



A newsletter about the *My Health, My Choice, My Life* initiative across the State of Tennessee.

# Tomorrow Starts Today



April 2015

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Check out the NEW **20FIT**Teen Program designed by Cassidy Bryant on page 3!



## Michael and the Courage to Overcome

By James Pincham, Ridgeview Peer Wellness Coach

As a peer wellness coach, I occasionally meet and work with individuals who manage to overcome significant physical and mental health challenges despite great odds. Michael A. is one of them.

Since November, 2013 - almost a year-and-a-half ago - Michael has lost 53 pounds, stopped drinking sodas, and stopped smoking. He finally feels as though he has his diabetes and serious mental illness under control too.

His diagnoses are multiple. In addition to depression and diabetes, Michael lives with schizophrenia and high blood pressure. The key, he said, to his success has been increased physical activity and the support and education he has received through *My Health, My Choice, My Life* workshops. Michael has taken three out of four workshops I offer – Chronic Disease Self-Management (CDSMP), Diabetes Self-Management (DSMP), and the Tobacco-Free program. He has also participated in one-on-one wellness coaching.

Michael's biggest achievement since November, 2014, has been gaining control over his blood sugar, which often ranged from 450 - 500, daily. While taking the DSMP workshop, he learned important skills like healthy eating, meal planning, common complications of diabetes, and how important it is to stay physically active.

Today, months after completing his first DSMP class, Michael continues to meal plan and limit carbohydrates to no more than 60 grams per meal. He no longer drinks soda. As a result, his doctor has now reduced his diabetes medication by nearly 50 percent and his blood sugar now usually averages between 90 and 180.

While he took the Tobacco-Free workshop, over a period of several weeks Michael gradually reduced his smoking. For the past three months, he hasn't smoked.

Michael is an amazing example of the success that is possible with the population we serve as wellness coaches when they acquire the tools they need to be courageous self-managers. His hard work is proof that the support and encouragement we provide does make a difference.

# Expanding Our Territory

By Donald Williams, Middle Tennessee Peer Wellness Coach

On February 4, 2015, *My Health, My Choice, My Life* made its debut at the Mental Health Co-Op on 275 Cumberland Bend in Nashville. Seven members signed up to participate in the Chronic Disease Self-Management (CDSMP) workshop I facilitated with the help of Case Manager Supervisor, Kate Habegger.

To ensure participation, we provided bus passes to those clients who didn't have access to transportation but who still wanted to attend. It was great to receive such great, positive feedback on the workshop from several people. It's inspiring as a wellness coach to be a witness to improvement in healthy behaviors.

One participant, Pam Hopkins, said she now realizes she doesn't need to eat large portions to feel full and satisfied. She also tries now to eat more fresh foods and less canned foods. And because she felt valued as a workshop participant she began to communicate more effectively and reach out for support.

Latasha Grant has started walking more and drinking more water. She also controls her portions more now. She said that staying focused has helped her to set complete goals. She's also much more confident now than she was during the initial meeting for the pre-assessment. She's more open and willing to make herself vulnerable.

Allen Beech, who has been diagnosed with pre-diabetes, has had to make a lot of dietary changes so he doesn't develop the disease. Since the workshop, he has avoided eating sweets and decreased his consumption of fried foods. These changes have resulted in losing four pounds and gaining a more positive attitude and outlook. He's also followed advice of his doctors and has invested in two pairs of shoes specifically designed for those who are managing life with diabetes.

Kate Habegger received training to co-facilitate the CDSMP in December, so this workshop was her first experience.



Pictured above are the graduates of the CDSMP at the Mental Health Co-Op in Nashville. We are so proud of you all!

“I have been pleasantly surprised with how well the workshop has gone here at MHC as groups in general are difficult in an outpatient setting due to the difficulty with transportation. The participants have embraced this group. I believe that having to find your own way to get to the group means truly having to practice those self-management skills that we discuss throughout the workshop. This workshop focuses on all areas of self-management in regard to a chronic illness, not just being focused on physical health. It makes me excited thinking about the potential of offering this group to our satellite offices since it has been so successful here in our metro office.”

Prior to December, *My Health, My Choice, My Life* was not operating within the Mental Health Cooperative network and doing the CDSMP workshop there was a wonderful opportunity to expand our network and the people we reach. The response was positive all around – from the participants and the employees at MHC. We continue to receive not only anecdotal evidence of success, but also specific stories of participants using their taught skills in daily life.

