

Greater Nashua Continuum of Care Meeting Minutes
Nashua City Hall Auditorium
October 3, 2012@ 8:00AM
www.nashua-coc.org

Wendy LeBlanc, Chair called the meeting to order at 8:03AM. Introductions were made by all, and the attendance sheet passed for signatures. Newcomers were asked to add their email to the list if they would like to be added to the GNCOC mailing list. Wendy explained the meeting format for newcomers. The minutes of the September 5, 2012 meeting were reviewed following the initial presentation at this meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Barbara Alves, which was seconded by Pat Murphy, and the minutes were unanimously approved, with no changes or discussion.

H.E.A.R.T.S. Presentation:

A H.E.A.R.T.S (Hope, Empowerment, Advocacy, Recovery, Towards, Support) presentation was provided by Ed Bowman and Denise Green. H.E.A.R.T.S is a peer support center of Greater Nashua Region VI, and an adult educational wellness center. E. Bowman spoke about the challenges for people with mental wellness issues, and the struggles they often face when working towards getting back into the community in terms of employment as well as in many other ways. Mr. Bowman indicated that more companies, particularly in past 7 years, have been requiring drug tests for potential employees that go beyond the scope of illicit drugs, and now they also sometimes test for psychotropic drugs as well, and often are asking questions that are more intrusive. It is believed that this line of questioning and testing is a result of the increased level of random violence that has been occurring at the workplace and school campuses throughout the nation.

Ed Bowman then introduced Denise Green, a senior staff member of H.E.A.R.T.S. Ms. Green is someone who has never told her own story publicly before, and what she has done to overcome her own mental illness or to manage her mental 'wellness'. Ms. Green shared that she had had many childhood traumas, but was able to overcome these and went to college, got a healthcare degree and has a supportive husband. She shared that it is hard for people to hold and keep jobs when suffering with mental illness and that professional help and peer support can be very helpful. She went to H.E.A.R.T.S at the recommendation of her therapist, has learned to recognize when her coping skills aren't working and how to reach out for support from others. Mental wellness is now a part of her daily life. As mentioned, she holds a senior staff position with the organization and is very proud of her accomplishments. She doesn't dwell on where she was, and the past, but rather focuses on where she is now. She is not ill, she has an illness, like any other disease that people suffer with that they need help and/or medicine to control. H.E.A.R.T.S helps others to in their recovery and with the coping skills needed to live a fulfilling life.

Ed Bowman and Denise Green indicated that transportation is available through H.E.A.R.T.S to get people to and from the H.E.A.R.T.S center. A brochure was provided with more program details. They also shared that they became independent from Harbor Homes Inc., who had provided space to them, when they became their own 501C 3 in 2010. They started with 45 members in 2010 and now have 560 members. There are other peer support centers throughout the state and can be located by contacting the Nashua office. They also indicated that 60% of their funding is federal and 40% state. They also indicated that H.E.A.R.T.S has contact information available for other peer support centers across the State and if anyone wants that information they can contact Ed or Denise.

They were asked about the difference between the H.E.A.R.T.S support center and Connections, a drop-in center at Harbor Homes. Wendy LeBlanc explained that the former Connections space is still being used as a drop in center, where people can connect and wait for the onsite health care center, but there are no longer any programs available at the site. The H.E.A.R.T.S center provides many educational and group activities. Additionally, while there may be some overlap, the former Connections site is for homeless persons, whereas H.E.A.R.T.S is for individuals working to improve their mental health.

Susan Mead congratulated Ms. Green for her courageousness in sharing her story. S. Mead talked about how well the peer support is working and the connection has been very good between H.E.A.R.T.S and the Greater Nashua Mental Health Center. She also indicated that mental illness sufferers are typically more the victims than the perpetrators and it therefore makes it challenging for these individuals to reach out for the help they need.

Tom Lopez asked if there is an employment program and E. Bowman indicated they are working on exploring and possibly restarting a job program.

IRS/Asset Building Coalition Presentation:

The presenter, Gregg Woodes, was not able to get to the meeting and therefore Beth Todgham spoke to the group on behalf of the Asset Building Coalition.

