



# THE BRIDGE

Family-centered recovery for co-occurring mental illness & substance use disorders

Fall 2008

## WestBridge values

WestBridge strives to be collaborative, person-centered and recovery-oriented. We have developed the following set of values that we want to be reflective of our relationships with our participants, families, co-workers and colleagues.

- Hope, respect, teamwork and direct communication are the core elements of our culture.
- We want everyone we interact with to experience our compassion, thoughtfulness, integrity and responsiveness.
- Everything we do is driven by a desire to develop authentic relationships.

We encourage you to let us know when we are living up to these values and when we are falling short. By working together, we can make treatment a positive, hopeful experience. ■

## Outcomes: evaluating success

Many people ask us, "What is your success rate?" The typical brief answer is, "For everyone who wants to get better, the success rate is 100 percent." Yet, this leaves out people who don't recognize that they have any problems related to substance use or mental illness, and those who recognize these issues but haven't yet decided to make changes.

One outcome WestBridge tracks is whether individuals are engaging in vocational or educational activity once they begin receiving services from our community care management teams. This indicates that

*To say "I am a student" or "I have a career" tends to promote greater self-esteem.*

an individual is moving from a need for intensive daily treatment toward a role that the individual values. To say "I am a student" or "I have a career" tends to promote greater self-esteem than to identify oneself as a patient.

Education and employment outcomes indicate a person's involvement in the greater community. In 2007 and 2008, 56 percent of all WestBridge care management participants became employed or started an educational program.

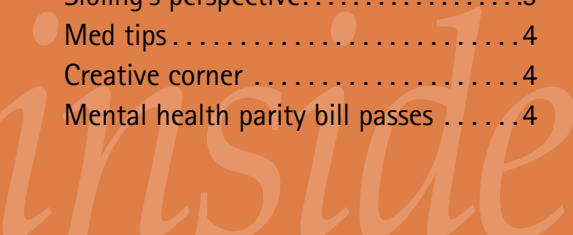
Another tracked outcome is the number of families in our Family Education and Support (FES) program, because successful completion correlates with lower re-hospitalization rates and higher treatment satisfaction. In 2006 and 2007, all families that came to WestBridge for services received at least four FES sessions.



Outcomes do not tell the whole story of a program's success, but they do reflect what is important and valued, and they give families and participants an idea of how a program might address their particular needs. Outcomes also provide us with a benchmark to evaluate our performance and help us know if our efforts are having a beneficial effect on others' lives. ■

## WESTBRIDGE COMMUNITY SERVICES

- WestBridge values ..... 1
- Outcomes: evaluating success..... 1
- Parent's perspective ..... 2
- Perfect holiday gift: 'Blues After Christmas' ..... 2
- Did you know?..... 2
- Benefits of shared decision-making ... 3
- In the news ..... 3
- Sibling's perspective..... 3
- Med tips ..... 4
- Creative corner ..... 4
- Mental health parity bill passes ..... 4



## Parent's perspective

Our son Sam's\* bipolar disease and drug addiction resulted in years of violent behavior, stealing, academic failure and repeated run-ins with the law. Following his stay at The Commons, we have seen an unbelievable change in him. He is a new young man, a person we had never met before.

WestBridge staff members have taught him skills to use when he is losing control, so he can stop the cycle. Now, he is nearly always in control. They have also improved our communication skills and helped us learn how to talk with him and deal with him, which has reduced our stress level. They have been patient in helping us figure out how to care without overstepping, because he has to do things for himself.

Sam has been sober for eight months and is very proud of this. He is living in an apartment as part of WestBridge's community care management program and is doing beautifully. He goes to WestBridge each day, handles his own medications and checks in with their nurse. He has a staff mentor that he is in contact with, and he continues to participate in dialectical behavior therapy and cognitive behavior therapy there. He also has been working successfully and is taking college courses.

WestBridge is unique. As part of the recovery process, the staff stresses physical activity, work and school, but at a pace the person is capable of. It is a warm place, more like a family. The professional yet nurturing environment has helped Sam immeasurably. I love WestBridge for what it has done for him, and for us. We are forever grateful! ■

*\*not his real name*

Enjoy an evening of recovery, joy and laughter at the second annual "Blues After Christmas" benefit show at The Derryfield School in Manchester on January 30 at 7 p.m. The event will benefit New Horizons Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry in Manchester.

## Perfect holiday gift: 'Blues After Christmas'

Noted for his storytelling, singer, songwriter and musician John McAndrew ([www.johnmcandrew.com](http://www.johnmcandrew.com)) will headline the evening. A self-described "pops/blues" artist, he has performed at the 2000 International AA Convention and National Town Hall Meeting with Colin Powell, and three of his songs are featured in the film, "Welcome Back Miss Mary," starring Olympia Dukakis and Stacy Keach. Also making a return engagement is Boston comedian Jack Lynch.

Attendees at last winter's event offered high praise:

- "It was truly a magical evening... I was laughing so hard."
- "John has been touched by an angel and I am blessed to be part of a fabulous evening!"
- "I thoroughly enjoyed the lyrics, music and storytelling of John McAndrew. It truly was a way to escape from the winter blues."

Reserve your \$25 tickets by contacting Melissa Westerman at 603.634.4446 ext. 107 or [mwesterman@westbridge.org](mailto:mwesterman@westbridge.org), or, stop by WestBridge Community Services. ■



## did you know?

The American Residential Treatment Association (ARTA) is a network of providers that share a common interest in ensuring the best services possible are available to those with a variety of treatment needs. Formed in 1992, the organization meets regularly to identify common issues and share ideas on how to improve programs. ARTA's mission is to promote mental health and dual diagnosis treatment in a residential setting.

