June 2022 | Vol. 3

IN THE LOOP

The official newsletter of the Family Satisfaction Team (FST) at HopeWorx Inc.



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WELCOME!

We are the Family Satisfaction Team (FST). We hope you enjoy our third issue of *In the Loop*. In this issue you will find community event information and resources, results from our 2021 Blended Case Management Satisfaction Survey, and information regarding future projects. Also featured in this issue, our parent column by Dawn M. Sites, an article on Apiary Therapy by Amelia Mraz, and an article highlighting the Community Satisfaction Team (CST) at HopeWorx Inc. If you would like to be featured in our next issue, please email us at *familysatisfactionteam@hopeworxinc.org* We would love to feature you.

What is a Family Satisfaction Team?

The Family Satisfaction Team (FST) is a statemandated survey team that is responsible for gathering feedback from families regarding their experiences using behavioral health services that are provided by the county through PA HealthChoices in Montgomery County. We want to make sure your voice is heard by the county and providers so that services reflect families' needs in the county. Montgomery County's FST is housed within HopeWorx Inc. HopeWorx Inc. also houses the adult survey team, Community Satisfaction Team (CST).

Upcoming Community Events & Activities

Image: Superior of the second state of the second state

Free resources! Animals, crafts, and fun for the whole family! (FREE ADMISSION TO THE FIRST 200 PEOPLE) <u>click here for flyer</u>

Youth MOVE PA

Wellness Days 2022



Evansburg State Park

Regional retreat for youth/young adults ages 16-29 Educational opportunity on the topic of self-stigma. Leadership and team building activities, fishing, hiking, music, art, workshops, food, and more! <u>click here to register</u>



a collaborative community celebration

Harvest, Hope, &

Healing Day

Norristown Farm Park

Celebrating the community together. Families welcome! Free activities and resources. <u>click here for flyer</u>

Mental Health Resources

click the links for more info

Youth MOVE PA Thrive for Hope

Virtual support group for youth/youth adults ages 16-29

Every Thursday 4-5pm on Zoom

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

How to Talk to Your Child About Their Mental Health



Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers' Association (PMHCA)

Virtual Drop-In Sessions Schedule

6 days a week, 18+ years old

Sessions including: 'Waiting for Services", "WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan)", "Community Inclusion", "Alternate Coping Skills", "Goal Setting", "Skill Building", "Community Resources"

Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA)

National Maternal Mental Health Hotline

24/7, Free, Confidential Hotline for Pregnant and New Moms English & Spanish Call or text **1-833-9-HELP4MOMS** (1-833-943-5746)



PRIDE Community Events & Resources

June 26, 12-5 pm Bucks-Mont Pride

Enjoy live music, food, community resources, family-friendly activities, an Art Gallery, and more at this free, indoor/outdoor event!

<u>click to register</u>

Tuesday, June 14th, 7-8 pm Raising LGBTQIA+ Kids: Panel Discussion A panel of parents of LGBTQIA+ youth share their experiences and how to be a child's strongest advocate and ally

click to register

Tuesday, June 28th, 7-8 pm Sharing Our Stories: A Queer Recovery Experience

Katie Greeley (she/her) and Hadeis Safi (they/them) share their experiences with substance use and recovery as queer and trans individuals. What drove their substance use and how recovery can be deeply personal and vary person to person.

click to register

SAGA Hatboro Resources

- Trans & Non-binary Support Group
- LGBTQIA+ Support Group
- Youth Program

click to register

BEES, HONEY + RECOVERY HALF MAD HONEY By: Amelia Mraz

I stumbled into beekeeping in 2016, signing up to fill an elective for my liberal arts major in college. Though I registered on a whim, I was also searching for something different. I had just gotten back into school, out of the psychiatric hospital again, and burned out from lectures. I was really struggling. I thought working with nature would be comforting, while I also knew I had always been afraid of bees.



