

Community Support Journal

Montgomery County Community Support Program Committee Newsletter

June 2026

Volume 6



CSP Logo designed by Chris Ford

Remembering a community - A safe place to be

By: Penny Johnson,
CSP Technical Assistant



I was saddened to hear that CommunityWorx at Hopeworx was closing.

CommunityWorx started as a “barter store” at Building 6 at the Norristown State Hospital many years ago. When HopeWorx moved to its new building on Stanbridge Street, they continued the operation with a new name “Hope Market, gathering donations and giving people in the community an opportunity to “earn points” by sorting donations, or helping with the HopeMarket. The points could be used to purchase items that were donated (usually household items, furniture, or clothing).

Through the years, the Hope Market operated without being “policed” or without strict guidelines. It slowly became something amazing all on its own.

As people from the community, people with mental health challenges, and people struggling with homelessness continued to come in daily, we saw something beautiful happen. People from different walks of life supporting each other and sharing resources! The environment starting becoming a safe place for anyone to come and just be themselves, no judgment, no “comparing”. People starting sharing cultures, sharing ideas, and just simply being kind. During a time of rebranding, the name of the Hope Market name changed to CommunityWorx ...well because that’s exactly what it had become - a community within the community.

Over the years, people began to not only come to help with donations or find things they needed, people started also doing activities together such as art, games, music etc. For many years as I worked on

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Celebrating Montgomery County CSP



By:
Kathie Mitchell, CSJ Editor

Over the past two months, it wasn’t clear where the Montgomery County CSP Committee would land with a change in leadership at HopeWorx and the elimination of two of its

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the Consumer Satisfaction Team at HopeWorx, there were many days where I too found solace in CommunityWorx on trying days. I would simply put down my burdens of the day and go back in CommunityWorx and just enjoy the simplicity of the environment. The compassion, kindness and yes, even sometimes chaos (not negative at all).

As CommunityWorx started partnering with a local organic farm, I had the pleasure of using my Chef skills from previous employment to teach others how to can vegetables, share recipes, and just enjoy being out of the office. Then we started receiving food donations from local stores and a bunch of us would imitate “Chopped Kitchen” and find new exciting ways to use food that would have been discarded. That turned into other people from our little “community” to start sharing their recipes and the next thing you know, all of HopeWorx was filled with wonderful smells of delicious food that everyone could enjoy. An amazing woman who taught and created art started coming in and then there would be art activities going on simultaneously as food was being shared, music playing, people from all walks of life and recovery playing games, chatting, etc. I know these words do not begin to explain all the wonderful things that came out of this once tiny place to get a few household items, that because of no restraints or “guidelines” morphed into something other places asked how to duplicate. There were no answers on how to duplicate it because it wasn’t “created “ by anything in particular - it just happened.

There was never really any actual funding to run CommunityWorx but somehow it survived because of the people who came and the places that donated food, games, art supplies...everything. CommunityWorx also became extremely helpful when Hurricane Ida hit and many people lost everything! People could come in and get some things to lessen the burden of losing everything. Other organizations began to help with necessities like hygiene items and clothing that not only helped individuals struggling with homelessness but people who had survived the storm and people that were struggling with food insecurity. I could talk forever about all the beautiful things that happened in CommunityWorx and it still would not even begin to do justice to such an amazing place. As I speak about the CommunityWorx and all the guests and volunteers I have to include all the staff at HopeWorx who yes, played a huge role in helping this “community within a community” run. They helped with events during holidays to give people in the community who either didn’t have a place to be or family, to enjoy a meal with. Our annual “Friendsgiving”, winter celebrations, and many more were always filled with wonderful food, wonderful people and just all around joyful days. It’s very sad that this incredible place has to end and I’m truly heart-broken over it. I hope that another non-profit will allow a space for people to come be themselves and watch how it, too, will morph into something beautiful.



I don’t believe anyone can recreate CommunityWorx but I do believe that if you get the opportunity to look past social norms, diagnosis, and economic stigmas, there could be another “safe place” for people to come together again and create their own version of CommunityWorx. So as I close this chapter I want to thank all the amazing people, staff, donors, and organizations that didn’t try to change the environment by implementing stipulations, “rules and regulations”, or exclusions. Thank you all for simply letting it be what it was something beautiful!!



programs—AdvocacyWorx and CommunityWorx.

But we have good news!

As of July 1, 2026—the new fiscal year for county budgets—Montco CSP will continue to be supported by HopeWorx as its fiduciary, according to Vera Zanders, Deputy Administrator of Adult Mental Health in Montgomery County.

