



More Graduates of KTP Trainings!

by Maura Sheil-Hughes, Assistant Coordinator, KTP

The Essentials of Legislative Leadership Training, (Advanced) a free annual KTP event held last December at the Legislative Office Building (LOB) graduated 18 enthusiastic new advocates. This class presented in-depth information about the budget, committees, bills, and the House and Senate, for individuals who have completed the *Essentials of Legislative Advocacy* class and/or who have strong advocacy experience.

Many legislators such as, Senator Andrew Roraback, Representatives Sandy Nafis, David McCluskey, Cathy Abercrombie, and Chris Donovan took time out of their busy schedules to talk about their experiences, the best ways to contact them, and what mental health issues are important to them.

A game of *Legislative Jeopardy* challenged all players on the second day. Susan Keane, Senior Administrator of the Appropriations Committee, gave a staff perspective of what goes into preparing and monitoring public hearings. Then, Majority Leader, Rep. Chris Donovan, handed out certificates of completion at the end of the day.

Merva Jackson, Executive Director of the African-Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities (AFCAMP) coordinated an *Essentials of Legislative Advocacy* class held on February 5, 2008, and taught by Attorney Jan Van Tassel. About 20 people attended the one day training.

Parents shared concerns and issues close to them and listened intently as advocacy strategies were discussed.

We congratulate all and look forward to seeing you at the Capitol!



AFCAMP parents share their advocacy issues with Attorney Jan VanTassel.

Legislative Update: The Short Session

As we head into mid-March, we have both just started and at the same time are looking at the end of our chances to testify. "How can that possibly be"? you say? Connecticut's short session this year is scheduled February 6th through May 7th, 2008. However, committee deadlines leave us with the month of February and early March for most, if not all, of our opportunities to testify.

KTP Coalition members testified at budget hearings in front of the Appropriations Committee. Members also testified about Supportive Housing, Young Adult Services, Alternatives to Incarceration, raising the Medicaid Income Limit, the Governor's Charter Oak Health Plan, the private, non-profit C.O.L.A. (cost of living adjustment), and fully funding the specialized jail diversion and alternatives to incarceration bill that passed in the Special Session in January. **Thank you to those who came out to testify or submitted written testimony, and participated in the Breakfast Club and Visibility Patrol as well as those who contacted their legislators. Shared personal experiences continue to make a huge impact!**

"Remember our Basic Message: Fund Housing & Community Services!"

Remember our basic, but strong, united message: **Keep the Promise to fund Housing and Community Services!**

Meet the New Executive Director in DMHAS' Region Two!

Pat Settembrino, Region Two's new Executive Director, started October 15, 2007.

Formerly the Executive Director of the Association for Retarded Citizens of Quinebaug Valley, Pat spent the past 12 years as the Executive Director of the Network Against Domestic Abuse of North Central Connecticut.

Pat holds a B.A. and M.B.A. in Health Care Administration from Wagner College in New York City.

He and his wife Susan reside in Vernon, CT. Welcome, Pat!

How can you contact your RMHB?

Region I: Southwest: Kim O'Reilly, Norwalk (203) 840-1187;

Region II: Central: Pat Settembrino, Middletown (860) 262-5027;

Region III: Eastern: Bob Davidson, Norwich (860) 886-0030;

Region IV: North Central: Sheryl

Breetz, Wethersfield (860) 667-6388;

Region V: Northwest: Janine Sullivan-Wiley, Waterbury (203) 757-9603.

In the last issue we mistakenly reported that Catherine Ferry was the Region II Director. Cathy is now Executive Director of the Disabilities Network of Eastern Connecticut (DNEC) in Norwich. We apologize for this error.

Oportunidades de Participar en la Coalición Keep the Promise (KTP)

Keep The Promise (KTP) ofrece diferentes oportunidades para la participación en la defensa de la salud mental. En la lista hay varias maneras importantes de participar, todos califican para el reconocimiento de las personas en la ceremonia de Awards de KTP en el otoño del 2008.



Premio la Pluma dorada (Golden Pen Award): Se enfoca en los medios de comunicación, servicios de salud mental escribiendo y publicando artículos relacionados con salud mental, cartas, o entrevistas impresas a través de radio o televisión, o celebra un evento y consigue cobertura de los medios de comunicación entre el 1 de octubre del 2007 y el 1 de agosto del 2008. Envíe su trabajo publicado o información de la entrevista a KTP para recibir el crédito.

