before, is the time to turn to them for guidance and direction. Don't let false pride kick in and cause you to think that no one can help.

Turn to your family and friends. You have to level with those who love and care for you. Be honest and say that a relapse was not in your plans. Be willing to tackle this temporary setback head-on, learn from it, and move on. People who genuinely care will continue to be there for you. Those that are fair-weather friends may not. Try to be understanding and patient. Not everyone can appreciate the true nature of your illness.

Turn to your DBSA support group. Mutual support is an essential part of your wellness plan. People attending a support group can relate to what relapse is all about. Remember that they've been there and they understand. Don't be embar-

assed or ashamed. Have the courage to reach out to the very people who can help you get right back on track.

Turn to yourself. So you had a relapse. You think you've wasted all that past effort. But you've gained considerable know-how along the way. Don't let a temporary setback stop you from relying on what you've learned. A relapse provides yet another opportunity to gain more insight for staying on the recovery path.

Turn to the resources that DBSA offers. Never forget that DBSA is here to help! A visit to www.DBSAAlliance.org reveals a host of important tools and techniques for maintaining recovery. For example, if you're a fellow consumer, be sure to check out the new DBSA Wellness Tracker and the Facing Us Clubhouse. If you're a family member or friend, you'll benefit tremendously by visiting the Rebecca's Dream Family Center.

A relapse is not an occasion to beat yourself up. It's not a reason to abandon hope. Use the experience as a chance to evaluate what happened, learn from that, and take the next step toward recovery. Relapse does not equal failure. Instead, it can offer the chance to learn and grow. A relapse is not a dead-end; it's merely a detour on your continuing road to recovery. And DBSA is there to help you keep forging ahead.

Johns Hopkins Medical School and DBSA Collaborate on New TRD Project

The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine is working with DBSA, Baylor College of Medicine, and MJ Consulting Group, LLC, in a partnership called the Educational Alliance for Consensus on Treatment-Resistant Depression (TRD). The Alliance's goal is to develop a continuing medical education program (CME) that will educate clinicians about TRD and also promote multidisciplinary collaboration among providers to enhance patient care and outcomes.

The CME program will help providers—primary care physicians, general practitioners, internists, and psychiatrists—better identify and diagnose TRD. Based on professional guidelines and evidence from clinical trials, the program also will help them provide appropriate follow-up care for individuals living with this illness.



The Alliance's TRD Council consists of four researchers and clinicians, including DBSA Scientific Advisory Board Vice Chair Michael E. Thase, MD,

and course director, Glenn J. Treisman, MD, PhD, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and of Medicine at Johns Hopkins. The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine has been ranked #2 in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report* in its most recent "honor roll" of medical schools. And Hopkins CME has been recognized as a center for "Best Practices" as a resource to providers accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME).



Learn more about this partnership at www.TRDcme.com.

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DBSA is the leading patient-directed national organization focusing on the most prevalent mental illnesses. The organization fosters an environment of understanding about the impact and management of these life-threatening illnesses 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. 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 1,000 peer-run support groups across the country. Nearly five million people request and receive information and assistance each year.

Chapter Highlights

Chapter Service Awards

Chapter Service Awards are an opportunity for our hard-working chapters to showcase their outstanding efforts in the mental health community. This year's award-winning chapters achieved so many successes in 2008 that we're only able to tell you about a few!



ings. Some of the social activities included movie afternoons, barbecues, and holiday parties. The chapter also built an extensive lending library of books, videos, and various mental health and wellness publications that offer a wealth of knowledge to a variety of audiences, including children.

Large Chapter Service—DBSA National Capital Area (DC) had a fruitful year with record-breaking attendance at educational programs, speaker series presentations, and support group meetings. Several creative members of the group inspired, and began hosting, "Healing through the Arts," an open mic program that served as a venue for sharing personal stories through poetry, music, comedy, memoir, and journal entries. The chapter also planned, raised funds for, and held a regional facilitator training that was open to other area chapters.

