



# THE VOICE

November 2007

CONSUMER VOICES ARE BORN  
CVAB

Volume 2 Issue 5

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The VOICE is a monthly newsletter produced and distributed by CVAB, Inc.

The content of articles are the opinions of the writers and are published in the Voice so they may exercise their right to say something, and for your reading pleasure

CVAB is a consumer-run non-profit organization.

The Voice welcomes all original contributions related to your recovery experience that you may want to share with our community. We'll treat each with respect and we'll try to print them as submitted but may need to edit for space. Our deadline is the 15th of each month. Thank you.

## Consumers Voice Their Opinions

BY NICK KESSLER

CVAB REPORTER

The day after the Recovery Initiative Event at the Center for Community Health took place, a much smaller but equally important series of meetings took place in the same room.

While a small portion of the Recovery Initiative Event was a panel forum, the meeting that took place from 11am to 12:30pm the next day was a much more interactive group, one that discussed the shortcomings of the Mental Health system as a whole (and thus informing group leader and Clark County consultant Andrew Keller about them), as well as brainstorming possible solutions that Andrew could present to the state government.

One of the bigger issues mentioned was the merging of professional and peer counseling (which is something staff and volunteers at CVAB do every day) and how hazy the framework of this plan still is. It was adamantly voiced that peer counselors—specifically those who are/were consumers—had a distinct advantage over professionals.

Also mentioned were crisis and homeless issues. Many people on the panel, if not all, saw these as relative topics. It was observed by one sneaker that many consumers go

into a "gray area," where they "fall through the cracks," wind up in a crisis situation and hospitalization, and then run out of insurance and are forced onto the streets; or, if they're lucky, they get the limited time of 60 days at Share.

A point was made that Intensive Case Management at Columbia River Mental Health Services can help anyone, even if they have no insurance, but the amount of help they would receive was debatable.

The fact that there are only 3 registered payees in Clark County was a frustrating fact that made it obvious that educational medication management to consumers was a necessity. It was conclusive among most members on the panel that people with Medicaid/Care should be given a check to prove they can spend money on their own terms so they won't feel so limited.

It was an enthusiastic group to say the least; there were several representatives from CVAB, as well as the Clubhouse. A few other consumers, the majority of them having paying jobs in Mental Health services, also attended. We were very fortunate to have a speaker/reporter like Andy Keller on board. Hopefully voices were heard enough to make significant changes. V

## Recovery Theme

CVAB is committed to the reality of Recovery. We encourage you to look for a Recovery Concept posted each month and enter into the dia-

log we enjoy around the new theme at each CVAB Community Gathering. November's theme is *Individualized and Person-Centered*. V



## KESSLER'S KOLUMN

CVAB IS SORT OF LIKE  
A SLEEPING DRAGON.  
IT'S ALWAYS HERE IN  
ITS LAIR, BUT IT HAS  
CAPABILITIES THAT  
REACH FAR BEYOND  
THE BOUNDS OF WHAT  
MOST PEOPLE  
CONSIDER.



## Disrespecting CVAB

I really hate it when people give CVAB a bad name, mention it in a harsh tone, or see it as “just this small part of a large building on Fourth Plain Boulevard next to the VA.” Obviously from this example there are people that participate and people that don't. Those who don't have their reasons, but at the same time, they *are* really missing out. What you get out of life is quite often what you put into it, just to express a cliché in an appropriate context.

When a lot of people come into CVAB, they seem to have this subconscious impression that it's just this boring drop-in center with some computers lying about and staff members twiddling their thumbs. Man, how disrespectful can you get? I think these people need to know that CVAB is a

place where, if you choose, you can take part in or even lead *entire campaigns* to change the community around us. CVAB is sort of like a sleeping dragon. It's always here in its lair, but it has capabilities that reach far beyond the bounds of what most people consider. CVAB's staff have done an excellent job with the Respect/Recovery/Responsibility premise, and this is what sets the foundation for great things happening.

So if you're not sure about CVAB, either by reputation or direct experience, give it a chance. If you are intimidated, tell someone. If you are disgusted, tell someone how you'd like to see things done. But give it a chance. I have a feeling you won't be disappointed. **V**

## Words... from Paula C

In the future I would like to change the world with my words and talent for writing.

I know that words can heal the broken hearted and lift people up when

they are down, or words can harm and tear people down. I know that here at CVAB that we use healing words and lift people up and I'm glad of that. **V**

*Note: Write Around Portland will begin a 10 week workshop at CVAB in February 2008. We hope each of you at CVAB find your voice.*

## Volunteering by Carolyn M

In December 2007, it will be one year that I have volunteered at CVAB. I have been a greeter, answered telephone calls and have greeted people when they come to CVAB.