# Wellness Changes Stick at Laurel House

By Julie Fann, Frontier Peer Wellness Coach

How do you make positive health behaviors stick? Constantly practice them, that's how. And don't be afraid of change.

Staff and residents of group homes face a wide range of chronic health issues that require information, time, and effort to address. Mainly effort. And more effort.

Nearly two years after working with all of the wonderful people at Laurel House in Johnson City by leading *My Health, My Choice, My Life* workshops, shopping and talking with staff and residents, nothing is now at all like it used to be when I first went there. They do stuff now. Fun stuff. Like go for walks at the park and visit a gym to see what going there might be like.

Now, three days a week, every week, residential technician Marcie Austin leads residents in flexibility activities; moderate physical activity that increases heart rate, and relaxation techniques. "All of us usually walk together at a good pace for ten minutes, even if it's just around the inside of the house on cold and rainy days. We do some warm-up stretches and, afterward, five minutes of relaxation. On those days when it's warm and the sun's shining we go to the park and walk," she said. More residents are choosing to participate, and it's making a difference in their health.

The staff also prepares healthier foods daily and monitors portions, no longer serving seconds. Residents don't eat fried foods or white bread anymore, and all meat is broiled or baked, except fish, which is now part of the weekly menu. Instead of snacks like cookies and chips, residents are self-managing by eating fruit, string cheese and drinking more water. And they're feeling better.

Recently, staff adopted a two-week menu provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) titled "Healthy Eating on a Budget" which comes complete with all of the recipes and a break-down of nutritional content. It can be found at <http://choosemyplate.gov/budget/sampletwoweekmenus.html> and provides a wide variety of meal options that are tasty and worth sharing.

The *My Health, My Choice, My Life* initiative is not just creating greater awareness among those who live and work in behavioral health; it's now resulting in permanent change in the overall culture.

## 20FITeen Program

Let's Get FIT!

East Tennessee Peer Wellness Coach Cassidy Bryant has developed a 20-week cardiovascular fitness program designed for all populations, with an intensity level that gradually increases. 20FITeen is intended to support you in becoming a stronger person mentally and physically. Each week of the program focuses on a different activity - from legs, arms, abs and core workouts to stretching and yoga. The most important goal of the program, however, is that we have a great time!



*Pictured Above: These two women have worked incredibly hard the past two months. April Anderson and Ambrosia Adams, after attending a Tobacco-Free workshop led by Peer Wellness Coach, Cassidy Bryant, can now take a deep*

*breath of fresh air. Ambrosia is currently pregnant and April recently had a child. Both women smoked cigarettes during their pregnancies, but have now quit completely! Cassidy is so proud to be a part of their lives and to have helped them become tobacco-free!*



# The Truth About Sugar

By Mark Bresee, East Tennessee Peer Wellness Coach



When you read the word *sugar* what picture pops into your mind? Most of us see granulated white table sugar, made from sugar cane or sugar beets, a sweet substance called *sucrose*, with a reputation for being hostile to our health. While essentially factual, this does not tell the whole story.

Our digestive system turns nearly everything we eat into glucose, also known as blood sugar. It is the primary energy source for the cells in our body.

You have probably heard of *fructose*, fruit sugar. Fructose provides healthy energy if it is connected to fiber in its original form. Fructose in an orange produces healthy energy. Remove the fiber and it turns into orange juice, a beverage with some nutritional value, but also a source of 24 grams (4 teaspoons) of sugar. Fructose separated from fiber works like sucrose, regular table sugar.

Lactose is sugar found in milk and is famous because some people are unable to digest the sugar in milk, which is defined as *lactose intolerance*.

Some alcoholic beverages contain sugar, and consumers do well to be aware of the sugar content of what they drink. These adult beverage companies do not usually provide nutritional information on their product, making a trip to the Internet a necessity.

Recommended maximum sugar (disconnected from fiber) intake is 24 grams for women, about six teaspoons, and 36 grams for men, or about 9 teaspoons. American adults average 22 teaspoons (88 grams) of sugar each day and children consume about 32 teaspoons (128 grams) of sugar daily.

Following is a list of a few beverages and how much sugar they contain. Please note that the apple juice is 100% from apples and the grape juice is 100% from grapes, not fruit flavored drinks.

