

Hearts & Ears Incorporated

A Wellness & Recovery Center for LGBTQIA+ people who are consumers of mental health and/or addiction recovery services.

The Wellness Gazette

September/October 2017

Volume 1: Issue 3

From The Director's Desk by Mary C.

Welcome to Fall, my favorite time of the year! The leaves changing colors and the crisp air inspires fresh ideas and new beginnings. We have much to look forward to in the coming months. September is Recovery Month and it has led to some great conversations about the many ways we define recovery.

We have our annual Halloween Party October 28th from 6pm to 9pm. There will be plenty of good food and music. Come in costume for a chance to win a prize! Looking forward, we have our "day before" Thanksgiving dinner. This year we are planning a very special event! Stay tuned for details.

I hope everyone has a chance to come in and try some of our new groups and meet some new members. Fall is a great time to try something new!

Mary Chirico, Executive Director



Celebrate Bi Visibility Day by Eryn A.



The word of the day is "Bi" and many bi people get so much flack for just being who they are. This should stop. Don't hate, celebrate! Celebrate Bi Visibility Day on September 23rd of each year. According to bivisibilityday.com, people have embraced Bi Visibility Day since the year 1999.

However, some people still think bi people are greedy. To that, I say don't judge them on their expansive capacity to love.

Some people say that bi people oversexualize everything. To that, I say bisexual people are no more or less sexual than other sexual orientations. Everyone is human so let's not be so literal. Some people say that bi people are always unfaithful. To that, I say bisexual people are no more or less unfaithful than other sexual orientations.

"Don't judge them on their expansive capacity to love."

Some people condescendingly throw the phrase "hearts not parts" in bi people's faces to discount their identity. To that, I say try not to despise and discount people off based on how they love. Heck! That would be like this wild idea that heterosexual people hating and invalidating gay people based on their identity.

Some people say that bi people's very existence automatically reinforces the gender binary. To that, I say every bi person will define their bisexuality differently. The gender binary is a system of believing in only male and female genders (even though there is more than one gender). Some bi people appreciate the notion of dismantling the gender binary and have defined their attractions beyond male and female genders. For example, some bi people define bisexuality as being attracted to genders that are like and unlike their own. I wouldn't dare say there are no bi people that reinforce the gender binary. There are jerks out there who choose to disregard the fact that people don't identify as male or female, but don't be a jerk yourself. Don't overgeneralize.

Instead, hug your nearest bi person with their permission and say to them "I appreciate you". Celebrate visible bi people (who aren't jerks). Uplift nonvisible bi people who can not be visible for varying reasons (and who aren't jerks).

Haha. Joking. (So serious.)

Follow us on Facebook at
www.facebook.com/heartsandears
today!



Poetry & Fun

The Fabrics of the World by Christina M.

Her nimble fingers continued their journey across the fabric.
Inward and outward the thread traversed across various colors.
She joined the fabrics in a simplistic pattern that captured the eye.
A quilt of varying fabric types and contrasting colors
Something seemingly impossible to put together as one
She carefully and lovingly stitched with strong yet yielding thread.
The completed work, she stretched out thoughtfully
And mused aloud to herself,
“If only the world was as simple as a quilt.”



Jokes of The Day

I tried to catch some Fog. I mist.

I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. I just can't put it down.

I did a theatrical performance about puns. It was a play on words.

What does a clock do when it's hungry? It goes back for seconds!



Member of the Month: Laura P.
by Eryn A.

Hi, my name is Eryn and the member of the month for this edition's newsletter is Laura P.

Tell the readers a bit about your interest in Hearts & Ears. Why were you first interested in Hearts & Ears? And, when did you get involved?

I came here in October of last year and I was looking for a support group. It became more than a support group, it became family. The more that I came the more that I want to be here because it is a safe place. It helps me with my transition. I wanted to give back to the LGBTQIA community so I ask to volunteer here which I love. I have been volunteering for more than 3 months.

It's been so long since you've been with us.

It seems like it's been longer but I guess everybody got so familiar with me that I fell into a groove. It's more than a support group. Like many people who come here, I have mental health issues. I have depression. It's a very positive place to have help at if you have a mental illness or a mental difficulty. They're very supportive. The peer specialists are great, the director is awesome. Mostly everyone that comes here I consider my friend. I have more friends here than I have ever had in my whole life. I'm trans female, glad to be so, and proud. I'm looking forward to my transition. Hopefully I can be more help to the wellness and recovery center down the road.

