



The Power of Peers

by Dr. JC Carrica, COO

When you are going through a hard time--no matter what that hard time is all about--knowing that someone understands what you are experiencing can make a powerful difference.

This past year, Southeast Health Group started a Peer Services Program, employing 11 Peer Specialists who are helping others cope through hard times. Our team of Peer Specialists has received training to deliver peer support services to others with similar life experiences. The team has attended the NAMI-Community Connections Facilitator Training, as well as the NAMI State Conference. Because of their life experiences, Peer Specialists have expertise that professional training cannot replicate.

Since the program was initiated,

to teach coping skills, provide recreational opportunities and combat isolation. They also provide traditional holiday events like the most recent Thanksgiving Dinner. The Peer Specialists assist people in accessing health care services, averaging 21 medical transports and seven behavioral health transports each month. Peers also assist individuals living in the outlying communities by offering pre-approved transportation to Peer 613 and other services offered at SHG, like the skill building program “Choices”, the Vocational Program and other groups.

Peer Specialists have been instrumental in speeding up the intake process by offering same day access in Lamar and La Junta and making it more accommodating to the patient. They assist people in filling out the intake paperwork and are able to answer questions about what happens when a person is receiving behavioral health services, from the perspective of a peer. They have access to resource lists and help find emergency assistance when individuals and families have immediate needs.

Time and time again, Peer Specialists have gone the extra mile--literally—to help people in unfortunate circumstances.



They have responded to requests to help people out of domestic violence situations and connect them with the right resources. They have assisted homeless adults and their children find housing. They mobilize their communities to find clothes, toys, furniture, food and anything people might need when they are starting over. The most valuable gift they give is encouragement, coming from someone who knows how it feels to go through what you are facing.

I'm very proud of Kristi Roe, supervisor of the Peer Program, and her team of Peers. In the short year that they have been working together, they have made a significant impact on the experiences of people struggling to cope with a variety of problems. They are committed to helping others regain and recover the things they lost due to illness and addiction, and lead full and productive lives.

For more information about the Peer Services Program, call Kristi Roe at 1-800-511-5446.

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the Peer Specialists have been very busy, interacting with an average of 65 peers per month at their location, “Peer 613”. Peer 613 is open daily for anyone in the community, offering 15 different free groups designed

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