Small Chapter Service—DBSA Uplifters (Calif.) inspired an amazing sense of community through many social events in addition to its regular support group meet-

Rookie Chapter Service—During its first year, DBSA Blount County (Tenn.) began a myriad of support and educational groups. These groups focus on such things as wellness activities, building relationships, and identifying and sharing skills and/or talents. The chapter also developed a newsletter, created a speaker series, and has hosted DBSA's "Living Successfully with a Mood Disorder" course. It's also active in recruiting professional and community advisory boards to help build a strong chapter.

Professional Advisor Service—Dr. Radwan Haykal of DBSA Memphis (Tenn.) has proven over and over his compassion and faith in this chapter. Through challeng-

Continued on page 7

New Chapters

Chapters affiliating between February 1 and May 31, 2009

- DBSA Tuscaloosa County/Pathfinders (Tuscaloosa, Ala.)
- DBSA Yavapai County (Prescott Valley, Ariz.)
- DBSA Fresno Area (Fresno, Calif.)
- DBSA Lake County (Lakeport, Calif.)
- DBSA Edwards Moms (Lancaster, Calif.)
- DBSA Rancho Cucamonga (Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.)
- DBSA Burbank (Sunland, Calif.)
- DBSA Greater Lakeland Thursday (Auburndale, Fla.)
- DBSA Albany, GA (Albany, Ga.)
- DBSA Clarkesville (Clarkesville, Ga.)
- DBSA Hope-Dixon (Rock Falls, Ill.)
- DBSA Eastern Kentucky (Prestonburg, Ky.)
- DBSA Tangipahoa (Hammond, La.)
- DBSA Central Massachusetts (Jefferson, Mass.)
- DBSA Ware (Ware, Mass.)
- DBSA Central Missouri (Columbia, Mo.)
- DBSA Concord, NC (Concord, N.C.)
- DBSA Plymouth (Rumney, N.H.)
- DBSA Ashtabula (Ashtabula, Ohio)
- DBSA Euclid (Euclid, Ohio)
- DBSA Portsmouth, OH (Portsmouth, Ohio)
- DBSA Westerville (Westerville, Ohio)
- DBSA OKC Tuesdays (Oklahoma City, Okla.)
- DBSA Weatherford (Weatherford, Okla.)
- DBSA Schyulkill County (Pottsville, Pa.)
- DBSA Mt. Juliet (Mt. Juliet, Tenn.)
- DBSA Wilbarger County (Harrold, Tex.)
- DBSA Davis/Weber County (Layton, Utah)
- DBSA Sauk City (Sauk City, Wis.)



Help Others Put the Pieces Together

Make a Gift to DBSA

Living with depression or bipolar disorder makes it hard to put the pieces together. But peer support through DBSA can help:

I belong to a DBSA support group, and I love it because we all speak the same language. My peers truly "get it" when I talk about my struggles, because they have been there, and they know what I'm describing. I'm surrounded by caring and supportive people, and that is just such a tremendous healing power. I've been with the group for two years...the best two years in my recovery. I don't think that's a coincidence! — Sue H.

I know firsthand that depression can make suicide seem the only choice.... Fortunately, as I've experienced, you absolutely can feel better....It seems a contradiction: depression almost killed me, but then it taught me how to live. I learned to deal with the illness, to live well and happily. You can, too. Who knows how much good you'll be able to do for others? I'm now able to help many others, based on my own experience. —Dan M.

Your gift to DBSA supports hopeful, peer-focused help for people like Sue and Dan. Know that we will always use your donation wisely, dedicating 83 cents of every dollar to powerful programs and tools like those described here in *Outreach*. Please use the enclosed envelope, or visit www.DBSAAlliance.org/Donate, to help millions of people put the pieces together, find their place, and find recovery.

Scientific Advisory Board Update

Why Use the DBSA Wellness Tracker?

Greg Simon, MD, MPH
SAB Chair



Just below this column is an announcement about the new DBSA Wellness Tracker, an online tool to chart your progress in managing and recovering from depression or bipolar disorder.