I have worked hard to

remember everyone's first name. I have enjoyed meeting everyone, and glad life is working out better for you. Thanks for putting up with me.

In no way does a person volunteer for self.

A person feels better about themselves because they help someone else, and reach out to others. This helps a person with self confidence and self esteem.

Enjoy life and have a nice day. **V**

## Family Forum News by Pat Roe, RSN Family Support Specialist

Thanks so much to all of you who attended the recent Family Forum, and joined in a discussion of family resources in Clark County. The forum allowed us to take a closer look at the resources that currently exist, explore any barriers that get in the way of families accessing those resources, and talk about additional offerings that would benefit families in the future.

In addition to CVAB members, we welcomed others representing Clark County consumers and families, the local NAMI Chapter, Columbia River Mental Health Services, YWCA Clark County, Educational Opportunities for Children and Families (EOCF), Catholic Community Services, Children's Center, The Lord's Gym, Children's Home Society, Special Education Parent Teacher Student Association (SEPTSA), Juvenile Justice Connections Program, Corrections, our Mental Health Ombuds, SAFE WA and Department of Community Services staff. It was so great to see people representing all of these organizations working together to improve services for families in Clark County!

The item most identified by the attendees as a barrier and as a dream for the future was additional education surrounding the availability of resources. Everyone wanted to know what was available, and how to access those services. Attendees said they wanted local service providers to know about resources so the information could be shared when it was needed. Additionally, attendees

wanted to see more training for certain provider professions in the areas of treating all individuals with understanding and respect.

The second most identified dream for our community was more support for parents and other caregivers. People suggested additional support groups, trained people like peer supports or benefits specialists to provide help navigating systems, and legislative advocacy to help rewrite legislation such as HIPAA that has negatively impacted family relations.

### THE ITEM MOST IDENTIFIED BY THE ATTENDEES AS A BARRIER AND AS A DREAM FOR THE FUTURE WAS...

Attendees also indicated that it would be beneficial for their families if there were more resources for youth. They hoped for additional after school activities, additional support groups for teens and children, additional youth centers easily accessible and open to everyone. An ongoing dream is additional services for transition aged youth to help them successfully move from child to adulthood with no interruption in services or support.

Affordable, available housing, smoother referral and collaboration processes between agencies, and additional funding for services completed our wish list. Based on the input from that event, a list of six recommendations has been approved for action by the Clark County Regional Support Network's Executive Team, including education for families and providers. I will be continuing to work with SAFE WA and other local community organizations to see how we can work together on

## Poetry Shared from CVAB Community Members

The wounded seek refuge with cause  
Shelter is the need until the storm has ended  
Self worth dictates survival then success  
Life struggles are many  
Profound are the demographics of life  
God's promises are assured and the power  
of his healing hands extend to the needy  
The prerequisite is to love God ourselves and  
our fellow man.

David C.

### "My Humble Poem" by Sara

Lord, give me the peace I daily need,  
teach me kind words to say.  
Send your angels to give me comfort,  
and help me be grateful for each passing day.  
Lord, give me patience to endure my fears,  
and wipe away my tears.  
Give me the strength to pray again.  
Lord give me faith to get me through,  
each and every day.  
Make an angel on my path to gently guide my way.  
Lord teach me forgiveness as Jesus taught.  
Open my heart to laughter.  
It's the human angel friends who always cheer  
me up and to my heart they are very dear.

**A PERSON-CENTERED, RECOVERY-ORIENTED, SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY**

Consumer Voices Are Born  
CVAB

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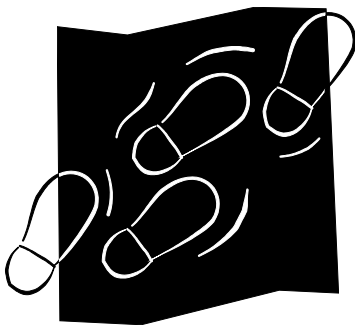
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## Executive Direction from Brad Berry

Responsibility. Consumers across Washington are voicing the desire for consumer-run and peer-oriented recovery organizations to play a more significant role in mental health and other services. One of the major barriers to this is at this time is CVAB is the only consumer-run non-profit agency providing services seven days a week in the State of Washington.

Think about that for a moment.... There are consumers in every other part of Washington wishing they had an organization that offers support and encouragement to one another, that they could call their own and CVAB is the only one. Sure,

there are a number of other models but none that has consumer leadership as a value, in the by-laws, and in the day-to-day practices.

CVAB recognizes the unique opportunity and significant responsibility that comes with being the only agency like ours in the state. We also sense how important the contributions of each of you to CVAB's success. The question is how will we responsibly make our voices heard as we contribute to the rise of successful consumer-run organizations?