I took a leap into a new experience. After spending time in the apiary (bee yard), beekeeping became a meditative practice. It was a place I felt like I could truly breathe, and I knew the bees needed me to be calm and present. The apiary became a concentrated safe space where I could process the past and trajectory of my own recovery while spending time with nature. When I open up a hive I immerse myself in my 5 senses, listening to the buzz of the bees, smelling the honey wafting from the frames, feeling the breeze on my face from thousands of tiny wings fanning, and watching pollen, an array of rainbow colors, carried in on tiny legs. My feelings slowly metamorphized from fear to curiosity, and trust.

Half Mad Honey was born during the pandemic, though the passion to share this practice with others with mental health experiences has been brewing since I began beekeeping. Half Mad Honey's mission is to cultivate wellness and connection through honey bees. The name of our company is an intentional nod to the Mad Pride Movement. A movement rooted in improving mental health services, destigmatizing mental health, amplifying and empowering the voices of people living with mental health experiences. We believe that therapy and conversations about mental health need to be brought outside the clinical setting, and that honey bees help bring people together.



At Half Mad Honey we offer apiary therapeutic and experience, an interactive immersive experience with honey bees, and a licensed therapist. Apiary therapeutic experience focuses on practicing mindfulness, distress tolerance, and grounding with honey bees at our apiary in Philadelphia, PA. Sometimes talking to a therapist isn't enough, sometimes not everything we process is verbal, and sometimes learning new things is cathartic. If we can find a space of peace, of growth, and of confidence, we can infuse that into other parts of our lives. Apiary therapeutic experience is rooted in making a space to actively learn and practice coping skills, while grounding through the sensations of being with the bees. We truly believe, bees can help us connect and grow.

For more information go to our website below or email info@halfmadhoney.com

CLICK HERE





Half Mad Honey

COMING PROJ





Currentl Surveyi

Partial Hospitalization Program

Data collection closes June 30

Inpatient Hospitalization

CLICK HERE

In Development:

Family Based Services

Multisystemic Therapy



Residential Treatment Facility (RTF)

More Details:

All data shared with FST by families is de-identified to protect families. All surveys are conducted via telephone, online, and in-person (where permitted). All of our survey respondents receive a \$10 Amazon egift card via email or mail. Eligibility criteria varies. If you are interested in responding to a survey or if you have suggestions for survey questions, please contact familysatisfactionteam@hopeworxinc.org



Overall, families were satisfied with Blended Case Management. Families appreciated their case manager connecting them to supports and activities within the community. However, many families reported frustration with staff turnover. Overall, 74% of parents would recommend BCM. 69% of youth felt their case manager was helpful to them.



For permission to cite or copy please contact familysatisfactionteam@hopeworxinc.org

Blended Case Management.

satisfied overall

"That Mom"

Written by Dawn M. Sites

"I'm a mother, student, advocate, and ballerina. I've finally found my voice."

I've always said that I wouldn't become "that mom". You know her, the kind that seems argumentative with everyone and everything. Well, if I've learned anything about myself it's because I have indeed become "that mom" and for very good reasons.

Being a special needs mother to the oldest of three children is quite a challenge, and that's an understatement for sure. Outsiders looking in, rudely passing judgement because all they see is out of control children while the parents are beyond exhausted just trying to buy some dinner at the local Walmart. People have no idea what's going on in your world, my world. Yes, there are plenty of neurotypical children that act out for various reasons, but I feel looked down on when my child is just expressing himself the only way he can.

My oldest, who just turned II in January, is just not a special needs child, he is a NICU graduate from St. Christopher's Hospital for Children. He was born five weeks early with a birth defect called Gastroschisis, this is when the intestines are protruding out of the belly. Think of it as an external hernia. He spent seven months hospitalized, almost died, and had six repair surgeries. I found out at 18 weeks pregnant that is how he would be born. So, for II+ years it has been nonstop with signatures, specialists, doctors, HIPPA, meetings (oh the countless meetings that were basically the same exact meeting!). So clearly this child has had some severe trauma in his short baby life.

