



MERCER COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMISSION, INC.  
8406 Sharon- Mercer Road, Mercer, PA 16137

Please contact us at: 724-662-1550  
Or visit our website at: [www.mercercountybhc.org](http://www.mercercountybhc.org)

BHC Central Intake: 724-662-2230  
Crisis: 724-662-2227

**It's that time of Year!**

**Please mark your Calendar:**

**The 15th Annual  
Leslie Colucci/Sparano  
Memorial Summer Fest!**

**A Special Event for all Mercer County  
ID Consumers and Families.**

**Free Food, Fun, & Outdoor Activities!**

**\*\*July 13, 2018\***

**Mahaney Recreational Area Shenango Lake**

*Event is Sponsored by:*

The Leslie Colucci/Sparano Memorial Foundation,  
Mercer County Behavioral Health Commission, &  
US Army Corps of Engineers-Shenango Lake

**Due to it being the 15th Annual Summer Fest, anticipate some surprises!**

**More information to follow!**

# BHC Bulletin

MERCER COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMISSION, INC.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PROBLEM GAMBLING



2018 SPRING FORMAL DANCE



MCBHC 40th ANNIVERSARY



NATIONAL AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH



ISSUE 25  
SPRING 2018

## Note from our CEO | Mary Ann Daniels

“See Me for Me” – the slogan for March and Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. What is a developmental disability? Individuals with a developmental disability may have an intellectual disability. They may have some level of autism. They may have some other, less defined delay in one or more areas of their development or they may have a combination of several issues.

Regardless of what defines a developmental disability, the disability does not define the individual. We are proud to work with and support the many individuals in Mercer County who have a developmental disability. They are our neighbors, our friends, someone working right beside us.

They are our sisters, our brothers, our family members. They are individuals striving to be accepted for who they are and to have opportunities to be included in the community.

Along with those individuals, we partner with several provider agencies who strive to help others make their lives whole and fulfilling – ABDD, The ARC of Mercer County, AVS, Diversified Family Services, Erdos, Iron and String Life Enhancements (Purple Cat), Keystone, LARK, Loving Care Center, McGuire Memorial, NHS Woodhaven, Passavant, St. Michaels’s Harbour, Thoughtful Needs, Verland, Whole Life Services, and YAP.

We appreciate everyone—Supports Coordinators, providers, and most of

all, the individuals themselves—it is a privilege to work with you.



# APRIL IS NATIONAL AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

join us in CELEBRATION



The first National Autism Awareness Month was declared by the Autism Society in April 1970.

The aim of this month is educate the public about autism. Autism is a complex mental condition and developmental disability, characterized by difficulties in the way a person communicates and interacts with other people. Autism can be present from birth or form during early childhood (typically within the first three years). Autism is a lifelong developmental disability with no single known cause.

People with autism are classed as having Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and the terms autism and ASD are often used interchangeably. A wide spectrum disorder, people with autism have a set of symptoms unique to themselves; no two people are the same.

### Increasing Awareness About The Common Characteristics Of Autism

Whilst no two people with autism will have the same set of symptoms, there are common characteristics found in those with this complex disability. Briefly, these characteristics include:

**Social Skills**-people with autism have problems interacting with others; autistic children do not have adequate playing and talking skills. Mild symptoms on one end of the spectrum may be displayed through clumsy behavior, being out of sync with those around them and inappropriate or offensive comments being made. At the other end of the spectrum an autistic person may not be interested in others.

**Empathy** - empathy is the ability to recognize and understand the feelings of another person. People with autism find it harder to show empathy to others although they can be taught to acknowledge the others feelings.

**Physical Contact** - in some cases, autistic people do not like physical contact such as hugs, tickling or physical play with others.

**Sudden Changes To Their Environment** - a sudden change in the surrounding environment may affect a person with autism. The could be a loud noise, a change in intensity of lighting or even a change in smell.

**Speech**- speech can be affected in people with autism. 'Echolalia' is a typical speech symptom in which the person repeats words and phrases that they hear. The speech tone of an autistic person may be monotonous. Where symptoms are more extreme the person may not speak.

**Changes To Behavior and Routine** - people with autism often display repetitive behavior in which they repeat the same action many times over. For example, a person with autism may repeatedly pace around a room in a certain direction. Any change to their behavior or routine can be unsettling for them. This could be a reordering of daily activities such as when a person brushes their teeth, takes a shower and has breakfast when they get up in the morning.

