

Prince William Drop In Center

Volume 1

Quarterly Newsletter

March 2008

The Story of Prince William Drop In Center

We heard about some funding available to mental health consumers in Virginia. Ann got the news from Phil Ross, President of NAMI PW. Immediately she inspired us all to meet with him and hear a little more about the program. Ann, Traci, Cynthia, Phil and Andrew met at IHOP, and it all began.

The monies available were from the Commonwealth of Virginia, funneled to the CSB-Fairfax, who put the Regional Recovery Workgroup in charge, who brought Pathway Homes in as the fiscal agent of the funds. There was a lot of money available to consumer-run programs. The only drawback that was the funds had to be given out to consumer-run programs before June 30, 2007. There was to be a meeting at NVMHI on the following Thursday to get all of our questions answered. We had this meeting at IHOP on April 15, 2007.

A dream had the chance of becoming reality.

Ann had been running this support group she created with another woman more than 10 years ago. It meets Wednesday nights in Manassas, for mental health consumers to support each other and listen to each other and just be there. Cynthia started going to the group in 2003 and Traci a year later. Strong bonds were formed and friendship was easy.

When we heard about the funding we knew we had to try. Support in the world is part of being human but people with mental health concerns don't always get the support they need. Creating friendships is difficult when one is continuously focused on staying psychologically stable. Crisis can be the norm and confusion abounds when there's so much to figure out.

But we had this Wednesday night group. And friendship. A strong commitment to recovery. And the perfect opportunity.

We had the chance to take our group and turn it into something bigger. Something for more people.

The whole community. Prince William County.

A lot of questions were answered regarding this particular grant at NVMHI. There was a one-time pool of money for mental health consumer run programs. For mental health consumers to help other mental health consumers. There must have been 30 people there all with hope and a dream. Listening, asking questions, trying to get it right. Up to this point it seemed like a whirlwind, but we soon knew the whirlwind was going to get stronger, not slow down.



From left: Cynthia Dudley, Ann Gurtler and Traci Jones during one of our very first visits after signing our lease.

The grant applications had to be turned in by May 2, 2007. We'd better get busy, we were thinking.

Ann Cynthia and Traci with the help of Phil Ross tackled the monstrous grant application and worked like crazy to complete it by the deadline. And we did. And we were awarded our full request. Can you believe it?

During and after the grant writing marathons, we visited the lawyer, became incorporated and wrote our by-laws, found the perfect office suite with a great landlord, signed up for insurance, miraculously found a fiscal agent, successfully battled the county code enforcement people, and sent help wanted signs to both PWC CSB's and the Club. We got great deals on furniture, including a few key donated items. We began establishing a relationship with the PWC Community Services Board in the form of meetings. We interviewed lots of applicants. The final step was receiving our Occupancy Permit and realized we didn't need a business license and there wasn't anything left to do but to open! TO OPEN! (con't on page 4).

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Introducing PWDIC Facilitators

