



# THE BRIDGE

Family-centered recovery for co-occurring mental illness & substance use disorders

Summer 2007

## 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. ■

## Proposed Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act to provide parity

Individuals and families who experience dual disorders have limited insurance resources available. With the advent of managed care, insurance companies created “behavioral health” to artificially separate brain and body illness. This was a cost containment measure that has created discrimination in healthcare.

In 1996, the Mental Health Parity Act was signed into federal law, which provides parity in aggregate lifetime and annual dollar limits on mental health benefits with dollar limits on medical/surgical benefits. This applies to any group health insurance plan that provides mental health benefits. This has been considered partial parity as it does not cover addiction, and “wiggler room” still exists for insurers.

*“A wise man will make more opportunities than he finds.”*

*Francis Bacon*

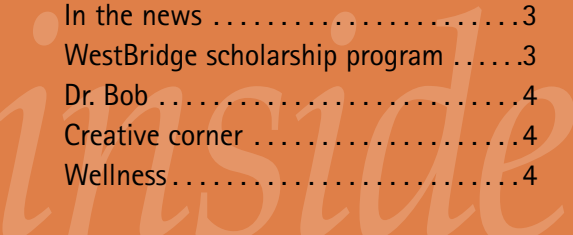
Rep. Jim Ramstead (R-MN) and Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) are co-sponsoring the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act (HR 1424). This plan is modeled on the Federal Employers Health Benefit Program, which has covered federal workers and their dependents and members of Congress and their dependents since 2001. Under this legislation, no state laws that provide greater consumer protections, benefits, methods of access to benefits, rights or remedies would be preempted. This would apply to group health plans that cover 50 or more employees. Parity legislation ensures that a plan’s mental health and addictive disorder benefit must be equal in co-pay rates and co-deductible to its primary health benefit.

For more details on HR 1424, visit <http://thomas.loc.gov>. Lending support to this legislation is as easy as sending an e-mail. Encourage friends and co-workers to send e-mails by visiting [www.capwiz.com/congressorg/nvra](http://www.capwiz.com/congressorg/nvra). ■

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## Thinking hopefully

How we talk about others is a cornerstone of our values and beliefs at WestBridge, which are printed in each newsletter: "Hope, respect, teamwork, and direct communication are the core elements of our culture.... Everything we do is driven by a desire to develop authentic relationships."

People categorize others to better understand them. Sometimes we characterize someone in a way that negatively impacts our ability to have a hopeful relationship with or opinion of them. For example, men and women who suffer from addiction and mental illness have met professionals and others who refer to them as a "classic addict" or a "schizophrenic."

At WestBridge, we believe this is a biased, hopeless and pejorative description. We would not refer to a person who lives with heart disease as a "classic heart disease" or a "heart attack." This illness does not encompass what this person is or will become. We know they need a heart-healthy diet, exercise and often medication, as well as medical monitoring and cardiac rehab to help them live a quality life, despite their illness.

Our language choices are important as they reflect how we think and behave. By changing the way we think, we change the way we behave. Changing how we describe someone can open the door to a future of hope outside of and in spite of an illness. ■

If you feel overwhelmed by strong feelings about having a family member who suffers from a severe mental illness, your feelings are normal and completely understandable. The WestBridge Multi Family

## Multi Family Group offers understanding, support

Group can help you obtain the support and information you need to move forward, understand your feelings, allay your fears, and learn new ways to be calm and straightforward with your ill family member.

Our Multi Family Group is offered at the Manchester, N.H., WestBridge site on the first Friday of each month

at noon, and serves as an educational/support group for all WestBridge family members. A luncheon begins the meeting, followed by a guest speaker who addresses a topic previously selected by the group. The meeting concludes with questions and answers, facilitated by a WestBridge family specialist.

Participants may also call our conference line to join us remotely. WestBridge has a video conference system that links the Cambridge and Manchester sites, so families can see and hear the speakers. Past topics include family education and support, self-help and alternative healing modalities. A future speaker will be Dr. Mark

Green on psychopharmacology.

Family members also benefit between sessions, as sharing of phone numbers and e-mail addresses is encouraged. These sessions help provide needed support. Coping with mental illness is never easy, especially when you are feeling overwhelmed and alone.

For more information on the WestBridge Multi Family Group, call Lois Hollow, ARNP, Family Program coordinator, at 800.889.7871. ■



## did you know?

### Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act

The latest details on the U.S. Senate and House bills on this act include:

- Plans that increase 2 percent the first year after parity and 1 percent any following year are exempt. Exemptions are good for one year.
- Licensed actuaries must perform the evaluation and companies can measure cost increases every six months.
- Companies with fewer than 50 employees are not affected by the bills.
- The cost exemption and small employer exemption are unlikely to be added to the final bills as these exemptions are necessary to protect small employers and prevent insurance companies from closing or denying people from coverage lists if there is an initial cost increase. ■

# Mentoring Program encourages hopeful life of recovery

When we are isolated, by accident or design, most of us do not thrive. Through our connections with people and a community, we are challenged and supported in living a healthy life. This is why WestBridge employs a Mentor Program.

