

AuMHC Perspectives

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LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST



AuMHC...
Winner
of the
Alfred P. Sloan
Award



AuMHC
Spring
Luncheon
was a
huge
success!

The future of mental health care

By Randy Stith, Ph.D., CEO & Executive Director, Aurora Mental Health Center

The idea for this article began one day when the question was put to me, "what do you envision mental health care will look like 30, 50 or 100 years from now?" What immediately came back to me was what my good friend and former board president, Bob O'Dell, M.D. once said: "My hope is that someday the time would come when we could cure mental illness altogether and that there would not be a need for mental health associations; we will have worked ourselves out of business." As I contemplate the future of mental health care and centers such as ours, I think my friend was not only right, but also closer to being prophetic than he could have imagined at the time.

The three forces that influence mental disorders are biological, psychological, and social/cultural factors. Today, science (biology) has made tremendous strides in mental health care. It is now largely understood that practically all mental illnesses, not derived from trauma, are a result of chemical or electrical imbalance(s) in the brain. Medication is now routinely prescribed for the treatment of depression, anxiety, and disorders such as schizophrenia, bipolar, attention deficit, compulsive behaviors, and addiction.¹ Many more solutions to these brain imbalances are also being developed for the treatment of mental illnesses. Looking decades in the future, I trust that the use of medication is only an intermediate step on the march toward a permanent cure for mental illness in all of its forms.

Just a half-century ago, very little was known about the genetic factors that contribute to human disease. However, since the discovery of DNA, science has made great progress in understanding how human beings are made. With the aid of the Human Genome Project we now have the complete sequence of the human genes – it's like having all the pages of a manual needed to make the human body.

What makes this exciting is that these breakthroughs can help science



isolate areas of DNA that cause the chemical imbalances in the brain that result in mental illness. Once isolated, these genes can, one day, be altered or eliminated or allow early enough intervention so that healthy children may be born who might otherwise have suffered a lifetime of mental illness. In the same way that antibiotics revolutionized the treatment of infectious diseases in the 20th century, human gene research may well revolutionize the treatment of mental illness in the 21st century.²

Ironically, the biological discoveries in the treatment of mental illness as a chemical imbalance in the brain may well help eliminate the social stigma so long attached to mental illness. We stigmatize what we don't understand or what we fear. If medication can decrease the symptoms and effects, mental illness may become no more stigmatized than a simple infection or even the common cold.

I have no doubt that science will do its part to work on ending mental illness. Making the social changes that also contribute to mental illness will be harder and may take longer to accomplish than will the biology of effective gene therapy. These social changes include the elimination of war, poverty, crime, hatred, discrimination, joblessness, homelessness, hopelessness, and other forms of human suffering that help create the stressful psychological environment that contributes to mental illness. Science can take us halfway home, the rest is up to society.

The future of mental health could not be brighter. I look forward to the day when the need for specialized centers that serve those who suffer from mental illness like Aurora Mental Health Center will end. And for all of us who have seen the effects of mental illness, that day will be a very happy day indeed.

What is the future of mental health? If we do our job well, we may work ourselves out of business!

¹ About.com - "Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General - Chapter 2"

² "The Genome Era and Mental Illness," by Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., NAMI Advocate, 2003.

Randy Stith, Ph.D., CEO and Executive Director of Aurora Mental Health Center. Dr. Stith graduated from St. Louis University where he received his Bachelor's degree in psychology and philosophy in 1968, his Master's degree in research in 1970, and his Doctorate in clinical psychology in 1972. In 1978, Dr. Stith joined Aurora Mental Health Center as the Executive Director. After 33 years under his leadership, the Center has grown from one small office in North Aurora, Colorado to an organization with more than 400 regular employees, 50 interns and 80 volunteers who provide services to more than 14,000 people annually.

The Aurora Center for Life Skills, a program of Aurora Mental Health Center, is honored to have won First Place in the National 2010 Eli Lilly Reintegration Award for Clinical Medicine.

Eli Lilly and Company recently announced that the Aurora Center for Life Skills (ACLS), a program of Aurora Mental Health Center has won "First Place for Clinical Medicine" in the National 2010 Lilly Reintegration Awards. The first place award also carries with it a monetary contribution of \$5,000 to be donated to the recipients' designated program or agency, which in this case will be ACLS.

The Reintegration Awards, which Lilly established in 1997, recognize mental health professionals and individuals battling severe mental illness, for their exceptional contributions and achievements. Specifically, the awards honor treatment teams, programs and services that assist those with severe mental illness as they re-enter the community, as well as individuals with bipolar disorder or schizophrenia who provide hope and support to their peers.

