



THE BRIDGE

Family-centered treatment for mental illness & substance use disorders

Spring 2010

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. ■

Support for lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual people

by Calvin Genzel

Vice president of Clinical Services at Pastoral Counseling Services, Manchester, N.H.

Gender identity and sexual orientation are shaped at an early age and are the result of biology, genetics, and psychological and social factors. About 10 percent of the U.S. population is estimated to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). This group has an estimated 30-33 percent rate of alcoholism, about three times more than the general population.

For people who experience mental illness and substance use disorders, gender identity and sexual orientation conflicts may arise

For people who experience mental illness and substance use disorders, gender identity and sexual orientation conflicts may arise in early recovery.

in early recovery. People need to do the work of adolescence at whatever age they enter sobriety.

When a family member or friend “comes out,” offering support and acceptance is important. If you have negative thoughts, feelings or religious beliefs regarding homosexuality, these may get in the way of having a loving and supportive relationship with your LGBT family member or friend. Family

support and involvement is one of the best predictors for recovery for people who have a dual disorder, so it is crucial to get the support and help that you may need to support your LGBT family member. The best resource for learning more – for yourself or your loved one – is Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG).

PFLAG is a national support, education and advocacy organization for lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual people, their families, friends and allies. PFLAG locally and nationally supports LGBT people and their families and friends by providing PFLAG chapter help lines, support group meetings and resources. For more information, visit their website at pflag.org. ■



WESTBRIDGE

COMMUNITY SERVICES

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inside

Participant perspective

When I arrived at The Commons, I had been sober five years, but couldn't shake my depression or hold a job. I didn't have the tools to get out of my slump. The Commons changed that.

I like the community environment of participants on similar paths and staff who consider and treat our issues individually. Cognitive behavior therapy has helped me connect my thoughts, feelings and actions and face issues in a healthy manner.

One reason I chose WestBridge is the support of the transition program between residential and community living. I have earned freedoms and gained confidence. I've grown to appreciate the consistency of a healthy routine because my mind is clearer. The results are amazing.

About 10 weeks after my arrival, I am moving to my own apartment a few blocks away. With support from WestBridge staff, other participants, and people I've met in recovery groups, I feel well supported. My family has been cheering me on and is amazed at my progress.

I feel more employable now, and when I am settled and self-sufficient, I want to return to college. My achievements have given me a strong sense of gratitude. ■



College students identifying as LGBT are culturally diverse. Some came out as early as middle school; some are keeping their identities a secret. Some are political activists, while others wish to focus only on their college careers.

LGBT issues in college

by Paul Cody, PhD
UNH Counseling Center and
Social Work Department

Not all colleges are the same when it comes to LGBT issues. An LGBT high school student should look at whether sexual orientation and gender identity/expression are included in the nondiscrimination/non-harassment policy of colleges to which they apply.

That policy will not entirely prevent harassment, but provides recourse if it happens and shows the college has thought about safety for LGBT people.

A college's climate can also be determined by the presence of LGBT student organizations, Safe Zones programs, LGBT inclusion in multicultural programs, gender/queer studies programs, and faculty/staff benefits for partners in same-sex couples. Not all communities within the college may be entirely accepting and supportive of those with LGBT identities.



What is important is that, institutionally, LGBT students are supported. Finding oneself within a community, both intellectually and personally, is the most profound aspect of a successful college career. ■

did you know?

Mark Green, MD, guest host of "One Hour at a Time," talked with Petros Levounis, MD, MA, about "Valentine and Tina; Love in the Time of Crystal Methamphetamines." The show aired May 11, 2009, with an encore Feb. 22, 2010. Log on to voicemamerica.com and search the Health and Wellness Channel on Mondays to listen to past shows or listen live Mondays from 3-4 pm EST.

Dr. Levounis, director of The Addiction Institute of New York and chief of addiction psychiatry at St. Luke's and Roosevelt Hospitals in New York City, is a board-certified addiction psychiatrist, Fellow of the American Society of Addiction Medicine, and Distinguished Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association. His academic interests include the psychotherapy and psychopharmacology of addiction, gay and lesbian mental health, and behavioral addictions. ■



Petros Levounis,
MD, MA

Addictive behaviors and LGBT

President Obama proclaimed June as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month and urged all Americans to end discrimination against LGBT persons. This is significant action because discrimination can contribute to the development of mental health issues for LGBT persons. Studies have shown that LGBT people may be more prone to anxiety and depression because of the impact of discrimination, rejection and condemnation of members of this group.



