

# What's Working Well



...In the Employment of People with Lived Experience of Mental Health Challenges, Parents and Family Members to Transform California's Public Behavioral Health Workforce

What's Working Well

<http://workingwelltogether.org/>

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## Working Well Together

Training and Technical Assistance Center

## Stanislaus County Rich Community Settings

By John Black, Peer Recovery & Family Advocate, CEO Peer Recovery Art Project

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Working Well Together (WWT) is a collaborative project comprised of the California Network of Mental Health Clients, NAMI California, United Advocates for Children and Families, and the California Institute for Mental Health. Funded by the MHSA and the Department of Mental Health, the WWT Training and Technical Assistance Center supports the vision of the MHSA Act to transform systems to be client and family-driven. As such, WWT supports the sustained development of client, family member and parent/caregiver employment within every level of the public mental health workforce.



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My personal experience has afforded me some knowledge on the topic of consumer and family employee practices—as a volunteer, then entry-level personal services coordinator for Telecare Corp., to Stanislaus County Peer Recovery and Family advocate and now Administrator for the Stanislaus Peer Recovery Art Project. I'm one who had to face my own bitter truths. I had to make the decision to go on, dependent on family and Uncle Sam, or get moving. Scared out of my wits I chose to move. Family and friends advised against volunteering and were really concerned when I brought home my first job application. There were choices that I had to make regardless of the possible negative outcomes. But I knew that since I became a volunteer in Stanislaus County Wellness Recovery center under Jim Hurley's direction, I felt value and an inner confidence that I had lost so many years before. My life changed in how I felt and how I looked. Vocational Rehab stood toe to toe with me in my first few weeks working for Telecare. And after a

very short time I was providing billable services. I was a valued member of the team and I saw how my experiences really could help others. Though still driven by fear, I went back to college part time. As educational requirements for Medi-Cal billing popped up, I managed to gain the level of education needed to continue.

Building a bright future can have some dim spots. Ten years of college classes and working full time presented challenges. The productivity and billing requirements were killing me. In 2007, I left Telecare, entering into my position with Stanislaus County, and finished my BA degree with high honors.

Even during those busy years my level of creativity had sky-rocketed. We founded the 'Day of Hope', a community building event, as well as the award-winning [Peer Recovery Art Project](#). "The mission of the nonprofit Peer Recovery Art Project., is to end stigma, revitalize downtown areas,

while implementing new strategies for an all-inclusive and, therefore, healthier community." Mental health consumers and their family members have been jumping in to build peer support networks outside of behavioral health settings. Please listen to us! We need meaningful activities in order to build healthy relationships in community settings, not a room in a clinical center labeled the "Community Room". No. We need to live, laugh and love just like everyone else, not "managed" as part of someone's caseload. So I'm pleased for the education I've received, both on, and off campus. But I think there are many consumers and family members who could benefit from entry level peer support positions not requiring documentation, just to see how this mental health work deal fits. Then by all means gain the educational expertise and climb that career ladder. After all, I did, and if I can, anybody can! Now I'm the employer and well respected in my community that I once rejected.



# WWT Regional Activities & Trainings

## WRAP® Booster Refresher Course in Superior Region

On June 6-8, 2012, 14 peer WRAP facilitators gathered in Chico, CA for an amazing three-day interactive, WRAP booster/refresher training for the Superior Region to sharpen and expand our facilitation skills, grow our knowledge and skills with WRAP and to get updates on implementing WRAP as an Evidence-Based Practice. While those who attended came from geographically remote counties—Butte, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Mendocino, Nevada, Sierra and Tehama Counties—the emotional support and connection felt by participants could not be beat. What better way to maintain our own wellness than through the support of each other! WWT-TAC, [Donna Matthews](#), (916) 379-5353

## Greater Bay Area Regional 'Welcoming Peers' Training

On May 4th, 2012, Deborah Van Dunk, WWT TAC, coordinated the WWT Regional Training: *Welcoming Consumers, Family Members, and Transitional Age Youth (TAY) into the Mental Health Workforce*. The instructors: a Peer Partner, Youth/Family Coordinator, and a Family Partner. Each instructor presented a power point and Q&A followed. In the afternoon session, the instructors held a panel discussion by sharing their individual story and personal experience in their current positions. A total of 26 participants at the training from six counties of the Greater Bay Area Region attended. The overall rating of the training/trainers was outstanding! [Deborah Van Dunk](#) (916) 643-1530 ext. 105

## Central Area TAC Makes Inroads with Trainings

Ron Shaw, the WWT Central Region TAC Coordinator has been on the road! Three TA Visits in May; first time contact with San Joaquin, Merced and Kings Counties. Plus, San Joaquin was a return to Ron's behavioral roots (first Internship, Stockton State Hospital, 40 years ago). Two training visits to LA Region, both well received. All participants are looking forward to more engaging learning activities. Much gratitude to Constance Burgess for a thought provoking workshop on 'Cultural Responsiveness to Enhance Team Building in the Workplace'. [Ron Shaw](#), (916) 567-0163 x107

## WWT Statewide Peer Certification Project Regional Forums & Findings

WWT TAC, Southern Region Karin Lettau hosted five Regional Forums for stakeholder input on the Consumer, Youth, Family and Parent (CYFP) Statewide Certification Project throughout the state in March and April with Inspired at Work consultants, Debra Brasher and Lucinda Dei Rossi who facilitated. A total of 165 stakeholders attended and gave input at the forums.

The Draft Summary of the Regional Stakeholder Meeting Findings has just been released. For an electronic copy go to the [WWT website](#) or contact [Karin Lettau](#), (619) 246-7797.

## Los Angeles Region 'Labs'

In March, April and May, all WWT TACs shared facilitating five 'Lab' trainings with LA County Quality Assurance for County employees with lived experience and/or family members, to maximize recovery-based documentation skills and networking strategies for success on the job.



**Webinar 12 noon on June 28, 2012.** Join Ron & Constance for a : *"Ah Huh, Uh Uh": Trust Building Communication to Enhance Support and Success in the Workplace*". Register now by email to: [ron.shaw@namicalifornia.org](mailto:ron.shaw@namicalifornia.org)

## Financial Incentive Deadline -- MHLAP

If you are like me, you could be paying off your student loans for the rest of your life. So this may be a great resource for you. The 2012 [Mental Health Loan Assumption Program—MHLAP](#) provides **loan forgiveness of up to \$10,000 to repay educational loans** for people who will work in 'hard-to-fill' positions in County public mental health for at least one year. Each county determines which positions qualify as 'hard-to-fill'. More information, county contacts, the application and tips for filling it out are found on the following website: <http://www.oshpd.ca.gov/hpef/MHLAP.html> But hurry, because the DEADLINE is August 17, 2012!

## Join Peer Certification Project Monthly Calls

Please join our monthly call to learn the latest on the statewide Peer Certification Project efforts and give your input to shape the next steps. The teleconference calls are on **the 4th Wednesday of each month from 12 to 1 PM**. Call **1-877-552-6504** to participate.

**WWT Webinar June 28!**