

# HEARTS & EARS, INCORPORATED

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

## THE *Wellness* GAZETTE

July/August 2017

Volume 1: Issue 2

### From The Director's Desk by Mary C.

Happy Minority Mental Health Month and happy summer! Here at the Center we have been very busy. At the beginning of June, we attended the On Our Own of Maryland summer conference in Ocean City. We took members who had never been before and it was fun to see it through their eyes the excitement of being in a hotel with hundreds of people who have similar experiences. The workshops seemed especially informative. We walked on a beach in Ocean City. We also made a stop in Rehoboth on the way home and walked the boardwalk. Special thanks to Vanessa and Jenn for all they did, and to the people who donated money for our trip!

One week later we celebrated Baltimore Pride. Ken and our awesome volunteers did an amazing job on Sunday at the park. They were able to speak to so many new people and invite them to Hearts and Ears! Again special thanks to our board members Vanessa and Jill and honorary member Jenn!

Coming up this month we will have a movie trip (details to be announced soon). In August, we will be going back to the State Fair which was a blast last year! More special events will be announced soon.

Enjoy the summer and stay cool!

*Mary Chirico, Executive Director*

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## On Our Own of Maryland Conference in Ocean City by Laura P.



This was my first time going to the conference in Ocean City and this with my experiences. The hotel was fabulous and the service was nice they were very gender friendly and call me by my proper pronouns. My roommate was nice.

There were a lot of workshops on mental health that I enjoyed. They had a lot of workshops with information that we could use. There were many different people of many different backgrounds that attended. We sat at the table for Hearts & Ears. I got a lot of information from organizations that were there and I learned a lot from what I saw.

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*“All in all, it was a very fun trip.”*

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The dinner was very good and they also had a dance party at the end of the night. They had a very beautiful view from where we ate. Then, we took a walk across the street and went to a souvenir shop we got a few things from the souvenir shops. They also had breakfast in the morning for us.

After we left the Ocean City conference, we went to Rehoboth Beach where we walked on the Rehoboth Beach boardwalk. We had pizza and fun. I want to thank Hearts & Ears for being patient with me while we were on the trip. All in all, it was a very fun trip. Thanks again.



### Positive Thought

**From the  
Dalai Lama:**

**Your  
enlightenment  
rests on your  
own shoulders.**

### Community Resource Series by Ken J.

**Coming soon!** Follow us on Facebook  
at [www.facebook.com/heartsandears](http://www.facebook.com/heartsandears)

for more updates the  
Community Resource Series.



## Member of the Month: Jawan S.

by Eryn A.

**Hi, my name is Eryn and the member of the month for this edition's newsletter is Jawan S.**

**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?**

*Well, I was at a hospital. When I first came to that hospital, I was not fully out. I was out the closet but I didn't hang around people who are gay like me and have mental health issues. I mostly was by myself. So, I would go to day programs like Prologue and other programs like day programs at caretakers' homes with a bunch of straight people. So, I didn't feel comfortable going to those programs. I asked a guy, "Is there a program I can go to with gay people who deal with mental health issues?" I remember the black and white pamphlet that they gave me. And, I was like "Oh, god! Whoever did the marketing pamphlet did a horrible job! This pamphlet is horrible!" (Jawan laughs.) I got out of the hospital and I automatically went to Hearts & Ears the next day. The first people I met there was the [director at the time and a member]. I met a couple of other people there. The first time I walked in it was weird because I never seen out and open [LGBT] people or have mental health issues that were gay and lesbian people. I was like "Okay? This is a little bit strange." I was there for [about] a year and the director came to me. She asked me one day, "Do you want to be on the Board?" I said, "I don't know anything about being on the Board." She said, "I think you would make a good Board Member." I was like, "I don't know anything about being on the Board." She was like, "I think you should be on the Board." So, that's how I got introduced to Hearts & Ears.*

**Cool. So, you talked a little bit about being on the Board in the past. How else have you been involved with Hearts & Ears in the past? How are you currently involved with Hearts & Ears?**

*One of the things I first started doing before I got on the Board was doing receptionist work and answering the phones. It was kind of scary for me because I don't do well with answering phones. But, I learned because I was in receptionist class from my old day program. They taught us how to answer the phones. So that is where I'm most comfortable at and now I do the same thing. I answer*

*phones, I help take out the trash, and I help with the members. One of the things I got interested in was being [in peer support]. It was [someone in peer support] who introduced me to that... He called me one day and said that [I was] signed up for LEAP, leadership empowerment training. He said that it would be good for me to go. So, I did that... and learned that people with mental health issues can still do the work of peer [support].*

**Okay. Along those lines, how would you define success in recovery?**



Jawan S.