"Every year we look forward to the Awards shining a spotlight on the most innovative and supportive services," said David Ricks, President of Lilly USA, LLC. "It is these dedicated individuals and strong community programs that make it possible for those living with mental illness to reintegrate into society – to secure jobs, housing, education, all the essentials of a meaningful life."

"On behalf of the board of directors and the entire staff of Aurora Mental Health Center, we are very excited and honored to have won the coveted Lilly Reintegration Award for 2010. The Aurora Center for Life Skills is a very unique program, and at its inception in 1986, was the only one of its kind in the United States.

We are very proud of our staff and extremely impressed with the work they have done and the results they have achieved through this program, but more importantly, we are proud of the difference they have made in the lives they have touched over the last 24 years, and the many lives they will help in the future," said Randy Stith, Ph.D., CEO and Executive Director, Aurora Mental Health Center.

The Program

The Aurora Center for Life Skills (ACLS) was created by Aurora Mental Health Center in 1986, because there was no specialized outpatient mental health treatment for adults with a developmental disability and concurrent mental illness in Colorado.

ACLS started with 12 clients. Services at that time included



Left to Right: Ralph Aquila, M.D., Chair, Lilly Reintegration Awards Judging Panel; Sarah Avrin, Ph.D., ACLS Program Director, Aurora Mental Health Center; Suzi Scherzer, M.S., LPC, ACLS Therapist, Aurora Mental Health Center; and Bart Peterson, Senior Vice President, Corporate Affairs and Communications at Lilly, USA, LLC.

residential treatment, psychiatric and psychological consulting, and a day treatment program. The program has grown every year and thus far this year more than 350 clients have received services.

"As the program grew, more clients were seen with more severe illnesses and consequently, the program needed to use inpatient treatment more frequently. What we discovered was, clients who were hospitalized for behavioral problems, then released without proper diagnosis and treatment for mental health issues, had more difficulty in the community and were more likely to be re-hospitalized," said Sarah Avrin, Ph.D., Program Director.

"I can describe, with his permission, a case to illustrate this. It involves one of our most challenging clients who had been referred for outpatient treatment following a hospitalization. This individual had been hospitalized many times for suicidal tendencies and threats to harm others. Once we were able to diagnose and treat his mood disorder, he began to learn the coping skills he needed to help manage his mood swings. Once these issues were under control, he began to identify what he wanted out of life. His last

hospitalization was more than eleven years ago. He now lives in his own apartment, works at a job he has held for over six years, and has developed relationships in the community that give him the encouragement and support he needs to live a happy and productive life," said Sarah Avrin, Ph.D., ACLS Program Director, Aurora Mental Health Center.

Eventually, the day treatment model was abandoned in favor of a strength-based model, and a program was designed to promote recovery and help clients build skills to achieve their recovery goals. Clients define their own recovery goals and receive services that are appropriate to their individual needs. Services include psychiatric consultation and treatment, individual, group, and family therapies, psychoeducation, residential, vocational and case management services.

The ACLS team has become a "Center of Excellence" within our managed care organization and consultations are often sought by other mental health centers for differential diagnosis, since many times the diagnosis of a mental illness is overlooked in persons with a developmental disability.

The Importance of this Award

Ralph Aquila, M.D., chairperson of the Awards committee stated, "We apply the strictest standards in selecting those honored by this program. We now have a 14-year history and a network of hundreds of key players in the delivery of our nation's mental health services. Our goal is to honor their work and to add to their roster by only choosing individuals and programs that are similarly implementing strategic, progressive services for the mentally ill. If you look at this year's honorees you will see innovative thinking and a results-oriented approach—we do not recognize old, staid, legacy programs—we are looking for true results and true reintegration."

"The Lilly Reintegration Award is an affirmation that what we do is important in supporting clients in their recovery process. We think the award will provide impetus for the treatment methods we use to be replicated by others. It is gratifying to be recognized for treatment that we know to be effective, and to know that an effective treatment will be available to more people, and that they will have the opportunity to recover, achieve life goals, and significantly improve their quality of life," said Randy Stith, Ph.D., CEO and Executive Director, Aurora Mental Health Center.

For the Second Consecutive Year,

Aurora Mental Health Center has been selected as the Winner of the National Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility.



Aurora Mental Health Center has been selected as the winner of the national Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility for the second consecutive year. "We are honored to be a recipient of this award for the second year in a row," said Randy Stith, Ph.D., CEO and Executive Director of Aurora Mental Health Center, "it is testimony to the hard work of our employees and our management, and their commitment to building a superior workplace based on respect, cooperation and growth where everyone can flourish. Without our dedicated employees we could not provide the level of care that is so necessary to the health and well being of our clients and our community."

