



RECOVERY IN MOTION



RECOVERY IN MOTION

May 2019 Edition

That Time In The Psych Ward

By Katherine Ponte, BA, JD, MBA, NYCPS-P, CPRP | Mar. 11, 2019



I have been hospitalized three times. I was given heavily sedating medication much of the time, however I will never forget what I went through. Each time, I was in crisis, at my life's lowest points, looking for a path forward. Instead, I was treated like I was a threat to others safety, as if I had done something terribly wrong. Instead of receiving care, my experiences left me scarred, stalled and aimless for years afterwards.
(continued on page 2)

I Needed Treatment, Not Sedation

My last psychiatric hospitalization was the most painful. I arrived, strapped into a wheelchair, to a chaotic psychiatric emergency room. They separated me from my husband to interview me. After my intake, they placed me on a gurney and forcibly medicated me.

I was left on that gurney in the corridor of a psychiatric ER for two days before an inpatient-psychiatric bed became available. I couldn't sleep or rest. Another psych patient wailed constantly. I was in internal crisis, yet there was crisis all around me. The last thing I can remember from my experience in the ER was being forcibly medicated one more time.

Once admitted to the inpatient ward, I awoke to find myself in leather restraints. There was no one there to explain where I was or why I was being detained or subdued. I didn't know what was happening. I was alone.

As I slowly gained awareness of myself and my surroundings, it became clear that we were under constant watch. The staff was concerned that we were potentially dangerous to ourselves and others. Everything in the psych ward was violence and suicide proof. Even the personal belongings our loved ones brought were carefully checked. I had never been violent or suicidal before in my life. I started thinking: "Am I really *this* ill?" "Am I really violent and suicidal?" The severity of my illness and all that it meant, the stigma, started to sink in.

I Needed Help, Not Imprisonment

Treatment seemed to focus on immediate stabilization, rather than long-term health. I saw my assigned doctor infrequently, and more often I saw a resident. I couldn't see my outside doctor. I was placed on a new medication regimen. I was highly sedated for most of my stay. Many patients never left their room, and others spent the day walking loops around the ward. I never once saw a nurse in my room.

They kept us on a locked down ward. I was never allowed to go outside, not even with an escort. Security guards roamed the floors. I also faced other restrictions, including suspension of computer and phone privileges, in-room confinement and solitary confinement to a seclusion room.

At one point, my condition significantly deteriorated, and I fell into a severe manic state. Two security guards picked me up and dragged me to a seclusion room furnished with only a thin red mattress on the floor. They wrapped my arm tightly around my back, pinned me to the floor, and then forcibly medicated me. They left me in a locked room for hours as a guard watched me through a small wire-glass window. When they released me, they placed me on around-the-clock surveillance for a week. They watched me even as I slept.

I Needed Support, Not Isolation

I desperately needed love, comfort and support from my family during my stay, but it was difficult to stay connected with them by phone or in person. There were no phones in the rooms. There were only a couple of payphones located in the hallway. As a policy, staff did not answer calls, only patients could answer. Often when a patient answered a call from my mother, they would tell her that they didn't know me, I was not there or they couldn't find me. There was no way to leave a message. Each time this happened, my mother worried that something might be wrong. She was often unable to reach me for days.

No visits were allowed in patient rooms, out of a fear that we might injure our loved ones. All visits had to occur in full view of clinicians, security and other patients and their visitors. It was more than a bit uncomfortable for my spouse and I to express our heartfelt emotions at this sensitive time in public view. Even a hug felt awkward when the person next to you had no visitors, which is often the case in the psych ward. These should be among the most private moments families have together, when a loved one is at their worst lows. Visiting hours were three hours shorter per day for the psych ward than "regular" patients. Did we need less love, compassion and human contact? Were we somehow less worthy or important than "regular" patients? (Continued on Page 3)

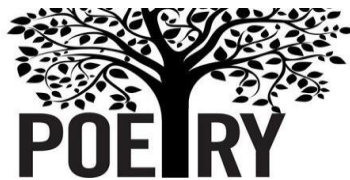
This Needs To Change

I returned home after each one of my hospitalizations severely depressed. I was too demoralized to appreciate that I was discriminated against. At times, I was made to feel like a criminal being punished, a danger to society. I felt it was all my fault for getting sick in the first place. I felt that I deserved the treatment that I received. I was at a top hospital. This perception fed off the social stigma I already experienced and certainly did not help my recovery.

