



## WELCOME BACK, COMMUNITY MEMBERS!

As a way to create a more inclusive community, the UMass Psychotic Disorders Clinical and Research Program has developed the Central Massachusetts Psychosis Network to build knowledge, develop skills, and share resources that may be useful to those who are interested in psychosis, schizophrenia and severe mental illness. We hope the network will serve as a catalyst to promote collaboration among all of the Central Massachusetts community and ultimately to improve the clinical care and quality of life for those living with psychotic disorders and severe mental illness.

As a member of this network, you will receive up to date information such as patient resources, upcoming events, inspiring stories, and research updates. If you know of anyone who is interested in joining this network, please let us know. We will be happy to add them to the group.

Welcome back to the Central Massachusetts Psychosis Network!

## PAINTING YOUR WAY TO WELLNESS

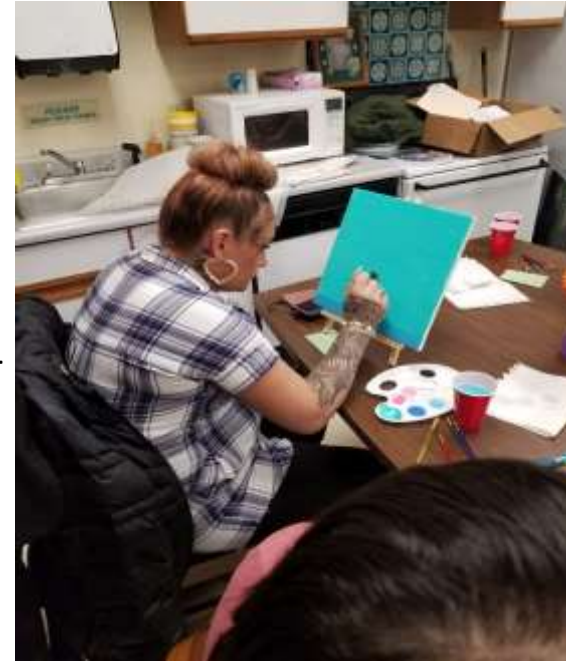
*Contributed by Alexandra Palmer*



On January 25th, the Community Intervention Program-Severe Mental Illness (CIP-SMI) partnered with Community Healthlink (CHL) of UMass Memorial Healthcare to organize a paint night for community members who experience severe mental illness. The event welcomed members of all CHL group homes and independent living facilities. Spanish speaking members of the CHL community were also invited to participate, as the event was translated for them by a community counselor. Each of these individuals brought their own stories and experiences to share with each other in this creative, healing space.

The event opened with an educational talk which offered the group some information about links between mental health and art. Shaun Cannon, the founder of Pronoia Arts Alliance, spoke about his experience using art to better understand and cope with mental illness and shared a series of his own paintings with the group. Cannon, with the help of local artist, Bryan Davagian, MFA, led the group in a guided imagery painting exercise accompanied by soothing music. Cannon encouraged the participants to express their identities on the canvas in any way they would like to. He reminded them that there was no right or wrong way to complete the exercise, but just to capture how they were feeling in that moment. A serene energy and burst of creativity filled the room as the participants let their brushes take to the canvases.

After making the finishing touches to their pieces, the participants were encouraged to walk around and share their works with one another. The participants' works included nature as a representation of personal growth and domestic scenes symbolizing longing for a more idealistic childhood. Some works were very abstract and meant to be open to the viewer's interpretation. One attendee shared that her piece was meant to be whatever the viewer wanted it to be and symbolized the thankfulness she experiences to those who have reached out to her throughout her life. She plans to donate her piece to a residence at CHL.



Overall, the paint night was a great success and well-received by everyone who participated. All participants rated the event as highly enjoyable and 71% indicated that they would like to do another paint night. Attendees expressed their gratitude for this opportunity to be creative and expressed interest in future art events. The event also left 80% of participants feeling motivated to use art as a form of therapy going forward. In particular, several participants who are avid sketchers in their free time said they were very excited for any opportunities to learn more about painting. CIP and CHL hope to continue their partnership to bring more events like these to the community.

## ALTERNATIVES AND THE BRIDGE COME TOGETHER AS OPEN SKY: LOOKING FORWARD TO A FUTURE OF LIMITLESS POSSIBILITIES

*Contributed by Karen Goldberg*

On July 1, 2018, Alternatives Unlimited, Inc. and The Bridge of Central Massachusetts became affiliated organizations under the name Open Sky Community Services. Both Alternatives and The Bridge brought long histories of providing services to individuals in Central Massachusetts living with mental health challenges.

The Bridge was well known for providing evidence-based treatments and services, while Alternatives focused on a psychiatric rehabilitation approach with an emphasis on community membership for individuals served. Open Sky's mission statement reflects the history and strengths of both of its predecessors: "Blending best practices with the power of community, we partner with individuals and families to see beyond and live beyond perceived limitations to pursue fulfilling lives." The goal of affiliating was to bring together the best of both worlds, while being better positioned to meet the changing healthcare landscape.