We can't say enough about how blessed we feel toward the Facilitators we were able to hire. All of our Facilitators are mental health consumers. In all, we have 12 Facilitators – 8 regular and 4 back-ups. Our fearless leader, Ann, has first-hand experience with schizophrenia and depression. She is great at encouraging people. When you meet her, instantly it's apparent how much she loves people and enjoys listening to them. She loves learning how to play cards with our consumers and staff members. Ann is a devoted mother to her 28 year old beautiful daughter. Cynthia, our assistant fearless leader, has a strong commitment to her own mental health and that of others. She has been diagnosed with depression and PTSD. She loves working with people, laughing, playing cards, and anything artistic. Traci loves music & art and has a beautiful 15 year old daughter who's been diagnosed with bi-polar. The creation of PWDIC is a dream come true for Traci. She has several mental and physical health concerns and deeply understands the importance of what PWDIC offers the community. She was a critical piece to PWDIC's inception and took a necessary break until after our opening. She is back now and we couldn't be more grateful. We have Barbara who is gentle and caring to her core. She takes charge on projects and is a fantastic sounding board. Orlando came to this area from New York with his family. He loves spending time with his two grown kids and 6 grandkids. He is very personable and loves to play Chess, softball or pull together an impromptu card game. He's been clean & sober with help from AA and finds support groups helpful. He strongly believes asking for help has made him a better man. He loves listening to people and helping people. Kimberly stepped up early on as a shopper in our food supply. She's clear in her opinions and is great at speaking up. She likes to play chess, cards, checkers, and do arts and crafts. She is the proud mother of twins. Kim was diagnosed with bi-polar 30 years ago. Debra comes to us from Springfield. She is part of the Manassas Support Group. She is so talented with computers, loves to read, loves creating and appreciating art, and enjoys going for walks and listening to people. She has a 29 year old son with a mental illness. Debra is committed to her own recovery, finds it important to go to therapy and credits medications in helping her remain stable. Shawn loves to talk with our consumers, is very knowledgeable about mental health issues, and a great computer guru. He has had a Drop In Center dream for 10 years and is so thrilled to be a part of it. One of our back-ups that works like a regular is Nancy. We found her through PWC CSB's Club. She loves hats, shoes, arts and crafts, and people. Nancy went to school to study music, likes working at PWDIC and enjoys giving a helping hand. Sharon is a true artist (did you see the bamboo in our bathroom?), is great at finding resources (ask her about Freecycle!) and yet another computer geek for us. She has been singing in the choir since she was 3 feet tall, is a thrift shop queen and a devoted mother of 2 beautiful daughters. Most of her Christmas presents are crocheted and she loves to chit chat. See what we mean when we say we are blessed?

Other Area Services

NAMI PW

NAMI PW (National Alliance on Mental Illness Prince William) is an organization in the county comprised of family, friends and professionals of mental health consumers, and mental health consumers themselves. They advocate, provide education, and offer support in the region for the treatment and recovery for people with mental illness. They are affiliated with NAMI VA and the national NAMI organization. To get involved or for more information, please contact them at info@NAMI-PW.org or mail them at NAMI PW, PO Box 1423, Woodbridge, VA 22195-1423.

Little Jack Horner's Corner

Little Jack Horner's Corner is in its growth stage & is seeking to become a non-profit bakery. Their mission is to offer bakery products to the public while creating a nurturing atmosphere for consumers.

They teach mental health consumers baking skills, build their confidence, & promote their integration into the community by helping them find employment & become independent, contributing members of society.

They specialize in making & selling brownies, cookies, & muffins... seeking to gain patronage by providing the best products and service possible.

For special orders please contact Angela at 703.946.3076.

Little Jack Horner's Corner Price List

Brownies	\$6.00/dozen	peanut butter, walnut, triple chunk or low fat
Cookies	\$4.00/dozen	Chocolate chip, chocolate chip w/nuts, peanut butter
Muffins	\$4.00/dozen	White, yellow or chocolate cake with your choice of frosting

Hours of Operation:

10 am to 10 pm
Monday thru Saturday

Contact us:

PWDIC
13184 Centerpointe Way
Woodbridge, VA 22192
703.763.3865

Join Us for

Movie & Pizza!

On alternating Friday and Saturday nights (which works out to once a week) we offer Pizza and a Movie. This has already turned into a huge success, and we've come very close to having to figure out an "over our occupancy level" procedure on the fly! Want to see a particular movie at PWDIC? Let our Friday or Saturday night Facilitators know!



How About These Volunteers!

Kevin signed up immediately (before we even opened!) as a volunteer and is so generous in his time and energy in doing what needs to be done. He steps up in the nightly duties and lends a hand anytime we happen to ask for any assistance. You can be fairly sure a card or board game will occur when Kevin is there and conversation and laughter is always in great supply. He's been such a great volunteer we recently had to hire him!