Other characteristics of autism include an unpredictable learning rate, obsessions and physical tics.

In the United States, autism affects 1 in every 110 children. National Autism Awareness Month aims to make the public more aware about this widespread disability and the issues which arise in the autism community. As about 1 in 150 people in America have autism, the chances are that you know someone with this disability. A better informed public will be more empathetic and supportive towards people with autism.

This month is backed by the Autism Society of America which undertake a number of activities to raise awareness about autism. The Autism Society has local chapters throughout the United States which hold special events throughout April.

The 'Puzzle Ribbon' is the symbol for Autism Awareness and is promoted by the Autism Society as means of supporting awareness for autism. The Puzzle Ribbon may take the form of a pin attached to clothing, a fridge magnet or a sticker and are available to purchase from the Autism Society website.

The Autism Society of America also run a year long campaign through their 1 Power 4 Autism initiative, in which people are encouraged to hold events to raise awareness and support for those affected by autism.

For more information on National Autism Awareness Month visit the [Autism Society's Awareness Page](http://www.autismsociety.org).

## March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month Frequently Asked Questions:

### WHAT IS PROBLEM GAMBLING?

Problem gambling-or gambling addiction-includes all gambling behavior patterns that compromise, disrupt or damage personal, family or vocation pursuits. The essential features are increasing preoccupation with gambling, a need to bet more money more frequently, restlessness or irritability when attempting to stop, "chasing" losses, and loss of control manifested by continuation of the gambling behavior in spite of mounting, serious, negative consequences. In extreme cases, problem gambling can result in financial ruin, legal problems, loss of career and family, or even suicide.

### ISN'T PROBLEM GAMBLING JUST A FINANCIAL PROBLEM?

No. Problem gambling is an emotional problem that has financial consequences. If you pay all of a problem gambler's debts, the person will still be a problem gambler. The real problem is that they have an uncontrollable obsession with gambling.

### WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE BECOME PROBLEM GAMBLERS?

Anyone who gambles can develop problems if they are not aware of the risks and do not gamble responsibly. When gambling behavior interferes with finances, relationships and workplace, a serious problem already exists.

### HOW CAN A PERSON BE ADDICTED TO SOMETHING THAT ISN'T A SUBSTANCE?

Although no substance is ingested, the problem gambler gets the same effect from gambling as someone else might get from taking a tranquilizer or having a drink.

### HOW MUCH MONEY DO YOU HAVE TO LOSE BEFORE GAMBLING BECOMES A PROBLEM?

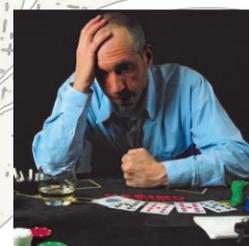
The amount of money lost or won does not determine when gambling becomes a problem. It becomes a problem when it causes a negative impact on any of the individual's life.

### HOW WIDESPREAD IS PROBLEM GAMBLING IN THE U.S.?

2 million (1%) of U.S. adults are estimated to meet criteria for pathological gambling in a given year.

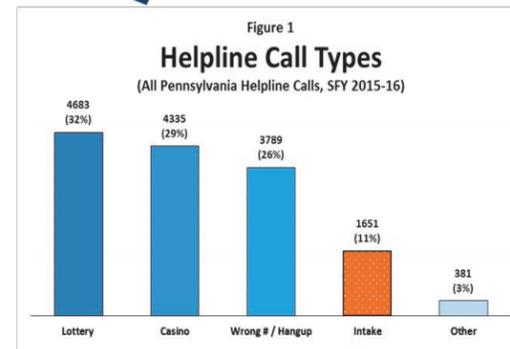
For more information:

[www.ncpggambling.org](http://www.ncpggambling.org)