WestBridge is proud to be an ARTA member since 2004. This is a unique provider association due to the mix of dedicated leaders that attend meetings. The 29 ARTA members provide a broad range of treatment, including long-term residential treatment, apartment-based treatment, group home and farm-based residential communities. For more information, visit [ARTAUSA.org](http://ARTAUSA.org). ■

# Benefits of shared decision-making



Most healthcare decisions involve complex tradeoffs: balancing potential positive and negative outcomes among several options, rather than choosing a single best option. Healthcare models assume that providers and consumers should collaborate in selecting among the options. Shared decision-making, a partnering with patient and families, suggests concrete steps.

*Robert Drake, MD, PhD* First, the practitioner and participant/family access the same scientific and treatment information. The parties share their areas of expertise: the participant/family knows its own history, phenomenology, values, beliefs, aspirations and preferences for care, while the practitioner has training, experience, scientific understanding and a commitment to ethical principles. Participants/families often need provider information to resolve questions, and practitioners need ways to keep up with scientific evidence. The parties then discuss options and viewpoints to arrive at a consensus. The practitioner must honor the participant/family's ethical right to autonomy and choice, and they must respect the practitioner's perspective. Finally, the parties commit to a sensible, ethical and practical plan for treatment.

Shared decision-making is improving the process of care. All are more satisfied with the information, participation, goals and decisions. Research, including work done through the West Center for Co-Occurring Disorders at Dartmouth, is studying if long-term outcomes will also be improved. ■

## Sibling's perspective

My brother Steve's\* experience at The Commons changed his life. For the first time, his life had structure and he had an official dual disorder diagnosis.

At WestBridge, everyone was calm, supportive and interested in what he wanted out of life. They asked our opinions about his strengths and weaknesses but focused on his strengths, which they helped Steve to recognize. When he showed weaknesses, the staff rallied in support of him.



Our family was deeply involved in the Family Education and Support sessions. The staff educated us on how to support an addicted mentally ill family member and helped us let go of our guilt, anger and frustration. They taught us how to care for ourselves and understand that we could give Steve support and tools, but we couldn't force him to do anything.

After one month at The Commons, he wanted to leave. We and the staff encouraged him to stay but said it was his choice. He stayed, and with support and appropriate medications that helped lift his depression, he is much better. Now at home, he gets up in the morning, is looking for a job and is attending AA and NA meetings. He has better tools for handling life. ■

*\*not his real name*

## in the news

- The WestBridge Cambridge, MA, office is moving to a brand new space/building in Medford that is more accessible to the community.
- WestBridge has partnered with the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy to have advanced placement doctoral students participate in supervised care/education of our participants in NH and MA, a phenomenal addition to our services.
- The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) NH Walks for the Mind of America walkathon was held October 5 in Concord, NH. WestBridge COO Jonathan Routhier was the walk committee chairperson and WestBridge fielded a walk team.
- Dr. Mary Brunette, Bureau of Behavioral Health Medical Director, associate professor of psychiatry at Dartmouth Medical School, is consulting with WestBridge every two weeks from our Manchester, NH, office. ■



Cindy Bolduc, PharmD intern

### Facts on herbal supplements

Herbals are natural remedies from plants and plant extracts. Using herbals may help decrease the amount of prescription medication needed and reduce the cost burden of prescriptions.

Herbals are not meant to cure or treat a medical condition but can be useful in supporting one's health. They are regulated by the DSHEA (Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act), which balances consumer access to herbals with allowing the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) to withdraw dangerous products or products with false, misleading health claims. Consumers should consult with a naturopath, herbalist or doctor before adding these

supplements to their regimen.

Herbals have been used for hundreds of years by natural and folk healers. When chosen carefully, herbal supplements

can help support the body's ability to heal. To prevent drug interactions, always consult with a doctor or pharmacist before taking any over-the-counter medications, including herbals. ■



## Creative corner

We invite our readers to share their artwork, essays, photos and poems.

*Found myself broken  
By pain within  
Afraid to go back  
To the state I was living in  
Broken and soiled  
Is my mind  
I come to find a disease  
Engrained in my DNA  
Caused me to make me  
This way  
Once I believed I was afflicted  
By my circumstance  
Now I see I'm addicted  
As a consequence of me  
I've been afflicted  
And been addicted  
Due to me*

*Lived my own mutiny inside  
Just to hide from time  
With my self  
Self-loathing and fear  
Bread blasphemy  
Until I was left broken  
And disheveled  
In a state of catatonic despair  
Through this knowledge I've  
Trickled back to reality  
Acceptance and willingness  
To know me*

Written by Brian O'Neil

Attached to the \$700 billion economic bailout package passed by Congress on October 3 was the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act. This federal legislation makes it illegal for insurance companies to exclude addictive disease disorders from insurance coverage.

This legislation becomes law on October 3, 2009, one year from its enactment, but work is still to be done. Procedures—issues of transparency, medical necessity criteria, etc.—will be written some time after the new administration

## Mental health parity bill passes

takes office. It is critical that these procedures accurately reflect the intent of the legislation.

The passage of this bill is a cause for much celebration, as addictive disease disorders are now recognized as having parity with other covered diseases in health insurance plans. WestBridge extends thanks to everyone involved in this process. ■

## comments

We welcome your comments about this issue of *The Bridge* and invite you to submit ideas for future stories.

To contact us and for more information on our services, visit

**WESTBRIDGE.ORG**

or call us at

**800.889.7871**

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