Melanie comes in a couple of times a week during the day to hang out with our facilitators and assist in any way possible. She encourages people to do arts & crafts, plays cards with consumers and just helps PWDIC run smoothly while she's there on volunteer time. Her pleasant personality is a definite asset to PWDIC and we are lucky to have her on board.

Phil Ross, while not an "official" volunteer, needs to be mentioned here. He's affectionately referred to as PWDIC's "Godfather" by Cynthia for good reason. He's a wonderful sounding board and gives great guidance during administrative confusion and even makes emergency computer tech repairs (even on Sundays!).

TOKENS TOKENS **TOKENS**

We have tokens for our PRTC riders! These tokens are available from any Facilitator. Our policy is to give anyone 2 tokens at a time. We offer these tokens in case of emergency. Our budget won't allow us to give everyone a free ride all the time, but we want to help out when we're able. We have a log to track dates, people, and how many tokens are given. We also encourage anyone to offer assistance when needed to other consumers and will reimburse them at PWDIC.

Making Progress on the

Community Resource Manual

The staff of PWDIC is working hard on creating a Community Resource Manual. Currently we have the NVRC (Northern Virginia Regional Commission) Quick Guide. CrisisLink in Fairfax gave us the information to order this guide during our earliest days. DRS (Department of Rehabilitative Services) gave us a copy of the PWC Disability Services Board Community Resource Guide. These guides index public & private agencies offering a wide variety of services to people in Northern Virginia. We also have a copy of Northern Virginia's Where & When which lists area AA Meetings. Our facilitators are working on identifying local and national programs which assists people in paying for their medications. We have information from PRTC on how to get discounted bus transportation. Our hope is to cover more and more areas in which people might need assistance. If you have any organizations to include in our Community Resource Manual, please let a Facilitator know. This manual is kept at our front counter. If you are looking for a particular resource, any facilitator will help you search through the information.

Need someone to talk with?

Join us for a supportive self-help group.

Peer Support Groups

Consumer-operated mental health groups that promote recovery through peer support.

These are a mutual support group for mental health consumers,
including depression, bi-polar, anxiety & other issues.

These groups meet:

At the Prince William Drop In Center:
3rd Monday of each month 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm
Every other Friday 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm

In Manassas, Marsteller School:
Wednesdays 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm
Call Terry for more info: 703.754.1102

Run by mental health consumers for mental health consumers.

The Story of PWDIC (cont from page 1)

We called our Facilitators and said it's for sure a go and can you come in for Orientation and Training on September 21, 2007.

There was talk about a Grand Opening but we quickly realized, after the delay, that we were tired and couldn't we just have a soft opening first and a Grand Opening very soon after. So that's what we did.

On that Special Friday, our new facilitators started coming in early. We handed out folders with forms and information and more forms. We had everyone introduce themselves and say just a little bit. We got into guidelines and rules for PWDIC consumers. All the boring stuff that goes into hiring, drug policies and taxes. And then it was time to hand out the keys and name tags. We were feeling blessed at the group of people we were lucky enough to hire. So many people with different qualities to bring to PWDIC. What a great group. So Monday was our Opening Day and from Ann and Cynthia there was yet another sigh of excitement and of relief. Our hard work was paying off.

It may have taken a few days to get our first few consumers to drop in the Drop In Center. It didn't take very long to get more than a handful of regulars.

After a week or so Ann and Cynthia realized a Grand Opening needed to be planned. So the Facilitators all stepped up to the plate and started organizing. The date was set for October 24. That didn't leave us much time. Food had to be ordered, decorations had to be bought, press releases sent out, and invitations, too. It was exciting to do the planning and everything came together beautifully. People came in for a tour and to meet us all, to hang out, to chit chat, and to eat great food. It was definitely a success.