Arizona Lemon Ice Tea	8 oz.	24g
Apple Juice	8 oz.	26g
Red Bull	8 oz.	27g
Mountain Dew	8 oz.	31g
Grape Juice	8 oz.	39g
Chocolate McCafe' Shake	8 oz.	51g

Weight gain is the most obvious result. Decreased nutrition which weakens our immune system ranks high as well because these sugars provide calories almost devoid of nutrition.

Here is a statement from an article by the National Institute of Health that many may find sobering: “Under select dietary circumstances, sugar can have effects similar to a drug abuse.” (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15987666>) Because sugars often cause the secretion of the happy hormone dopamine, our bodies come to crave those sugar hits much they do addictive feel-good drugs like morphine. “Sugar high” and “sugar addiction” do not sound much like exaggerations.

When your taste buds urge the search for sweetness, do yourself a favor and find the flavor where nature, not Nestle, intended it to be.

# Donald's Move of the Month

Sitting at a desk for long periods of time, along with poor posture while you type can create a stiff neck, tense shoulders or even a headache. After a long hot shower to loosen muscles, try a few of these stretches that can provide some relief:

**Seated Neck Release.** Begin seated on the floor in a cross-legged position, or in a chair with your feet flat on the ground. Extend your right arm next to your right knee or along the right side of the chair. Place your left hand on the top of your head and slowly tilt your head to the left. Apply a gentle pressure with your hand to increase the stretch. Hold for 30 seconds, then slowly lift your head up and repeat the stretch on the other side.

**Seated Clasping Neck Stretch.** Begin seated comfortably either on the floor or in a chair. Clasp your hands and bring both palms to the back of your head. Sitting with a tall spine, ground your hips firmly into your seat. From here, begin to gently press your hands down toward your thighs, tucking your chin into your chest. As you press down, use the heels of your palms to pull your head away from your shoulders. Hold here for at least 30 seconds, and then slowly lift your head up and release your hands.



## Breaking Hard Habits, One Step at a Time!

By Lindsey Johnson, West Tennessee Peer Wellness Coach

In October, 2014, when the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) started at the Comfort Center in Lexington, Tenn., Dayna Mulford was smoking on average two-to-three packs of cigarettes a day.

By the time she started wellness coaching in January, 2015, Dayna had made small changes to reduce that amount somewhat, but still had no desire to quit. When asked about smoking cessation she said, "Smoking is the one bad habit I still have, and if it's the only one I have, I'm okay with it. I've come a long way with many other things." Smoking wasn't a habit she was willing to break yet.

Around week six of the eight weeks of coaching, something shifted in Dayna. Smoking cessation became a priority, along with increased physical activity. She began a regular exercise routine and started decreasing her smoking little by little. By week eight, she expressed her plans to quit completely. Currently, she is smoking an average of four cigarettes a day, and she is determined to be tobacco-free as soon as possible.

When I asked where she found her motivation, she said, "My future grandkids. I don't have any yet, but I'm sure I will one day, and I don't want to be in the same shape my mother is in. My mother has been diagnosed with COPD, and that's what my kids see. Instead of having a healthy grandmother, my kids see her coughing and struggling to breathe continually. My mother's father actually died from emphysema, so I know this runs in my family. I don't want my future grandkids exposed to anything like that."

Since Dayna has reduced her smoking substantially, she has seen many improvements already. "I have about 20 steps from my road to my front porch, and now I'm not huffing and puffing once I get to the top. Also, I don't have to catch my breath anymore when I sing. It definitely has a positive effect on my mental health as well because I am doing something positive for myself. ... Only you have the ability to take your life into your own hands. If there is something you don't like, change it! You can!"

The *My Health, My Choice, My Life* initiative is proud to show such wonderful success stories like these. We believe that sharing your story has a powerful ability to inspire others to do similar things. Thank you, Dayna, for your boldness and dedication to breaking this habit, and we look forward to seeing how this positive change affects you and many others!

# A Garden is a Friend You Can Visit Anytime...

By Leanne Crawford, Cherokee Health Systems Peer Wellness Coach

I remember those care-free days of being a child. I loved playing outdoors, riding bicycles and swinging, but, most of all, just digging in the dirt made me happy. Making mud pies was my favorite thing to do. Years later, I find that there was a reason that digging in the dirt made me feel so happy. It's called Horticulture Therapy.

