



# THE BRIDGE

Spring 2005

Family-centered recovery for mental illness & substance use disorders.

## WestBridge values

WestBridge strives to be collaborative, person-centered and recovery-oriented. We have developed the following set of values that we want to be reflective of our relationships with our participants, families, co-workers and colleagues.

- Hope, respect, teamwork and direct communication are the core elements of our culture.
- We want everyone we interact with to experience our compassion, thoughtfulness, integrity and responsiveness.
- Everything we do is driven by a desire to develop authentic relationships. We encourage you to let us know when we are living up to these values and when we are falling short. By working together, we can make treatment a positive, hopeful experience. ■

## Community care helps shape recovery

For many decades the treatment of mental illness and addiction disorders occurred in state hospitals, private sanitariums, inpatient detoxes and residential treatment settings. Since the de-institutionalization of mental health services, care has moved away from hospitals, and community mental health centers have evolved to provide services to individuals in the communities where they live.

At WestBridge, we believe that true community-based care not only

*Happiness is not a destination, it is a method of life.*

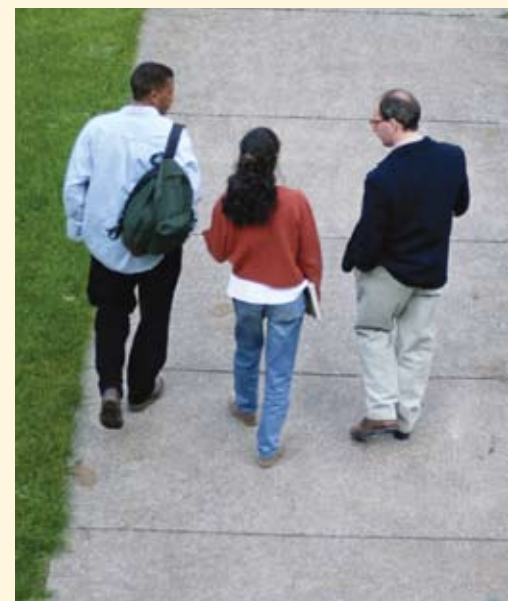
*Burton Hills*

takes place outside a hospital setting, but also involves the influence of community factors to shape and reinforce a person's recovery. These factors include family and social relationships, housing, work and school expectations, legal involvement, worship, medical care, etc.

Most people with co-occurring disorders experience recovery through a series of stages. During the contemplation stage, for example, a person experiences ambivalence about whether to make the changes. Feedback from the community through consequences and positive experiences can enhance a person's motivation to recover.

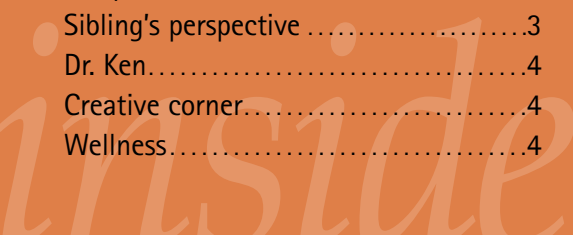
We encourage individuals and families to deal with crises using community resources. Interventions such as going to a hotel overnight as respite, assigning staff members to extend normal visit hours into the evening, and calling upon family, friends, landlords, physicians and employers for additional support can all help individuals cope with a crisis without disrupting their structure or removing them from the comforts of their environment.

Working through a difficult time while living in the community enables people to have the support they need to enhance their recovery. ■



## WESTBRIDGE COMMUNITY SERVICES

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## Parent's perspective

Since my daughter's terrible illness began swirling around my family 18 months ago, and her subsequent diagnosis of schizophrenia, not many of my friends and colleagues have talked to me about it at length. Some friends are worried about making me uncomfortable, some about their own awkward discomfort. So, who do you talk to about your child's severe mental illness?

When I visit WestBridge, I often wonder about the other families. Would it feel better or worse to know other families in my situation? Since our first visit to WestBridge, we have been urged to contact NAMI, but we haven't yet.

Would it help my daughter if she knew other WestBridge or NAMI families? Since becoming ill, she had to give up her job and alter her plans to return to graduate school. If she reached out, would she meet new friends? Should my son be connecting with other siblings? None of his peers have had experiences like this. I wonder whether it is possible that any other family has experienced anything similar to what my family has.

Psychiatrist Leston Havens, MD, suggests that every therapist who works with families facing severe mental illness should post a simple phrase above their office door: "Accept uncertainty within, or do not stay." This message rings true for my family and, perhaps, yours as well.

Visit [www.westbridge.org](http://www.westbridge.org) for the full article. ■

## Spirituality: A resource for recovery

It is easy to understand the need to heal the brain and the body in the treatment of substance abuse or mental illness. However, despair, fear, isolation, confusion about self and loss of meaning are often part of the experience with these illnesses. This leads to a crisis that can best be understood as spiritual in nature: a profound disconnection from self, others and meaning in life.

If the crisis is spiritual, then recovery also involves healing of the spirit.

Discovering sources of hope and courage is essential when facing difficult choices and changes that recovery demands. One needs to surrender to the reality of the illness and learn to see oneself as more than the illness. Forgiving oneself for the illness and for the hurtful consequences of an untreated illness is also a part of the spiritual healing. Finding a way out of the isolation to be part of a community and family is another spiritual aspect of recovery.

This spiritual recovery and healing is also relevant to family members and significant others in a person's life. Everyone involved grapples with spiritual concerns when coming to terms with the role of powerlessness and acceptance in the face of a serious illness.

