

Office of Mental Health Report To The Developmental Disability Council

**Robert Levy, LCSW
June 24, 2008**

Introduction

The Office of Mental Health, under the direction of the Assistant Secretary, has continued to develop strategies that will result in successfully achieving its goals. Herein is found a review of ongoing programs in the Office of Mental Health.

Louisiana Spirit

Louisiana Spirit, the crisis counseling program through the Department of Health and Hospitals – Office of Mental Health, was recently honored for its 2007 advertising campaign with three awards at the 2008 New Orleans Addy Awards. The Addy Awards is the world’s largest advertising competition, with over 60,000 entries annually. The entries submitted by Louisiana Spirit included pictures, television and radio commercials encouraging hurricane survivors to continue down the path of recovery.

Louisiana Spirit received “Silver” awards in the following categories:

- PSA Multimedia Campaign (print, outdoor and radio)**
- Print Campaign**
- Print advertisement “You’re rebuilding you”**

Louisiana Spirit partnered with Zehnder Communications, a strategic and creative advertising agency with offices in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, for this campaign. The advertisements, which feature photos of hurricane survivors with messages including “You’re rebuilding you” and “Rebuilding begins with families,” encourages citizens to take care of the well-being of themselves and their families.

“We are excited to receive these awards and very proud of the effort our staff and Zehnder Communications put in to make this possible,” said Jennifer Kopke, assistant secretary for DHH’s Office of Mental Health. “We want our messages as well as the work our staff is doing in communities all over the state to continue to encourage citizens to help themselves, their families and their communities to recover and move forward together.”

The three Silver Addy awards this year raises Louisiana Spirit’s total to 11 Addys over the past two years. The 2008 winning entries will now move to the regional competition for consideration.

Louisiana Spirit is a free counseling service that was formed in response to the sudden increase of Louisiana residents facing post-hurricane stress issues.

Louisiana Spirit was created as a federal/state partnership, and receives all of its funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The funding is administered through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

NOAH

Children and adolescents in New Orleans now has more readily available access to mental health services with the unveiling of a mobile mental health clinic by the New Orleans Adolescent Hospital (NOAH).

The unit, called NOAH's ARC (a resource center), will travel throughout Orleans, Plaquemines and St. Bernard parishes to provide evaluation and treatment services to seriously emotionally disturbed children and adolescents. It will be available to provide its services among schools, pediatric clinics and other community sites as needed.

The ARC will be staffed by clinical professionals from NOAH, including child and adolescent psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, social workers and trainees.

The ARC was unveiled on Wednesday, June 11 at the New Orleans Adolescent Hospital, 210 State St., New Orleans, La. The media was invited to attend and a tour of the ARC was provided.

NOAH was the first public mental health inpatient facility to re-open after Katrina within New Orleans and remains at the forefront of providing these vital services to a population in great need. Since Katrina, the youth-oriented hospital has been treating adults as well as children and adolescents to accommodate the demand for services in the city.

“NOAH has been a leader in public service through their dedication to serve and their imaginative foresight. The ARC is an addition to be proud of,” said DHH Secretary Alan Levine. “There’s still much more work needed to bring the mental health system in New Orleans back to pre-Katrina levels, and NOAH and the Department of Health and Hospitals remain committed to that effort.”

NOAH's Friends, a non-profit organization that advocates on behalf on NOAH, was the fiscal agent for the ARC which is now owned and operated by the hospital. The ARC was funded by a \$50,000 grant from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Access Initiative, a \$40,000 grant from the AmeriCares Foundation and a \$50,000 grant from the Institute of Mental Hygiene. The state Office of Mental Health also contributed to this project.

The idea for the ARC was realized after Katrina, when NOAH's child and adolescent beds were cut in half and there were many areas that had no longer had mental health services, but many more children were in need. Today, NOAH treats children and adolescents through its network of services that includes 15 inpatient beds, three clinics, a crisis intervention service and outreach teams. The hospital also has 29 inpatient beds for adults, with an additional 11 pending.

OMH PROMOTES MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY ACROSS THE STATE

Throughout the state, people are learning effective ways to develop and restore a positive and meaningful identity apart from their mental health diagnosis, symptoms and conditions. During April, OMH sponsored five (5) “Recovery for Everyone” community conferences throughout the state. Each conference was led by Stephen Pockington, Executive Director of the Copeland Center for Wellness and Recovery, located in Chandler, Arizona. These conferences were made possible by a grant by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid and with state and block grant dollars. Mental Health Recovery means building a rich, meaningful and satisfying life in the community despite a diagnosis, symptoms history or presumed limitations.

Conference sites included Shreveport, Lafayette, Mandeville, Baton Rouge and Houma. The conferences were designed to help steer Louisiana’s mental health system of care toward a prevention and recovery attitude and to promote the concept that mental health recovery is possible for everyone. These conferences had an additional goal of building community networks that reflect mutual support and community and empowerment. Over 800 mental health and addiction professionals, social service professionals, community advocates, family members and persons with a lived mental health experience attended these conferences throughout the state.

The feedback received from conference attendees described this conference as “tremendous”, “universally helpful”, “amazing”, “his story helped me as a helper”, and “powerful information”. Next steps will include statewide trainings for clients to learn to develop their own wellness and recovery plans and facilitator trainings to build a cadre of clients throughout the state who will support others through their recovery process as Recovery Specialists.