



According to PLAN

Planned Living Assistance Network of Central Texas

Serving individuals with mental illness and their families by providing an array of support services to address their immediate needs and to plan for the future.

Editor: Sireesha Nandagiri Rutter

www.planctx.org

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President's Message by Elizabeth Choate, JD, Board President

The past year has been a financially challenging time for many non-profit organizations like PLANCTX. In tough economic times, private contributions as well as corporate and foundation donations tend to decline while state and federal governments slash funds for programs. At the same time tough economic conditions increase the demand for services from non-profits and those who are most in need for services are the least likely to be able to pay.

I am proud to say that despite these difficulties your PLAN staff has risen up to meet these challenges head on. They have focused their efforts on providing top quality services while cutting PLAN's expenditures and working very hard to collect outstanding balances owed to PLAN. Because of this hard work and belt tightening PLAN has managed to keep its door open and even received a new grant (relentlessly perused by Executive Director Debbie Webb) to cover a portion of our administrative expenses.

Now is not the time to retreat but merely a time to re-focus our efforts to provide much needed mental health services that improve and even save lives. PLAN's staff and board deeply believe in our mission and I know that despite the difficulty we will come out a better more financially sustainable organization due to our efforts.

PLANCTX exists in a time of increased need for affordable mental health services. It's no secret that Texas ranks last in the nation in per capita mental health funding. The Texas Department of State Health Services representatives have stated that at any given time only 25% of the need is met and at least 6,000 people are on waiting lists and this does not even reflect the true demand for services.

A recent study conducted by the Treatment Advocacy Center and the National Sheriffs' Association concluded that our state's prisons house eight times as many mentally ill people as the state psychiatric hospitals and that 16 percent of all prisoners need mental health care. Unfortunately, as the Texas legislative session draws closer we are beginning to hear legislators discuss making additional cuts to the few and insufficient state funded mental health services that are currently available to help fill a gaping hole in the state budget. It seems that mental health services are

an easier thing for state budget writers to cut because support for adults with severe mental illnesses is not on many people's minds and these individuals are seldom able to advocate for themselves. Please call your state Representatives and Senators and urge them to avoid these potentially devastating cuts.

These dismal statistics only serve to strengthen our resolve to make PLAN a more financially sustainable organization. Already, we are making plans to go through a strategic planning process which will serve to further sharpen our goals to expand services to further meet the needs of our clients while developing more reliable revenue streams.

When mental health professionals discuss providing services often an old parable is brought to mind. Most people are familiar with it, but just in case I wanted to provide it for your consideration.

One morning an elderly man was walking on a nearly deserted beach. He came upon a boy surrounded by thousands and thousands of starfish. As eagerly as he could, the youngster was picking them up and throwing them back into the ocean.

Puzzled, the older man looked at the young boy and asked, "Little boy, what are you doing?"

The youth responded without looking up, "I'm trying to save these starfish, sir."

The old man chuckled aloud, and queried, "Son, there are thousands of starfish and only one of you. What difference can you make?"

Holding a starfish in his hand, the boy turned to the man and, gently tossing the starfish into the water, said, "It will make a difference to that one!"

PLANCTX will continue to make a difference one person at a time because we believe in the value of our mission but we can't do it without you. If you are able to please donate money or time or simply spread the word about PLAN and encourage others to do so. If you would like to help but are unsure how please contact the PLAN office and the staff would love to tell you how you can help make a difference one starfish at a time.

Ecohealth

by Cecile DeWitte, Ph.D., Board Member

Ecohealth (a.k.a. Ecosystem approach to human health) is Ecosanté in French.

There is a new word that is gaining acceptance in several countries, also a concept in line with PLANCTX's goals: Ecohealth.

Ecohealth brings together all of the factors (social, economic, cultural, political, and ecological) that affect the well-being, the quality of life and the health of humans. It stems from the same concerns as integral care, but it goes beyond the scope of integral care. For instance new zoning laws, a new road, a new agricultural technique, may impact human health. Ecohealth creates bridges between physicians, architects, environment specialists, etc.

Ecohealth emerged as a well defined field of research and applications in the nineties in Canada. But this approach to health and ecology can be traced back to earlier civilizations. This approach may also help bring new outlooks on worldwide problems, such as climate change, fighting diseases, economic progress, etc.

For more information, see Ecohealth in Wikipedia.

Swift Response for Help

by Yvonne Hansen, Board Member

The Eric W Field Memorial Fund was established almost two years ago following a Memorial Service and tree planting was held to honor and celebrate Eric's life. The fund is alive, and continues to help those consumers who need a little bit of money to solve a problem or meet an urgent need. When the Fund was formed, Yvonne Hansen, Eric's mother, and Debbie Webb (PLAN Executive Director) agreed Debbie would dispense funds swiftly in response to a consumer's need.

PLAN's care managers are integral in conveying such needs. Money from Eric's Fund does good in highly diverse ways such as helping a person access immediate transportation to a doctor when it is urgent, being able to buy necessary adaptive equipment not covered by insurance, helping families in need pay their part of a cost-share membership to PLANCTX, keeping someone's electricity turned on, and supplying sheets and towels to someone with no other resources. This is especially wonderful because there is quick access to the money and no "red tape." The Eric W Field Memorial Fund falls under PLAN's 501(c)(3) non-profit designation, thus is tax deductible.

