



Advocacy Unlimited, Inc. Spring 2009 Newsletter

Advocacy Unlimited offers education in self, systems, and legislative advocacy skills for persons with, or in recovery from, psychiatric disabilities or co-occurring disorders. Our comprehensive Advocacy Education course is now taught both in English and in Spanish. The 14 – week course meets one day a week for approximately five hours. For information about upcoming courses and applications, please visit our website, www.mindlink.org.

AU Programs

Hispanic Initiative

Advocacy Unlimited has been awarded a \$75,000 grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. The three-year grant allows us to expand our efforts to serve the Latino community in Greater Hartford by translating the website into Spanish, presenting our Advocacy Education Course (a comprehensive, nationally recognized course that provides extensive training in self, systems, and legislative advocacy skills, as well as topics related to psychiatric disabilities and recovery, personal growth, and skill building) in Spanish, and strengthening leadership skills for Latinos with psychiatric disabilities and co-occurring disorders (formerly known as dual diagnosis). In addition, AU received a three-year grant from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency (SAMSHA), and a significant portion of this grant will be dedicated to English/Spanish translations, outreach to the Hispanic community and developing Hispanic community leadership.

Hispanic Initiative Director Annette Deonarine has completed three Advocacy Courses, two for Connecticut’s Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and one for the Hartford Foundation, in Spanish so far. She has also coordinated translating AU’s English website and all the course materials into Spanish. Ms. Deonarine participates in regular outreach to Connecticut’s Latino community through non-profit organizations, conferences and through her membership on DMHAS’ Multicultural Advisory Committee.



State Rep. Minnie Gonzalez speaks at the Third Hispanic Graduation



Message from Executive Director Dr. Karen A. Kangas

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It has been an exciting adventure for me to be a part of the outstanding team at Advocacy Unlimited for the past year and a half. As most of you know, I have been involved since the beginning of AU, as I was a continuous supporter even in my position at DMHAS. Now, however, I find myself directly involved in the day-to-day operation of this progressive, involved non-profit agency. I continue to meet with many of you as long time friends and advocates, and I am constantly meeting new and exciting (young!) Advocates who are anxious to work hard to change and improve our destiny.

Recovery seems to be the word of the day, but for many of us it is more than a word - it is how we survive each day. As you will see throughout this newsletter, AU’s many new, innovative projects are taking us toward a future that we only once dreamed about. Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

AU Programs

Hispanic Initiative (*continued*)

At the most recent graduation ceremony, guest speakers included State Rep. Minnie Gonzalez (D-Hartford), Jose Ortiz, Director of Multicultural Affairs at DMHAS and Carl Shields, Director of Recovery & Community Integration at Capital Region Mental Health Center. A fourth class started in April 2009 at Mi Casa Family Services & Education Center, in the heart of Hartford's Latino community.

In addition to Spanish-language classes, students in this course will have access to considerable other resources at Mi Casa and will meet former and recent graduates of the Advocacy Course. Twenty-six students are currently enrolled in the class at Mi Casa.

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region, dedicated to improving the quality of life for area residents. The Foundation receives gifts from thousands of generous individuals and families and last year, it awarded grants of more than \$27 million to a broad range of area nonprofit organizations. For more information about the Foundation, visit www.hfpg.org or call 548-1888.

“Mad Cool”

With a grant from SAMHSA, AU is creating a gaming simulation aimed at educating young adults (18-25 year-olds) about mental illness and recovery. Lyne Stokes is leading a design and implementation team of six young adults, and the developed game will be field-tested in ten Connecticut locations.

Online Education

Amy Beer, Director of Media and Legal Education, is creating online educational content for AU's website that focuses on the rights of people with psychiatric disabilities. This project is also funded by SAMSHA.



C-RECS

Working with Focus on Recovery, Chris Hacia and Norm Kidwell of AU have been instrumental in creating a new website that connects jobseekers with employers in mental health and disability fields. The site, www.creecs.org allows consumers to register, upload resumes, search job listings and apply for jobs online.