*I tell people all the time that I spent the better part of my twenties in and out of the hospital every month. I have been a whole lot better with not being in the hospital and learning how to cope with skills than what I did in past. It used to be when I got into relationships or*

*when I got too*

*stressed out I would go to the hospital. Like everyone in the hospitals know my name. I spent two years in one hospital. I spent three years in another hospital and lived over Eastern Shore for a little while. I got my own place. That was my recovery. After a while, I lived by myself. For a while, I was in group homes [before I got my own place.] My recovery to me is getting up everyday and coming here, being able to help people out and talk to people. I know that even though I'm having a bad day I can still help somebody out... When I see somebody in need, I can't refuse. I'll set aside what I'm going through that day to help.*

## Member of the Month: Jawan S.

(Continued) by Eryn A.

**Cool! So speaking of success in recovery, what are some coping skills you use?**

*I'm a big video game person. I like video games! I do! I have a computer so I play MMOs which is Massive Multiplayer-Games Online. My favorite game to play is Final Fantasy. So they just put out the new expansion pack for Final Fantasy and I've been playing that. (Eryn laughs.) I love music! I listen to music all day. I do artwork. I have my own website with my art on it. So, I try to use the skills that I have. I learned art in a mental health hospital. There was a lady who did mandalas. She was drawing them one day and she said to come here. I said, "What is that?" She was like, "It's a mandala and you should try to draw it." I was like, "I do not know how to draw this complicated mess!" She said, "it's just a circle." So, I started out with mandalas and what I do now which is abstract art. When she left the hospital, she gave me all her markers and stuff like that. She introduced me to art.*

**What is your website?**

[www.jawanartworld.com](http://www.jawanartworld.com)

**So, let's get back into Hearts & Ears. What has surprised you most about working with Hearts & Ears?**

*It's odd how I learn from the members and the staff. I'm allowed to be my crazy self... I will just say anything out my mouth. Being here, I'm allowed to be me! Hearts & Ears has taught me to be me. I used to be ashamed of being me. And, sometimes I told Mary that I don't think I can be a peer advocate because I have too much going on. She always encourages me and says, "you can do it if you try." I never had people around who encourage me. I have a couple of people who will keep me laughing... I have people here who care who will text me and ask "are you okay or are you going through something?" So, it's like a family. It's a backwards family, but it's a family. (Both Jawan and Eryn laugh.)*

**What are your hopes and aspirations for Hearts & Ears as an organization? What do you hope that Hearts & Ears will do in the future?**

*I kind of hope that there will be more than one Hearts & Ears because this is a model that can be replicated. There are a lot of people in rural areas and around the world who don't have places like this, who suffer from mental health issues while being gay and don't have places to talk to people. I would love to see more Hearts & Ears' around the world. For me, I have a passion that I would like to see people talk to foster care kids who are gay and lesbian (who have mental health issues). We can go out and do outreach to that.*

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*"If someone's self-worth is diminished, will they even care about sexually transmitted infections, reproductive health, or other disparities in the LGBTQIA+ community?"*

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*I think one of the things that we in the gay community suffer from is that we don't talk about mental health issues and being gay at the same time. I often tell people all the time that I'm gay, I have a mental health issue, and I'm HIV-positive. It kind of changes their mindset of what a person who's gay and lesbian, who is HIV-positive, looks like. There was a time I was ashamed of just being me and the situation I'm in. People used to tell me "if you weren't such a hoe you wouldn't have got what you got." ...I think you can use your story to empower people and help other people through stuff. There have been times when I have done a one-on-one and people were like I want to hear how you get up everyday being positive, still come in, still do it, and still help out people. I tell people, "that's what I have to do." I can do one of two things. Stay at home and be mad about it. Or, do what has to be done. I rather help people than be mad about it. Mad ain't going to get me anywhere. I rather help people not go through the same thing I went through or if they do let people know that they're not alone.*

**(Certain names have been redacted to respect the confidentiality of members in the peer support network.)**



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A guy goes to a psychiatrist. "Doc, I keep having these alternating recurring dreams. First I'm a teepee; then I'm a wigwam; then I'm a teepee; then I'm a wigwam. It's driving me crazy. What's wrong with me?" The doctor replies: "It's very simple. You're two tents."

How many psychologists does it take to change a light bulb?

