Framing This Portrait... As I enter this workshop, I’m wondering:

How do I feel about the stories I’m about to hear?

Is storytelling an effective anti-stigma strategy? Why?

Is it important to marry stories with visual art?

Do I believe that mental (and overall) wellness/health is everyone’s issue?

Do stories and art create conversations and communities that will break down stigma and barriers?

What are my fears about all this creative jazz?

What am I going to do about it in my own community? After all, I’m not a writer/artist (or am I?)?
Yours,

Mary Ruth Coffey, Chicago (having just endured wind chills of 6 below.....)

Connecting in storytelling with

Billy Gazard, London (Having just been in New Orleans at Mardi Gras, hmmm.....)
Manifesting Healthy Futures

Curator, Executive Director,
Presenter: Mary Ruth Coffey
Mental Health America of Illinois
What's in a Name?
Manifesting Healthy Futures: 24/7 Voices and Visions of Wellness

• Manifesting our futures
• 24/7
• Voices and Visions – diversity of struggles and recovery; uniqueness of style and interpretation
• Wellness – our connecting, unifying, common human goal
The Story Behind The Stories

• Memoir as Healing and Transforming the Writer and the Listener
  – Writers with lived mental health experience – One Writer, one Artist
  – The community of 48 writers and artists across the nation
  – Local Community Conversations with the writers and artists
  – The Community here at this International Conference
  – The Website (www.mhai.org)
  – The Documentary
  – The Book
Community Gatherings and Conversations

• Writers, Artists and Community Members
• A little bit of storytelling
• A little bit of art exhibition
• A lot of conversation – Dialogue about stigma and whether sharing and hearing these stories reduces stigma; is it important to have both words and visual art, etc...
Manifesting Healthy Futures
Schedule of Community Conversations

• February 23- The Main Gallery, Redwood City, CA
• March 29 – Frank Lloyd Wright’s Unity Temple, Oak Pak, IL
• March 31 – KNI Communications, Uptown neighborhood, Chicago
• TBD – Hinsdale Hospital, Hinsdale, IL
• April 30 - Full exhibit, Storytelling, Gala and Auction – Macy’s, Downtown Chicago
Manifesting Healthy Futures:
24/7 Voices and Visions of Wellness

Join Writers and Artists sharing mental health stories and art, breaking down barriers, erasing stigma, creating wellness for all.

Monday, February 23, 2015
6:30 - 9:00 pm
The Main Gallery, 1018 Main Street, Redwood City, California 94063
(Caltrain to Redwood City station)
Panel Presentation and Conversation
Refreshments served
Curator/Editor: Mary Ruth Coffey
CEO, Mental Health America of Illinois

Featured Writers

Doug Baird
Dad took it the hardest when I left home for naval boot camp the day after.
I watched Neil Armstrong walk on the moon. It was my effort to escape being drafted,
and ending up in Vietnam with a gun in my hands.

Sue Banzon
The better part of my childhood was spent trying to figure out what Mum was doing behind the bathroom door. I just wanted to know who the Hell she was talking to!

Mary Ruth Coffey
She sat down with me and my seven dinner guests - Trauma, Fear, Pain, Sadness, Anxiety, Self-Doubt and Depression - smiled and announced, “My name is Joy.”

Hannah Giarruso
My mom has Parkinson’s, a disease that has shrank her world in countless ways.
A relentless mire of losses. Her short-term memory is just one of these,
dreaming tumbling downward dream.

Valerie Stoller

For further information, please contact Ginger Slonaker • 650.619.4910 • tmgginger@gmail.com
And, now for the storytellers, their stories, the artists, the artworks.....
"Depression like mine doesn’t just go away, it leaves quietly and surreptitiously like the honey colored light at dusk but word about my breakdown spreads quickly and at full tilt. I am humiliated beet red but the most unexpected things happen... I swallow my fear and I recognize that loosening the shame and releasing the secret into the blue saves me."
“Psychiatric wards are hardly cheery places and as I kept trying to look to the future I walked up and down the hall, saying to myself two poems I had written years before: Tough as weed / Scraggily limbed and lifed, / Through the wilting winds of change, / I have survived, / I have survived.”
“Mr. Garbanzo, a hip guy, sometimes sure, his head’s way up in the sky... he passed his time inside the light, inside his brain, inside the confusion, chaotic hot fusion of wonders, illusions and insights he liked...”
“People do horrible things,” I finally said and added, “If we can’t talk about them to someone, how can we ever get through them?”
“I was happy once. I sang and I danced and I always showed everyone my smile... I will get better and maybe even see another counselor. Right now, I'm going to run inside the house and hug my baby...Just breathe. That's all I need right now, a breath and a hug. A cup of hot chocolate would be nice too.”
“How did this happen? I want to grab her by the shoulders, tell her that her old self would be appalled by this new one. Who is she? Where is my mother? She’s slipping away, and I’m helpless. My ninety-three year old frail mother... is disappearing before my eyes. There is less of her each time I visit. Meanwhile my new mom is very happy to see me. Even if she’s not sure who I am. And I’m happy to see her, too. She’s much easier to be around now. Still, I miss my mother...”
“I still think about suicide at least once a week, but now the grim reaper and I share an odd kinship. Now I consider myself post-suicidal. Because I have the option of being dead, I have nothing to lose by staying alive.”
“It’s now or never. My foot lifts high off of the floorboard and comes down heavy. There is something so concrete and impersonal about this landscape – it fits with where I am mentally. I make a muffled scream; feel my face twitch. My scream turns into a word. “Go.” Or was it, “No”? My foot is stuck on the brake pedal; the car passes; the light turns green; I sob.”
"You wore cool black every night whenever you drank beer and shot pool with your friends in the smoky basement, Light My Fire playing on the radio."
“This garden was a serene and sacred place from the congestion of Lake Shore Drive that was located less than four blocks away from the lakefront. The sunflowers act as a protective barrier for the both of us from the harshness outside. The rustling of the leaves whisper, “You’re special to us. We will all be here when you come back from all the madness out there.”
“Dear past self, I know the days are hard. I remember wanting to sink into the wall and disappear. I remember how you would hide... so you wouldn’t have to face yourself at the end of the day...By the time you’re me...You’ll walk out of his office crying one day because for the first time that you can remember, you hear the words, “You’re not depressed.”
"My mother began showing signs of her battle with depression that were visible to me when I was 14. Her bed was her refuge. Her tears flowed without signs of ceasing. There was an untouchable pain that I could not heal, and guilt that perhaps I had done something to provoke it."
"I do not understand why they whisper so much.
FOCUS
I must teach, over the whispers...
FOCUS.
I must teach
I must sleep
I must take these pills
FOCUS.
What’s wrong Ms. H?
FOCUS
I must teach."

Story by Jill Howe
Artwork by Haley Rovak
For more information about Manifesting Healthy Futures –
24/7 Voices and Visions of Wellness
MHAI’s Peer-Led, Anti-Stigma and Awareness Project

Please visit www.mhai.org

Thank you