

# BHRS-MHSA Newsletter

...a newsletter to share with you reflections about the four aspects of our long term change initiative: Community Capacity Building, Leadership Development, A Focus on Results, and Fiscal Sustainability...

## BHRS Mission

In partnership with our community, our mission is to provide and manage effective prevention and behavioral health services that promote the community's capacity to achieve wellness, reliance, and recovery outcomes.

## MHSA Five Essential Elements

- Community Collaboration
- Cultural Competence
- Client/Family-Driven Mental Health Systems
- Wellness for Recovery & Resilience
- Integrated Service Experiences

## Inside this issue:

Friends are Good Medicine (cont'd) **2**

MHSA Annual Update Fiscal Year 2011-12 **2**

Any questions or suggestions regarding the newsletter, please forward them to Karen Hurley, khurley@stanbhhs.org or Pete Duenas, pduenas@stanbhhs.org

**Stanislaus County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services**  
*A Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Service Organization*

Volume 5, Issue 1

## Friends are Good Medicine By Tim White, BHRS Consumer Advocate



### Tim White behind 1 of 10 benches in the community with the Friends are Good Medicine Sign (8 English, 2 Spanish).

Since 2007, I have been working at BHRS as the Consumer Advocate. Around June 2010, I was asked to start spending part of my time working with the BHRS PEI Community Capacity Building Team – which I thought seemed interesting and pretty compatible with what I care about. My assignment would be to develop an online version of the BHRS Friends Are Good Medicine Directory. The "Friends" directory has existed since the mid 1980's but only in booklet form. Along the way, I learned that the Friends Are Good Medicine campaign was part of mental health prevention way back in the 1980's but in the 1990's, the State de-funded mental health prevention. Even

though the official funding went away, BHRS kept the "Friends" directory going for over a decade because it was so important for support groups and people who needed support groups. When MHSA PEI funding came along, it allowed for the Friends are Good Medicine Program to be revived and expanded with MHSA values and community capacity building as the purpose. It also allowed time for staff to make sure it was really a useful tool for communities!

My main role is to expand the directory significantly to make sure it is available online and that it is updated regularly. The kinds of information included in the directory are group topics,

when and where groups meet, and other details that could help community members figure out the right groups for their issues. I have never put together a directory but it seemed like the first thing to do was go out into communities and just start looking for what's out there. I knew that Stephanie Whitefield, an Intern with Workplace Wellness had already begun putting a resource list together for a college thesis she was writing and she had lots of current information on community groups, so I recruited Stephanie to work with me. We took the 2007 version of the directory and began calling and visiting the groups listed to see if the information was up to date. We quickly found out that between 2007 and 2010, 90% of the groups listed had disbanded, moved locations, changed the name of the group, changed dates and times or that we could not even locate. We began to realize that this was going to take a lot more time than anticipated and that if we were going to get accurate information, we would have to go city by city or even community by community and that is what we did! We each took a different city in Stanislaus County and we

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## Friends are Good Medicine (cont'd from Page 1)

**“People began to see the Friends directory as a real community resource!”**

went to every church, community organization, behavioral health organization, medical office, hospital, and other businesses in the area trying to find information. We ended up in Modesto, where we talked to anyone who would talk to us in our search for support groups. It took many months, emails, phone calls, and letters until finally we were able to gather enough information to start the directory.

When the directory was released in the summer of 2010, the phone began to ring off the hook!! Almost immediately I began to receive calls from community members looking for support groups for themselves or for someone they were concerned about. As we started advertising on the

side of city buses and on bus stop benches, the calls increased even more! By this time the calls also included people with information about new community-based support groups and some we had missed in our initial search. In other words, people began to see the Friends directory as a real community resource! It's going strong now and there are over a 100 support groups listed, with 12 different support topic categories including abuse, addiction/recovery, bereavement, disabilities health, LGBTQ, life changes & transitions, seniors, veterans, mental/emotional health, parenting, and youth/teen.

We don't know how many people benefit from the support groups but we think

it must be in the thousands – which is very satisfying. I feel good about this project and I think it makes a big difference in Stanislaus County.

The website address is [www.friendsaregoodmedicine.com](http://www.friendsaregoodmedicine.com) and has a search feature that works by city or topic. Support group information can also be submitted through the website. After the information is checked for accuracy, the group is posted in the directory. Information can be printed. The directory also includes a list of trainings offered for Group Facilitators. In other words, tons of good stuff!! If you would like more information, call Tim White @ 602-4311 or go to the website.

Sponsored by Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors



**“a document that counties must submit to receive funding”**



The Annual Update is a document that counties must submit to receive funding for already approved programs. When the Annual Update for Fiscal Year 2011-12 is submitted to and approved by the California Department of Mental Health (DMH) and MHSA Oversight and Accountability Commission, funds are released. The instructions (or guidelines) for the annual update were given by DMH Information Notice 10-21.

The basic content of the Annual Update FY2011-12 is to provide progress reports about services/activities delivered in FY2009-10 and a description of the programs

that are continuing in FY2011-12. For Stanislaus, this includes Community Services and Supports (CSS), Workforce Education and Training (WE&T), Prevention Early Intervention (PEI), and Innovation (INN). Funds are requested for existing programs/projects in CSS, PEI, and Technological Needs (TN). All funds have already been received for previously approved WE&T and INN projects.

The 30-day public review and comment period runs from February 23, 2011 through March 24, 2011. A public hearing will be conducted by the Mental Health Board on March 24,

2011, at 5:00 p.m. at the Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Redwood Room, 800 Scenic Drive, Modesto, CA. Additionally, an informational meeting was conducted on March 1, 2011, at 4:00 p.m. in the Main Conference Room at 800 Scenic Drive, Modesto, CA. All community and agency stakeholders are invited to participate in public reviews, information meetings, and public hearings. All planning documents may be downloaded from [www.stanislausmhsa.com](http://www.stanislausmhsa.com) or by calling Teresa at (209) 525-6247 to request a paper copy by mail or for pick up.

## MHSA Annual Update for Fiscal Year 2011-12

By Karen Hurley, MFT, Planning Coordinator