



Adolescent Treatment Programs

Adolescent Continuing Care • Connections BIRT • Transitions IRTP
System of Care

HOPE Group

Helping Others Promote Equality

Sponsored by PAL (Parent/Professional Advocacy League) Central Mass

Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PAL) is an organization that promotes a strong voice for families of children and adolescents with mental health needs. PAL advocates for supports, treatment and policies that enable families to live in their communities in an environment of stability and respect.

Transitions and PAL have been collaborating over this last year to provide more community based support services for the residents of Transitions. The HOPE Group is a non clinical support group for youth facing mental health challenges from residential, supportive housing, and families. as they strive to make their way in the community. The youth from Transitions have been attending every Tuesday evening for several months now where they share a meal, play games and get to know others living with mental illness. We look forward to our continuing collaboration in helping youth build the bridge to community life.

The following are comments our youth have made about their participation in the HOPE group

"There are different kids we can relate to and it gets us ready for real life situations with other kids."

~~Jasmin

"You get to talk to people your own age group and people treat me like a normal kid." ~~Tricia

"Hope is a group where people from the community and programs get together and talk. It makes me feel like a community member and not in a program. It's a supportive group, we can interact as teen young adults. This group is different because some of the teens are living in the community some are living in programs and people that are currently living in the community were also in programs at one time. So for us who are in programs we don't feel awkward because others have been there too." ~~Felicia

This groups is different because we learn things about other kids and their situations. You get to meet new people and then become friends with people not in your own program. ~~ Emily

Youth Voices

The light from the sun

The stars in the sky

You can't reach them now because they're too high

We want to be more than we think we can be

When all that we want is to be happy

The goals that we have when they're all set and done

We say that we will complete them each and every one

The light from the sun

The stars in the sky

We can't reach them now

But they won't always be so high

Erin

When you really want something

Sometimes you have to swim

A little deeper

You can't just give up because

Things don't come easy

You have to overcome the obstacles

And face your fears

But in the end it's all worthwhile

Life is full of ups and downs

But if you believe in yourself you

Will always come through with

Flying colors

Value Friendship

Love and Faith

Never Underestimate yourself

Believe in yourself

Have a GOOD LIFE !!!!!

SADE

What I've learned to prepare for the future

I've learned many things to prepare for my future but the thing that stood out most is learning from my mistakes.

I have learned in order to have a successful life, I must learn quickly from my mistakes.

I have learned to use my coping skills as a way of dealing with my anger.

And dealing with anger takes a lot of your time because you want to learn how to control it instead of just losing it.

You don't want your life to come crashing down cause you can't figure out ways to make it better.

The things I want for my future is to become somebody that will think

and look back at the things I've done wrong and say wow I was making the right decision.

And I just want to thank my therapist Dr. Holbert for helping me understand that you can be somebody if you really try your hardest.

I understand that if you don't get what you want just know that someday you will get what you want from yourself because you have a job or helping someone out.

Your life is the most wonderful thing of all it's your life you do whatever you want when you become someone famous or someone very important.

Well my goal for the future is to go to college and become a doctor, a

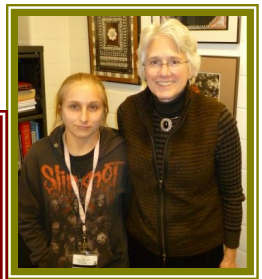
pediatrician and I want to be a parent of 4 children when I finish school.. I really hope I can make my dream come true.

Also I want in my life is for people to look at me like I'm somebody to make it through their tough times in their life.

Shalimar



Adolescent Units are Building Bridges in Every Direction



Laura Myers (r)
Transitions peer mentor, Lori

Since assuming her new position at the end of April, the Associate Director of Parent and Community Engagement has been *Building Bridges* in every direction. Laura Myers has become very visible to staff and parents/ guardians/grandparents on all of the units as she attends morning rounds, systems and IEP meetings, clinical staff gatherings and pre-admission meetings at regional hospitals. She often meets with family members prior to their family therapy sessions and is on the telephone with them many hours each week. Since July, Laura has facilitated a parents group which meets one Saturday morning each month.

Laura has also been working with staff to begin to bring parents onto the units. Each unit has been hosting special events and inviting those individuals who play a significant role in the life of each youth. DMH and DCF staff joined family members for a Spaghetti Dinner, Pumpkin Fest, Meet & Greet night and Open House. These monthly events have been terrific as family members get to meet staff and each other and the feedback has been wonderful from everyone.

Plans are underway for family members to join staff and youth on field trips and to offer “mini classes” on the units in such areas as Spanish Cooking and Art. Family members are eager to become an active part of the life of each unit and the staffs continue to be open and welcoming.

Bridges are also being built with the community as Laura has met with over twenty five agencies throughout the state. These organizations are potential resources for youth and their families when they transition back to the community and everyone has been enthusiastic and committed to be of assistance.

The bridges being constructed have begun to facilitate an important new model for the role that parents/family members/guardians will play in the lives of their youth while they are hard at work as residents in the Adolescent Treatment Programs. Such bridges will also ensure a more active engagement of community agencies that will facilitate the opportunity for stronger community support for youth and their families. This new model takes time to implement but is clearly a win-win for all; the youth, family, staff and community.

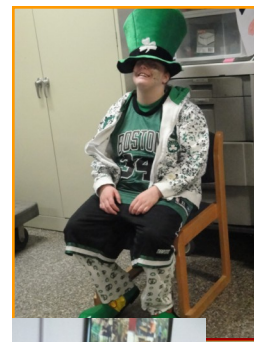
Laura H. Myers, MSW, EdD



Even Parents get to Compete for First Prize!!