Recovery can be a long and exhausting journey. Spirituality is different for each person. A question that can guide each person in the exploration of spirituality as a component of recovery is: *What is it that connects you to your best self, to others and to the world around*



## in the news

### The Commons scheduled for June opening

The Commons, our short-term stabilization residence for dually diagnosed men, will soon be a reality! We are working with CMK Architects on designing the space and LaPlante Builders has been hired to oversee the renovations. Linda Murphy of Murphy's Boxing Gymnasium has been consulting with WestBridge on developing an individualized strength-based approach to wellness that is also fun! An open house is planned for June 23. More details to follow.

### 2005 NAMI Walks NH

This year's NAMI Walks for the Mind of America will take place Sunday, October 2, at White's Park in Concord. This exciting event will take walkers and teams past the state capitol. Come out and celebrate life, fight the stigma of mental illness and spread the message of hope. For more information, contact Melissa Edney at WestBridge at 800.889.7871. ■



# Hope and recovery: The value of peer mentoring

by Lisa Halpern, peer mentor,  
WestBridge Community  
Services, Cambridge, MA

A peer mentor, a member of the clinical Program for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) team who lives with severe brain illness, has a unique ability to connect with participants and their families.

Serving as a resource by bridging communication gaps whenever possible, a peer mentor is a tremendously valued member of a PACT team and has numerous potential responsibilities. A peer mentor:

- is a resource for PACT team members, providing the team with a highly positive, unique perspective of an individual flourishing with brain illness.
- uses personal insight to simultaneously foster and grow communication, build alliances between professionals and patients, engender dialogue and alter opinions.
- coordinates with clinical members of the PACT team, works with participants (one-on-one and in groups) and interacts with their families.
- exudes hope by being an active and respected PACT team member; people who are sick and those who care for them can view the peer mentor as a role model and source of empowerment.
- serves as a liaison between the PACT team and consumer-run programs and self-help groups.
- should aim to write and speak publicly on topics related to recovery, hope and the peer mentor's personal experience with each.

Operating a PACT team without a peer mentor is similar to sailing a boat in a storm without any sailors who have ever weathered and survived a squall. It is possible, but it weakens the overall strength of the boat and crew. ■

## Sibling's perspective

My brother had his first "schizophrenic break" as a college freshman, but only years later did my parents admit that schizophrenia was part of his diagnosis. He completed college and graduate school through tremendous efforts to maintain stability in his increasingly shaky mental state.

Ten years later, my parents suggested he move to New Hampshire to go into "business" with me, to give him a more normal life, rather than the isolation he had built in my parents' home. I soon saw the daily torment of the voices he heard and the delusions that plagued him. His world and mine became a terrible cycle of illness, disappointment, frustration and terrible feelings of lost potential.

As I saw my life being sucked into his abyss, we ended our business venture. Now, he has been properly diagnosed and receives treatment from the local mental health center, as well as additional support services from WestBridge. We maintain a close relationship, without me being responsible for his day-to-day well-being.

My parents and I have learned that "potential" can have many faces, and that success can be measured with many types of milestones. We know he will not be the person my parents dreamed he might be, but he will make a difference in the lives of other people, especially ours. ■

## did you know?

- Nearly twice as many women (12 percent) as men (6.6 percent) are affected by a depressive disorder each year, affecting 12.4 million women and 6.4 million men in the U.S.
- Depressive disorders often co-occur with anxiety disorders and substance abuse.
- While a major depressive disorder can develop at any age, the average age at onset is the mid-twenties.
- Approximately 2.2 million adults in the U.S., about 1.1 percent of the population age 18 and older in a given year, have schizophrenia.
- Schizophrenia affects men and women with equal frequency, appearing earlier in men (usually in their late teens or early twenties) than women (twenties or early thirties). ■

*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*





# Dr. Ken

Ken Duckworth, MD  
WestBridge Outreach Psychiatrist  
NAMI Medical Director

## What determines whether people take prescribed medications?

The best medication is sometimes one that a person will actually take, especially with co-occurring disorders. People take their medicines for many reasons, the most enduring being they find them helpful. Getting a person to take medicines over the long haul for any chronic condition can be difficult, and conditions with insight deficits compound the problem. (See *I Am Not Sick, I Do Not Need Help* by Xavier Amador.) Side effects like weight gain and sexual dysfunction add to the challenge.

Many people want to conduct a do-I-really-need-this-medicine experiment. This is understandable, as long as they are good scientists and learn from their experience and accept feedback from clinicians and family on whether they act differently on and off medications. Increasing interest in "leverage strategies" and their impact on medication adherence will help us better understand what works for people who cannot see what ails them.

Visit [www.westbridge.org](http://www.westbridge.org) for the full article. ■

## Creative corner

We invite our readers to share their artwork, essays, photos and poems.



Photo by Kurt Mihelish

# wellness

## Life Lessons from Boxing

by Coach Murphy, Murphy's Boxing Gymnasium

Boxing teaches a lot of important life lessons: Have good people working in your corner. Don't be distracted by remarks made by members of the audience. Roll with the punches. Don't fight the other guy's fight.

Every human body has strengths. You just need to find yours. In boxing, we take your body type and teach you to use your personal strengths. We're not looking for what the latest fashion says is a good body type. We develop a boxing strategy based on your body type.

A person with a lanky body may be quick with a stinging punch. A short stocky body could be a tank coming in under a taller person's height. You need to work from your strengths, both inside and outside the ring.

Murphy's Boxing Gymnasium will be working with residents of The Commons on finding their physical strengths and developing a curriculum of health-related activities. ■

# comments

We welcome your comments about this issue of *The Bridge* and invite you to submit ideas for future stories.

To contact us and for more information on our services, visit

**WESTBRIDGE.ORG**

or call us at

**800.889.7871**

Editors: Stacey LeBel and Kevin Keefe



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