Mentors augment our Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team, to provide support during evening hours or for activities that may require extensive time. Mentoring provides participants with a diversity of people in their lives and nurtures and supports participants in a way that does not feel like therapy.

Daloz (Penn State, 1990) said an effective mentorship is similar to “guiding the student on a journey at the end of which the student is a different and more accomplished person.” In a clinical setting, mentors provide support, role modeling and fellowship.

A mentor is a member of the team that works with participants in their community. Activities may include a self-help or mutual-help group; healthy meal planning, cooking and dining; recreational activities; organizing the day or week; shopping and cleaning.

Mentoring’s many benefits include increased independence, motivation for change, connection to the recovery community, and social skills and opportunities. It also provides role modeling and reinforces recovery-oriented skills and behaviors.

Providing this type of support for a hopeful life of recovery is at the core of what WestBridge does. Through our relationships, we succeed and continue to live a life full of hope. ■



# WestBridge scholarship program

WestBridge was founded through the philanthropic efforts of a family who has experienced life with dual disorders. By donating to WestBridge, you can help provide hope and healing to other individuals and families who need effective services. Gifts from generous donors provide critical financial assistance for treatment scholarships. These scholarships are designed as matching funds to assist families in paying for services.

WestBridge is a private operating foundation under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code, so contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Checks, stock, cash and credit cards are accepted for donations. Our updated website will soon accommodate online donations. Some donors may also elect to pledge a certain amount of money over time.

WestBridge does not provide legal or tax advice. Please check with your tax and legal advisors when planning your charitable gift. For further information, please contact Jonathan Routhier at 800.889.7871 or email questions to [info@westbridge.org](mailto:info@westbridge.org). We welcome you as a member of our healing community. ■

# in the news

Eileen Fiori, LICSW, LADC, recently became residential director of The Commons. Previously, she supervised the intensive outpatient program for adolescents at Child and Family Services in Manchester, N.H., for three years, worked at various mental health centers and spent 16 years as clinical director of outpatient and residential programs at the Farnum Center, a chemical dependency treatment facility in Manchester.

“Being at The Commons is a wonderful opportunity to bring together the experiences that I’ve had that were purely mental health and others that were purely chemical dependency,” says Fiori. “There are lots of wonderful, talented people at The Commons and I look forward to pooling our strengths to organize and develop the program further, in line with evidence-based practice.” ■





# Dr. Bob

Dr. Robert Drake, MD, PhD

## Schizophrenia vs. schizoaffective disorder

Schizophrenia means long-term psychosis, mood disorder means long-term depression or mania, and schizoaffective disorder means both types of disorders overlap at times but only psychotic symptoms are present at other times. With co-occurring disorders, the situation is more complicated.

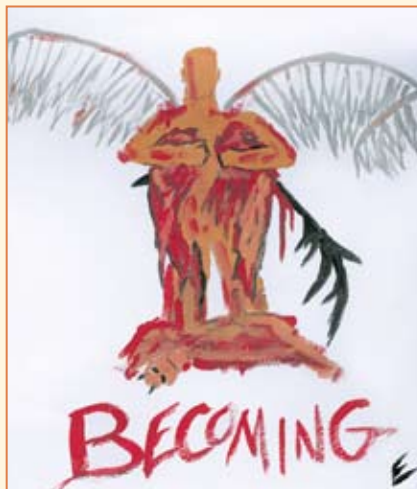
Substance use can mimic, cause, precipitate, mask, or confound psychosis and mood disorders. Thus, we try to be cautious in making psychiatric diagnoses, including schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder, in the context of heavy substance use.

Many who have carried a psychotic diagnosis become completely non-psychotic without any residual symptoms once they have been completely sober or abstinent for years. For others, the psychiatric symptoms are typically much milder and more easily controlled. People who experience schizoaffective disorder need both antipsychotic medications and medications for mood-related symptoms.

For Dr. Drake's full article, visit [www.westbridge.org](http://www.westbridge.org). ■

## Creative corner

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



### *Brothers in Bondage*

Regardless of our past  
A variety of addictive afflictions  
We bear our chains  
With hearts held high  
Shattered self reflections  
Compounded by alien environments  
I, like you, strive to survive  
Our shared disease  
No matter the weight of my chains  
I will forever endure  
Head held high  
Because when in need  
I can always rely on my  
Brothers in bondage

Eric K.

# wellness

## Reiki Relaxes and Heals

Reiki (pronounced RAY-key) is a stress reduction and relaxation technique during which a Reiki practitioner delivers healing energy by a placing of hands on or close to various parts of the body. During a session, the trained practitioner is a conduit for the healing energy, which flows where it is needed.

Reiki heals by unblocking congested Ki (caused by negative thoughts and feelings) which is lodged in the chakras, energy pathways of the body. By unblocking these constrictions, the normal flow of Ki energy is restored and the patient experiences inner healing and relaxation, often on a cellular level.

Reiki can be used with all traditional treatments and will be offered in the future to WestBridge participants. For more information on Reiki, contact Lois Hollow, ARNP, a certified Reiki practitioner. ■

## 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**

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