Just one, but the light bulb really has to want to change.

Did you hear about the  
auto mechanic  
who went to a psychiatrist and  
insisted on laying under the couch?



## Affirmation

*"I DESERVE TO BE  
HAPPY"*

## Positivity From Across The Globe

"It's okay to enjoy someone's  
presence without having a  
"label" on what you two  
"are". Let everything  
fall in place how it's  
supposed to."

— Reyna Biddy



**HEALING DOESN'T MEAN THE  
DAMAGE NEVER EXISTED.  
IT MEANS THE DAMAGE NO  
LONGER CONTROLS OUR LIVES.**



## Happy July Birthdays!!!



Ross A (not pictured), Laura H, Jawan S, and Laura P .  
Happy Birthday!!!

## Witchy Poo Wild Flower by Roxy Storm

My name is Witchy Poo Wild Flower

Coming out of a black rose pedal shower

Almost like the witch from HR Puffenstuff

So much love how I love so much

Left wing liberal woman with independence of freedom

About as liberal as the statue of liberty

No I don't do harmful evil spells, never fear

White positive magic spells to heal my love comes near

No I don't burn American flags, I don't even burn my bra and my underwear

I play distortion heavy rock music as the punk rock version of Hair

No I don't pose naked. I don't do nude

If you go against me to play my emotions like a toy I will act very, very rude

Don't do evil spells. Don't do harm. John Lennon said instant karma is going to get you. Get yourself together darling

Something you may understand about me and something you won't and can't understand about me

I'm a Goth fairy witch from darkness who see and feel the light

The light I will always feel to see

## Baltimore Pride Parade and Festival 2017

### 2017 Baltimore Pride Parade

My name is Eryn A. This Pride Parade and Pride Festival 2017 were amazing experiences for me. I have been to Pride Parades in the past as a spectator but this time I was in the parade! Unfortunately, I was not able to be in the parade with my Hearts & Ears family but I still had an awesome time regardless. I marched with a church I attend but that is not all of who I celebrated this occasion with. As I and the rest of Parade participants waited for the parade to start, we enthusiastically talked to each other while shared our resources and information. It was a grand get-together to say the least. The parade march was long but exhilarating as I shouted “Happy Pride” and “Yasss”. Besides seeing friends and family there, the highlight of the Pride March for me was getting a bisexuality pride flag from a neighboring parade participant. All in all, I thoroughly enjoyed myself and I would do it again in a heartbeat.

*“I thoroughly enjoyed myself and I would do it again in a heartbeat.”*



*Eryn A., member of Hearts & Ears*

### 2017 Baltimore Pride Festival

Hi my name is Ken J, Program Director at Hearts & Ears. On Sunday, June 18th, Hearts & Ears participated as one of the many vendors at this years' Pride Festival in Druid Hill Park. There were many vendors selling items and providing resources. The park had areas set up for children as well as adults. The SAGE area had a canopy set up with chairs for folks to keep cool out of the sun, as well as a huge timeline to place your name on representing your “coming out” in the community. The Lady Lisa Drag stage had many folks in attendance resting on blankets and enjoying the various performances. There was also an interfaith service held for members of various religious backgrounds. The weather this year was not as intense as last year, as usual we had a lot of heat and humidity, but there were slight breezes of air blowing too.

We had a large turnout of people who visited our table. Many folks had not heard of Hearts & Ears before coming to our table. Our display board was a great hit with people (especially the pictures of our mascots, Zander and Lucky) along with our giveaway bags! Kudos to everyone who came out to help us out at the booth, as well as transporting everything and everyone to the festival and back! Hopefully next year, we will participate in the parade as well as the festival!

*“Our display board was a great hit with people (especially the pictures of our mascots, Zander and Lucky) along with our giveaway bags!”*



*Members of Hearts & Ears*

## GLSEN Baltimore's LGBTQ Prom by Brandon J.



All people came together for the LGBTQ Prom and it was good this year on May 5, 2017.

Young people went to the LGBTQ Prom and they went to the Prom's Resource Fair to get free stuff.

People had fun, they talked, and they had ice cream. There was art and crafts. People went to get pictures taken.

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*"People had fun, they talked, and they had ice cream."*

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There was a dance. They were spin dropping and vogue dancing. And, there was gifts.