How are you currently involved with Hearts & Ears? What would you like to do with Hearts & Ears in the future?

Right now I am a receptionist, one of several. I enjoy contact with the people and groups that come here most of which I know on a first name basis. I feel comfortable answering the phone. I also feel comfortable directing phone calls and messages. It makes me more confident in my abilities in this volunteer position. Hopefully, down the road I would love to be a peer specialist or assist peer specialists.

How would you define success in recovery?

First of all, you have to understand the basics of the illness and you have to recognize it in yourself. You need

to know when you need help, where to go if you need that help, and who to express yourself with.

What are some coping skills you use that you find helpful in your recovery?

My number one coping skill is music. I use that to help me with my moods. It helps me to be more positive and more happy. It'll put me in a good mood. There will still be times when the depression will be there but it'll take the edge off when it comes to me. Other people meditate, pray, read, or express themselves which I know a couple of people who do that very well.

What has surprised you most about working with Hearts & Ears?

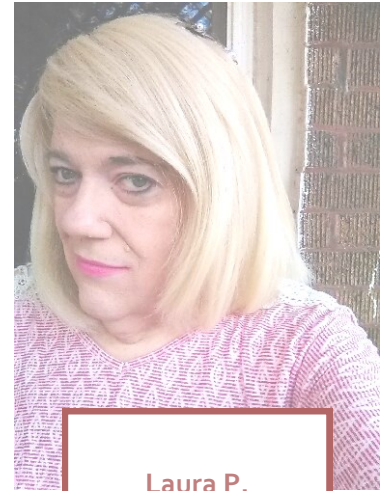
Comradery. I see a closeness. They treat everyone equally. They treat everyone as family and support. As far as I'm concerned, there's no better place to come to if you need help. It's a very cool place.

Do you have any hopes for Hearts & Ears to do in the future?

What I see is an organization that knows what it wants, where it's going to. They have a plan have a plan of what they want to be. I see them expanding in the future. I do see a bigger place in the future. I see more than just a place but an expansion of services. I really see a positive future for this organization.

Anything else you would like to share?

It's an awesome place and I'm proud to be a part of it. It makes a big difference in my life and I've seen that it makes a big difference in other lives.



Laura P.

Home For Hope, A Model for Baltimore

By Laura H.

Homelessness and being housing insecure is a huge problem for our members at Hearts & Ears. I spoke with Mary Chirico and she stated that 30-40% of our member population are homeless or housing insecure. We give information and resources to people but the feedback we get coming from them is that the shelters and housing options in Baltimore are not very welcoming. We have had members physically assaulted due to their gender identity or sexual orientation. There are no specific housing options for the LGBTQIA community in Baltimore. Finding a safe shelter is difficult.

I happened upon an article from the Voice, a Philadelphia LGBT newspaper. I lived in Philadelphia. I raised my son there. I came out of the closet there. Philly is a happening place for us. I used to go 3-4 gay Alcoholic Anonymous meeting. There's a place called William Way Center which has multiple activities happening daily for LGBT people. When I lived in Philly, I felt a huge sense of community cohesiveness no matter which letter LGBTQIA alphabet soup you are. In Baltimore, I don't feel the spirit and my belief is that we need to find that spirit to survive. Let me tell you about this shelter in Philly called Home For Hope.

The residents can range in age from 19 to 67 years old. They say that it seems more like a college dorm than a shelter. They live there like family. It is in north Philadelphia which isn't the greatest neighborhood, but it's where it is needed. It is a 120-year-old graystone type of house and a former rectory. Northstar Manor Incorporated states its market value is \$500,000. And, it was purchased for half the price. It has four floors and 37 residents. It employs 7 staff members. They consider it an actual home. Residents have chores and they have to be in recovery. There is a \$10,000 monthly operating cost. At one point, they used a GoFundMe and raised \$45,000. They have also have done other fundraising. For example, they had a silent auction and separately raised money at a raffle at a bar. Of

*"There are no specific housing options for the LGBTQIA community in Baltimore.
Finding a safe shelter is difficult."*

I feel passionately about my family which is LGBTQIA people in Baltimore. I know we can do as well or better than Philly. The staff and some peer support of Hearts & Ears have tentative plans to visit the shelter soon. I have also reached out to the founder and the executive director of Home For Hope. I'll be writing a follow-up article and I will let you know what I have found out. In the meantime, I will be talking to as many people as possible around town to find a way to emulate what has been done in Philly.