Defensores Locales de Acción (Local Action Advocates): Organizan & sostienen eventos locales para educar e influir en los legisladores como: por teléfono, llamar-en las campañas, desayunos legislativos, foros del candidato, público que habla & el outreach, o reuniones locales con los legisladores individuales de su distrito, para nombrar algunos. ¡Envíe información sobre su actividad a KTP para recibir el crédito!

El Club del Desayuno (The Breakfast Club): Ayuda a otra persona a firmar para testificar en el Edificio de la Oficina Legislativa(L.O.B.) quién no puede estar ahí debido a algún problema de trabajo, o distancia. ¡POR FAVOR DEJELE SABER AHORA MISMO A KTP SI USTED ESTÁ DESEOSO DE HACER ESTO! Nosotros estaremos ahí para ayudarlo en este proceso. ¡Los miembros del Club del desayuno son críticos ayudando a esas personas que no podrían testificar sin la ayuda vuestra!

Testificadores que lo Dicen Tal como es (Tell-it-Like-it-Is Testifiers): ¡Testifique en una audiencia pública para ayudar a proteger e implementar servicios de salud mental y recaudación de fondos! KTP mandará correos electrónicos y alarmas mediante fax para notificarlo sobre las audiencias. ¡El aviso que se da muchas veces es muy corto así que empiece a escribir su testimonio ahora! Llame a KTP si necesita alguna guía en temas o tópicos más comunes de las audiencias. POR FAVOR DEJE SABER A KTP EN QUÉ TEMAS O TOPICOS LE GUSTARIA TESTIFICAR estos pueden incluir: Alternativas de Encarcelamiento, Apoyo en la Vivienda, Aumentando el límite de Elegibilidad en Medicaid, Servicios para los Adulto Jóvenes, etc. Sus historias personales y experiencias son invaluable!

Patrulla de visibilidad (Visibility Patrol): Gente que ofrecen ser visible a los oídos públicos en Hartford o localmente sentándose y usando las camisetas y los botones de KTP para hacerles saber a los legisladores que ¡KTP está aquí para quedarse! Esto ayuda a mantener los problemas de salud mental visibles durante la legislatura. Estipendios, con la aprobación escrita de antemano y documentación están disponibles como: estipendios que permiten el transporte, el costo de algún cuidador (baby sitter) y comida - por favor pida un formulario de estipendio a KTP. Formularios detallados están disponibles en cada programa listado anteriormente. Llame o mande un correo electrónico a KTP con cualquier pregunta que podría tener al: 860-882-0236; 800-215-3021; keepthepromise@namict.org.

Juntos podemos hacer diferencia! Gracias a Paloma Dee por la traducción

Advocacy Unlimited By Annette Deonarine

Hola, me llamo Annette Deonarine soy la Directora de Educación e Inicio Latino en Advocacy Unlimited, Inc.(AU).

AU es una organización que es controlada y manejada por personas con impedimentos siquiátricos. Parece que comencé hace unos días, pero la realidad es que el tiempo pasa rápido! En mi vida profesional previa trabajé en una compañía de casi tres mil empleados (Fortune 500). Subí la escalera ejecutiva con facilidad y rapidez. Nunca pensé que trabajaría en esta área o que estaría en una posición para ayudar a otros. Siempre fui defensora de personas, de pequeña me prestaba para traducir a vecinos que necesitaban ayuda, o traduciéndoles documentos. Me molestaba con las injusticias y discriminación en mi comunidad. Me sentía orgullosa de mi gente y siempre ayude a otros sin esperar nada a cambio.

Cuando entre por las puertas de AU, con la ayuda de la Doctora Karen Kangas fue cuando comenzó todo. Me pregunte porque no había recursos suficientes para los hispanos y porque no se proveían las clases de defensa (abogacía) en español. El trabajo fue fácil, con facilidad se pudo traducir los materiales, la comunidad hispana se unió y graduamos los primeros 20 estudiantes hispanos (los primeros en CT!) en la historia de la organización. Mi trabajo solo ha comenzado, pienso que se debe trabajar más, debemos representarnos en la legislatura, en todo el estado como hispanos, consumidores, personas en recuperación. La Doctora Karen Kangas es hoy mi jefa y mentora ella me dice que los cambios vendrán, pero todo a su tiempo. Mi pregunta es siempre la misma. Cuanto más tiempo??

