

EMPHASIS

ON MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Fall 2012

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Teens Share Who They Really Are
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Welcome New Board Members
Therapy for Children: Does It Help?
Be Aware of the Signs of Depression

**Volunteer for MHANS Programs
Call 847/328-6198.**

MHANS 2012 HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY CONTEST

Winners Discuss "The Real Me vs. the Me I Show Others"

By Sue Laue, Past President

Mental Health America of the North Shore honored high school students from across the North Shore early this summer for their insightful essays on the theme, "The Real Me vs. the Me I Show Others." Prizes ranged from \$200 for first place to \$50 for honorable

mention. Teens read parts of their essays at a ceremony for families, friends and the public at the Hilton Orrington Hotel in Evanston.

In their writing, teens addressed the prompt, "Do you represent your true self, or do you change your external image for others?"

One of the top winners wrote about never being the tough, brave

kind of son his dad wants when a school bully jumps him. "Instead, his son has about as much bravery as a pill bug," the teen wrote. He weeps at his mom's grave. She died when he was younger, and had always defended him. But then he sees the bully hunched over, weeping at another grave, and discovers that he, too, is covering up his true self by being a bully.

Another top winner wrote, "My mask was my smile. I would always smile in public or when I was not caught up in all the arguing (at home)." She became depressed and turned to cutting herself for awhile. But then she wrote, "I got help and am still struggling, but I learned one of the most important lessons anybody can learn: you have to be yourself."

A bisexual teen wrote, "I played the same straight role . . . for many (continued on page 2)



NORTH SHORE HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY WINNERS 2012 AND SCHOOLS

Freshman/Sophomore Category

First Place: Lydia Zuehsow,
Maine South High School

Second Place: Maddy White,
Evanston High School

Third Place: Sam Baum, Evans-
ton High School

Honorable Mention: Jed Kim,
New Trier HS; Hayoung Lee,
New Trier HS; Marisa Washing-
ton, Maine East HS

**"I got help, and am
still struggling, but I learned
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you have to be yourself."**



**Volunteer for MHANS New
Youth Board, 847/328-6198**

Junior/Senior Category

First Place: Alissa Bregman,
Evanston High School

Second Place: Claire Leoni,
Evanston High School

Third Place: Justin Lee, Evanston
High School

Honorable Mention:
Eliza Weaver, New Trier HS; Matt
Suppelsa, Evanston HS; Fatima
Rogaria, Maine East HS

*From the
President's Desk*
**Dr. Kristin
Velazquez
Kenefick, Psy.D.**

MHANS will initiate an education and advocacy program in 2012-2013 that will emphasize the promotion of mental and emotional health for children and youth. The focus on the promotion of mental health in our community allows MHANS to address the vacuum that exists with regard to information on prevention and promotion of mental health. Our unique initiatives aim to provide families, children, and organizations who serve them, with information and access to tools for strengthening mental health and building resiliency skills.

Through forums, educational materials and partnerships with organizations, we intend to foster an understanding of mental health promotion. Expanding the resources available to help children and families learn skills in areas such as coping with stress, emotion management and conflict resolution are vital to the well-being of our children and our community. With our focus on partnering with schools and organizations, we can create new opportunities for involvement and collaboration.

Founded in 1965, MHANS is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization of volunteers and professionals dedicated to promoting mental health through education, advocacy and community programs, and is affiliated with Mental Health America. Office: 2120 Lincoln St., Evanston, IL 60201 Phone: 847-328-6198 (o); 847-869-4701 (f) Newsletter Editor: Sue Laue



High School Essay Contest Winners 2012

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years because I was afraid of people judging me . . . and afraid of getting put out of the house.” Now more comfortable, the teen said, “I realize that who I am as a person isn’t her (mother’s) decision to make. I am my own person.”

Another teen who lives with constant parental criticism, wrote, “I ask myself what have I done wrong? You reject my very being. You ask me: Why do you not trust me? I ask you: Why do you not accept me for who I am?”

MHANS President Dr. Kristin Kenefick said, “While some teens wrote about the difficulty of being accepted by peers, the most poignant and disturbing were those about rejection by parents. Teens can face almost anything in the world when they are loved and accepted at home.”

Through the annual teen essay contest, MHANS helps teens express their needs, and lets adults know how they can help them. MHANS also follows up when students may be having problems that could require help to resolve.

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MHANS Mission Statement

The purpose of Mental Health America of the North Shore is to educate our community about mental health and social-emotional wellness, to dispel stigma and to advocate for individuals and families affected by mental and emotional disorders.

Phone: 847/328-6198

www.mhans.org

Fax: 847/869-4701

The Right Fit for Positive Change: Can Therapy Help In A Child's Mental Health Treatment Plan?

Reprinted from BP Magazine, Summer 2012

Susan Resko of the Balanced Mind Foundation asks Julie Joyce, a former community police officer who is now a foot patrol officer and on the Chicago Police Department's crisis intervention team questions: How do you look for a good therapist? How do you know if therapy is working? Joyce is also the mother of a 19-year-old son who was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and ADHD at age 10.

As consumers, we can spend countless hours researching which vehicle or home we want that will fit our needs. As parents, isn't the person you trust with your child's mental health care worth at least that much diligence?

I first started looking for a therapist when my son was five. I don't know if therapy had any direct effect on him at that age, but I do know it set a precedent for him to understand that therapy is something he needs in order to function in a healthier way. In the beginning, I didn't know how to find a therapist who was the right fit, and we found a lot of wrong ones. Now I know: Do your research.