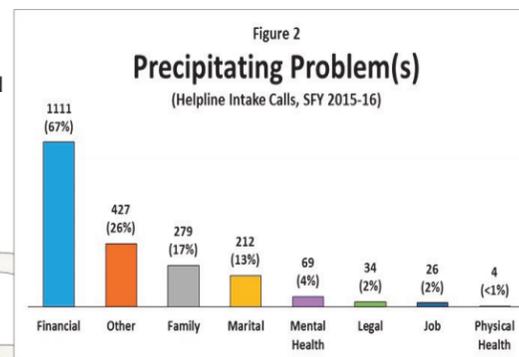


PROBLEM GAMBLING AWARENESS MONTH

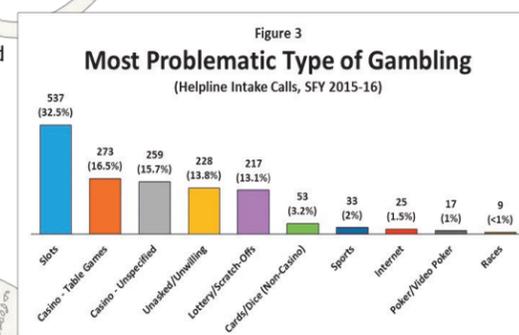
→ HAVE THE CONVERSATION



This chart identifies total of all incoming calls to the Pennsylvania Helpline (2015-2016). The call types are identified and recorded in one of five categories.



This chart displays a breakdown of the precipitating problem(s) that were reported as a result of gambling. It is important to note that more than one problem can be reported by the caller.



This chart displays the most problematic type of gambling reported. This data is gathered to identify gambling preference. As in past years, the majority of Helpline callers identified slot machines as being most problematic.



Thursday, May 10, 2018, is National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day. This day is set apart to raise awareness about the importance of children's mental health and show that positive mental health is essential to a child's health development.



Awareness Day 2018: Partnering for Health and Hope Following Trauma will focus on the importance of an integrated approach to caring for the mental health needs of children, youth, and young adults who have experienced trauma, as well as their families.

This is a good opportunity for parents, teachers, coaches and troop leaders to make a difference in a child's life by keeping on the look out for signs that a child is struggling with a mental health issue. So often what is burdensome in a child's mind, what isolates them and makes them feel different from everyone else, is something that can be effectively addressed, treated and overcome.

These mental health issues include: paralyzing anxiety that keeps children from raising their hand in class, attention difficulties which leave them frustrated for getting in trouble when they don't know why, feelings of depression like nothing is worth anything, especially themselves, and even concerns that any food they put in their mouths will make them fat. We live in a time when very effective treatments are available to help children recover from these detours and regain their stride in life. However, if left untreated, mental health disorders pose serious threats to a child's growth and functioning and can rob a child of a full, healthy life.

What should we look for? Sometimes when a child is struggling there may be an external factor that is at play, such as being bullied at school, being rejected by a friend, family conflict or changes in the family routine. Red flags for specific conditions vary, but if you see changes in the child's behavior, personality, mood, sleeping habits, appetite, and/or social interaction and these changes are not fading with time, but instead are becoming more pronounced, then a problem may exist. The child may require treatment. A referral to a qualified professional may be in the child's best interest.

# 12th Recovery Conference wellness for the



**May 8, 2018**  
**8:30 a.m.—3:00 p.m.**

**First Assembly of God**  
**1455 N. Keel Ridge Road**  
**Hermitage, PA 16148**

## Registration

**All participants must register.**

**Contact:**

**Diana Covert**

**Mercer County Behavioral  
Health Commission**

**Phone:**

**724-662-1550**

**Or**

**Email:**

**diana.covert@mercercountybhc.org**

**Registration is due by April 27, 2018**

# 2018 Spring Formal Dance

Saturday,  
April 21, 2018  
4:00 - 8:30 p.m.



Hosted by  
The Mercer County BHC

RSVP NO LATER THAN

**MARCH 27, 2018**

(Maximum Seating is 300)  
Please send payment along with this form to:  
Mercer County BHC  
Attn: Tina McMath  
8406 Sharon-Mercer Rd.  
Mercer, PA 16137

Hickory VFW  
5550 East State Street  
Hermitage, PA 16148



Guest's Name & Phone #:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please List 2 Emergency Contacts & Phone #:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of 1:1 staff if needed:

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you attending with a provider? YES NO

If YES, Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Home Address & Staff Names:

<i>Group Home</i>	<i># of Staff &amp; Attending Names (If name is Unknown, put "Unknown")</i>

*If this info is not provided for the correct number of staff attending, then there will not be seating available.*

Preferred to sit with/by:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please Circle YES or NO:

Does the Individual need food pureed or other dietary concerns? YES NO

Please note dietary concerns: \_\_\_\_\_

Requires assistance in getting own food due to physical limitations or Concerns? YES NO

