



NAMI

Cheyenne

National Alliance on Mental Illness

The Official Newsletter of NAMI Cheyenne

May-June 2008

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Calendar:

Educational Meetings

- **May 1, 7:00 PM** The Haven, Dual Diagnosis Treatment Center
- **June 5, 7:00 PM** PBS Frontline Program: *The Medicated Child*

Support Group Meetings

- **May 15, 7:00 PM**
- **June 19, 7:00 PM**

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Casa de Paz, Crisis Respite Center

Emily Smith, the coordinator for Peak Wellness Center's Crisis Stabilization Program, gave a presentation on Peak's Casa de Paz Crisis Respite Center for the March 6th educational meeting. Emily was accompanied by Jan Person, who is a psychiatric technician at Casa de Paz. The purpose of Casa de Paz is to divert seriously mentally ill individuals, who are having a psychiatric crisis or exacerbation of symptoms, from jail or the hospital to its facility. The person must be impaired enough in their life to affect their work and personal relationships. Also, the crisis must not be solely a housing crisis. The individual can refer themselves to Casa de Paz, or have their mental health professional do it.

Individuals must be over 18 years of age and willing to go to the facility. The person cannot be imminently dangerous to themselves or others. Casa will admit a person claiming to be sui-

cidal, provided the staff believes the person is not serious about a suicide attempt. Individuals cannot be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. If so, they are referred to Peak's detox facility. Potential patients also must not have medical conditions that would be better treated in the hospital or at a detox facility.

The Casa facility is a duplex on the east side of Cheyenne. It can house a maximum of 9 patients in semi-private rooms—2 to a room. The staff consists of two full time psychiatric technicians. A nurse, therapist and psychiatrist are available. Most of the staff has experienced mental health issues in their own lives. As a result, they have greater empathy with clients--listen better and are easier to talk to. There is a day room where patients can relax, watch TV, play

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CONTACT US!

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Wyoming Guardianship Corporation and Mental Health Ombudsman Program

On April 3rd Sue Mydland, the Executive Director of the Wyoming Guardianship Corporation and acting Wyoming Mental Health Ombudsman, discussed her duties and responsibilities with those entities for the educational meeting.

The Wyoming Guardianship Corporation (WGC) is a statewide 501 C3 not-for-profit corporation that has been active since 1997. The mission of WGC is to provide guardianship services and other substitute

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Casa de Paz, Crisis Respite Center Continued

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games, do crafts or engage in fitness activities. A kitchen is available with scheduled meals and snacks. Patients can cook and do chores, if they desire. Transportation is provided. Clients can have suitable visitors. Patients can leave for social occasions, for instance, dinner with family and friends. Casa de Paz likes to involve a client's family and friends. They have had support groups for patients and their families. On occasion, Casa has taken its clients to Frontier Days events and picnics at Granite Reservoir. Emily said Casa de Paz is designed to "feel like a home and be less traumatizing than the hospital". It is also a much cheaper alternative to the hospital.

Clients have their belongings searched at intake for safety and to minimize suicide risk. Belongings and medications are then locked up. Casa doesn't dispense medications, but the staff monitors how well the medications are being taken. The staff provides feedback to the client's psychiatrist, if they believe the medications are not working satisfactorily. Clients who smoke must do so outside. No alcohol or illegal drugs are allowed in the facility. Patients are not allowed to borrow from each other. Emily said they leave people alone for the first couple days, if the client desires it.

Patients can stay up to 30 days, but can leave whenever they want. Discharge planning begins on admission, with the goal of returning the client to the community as soon as

symptoms are manageable. Casa de Paz opened in May 2007. Seventy to 80 people have stayed there and only four have had to leave to go to the hospital. Services are billed to insurance. The person doesn't have to be a client of Peak beforehand. Emily said they won't let the financial aspects deter people; they will work out payments if necessary.

Casa has a receptionist during the day and an answering service at night. For calls at night, ask to talk to the on-call therapist, Emily or Casa directly. During the day Emily said she will most likely respond to a call. At night the Casa person who responds may have a policeman accompany them, one who is trained in mental health crises. The Casa de Paz staffer will give a potential client a ride to the facility. Emily said about 40 times a month they get calls to evaluate whether a person can go to Casa, or should go to the hospital. Emily can be reached at Peak Wellness Center at 637-3953.