Just because a clinician has MSW or LSW or some other combination of letters after his name doesn't mean he is a good match for your child. I don't care as much about a therapist's credentials as I do about what other parents have to say about their child's experience with that person. Over the years I have utilized resources like The Balanced Mind Foundation, DBSA and NAMI, as well as my son's therapeutic day school and his psychiatrist — these are people I trust who understand my child's needs and struggles.

Therapy has worked well for my son. I have seen

MHANS Calendar

Board Meetings are on the first Wednesday of the month, 7 p.m., at St. Matthews Church, 2120 Lincoln St., Evanston, IL. Please check with Board Secretary Josefina Alvarez to confirm meetings, jalvarez@adler.edu.

Annual Teen Essay Contest will open early 2013.

MHANS Benefit will be held in Spring 2013.

him apply techniques he learned in therapy to real-world scenarios, especially in communication. Now when he gets angry, instead of lashing out he will say to me he "needs space" — this tells people to back off and prevents a situation from escalating. When he is in a manic state, he will say his mind is racing — this tells me he may need more time to accomplish tasks. That's not all he's learned in therapy; one thing that always makes me laugh is when he psychoanalyzes my moods, complete with all the "buzz" words!

One of the greatest tools he has gained from therapy is to advocate for himself. When questioned about his illness, he speaks openly and honestly and doesn't shy away from even the most difficult questions. Therapy has taught him to lean on others for support when he needs to, and to use his voice as a tool to battle through stigma and bias. Even though he continues to struggle with bipolar, he has realized that having an outlet such as a therapist will help him to continue to build on his successes.

What Are Social and Emotional Skills?

Self-Awareness: Recognizing one's emotions and values as well as one's strengths and limitations.

Self-Management: Managing emotions and behaviors to achieve one's goals. www.casel.org.

Social Awareness: Identifying and understanding thoughts and feelings of others, respecting their rights and appreciating diversity.

Relationship Skills: Establishing and maintaining healthy, positive and rewarding relationships with individuals and groups through communication, listening and negotiation skills, working in teams and dealing effectively with conflict.

Responsible Decision-Making: Generating, evaluating and carrying out positive, ethical and informed solutions to problems, and assuming responsibility for personal decisions and behaviors. *Further information on these skills can be found at:* www.casel.org, www.icmhp.org, and www.isbe.net.

We want our children to be successful in school, in a job later on and in life's relationships. But we don't always know how to assure that competence. Research shows that SEL skills, if modeled and taught by adults, can be learned by children. Peer relationships improve and academic performance can be improved by 11-15 points. Parents can model and teach these skills by practicing good communication, listening and problem-solving skills in relation to their children. Visit www.icmhp.org for a parent brochure..

MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

Knowing the Signs of Depression to Reach Out For Help

By Dr. Josefina Alvarez, Adler School of Psychology and MHANS Board Secretary

Everyone occasionally feels sad. Often, these feelings are short-lived. When feelings of sadness last and when they interfere with daily life, they could be a sign of depression. There are several types of depression, including "major depression" and a milder but long lasting type called Dysthymia.

Depression is very common in adults and children. Bipolar disorder is not as common and is characterized by changes in mood from severe depression to extreme highs (also called mania). Not everyone experiences depression in the same way. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, signs of depression may include:

- Persistent sad, anxious or "empty" feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or helplessness
- Irritability, restlessness
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies once pleasurable, including sex
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details and making decisions
- Insomnia, early-morning wakefulness or excessive sleeping
- Overeating or appetite loss
- Thoughts of suicide and/or suicide attempts
- Aches or pains, headaches, cramps or digestive problems.

Children may experience depression differently than adults. For example, they may become negative and irritable, misbehave or refuse to go to school. In adolescence, depression is more common among girls, and these patterns continue in adulthood, but men and teen boys are more

likely to report loss of energy and interest in activities, irritability, anger and trouble sleeping.

Adolescents and adults who experience depression may also report anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse and other mental health issues. A major concern when someone is seriously depressed involves the danger of suicide.

Depression can be a serious problem, but it is very treatable. If you or someone you know experiences depression, seek help from a mental health professional. Research clearly shows that psychotherapy, in many cases in combination with medication, is effective in treating depression.

Even if depression appears to be the result of life stresses, it is important to seek help. Someone who is depressed will also benefit from support from family and friends. Never ignore someone who talks about suicide.

If concerned that a friend or relative may be at risk for suicide, call the 24-hour National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1 -800-273-8255); TTY: 1 -800-799-4TTY (4889) to talk to a trained counselor.

Sources of information on depression include:

The National Institute of Mental Health

(www.nimh.nih.gov)

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (www.samhsa.gov)

The American Psychological Association (www.apa.org).

Other links are also on MHANS website, www.mhans.org

MHANS Creates Suicide Prevention Brochure for Young Children

MHANS has created a brochure for young children in grades 2-4 to combat depression and suicide called, "Sometimes I Don't Feel So Good." Former MHANS President Elizabeth Brasher said, "There wasn't much information for young children, about their feelings of sadness, and how they could get help. MHANS stepped into this void and created a simple brochure that empowers children to reach out to an adult or friend to let their feelings be known." The brochure was created due to the suicide of a 10-year-old in Evanston. English & Spanish versions can be downloaded at www.mhans.org.

MHANS Is Creating A New Youth Board

MHANS is looking for committed young people to join its new Youth Board to promote good mental health and social-emotional wellness for their peers and for themselves. Please call 847/328-6198 to volunteer.