Young Adult Services

Program Director Lyne Stokes completed the first of a series of advocacy courses for young adults at Bridges in West Haven. Eight young adults, known as SuperAdvocates, graduated from the first class in a ceremony held on January 29, 2009 at the West Haven Public Library. The guest speaker was Kenneth Marcus, MD, Medical Director for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and the students presented a video they created titled "Super Advocate." Lyne and Jennifer Bucci, Coordinator of the Community Resource Center of Litchfield County, began a second class in Torrington in March 2009.



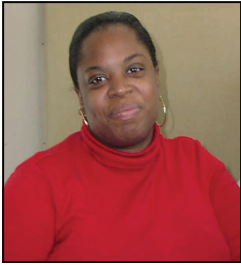
Recovery University

Advocacy Unlimited has received a grant from Connecticut's DMHAS for "Recovery University," an intensive program to train and certify "Recovery Support Specialists, Peer Delivered Services." As of 2009, under Money Follows the Person, Medicare/Medicaid's pilot program to move elderly and disabled people from nursing homes into independent living, RSS services provided in the home by an accredited agency are eligible for reimbursement. RSSs will work with people with psychiatric disabilities and co-occurring disorders on treatment teams. Magellan Behavioral Health Services, headquartered in Avon, will provide in-kind support for curriculum development, testing and evaluation.

Recovery University is a 60-hour course that includes classes and career preparation. The first training starts in June, and the first Certification Exam will be held in September. With approval, peers with certain other training and/or work experience may take the exam without attending the course, and AU will offer an intensive one-day review program before each exam.

For more information about Recovery University, contact Linda Lentini, Training Director, at llentini@mindlink.org.

Announcements



Jennifer Henry
AU Graduate,
Waterbury (2008)

Dr. Karen Kangas Award: Susan Werboff, Program Director of Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI), was awarded the Dr. Karen Kangas Award for Excellency in Advocacy in December 2008. Susan's list of accomplishments and service to the community is extensive, and she has helped thousands of persons with psychiatric disabilities, often being selflessly available for them regardless of the time of day or night.

"You're Beautiful": Jennifer Henry, who graduated from the New Britain Advocacy Course in November 2008, was awarded an RCAC mini-grant for "You're Beautiful

Inside and Out," a program to give makeovers to persons in recovery.

GED Preparation: Lyne Stokes is teaching ongoing GED classes at CCAR in Hartford.

Transition: Selina Wellborn, who worked with AU for three years as a Vista Volunteer, joined AU as a full-time staff person in December 2008. Selina has taken the lead in organizing AU Advocates and staff members to testify on issues of concern to our community raised by proposals to cut the state budget for health care and other services for persons with psychiatric disabilities and co-occurring disorders. With Linda Lentini, Selina will be co-teaching the AU Advocacy Course at Genesis Center in Manchester starting in April.

Legislative Advocacy: In January and February 2009, all members of the AU staff and more than 30 advocates testified at public hearings on Governor Jodi M. Rell's proposed state budget.

Advocacy Unlimited has been selected as one of the organizations that will benefit from the 2009 ING Hartford Marathon/Half Marathon on October 10. To sign up to race or to volunteer, contact Linda Lentini at llentini@mindlink.org.

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IN MEMORIAM

We report with great sadness that on Thursday, May 14, 2009, long-time AU Advocate and Board Member Gabrielle (Gaby) Kitchener died at the Hospital of Saint Raphael after losing a long-term battle with several ailments.

Gaby graduated as an Advocate from AU's second Advocacy Education class in 1995. In [date], she was the first recipient of the Dr. Karen Kangas Award for Excellency in Advocacy. She continued to be an enthusiastic and enduring supporter of AU's mission and activities and served as the Board of Directors from [date to the present], most recently as the Secretary,

Gaby's passing is a great loss to the entire AU community. Her courage and perseverance, and her unflinching optimism, inspired us all. We will miss her tremendously. Her family requests that any donations in Gaby's memory be sent to The Disability Resource Center of Fairfield County, 80 Ferry Blvd., Suite 210, Stratford, CT 06615.

Advocacy Unlimited is operated and controlled by persons in recovery from psychiatric disabilities and co-occurring disorders.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life for all persons with, or in recovery from, psychiatric disabilities or co-occurring disorders through education in self, systems, and legislative advocacy skills.

2009 AU Board of Directors

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*Karen Kangas and
John Sims at 2008
AU Holiday Party*

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address correction requested

AU NEWSLETTER GOES GREEN!

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