These inpatient experiences traumatize me to this day. We need to focus on how it can be better, to turn psychiatric hospitalization into a constructive turning point towards recovery. The only positive memory I have was of an occupational therapist from my last hospitalization. She treated patients with genuine care and affection. She designed programs not only to occupy us, but to inspire us to get better. She emphasized the power of peer support. She showed me my first example of a high functioning person with mental illness. She planted a seed that my fellow patients and I, struggling as we were, could get better.

I like to imagine a psych ward staffed with empathetic professionals like that therapist, and how much better the experience could be. She helped me get to where I am today, because she cared and shared tools to help me. It felt like this is what a recovery-oriented psych ward should be like all the time. A place that helps sick people recover, as a hospital should. A place that doesn't treat you like a violent criminal because you have mental illness. A place that shows compassion for how hard it is to go through a mental health crisis. A place that gives you treatment, care and support rather than sedation, isolation and discrimination.

Agape Center



My Next Life

2004

By Gerri Steele

The end of life is at hand please scatter my ashes though out some other land.

Maybe by doing so my next life might not be so wasteful.

I look into my life passed by, I just keep wondering why!

So much hate and blame, no one even seems the same.

People come into your life and take you for all they can for they don't have one ounce of shame.

It truly has been so long since I could enjoy the beauty of a song.

It has been so long since I felt true loving arms!

When you have to beg for the love, it's not even worth the hug.

Cold eyes that glare with a haze of non-existent love,

**You cannot hide from the One up above. He will always show you that you cannot live without
True Love!**



Agape Member Spotlight



Sandra Carter

By Becky Irvine

Sandra shared with me that life before Agape was very hard for her. She didn't like her life. She says, "I wasn't on medicine, and I didn't have any friends before Agape." Sandra says that even though she was married, she didn't feel like she had any reason to live. She separated from her husband for a year because of how she felt about herself. She didn't have any relationships with her family because she didn't feel like they cared about her, so why should she care about herself?

Sandra learned about Agape through her case manager at TPC. She said this would be a great place for Sandra. Sandra started coming in 2007.

Sandra has learned that just because she has a mental illness doesn't mean she can't have friends. It doesn't mean she is crazy. She has learned how to have respect for herself and for other people. Sandra said, "The people here at the Agape Center give her more love and respect than people in the "real world"." I like being accepted for who I am says Sandra. I like not having the stigma most of the world places on me.

The future looks good for Sandra because she has learned how to treat others. She said, "this place has really taught me not to judge other people." I've learned to treat other people how I want to be treated, and it feels good. Sandra is the newest volunteer in the work training program. She is learning computer data entry and phone skills. She's doing a great job and her prospects are limitless!



NAMI Texas Panhandle

Our next **Monthly Meeting** will be on **Saturday, May 25, from 2-3 p.m.** in **Room 105 of Polk St. United Methodist Church**. We will have a Care and Share Meeting. We will have community mental health resources information available. Our monthly meetings are open to individuals living with mental illness, their loved ones, and interested friends and community members.



Our **Family Support Group** is for loved ones of those living with mental illness. Our next meeting will be on **Monday, May 6, from 6:00-7:30 p.m.** in **Room 105 of Polk St. United Methodist Church**. Drop-ins are welcome.



