



# 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: Karla Starkweather

[www.planctx.org](http://www.planctx.org)

April 2010

## New Board President Elected

*by Debbie Webb, Ph.D., LCSW, Executive Director*

**P**LANCTX, Inc. is very pleased to introduce you to our new Board President, Elizabeth Choate, JD! Like so many Board members and staff of PLANCTX, Ms. Choate understands and cares about individuals with neurobiological disorders from a personal, as well as professional, standpoint: she has a family member who has mental illness. In fact, Ms. Choate reports that she attended law school with the goal of public service in mind. She has also just completed her tenure of working as the Chief of Staff and General Counsel to Rep. Garnett Coleman, a huge champion at the Texas Legislature for those facing mental illnesses. During her two sessions of experience, Ms. Choate assisted Rep. Coleman in attempting to pass legislation aimed at improving the lives of Texans who have mental illnesses. Ms. Choate is a true advocate for our fight against stigma! We are very fortunate to have Elizabeth join the PLANCTX Board and serve in a crucial role! We hope you will join us for a PLANCTX Board meeting the fourth Monday of a month really soon and see Elizabeth and our entire Board in action! 4:30PM – 6PM in the Canteen A and Building at Austin State Hospital, next door to the Nifty Fifty Diner. Keep an eye on [www.planctx.org](http://www.planctx.org) for the latest PLANCTX news and events!

## The Robert V. Miller Memorial Fund

*by Liz Shelby, Board Vice President*

**T**he Robert V. Miller Fund is providing membership scholarships, upscaled peer socials, and two PLAN'd Getaways. Sharon and Jerry Miller started the fund in honor of their son Robert who passed away in September, 2005, from complications stemming from neonatal adrenal leukodystrophy. Robert and his brother, Ben, who has the same condition enjoyed camp experiences for people with disabilities as children and young adults. Robert's laughter and joyful spirit at these camps prompted the Millers to begin the Robert V. Miller Fund to provide fun, outdoors experiences for adults with disabilities. This is the first time such an

experience has been made available to adults with serious mental illness. Thank you to the Millers for their vision and selfless generosity for this unique gift of wellness to PLAN of Central Texas families in a life-giving bequest from the Robert V. Miller fund.



## From the Desk of Cecile DeWitt, Ph.D.

*Board member and Chair of the Resource Development Cmte*

The Resource Development Committee wishes it could acknowledge the wonderful contributions of all of the volunteers who have served PLANCTX throughout the years. Unfortunately, it is not feasible to make a list of these volunteers. The PLANCTX Board of Directors and the PLANCTX Advisory Board are the only visible lists of volunteers.

Sometimes, there is an occasion to thank some volunteers and today we wish to recognize Paula Schmitz and Elizabeth Nash. Paula Schmitz, PhD, JD, MBA, CFA has been on the PLANCTX Board of Advisors since its inception. She has asked to step down from the Advisory Board now that she lives too far from Austin for participating in PLANCTX activities. As this newsletter goes to print, we recall fondly all of the newsletters prepared by Helen Hardwick and Liz Nash and express our heartfelt thanks.



Photo: Board President, Elizabeth Choate, accepts a \$40,000 check (1st of 2 for a total of \$63,000) from Sharon and Jerry Miller of the Robert V. Miller Fund

## A Study Supporting the Holistic PLAN Approach

by Cecile DeWitte Morette, Ph.D., Board Member

About an M.D. who incorporates social services in his practice

A quote from *Mountains beyond mountains*:

While still a student at Harvard, Paul Farmer, designed a study in Haiti to compare tuberculosis patients who received only free medicine and patients who received other services as well, including regular visits from community health workers and small monthly cash stipends for food, childcare and transportation to the clinic. Of the patients who had received only free medicine, a mere 48 percent were cured. By contrast, everyone in the group that received the cash stipends and other services made a full recovery.

An aphorism from Paul Farmer, MD. "Medicine is a social science, and politics is nothings but medicine in a large scale."