Hearts & Ears Trip to the Maryland State Fair

by Ken J.



On Friday, September 1st, many of our members took a trip to the Maryland State Fair. Although the weather was a little chilly and cloudy, the day was enjoyed by all.

There was a visit to see the baby farm animals, a trip to the cow palace, a stop to see the 4-H crafts and produce,

and a definite trip to the food vendors. A few games were also played and prizes were won, and a few free souvenirs were also collected to take home.

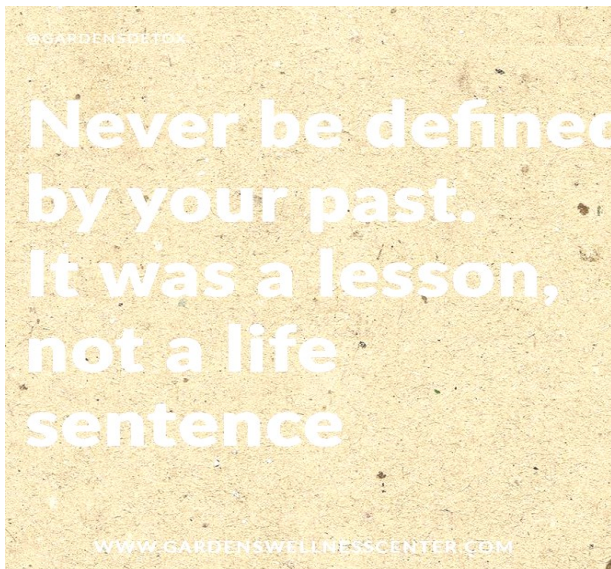
Reflecting on the Black Trans Advocacy (BTAC) Regional Conference 2017

Black Trans Advocacy hosted their annual Baltimore/DC Regional conference on Saturday, August 19th at the Raddison Hotel Baltimore. There were various workshops held, vendors providing information, and a day of networking and support. Some of the topics discussed focused on trans-masculinity, safe sex and consent, support of allies, telling our story, and other subjects. There were many folks in attendance including our own Mr. Jiretsu. After the conference, many attendees gathered at the hotel pool for an after hours social event.

Affirmation

*"I DEEPLY AND
COMPLETELY
ACCEPT MYSELF"*

Positivity From Across The Globe



**Life is
tough,
my darling,
but so
are you.**

-Stephanie Bennett Henry-

Back To School DIY Mental Wellness Care Package by Eryn A.

College can be stressful and difficult at times. It is important to be emotionally healthy along the way. Enter the Back-To-School Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Mental Wellness Care Package. This kit is a care package, a self-care package rather, of items for engaging you in activities to help keep you calm and collected. While no amount or type of coping skills will ever substitute the care and guidance of a mental health professional, using your (DIY) mental wellness care package might make tension, anxiousness, and other stress-related woes more manageable. Here are five items to think about adding to your DIY wellness care package.

- 1. Adult coloring books and coloring pencils.** Get your favorite theme whether it be animals, abstract art, or even superheroes.
- 2. Gratitude Journals.** There's research that shows the importance of expressing gratitude which yields positive results for people's mental wellbeing. To start a gratitude journal, get a journal notebook and write 3 to 5 things you are thankful for. Get that same journal on the next day and write 3 to 5 more things you are thankful for. Continue that process daily. If you are having trouble starting a gratitude journal, look up tips on the Internet for creating a gratitude journal.
- 3. Write on 5-10 index cards with a positive mental health affirmation on each card.** For example, "Be gentle with yourself" can be on one index card. Later, read an index card for inspiration.
- 4. A calming reading book or a book of jokes.**
- 5. A small notepad to draw or doodle in.**

Bonus item! Something to occupy your hands with like a bead bracelet for counting beads or the right resistance of TheraPutty to knead. Or, if you knit or crochet add it to your kit.

Put all the previously mentioned things in a book bag, purse, or briefcase to carry around with you for breaks between classes and other downtimes. Ta-dah! You have your very own self-care package. Remember that your self-care package can be used when stressed or not stressed. To reiterate, no amount or type of coping skills will ever substitute the care and guidance of a mental health professional. Your mental health matters! Have a great school year!