It was decades ago that researchers first started using mood charts or mood diaries in studies of medications for bipolar disorder. Those charts were designed to measure how medications or other treatments affected specific symptoms over time. Keeping track of symptoms or test results is a common practice for people living with other health problems like diabetes or high blood pressure. And we know that tracking progress increases the likelihood of success when people are trying to make positive changes like exercising more or following a healthier diet.

The DBSA Wellness Tracker adds some things to the traditional mood chart or symptom diary. It doesn't just focus on symptoms or treatments from professionals; it also shows you, in the monthly reports, the **positive** changes. Recovery from a mood disorder is not just about reducing symptoms...it's also about focusing on the things you do to get well and move forward...and rebuilding your confidence to create the kind of life you hope for.

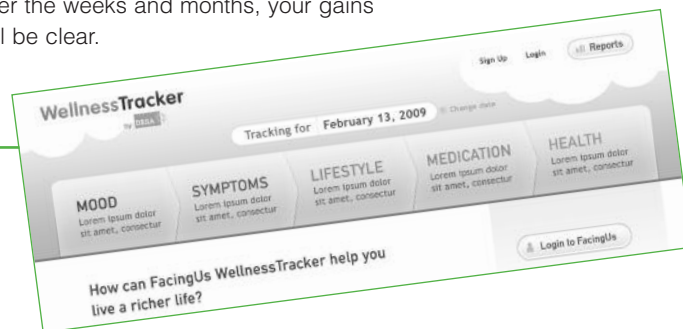
Of course, it's important, too, to track your progress if things aren't going well...if you're experiencing significant symptoms or you think your symptoms are changing or increasing. Using a tool like the Wellness Tracker can help you take a step back and see the patterns and trends. You'll be able to tell if things really are changing over time. And you'll be able to see if changes in your treatment or wellness plan are actually helping. You'll see the "ups" and not just the "downs."

If you use the Wellness Tracker you'll certainly want to bring your monthly reports/records with you when you visit your doctor or therapist. Looking together at your progress since the last visit, the

two of you can make decisions based on the **big picture**, rather than just how you're doing on that particular day. It's important that you and your clinician evaluate treatments for mood disorders (including psychotherapy and medications) and the wellness tools you use yourself (like exercise, changes in your sleep schedule, or diet) over several **weeks** and not just a single day.

I sometimes use this analogy: Making changes to your mental health treatment based on how you're feeling the day of a doctor visit is like driving to the visit with your eyes closed—and only opening them to look at the road ahead every minute or so. If you keep your eyes closed most of the time, you might still make it to the visit alive. But your trip will be quicker, safer, and much less stressful if you keep your eyes open the whole time and use all of the information you can gather. That's what the DBSA Wellness Tracker does: it helps you look ahead so you can see what's coming down the road and plan your next turn.

A tool like the DBSA Wellness Tracker can help you to recognize and appreciate your **long-term** progress. If you struggle with a mood disorder, it can be hard to see positive changes or give yourself credit for them. When things are going well, you might think, "Oh, it's just an accident, and it won't last." And when things are going poorly, you might think, "Things will never change. Why do I kid myself?" Having a **tangible** record of your progress will give you the evidence—the proof—you need to challenge that negative thinking. Day to day, it can be a challenge to shift your focus from the setbacks you've had and to notice the steps—even the small ones—you're taking toward recovery. But when you look back over the weeks and months, your gains will be clear.



The New DBSA Wellness Tracker— Stay Well and Stay on Track

The Merriam-Webster dictionary gives several definitions of health, but the first entry says it all: "the condition of being sound in body, mind, or spirit." Wellness involves your whole health—emotional and mental, as well as physical. Research has shown us time and again that what's going on emotionally affects us physically—and vice versa.

The DBSA Wellness Tracker is an innovative, user-friendly online tool that allows you to keep track of both the emotional/mental and the physical. With this tool, you can track key health trends related to

- Overall mood
- Mood disorder symptoms
- Lifestyle (including sleep, exercise, etc.)
- Medication (and side effects)
- Physical health

Using the DBSA Wellness Tracker can help you better recognize potential health problems and mood triggers in your daily life. In its "Report" feature, each section provides helpful information to help you better partner with your clinicians on treatment plans that address your overall health and well-being. This free, secure tool allows you to be proactive in your recovery...all that's required is to register with an e-mail and a user-selected password on www.FacingUs.org. Stay well and stay on track with the DBSA Wellness Tracker!