Educated professionals who are trained to help my child dismissed every concern I had. This has and continues to infuriate me. Some of my friends joke that I should just go into the field because I always end up being right. After every evaluation I'm asked, "what are your main concerns?". I point blank tell them, my son cannot express himself appropriately, he doesn't understand emotions. The list could go on and on, as we had wrap around services for years. All the therapists saw was him jumping off the couch and nothing is stopping him. Their instinct was to focus on treating his hyperactivity. In my heart and mind, I knew it was a much bigger concern. Therapies started when he was 3 years old. Eight years of professionals telling me otherwise; and in those eight years he has been hospitalized numerous times and was in a residential treatment facility for Autism, ADHD, and medication management. The first time he was hospitalized he was five. I was extremely desperate for help and any possible answers. This was one month before he started kindergarten and I was panicked. What people don't understand or feels care to understand, is that I had no choice in the matter. He was unstable and unsafe being at home. Each time it hurts when I have to make that gut wrenching decision of getting him hospitalized and some stays are longer than others.

I would like to say it got better but it didn't, this became a nightmare. We were misled by the special education department in our school district. They assured us they could support my son's educational and behavioral health needs. He was in 2nd grade at the time. The same thing started, not listening to the concerns, needs and wants from his parent because I don't have the credentials of the staff. What I do know is I am the expert of my son. Over the past two years it became so bad that I ordered a shirt that says, "underestimate me, it will be fun" and I had to retain a lawyer. That is another journey for another time.

My question is, why? Why do people that we want to trust our children with just dismiss the parental concerns? It infuriates me to no end when I hear other parents share about their experiences. My son's doctor felt he was on the spectrum when she first saw him at three but didn't tell me those suspicions until he was hospitalized at the age of five. That's two years of horrible therapy sessions, horrible adverse reactions to medication, and being judged at the preschool. We had limited options, so we had to stay with our provider. Five miserable years of upping medications, adding medications, and keeping him on medications that clearly did not help.

We felt that there was more going on other than the Autism and the ADHD. Each time we discussed our concerns it was dismissed. We kept asking if he could have something like Bipolar, we were told "kids cannot get bipolar". Seriously? Did she honestly think I would take that as an answer? Mental illness runs in my family, I can see it. I knew deep down that he had something else going on. As he got older, there were more hospitalizations, and we were running out of options in regard to medication. Yet again I was becoming desperate and during this period the therapists cycled through quickly. Constant meetings with various professionals ranging from pediatricians, home support and school. I'm tired and drained from trying to look for answers, guidance, any kind of feedback as long as I wasn't being dismissed.

I had enough, I lost my patience with his doctor, and I became "that mom". And it felt good to get all my years of feelings out and be heard. After a hospitalization over 6 months long, a new medical team validated what we had been saying all these years that he is in fact bipolar, and we were right. It was a sigh of relief yet still a hard pill to swallow. Then the "what-if's" started trolling in my head, what if the therapists listened, what if the doctor did not dismiss our concerns? What if he was treated the correct way would we be here, worrying about if there is going to be another hospital stay around the corner? Years of dismissive attitudes towards our family. It's like that scene in Matilda "I'm big, your little, I'm smart, your dumb".

I have a tremendous Amazon wish list for books on various topics like Autism, ADHD, Bipolar, books for siblings, books for other family members etc. There is no shame in wanting to educate yourself, learn, and do research. I've learned to assert and advocate for my child with professionals. I like surprising them with my knowledge and feel empowered when I meet with them.

The book I'm currently reading is titled Kids in the Syndrome Mix of ADHD, LD, Asperger's, Tourette's, Bipolar, and More. Another great Amazon find, this book is definitely in my list of top IO. This book proves that children can have more than one developmental, neurobiological, and or psychological disorders. When I was reading up on Bipolar in children and comparisons to ADHD; it was like I was reading about my son. What we have been dealing with on a daily basis for years in physical print form. Talk about a rollercoaster of emotions going on.