Needs Wheelchair Seating? YES NO

Does this individual have any medical concerns? YES NO

Please Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

***BHC uses your picture for Newsletters, on their website & other documents. Please note below if you DON'T want your picture used.***

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



### JAMESTOWN DEDICATED AND PROACTIVE PARTNERS (JDAPP) HEADED TO CADCA'S NATIONAL LEADERSHIP FORUM TO LEARN NEW SKILLS TO INCREASE SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION EFFORTS

Representatives from JDAPP, including four Jamestown High School students who are a part of the FISH club headed to the Washington, D.C. area, to join approximately 3,000 substance abuse prevention specialists and advocates from throughout the country for CADCA's (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America's) 28<sup>th</sup> Annual National Leadership Forum.

JDAPP's mission is to provide the residents of Jamestown an opportunity to create and sustain a healthy and supportive community through education, programming and advocacy.

CADCA's Forum covered a wide range of topics – everything from develop policies to reduce underage drinking, community collaboration, policy development, and positive community outreach.

The coalition continues to impact the community by providing education and programs. FISH (Friends in Support and Honor) Club members from Jamestown High School have been very active in their school and community by promoting Kick Butts Day, Prom Promise, and alternate activities.

The coalition's youth members participated in CADCA's National Youth Leadership Initiative training events to help them become strong community leaders.

The coalition representatives heard from several federal leaders including Richard Baum, acting director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

As part of Capitol Hill Day, the coalition was able to speak to Representative Mike Kelly. They were able to educate Representative Kelly about JDAPP, FISH, and their efforts in Jamestown. It takes one voice and these youth are bringing this passion and fire back to their hometown.



# Mercer County Behavioral Health Commission, Inc.

## Is celebrating their 40th Anniversary this year!

### 1978-2018

#### Our History:

- In 1978, the Mercer County Drug & Alcohol Commission, Inc., a non-profit corporation was formed to serve as the Single County Authority for drug and alcohol services in Mercer County.
- July 1, 1998, now known as the Mercer County Behavioral Health Commission, Inc. assumes administrative and service responsibility for MH/ID services in addition to the D&A service.
- In 2000, Mercer County works collaborative with neighboring six counties to move forward toward Health Choices.
- July 2007-In partnership with Crawford and Venango Counties, Mercer County enters Health Choices.
- Since 1978, the organization has grown from:
  - \* 3 employees in 1978
  - \* 8 employees in 1989
  - \* 16 employees in January 1998
  - \* 70 employees in July 1998
  - \* 92 employees currently



#### Moving into our new office in 2000!





# Bulletin Extra



**Star Vespaziani** began working at the Mercer County Behavioral Commission on May 9, 1994. She holds the position of Administrative Assistant. Star graduated from Slippery Rock Area High School in 1976. She was previously employed by Slippery Rock Area Middle School as Secretary to the Principal. Star resides in Slippery Rock with her husband Kevin and their 3 dogs, Piper, Trudy and Trixie. She has 2 adult Children, Melissa (39) and Kevin (33); 1 granddaughter Cassidy (11) and triplet step-grandchildren Frankie, Tyler and Maddie (12). In her spare time, Star likes to spend time with her family.



Happy  
Spring!

## Welcome to our New Hire:

Wesley Blauser  
D/A Recovery Specialist



### RECIPE CORNER

#### Banana Split Brownie Pizza

- 1 pkg. (21.5 oz.) brownie mix (plus ingredients to make brownies)
- 1 pkg. (8 oz.) cream cheese, softened
- 1 can (8 oz.) crushed pineapple, drained
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 bananas, sliced
- 1 cup strawberries, sliced
- ½ cup walnuts, chopped
- ¼ cup chocolate syrup



Preheat oven to 375°  
 Prepare brownie mix according to package directions.  
 Cut a circle of Parchment Paper to fit large baking stone.  
 Pour brownie mixture onto parchment paper leaving 1 inch from edge.  
 Bake 15-18 minutes.  
 Cool completely.

Mix cream cheese, pineapple and sugar until blended.  
 Spread cream cheese mixture over brownie.  
 Slice bananas and strawberries.  
 Arrange fruit over cream cheese mixture.  
 Sprinkle with walnuts.  
 Drizzle chocolate syrup over top.

Submitted by: Star Vespaziani



## Just a few memories from BHC's Children's Christmas Party 2017!