You may be asking yourself what exactly is Horticulture Therapy? According to the American Horticulture Therapy Association (AHTA): *"Horticultural therapy is the engagement of a client in horticultural activities facilitated by a trained therapist to achieve specific and documented treatment goals. AHTA believes that horticultural therapy is an active process which occurs in the context of an established treatment plan where the process itself is considered the therapeutic activity rather than the end product. Horticultural therapy programs can be found in a wide variety of healthcare, rehabilitative, and residential settings."*

When you stop and think about it, playing in the dirt and/or gardening can not only be fun but is also gentle exercise that allows us to nurture things and watch them grow.

Gardening takes a lot of time and effort, but it makes us feel so good and it is so good for us. Have you ever wondered why? Other than the fact that you're outdoors, getting some physical activity, and will eventually be eating fresh fruits and veggies? Well, here's another possible reason why...

"...some recent research has added another missing piece to the puzzle: It's in the dirt. Or to be a little more specific, a strain of bacterium in soil, *Mycobacterium vaccae*, has been found to trigger the release of serotonin, which in turn elevates mood and decreases anxiety." ([healinglandscapes.org](http://healinglandscapes.org))

Wow! Isn't that just amazing? Who knew? Well maybe he didn't know but actually, horticultural therapy (HT) dates back to the 1800's when a man by the name of Benjamin Rush discovered that clients who were diagnosed with mental illness had positive outcomes when they worked in a

farm setting.

"In the 1940s and 1950s, rehabilitative care of hospitalized war veterans significantly expanded acceptance of the practice. No longer limited to treating mental illness, HT practice gained in credibility and was embraced for a much wider range of diagnoses and therapeutic options. Today, HT is accepted as a beneficial and effective therapeutic modality. It is widely used within a broad range of rehabilitative, vocational, and community settings." ([ahta.org/horticultural-therapy](http://ahta.org/horticultural-therapy))

Members of Cherokee Health System's Health Recovery Group love visiting University of Tennessee (UT) Gardens Institute of Agriculture. For the past two years, they have been participating in monthly horticulture activities led by UT Agriculture's Horticulture Therapist and Gardens Education Coordinator, Derrick Stowell. Among some of the activities they have done are:

- Harvested fresh veggies and made salads
- Prepared beds for planting, planned and designed plantings
- Planted seeds, transplanted plants
- Learned to identify common garden pests, while focusing on the most healthy, safest, most sustainable pest management techniques
- Identified things both plants and people need to be healthy (light, air, nutrition and occasionally help)
- Picnicked in the gardens
- Walked the labyrinth
- Attended classroom activities as well as greenhouse and outdoor activities
- Divided and replanted (perennial) chives. Learned smells of various herbs in their "kitchen garden"
- Visited the Koi pond

In fact, our members loved these activities so much that Derrick and the Cherokee Staff had the brilliant idea to see if we could bring



some of these activities "home." On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015, Derrick Stowell, Horticulture Therapist from UT, came to our New Tazewell and Maynardville Day Programs and on March 4<sup>th</sup> he visited with our Morristown and Newport programs.

During these visits, he brought each center some gardening supplies such as a trowel, gloves, dibbles and soil. He talked with program staff and members about gardening activities they would like to do, assessed our landscape to see how much space we had to do these activities (gardens, waterfalls, etc.), then completed an activity with the members in which they planted vegetable seeds of their choice and then made a greenhouse of their own that they could either take home or leave at the center. He will be assisting each center in developing their special place to dig in the dirt and get happy.

I think C.F. Menninger, M.D said it best when he said "the field of activities in horticulture is practically limitless." He talks about how spring time is a horticulturist's favorite time of the year, but even in the winter one can still look at pictures in many different plant catalogs with anticipation of the beautiful flowers they will produce in the summer. "Hope never dies in the real gardener's heart." (Menninger, 1942)

When I look back to the beginning of this article, what comes to mind now is a saying I've often heard...from small beginnings come great things.

Resources:

[ahta.org/horticultural-therapy](http://ahta.org/horticultural-therapy)

<http://www.healinglandscapes.org/blog/2011/01/its-in-the-dirt-bacteria-in-soil-makes-us-happier-smarter/>

[Menninger, C.F \(1942\). Recreation and Morale: Horticulture. Bulletin of The Menninger Clinic, 65-67.](#)

# Safety Using Over-the-Counter Meds and Herbal Products

By Febe Wallace and Stella Melton, Cherokee Health Systems



When we face symptoms of illness, we all want to find the help that is the safest and most accessible. For many people, over-the-counter (OTC) medications and herbal remedies appear to meet those goals. Many OTC products and herbal remedies are useful and safe when used in the proper way. However, both OTC and herbals can cause unwanted effects, including danger to your health.