The Montgomery County Office of Mental Health has supported our CSP Committee for decades—collaborating as partners with CSP which represents mental health stakeholders - adults using services, families using services and agencies that provide these crucial services.

CSP's Mission: CSP brings together individuals who 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.

Over the years, CSP has evolved and changed as people joined the committee to find information and support and found others with like minds who strive for connection, optimal well being and access to vital mental health services. Many individuals, family members and providers work together on committees such as advocacy and community connections and often band together with other organizations during crucial budget times to advocate for necessary funds at the state and local levels.

CSP invites speakers to present at meetings who share information on resources that are important to the mental health community. They invite legislators to meetings and also meet their representatives at the their local offices or in Harrisburg.

When state budget cuts occurred in 2012 and the OMHSAS statewide mental health conferences were eliminated, Montgomery County CSP used some of their county funding along with many donations from partner organizations and the community, to conduct their own annual Montgomery County CSP Conference. It was first held at Mermaid Lake. And it was an immediate success. Workshops like Tai Chi, the Drum Circle, Mindfulness and craft making were just a few of the presentations that engaged participants. Soon after, the county opted to join the conference by holding their annual mental health awards ceremony as the second part of the conference. As attendance grew at the conference, the CSP Conference Committee found Martha's Community Farm in Audubon as their new location. A tent was rented each year and different vendors were chosen to provide lunch. The annual CSP art contest winners were displayed at the conference. Last year, CSP celebrated its 12th Annual CSP conference and the Office of Mental Health held its 47th Annual Mental Health Awards Ceremony. This year the conference and awards ceremony were not held.

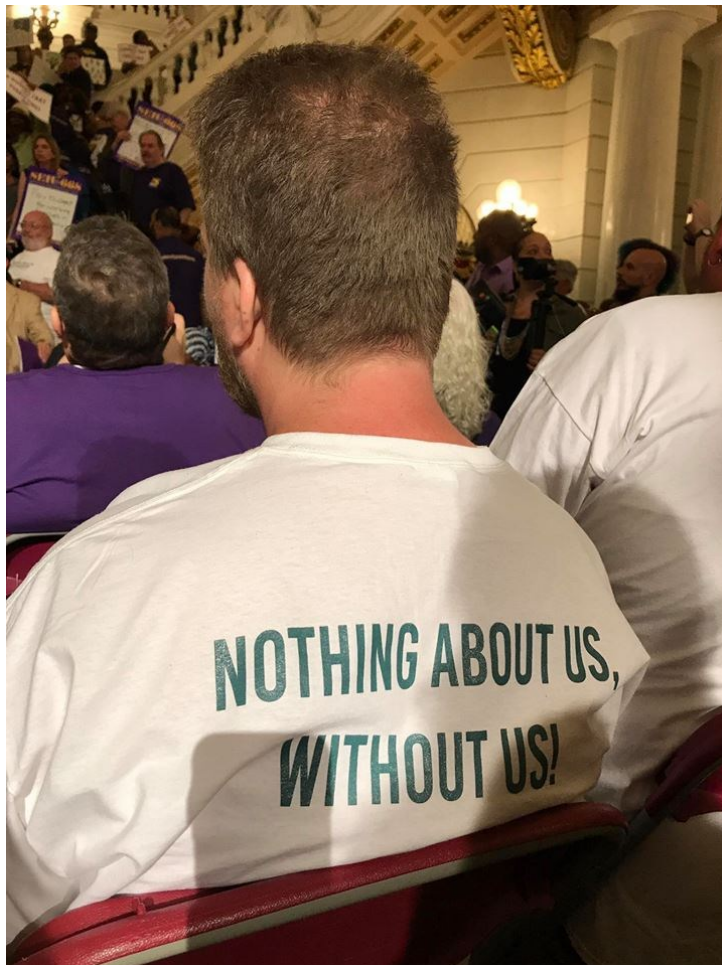
Every year, members of Montco CSP attend rallies in Harrisburg in May to advocate for mental health funds which always seemed to be perpetually on the chopping block. They show up, meet with legislators and rally with hundreds of other advocates from across Pennsylvania. It's always an educational and inspiring experience for all who attend.

Unfortunately, in the current climate we find ourselves, money is being taken away from many programs as a result of the massive federal cuts made last year. The Montco CSP Committee had been concerned that they, too, would lose funding provided by the county. At the April CSP meeting, CSP liaison Tracey Riper-Thomas said the CSP Committee would continue to be funded but did not know how it would be supported.