Pumpkin Fest Adolescent Continuing Care



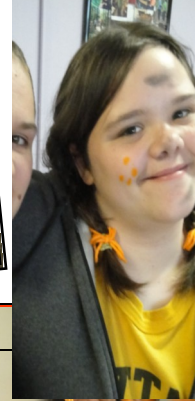
Celtics Mascot!!



Carla, yes she is a supervisor!!



Grandma knows best!!



Pirate looking for free food

Happy Halloween at Transitions!

Friday night Costume Party

Donuts on Strings without your hands!

Bouncing eyeballs, watch out!!

How many worms can you find in a bowl of whip cream??



Adolescent Continuing Care Unit 1

Written by Kirah Lenners

As one of the youths responsible for the decorating of the walls, I am willing to explain the reasoning behind the art. The Halloween scene obviously represents Halloween but to us having it on our walls it shows that you can still have fun on Halloween even though you're in a hospital. The skeletons represent friendship. We decided to have them holding hands to resemble that through out your stay here there is always someone here for you.

The second scene we created was the tree and the leaves bordering the day room. I interpret it as the tree of recovery. You start off in the dirt, brown bottom of the tree. When you come in and as treatment progresses, you climb further up the tree and it gets prettier as you progress. There are also falling leaves to show that people have their ups and downs. Eventually they will make it back to the top of the tree.

The third scene in our day room is our circle of hands. The hands represent each youth's goals which are written on them. Above and behind the youths' hands are the staff's hands and the nurses' hands. The point of having the staff and nurses hands there are to show that they are there to hold our hands to help us not just achieve our goals but to reach recovery. "You got the whole world in your hands" is the quote we chose for this image. The quote fits by it shows you got the whole world to do what you want the healthy way, the better way once you leave the hospital. Faith, Hope, and Happiness are the three hands in the middle because usually they are in the middle of people's hearts.

Staff was very supportive in providing us with ideas and materials. All of these projects were done when other youth were having trouble so they were good ways to help us cope and distract.





Spaghetti Dinner

On Adolescent Continuing Care September 29, 2010, letter excerpts from our parents:

"Thank you so much for the opportunity to get to know the staff, the parents and the youth on the Adolescent Unit. The spaghetti dinner the youth made and served was a great way to meet others in an informal setting and to get a better sense of the facility and the group activities available to the youth.

It was obvious that the kids took pride in the meal and they seemed to get along well with one another and with staff...I felt more comfortable with the unit and staff after the dinner and I believe others did as well. I met some parents from a town close to ours, and they were lovely people who provided me with information about parent resources in our home community.

I'm hoping there will be more dinners or other activities like the spaghetti dinner. I believe there is huge benefit in getting the adolescent community and their parents and other relatives/friends together to enjoy each other in a normalized setting."

"Just wanted to say that the Wednesday evening dinner with the parents was a worthwhile event. We got a chance to meet other parents, as well as some of the kids. [Our Child] also seemed to relax and socialize with the other kids. Overall a success. I hope we can continue having these on a regular basis."

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## Building Collaborative Partnerships

### Focus on Customer Service

At Connections and the other UMass adolescent programs, customer service is one of the most important aspects of our jobs. Whether we are welcoming residents, families, visitors, other staff or administration it is important to remember that everyone deserves respect. When visitors come to the program, I believe staff should greet them and take steps to meet their needs. Connections staff welcome questions and like to give accurate answers and contact supervisors or administrators if this would be helpful. At the end of a visit it we ask guests if they had concerns or would like to speak to anyone else about their tour experiences. Connections believes that being courteous, respectful and professional is not only a positive reflection on ourselves and the program but also a positive example for our residents.

Steve Evora, Supervisor  
Connections BIRT

Greeting Committee at Connections!!



### Building Bridges

Connections has been committed to building bridges with families, guardians and the community in the past, present and the future. We are committed to maintaining, strengthening and building connections for the youth in our program. We have strived to invite and involve family members, guardians and supports into the lives of our youth at the time of the pre-admission and throughout their treatment while they are at Connections while also being cognizant of the importance of their involvement beyond our program. In addition we strive to identify individuals who can be a lasting support for the youth, especially for those who have limited or no family support.

At Connections we collaborate with family/guardians. We encourage them to attend the pre-admission and admission into the program in addition to treatment teams. We regularly inform them of and ask them to attend other meetings such as the Program Specific Treatment Planning meetings, Periodic Reviews and discharge planning meetings. Family and guardians are also asked to participate in the treatment team planning and to help guide the treatment of the youth. Families are asked to participate in family therapy as well. We keep them abreast of important information in addition to communicating the value of their help and participation.

With the development of the Director of Parent Engagement role, Laura Myers has assisted the Connections staff with our goal of increasing the involvement of family members via the phone in addition to their attendance at meetings and events. Connections recently had a Making Connections event in which family members, guardians and supports were invited to attend a night of food and fun while meeting other families. Families and friends were provided with a tour of the program as well as the opportunity to chat with staff. We had participation from the clinical, educational, residential and nursing departments as well as the administrative team at Connections. Everyone had a great time meeting one another and making new connections. The Connections staff are planning additional events in the future such as a luncheon for families who may not have been able to attend the Making Connections event and whose schedules may be better accommodated during the day time hours.

We understand the importance of maintaining the connection with the community and preparing the youth for their transition to their next step. Our youth are encouraged to engage in the community outside of Connections. They volunteer at Baypath which is an animal shelter in Hopkinton, MA as well as the Community Harvest Project which donates food to the Worcester Food Bank. In addition they regularly have the opportunity to go off grounds such as to the library, museums and other places with the support of staff which enables them to explore new community experiences, build supports, while also furthering their skills outside of the milieu.

By Erika Grandberg, LICSW,  
Connections BIRT