**Please share your opinions about mental health in Texas by completing a brief online survey sponsored by the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health in Austin, Texas. The survey takes about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Your responses are confidential and anonymous. To take the survey, click on the link below, or copy and paste the link into the address line of your Internet browser: <http://www7.intellisurvey.com/run/py1021110b>**

## 2010 PLANCTX Election Results

by Debbie Webb, Ph.D., LCSW, Executive Director

Ms. Elizabeth Choate, JD, was elected as President for 2010 during the PLANCTX Annual Membership Meeting in November. Other election results for include: Liz Shelby is Vice President, Adrienne Kennedy-Puthoff is Secretary, and just Past President Dr. Marcia Toprac is our new Treasurer. "New" Board members (who are actually both "returning" Board Members) are Nick Huestis and Frank Rilling, Jr. Other continuing Board Members, in alphabetical order, include: Phil Cates, Dr. Cecile DeWitt, Anita Garner, Dr. Yvonne Hansen, Rita Hornak, Dr. Deborah Stote, Betty Wattinger, and Willie Williams.

A HUGE thank you goes out to our 2009, now exiting Board Officers: Dr. Marcia Toprac, President; Dr. Cecile DeWitt, Vice President; Anita Garner and Dr. Yvonne Hansen, Co-Secretaries; and Rita Hornak, Treasurer; as well as to our retiring Board members, in alphabetical order: Jan DeWitt; Bob Englert, JD, Emeritus member; Diana Kern; Gary Knight; and Becky Lilljedahl. Your many countless hours of contributions to PLANCTX, over the years, are too great to quantify! You are very much appreciated! We simply could not have "done it" without you! Thank you!

## Therapy Corner: PLANTX Family Therapy

by Catherine Weaver, LPC, PLANCTX Therapist

Five years ago this June, the first support groups for PLANCTX members and families were held. Consulting with PLANCTX leaders, I agreed to provide two groups per month where people could come together to discuss their experiences with severe mental illnesses, and to learn how others coped with the stress of those experiences. Initially, two groups were held each month, and the families were eligible to sign up after they had paid for annual membership in PLANCTX.

Currently, the "PLANCTX Family Group" meets on the second Thursday of each month from 7:15 to 8:45PM at Cathy Weaver's office, 1007 MoPac Circle in Austin. The fee is \$30 per family (not individual) each month. Limited scholarships are available to those who may need one.

Cathy runs the group by seeking information for those who are isolated while caring for family members. Cathy starts each group with announcements of upcoming events by PLANCTX and others, such as NAMI Austin classes, ATCIC meetings, and books, television programs and even movies. She provides other resources such as medical assistance and pharmaceutical programs to share with the group.

Next, Cathy asks for a brief report on the status of their family members by each family, during which questions, concerns and frustrations are welcomed. We often choose the issues raised by the group members for further discussion, so that those who had already addressed those issues could share their experiences, and group members learn from each other.

The group has not generally given advice, but rather shared their own insights so that families newer to living with mental illnesses and recognizing symptoms, can learn how they might assist their own loved ones in seeking and maintaining treatments. Cathy and group members are careful to recognize the unique situation of each family.

While these groups are not structured as traditional process therapy groups, they have become very helpful to group members as each have shared his/her own life's ups and downs. Revealing their own disappointments and joys has often led to closer bonds among the group members, as well as with family members who are facing a mental illness.

PLANCTX members who are interested in more information about how to become a part of the PLANCTX Family Group are invited to call Cathy Weaver at (512) 633-5933. Prospective members are always welcome to visit one group session for free to "check it out" and see if it is right for you, before joining. We hope you will join us soon if this sounds good to you!

## PLANCTX Fundraising Opportunity *by Diana Kern, Expect Recovery!, Inc., Former Board Member*

*If you know a grandparent who does not want to be left behind by the digital divide;*

*If you know an isolated person who would enjoy internet access;*

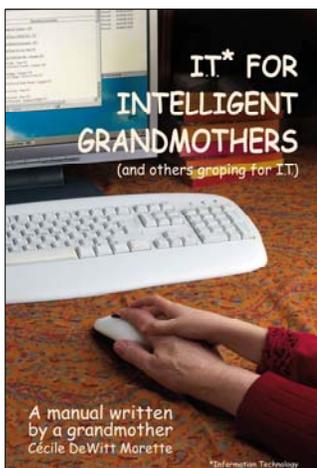
*If your grandparent has trouble assimilating your explanations;*

*If your grandparent is irritated by internet processes,*

*This manual will help them.*

### About the manual:

The author is my dear friend, Dr. Cecile DeWitt Morette, an 87 yr old retired UT Austin physics professor. Until recently, computers were foreign to her. As long as she had students taking care of her



computer needs, she was fine, but the day came when she had to go solo. She did not want to retire and be cut off from the world of opportunities offered by computers. She bought books about computers, but did not understand them. She asked for help from children who seemed to know it all instinctively and they went too fast for her. She asked

computer experts who used words and acronyms that were meaningless to her. Cecile was determined to create a manual for other intelligent grandmothers (and others) that she wished had been available when she was learning the computer and the internet.