Community News

Baltimore Black Pride is coming up in October and it is hosted by **The Center for Black Equity - Baltimore**. Save the dates! Baltimore Black Pride kicks off with *Baltimore Black Pride Week* on October 3rd through October 9th. Since Baltimore Black Pride's motto is "we embrace and celebrate our blackness everyday", it only makes sense for their team to plan over 10 events all month long in the line-up for Baltimore Black Pride.

One of several events is the *15th Annual Birthday Party for Baltimore Black Pride* will be on October 11th from 6pm to 8pm and held in the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center of Baltimore and Central Maryland (GLCCB) located at 2530 N. Charles St, 3rd Fl, Baltimore, Maryland 21218. Come out connect, create community and celebrate 15 years of enhancing the lives of LGBT people of color, with pride, in conjunction with National Coming Out Day. Delegate Mary Washington and others will be sharing their "Coming Out" stories. Downtown Kevin Brown of Nancy an honorary will be catering this event. (Lite refreshments will be served.)

The Center for Black Equity - Baltimore (CBE-B), an international Black LGBT organization, advocates and provides network services for Black Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people and their allies in the Baltimore Metropolitan Area.

CBE-B's vision is to eradicate social inequality of Black LGBT persons.

CBE-B's mission is to improve the well-being and quality life of Black LGBT individuals and their allies by setting the standard of excellence in the Black LGBT community through health and wellness, spiritual and economic empowerment, social justice and coalition building.

Be sure to like and follow The Center for Black Equity Baltimore and Baltimore Black Pride on all their social media outlets to get all the latest updates.

Website: <http://centerforblackequity.org/baltimore/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/centerforblackequitybaltimore/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Cntr4BlkEquityB>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BmoreBlackpride>



Community News

Get SMART with iCHAT

Group description: The purpose of the *Get SMART with iCHAT (Integrated Community Health Approaches to Transformation) Project* is to engage African-American MSM and LGBTQ emerging adults (18 to 24 years old), in an integrated substance abuse, Hepatitis C, and HIV prevention program to prevent and reduce the incidence of such conditions in these minority sub-populations. These African-American emerging adult groups (MSM, LGBT, QPOC) have been documented to be at high-risk for HCV, HIV, alcohol and substance abuse.

The overall goal is to increase access to educational and clinical preventive services among LGBTQ young adults within the minority serving institution (MSI) and the key community statistical areas (CSAs) around the MSI. This will be made possible with a collaborative partnership between Morgan State University (MSU), the MSI, and two partnering community-based organizations (CBOs) that have a long history in the community and provide clinical and educational services to youth and young adult populations particularly among those personally identifying as sexual minorities.

Feel free to call our office at 443-885-3566 to speak to a member of the team and learn more about programs.

www.getsmartichat.com Come tell us a story about you!



Community News

Guys Group

Hosted by Your Trans Care, a program of STAR TRACK Adolescent Health at the University of Maryland and by Black Transmen Inc., *Guys Group* is a social and support group for transgender dudes and trans masculine folx (12-26 years old) to discuss issues, ideas, and experiences in a safe space. Starts September 25th, 2017 and will continue every 4th Monday of the month. From 6:30PM to 8:30PM @ 120 Penn Street, Baltimore, MD 21201.

Black Transmen, Inc sponsors a new equality movement, empowerment and admiration of African American transmen living life in spite of societal and/or traditional expectations of gender identity...

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

Your Trans Care is a specialty program at STAR TRACK Adolescent health at University of Maryland for transgender and non-binary folx ages 12-24 looking for excellent health care.

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

www.startrackhealth.org

Girl Talk

Hosted by Your Trans Care, a program of STAR TRACK Adolescent Health at the University of Maryland, *Girl Talk* is a chill session for transgender women and trans feminine individuals to discuss issues, ideas, and experiences in a safe space.

Food will be provided.

Your Trans Care is a specialty program at STAR TRACK Adolescent health at University of Maryland for transgender and non-binary folx ages 12-24 looking for excellent health care.

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

www.startrackhealth.org



Contribute To The Center

As a small 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, Hearts & Ears, Inc. often finds itself in the situation of having to do very much with very little.

You can help give back to the community and help us fulfill our mission of serving our predominantly low-income member population in a number of different ways.

- YOUR TIME

Whether it is pitching in by running a group, teaching a class or just lending your time you can make a major impact and give someone a much-needed helping hand.

