



For January, February & March 2024, Vol. XX

www.rockingrecovery.org

2024 is going to be a difficult year for a lot of people and we are mindful that what is happening in our world affects everyone differently. The war in Ukraine and the conflict in Israel are both leading headlines in many news broadcasts as we enter the new year. America itself is likely to become a political battlefield as we move closer to the presidential election. When RIPPLE first started our online support groups in September of 2020, we found ourselves on the doorstep of the race between Joe Biden and Donald Trump. At that time given the political climate, one of the rules we created for our group was, *"Please keep politics out of the conversation: This group is meant to support peers, the polarizing topic of current political events can distract from helping those present in the chat."* A rule still in place today.

If you need a safe place to go where you can decompress for a little while or just unplug from the constant stream of news coming across our screens please feel free to join us. Along with our late-night peer support groups on Tuesday and Thursday nights from 10:00 to midnight you can now meet up with RIPPLE on Discord.

Our server officially launched on January 1st, 2024. We have started it off with a couple of threads including areas for offering suggestions for its improvement. The server can connect with others through voice chat as well and we are looking forward to exploring more of what Discord can offer our community. We will grow the server as needed adding rooms and chat channels as we grow.



Please contact RockingRecovery.org@gmail.com to request the link, we look forward to seeing you there.



Opening new doors for growth in 2024!

"CTsource Registration Successful. Thank you for registering with CTsource, powered by WebProcure! Your registration to become a certified bidder for State of CT - DAS Procurement is complete."

Long story short, this means that we are now able to bid on contracts with the state of Connecticut. For example, if we had the resources and infrastructure ready within our organization RIPPLE would be able to bid on a Request for Proposal (RFP) from DMHAS such as a peer-run respite.



What will 2024 bring to the peer community? As many of you know there have been several things being worked on by peers from various organizations, some efforts are collaborative and others are solo initiatives. So far, from what we have seen in the legislative priority announcements from around the state, there are still a lot of leftover topics from 2023. Peer-run respite, peer certification and reimbursement, and new legislation concerning laws around the legal sale of marijuana.

Unfortunately, we have already heard from several sources that this being a short session at the state capitol, it is unlikely to see much in the way of movement towards any meaningful changes peers want to see. Knowing this I will say however that it will not slow down community efforts to educate our public officials and Connecticut residents about the benefits of what peers can bring to the table.

RIPPLE will continue to work with organizations such as Advocacy Unlimited. Keep the Promise Coalition, and NAMI just to name a few. Our commitment to working with individual advocates remains strong and we will help them whenever we are able.

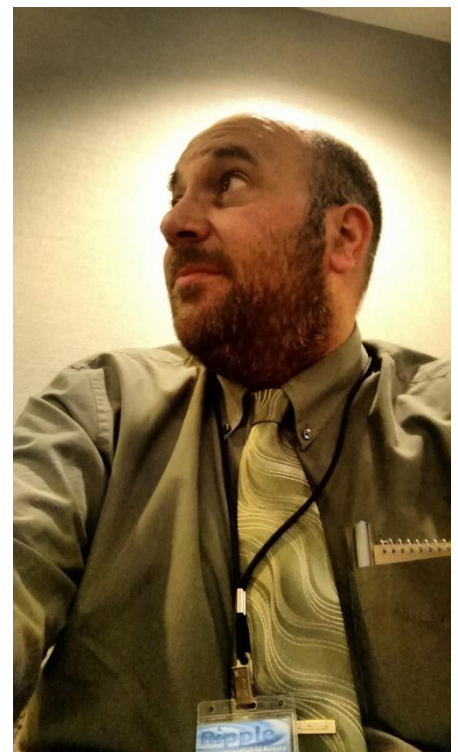


The “Angry Advocate” is making plans for 2024: As some of you may have read in our Summer 2023 newsletter, our executive director, Jeffrey Santo began referring to himself as THE angry advocate after hearing that wording being used to describe how not to communicate your ideas with others. With that being said, we are going to say something long overdue.

Peers DO NOT need to prove to anyone we belong. When we advocate for peer inclusion in policy-making, the creation of new programs, our place in rolling out new services, or the general diction of the DMHAS system, we should not act like we are coming from a weak position. We will use peer respite as an example. For years the peer community has been very clear on our ask for peer respite and what that service should look like. The RFP produced by DMHAS for this project was so absurd it never made it past that point.

The bottom line is peers should not be trying to prove how valuable we are. Every single person RIPPLE works within our online support groups, one-on-one interactions, and those we try and connect to resources all have one thing in common. They ALL have a “higher” level of care. In other words, they have treatment teams at an agency somewhere, a case worker, a therapist, a doctor, and so on. When do we start asking the question, what is the value of their current level of care?

Why do we have such a hard time advocating for the 600,000 dollar a year budget for peer respite when we know that is the cost of a single bed for one year at the Connecticut Valley Hospital?



Why do people still seek out the support of peers when they have access to professional services? A professional provider can charge 250 dollars for a 45-minute session but there is no mechanism for a peer-driven agency to get reimbursed for the services people are looking for.

For the last several years we have shown the data and the evidence-based practices. We have repeatedly shown the readiness of peers across the state to implement the in-demand services needed by so many. This year being a short legislative session perhaps we should change our tactics and not defend our position on peer support. Perhaps we should make DMHAS defend itself and the costs associated with running a vast taxpayer-funded network with so many gaps in its services. RIPPLE is the smallest peer-driven agency in the state and yet people keep coming to us through our website, RockingRecovery.org, and word-of-mouth referrals. Our late-night groups have attracted people from as far away as California because we were the only option for peer support they could find during those hours.

If the system was worth all of the money pouring into it we would not be so busy. If traditional levels of service provided by professional agencies worked as well as advertised, peer support would not be growing as fast as it is today. Every year more and more people are being trained as certified peer supporters and the demands being put on current classes means not all applicants are accepted. Without peer reimbursement, many of these graduates will not find employment and with no way for peers to bill for their services as independent practitioners, they are forced out of the field and into a career path that can actually support them.

More than a decade later DMHAS is still looking to finalize the ethical standards of peers and what certification should look like? How were thousands of people allowed to graduate from peer support training and these two common sense items have not been addressed until now?

At the end of the day here is the only question we want answered, why should we prove our value when the very system we are trying to be part of has not proven its value for years?

We need your voice!



Calling All Connecticut Peers!

**Join Keep the Promise and New Life II on
Saturday February 10th for an afternoon of
connection, discussion, and delicious food as
we discuss the future of Peer & Lived
Experience Support in Connecticut.**

**RSVP at
bit.ly/CTPeerOrganizingLaunch**

Questions?
e-mail info@ktpcoalition.org



Alternatives 2 Suicide Inspired Support Group

If You're Talking There's Time

**Wednesday, Friday, & Sunday
8:00 PM – 9:30 PM**

RIPPLE's support groups hold the same core values and commitment to confidentiality as traditional Alt2su groups. The approach will allow you to about openly explore the meaning behind thoughts and feelings of suicide, as well as what might be worth living for.

In addition to all the normal group offering is a proactive component which could allow a person reduce the level of stress in their life. RIPPLE and RockingRecovery.org works to connect people to resources that can help. This model can help those facing challenges such as food insecurity, housing problems, legal issues, finding a job, reentering the community after incarceration, and so on. Along with the same safe space, compassion and understanding to we will work to find resources close to you that may address some of the every day problems weighing you down.

These meetings will be offered on the Zoom platform and open to anyone who would like to attend.

Due to the nature of this group pre registration is required. Contact Jeffrey Santo at RockingRecovery.org@gmail.com

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