NAMI's **Connection Recovery Support Group** meets **each Tuesday from 1:00-2:30 pm on the fourth floor of Polk St. United Methodist Church**. This is a free, peer-led support group for individuals living with mental illness. Drop-ins are welcome, and van transportation is available. Call 373-7030 a day in advance to request transportation.

NAMI Texas Panhandle is participating in the "Peace of Mind" Mental Health Conference on Saturday, May 21, from 4-6 p.m. at Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Building located at 6500 Amarillo Blvd. West, Amarillo, TX. The cost is free, but registration is required using this website <https://bit.ly/2Hwu8R3>. The events include: Terry Bentley Hill (keynote speaker), Ask an Expert panel with Q&A, an Art Exhibit by local people who have mental illness, and a Behavioral Health Resource Fair. We encourage you to attend. The event is hosted by the Panhandle Behavioral Health Alliance.

NAMI has free **In Our Own Voice** presentations available for community and workplace groups. This is a 35 – 40 minute presentation given by two individuals living with mental illness to educate others and reduce stigma. These presentations have received wonderful feedback from groups such as the Rotary Club, the Salvation Army, and the Pavilion. Call Julie at 676-3540 to arrange a presentation.

Go to <http://panhandlebehavioralhealthalliance.org/> and then click on "Services Directory" to see a **comprehensive list of mental health and substance abuse resources in our area**.

Follow us on **Facebook** at www.facebook.com/NamiTexasPanhandle to keep up with our events and mental health news.



**Art Lessons Every Wednesday, 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM,
(Art supplies provided)**



Agape Center Art Work

Real Artwork done by Agape Center Members



Crosses and Bunny – D.M.S.



Easter Morning – M.H.










Country Road – K.M.



Cherry Blossoms – C.F.

May 2019 Calendar

Needing a ride? Please call a day ahead, **during office hours**, to make a reservation, **373-7030**. (**\$\$-bring money for activity**) **Note:** (Center does close due to inclement weather conditions)

