



For October, November & December 2021, Vol. XI

www.rockingrecovery.org

"You see things; and you say "Why?" But I dream things that never were; and I say "Why not?"

George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950)

Dream building and having goals are extremely important to anyone in recovery. It gives us something to look forward to in life and a reason to keep doing the work recovery demands. This quarter's newsletter began with a quote by George Bernard Shaw. It seemed appropriate because many things have never been in Connecticut that our peers would like to see. First and foremost would be peer-run respites. Some of us would even like to see entire peer-run practices that would offer more choices for recovery options. The question is, how do we turn a dream into a reality and make it accessible to everyone who needs or wants this type of support?

The first thing we need to do is find the resources to make this happen. In the case of peer-run organizations, it comes down to funding. Many peers in Connecticut have heard of Afiya house located in Northampton, MA, so we will be using the available information to see what we would need to get started. Afiya does not list the physical location of the respite on their website, so to respect them, it will not be listed here. After finding the address, we were able to look at property information, including the house's current value. The last sale on record was August 29, 2013, for \$183,750. Today the value of the home is estimated at \$341,300, according to realtor.com.



Why is having this information important when advocating for a peer respite in Connecticut? The short answer is because we can use this to prove the state has the money to invest in a project like this. Let's ask another question, how much does it cost for one bed for one year at the Connecticut Valley Hospital? Be sure you are sitting down before reading this next part...

The Connecticut Mirror reported in an article published on November 24, 2017, that the estimated cost of one bed for one year is \$560,000. The article went on to say, *"For that kind of money, Connecticut should have a facility that is state of the art, with well-staffed units and optimally trained staff. It should deliver care that is recovery focused."* Our argument should be, we could purchase property and run the respite for the first year for half a million dollars.

Ripple also looked at what would happen to the respite should a lockdown happen like the one we experienced because of Covid. We could not have a revolving turnover of new people in the house every seven days, so how would we serve the community? When the lockdown hit, every single bed in domestic violence shelters filled in a matter of days. If the respite has four beds, it will become a four-bed domestic violence shelter, and it will still serve a purpose.

Having a peer-run respite in Connecticut is not just a dream, it is an achievable goal.

The Value of Peers... People in the state question the value of those who have lived experience with mental health and addiction challenges. There is also a debate on the validity of the certifications that a large number of peer supporters currently hold in Connecticut. There should be no debate, and any agency that is not peer-run outside of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services should not be involved in the certification process.

We are not saying that there should be no oversight. We say peers should govern themselves, create their own training, testing, and certification methods. Even though a successful model already exists in Connecticut, some want to reinvent the wheel and have already started a process to do this while excluding the largest peer-run agency in the state, Advocacy Unlimited. Most peers in the state know of AU, and most know they created the Recovery Support Specialist program, a training that has seen more than 1200 people graduate.



Ripple attended the Project MORE resource fair on September 30, our first outdoor adventure since the start of the pandemic. We were also lucky enough to be seen in the background during channel 8's event coverage.

We can say with absolute certainty that without all of the hard work and dedication AU had put into the peer community, Ripple would not exist. There would be no RockingRecovery.org, no late-night peer support group, and none of the other things we have done...

My name is Jeff, and I am the Executive Director, Recovery Innovations for Pursuing Peer Leadership and Empowerment, Inc. I want to share a story with you. It takes place during the pandemic's lockdown. Around ten in the morning, I was at work going through my daily routine. My cell phone rang and when I picked it up all I could hear at first was a person crying. "Jeff, it's *****, and I am having a very hard time right now. What would happen if I called mobile crisis?"

We talked for about 20 minutes, and I knew that this person needed more than I could give in that moment. They had attended our late-night peer support group in the past, which gave me an idea. I reached out to the group's co-host and asked her to open up our Zoom room. Then offered that option to the person on the phone. I have gotten dozens of calls when people are in crisis, but this one was unique. It was the first time I could not stay with them until they were in a better place. It was the first time I reached out to another and handed off a person in distress.