Si usted está interesado en tomar las clases de Abogacía, llame a nuestra oficina, 860-667-0460, ext. 312 o visite nuestra página cibernética www.mindlink.org.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CONNECTICUT - NOT JUST WOMEN; NOT JUST VOTING

By Polly Franck

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut, comprised of approximately 2,500 members, is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Our public policy is based on positions derived from member study and consensus. We employ a lobbyist and have several unpaid volunteers on the Public Issues team (including a Mental Health Specialist) who work to support or oppose legislation on the basis of our positions.

The League's Mental Health Position supports comprehensive, community-based mental health services for children and adults to include early detection, intervention and a range of services as well as a public initiative on mental health (e.g., supportive housing, parity standards for insurance coverage, etc.). Together with KTP and other advocacy organizations we can help people with mental illness recover their lives in their own communities, with friends and neighbors to support them.

As a newcomer in my position of Mental Health Specialist, I've been privileged to learn about the challenges that people with mental illness face, the stigma, the struggle, and I've also learned about the great satisfaction and pride people take in overcoming these challenges.

In addition to supporting public initiatives for mental health, the League's 2008 legislative goals include:

- measures to ensure the security and integrity of elections;
- action and funding to reduce vehicular traffic on Connecticut's roads via expanded transit and rail freight;
- cap on carbon dioxide and other emissions caused by burning fossil fuels;
- better funding of the education cost sharing (ECS) formula;
- expanded health care coverage;
- stronger protections for reservoir lands.

Find out more about us at www.lwvct.org or (203) 288-7996 and **VOTE!**

Young Adult Advocates Emerging

by Amy Lydon O'Connor, Public Policy Assistant, NAMI-CT

On Feb. 13, 2008, the Appropriations Committee heard testimony from the public on the DMHAS budget. One issue important to KTP advocates was asking for funding for Young Adult Services (YAS), a DMHAS program for 18-25 year-olds created to provide age-appropriate services not otherwise available. Currently, YAS is underfunded, causing many young adults to fall between the cracks of the state's service system, only to land in our prisons, emergency rooms, or homeless. A major underlying issue for this population is the lack of affordable, stable housing and intensive support services, which is especially problematic for those "aging out" of the children's system without being connected to DMHAS.

Last year, the legislature agreed to appropriate more funding to expand YAS to more Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs), although the state was still left with areas without any YAS programs. On Feb. 13th professionals, family members, and consumers testified to the age-specific needs of this population. It was especially exciting to hear from YAS clients and other young adults because the young adult voice is noticeably absent at the Capitol, and legislators don't often have the opportunity to hear about YAS from those actually eligible to participate in the program.

Young adults, with and without mental illnesses, need support and guidance to successfully transition into adulthood. For many adults with mental illnesses, their disorders manifest during these critical years, leaving them particularly vulnerable to becoming disconnected from treatment. It is imperative that these young adults have opportunities and a voice—join KTP in advocating for funding for statewide YAS and specialized supportive housing for young adults. For more information, please contact Amy O'Connor, at policyassistant@namict.org or call 800.215.3021.

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Spend Down: by Judith Shaw

I am writing about the Medicaid spend-down on a personal level. The facts are “out there” though nearly incomprehensible to those not immersed in day to day Medicaid advocacy.

The spend down, which must be met to receive Medicaid coverage from the Department of Social Services (DSS), is an unwieldy, difficult obstacle for those of us in recovery from a mental illness and/or substance abuse, people with physical disabilities, and older people.

These folks face an overwhelmingly difficult time in understanding, accessing and receiving the services they need. We need healthcare, psychiatric care, medications, perhaps home health aides and transportation to medical appointments. Even professionals cannot adequately advocate for us because they often do not understand the spend down policies. Some consumers know this first hand after getting conflicting and inaccurate

information from their state workers. Our population is suffering from this confusion.

Many of us are on Social Security, SSDI and Medicare. Our incomes are often below poverty level. We are fighting for our survival and while some of us have been improving, many are losing ground.

We have found in talking to people in the community who are trying to “beat” the spend down that they do not know where to turn. In fact, people in need are not knocking on doors or coming out of the woodwork because they just don’t know how to say what is happening to them because of this situation.

This is a major healthcare crisis for us. We frequently cannot get adequate, timely or appropriate medical care. Many with low incomes who are unable to meet the spend down are now receiving bills or are not getting crucial

“This is a major healthcare crisis for us.”

services as people did before Medicare Part D was enacted.

Let’s join together in mutual educational forums, so that we can help each other speak out to people who can initiate change on a local and legislative front.

