

THE NETWORK NEWS

2021 2nd Quarter Edition

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OUR MISSION

To create a climate in Virginia where peers are empowered to understand and find their own recovery through programs that achieve:

personal transformation

community transformation

systems transformation

The Network News is published six times per year by the

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Greetings, members and friends!

The VOCAL staff wishes to thank all those who attended our annual conference “Survive, Strive, Thrive”, which was held virtually over two days on May 18 and 19. The average attendance was about 90 participants per day, and those who wished to apply and receive CEUs were able to.

Our keynote speaker was Lisa Hamp, who, barricaded with other students in a classroom, survived the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007. As a result, Lisa developed PTSD and an eating disorder. Lisa spoke candidly about her struggles, and how she has managed to overcome the obstacles and challenges she once faced. In addition to her storytelling, she helped the audience identify ways they could create a mental health and wellness plan for themselves, based on their unique needs and interests.

Additionally, there were 5 workshops including: “Surviving Treatment and the Path to Recovery” with Jennifer Spangler; “Effective Interactions with EMS” with Wendy Bundy, “Conflict Resolution 101: Tips, Secrets, and Inside Information” with Lawrie Parker, “Stories of Recovery” by Lynda Clarke from SAARA, and “Advance Directives” with the disAbility Law Center of Virginia (dLVCV). All of these offered different perspectives on “surviving, striving, and thriving” with one’s mental health challenges, and were very well received by the audience. Some comments VOCAL received through our conference feedback form were: “keynote address was excellent!”, “great, innovative, presentations”, “variety was excellent”, “I was so open-eared to their stories and information. I could personally relate”. We are so very grateful to each and every one of our presenters!

Our overall conference feedback was positive, but several attendees expressed that a conference that met virtually just didn’t feel the same as our in-person events because of the limited chance to socialize and make new friends! Our staff and Board of Directors heartily agree, and we are hopeful that we will be together again in person for 2022!

Here’s to new possibilities in the coming months! Happy Summer!

Elizabeth Bouldin-Clopton
Yolande Long

From Jerry Higginson President, VOCAL Board of Directors

Dear VOCAL Membership:

Following a very successful Annual Conference last month, we have some important announcements for you.

First, I would like to thank Deidre Johnson for many years of service to VOCAL and to peers throughout Virginia. Her last day as Executive Director was June 4, 2021. We wish her well in her future endeavors.

Heather Orrock was appointed Acting Executive Director by the Executive Committee on June 7, 2021.

I also wish to thank Megan Sharkey for excellent work as the REACH Program Director, as Megan's last day with VOCAL was June 8, 2021.

As the VOCAL Board of Directors conducts the search for a new Executive Director, we want to be clear that the organization is working diligently to continue to provide the excellent leadership, advocacy, training, and information that VOCAL is known for. It is our firm commitment to peer recovery and systems transformation that has carried us through one of the toughest years in our history, and it will guide us into the future. As Virginia's only statewide mental health organization that is 100% peer run, we will continue to exemplify the ability of all of us to persevere and govern ourselves in our work.

For all those who have experienced great loss last year, we stand with you as you recover and support you in your efforts to build a stronger life.

I am wishing us all well as we enter this next chapter.

A Letter from Megan Sharkey

VOCAL friends,

I am writing to you all to share the news of my resignation from VOCAL staff, as of Tuesday, June 8, 2021. I was first hired in 2017 as the REACH Program Coordinator and I will "hang up my hat" as the REACH Program Director.

This decision was not an easy one to come to, as I remain invested in the organization's mission, my colleagues, and all of the incredible VOCAL members that I have had the opportunity to build community with. With that said, I have come to recognize that taking a step back from the behavioral health field is the best decision for me, professionally and personally, at this time.

I am grateful to each individual I have crossed paths with and for all the opportunities that working with VOCAL has provided me. I will continue to cheer on all the work of Virginia's Recovery Community from the sidelines as a fellow VOCAL member.

I am wishing you all wellness and joy.

VOCAL Office Update

As of July 1, 2021, VOCAL will move to a virtual office space. This is for mail delivery and for meetings by appointment only. Our telephone number and email addresses remain the same.

The new address is:
7400 Beaufont Springs Drive
Suite 300
Richmond, Virginia 23225

Staff emails:
Heather Orrock: heather@vocalvirginia.org
Nicole Bridges: nicole@vocalvirginia.org
Elizabeth Bouldin-Clopton:
Elizabeth@vocalvirginia.org
Yolande Long: Yolande@vocalvirginia.org

Upcoming Events

Region 4 Speaker Jam Series Recorded

Find the "I Have a Story" recording at: [Region 4 – YouTube](#). Hear Megan Sharkey’s story about 23 minutes into the recording.

Robin’s Hope Open House and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony – New Address!

June 28
 4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.
 9513 Hull Street Road
 N. Chesterfield, 23236
 804-608-9389

On Our Own of Charlottesville Hosts Annual Member Meeting and Picnic

July 5
 Washington Park (shelter near intersection of Preston and 10th Street NW)
 3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.
 Bring your smiles and lawn chairs! On Our Own will provide the joy, food, and beverages. There will be voting on new Board members as well.

From Where I Sit: Creative Offerings from Members and Friends

Audi's Linda

by Ann Catherine Braxton, Hampton

I have a friend named Linda
 And she thinks that she has me
 She's quick with a hug and a treat
 As true as a pal can be
 Today's a special day
 She turns another page
 My Linda is an angel
 With the wisdom of a sage
 Right now I know she needs me
 Because she's on the mend
 My four legs follow her walker
 I really love my friend.

Come, Summer Rain

by Ann Catherine Braxton, Hampton

The willows are dry and parched
 The pets and their owners feel the heat
 But there's relief in a summer storm
 Come, summer rain!
 Come in huge torrents
 Huge bursts, huge pell-mells
 The clouds are filled with comfort
 The flora drinks to grown green and ripe
 How I have longed for a rainy summer day!
 And as the steam twirls up from the paved streets
 It points to the biggest rainbow
 Come again, summer rain.

From the Newsletter Editor

The deadline the next issue of the “Network News” is August 27. Send in submissions via email to [Yolande Long at yolande@vocalvirginia.org](mailto:yolande@vocalvirginia.org), or by postal mail to: 7400 Beaufont Springs Drive, Suite 300, Richmond, Virginia 23225.