I was disappointed about not being there, but I was not worried about the person in crisis. Desiree, who is also a Recovery Support Specialist, took over for me. It was not long before a couple of other group members heard what was happening, and they also offered to enter the Zoom room and offer support. One person who entered was a Recovery Support Specialist who had just graduated from the training the day before. A few hours later, Desiree sent me a screenshot of the Zoom meeting. I saw Desiree, the other RSS, and the group member all still online. The thing that made me cry was seeing the person who entered in crisis so relaxed that they were able to drift off to sleep in front of the camera. The room was kept open until the person woke up so that they would know that they were not alone.

Everything I have learned has shown me that it is impossible to put a value on the work that we do because it is truly priceless. I have met people who struggle with memorization, and some have panic attacks filling out applications or taking tests. The peer community is inclusive, and I fear that some amazing people who inspired and helped others might have missed out on that chance because they could not pass a one-size-fits-all test. A peer-run organization is better equipped to determine when accommodations should be made to overcome a challenge.

The idea of an agency coming in and creating a new certification process without peer involvement sounds familiar. How many of us have been told by our treatment teams how we need to recover? How many of us were non-compliant because we refused to take medication? It's as if they can't stand to see us successful in our recovery if their thoughts and ideas were not followed. This new proposed certification is nothing more than mental health professionals saying the same old thing... We know what is best for you, now be a good patient, follow our instructions, don't argue, and swallow this.



RSS Community Conversation

Recovery Support Specialists are a part of Connecticut's advocacy network. Being able to meet, support one another, share resources and ideas is necessary for the growth of peer support services in our state.

**Wednesday Nights
7:00PM - 8:30PM**

These meetings will be offered on the Zoom platform and open to Recovery Support Specialists as well as any other certified peer level supporter who would like to attend.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82840222585>

**One tap mobile
+19292056099,,82840222585# US (New York)**

**Dial by your location
+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)
Meeting ID: 828 4022 2585**

Powered by Peers....

And a
lot of
coffee!



**Please visit our website for more information:
www.rockingrecovery.org/zoom-rss-community-conversation/**

www.RockingRecovery.org

Ripple's site, RockingRecovery.org, continues to grow! We officially launched as a community resource on May 1, 2019, and since that time, it has taken on a life of its own. The most visited section of this site is the CT RESOURCE LINKS page, where we have programs and services for people in Connecticut who need help. As of the publication of this newsletter, we offer 49 different demographical categories that lead to hundreds of agencies and providers. When combined, they provide more than 1,620 resources within the state. This section of the site is icon-driven, which allows you to quickly scan through the services and find the help you need.

RockingRecovery.org is proud to be listed as a community resource on the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) website. As we move into 2021, one of our goals is to improve our site and make it as useful as possible for those in the peer recovery community. We have set a goal to add a minimum of 500 new resources during the upcoming year.

One of our philosophies is you only need three things to help someone, hope, time, and compassion. It is our goal to show others out there that Connecticut offers a vast network of organizations, services, and programs for people living with mental illness and addiction... That they are not alone and that people are willing to support them in their recovery.

Ripple's mission is simple, as people with lived experience in the mental health and substance abuse services system, we seek to empower our peers. To use our voices to educate, inform, and inspire new leaders in our community. We will bring new and innovative ideas to the recovery processes for the benefit of all. RockingRecovery.org is one of the tools that will help is be successful in that goal.

This website is made up of over 170 pages and has taken over 800 hours of work to get to where we are now. Currently, we are aware of more than a dozen agencies using our site to better serve their clients.

RockingRecovery.org has become a useful tool to help their clients get connected to outside services that improve the quality of their lives. We hope this will be picked up by more providers in the area, and it can bring more help to those who need it.



A note from the webmaster:

RockingRecovery.org is a lot like a person's recovery journey; it does not happen all at once, and at some points, it won't go exactly as planned. We will hit obstacles and have setbacks, but with enough time, we will see our way clear and be able to move forward. It is our goal to create the most useful site possible for our community and peers. We will be continuously adding the CT Resource Links section and expect that it, just like recovery itself, will always be a work in progress.