Therapy Corner: PLANTX Family Therapy

by Catherine Weaver, LPC, PLANCTX Therapist

Five years ago, PLANCTX (Planned Living Assistance Network of Central Texas) and I agreed to start support groups for PLAN member families. I began to facilitate two groups per month for young men (loosely defined as under 50 years of age), with the main qualification as having a family membership in PLANCTX. A second qualification is following a treatment plan developed with the team of professionals working with the member.

Currently, Men's Group meets on the second (2nd) Thursday and 4th Thursdays of each month from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at my office, 1007 MoPac Circle, Austin, TX 78746. The fee to attend is \$20 per member per session, if he attends the group. At the start of each group, I invite the men to "check in." Often, members bring in concerns they have about their lives, or concerns raised by their families. Frequently, members describe their hopes and fears, including finding work that is satisfying and fulfilling, and maintaining relationships. After each person has offered their "check in", I may introduce other subjects of interest, such as changes in local services, or articles regarding self-care and balanced living practices.

Next, I ask for issues which the group members want to bring into the group. Occasionally members raise issues because they hope to find common ground so that they can learn from the others present.

The group doesn't generally give advice, but rather shares their own insights with members newer to living with diagnoses of mental illnesses. People may ask about experiences seeking and maintaining treatments. Every conversation is held as confidential within the group.

While these groups are not structured as traditional process therapy groups, they have been helpful when members have shared the ups and downs of their lives. Revealing their own disappointments and joys has opened the members up to closer bonds not only with others in group, but often with their own family members as well.

Prospective members are welcome to visit a group session before joining if they so desire. I also would like to personally meet with potential members so that I can describe the group process, and answer any questions they may have.

PLAN members who are interested in more information about the Men's Group are invited to call Cathy Weaver at 512-633-5933 or to email me at catherineweaver@sbcglobal.net.

PLAN'd Getaways

by Liz Shelby

Ever daydream about getting away from the city? From your family? or from the day to day hubbub of living with a mental health disorder? Ever want to go on vacation by yourself? And spend a few days in the out of doors? And....it doesn't cost you anything?

Well, that dream came true for 20 PLAN'd Getaway participants in April and another 18 in November! It was like going camping without staying in a tent! They enjoyed spring flowers and fall foliage, outdoor walks, hill country wildlife, fishing, paddleboating, canoeing, making wallets or coin purses, arts & crafts, campfires, s'mores, and lots of surprises! There was even an up-close demonstration of birds of prey in flight. Many new friendships were made and lots of wonderful memories to cherish. As one participant wrote, "It was a beautiful

experience and I enjoyed it. I appreciate the people God put in my life, the new friends I made, and I am grateful PLAN invited me and welcomed me to attend. I am looking forward to participating in future events." Even the parents enjoyed it by experiencing some respite. One parent said their child was missed a little bit, but it was good to know the child was in good hands.

Thanks to the Robert V. Miller Fund, the PLAN'd Getaways were held at a beautiful conference center near Gonzales, Texas. For you techies, check out the place at <http://discipleoaksretreat.net/index.html>. To look at the video from the first Getaway, go to <http://sharonmiller.squarespace.com>. PLANCTX hopes that experiencing life at its best has encouraged the participants to pursue their own recovery.



Left: Two campers and Care Manager Adam Lenker working with Newt, a Spirit Reins champion of a horse!

Below: Hula instructor, Vivian Kaw, teaches campers the Hawaiian way to dance.



A Beautiful Necklace

From the desk of Cecile DeWitt

It begins with an ordinary necklace of plastic, dark spherical, identical beads. While it was unstrung for repair, a dog ate about a third of the beads; the dog's owner was so upset that she looked everywhere to find somewhat similar beads. And now I have an unusual beautiful necklace consisting of real pearls, cultured pearls, metal beads, glass beads and plastic beads. It is greatly admired and I am often asked where this unique necklace came from.



As we live our lives, we must continue to look for ways to appreciate the good, as well as those instances where we feel down, or when "things just don't go our way." Take those moments and appreciate them, finding the "pearl" anywhere you can.



PLAN campers enjoyed boating while at the getaway.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Saturday, December 4, 2010

Art Expression Group: Call Case Manager Annette Doyle at (512) 851-0901 for more details.

Saturday, December 18, 2010, 5 p.m.

Young Peer Social: Meet at Phil's Hamburgers at 5PM; Burnet Road at Koenig Lane (2222). Call Case Manager Derek Kerl, LMSW at (512) 851-0901 for more information.

Saturday, December 18, 2010

Mature Peer Social: Horse Drawn Carriage Rides & Hot Chocolate: Meet at the Driskill Hotel Cafe at 5:30PM; 604 Brazos Street (at Sixth Street). For more details, call Care Manager Stephanie Dowbusz at (512) 851-0901.

Give an Alternative Gift This Year

Do you have someone on your gift list that has everything? Consider purchasing an alternative gift from Planned Living Assistance Network of Central Texas (PLANCTX). PLANCTX is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit that provides support services to adults with severe mental illness and their families. How does alternative gift giving work? Make a donation to PLANCTX online or by mail and PLANCTX will send an acknowledgement in your name to your gift recipient in an appropriate card with an insert describing PLANCTX services. It's that simple! Both you and your gift recipient can share in the joy of contributing to a very worthy cause – and your gift is tax deductible. We will send you a letter acknowledging your donation for your records.

Questions? Call 851-0901 or visit www.planctx.org.

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