



# Field Notes

William F. Hostman, Editor

mhaa@alaska.net

A publication of the Mental Health Association in Alaska

May/June 1999

**Vision Statement**  
**Working for Alaska's**  
**Mental Health and**  
**Victory over Mental**  
**Illness**

## ***Upcoming Events in Mental Health***

### **Mental Health at the Frontier: Alaska**

**Sponsored by NIMH**  
**August 10-11, 1999**  
**Anchorage, Alaska**

### **MHAA Annual Meeting**

- **Annual Mental Health Awards Ceremony Banquet**
- **Launch of the 3rd Annual Campaign on Clinical Depression**
- **Health Care Reform Meetings**

**July 22-23**  
**Anchorage AK**  
**1-800-478-0880**  
**(907) 563-0880**

**American Psychological Association Annual Convention**  
**August 20 - 24**  
**Boston, Massachusetts**  
**202-336-5500**

**American Academy of Family Physicians Annual Scientific Assembly**  
**September 15 - 19**  
**Orlando, Florida**

## **National Mental Health Association Returns to Alaska July 22 & 23, 1999**

Your Mental Health Association in Alaska and the National Mental Health Association are planning its second Alaska Health Care Reform meeting in Anchorage July 22 and 23. Please mark your calendars!

Hosted at the new Hawthorne Suites Hotel (1110 West 8th Avenue), beginning at 11:00 am, the event will kick off with the Annual Mental Health Awards Ceremony and Honorary Chair DeeDee Jonrowe will launch the 3rd Annual Campaign on Clinical Depression. Award nomination information is in this edition of *Field Notes*.

The Mental Health Association and its National Center (NMHA) appreciate your input as its public health and public policy agenda takes shape at the July meetings. The agenda will include a federal over view, a state over view and specific focus on Mental Health Parity (HB 149), API 2000, and consumer empowerment issues of the day. The Health Care Reform portion of the agenda begins at 1:00 P.M.. July 22 and concludes by Noon July 23.

If you are interested in attending please R.S.V.P. to 1-800-478-0880 (toll free) or to 563-0880 (Anchorage Bowl) as soon as possible. Your involvement is essential.

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## **Mental Health Parity Long Overdue in The Last Frontier**

Alaska is a young state and so is its mental health delivery system. Alaska's general medical and public health care delivery system was a priority following state hood with the mental health delivery system following a close second. From the development of community based mental health centers in the 60's, 70's, and 80's mandated by federal and subsequent state legislation, Alaska is still playing catch-up to the concept that everyone should receive services close to home and in the least restrictive setting. The

*Continues on page 4*

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***Your Mental Health Association is a membership based non-profit organization. Members are people who experience a mental illness, their families, friends, advocates, and care providers.***

***If you are interested in serving as a director please submit a letter of interest and a resume to the association's office attention "Larry".***

***Call 1-907-563-0880 for further information about the Mental Health Association's meeting schedule.***

**Will Saul...**

**God Picks the Loveliest Flowers**

*Reprinted from the Anchorage Daily News*

Anchorage resident Will Saul, 45, died April 15, 1999, at his home.

A gathering of friends was held at Alpenglow Ski Area in Arctic Valley in his memory. Friends were asked to bring stories and musical instruments to the potluck that followed the services.

Mr. Saul was born November 19, 1953, in Buffalo, N.Y., and grew up in East Aurora, N.Y. His undergraduate degrees were in biology and chemistry. He followed his outdoor spirit to Alaska in 1979 and decided to make the state his home. He later earned a masters degree in education.

Over the years, he worked as a National Outdoor Leadership School instructor, was a chemist on the North Slope, took an early retirement to sail the Mediterranean, built homes, taught high school and returned to work on the Slope.

Mr. Saul's love of the outdoors took him to remote corners of the country and the world to climb mountains, ski, mountain bike and to spend time with his children, friends and extended family.

As a parent volunteer at Bowman Elementary School, Mr. Saul traveled to Homer where he taught children about the sea. For months, he found delight in the button awarded him that said "Semi-Expert."