Check it out now at www.FacingUs.org
or www.DBSAAlliance.org/Tracker.





PEER
CONNECTIONS

DBSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
2009 • INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

Final Lineup of Keynote Speakers



Crystal Crawford, JD



David Granirer



Bryce Mackie



Victoria Maxwell



Darby Penney

Crystal Crawford, JD

A Question of Faith: Reconciling Your Faith in God with Your Faith in Treatment

David Granirer

I'm OK, But You Need Professional Help

Bryce Mackie

Eternal High: Teens at Risk

Victoria Maxwell

Funny... You Don't Look Crazy?!

Darby Penney

The Lives They Left Behind



Don't Be Late for Special Rates!

Register by **Monday, August 3**, for special Advance Rates. And don't forget our special discount packages that can save you even more!

Announcing Breakout Session Topics

Alternative Treatments: Evaluating Your Options

Audrey R. Tyrka, MD, PhD

The 3 Ts of Community Activism: Touch, Take Charge, and Transform

Steve Bell

Breaking Free from Loneliness

Carol Bailey Floyd

Acting on Impulse

Stephen Propst

Psychiatric Service Dogs

Donna Dykstra (and dog, Bucky)

New APA Guidelines for Bipolar Disorder

Trisha Suppes, MD, PhD

The Rollercoaster Ride that Never Ends: Parenting a Child with a Mood Disorder

Cheryl Murphy

Cause & Effect: More Understanding = More Control + Less Guilt

Jehannine Austin, BSc, PhD

Beyond Meds & Talk Therapy: Complementary Treatments

Greg Simon, MD, MPH

Inner Stigma: The Shame of It All

Steve Lappen

Successful Self-Disclosure to Family/Friends/Work

Karen Fuqua, SPHR, CPS, CCP

Recovery: It's a Journey, Not a Destination

Malkia Maisha Newman & Margaret Thele

Disability: What to Know & Where to Go

Melissa Davidson, Attorney-at-Law

Peer Proof: Effectiveness of Peer Specialists & Support Groups

Lisa Goodale, ACSW, LSW

Clinical Trials Demystified

National Network of Depression Centers (NNDC)

Advocating for System Change: Making a Difference on a National Level

Jim McNulty

Pre-Conference Institutes (Friday, September 11)

Wilderness Tips for the Comeback Trail— Reclaiming Joy & Balance

Victoria Maxwell (Consumer Focus)

The Nature v. Nurture Debate— Overcoming Guilt & Stigma

Jehannine Austin, BSc, PhD
(Family Focus)

Post-Conference Institutes (Sunday, September 13)

Successfully Navigating the Complexities of the Workplace

Karen Fuqua, SPHR, CPC, CCP
(Work Focus)

Managing Effective Peer-Led Groups

Lisa Goodale, ACSW, LSW
and Donna Dykstra
(Continuing Education, CE,
for Peer Specialists)

Friends Reception Musical Performance at Indiana Repertory Theater



The beautiful, historic Indiana Repertory Theater is the site of a special performance by the winners of DBSA's 2008 Facing Us Music Contest! Join us at the Friends Reception Fundraiser on Friday, September 11, as the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place songwriters—Ray Ulrich, S. Miria Jo, and Ben Arthur—showcase their talents on stage. Proceeds benefit the scholarship fund for the DBSA Chapter Leadership Forum (CLF), held the day before the conference begins.



Register and learn more at www.DBSAlliance.org/Conference2009.



DBSA Stand-Up Comedy Night

A smash hit at last year's conference, the DBSA Stand-Up Comedy Night with David Granirer is back by popular demand this September. This summer, David will prepare 10 individuals for their stand-up comedy debut at the DBSA 2009 National Conference!

The opportunity to stand before a crowd and make them laugh with me, not at me, was...exhilarating...it practically makes me feel lucky to deal with bipolar disorder....