As she put it, “When I want to go from A to B in a territory new to me, I cannot absorb instructions sprinkled with alternatives. At a crossroads, I am only interested in the road that I want to take; information about the other roads confuses me. On the other hand, an overview of the territory makes instructions meaningful.”

“My only option was to take charge and write down instructions the way that I would have understood them. Hence, this manual. Older people need a dictionary to learn a language that children can

absorb by immersion. This simple manual provides both a “grammar” (rules of usage) and a glossary (alphabetical list and contextual examples). Giving it a title and format was easy. Writing it required a knowledgeable person with didactic skills. So, my assistant, Chloe, joined the project.”

### Users

This is a simple, basic, manual. "Intelligent Grandmothers" can use it whether they have a PC or a Mac. It is a wonderful, easy to read manual!

It need not be read sequentially, it can be consulted as needed. The table of contents directs the user to self contained pages, often divided into introduction and instructions. A glossary with 117 entries defines or explains words and acronyms. When appropriate, it gives the page number where the word or acronym is being used because it is sometimes easier to understand a word in context than by definition. In addition, The manual has an index.

### The manual layout:

The manual is divided into 7 chapters.

- I Communicating (e-mail, attachments, links etc.)
- II Using the Internet (connections, searches, web-sites etc.)
- III Tools (key board, printers, travel with a laptop, travel without one etc.)
- IV Trouble Shooting (computer not responding properly etc.)
- V Word Processing (formatting, storing etc.)
- VI The Power of Computers (your own records)
- VII Glossary

Cost: Thanks to a generous grant from the Tocker Foundation, costs have been kept reasonable. Each manual costs only \$15 and can be purchased online at [www.planctx.org](http://www.planctx.org) using PayPal, debit, or credit cards including MC, VISA, AMEX, and Discover. A small shipping and handling fee of \$3.00 is added. You may have it shipped as a gift anywhere in the United States. We will gladly enclose a card that states whatever you want it to say. Or, manuals may be purchased for \$15 even if you come pick them up at the PLANCTX Office, Building 781, Suite 410 at Austin State Hospital. All proceeds from manual sales go to PLANCTX, Inc., so please help us get the word out! Cecile says that “The Power of our Grassroots Organization is Necessary to make *I.T. for Intelligent Grandmothers* a best seller! We need your help.

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

### Saturday, April 10, 2010, 10 a.m.

PLANCTX's 1st Annual I RIDE FOR MENTAL HEALTH fund raiser. Great Music, Silent Auction, Food, Cool t-shirts, Good Family FUN whether you ride a bike or not! Cindy's Gone Hog Wild, Hwy 71, going toward Bastrop from Austin, 5 miles east of intersection of Hwy 71 and Toll Road 130; and 1 mile east of Garfield Water tower. See [www.planctx.org](http://www.planctx.org) for more information and a complete list of our very much appreciated entertainers, donors and co-sponsors!

### Thursday-Sunday, April 22-25, 2010

Robert V. Miller Fund & PLANCTX, Inc. PLAN'd Getaway to Gonzales, Texas! Recreation for Peers in a beautiful setting! See [www.planctx.org](http://www.planctx.org) for more information and a complete list of our very much appreciated donors and co-sponsors! The next PLAN'd Getaway will be November 4-7th!

### Monday, May 31, 2010, 6:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

ANNUAL PLANCTX GARAGE SALE on MEMORIAL DAY!. 2409 Little John Lane, Austin, TX 78704-5616 (just south of East Side Drive at Oltorf). We need your help! We are accepting donations of EVERYTHING EXCEPT NO CLOTHES, please! WORKING small and large appliances, furniture, CDs, DVDs, dishes, books, shelves, working computers, printers, cell phones, lamps, exercise equipment, cameras, musical instruments, purses and other small accessories, back packs, linens, silverware, pots and pans, toys, etc. We will be accepting donations Saturday and Sunday, onsite! We can also offer some limited pick up of items with earlier notice. Please call Debbie Webb at (512) 799-9358 anytime. Donation letters for tax deductions are available. Thanks!



PLANCTX Board Secretary Adrienne Kennedy-Puthoff gives Sharon and Jerry Miller an appreciation award and a bouquet of flowers

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