Last spring's family trip to Hawaii was a great expedition and lesson in body surfing despite the fact that they returned with severe sunburns, one broken nose and a strained back.

In February, he and his partner and 10 friends set up base at a remote back country lodge in British Columbia's Selkirk Mountains, where they set fresh tracks in the deepest he had ever skied.

Through the years, he worked hard with the help of his friends, his family and mental health professionals to maintain a high quality of life during his ongoing struggle with depression.

Memorial Donations may be sent to the Mental Health Association in Alaska, 4045 Lake Otis Pkwy., Suite 209, Anchorage AK 99508.

*Man is a social creature;*

*We are not meant to face problems alone.*

*- Bishop Thomas V. Daily*



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### **The Mint Green Ribbon means Awareness of Abuse**

A new awareness ribbon campaign has started. The wearing of a mint green ribbon shows support in the crusade to end child abuse, as well as getting people to ask about it. When they ask, tell them it is for child abuse awareness, and explain to them the tremendous problems child abuse creates.

The state of Alaska defines child abuse by law. Included in this definition is any of the following actions committed by a person responsible for the child's care:

- \* Physical injury that harms or threatens a child's health or welfare.
- \* Failure to provide care for a child. This can include failure to provide the needed physical, mental, emotional and social needs.
- \* Sexual abuse, including molestation or incest, and sexual exploitation, including allowing or encouraging prostitution.
- \* Mental injury. This covers any substantial mental, psychological or emotional damage to a child, as evidenced by substantial and observable impairments which hamper the child's ability to function as would be developmentally appropriate.
- \* Maltreatment. This covers cases where substantial harm is done to a child as a result of abuse or neglect, by act or omission. This act or omission need not be done by the parents, custodian or guard-

ian, but covers other potential caregivers as well.

In all cases of child abuse, it is vital that you remain calm around the child. Children often feel responsible for a parent's emotional reaction, and may even regret reporting the abuse because of the parent's distress. Children who have been abused need to see that you are strong enough to handle the situation. The best way to show strength is to appear calm and provide reassurance to the child.

Since 1989, reports of child abuse have been dramatically rising. Of the various types of abuse, neglect is the highest, followed by physical abuse, sexual abuse, mental injury, and abandonment. DFYS posts the statistics on their web site, at [www.hss.state.ak.us/dfys/Stats/intro.htm](http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dfys/Stats/intro.htm). During FY 89, there were 7876 reports of harm to children; during FY 98 there were 16,380 reports of harm. From 1982 to 1997, the Anchorage District courthouse had 312 convictions out of 950 Felony Child Sexual Abuse cases. As of March 22, 1999, there were 677 registered sex offenders in anchorage alone.

The scars of abuse last a lifetime, be they mental or physical. Let the world know you care.

### **New Book about Manic-Depression**

**When Irish Eyes Are Crying**, by Stephen D. Manning invites you into the mind of Archie McRae, a 16-year old manic depressive. This remarkable novel takes you on an emotional roller-coaster ride as you learn about manic-depression through the eyes of Archie McRae. You will learn about both Manic-Depression and how it is treated.

Stephen Dennis Manning is a graduate of the University of California at Irvine with a BA in Psychology. He has several years of work in the mental health/mental retardation fields. This is his first novel.

The book can be ordered from the author for \$8 per copy, plus \$2.25 shipping for first copy, and \$0.75 per additional copy.

To order, send a check to: Stephen D. Manning, PO Box 1242, Sharon Hill, PA 19079

**Parity** (continued from Page 1)

issue of the day for mental heal advocates is the mental health parity initiative to end discrimination in the insurance industry that sets mental health services aside from physical health services. "Makes no sense to me," stated Jan McGillivary, CEO of the Alaska Mental Health Association, "the brain is the most important organ in our bodies and the foolish concept that comprehensive insurance coverage would be cost prohibitive has been debunked years ago." Insurance discrimination is common and most Alaskans with medical benefits do not enjoy early intervention and treatment for mental illnesses.