During the Pandemic, CSP continued to meet using Zoom and later through hybrid meetings. Zoom was convenient for many who had access to the internet and for those individuals who did not have transportation to meetings. However, online meetings lost some of the personal contact that was experienced through in-person meetings.

I have been a member of CSP since 2000—first as a member of the Philadelphia CSP Committee and later part of the Montco CSP Committee and the Southeast Regional CSP Committee. It was a rewarding experience; quite different than most committee work that usually consists of professionals only. As CSP, we left the silos of our own programs in our own towns, and traveled across the fields to other towns, counties and sometimes states, to find out what we had in common, what we needed to learn and what we could share with other individuals and groups who were passionate about mental health recovery.

The journey continues.



Montco CSP over the years







June is

PTSD *Awareness Month*

**Those living with PTSD
can struggle with:**

- Flashbacks
- Anxiety
- Hypervigilance
- Difficulty trusting others
- Daily life and relationships

*Those affected should know that healing is possible.
Seek help today to start your recovery.*



From leader to friend...happy retirement!

By: Penny Johnson

I would like to take a moment to say happy retirement to Sue Shannon!

Sue for more than a decade has been the Executive Director of Hopeworx. Sue met me when I was really struggling. I was homeless, lost, and very new to accepting my own personal challenges with mental health. She gave me a chance and hired me to be part of the Community Satisfaction team at Hopeworx. I struggled with being able to “show vulnerability” or even talking about my challenges.

Working at HopeWorx changed my life! Not just in the sense of income to maintain housing but as an individual and that is largely as a result of Sue and her ability to see things from many different viewpoints. I can honestly say we may not have always seen “eye to eye”, but I’ve always respected the fact that she always had people’s best interests at heart. Through the years working with Sue, I have seen the effect she has had on many people. Not just staff but guests. She has an uncanny way of showing people their strengths they didn’t even know they had. She didn’t give up on anyone. If they weren’t thriving in one area of HopeWorx rather than letting them go, she provided opportunities for people to move to different areas of HopeWorx and find their niche.



**Sue Shannon,
HopeWorx Executive Director**

She was patient, kind and yes sometimes tough but that was usually because she knew we were capable of more. With all the current changes at HopeWorx, I’m sure it has all been extremely hard on her and I don’t think many people realized how much she truly loved HopeWorx and the work we were doing. Even when funding was tight or non-existent for particular things, she found a way. She poured her heart and soul into every single day even while facing her own personal losses and wellbeing. I wish nothing more than a stress-free, happy retirement for her. I know that she will be missed.

Please take a moment to thank Sue if she has affected your life and wish her all the best in this new chapter of her life. I won’t get too mushy here because I know she’d hate that, but I am truly a better person for knowing her and consider her a dear friend.



HAPPY PRIDE MONTH



JUNE 2026



National Alliance on Mental Illness

nami

Montgomery
County PA





ADVOCATING FOR EQUAL ACCESS

The LGBTQ+ community deserves
quality mental health care –
free of discrimination,
interference and judgment.

Everyone deserves community,
respect, love and access to
culturally competent care.



Montgomery
County PA



nami | Montgomery
County PA
National Alliance on Mental Illness

MENTAL HEALTH, UNCONDITIONALLY

RESOURCES FOR THE COMMUNITY

- **LGBTQIA+ Support Group** here @ NAMI Montco:
More information on the next page
- **CenterLink:** Nonprofit organization offering a member directory to find your nearest LGBTQ center
- **LGBT National Help Center:** Confidential peer support connections with phone, text or online chat
- **The Trevor Project:** Support network for LGBTQ youth with a 24-hour text line (“START” to 678678)



**MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES
CAN BE FOUND ON NAMI'S LGBTQ+ WEBPAGE.**



What is the NAMI Basics Education Program?

NAMI Basics is a free, six-session program designed for parents and other family caregivers of children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral difficulties. NAMI Basics helps parents and other family caregivers of children to understand the illnesses that are causing those behavioral difficulties, and the critical role families play in the treatment of those illnesses. The program is taught by trained teachers who are also the parents or family caregivers of individuals who experienced emotional or behavioral difficulties prior to age 13.

The next session will start on Tuesday, July 7th from 6:00 to 8:00pm via Zoom. Sign up now by using the QR Code!



Participant Perspectives

"This is such a great step by step program that walks parents every step of the way. It is as if you are holding their hand through it all."

"The course is inclusive of almost all aspects of family and child resources. I could have spent a lifetime getting all this information on my own. I feel supported, strong and ready to go forward."

"NAMI Basics bridges the gap. It provides help that can't be found in a doctor's office."

Contact us for more information!