It's important to keep in mind that medications you can obtain without a prescription are still medicines! They are strong substances that have very real influences on your mind and body. It is important to follow the label's directions precisely and involve your primary care provider if there are any unanswered questions.

Likewise, herbal products and nutritional supplements can be useful but are also substances that can have a strong effect on the mind and body. Many people believe that herbal remedies are "natural" and therefore safe in all situations. Many of our modern prescription medicines had a foundation in remedies that came from the natural plant world.

But many medications, and many herbal remedies, are toxic in certain amounts, or with certain co-existing health conditions, or in combination with certain other medications (or foods or drinks).

Unfortunately, there are many unknown effects of combining multiple medications and herbals together. An additional concern is that the lack of regulation of the herbal and supplement industries makes it difficult to know which products are high in quality.

But here are a few examples to illustrate the concerns about interactions between OTC/herbal/prescription medications:

*Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)* are commonly prescribed psychiatric medications that generally have an excellent safety profile. Frequently prescribed SSRIs include fluoxetine, paroxetine, citalopram, and sertraline. However, St. John's Wort can trigger *serotonin syndrome* when combined with SSRIs. Symptoms of serotonin syndrome can include high blood pressure, fast heart rate, confusion or disorientation, restlessness, apprehension, sweating, shakiness, poor coordination, and vomiting.

*Dextromethorphan* (a common ingredient in OTC cough medicine) combined with SSRIs can also cause serotonin syndrome.

Cold or allergy medications containing *pseudoephedrine* can increase psychiatric and cardiac symptoms in some people, and cold and allergy medications containing *diphenhydramine* can increase anticholinergic side effects.

Taking large doses of the common OTC pain reliever

*acetaminophen* can damage the liver, and this medication combined with alcohol increases the risk. Be aware that several multi-symptom OTC meds also contain acetaminophen, so it is possible to overtake it unless you read all the ingredient labels for medicines you take.

Both *kava* and *valerian* can add to the effects of other sedating medications. *Alcohol* also does this, and the increased effects/side effects can be serious.

Both *ginkgo* and *fish oil* can change how your blood clots. This can be a serious problem for persons taking blood thinners like warfarin. If you also add *aspirin* or *ibuprofen* to the mix, the risk increases even more.

These examples are only the tip of the iceberg. There are enormous numbers of prescription medications, OTC medications, herbal remedies, and nutritional supplements. Many of these can play a role in keeping us healthy. But they also have a potential to work against our health if we take them incorrectly or in combination with certain other products. Please make your providers aware of *all* medicines, herbals, and supplements that you take. Your health matters!

*Febe Wallace MD is the Director of Primary Care Services at Cherokee Health Systems. Stella Melton LPN, BA, CPRP is a nurse who coordinates Cherokee's Psychosocial Day Programs.*

# Spring Time!

(Find the Hidden Message)

L L S H A G V E F U X S N I N T H E S U  
 N L L U F L N F C Q A T R T F J N S Q E  
 K L A A N C I I D R L S A E Y H U F D F  
 R A S B B G G U Z K E F R R W N N A C R  
 A B O W T Y L O A A R T Z O S O N I L I  
 P E C A F O E A V N G O Q C O O L H O S  
 G S C T T R O L S L U R R E M D C F U B  
 P A E E A K U F L S C E A E R A T D D E  
 I B R R H P F I S O E N L T E U I U S E  
 C X L D O P L J T N V S U B S S S X O Z  
 N Z A Q E S O B F M O S S O L B A I T K  
 I R F V Y N G J Q L Q T A N S Z O U E R  
 C B I R D S I V A S C G T M E G J I W L  
 N V H B X B V N U M B R E L L A E S J Y  
 X M L Q E X O I G N C T T L X R B J U L

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### Word Bank

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|-----------|------------|------------|
| Baseball  | Beach      | Birds      |
| Blossom   | Clouds     | Flowers    |
| Football  | Frisbee    | Fruit      |
| Gardening | Golf       | Hat        |
| Leisure   | Lemonade   | Outdoors   |
| Park      | Picnic     | Relax      |
| Soccer    | Stargazing | Sunglasses |
| Sunscreen | Umbrella   | Volleyball |
| Water     |            |            |

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Note: Find the unused letters at the beginning of the puzzle to find a hidden message!