- SUNDRIES OR MATERIALS

If you have clothes or a pantry of canned food items you can spare, your gift could provide the assistance someone so desperately needs it.

- MONETARY GIFTS

Even a small amount can make a huge difference in someone's life.

If you would be interested in contributing to the Hearts & Ears mission in any of these ways please contact us by phone at (410) 523-1694 or by emailing info@heartsandears.org.

For more information on how to contribute to the center, please visit www.heartsandears.org

Do you like to Line Dance or want to learn?

Come out to Hearts & Ears for After Hours Line Dancing

Come out to Hearts & Ears for After Hours Line Dancing

Learn to do different dances



Exercise while dancing



Most of all..... Have Fun!!

Every Thursday 6p – 8p

611 Park Avenue, Suite A

H&E Members – Free Non-Members - \$5 Donation

For more information, Contact Ken 410-523-1695

Hearts & Ears

Group & Event Schedule

September-December 2017

| | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------------------|--|--|---|--|
| 1 st Wk | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 2-3:30p Art Therapy /Creative Writing | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 2-4p Ali's iChat | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 2-3p Meditation w/ Laura 3-5p Smoovies N' Movies 4-6 Sistas of the T | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 3-5p Support In Transition |
| 2 nd Wk | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 2-3:30p Art Therapy /Creative Writing | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 2-3p Current Events | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 2-3p Meditation w/ Laura 3-5p Game Time 4-6 Sistas of the T | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 2-3 Exercise w/Rema Dee 3-5p Support In Transition 3-5p SOFFA Group |
| 3 rd Wk | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 2-3:30p Art Therapy /Creative Writing | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 2-4p Ali's iChat | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 2-3p Meditation w/ Laura 3-5p Smoovies N' Movies 4-6 Sistas of the T | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 3-5p Support In Transition |
| 4 th Wk | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 2-3:30p Art Therapy /Creative Writing | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 2-3p Current Events | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 2-3p Meditation w/ Laura 3-5p Game Time 4-6 Sistas of the T | 12-1p Wellness Check-in 2-3 Exercise w/Rema Dee 3-5p Support In Transition 3-5p SOFFA Group |

Hearts & Ears is open **Wednesday – Saturday 10a – 6p**. The center is closed Sunday-Tuesday (this does not include after- hours events). We are also closed on major holidays (i.e. Thanksgiving, Christmas, & New Years). For more information, call 410-523-1694.

Hearts & Ears

After Schedule

September-December 2017

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|-----------------------|--------|---|-----------|--|--------|----------|
| 1 st Wk | | | | 6-8p Line Danc- ing H&E Members – Free, Non-Members \$5 Donation | | |
| 2 nd Wk | | | | 6-8p Line Danc- ing H&E Members – Free, Non- Members \$5 Do- nation | | |
| 3 rd Wk | | 7:30-9p Akanni (Black Transmen Inc) | | 6-8p Line Danc- ing H&E Members – Free, Non- Members \$5 Do- nation | | |
| 4 th Wk | | | | 6-8p Line Danc- ing H&E Members – Free, Non- Members \$5 Do- nation | | |

Hearts & Ears, Inc.

Hearts & Ears, Incorporated offers peer support for mental health consumers in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, inter-sex and asexual community. Activities, groups, educational forums are geared towards specific needs of GLBTQIA+ consumers.

We're There For You

At Hearts & Ears Inc., we believe recovery is very much possible through hope, personal responsibility, education, advocacy, and support. Not only do we offer resources but we also offer support in a friendly and inviting environment sensitive to the issues concerning the LGBTQIA community. At Hearts & Ears, members can meet new people, share their experiences with others who understand, regain a sense of involvement and belonging in the community and have the opportunity to build a healthy support network with others.

Hearts and Ears Inc. hopes to offer referrals to resources that will range from information on LGBTQIA friendly doctors, therapists, transgender transitioning, housing, food and clothing assistance, medication management and illness education. We also hope to foster a whole host of other information that will aid individuals to make well informed decisions on the road to recovery.

Hearts & Ears, Inc.
611 Park Avenue,
"Suite A"
Baltimore, MD 21201

Website: www.heartsandears.org
Phone: 410-523-1694
E-mail: info@heartsandears.org
[Facebook.com/HeartsAndEars](https://www.facebook.com/HeartsAndEars)

The Center is open on
**Wednesday through Saturday
10am-6pm.** We are closed on
Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays.