



## Mental Health Association of Nebraska

1645 N Street, Lincoln, NE 68508

July 14, 2020

### The Year So Far

It has been a year to remember. The good, the bad, and the undefined. However, life is full of ups and downs and downs and downs and ups again. There is no set formula to the rollercoaster of emotions life throws at us. This year certainly feels more

intense—and for most of us it is a year unprecedented in any other we've experienced—yet we keep going. The techniques we build together so that each of us can intentionally pursue and regain our wellness on our off days become crucial when the world seems so unpredictable. It is okay to have fears, concerns, or any other emotion because we are not summed up by one day's emotion, one moment's reactive projection. We are summed up by who we choose to be, and sometimes that requires us to do what we have to get ourselves back on course. This MHA-NE and all who work here understand. We want you to know that you are not alone. Reach out any time of the day or night.

# 2020



•Keya #warmline (402) 261-5959

•Honu #warmline (402) 975-2032



### What MHA-NE Has Been Up To

With recent events surrounding our society, the MHA team members have worked hard to keep up with the new normal. All programs are functioning as normal while practicing the CDC and The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services' precaution measures. We joined The Lexington Assisted Living, located next to Honu

Home, to put on a 4th of July firework show for those not able to celebrate with their families due to Covid-19. The surrounding neighborhood also enjoyed the show with us. Last year, we sponsored a kickball team where staff, participants, and community members built great connections while having tons of fun! This year, we hope to do the same for softball.

We are also excited to announce that we, MHA-NE, have been awarded the Nebraska Department of Corrections Vocational Life Skills (VLS) grant for the fourth time. The VLS grant has helped us expand many of our programs and our ability to support more individuals within our community. We look forward to seeing what the next two years bring as we build towards a better future for everyone!

-Destenie Commuso & Amber Pendley

## Spotlight: Sonya

Sonya first heard about the Mental Health Association of Nebraska from a co-worker who had benefited from MHA programs. Having been through her own struggles in the past, she wanted the opportunity to give back, and started volunteering first at Keya House and then at Honu Home beginning in 2018. By August of 2019, she was working full-time and loving her time with us. Even though Sonya got the chance to advance in her career elsewhere, she just couldn't bring herself to leave MHA behind entirely - so you'll still find her working as on-call staff from time to time, doing what she loves, giving back to others.

Congrats on your new job Sonya, and we hope to keep seeing you around for years to come!



*(Click on Sonya's picture to see a brief video interview with her!)*



## A Walk Through A Life Renewed

Two decades ago, I was still a teenager. A troubled one whom landed himself in prison. The “why” is something I rarely speak of, I sometimes do not understand, and I certainly do not justify. Two decades of incarceration and I have been released from prison recently with an uncertain future.

There is a huge separation from free society when one sits inside a prison cell. At times, it feels as if the world can care less for what I do or become. Then other times, I feel like I could care less. Then there are those other times...Several years ago MHA (Mental Health Association of Nebraska) presented several educational programs within those walls. One of those programs was WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan). Through those classes I developed a personalized plan of how I would cope with bad days, recognizing both good and bad days, and how I wanted others to assist me should I fall into a crisis. That sense of empowerment, of being a voice in my own life, lead me down a path of self-education and purpose. I no longer looked at leaving prison simply as freedom from a hard environment but rather as a chance to become a member of and contribute to free society.

MHA had a place for me to stay they call the Honu House. Rather than another facility the Honu House is exactly as it sounds...a home. Within this home they had staff working every day and

night. Those staff were individuals who had gone through their own ups and downs in life and whenever I needed someone simply to talk to they were there, they did not pretend to sympathize but rather showed empathy, asking what it is that I would like to do with my life rather than stating what they felt I should do. To be one's own person is to be truly accountable in one's own life.

I lived at the Honu Home for three months. My rent was investment in my future. I was able to obtain my driver's license and other critical life documents, obtain meaningful employment with the assist of their HOPE (Higher Opportunities through the Power of Employment) program, and so many other little things I probably would have froze up over after realizing that I never experienced some of the life steps everyone else takes for granted. However, MHA was there as a partner, never doing for me, guiding me when I began to lose my way and allowing being that source I could count on.

Today, I have my own place; pay taxes; great relationships with family, friends, and my neighbors; volunteer once a week with several organizations that provide support services for the men and women of our community struggling with their own day to day wellness; and, overall, am finally part of the community. I would like to thank MHA and, most likely, many of you reading this, for the support to help me become successful in my own life. Again, from a boy who was once lost and now to a man with purpose...Thank you!

-AP

## MHA-NE

We are there to support every member of society, wherever they are at, so that each person can find their personal wellness and purpose. In this mission, we do our part to make every community safer for everyone of us. With your support we are able to obtain greater success such as with the young man above.

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