I am that mom and I'm not ashamed of it. In the very early parts of this journey, I was worried about stepping on toes. Not anymore! I don't like confrontation; I would become shy and afraid to ask questions if I did not understand something. That all changed really quick. Don't be afraid of speaking your truth about your child. Don't be afraid of saying NO this is not what I want for my child. Let them know you will not be bullied. Sometimes it's scary but who is suffering, our children. I refused to let my child suffer. I am proud to say, "I AM THAT MOM" and so should you.



Some books that I highly recommend from Amazon: Kids in the Syndrome Mix Martin L. Kutscher Beyond Behaviors Mona Deahooke The Bipolar Child Demitri Papolos

THE COMMUNITY SATISFACTION TEAM

The Community Satisfaction Team (CST) meets face to face with individuals to listen to and document their satisfaction with the mental health services they receive that are funded by the Montgomery County Mental Health System. The staff at CST, all of whom have experience receiving mental health services, survey individuals to find out if their needs are being met, and if they are satisfied with the services provided to them. The CST staff develops the surveys based on their own experience in the mental health system as well as from the results of previous surveys and information about the goals of the services. The data gathered is used to create a report which is shared with the people who were surveyed, service providers, and the Montgomery County Office of Behavioral Health, who then work together to implement change.

What does CST mean to you?

It is a safe haven for me and a place for me to grow and learn and be a better person and love myself more. - **Anita**

Hope and giving people a voice. We can survey people and capture their feedback and empower them and let their voices be heard. - **Julie**

Viewing people as equals and viewing people as a peer, instead of one higher than the other. We're all equals, we're all peers, that's what I love so much about this company and that's why it means so much to me. - **Danny**

I really appreciate HopeWorx because they have been really understanding and helpful to me. - Lisa

There's a lot of acceptance here and it's given me the capability of feeling acceptance and all my rights and my wrongs can be mended. Our mistakes can be mended. It's growing and lessons learned, and I like that. , - Heather

To me it means an opportunity to give back. When I was struggling with mental health issues and homelessness there wasn't a lot an avenues to get your voice heard. So when I came here it was definitely a culture shock, coming from retail to services like this. But it gives us the opportunity to help others have that avenue for their concerns or even successes to be heard. - **Penny**

It's all about being the voice of the people and letting them know that we want their honest opinions, we want their honest experience, we want them to share that with us. - **Morgan**

What is your hope for the future of CST?

Keep the humanity that we've created on the CST and the diversity that we have on the team, not just meaning race. sex, or orientation, but the diversity we have of the services people have used, the levels of recovery they're in. My future would be keep it the way it is, but just continue to grow and learn as we go along. - **Penny**

More CSTs, increased connections. I love the partnership that we have with FST, FamilyWorx, etc. I think there's a lot of work we can do and we have a lot of knowledge as people with lived experience, so I'd love to see that valued more in other places. - **Amelia**



My hope for CST is to see it expand. For us to reach out beyond Norristown, and have multiple CST offices everywhere. - **Dion**

What is CSP?

Montgomery County's Community Support Program (CSP) Committee brings together individuals that receive mental health services, their family members, providers and the Department of Behavioral Health in an equal partnership to promote recovery and excellence in the delivery of community-based mental health services.

Meetings: 3rd Thursday of every month 1-2:30pm For more info contact: pjohnson@hopeworxinc.org or Ipetriello@hopeworxinc.org

Anita is a member of the Community Satisfaction Team. Since joining the HopeWorx community, she has improved her computer skills, and achieved varying certifications from trainings. Anita grew in North Hills, PA, and has been a resident of Norristown for many years. Anita loves music, and exercising. Her favorite part about working for HopeWorx is that she gets the chance to give back to her peers. What motivates her is the fact that she likes what she does, and is good at it.



Favorite quote: "God is good, all the time."

MEET THE CST



Heather is a member of the CST, as well as being an avid singer. She sang for many years overseas and abroad, as well as recording her vocals with a jazz group. She also sang at Carnegie Hall for 3 years with her son. Before coming to HopeWorx, Heather worked as a caretaker, and Certified Nursing Assistant. Heather is motivated to help others, with a specific interest in advocating around homeless and mental health issues. Heather really enjoys survey fieldwork, finding it is a great way to connect with others.