The Alfred P. Sloan Award is part of *When Work Works*, a national project on workplace flexibility and workplace effectiveness from Families and Work Institute in partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's *Institute for a Competitive Workforce* and the Twiga Foundation, with funding from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. The Aurora Chamber of Commerce is the official *When Work Works* partner for the greater Denver-Aurora area.



Left to Right: Catlin Ward, US Chamber of Commerce; Tawney Bass, AUMHC; Peter Cukale, AUMHC Board Member; Cindy Bohl, AUMHC; and Marsha Berzins, AUMHC Board Member.

This prestigious award recognizes employers that are successfully using workplace flexibility to meet both employer and employee goals. To win this highly competitive award, employer responses are measured against national data from Families and Work Institute's *National Study of Employers*. As a winner, Aurora Mental Health Center ranks in the top 20% of employers nationally in terms of flexible work programs, policies and culture.

The award is based on various factors, including the center's LEAD program, a nationally recognized leadership development program; flexible hours and compressed work weeks, generous paternity leave and our ability to share our vacation time with co-workers that are facing emergencies.

Some Bright Ideas for the Winter Blahs.

The winter months affect all of us in one form or another; from a mild "funk" to a full-on case of seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Chalk it all up to the hormonal changes in your body that coincide with a decrease in daylight that happens in the fall and winter. SAD can be a serious condition. As a form of depression resulting in fatigue, anxiety, reduced sex drive, and more, SAD can severely compromise your life. However, the majority of us suffer from symptoms that fall short of clinical depression. Here are a few things you can do to deal with the winter blahs.

- 1. Get out of bed at the same time.** Try to keep the same schedule on the weekends and holidays as you do on workdays. This will help alleviate that lethargic feeling.
- 2. Eat at the same time every day.** Your biological clock also responds to meals the same way it responds to sleep patterns.
- 3. Get outside.** You can help counter the affects of a decrease in daylight hours by spending a little more time outside in the sunlight. Schedule a daily workout outside even if it's just walking, both the exercise and the sunlight will make you feel better.
- 4. Light up your life.** Purchase a light therapy box (a box that emits a bright light that simulates natural outdoor light). Use the light therapy box about 30 minutes a day, preferably when you first get up, and it can prevent the blahs all day.
- 5. Change your light bulbs.** If the light therapy box is a bit too extreme, try changing out the light bulbs in your house with ones that have a color temperature of about 4100 Kelvin. These emit a warmer light than higher temperature bulbs, and stay away from bulbs 5500 Kelvin and above.

Remember, winter is a temporary condition, and soon we'll all be complaining about the heat once more.

Reserve your Spot Now! **10% DISCOUNT** if reserved by February 15, 2011!

The Second City® ON TOUR

is coming to Aurora Mental Health Center's 7th Annual Spring Benefit Luncheon
"Living Life to the Fullest" ~ Friday · April 29, 2011

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. • Red Lion Hotel Denver Southeast • 3200 South Parker Road (I-225 & Parker Road in Aurora)

Aurora Mental Health Center is pleased to announce that The Second City will appear at our Annual Spring Benefit Luncheon on April 29, 2011.

The Second City, Chicago's famed improvisational comedy troupe, will present their *Fair & Unbalanced* performance next spring. This show takes unbridled comic pleasure in the foibles of our politicians, celebrities and even our significant others. No institution escapes the satiric eye of The Second City—from the blowhards of the Beltway to the Hollywood elite. The Second City's *Fair & Unbalanced* is an hilarious ride through present day America.

Here's your opportunity to see the next generation of comic legends. The Second City alumni list includes: Alan Arkin, Joan Rivers, Robert Klein, Peter Boyle, Harold Ramis, John Belushi, Dan Aykroyd, Bill Murray, Gilda Radner, Martin Short, John Candy, Tina Fey, Chris Farley, Mike Myers, Stephen Colbert, Steve Carell and countless others.



Sponsorships:

Platinum: \$4,000 • Gold: \$3,000 • Silver: \$2,000
Bronze: \$1,500 • Tables: \$1,000 • Individual Seats: \$100

To reserve your sponsorship, or for more information, contact Heather Jackson at 303.617.2313 or email heatherjackson@aumhc.org. To purchase online, go to www.blacktie-colorado.com/rsvp and enter event code: *SecondCity*

Presenting Sponsor:



Gold Sponsor:



Aurora Mental Health Center's

ART CONTEST & SHOW

was a huge success!

At this year's 4th Annual Celebration and Art Contest we received 429 pieces of art from 27 local schools.

