MHACF at “Out of the Darkness” 5K Walk

"The American Foundation of Suicide Prevention, AFSP, provides opportunities for survivors of suicide loss to connect with each other and get involved through a wide variety of educational, outreach, awareness, advocacy and fundraising programs. At the walk around Lake Baldwin, stations of sidewalk chalk were set up along the walk so that participants could write in remembrance of a lost loved one to suicide. A memorial wall was also provided so that everyone could put up pictures, memories and hearts dedicated to families and friends they had lost. The ending ceremony concluded with the symbolic freedom of the release of doves. The Mental Health Association had many volunteers and interns participate in the "Out of the Darkness" community walk. We all helped spread information on mental illness and suicide prevention. It was a very influential experience for us all. Not only did we help with the spreading of knowledge but we all gained a better sense of understanding by just being apart of this walk. Even though this was a sad circumstance to meet under, everyone was able to find a friend to share their stories with and leave with a sense of closure."

A Message from the Executive Director

During a time when so many of our citizens are experiencing increased stress, the importance of having services is even greater. We know that the loss of jobs can bring about so much hardship for families and individuals. That is why the Mental Health Association of Central Florida, for sixty years, has continued to deliver as much assistance as possible to our clients. We, too, have experienced hardship during this time of extreme economic conditions but our staff and the board of directors have committed to providing as much resources as possible for achieving good mental health. The Mental Health Association of Central Florida provides training for volunteers and family members as Guardian Advocates. We provide referral services for children and adults that need assistance and we have consumer support groups in English and in Spanish. We need the support of individuals like you, in Central Florida to continue to join our association and support the programs we offer. Our association is pursuing opportunities to collaborate with other organizations to find a way to bring mental health services to those that do not have insurance or are underinsured. This could be an exciting opportunity that we are hoping can make a big difference for all of us. Please complete the form attached and join us in this effort.

Thank you,

Candice Crawford
Executive Director

We would like to give a special thanks to all of our Sponsors, Donors, Interns, and Volunteers for your generosity. The Mental Health Association of Central Florida would not be possible without your contributions.
Information and Consumer Referral

The program offers a referral services designed for individuals seeking information for themselves or family and friends. Referral services include information for centers providing counseling, group therapy, residential mental health facilities, local psychiatric doctors, crisis services, financial assistance, homeless shelters, physical abuse, teen support, substance abuse, and many others. “Our services are very valuable and necessary. We continually need financial support to implement new programs to assist clients in dire need.” Richard Classens concludes. At this time we facilitate the diverse needs of the community at no charge. “We receive between 60 and 100 referral calls per month in which we do our best to research the proper services for the consumers’ specific needs,” Mary Szymanski.

Please contact Mary Szymanski, or for a bilingual Spanish speaker, contact Richard Classens at (407) 898-0110. Our office hours are between 9am-5pm Monday through Friday.

Guardian Advocate Program and Training

Family, Friends, and Volunteers contact MHACF to set up appointments for trainings; once trained they can represent an involuntarily committed individual. Volunteers work with MHACF and facilities to place advocates with clients in need of representation. Charlotte Melton, Assistant Executive Director is heading the program, “I am grateful for the volunteers who work within our program, dedicating their time and energy. Reaching to meet the needs of the community is an exciting adventure.” The program’s strength is rooted in a wonderful base of independent and University affiliated interns and volunteers. When a person is involuntarily admitted and the court determines that he/she is incompetent to make decisions for him/herself a Guardian Advocate works directly with the treatment team and the patient to determine treatment options and to ensure the patient’s rights are not being violated. The Guardian Advocate is the patient’s representative in giving informed consent for treatment.

How do I Become a Guardian Advocate?

Florida Law requires Guardian Advocate to complete a 4-hour training course, which meets certain minimum requirements. The Mental Health Association of Central Florida, Inc. and the Department of Children and Families, collaborated to produce this high quality training program. For more information on becoming a Guardian Advocate please contact Charlotte Melton by email at CMelton@mhacf.org or by phone at (407) 898-0110 ext. 24.

Consumer Support

The Mental Health Association of Central Florida offers free support groups to all mental health consumers in the local community on Monday afternoons in English from 2:00-4:00PM and Wednesday afternoons from 2:00-4:00PM in Spanish. People Inc. is a place where individuals may come to express their feelings, thoughts, and opinions with other peers. We provide refreshments and information on hot topics in the realm of mental health. Discussions include employment, transformation, and other related mental health subject matters. We always encourage anyone that wants to participate upon discharge, or at any time during recovery, to join us in this very rewarding and beneficial experience. “Our group is designed to teach us the skills to better understand ourselves and our environment; building strong relationships along the way. It has been a rewarding learning experience for me,” Mary Szymanski explains. Consumers in the past have gotten much relief and support in knowing others in their community can share and relate to similar issues. For more information please visit our website at www.mhacf.org or call the office at (407) 898-0110 to reach Richard Classens or Mary Szymanski to discuss if the group fits your needs.