Insurance policies typically impose higher co-payments and more restrictive day and visit limits, as well as life time limits for mental health care than they do for physical health care. One in four Alaskan families will experience a mental illness this year alone. Most Alaskans can not afford mental health treatment, are most often untreated ... even though mental illnesses can be diagnosed and treated effectively,

"Alaskan policy makers and advocates have partnered to create a fairly decent beginning to our mental health delivery system," stated McGillivary. "The system we employ today is, however, inaccessible to Alaskans off road systems and the insurance discrimination compounds the dilemma of receiving treatment. For a few extra pennies a month an insurance carrier could end the discrimination." Representative Gary Davis introduced House Bill No. 149 on March 19, 1999 for Mental Health Parity in Alaska which will be revisited in January, 2000. "Advocates are building a head of steam around this issue," stated McGillivary, "and we'll continue to educate legislators and the public about this archaic practice. Studies show that comprehensive mental health coverage equates to lower overall medical benefit use within five years of mandated parity. President Clinton's recent announcement to require federal employee health plans to provide the same coverage for mental illness and substance abuse is definitely

a long overdue step in the right direction, Perhaps Alaska's legislature will take a closer look at the parity issue and fall on the side of decency, enlightenment and end the stigma surrounding mental illnesses."

The Alaska Mental Health Association has advocated for development, continued improvement and expansion of a mental health delivery system that adequately provides community based mental health treatment since the 1940's. Mental illnesses are common and effectively treated. For more information on mental health parity contact the Mental Health Association at 563-0880.

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**Mental Health Month  
May 1999**

May is Mental Health Month. It is a time to raise awareness of the various mental health issues affecting over 51 million Americans, almost 20% of the official U.S. population. Some facts of note:

- \* Of the over 51 million sufferers of mental disorders, only 8 million seek treatment.
- \* One in five children and adolescents has a mental health problem that can be treated.
- \* At least one in 10 children, some 6 million kids, has a serious emotional disorder.
- \* Only 1 in three children experiencing a mental disorders receives treatment.
- \* More than 18 million people experience a depressive disorder in any given year.
- \* One in 33 children and one in 8 adolescents experience depressive disorders.
- \* Juveniles interacting with the criminal justice system have two to three times the rate of mental disorders as the general juvenile population.

Obviously, there is a problem. Early diagnosis and treatment can help. There is no reason most persons who experience mental

*Continues on page 7*

1999 Mental Health Association Awards Nomination Form Award Category Selection  
Criteria:

1. An Alaskan mental health advocate, consumer, professional, business or organization.
2. Impact at the community, regional or state level.
3. Evidence of a positive, direct, ongoing and significant improvement in mental health services.

Name of Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_

Employing Organization/Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe how and why this person meets the above description:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Nominator: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Nominations must be returned to MHA by July 12, 1999.**

Faxes are welcomed at 907-563-0881; Email <mhaa@alaska.net>; or mail to:  
MHA, 4045 Lake Otis Parkway, Suite. 209, Anchorage, Alaska, 99508.  
Support letters are strongly encouraged. Please call 563-0880 with questions.

**Thank you for helping MHA recognize excellence in the field of mental health!**

Awards will be presented on July 22 at the Hawthorn Suites, 325 W. 8th Avenue, 11:00 A.M.  
in Anchorage.

**Website <<http://www.alaska.net/~mhaa>>**

## **Award Categories**

**1) Natalie Gottstein Memorial Award** - Presented annually to a person that has demonstrated outstanding commitment in advocating for those experiencing a mental illness and for broadening public awareness of Alaskan mental health needs, issues and services.

Natalie Gottstein served as the Executive Director of the Mental Health Association from the mid-1970's until 1986. Her tireless efforts to bring the Mental Health Lands Trust Settlement to the hearts and minds of Alaskans marks her outstanding contribution in the history of Alaska's mental health system.