NAMI Montgomery County PA

National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI Montgomery County
100 West Main Street, Suite 204
Lansdale, PA 19446
215-361-7784
office@namimontcopa.org

About NAMI

NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI (Affiliate Name) is an affiliate of NAMI (State). NAMI (Affiliate Name) and dedicated volunteer members and leaders work tirelessly to raise awareness and provide essential education, advocacy and support group programs for people in our community living with mental illness and their loved ones.



ADULT

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING

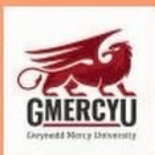
Mental Health First Aid Training is a skills-based training course that teaches you how to help someone who is experiencing a mental health challenge or crisis.

What it covers

- Common signs and symptoms of mental health challenges.
- Common signs and symptoms of substance use challenges.
- How to interact with a person in crisis.
- How to connect a person with help.
- Expanded content on trauma, substance use and self-care.

The curriculum also reviews risk factors and warning signs of mental illnesses, builds understanding of their impact, and overviews common professional and self help supports. The curriculum also does address suicide and non suicidal self injury and how to help a person who may be showing signs of suicidal thinking.

**We now offer CEU's through
Gwynedd Mercy University**



Thursday, June 25, 2026

8:30 am - 3:30 pm

Southeast Regional Mental Health
Services Coordination Office
2550 Eisenhower Avenue
Pinebrooke II, Suite B205
Trooper, PA 19403

Training Format and Details

- 2-hour, self-paced online class
- Followed by a 6.5 hour instructor-led training
 - Includes lunch and breaks
- Certification is for three years



Questions?

Email: regionalmalhealthfirstaid@pmhcc.org

REGISTER at
www.fivecountymh.org



**MONTGOMERY
COUNTY, PA**
DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES



**Mental Health
FIRST AID**
from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR
MENTAL WELLBEING

Sponsored by Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services



A group for people who experience things that others may not experience, where you can share these experiences in a non-judgmental environment. This includes hearing, seeing, feeling, tasting, and any other unusual beliefs.



Taking Back Our Power Is Moving Beginning June 8th



MONDAYS

2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

**Senior Adult Activities Center of
Montgomery County (SAAC)**

**536 George St,
Norristown, PA 19401**

**Last day of group at current location
May 18th, 2026**

All other Taking Back Our Power Groups
will remain at current locations

CICONNECTIONS.ORG

CONTACT:
SHEILA.HALL-PROILEIOU.ORG





Creating Increased Connections
A program of Resources for Human Development

CREATING INCREASED CONNECTIONS (CIC) GROUPS



TAKING BACK OUR POWER

Taking Back Our Power is a peer support group for individuals with lived experience of sensory phenomena (like hearing things others don't hear) and unusual beliefs

MONDAYS
2:00PM-3:00PM
Senior Adult Activities Center of Montgomery County (SAAC)
536 George St
Norristown, PA 19401

TUESDAYS
2:30PM-4:00PM
Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church
625 Montgomery Ave
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010

THURSDAYS
1:00PM-2:00PM
Trinity Reformed Church
60 N. Hanover St
Pottstown, PA 19464

CIRCLE OF HOPE

Circle of Hope is peer-to-peer led discussion group. Join us for lively conversation about how we are feeling, our successes and challenges, our recovery, and how we maintain our wellness. Everyone is welcome.

WEDNESDAYS
1:00PM-2:00PM
Hopeworx
1210 Stanbridge St #600,
Norristown, PA 19401

THURSDAYS
10:30AM-12:00PM
Hopeworx
1210 Stanbridge St #600,
Norristown, PA 19401

LIVE ANOTHER DAY

TUESDAYS
12:30PM-1:30PM

Lansdale Library
301 Vine St
Lansdale, PA 19446

Alternatives to Suicide groups are intended as non-judgmental spaces where people can share some of their darkest thoughts without being assumed to have an illness or being assessed for involuntary interventions. Openly exploring these thoughts - and the feelings and experiences underneath them - is often the key to moving toward something different.

WALK AND TALK

Every 1st and 3rd Friday
11:00AM-12:30PM

King of Prussia Mall
Meet at Food Court on 1st Floor
Join us for a time to work on our wellness, and enjoy each other's company as we exercise together.

Enter between KPOT and Bonefish Grill
160 N Gulph Rd
King of Prussia, PA 19406

WOMENS IDENTITY AND EXPERIENCES GROUP

WEDNESDAYS
3:00PM-4:00PM

This group was created for women as a safe environment to voice & openly share our life stories as women & to empower ourselves to find greater meaning & purpose in life.