— Susan Parker
2008 Conference Comic

Learn more at www.DBSAAlliance.org/Comedy2009.

Klerman Award Winners at Conference

DBSA will present the Klerman Awards—its highest honors—at "Peer Connections." Named after Gerald L. Klerman, MD, a pivotal figure in psychiatry, the awards honor researchers whose work contributes to understanding the causes, diagnosis, and treatment of depression and bipolar disorder. Several award winners will be on the conference's "Ask the Doctors Q&A Panel," and two of this year's winners will lead breakout:

Audrey R. Tyrka, MD, PhD—

"Alternative Treatments: Evaluating Your Options"

- Associate Chief, Mood Disorders Research Program: Butler Hospital (Providence, R.I.)
- Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry & Human Behavior: Brown University's Warren Alpert Medical School

Trisha Suppes, MD, PhD—"New APA Guidelines for Bipolar Disorder"

- Professor of Psychology & Behavioral Studies: Stanford University School of Medicine
- Director, Bipolar Disorder Research Program: VA Palo Alto Health Care System

A Different Kind of "Military Force"

It's 3:00 a.m., and Bill's asleep. The phone rings. On the other end is a police officer who's on duty a few blocks away...and asking for his help. Bill gets up, throws on his clothes, and rushes out the door to find the officer trying to talk to a belligerent, clearly intoxicated man.



But why does the officer need **Bill's** help? What's unusual about a pulling over a drunk driver...? This is something police do every day.

The officer knew the man he pulled over wasn't the typical Saturday-night drunk driver. He'd noticed how fidgety and agitated he was, frantically mumbling something about M16s and Fallujah. The officer had also noticed a decal on the man's windshield... "Operation Iraqi Freedom." He wondered if this man was a veteran who needed help...not handcuffs. That's why the officer called Bill, an Army veteran who works for the police department. He is also trained as a peer specialist to help people living with mental illness.

Peer specialists can help in a way that others can't. In a military culture still steeped in stigma, veterans facing mental illnesses like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) often aren't comfortable talking with clinicians. While non-diagnosed professionals may be experts in **treating** mental illness, people like Bill are experts in **living** with it. Jack Berman, an 80-year-old Korean War veteran, will tell

you, "Yes, I'll go to the doctor for medication. But I would never share my feelings with a doctor. For that, I will only talk to another veteran."

This spring in Chicago, veterans gathered for a five-day, peer specialist training course delivered

by DBSA and Vet Net Illinois. (Vet Net is a veteran-led, recovery- and peer-focused organization that supports fellow veterans.) The men and women at this training had served with the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines...in Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan. A powerful camaraderie emerged as each announced his/her branch of service to resounding applause. They completed the curriculum and left the training ready, like Bill, to use their skills to help their fellow veterans. Serving those who have served our nation, these men and women represent a very different kind of "military force."

DBSA has trained hundreds of consumers—not just veterans—to help others lead meaningful lives in recovery.

The next DBSA Peer Specialist Training is this September 14–18. Learn more at www.DBSAAlliance.org/PSTraining.

Chapter Highlights

Continued from page 4

ing times, Dr. Haykal has been a constant source of support, always offering encouragement. He has helped DBSA Memphis to build and maintain relationships and secure financial support, and has assisted in crisis prevention and response.

Professional Advisor Honorable Mention—Henry S. Levine, MD, of DBSA Whatcom County (Wash.) is a strong advocate for the chapter and the peer support it offers, continually referring individuals to the group. He shares what he learns from psychiatric

publications, events, and conferences to keep the chapter abreast of current information. He was also a key player in securing funds to produce a 12-page brochure for the chapter.

DBSA appreciates all of the exceptional submissions for Chapter Service Awards and would like to commend all of our chapters for their outstanding work. It's so rewarding for us in the national office to learn about the many successes of our DBSA chapters.

Please watch future editions of *Outreach* to read about the amazing things our chapters do nationwide!

Find a DBSA support group at www.DBSAAlliance.org/FindSupport or online support at www.DBSAAlliance.org/OSG.





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Editor: Karen M. Kraft



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