B. Todgham indicated that the emphasis at this time is on the upcoming tax season. There will be four locations available to assist low income individuals in preparing their taxes - Nashua Public Library, Wadleigh Public Library in Milford, Merrimack YMCA and Triangle Credit Union. She spoke about the need for work to continue on financial literacy and they continue to reach out to other non-profits to collaborate on this issue to ensure that all agencies clients have access to financial literacy help and understanding. She shared that part of the mission of the coalition is to not only help people get their tax returns prepared, but to help individuals/families understand that the tax refund can help to jumpstart a better life, a help to get out of poverty, rather than buying a material item with the refund. This is all part of the education component.

M. Wirbal of the Front Door Agency shared that their agency will be distributing flyers in December as people pick up their Christmas gifts, talking about the tax preparation and refund issues. E. Brady of NSKS, which is a member of the coalition for years, said the NSKS has been encouraging people to keep going to these tax preparation events rather than to these rebate companies that offer to provide your refund immediately for which they then take a sizeable chunk of the refund when it arrives. The returns are done electronically and people get their monies back quickly. E. Brady said that volunteers are needed for the various sites.

Announcements:

W. LeBlanc indicated that the HUD SuperNOFA registration was completed on 9/28/12, and the application will be starting soon. This funding process brings about \$1.7Million to the community each year. She also asked that there are some collection data items being required by HUD. Point In Time (PIT) count is scheduled for 1/23/13. A HUD webinar indicated that the PIT is now asking for some age data (within 3 age categories) to be collected as well. HUD also will require the Housing Inventory Chart (HIC) for housing programs that target people who are homeless. Typically the shelters and transitional programs that exclusively serve the homeless persons are familiar with completing the chart. However, HUD is now requiring that anyone new that is providing shelter or transitional or permanent housing specifically targeting homeless persons also needs to report whether they are receiving HUD funds or not through the SuperNOFA.

W. LeBlanc also reported that Jerry LeClerc has resigned as vice-chair given his career change and he is no longer able to fulfill his role as vice chairman. This leads to a vacancy on the board. W. LeBlanc shared that there are not a lot of specific tasks for this position. She indicated that an election will be held at our November meeting to complete the current term through October 2013, and she encourage all to consider the role and submit their name for consideration. She also indicated that her term of Chair of the Board will expire October 2013, and anyone considering the vice-chair position should consider that they may be considered as the Chairman of the Continuum for the following year.

W. LeBlanc requested a letter of support be provided by the GNCOC in support of an RFP by Southern NH HIV AIDS Task Force as the lead agency for all AIDS Service Organizations in NH, which is being submitted to the State of NH to continue providing HIV/AIDS support services. M. Wirbal made a motion that the GNCOC provide a letter of support as requested, C. Gebhart seconded the motion, there were two abstentions and the motion passed.

R. Villeneuve reported that he is a veteran who attended the recent Veterans Stand-Down Event, and that it was a good event and a wonderful program, and thanked all involved in that effort.

T. Lopez reported that the Project Employment Connect went well. They served three times more people this year than last year, and had double the number of companies participating over last year.

S. Gale of NH Citizen Alliance, indicated they are hiring non-partisan voter workers for \$12 - \$13/hr.

B. Todgham reported that the Adult Learning Center, is holding a community resource fair on November 13th and 14th. E. Brady suggested that the legislators be invited to this event.

S. Owen reported that Lamprey Health Care will be holding an open house and health fair on October 20th from 10am to 2pm.

S. Laughton encouraged everyone to get out and vote on November 6.

B. Mack reported that the Project Homeless Connect Event will be held on December 10th at 45 High Street.

E. Brady reported that a NH wide housing conference being put on by NH Housing Finance Authority will be held on October 30th at the Grappone Center in Concord, NH.

M. Wirbal indicated that applications for holiday gifts will commence on 10/24 from 4-7; and then there will be several Friday dates as well. All applications this year will be taken at the Front Door Agency, rather than at the Salvation Army.

K. Robinson asked that anyone holding holiday gift programs make #211 aware of these as they are already receiving many calls from those in need looking for support this year.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:55AM.

Minutes taken by Lori M. Piper, Merrimack County Savings Bank