

Public Hearing with the
Mental Health and Wellness Commission

September 19, 2013

Wayne State University

Thank you for the opportunity to share a few thoughts on the important topic of mental health and wellness.

I do not represent any agency but am here as a citizen of Michigan who cares about the wellbeing of its residents.

As I have met and continue to meet new people over the years, it is amazing how many families are affected by mental illness. When I was a young woman, I worked for a librarian who had a son with mental illness. I was shocked at some of her tales, including episodes of violence ended only by a call to the police. My own parents dealt with my brother who was discharged from the Army because of a serious psychiatric event. He was eventually diagnosed with schizophrenia and is in fact considered 100% disabled by the VA. My parents were able to pay for doctor visits etc. but what would they have done if they had no financial resources? One place I did hook my brother up with was Kadima in Southfield. We need more organizations like it and we need to support them financially.

We are right now very close to an agency which is working with mentally ill veterans – the Detroit VA right across the street. The medical center recently held a “Mental Health Summit” which brought many groups in the community who see veterans as clients. The idea was to let community providers know what the VA has available and for VA staff to know better what is out in the community for its veterans. Coordinating already existing resources should be a priority no matter what the social service goal is.

It is no mystery that many people living with mental illness have come from less than a strong family background. How many mothers of these at-risk children were not prepared or ready to raise a child? Let's make every child a wanted child. Access to safe and affordable reproductive health services should be a basic component of any woman's health care options. We are talking not only of the mental health of the child but also the woman and the rest of her family. Parenting is hard enough when you feel that you are ready.

Another issue important to me is that of public transit. Not only do people need to get to their mental health appointments but they need to be able to visit friends and family as well as participate in neighborhood and city activities.

Recreational and cultural opportunities are so important to the mental wellness of any community. Public art is important because everyone can enjoy it and if it is good art, it will inspire and lift up one's spirits. Parks are important too and we need more bike and walking trails. These all are available to people without admission costs. Events like movies at Campus Martius are such simple examples of good clean entertaining but it means so much to the people gathered there.

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