Throughout the complex transition period of the last months, the emphasis at Open Sky has remained squarely on ensuring that services to individuals remain at the highest level. So far, it would appear that these efforts have been successful as staff on the organization's clinical partners at another agency recently commented that the clinical transitions for individuals served have been seamless, while the quality of services have remained at a high level.



Open Sky President and CEO Ken Bates shared his vision for the future with 200 of the organization's leaders at a recent Agency Leadership Team gathering. In reflecting on the six months since the affiliation, he urged those present to continue to focus their time and energy "on those things that make the greatest difference for us - our services, our staff and our connections to the community."

"Open Sky serves many individuals with severe mental illness. We are pleased to be part of the Central Massachusetts Psychosis Network," said Bates. "We are looking forward to future collaborations with UMass clinicians and researchers to promote evidence-based treatment, and to improve the quality of life for the people we serve."

## GOOD EATS!

*Contributed by Jennifer Selland*



Cooking can sometimes be considered a daunting task. There is a great deal of planning and prepping required for a meal before you can sit down to enjoy it. You may also have to factor in budgetary restrictions and are then faced with the question of "How do I get something that is both nutritious and delicious on a budget? How is this possible?". The UMass Medical School CIP program partnered with Genesis Club of Worcester, the restaurant Roots in Leominster, and Jennifer Parker, a UMass Memorial Medical Center clinical dietician, to organize a cooking demonstration for members of Genesis Club. The theme of the night was to prepare a budget-friendly meal using minimal cookware, so participants would be able to re-create it on their own.

The event was a huge success! Members of Genesis Club signed up to attend the event beforehand, and all 20 spots were quickly filled. The event began with an educational nutritional overview given by Jennifer, and the clients were immediately engaged. They asked insightful questions that showed they truly wanted to know more about the foods they frequently consumed such as - "I've heard that sugar is bad for you. Do I need to eliminate sugar from my diet completely?" and "Does peanut butter have good or bad fats?".

Next, Chef Kevin from Roots began the cooking demonstration. The meal was roasted chicken with root vegetables, wilted greens, and homemade honey mustard, barbecue, and pesto sauce. He modeled every part of the meal, including how to break down an entire chicken and how to slice up the different root vegetables. Purchasing a whole chicken and break it down yourself is vastly cheaper than buying pre-sliced chicken breasts and provided participants with a slick price saving tip and the skills to use them.

When it was time for the clients to prepare the meal, one group each was responsible for preparing the chicken, root vegetables, barbecue sauce, and honey mustard. They were supervised by Roots staff members but worked independently and diligently, still leaving space to fill the room with cheerful conversation and enthusiasm!

The meal was not only fun to prepare, but delicious to eat as well! All of the clients and staff members served themselves full, balanced plates of food, and the chicken and root vegetables quickly disappeared. It was clear that the clients were proud of their culinary work and were grateful to have this informative hands-on experience.



## PAPERS IN PRESS

The UMass Psychotic Disorders Program includes many dedicated faculty, staff members, and trainees of all levels. In particular, more than 10 UMass medical students are involved in various academic projects with us. Thanks for the contribution from each of you. Listed below are a list of papers accepted for publication in the past 6 months. Congratulations!

1. Chiang M, Reid-Varley WB, Fan X. Creative art therapy for mental illness. *Psychiatry Research*, in press.
2. Zhuo K, Tang Y, Song Z, Wang Y, Wang J, Qian Z, Li H, Mei L, Zhu D, Xiang Q, Chen T, Yang Z, Xu Y, Fan X, Wang J, Liu D. Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation as an adjunctive treatment for negative symptoms and cognitive impairment in patients with schizophrenia: a randomized, double-blind, sham-controlled trial. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*, in press.
3. Liu Y, Zhao J, Fan X, Guo W. Dysfunction in serotonergic and noradrenergic systems and somatic symptoms in psychiatric disorders. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, in press.
4. Robertson I, Cheung A, Fan X. Insomnia in patients with schizophrenia: current understanding and treatment options. *Progress in Neuropsychopharmacology and Biological Psychiatry*, in press.
5. Wu C, Chiang M, Fusaro-Davis M, Cimpeanu C, Harrington A, Fan X. Lifestyle education for patients with severe mental illness during their psychiatric inpatient stay. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, in press.
6. Fan X, Copeland P, Shukair N, Harrington A, Freudenreich O, Goff DC, Henderson DC. Adjunctive telmisartan treatment on body metabolism in clozapine or olanzapine treated patients with schizophrenia: a randomized, double blind, placebo-controlled trial. *Psychopharmacology*, in press.
7. Brown HE, Freudenreich O, Fan X, Heard S, Goff DC, Petrides G, Harrington A, Kane JM, Judge H, Hoepfner B, Fava M, Perlis RH. Intravenous sodium nitroprusside treatment for outpatients with schizophrenia: a randomized clinical trial. *JAMA Psychiatry*, in press.