In the first months of being open, we've already had a flower arranging party, several pizza & movie parties, a few painting groups, latch hook sessions, beading groups, lots of Uno games, there's an ongoing chess tournament, our bathroom walls were decorated, many great conversations, lots of connecting and sharing and making and strengthening friendships.

Each day there's more to do. We're contacting local therapists and doctors in the area to let them know we're here (we've already sent letters to area churches). Constant contact with the CSB is occurring. Working with the accountant is nearly a daily chore. Payroll has to be done 2 times a month. We're working on transportation for our consumers and our website is in process and we finally have figured out a manageable process for food to be purchased on a regular basis for PWDIC. We've already outgrown our refrigerator. We're already researching expansion and we're looking for funding sources all the time, for the day the IRS approves our 501(c)3.

From the time we heard about the grant to the day we opened a little more than 5 months elapsed. It was a total whirlwind. It's slowed down slightly but the excitement of all we offer and the ideas of what more we can offer keeps us quite busy indeed.

We've made a dream come into reality and we're able to serve Prince William County in a way it desperately needed. And we are thanking goodness every single day.

Got an Idea?

Our suggestion box is located in our Tranquility Room. We are excited about the ideas we have gotten so far. Through the suggestion box we have recently gotten a coffee table for the tv room, a coffee pot, bus tokens for consumers, 2 printers for the computers (which were both donated), fruit added to our shopping list, a subscription to the Washington Post (hopefully the Manassas Journal Messenger will be added soon), we've gotten 'better' jewelry making supplies, and our pizza parties have taken off with great success!

Our Wish List:

- Ø Bookshelves
- Ø A Van
- Ø Bus Tokens
- Ø Exercise tapes
- Ø Movies (vhs or dvd)
- Ø Music cd's
- Ø Games
- Ø Office paper
- Ø Art supplies
- Ø Food contributions
- Ø Brochure/flyer rack
- Ø Financial contributions

If you can help with any of these items, please contact us at 703.763.3865 or PWDropInCenter@yahoo.com

Unless someone like you
cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get
better. It's not.

- Dr Seuss The Lorax

Just Drop In

Come in and **play games**. We have Monopoly, Scrabble, Pictionary, Checkers. Play a game of **Chess** or enter our ongoing **tournament**. Our Champion is Orlando. Can you beat him? Drop in on Monday, Wednesday or Saturday nights to find out. **Play cards**: Spades; Tonk; Rook; Pinochle, Rummy, Uno. Learn how to play any of these games. Just ask our facilitators! **Are you creative?** Come in and make Jewelry. Do latchhook. Don't know how? Nancy can teach you on Monday evening or Wednesday & Saturday days. Paint with watercolor or acrylics. **Draw** with crayons, colored pencils or markers. Play with Playdough. **W** Come and use our **computers**! We have two, they are great for surfing the web, playing games, doing research, or just exploring. Want to **learn how** to use a computer? Sharon, Shawn and Debra are our resident gurus, but many of our facilitators can get you up and running on something cool. **W** Need some **quiet time**? Our Tranquility Room has the best couches and a stereo. **W** Support your inner couch potato! Come in and **watch tv!** Have a sandwich. Get something to drink. **Just hang out**. Our facilitators love to **chit chat**. Just come on in and talk with them. Drop in and make some new friends.

Activities & Seminars

Activities are always going on at PWDIC. Check for a current Activity Calendar.

Call us: 703.763.3865

Place your advertisement here

Our newsletter reaches hundreds of mental health consumers and professionals. Place your ad in our newsletter to help support it's publication and to reach many people in Northern Virginia. Call Cynthia to find out more.

Membership Form

Everyone is welcome to join. No financial contribution is necessary. All contributions are welcome.

Name _____

Address _____

City State Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

_____ I want to get involved! Please contact me!

Please tell us how you heard about PWDIC: _____

Enclosed please find the following donation _____

Please complete and return to:

Prince William Drop In Center
13184 Centerpointe Way
Woodbridge, VA 22193

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Phone: 703.763.3865