The North Central Regional Mental Health Board has designed a **spend down questionnaire** which targets seniors and people with physical and mental disabilities. This will be an on-going labor. We must move steadily and quickly. But, think of the joy in knowing that together we can talk, write and speak out about what action needs to take place.

Contact Judith Shaw, North Central Regional Mental Health Board, 860-667-6388 for input, comments or to access the Spend-Down Questionnaire.

Self Injury Awareness: by Robbyn Sibley & Evangeline Sargent

Did you know that approximately 2 million people in the United States self-injure annually?

We, the authors of this article, are two self injurers in recovery. A person who self injures can be anyone. There is no “type” of person who self injures. Self injury recognizes no socioeconomic barrier. In other words anyone could be a self injurer, the cashier ringing up your groceries to the judge at the local courthouse, or even your providers.



Self injury commonly starts in the teenage years, but doesn’t have to and even adults struggle with it. Two examples are: Robbyn who started at 12 years old, is now 50, and still struggles with it; and Vange who started at 21 and at 28 still struggles with it. Recent research shows the difference in rate of self injury in men and women is less marked. Males are far less likely to either accept what they do as self injury or admit any need for support, but the true ratio between male and female self injury is more like 60% females to 40% males. There is no evidence to show that people “grow out” of it. It is not a behavior or development “disorder.”

We have been working on Self Injury awareness for the past three years; with most success over the last two years, with the Governor issuing a Proclamation declaring **March 1st as Self Injury Awareness Day**. Currently, only the State of Connecticut officially recognizes it; no national agency or other state recognizes it at this time.

Public awareness is one way to shed light on this growing problem to reduce the stigma and help reduce some of the myths. It can also help people who self-injure get and/or find treatment. In order to bring about public awareness, we held a well attended **Informational Fair on February 29th from 10:00 am to 2:00pm at Southeastern Mental Health Authority**, Call Robbyn and/or Vange for more information on Self Injury Awareness at 860-887-1937.



Keep the Promise
241 Main Street, 5th Floor
Hartford, CT 06106

Phone: 860-882-0236 or
800-215-3021
Fax: 860-882-0240

KTP Monthly Meeting:
03/19/08, 04/16/08 10 —12
CVH Shew Hall
Region 2 Conf. Rm.

Call or Email to RSVP
—lunch included—

Non-Profit Org.
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The Keep the Promise Coalition is dedicated to advocating for the “Blue Ribbon Solutions” needed to maintain and expand critical mental health services for adults and children. We hope you will join us in building the bridge to support, respect and recovery. Together we can create change!

“The Glass Half Full” by: Janine Sullivan-Wiley



This year, as each year, the Northwest Regional Mental Health Board conducted three Legislative Breakfasts done as a collaboration between our three Catchment Area Councils and local consumer groups. The Danbury and Torrington forums were held in October, the first in collaboration with New Heights, which is the social club in Danbury. The Waterbury Forum was in January, held in collaboration with the Independence Center. This year, we tried a new approach; we paired each event with a Consumer Art Show built on the success and popularity of a region-wide show at the LOB.

We included textiles, needlecraft, and knitting, as well as the more conventional fine arts. This added a really nice dimension and provided a comfortable introduction and segue to talking about the issues. **We would recommend it to others.**

The art show gave legislators a strong sense of the recovery of some folks, and the gains that can be made when people get the supports that they need.

Food was provided by the CAC members in Torrington, and the clubhouses in Waterbury and Danbury—the latter putting out an amazing amount of delicious goodies! We emphasized to legislators that the food was from their constituents and hosts.

Torrington had a strong turnout of legislators, with one Senator and the State Reps; three of the legislators see this forum as an annual event and come just about every year.

So why did I title this as “the glass half full”? Because that is how I see each of these events. Despite strong turnout from consumers, family members, CAC members and providers, only two representatives showed up at one meeting which was his really upset some people. While we did everything right in re-

gards to invitations, a special session was called the day before, unfortunate, but unavoidable.

Was this still a success? I think it was. After the event we sent letters summarizing the issues. We will have forums again next year, and I expect we will have the Consumer Art shows again, too. Being active with legislators is an ongoing, year-round and year-after-year process. It’s about relationships, and they take time. So would two or three legislators be a glass half full? I think so. Will we try to get it “more full” next year? Absolutely!



(L-R)Legislators pictured are Reps. Sean Williams and John Piscopo

Janine Sullivan-Wiley is the Executive Director of the Northwest Regional Mental Health Board.