Finally, Emily said the mental health community has a shortage of psychiatrists, therapists and money, but not of people needing help.

Family-to-Family Teacher Training will be conducted by NAMI-Wyoming in Casper from June 6-9th. For an application or more information, contact them at:

1-888-882-4968 or
307 265-2573
nami-wyo@qwest.net

"Casa de Paz is designed to feel like a home and be less traumatizing than the hospital" - Emily Smith

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Educational meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 3005 Thomes, in Cheyenne. The meetings start at 7:00 PM and typically last an hour.

On **May 1st** Mike McKee, of Peak Wellness Center, will discuss the Haven, which is a 24/7 dual diagnosis co-educational residential treatment center.

On **June 5th** the PBS Frontline program *The Medicated Child* will be viewed. The program discusses the explosion in the number of young children diagnosed with bipolar disorder and the questionable practice of prescribing anti-psychotic drugs for it, which were developed in adults-only trials.

Wyoming Guardianship Corporation and Mental Health Ombudsman Program Contd.

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decision making alternatives for incapacitated persons when no other appropriate individual is willing or capable to serve.

WGC is the named guardian for over 90 high risk adults who require this level of personal intervention. The Executive Director and case managers provide the services and oversight.

Guardians try to see their wards once a month; they are required by law to see them quarterly. Guardians are not paid and they have immunity under state law for any liability that arises from their decisions for their wards. Guardians don't own their ward's money; they only use the ward's resources for the ward's benefit. "A guardianship takes away a ward's civil rights, but can restore his or her dignity", according to Sue..

The Corporation, through the WGC-Representative Payee Program, provides conservator services, manages small trusts and/or special needs trusts, provides financial management for VA guardianships, and is the Social Security appointed representative payee for over 200 individuals who require assistance to manage their funds to assure they have food, shelter and clothing.

Also, administered under the umbrella of WGC is the Mental Health Ombudsman Program (MHOP). This program evolved as part of the settlement agreement between Chris S. et al class action lawsuit and the

State of Wyoming. The mission of MHOP is to improve the quality of life for people in need of mental health services throughout Wyoming and their families. The MHOP functions with independence, and is not subjected to undue influence by any party in the completion of its duties.

Sue is the acting Ombudsman currently, but Patty Roberts will become the Ombudsman starting in June. Patty will also be in charge of a similar outreach program for alcohol and substance abuse services.

People can contact the Ombudsman if they have questions or concerns about mental health services, and other issues such as rights, medication, financial, transportation, discrimination, and more. All calls are confidential. Call toll-free (888) 857-1942 or Cheyenne (307) 632-5519. The mailing address is: Mental Health Ombudsman Program, P.O. Box 2778, Cheyenne, WY 82003.

The newest program under the WGC umbrella is the WGC Pooled Trust. The purpose of the trust is to protect a person's Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid benefits should they receive funds that would make them ineligible for these or other public benefits.

For more information about the Wyoming Guardianship Corporation and its services, contact it at 307 634-9772, or at P.O. Box 2778, Cheyenne, WY 82003.

"A guardianship takes away a ward's civil rights, but can restore his or her dignity." - Sue Mydland

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Support group meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at the Unitarian Universalist Church. At the start of the meeting attendees break into two groups—one for family and friends, and a second one for consumers—provided there are enough attendees for each group. Support group meetings start at 7:00 PM and normally last an hour and a half.



NAMI of Cheyenne Membership Application

TYPE	COST	AMOUNT ENCLOSED
<input type="checkbox"/> Consumer/Open-door	\$ 5.00	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Family/Profession	\$35.00	_____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Please remove me from the mailing list.

Make checks payable to and return form to:

NAMI of Cheyenne
1404 West 31st Street
Cheyenne, WY 82001

Affiliate memberships expired at the end of March. Please renew your membership, if you haven't already done so.

POSTAGE

NAMI of Cheyenne
1404 West 31st Street
Cheyenne, WY 82001

NAMI-Wyoming is looking for a **Consumer Representative**. Prospective candidates should have the ability and time to travel, and be able give some presentations. If interested, submit a short resume' and statement about why you would like the position. For additional information, contact the state office:

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Casper, WY 82601
1-888-882-4968 or
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