12 students received top honors for their entries in the Living Life to the Fullest Art Contest, sponsored by Aurora Mental Health Center. The awards were presented at the Aurora Mental Health Center's 35th Annual Celebration. The event took place on Wednesday, October 20 at the Red Lion Hotel Denver Southeast in Aurora, Colorado.

Students from schools throughout the community submitted their best art piece based on this year's theme: "Happiness is _____". All pieces were displayed and recognized at the annual celebration and the winning students in each category were awarded prizes.

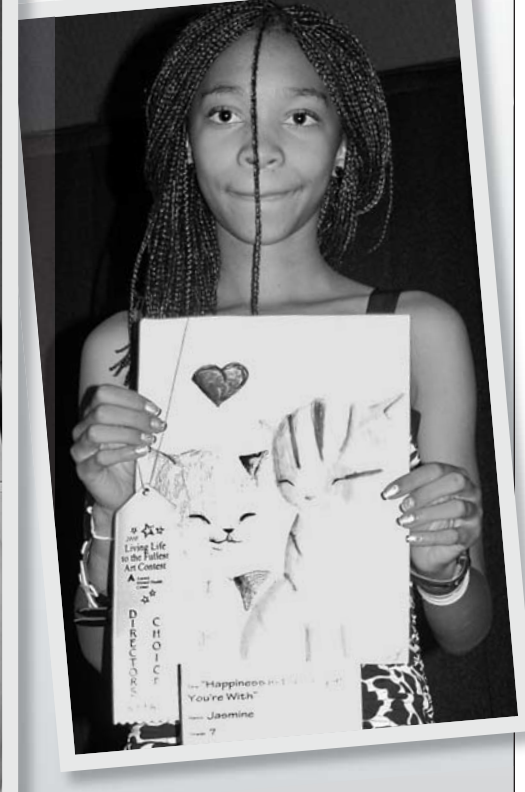
Winning students include:

First Place Winners Second Place Winners

- ▲ Grades K-3: A.J. Bartik Gabriella Ello
- ▲ Grades 4-6: Alicia Moralez Jyszelle Martinez
- ▲ Grades 7-8: Isabella Ello Christian Frank
- ▲ Grades 9-12: Beryl Allee Amanda Alvarado

Director's Choice Awards:

- ▲ Briana Pasillas, 1st Grade
- ▲ Samantha Smith, 5th Grade
- ▲ Jasmine Middleton, 7th Grade
- ▲ Mandi Quinn, 11th Grade



Mission Statement

Aurora Mental Health Center is committed to creating healthy and secure communities by providing the least restrictive service that ensures quality, appropriate, and efficient care.

Officers

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 Peter Cukale, Vice President
 Gregg Fanselau, Secretary
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 Jane Barber, Aurora School District
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Mental Health First Aid USA

A 12-hour certification course to help communities better understand mental illness and respond to psychiatric emergencies.

Mental Health First Aid courses are offered by Aurora Mental Health Center.

The 12-hour course will teach you:

- ▲ How to provide help to someone showing signs of mental illness or mental health crisis.
 - ▲ A 5-step action plan to help an individual in crisis connect to professional care.
- ▲ The potential warning signs and risk factors for depression, anxiety disorders, trauma, psychotic disorders, eating disorders and substance abuse.

Who should attend:

- ▲ Friends and family of individuals with mental illness or addiction.
- ▲ Community leaders including, police officers, human resource directors and primary care workers.
 - ▲ Teachers, college faculty and clergy.

All who complete the course will receive a certificate of completion.

For more information please contact Cindy Bohl, Aurora Mental Health Center at 303.617.2300.



This class is delivered by a Mental Health First Aid USA instructor who has completed a five-day training and other certification requirements.

All photos and interviews were provided with full cooperation and permission of the people depicted.

We want to thank everyone who gave so generously to Colorado Gives Day on December 8, 2010. More than \$4,600 was raised for Aurora Mental Health Center. You have brought compassion to those who suffer from mental illness. Without your support we could not help all those that need help, or give hope to those who have lost hope. Thank you from Aurora Mental Health Center and from the hundreds of nonprofit organizations that touch the lives of those in need every day.

12.08.10
COLOrado GIVES DAY

Thank you to our individual contributors during the third quarter!

Thank you to our corporate contributors for your support during the third quarter!

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Donating
 to Aurora Mental Health Center

Everyday, lives are changed by the services provided by Aurora Mental Health Center. This year, as we all face challenging times, those we touch at the Center need your help more than ever. With our new secure online giving options, you can set up a one time or recurring gift that will support services that make a difference in the lives of children, individuals, and families in our community.

Visit www.aumhc.org and click on "Your Support!"