**2) Achievement Award to an Alaskan Social Service Organization** - Presented annually to recognize an exceptional and innovative program effort in the delivery of mental health services in Alaska.

**3) Outstanding Citizen Contribution to the Field of Mental Health** - Presented annually to recognize exceptional personal or professional contribution of an Alaskan dedicated to prevention, treatment, and/or destigmatization of mental illnesses.

**4) Outstanding Business Contribution to the Employment of Persons Experiencing Mental Illness** - Presented annually to recognize an Alaskan business that had demonstrated outstanding support and employment opportunities to persons experiencing mental illnesses.

**5) Outstanding Mental Health Prevention Effort** - Presented annually to a person, group or organization which has excelled in its mental health prevention effort.

**6) Mental Health Volunteer of the Year** - Presented annually to an individual who has demonstrated outstanding volunteer commitment to the field of mental health.

**7) Media Award** - Presented to an Alaskan media organization for outstanding reporting, coverage, and sensitivity to the people and issues relating to the field of mental health.

**8) Michael Graf Memorial Award** - Presented annually to recognize a mental health professional who has demonstrated outstanding commitment, innovation and strength to the field of community mental health services. This award is awarded jointly from the Alaska Community Mental Health Services Association and the Mental Health Association in Alaska.

**Nominations must be returned to MHA by July 12, 1999.  
ALL Nominees will be recognized on July 22, 1999 at 11:00 A.M.  
at the Hawthorn Suites, 325 W. 8th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska.**

**Website <<http://www.alaska.net/~mhaa>>**

## **Mental Health Month**

*(continued from Page 4)*

disorders cannot go on to lead productive lives, which is why MHAA maintains a year-round policy of providing depression and anxiety screenings. We do these screenings at no cost to the participant. This May, we have made efforts to let the public know these services are available, and have had some response. Unfortunately, the response was slow.

Stress is another major issue in Mental Health. Not everyone can handle stress, and some handle it far better than others. Stress is a natural part of modern life, but stress overwhelming one need not be. Overwhelming stress can be a factor in depression, anxiety disorders, and other mental illnesses.

In 1998, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that by the year 2020, depression would be the greatest cause of premature death and disability world wide. It is currently known that depression ranks among the top three workplace problems currently, right after family crisis and stress, and costs the U.S. \$43.7 billion annually, including lost productivity, absenteeism, direct treatment and rehabilitation costs, and loss of earnings due to depression-related suicides. Anxiety disorders and another \$46.8 billion to the costs to the U.S., and are nearly one third of the nations total mental health bill.

Schizophrenia costs rank among the

highest of any disorder. The cost to the US is enormous, with the private sector picking up some \$65 billion per year, which is over one third the total costs per year. Schizophrenia has a treatment success rate of over 60%, as compared to the success rate of 41%-52% for heart disease.

Nearly 2 in five alcoholics and just over half of all drug abusers also have at least one serious mental illness, according to the Journal of the AMA (1998).

About 1 in 6 people lack health insurance, and according to the Hay Group Study of 1997, many of them are unable to access the services they need from an overburdened and underfunded public mental health system.

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### **NIMH Coming to Anchorage**

The National Institute for Mental Health is coming to Anchorage to present a conference, Mental Health At the Frontier: Alaska, on August 10th & 11th, 1999.

This Conference is one of a series of conferences to address the mental health related research issues of the rural and frontier areas of the United States. This particular conference is an effort to learn more about the mental health issues unique to Alaska communities and families.

The conference is to be composed of a grant writing workshop on the 10th, and the main conference on the 11th. Registration is free.



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- Student/Senior: \$10
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- Patron: \$100 to \$500
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Information (mark all that apply)

- I would like more information about the Association
- I would be willing to devote time to the efforts of the association
- This is a Change of Address.

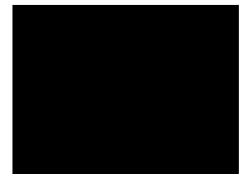
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Field Notes Summer 1999.

**Mental Health Association in Alaska**  
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**Advocating to Reduce Stigma**