When a family, school, religious organization or culture teaches that an individual is inherently flawed, disordered or perverted simply because of his or her relational attractions, that person is vulnerable to internalizing those negative messages and developing intense guilt and shame. Helping a person with same-gender attractions replace detrimental anti-gay messages with an understanding of the natural variability in human sexual orientation is an important aspect of clinical treatment.

Because LGBT individuals are often treated with disdain, rejection and exclusion, including by religious organizations and leaders, they may suffer from low self-esteem. To cope with intense emotional pain, LGBT persons may be vulnerable to addictive behaviors. Treating these behaviors with appropriate cognitive-behavioral techniques can provide relief and change. Spiritually and scientifically sensitive psychotherapy affirms that all persons, regardless of relational orientation and gender identity, are persons of worth and value. ■

Family perspective

Our son Adam* has co-occurring schizoaffective disorder and substance abuse issues and experienced frequent paranoia when he first arrived at The Commons. He has been in other programs that focused on one illness and ignored the other. He might do well for a bit but then would relapse in the area unrelated to treatment. WestBridge is different.

WestBridge counselors have worked closely with Adam to help him develop skills as he has worked on a lot of issues. Through discussions during the weekly Family Education and Support sessions and daily counseling with WestBridge staff, Adam is regaining his self-confidence. He still has some paranoia, but it no longer prevents him from functioning.

He has enjoyed activities—exercising at the YMCA, going to the library, volunteering at an animal shelter, attending AA and dual diagnosis meetings—which have him interacting with others. After much work, he is eager to move on to WestBridge's community program and have his own apartment near The Commons.

Staff has been working with Adam all along to get him stable so he can function in the community. In preparation for his move, he has been attending group sessions and working with his mentor in getting things for his apartment. He has a defined plan for his transition and participation in the community program. We and he feel more comfortable that he has a plan and will be in daily contact with WestBridge staff. They will keep an eye on him to make sure things are going well, and he can call for help if he needs it. ■

**not his real name*

in the news

- The second annual John McAndrew concert fundraiser for New Horizons Soup Kitchen, Food Pantry and Shelter raised \$5,527! Thank you to all involved.
- Dr. Mark Green, WestBridge medical director, and Drew Welch, Boston area team nurse, presented "Recovery, Sobriety and Opioid Replacement Therapies" at the Southeast Conference on Addictive Disorders Conference in Nashville.
- WestBridge co-sponsored a CEU event with Brattleboro Retreat entitled, "What Everyone Needs to Know When Working with LGBT Clients." Joe Amico presented.
- Kevin Keefe, Gavin Cherry and Reid Slavin presented "Building a Recovery Community Culture – Inclusive Planning and Participation with Persons in Recovery" at the Assertive Community Treatment Association conference in Chicago. See westbridge.org for information on ACTA teams. ■



ask the nurse

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Lisa Williams, RN, MSN, ARNP

Quitting Smoking

At a recent four-day smoking cessation retreat off site, six WestBridge participants and staff members worked on strategies to quit smoking. Two participants who had quit previously came to support participants attempting to quit. Some chose to use nicotine replacement gum and patches and others quit cold turkey. Participants supported each other and staff was available for support at all times.

The steps in quitting are make the decision, set a quit date and make a quit plan, including dealing with withdrawal symptoms and starting a support network. It's best to keep active, drink plenty of water or juice, eat healthy snacks, use nicotine replacement if that is the plan, attend support groups, avoid situations where the urge to smoke is strong, and change up regular routines.

Some participants who had been smoking heavily for years quit for a few days, some quit for more than a few days, and one participant has continued to stay quit.

Read the full article at westbridge.org. ■

wellness

Be safe in the summer sun

Protecting your skin during the summer is important, particularly because 80 percent of sun damage occurs before age 18 and the incidence of skin cancer is on the rise. To protect your skin, follow these practices:

- **Wear sunscreen.** Apply 30 minutes before going outside, even on cloudy days, and reapply every two hours. Use a sunscreen with both UVA and UVB protection and apply liberally.
- **Use a hat and sunglasses.** Protecting your head and eyes is important too.
- **Wear sun-protective clothing.** This clothing protects your skin even better than sunscreen.
- **Avoid the sun from 10-2.** The sun's rays are most damaging in the middle of the day.
- **Know the ABCDE's of moles.** A: asymmetry. B: border irregularity. C: color variations. D: diameter larger than a pencil eraser. E: expansion of size. ■

Source: pamf.org/skincancer

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

Editor: Melissa Westerman

creative corner

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



by
WestBridge Participant