Favorite quote: "Live, love, and laugh."

Dion has been a member of the CST for many years, serves as Technical Assistant for Southeast Regional Community Support Program, as well as treasurer for Montgomery County's Community Support Program. Dion recently received his Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) certification. Dion was born and raised in Norristown. In his free time, Dion enjoys videogames, D&D, writing, music, and anime. Dion values his role at HopeWorx, being one of the few places where he feels like he is making a difference in people's lives.



Favorite quote: "It's not about how many times you get knocked down, but how many times you get up."



Lisa is a member of the Community Satisfaction Team. You can usually find her conducting surveys, or at the front desk. Lisa is on the autism spectrum, and her favorite hobbies are reading and writing. What motivates her to be part of the HopeWorx community is knowing that she is making a difference in the world.

Favorite quote: "Who you are authentically is all right." – Laverne Cox



Danny is a member of CST, serves on the Ferns Peer Respite Committee, and is an Executive Tri Chair of Montgomery County Community Support Program. Danny has been a part of the mental health system all his life but that hasn't prevented him from doing what he wants to do in life. Danny has previously hosted radio shows and podcasts, interviewed rock bands, and helped at professional wrestling events with production. Danny interests include cars, watching pro wrestling and sports, listening to music, birdwatching, and going to concerts. Danny is also a huge family person and likes spending time with his family and friends. Danny enjoys survey research, and is hopeful that results will provoke changes in mental health services that are needed. Danny is also passionate about empowering others, and allowing individuals voices to be heard.

Favorite quote: "Who'll walk me down to church when I'm sixty years of age When the ragged dog they gave me has been ten years in the grave And senorita play guitar, play it just for you My rosary has broken and my beads have all slipped through- Elton John from "Sixty Years On"

Morgan has been a part of the CST since June 2016, as well as a former treasurer for the Montgomery County Community Support Program. Morgan is currently attending Temple University, seeking Bachelor's in Media Studies and Production with Sports Media Certificate; hoping to become a play-by-play announcer. Morgan is a big Philadelphia sports fan, fan of collectible games, and enjoys playing video games. Morgan believes that being part of the HopeWorx community means knowing that you'll always have support. There are plenty of people that don't have the right kind of support. Morgan is interested finding ways to help provide that, and having others voices be heard.





Amelia has been a member of the CST since 2019. She also serves on the Southeast Regional CSP committee as advocacy co-chair. Amelia received her bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts from Temple University, and is currently pursuing a master's degree in public health and health communication at Temple University. Amelia is passionate about improving the quality of mental health services, access to mental health care, and destigmatizing mental illness. On weekends, you can find Amelia in the apiary spending time beekeeping. She also enjoys art, and good food. Her favorite part about the HopeWorx community is the value of peer support and commitment to improving mental health services

Favorite quote: "Everything you've ever wanted is sitting on the other side of fear." – George Addair



Penny Johnson is a Certified Peer Specialist/Peer Specialist Supervisor and is currently the Program Supervisor for the Community Satisfaction Team at HopeWorx.

Prior to joining HopeWorx as a Community Satisfaction Team member, Penny worked as a chef for many years. Penny experienced homelessness here in Montgomery County almost a decade ago, while struggling with clinical depression and anxiety.

At HopeWorx, she has been able to gain skills to share her experiences and the experiences of others to advocate for better resources that meet people who are struggling where they are at.

She previously was on the Community Advisory Council representing Homelessness/Housing as well as one of the chairpersons for The Ferns Peer Respite Board who are working to open the first Peer run respite in Montgomery County!

She brings those skills to the Your Way Home CoC Governing Board, because she is passionate about helping people who are where she once was. When Penny isn't working, she enjoys spending time with her two adult children and her two nutty cats and cooking delicious food for all of her friends and people who come into the Hopeworx community.