MON AGAPE Hrs: <u>9am – 4pm</u>	TUE AGAPE Hrs: <u>9am – 4pm</u>	WED AGAPE Hrs: <u>9am – 4pm</u>	THU AGAPE Hrs: <u>6:00pm-8:00pm</u>	FRI AGAPE Hrs: <u>9am – 4pm</u>
		<u>1</u> Practicing Gratitude <u>9:30 – 10:30</u> Art Class <u>11:00-12:00</u> Step up Scale Down <u>1:00-2:00</u> Yoga <u>2:30-3:30</u>	<u>2</u> Guest Speaker City Council Candidate Brad Torch <u>6:00 – 8:00</u>	<u>3</u> Election Day Voting for Mayor, City Council <u>9:00 – 11:30</u> Golden Light Café - \$\$ Zoo - \$\$ <u>12:00 – 4:00</u>
<u>6</u> Agape Volunteer Day Lunch: Sub Sandwiches & Chips <u>9:00-3:00</u> How do You Say “Recovery” <u>3:00-4:00</u>	<u>7</u> Mood Swings <u>10:00 – 11:00</u> NAMI Connection Group <u>1:00-2:30</u> Current Events <u>2:45-3:45</u>	<u>8</u> Education Group: Managing Loneliness <u>9:30 – 10:30</u> Art Class <u>11:00-12:00</u> Friendly Concerns <u>1:00-2:00</u> Yoga <u>2:30-3:30</u>	<u>9</u> Movie at the Mall  <u>6:00 – 8:00</u>	<u>10</u> GED Class <u>9:30 – 10:30</u> Fear in a Hat <u>10:45 – 11:45</u> Golden Light Café- \$\$ Walking 6 th Street - \$\$ <u>12:00 – 4:00</u>
<u>13</u> Dealing with Depression <u>9:30 -10:30</u> Good Sleep Habits <u>11:00 – 12:00</u> Exercise <u>1:00 – 2:00</u> Humor is Healthy <u>2:30 – 3:30</u>	<u>14</u> Budgeting <u>10:00 – 11:00</u> NAMI Connection Group <u>1:00-2:30</u> Journaling <u>2:45-3:45</u>	<u>15</u> Education Group: Anger Management #2 of 3 <u>9:30 – 10:30</u> Art Class <u>11:00-12:00</u> Step up, Scale Down <u>1:00-2:00</u> Yoga <u>2:30-3:30</u>	<u>16</u> AAHMC Board Meeting <u>5:30 – 7:30</u> 	<u>17</u> Center Closed Staff Training 
<u>20</u> Agape Volunteer Day Lunch: Chef Salad & Fruit Cup <u>9:00-3:00</u> How do You Say “Recovery” <u>3:00-4:00</u>	<u>21</u> Types of Personalities <u>10:00 - 11:00</u> NAMI Connection Group <u>1:00 - 2:30</u> Mental Health Wheel of Fortune <u>2:45 - 3:45</u> Peace of Mind Event <u>4:00 – 6:00</u>	<u>22</u> Education Group: Finding Purpose in Life #2 <u>9:30 – 10:30</u> Art Class <u>11:00-12:00</u> Guest Speaker Jennifer Bledsoe: TPC <u>1:00-2:00</u> Yoga <u>2:30-3:30</u>	<u>23</u> Sod Poodles Baseball Game <u>6:30 – 9:00</u> \$\$ 	<u>24</u> Center Closed  NAMI Meeting Saturday, 25 th <u>2pm – 3pm</u>
<u>27</u> Closed Memorial Day 	<u>28</u> Managing Loneliness <u>10:00 - 11:00</u> NAMI Connection Group <u>1:00-2:30</u> Way's to Make Life More Interesting <u>2:45-3:45</u>	<u>29</u> Education Group: Nutrition #2 of 3 <u>9:30 – 10:30</u> Art Class <u>11:00-12:00</u> Folk Music/Vickie Lee (Guitar & Sing Along) <u>1:00-2:00</u> Yoga <u>2:30-3:30</u>	<u>30</u>  Birthday Night <u>6:00 – 8:00</u>	<u>31</u> GED Class <u>9:30-10:30</u> Personal Safety <u>11:00-12:00</u> Peace & Relaxation <u>1:00-2:00</u> Housing: Spring Cleaning <u>2:30-3:30</u>



AAMHC

P.O. Box 44

Amarillo, TX 79105-0044

Physical location:

1401 S. Polk St.

(Polk Street United Methodist Church, 4th floor)

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

AAMHC Board of Directors

Chairman: **Adrian Gonzalez**
Vice Chairman: **Montey Kunkel**
Secretary: **Nanette Nguyen**
Treasurer: **Keith Nishimura**
Asst. Treasurer: **Open**
Asst. Secretary: **Open**
Advocacy Committee Chairman: **Open**
Angel/Outreach committee Chair: **Open**
Program Chairman: **Open**
Member-at-large: **Sharlotte Parish**
Member-at-large: **Open**
Member-at-large: **Open**

AAMHC Staff & Volunteers

Executive Director: **Tony Foster**
Center Director: **Gerri Steele**
Center Director Assistant: **Malaki Ivery**
Administrative Assistant: **Becky Irvine**
Computer Lab Technician: **Glenn Truett**
Computer Lab Technician Assistant: **Stephen Waguespack**
Van Driver: **David Steele**
Art Teacher: **Linda Hilario**
Yoga Instructor: **Margie Netherton**
Work Training Assistant: **Nanette Nguyen**,
GED Teacher: **Tony Foster**
Newsletter Creators: **Tony Foster, Becky Irvine**

This publication is funded by a grant from the Texas Health and Human Services and contributions from readers like you. Views expressed in these newsletters do not necessarily reflect those of all AAMHC members or our funding sources. Feedback is always welcome.

Website: www.aamhc.us

Email: amhcamarillo@gmail.com