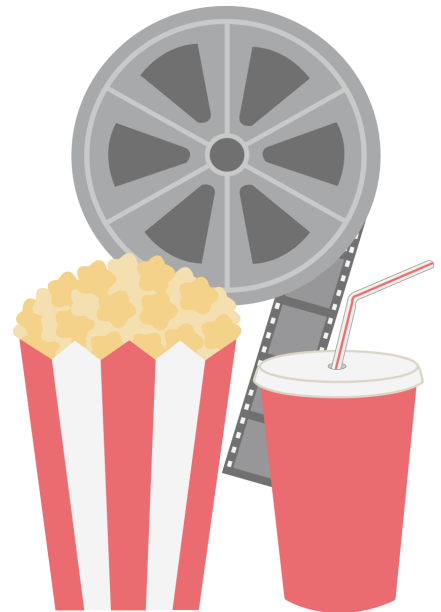
Then, they went home from the LGBTQ Prom.

## Movie Review: Chasing Amy by Eryn A.

So... There is one spoiler in this review if you have not seen the movie. I have never seen Chasing Amy before until this past weekend. As I watched the beginning of the movie, I was not really enthusiastic about the overt vulgarity in some parts. After all, the movie is R-rated.

Instead of swapping the DVD out so that I can review a different movie, I stuck with it like a trooper! The movie evolves into a film of substance to explore a plethora of issues related to heterosexism and homophobia as the a male main character pursues a queer woman named Amy. A viewer can get invested in the development of the characters because one could grow to like these characters.

Overall, I would rate the movie as having four out of five stars. If you want more details, you're just going to have to watch the movie!





### ***Congratulations to Our New Directors!***

**Congrats to Mary Chirico on her new promotion to Executive Director of Hearts & Ears!**



**Also, congrats to Ken Jiretsu on his new promotion to Program Director of Hearts & Ears!**



*We, the members of Hearts & Ears, are so happy for you both. Congrats again!*

### **Contribute To The Center**

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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](mailto:info@heartsandears.org).

For more information on how to contribute to the center, please visit [www.heartsandears.org](http://www.heartsandears.org)



## Community News

*Have you heard the news? There's a new community group for nonbinary gender people!*

*Here are the details.*

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### **Group name: Baltimore Nonbinary Gender Support Community**

#### *Group info:*

<https://www.meetup.com/Baltimore-Nonbinary-Gender-Support-Community/>

We're a Baltimore-based mutual support community for people of nonbinary gender, whatever form that nonbinary-ness takes. [Not sure what nonbinary means? See <http://gender.wikia.com/wiki/Non-binary> ] We get together every couple of weeks to share experiences. How have we -- or haven't we -- come out to friends, family, co-workers, or the public as nonbinary? Know a nonbinary-friendly therapist? Want advice or support for desegregating restrooms? How do we get people to respect our pronouns? Need a place to vent about feeling invisible? You're visible here. Let's hear each other.

#### *Next event:*

Picnic at Druid Hill Park on Saturday, July 29, from noon to 5pm

<https://www.meetup.com/Baltimore-Nonbinary-Gender-Support-Community/events/241363626/>

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If your group or organization would like to have your community news to be highlighted in our next publication, please email [info@heartsandears.org](mailto:info@heartsandears.org)

### Hearts & Ears, Incorporated

Hearts & Ears, Inc. offers peer support for mental health consumers in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex 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](http://www.heartsandears.org)

Phone: 410-523-1694

E-mail: [info@heartsandears.org](mailto: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.

#### Wednesdays

*Wellness Check-In* 12p-1p  
*Art Therapy* 2p-3:30p  
*Dual Diagnosis Group* 3:30p-4:30p

#### Thursdays

*Wellness Check-In* 12p-1p  
*Creative Expression* 1p-2p  
*\*Current Events/* 2p-3p  
*\*HIV Support*  
*Japanese Culture Group* 5p-6p

#### Fridays

*Wellness Check-In* 12p-1p  
*Relationship Group* 2p-3p  
*Smoovies n' Movies* 3p-5p

#### Saturdays

*Wellness Check-In* 12p-1p  
*\*\*SOFFA Group* 2p-3p  
*Support In Transition* 3p-5p

#### Monthly Groups/ After Hours

*Akanni (Black Transmen Inc.)*

3rd Tuesday of the month

7:30p-9p

*Beginner Japanese Class*

Every Thursday

7p-9p

**If you are interested in the "Beginner Japanese Class," please contact Mr. Ken Jiretsu at 410-523-1694 to RSVP.**

**\*The "Current Events/ HIV Support" group rotates each week**

**\*\*SOFFA is a support group for love ones of transgender and non-binary individuals**