Favorite quote: "We might not have it all together, but together we can have it all."

Julie works on the Community Satisfaction Team, she is also a Certified Peer Specialist, and trained in intentional peer support. Julie has completed many various trainings that have added to her expertise at HopeWorx. Julie is passionate about giving a voice to the voiceless, encouraging the hopeless, and fighting for the discouraged. Julie shares her story of hope to cultivate a connection between individuals and with the community. Julie enjoys helping people in practical ways, whether it be helping her elderly neighbor in the garden, assisting in the children's ministry in church, or singing on the worship team. Julie loves to make people laugh, bringing a smile to someone's face means the world to her. A few fun facts about Julie are that she has 3 nephews that she loves very much. She never thought being an aunt could be this awesome! Julie also has a one-of-a-kind emotional support animal, Peaches, who she has had since she was a puppy. Julie appreciates being a part of the HopeWorx family. HopeWorx gives her the opportunity to encourage others to use their voice, and tell their story. Julie feels honored to have the opportunity to sit down with people and listen to them, capturing their words through surveys. She wants others to know that they are valid, and they matter.





Watermelon Salad

Juicy watermelon with cucumber, mint, and crumbled feta cheese tossed in a super simple vinaigrette. This colorful, simple, and refreshing salad is perfect for the whole family and ideal for those upcoming hot summer BBQs and picnics!

Ingredients

- 1/2 of a whole watermelon, cubed or balled
- 1 English cucumber, chopped
- 2 tablespoons mint, thinly sliced
- 1/2 red onion, thinly sliced (optional)
- 1/3 cup feta cheese, crumbled
- 1 tablespoon lime juice or red wine/balsamic vinegar
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste

Instructions



- 1. In a large salad platter or serving bowl, combine watermelon, cucumber, feta, mint, and red onion (if using).
- 2. Whisk together the dressing or place the ingredients in a small jar and shake to combine. Pour over the salad and serve right away. Enjoy!

Notes:

- For a vegan/non-dairy option, try swapping out the feta cheese with avocado.
- To take some of the bite out of the red onions, slice and soak them in water for 15 minutes. Drain and pat dry before using.
- Young picky eaters? Or little kitchen helpers? Try using a melon baller or small veggie cutters to cut your fruits into fun shapes!

Parent/Caregiver Virtual Support Group

Sponsored by FamilyWorx Family Peer Support & Advocacy Program

Parents and caregivers, you are not alone! Please join us for a virtual family support group for parents/caregivers of children (pre-school to young adult) with behavioral health concerns. There you can connect with other parents who share similar experiences, learn about resources, receive nonjudgmental support, and share stories of hope and strength. All support groups are co-facilitated by Family Peer Support Partners

WHEN:

2nd and 4th Thursday of every month

(excluding holidays)

7:00-8:00 pm

WHERE:

Join us via Zoom from the comfort of your home

* A one-time pre-registration is required for sessions. A Zoom link will be provided in the confirmation email

For more information, please contact:

Lori Warren Senior Family Peer Support Partner Iwarren@hopeworxinc.org 484-672-1610



Registration is required:

CLICK HERE

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/ tZckcOqorzkpHdMKz6O_r0XpVjyi9SAEkNCG



Program Contacts

HOPEWORX TEAMS

<u>Family Satisfaction Team (FST)</u>

-family & youth survey team

<u>FamilyWorx</u>

-family peer support & advocacy team

<u>AdvocacyWorx</u>

-adult peer support & advocacy team

Community Satisfaction Team (CST)

-adult survey team

<u>CommunityWorx</u>

-micro community open 3 days a week

Independent Monitoring for Quality (IM4Q)

-developmental disabilities survey team

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Montgomery County Children's Behavioral Health Guide



<u>Student Assistance Program (SAP)</u>



Mobile Crisis provided by Access Services 1-855-634-HOPE(4673)



<u>Teen Talk Line provided by Access Services</u> call 866-825-5856, text 215-703-8411 or email teentalkline@accessservices.org

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Click on the link to learn more