Teams Link
<https://teams.microsoft.com/Womensgroup>

For More Information Contact Sheila.HallPrioleau@RHD.org 215-906-0453
www.ciconnections.org



**NORRISTOWN 5TH ANNUAL
JUNETEENTH JUBILEE**
June 19th - 12 pm to 6 pm
Dekalb & Main St

**Free & Open to All!
Bring your friends & family**

- Live Music
- Local Talent
- Vendor Market
- Food Trucks
- Carnival Games
- Face Painting
- Line Dancing

ROTATIONRECORDS
Main Stage Headliner

Featuring
Rich Flow * Ria4Real * Mizzy Montana
Senku Senfab African Drum Ensemble

Headliner
DJ DIAMOND KUTS

Sponsors



CENTRE THEATER CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

Charles Blockson Exhibit
(free admission)

Original Play by
I Am WE Entertainment



THEATER HORIZON
One Man Art Show

ROTATION RECORDS
Open House

For more information about vendor and sponsorship opportunities email thenry@norrictown.gov

Subcommittee Reports from April 2026

Advocacy Subcommittee – Working on Medicaid stories.

Community Outreach – No Meeting.

Conference Subcommittee - No conference this year.

A meeting was not held in May.

CSP MEETING CALENDER 2026

*Meetings are held every third
Thursday, monthly from
12: 00-2:30pm*

The next meetings will be:

June	17
July	16

*Meetings are held in person
and via Zoom.*

Montgomery County CSP Executive Committee

2024/2025 Tri-Chairs

Provider Member: Jim Markey

Person in Recovery: Morgan Killian-Moseley

Family Member: Vacant

County Liaison -
Tracey Riper-Thomas

2024/2025 Sub-Committee Chairs

Community Outreach: Erin Villarose

Advocacy: Cindy Todd & Christine Stutman

Conference: Harry Bowles & Justin Chamrin

Fiduciary - Hope Worx, Inc.

1210 Stanbridge Street,
Suite 600
Norristown, PA 19401
610-270-3685

2024/2025 Treasurer

Erin Anguish



CSP Principles

- * Person Centered/
Person Empowered
- * Culturally competent
- * Designed to Meet
Special Needs
- * Community Based
with Natural Supports
- * Flexible
- * Coordinated
- * Accountable
- * Strengths-Based

CSP Mission Statement:

Montgomery County's Community Support Program (CSP) 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.

The committee strives to include a balance of people who use services, people who provide services, family members, and interested members of the community at large. The CSP initiatives continue to grow state, regionally and county wide. As the involvement increases CSP has become a place that feedback can truly be given to the county from individuals that receive services and information can be given that suits the needs and requests of those that attend.

Organizations who regularly send representatives to CSP:

Central Behavioral Health, AdvocacyWorx, Community Satisfaction Team of Montgomery County, Magellan Health Services, Montgomery Co. Department of Behavioral Health, Montgomery County Emergency Services (MCES), NAMI Montgomery County, Norristown Vet Center, Resources for Human Development, Salisbury Behavioral Health

CSP Subcommittees:

- * **Advocacy Subcommittee**—Works on legislative, policy, communication, budget, voter education and other issues related to mental health services in the county, statewide and at the federal level when relevant. At the direction of the CSP Committee, the Advocacy Subcommittee gathers information on issues, plans advocacy events and creates a monthly newsletter to provide information to the stakeholder network as well as the community at large about the work of CSP. The newsletter also provides updates on new and changing mental health services provided in Montgomery County. The newsletter editor can be contacted at: kathiemitchell8221@gmail.com.
- * **Community Outreach Subcommittee**—Works on facilitating opportunities for people in the CSP community to be more involved in the Montgomery County community. This includes implementing the Community Connections grants, which provide funding for people to participate in a variety of activities. The committee also implements transportation grants that provide gas cards and SEPTA day passes to CSP community members. The annual CSP Poster Art contest is also organized by this committee.
- * **Conference Subcommittee** – The conference subcommittee will plan and fundraise for the annual Montgomery County CSP Conference.

Meetings:

12:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

3rd Thursday of each
month

Montgomery County
Community College
Blue Bell, PA

In person & Zoom

Kathie Mitchell, Newsletter Editor

Join our Mailing list!

We have an email list as well as a regular mailing, to join:

Send an e-mail to:

pjohnson@hopeworxinc.org

Or send your contact info to this mailing address:

We invite all peers, family members and providers/professionals to attend.

Website: www.montcopacsp.org

<https://www.facebook.com/montcopacsp/>