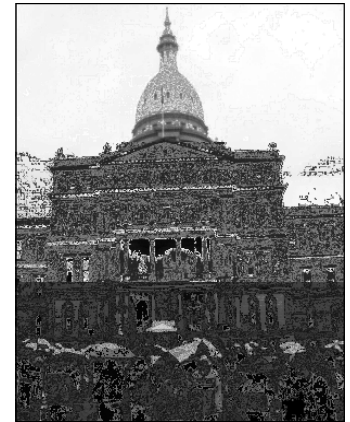




CHOICES

DISCOVERY & RECOVERY THROUGH HOPE, CHOICE, EMPOWERMENT AND COMMUNITY

1500 MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES RALLY IN LANSING



Fifteen hundred mental health advocates, including a group from St. Clair County Community Mental Health, rallied on the steps of the state capitol on May 11 in a steady downpour. Their goal was to educate the public and legislators about mental health issues and chip away at stigma.

The top issue appeared to be the proposed \$54 million in cuts to the state's Department of Community Health for next year. The department funds non-Medicaid mental health treatment in Michigan.

The annual event, held for the sixth time, is called Walk a Mile in My Shoes.

"Life can be seen as a victory or a defeat. It's all in how you view your obstacles and decide to overcome them," said Anastasia Cornell, representing St. Clair County CMH, from the steps of the capitol building. Sandy Olvera held the St. Clair County flag.

"In Crawford County, we are very afraid about more budget

cuts," said the speaker. "We are afraid people won't be able to recover and get their lives back. We are afraid more people will end up in the emergency room or on the streets instead of getting treatment... Treatment and support should be a right, not a privilege."

Representatives of all Michigan's 83 counties spoke on the capitol steps.

A waterlogged signed waving above the sea of umbrellas reminded legislators of why they should listen: "We vote."

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CHOICES

CHOICES is a newsletter dedicated to sharing information about discovery & recovery with people who use Community Mental Health services in St. Clair County. Artists and writers who use CMH services, and their family members, may submit artwork, photography, poetry, articles or story ideas for possible publication. All material published in the newsletter is subject to editing.

Submit work to:
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STAR OF CMH ADS GRADUATES FROM ART SCHOOL, LANDS JOB

How real is recovery from a mental illness? For former Port Huron resident Dairoll Medrano, it is real enough to take to the bank.

Medrano is about to graduate with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in illustration from the Cleveland Institute of Art, where he won a \$29,000 scholarship while studying at SC4. He has been hired as a fulltime graphic designer at the Legacy Project Group.

Medrano's face is familiar to residents of St. Clair, Lapeer and Sanilac counties. Since 2007, he has appeared on billboards and in TV ads in the region. "I am

not my mental illness," he says in his ad.

Medrano has bipolar disorder. "Art is my passion," said Medrano in 2007. "It's an outlet for me to explore my illness and my creativity. It helps me cope. It's very great therapy for me."

In Cleveland, "I've been doing a lot of freelance work, internships with galleries, all kinds of things," he said.

On top of his artistic success, his active lifestyle in Cleveland has left him thinner than he appears in the ad campaign here. "I'm doing really good," Medrano said. "And to finally get a job—that's fantastic."

CLAY TOWNSHIP ARTIST CATHERINE MILSON LANDS PIECE IN TRAVELING ART SHOW

Catherine Milson of Clay Township entered two paintings in the art contest sponsored by St. Clair County Community Mental Health last February, a portrait of an avatar from the James Cameron's blockbuster movie and one of a sock monkey.

From a selection of about 25 works, CMH visitors and staff selected the Milson's "Avatar" as the winner. Milson's painting will represent St. Clair County in the Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Board's (MACMHB) two-year traveling art show, called "Creative Minds, Changing Minds." Voters also selected "Brainworks" by Laura Elizabeth Waschull of Lapeer County.

The MACMHB asked each of the state's 18 Pre-paid Inpatient Health Plans, representing all of the state's 48 CMHs, to submit two pieces by artists who use public mental health services.

This is the second two-year show mounted by the association. The show debuted at the Walk-A-Mile-In-My-Shoes mental health rally in May, beginning its two-year trip around the state. The goals of the show are to help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues and to point to art as somewhat unconventional pathway to recovery.

Milson's winning painting combines acrylic, watercolors and pastels in a stunning avatar-likeness.

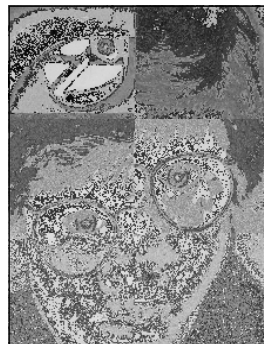
"I got the painting done the day the movie came out, before I had seen it," said Milson at the Algonac Community Center, where she participates in a weekly art class sponsored by St. Clair County CMH. "I saw the movie the day after it came out. Different. Vibrant. Very unique. I was excited – the painting looked awesome. People encouraged me to enter it in the show. I was hoping that one of my originals would win, such as my sock monkeys or gothic art. Not that it wasn't original. I painted it! But it's fan art and I usually don't do that."

Milson has a tattoo of a sock monkey angel ascending to heaven on her arm.

"Their smiles make me happy," she said.

The tattoo honors her grandmother who died in January 2009.

The show will be in Port Huron in February, 2012.



- 1) Avatar.
- 2) Brainworks.
- 3) Artist C. Milson.

CMH ART SHOW AT STUDIO 1219 THROUGH JULY 9

In one painting, dragonflies buzz above trembling daisies. In other, a row boat bobs at water's edge, suggesting years of use at an Up North cottage.

Both are among the 100 paintings on display at Studio 1219 in Port Huron by artists who happen to use Community Mental Health services in St. Clair and Lapeer counties. The show runs through July 9 in the second floor classroom of the building. The arts programs at the CMHs offer individuals the chance to build non-traditional pathways to recovery.

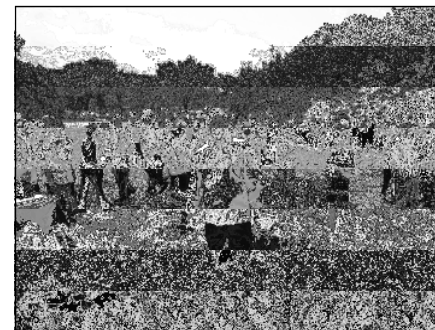
Studio 1219 is located at 1219 Military Street, Port Huron. Gallery hours are Tuesdays-Wednesdays 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Thursdays-Saturdays, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. and Sundays noon-5 p.m.



Artist Ricky Mills with two of his paintings at Studio 1219.

CMH CHEF JOINS MICHELLE OBAMA'S 'LET'S MOVE' CAMPAIGN

Jim Kokenyesdi, the executive chef of St. Clair County CMH's training kitchen called The Galley, met with Michelle Obama and many of the nation's top chefs at the White House on June 4. The event was called "Chefs Move to Schools." It was part of the First Lady's campaign called "Let's Move!" – a national effort to end childhood obesity within one generation. "Chefs Move to Schools" will match up a local chef with each of the county's 95,000 schools. The goal is to improve the nutrition and taste of school meals. Kokenyesdi sees helping schools as an extension of his work at CMH, where he is part of the agency's effort to combine physical and mental health. The Galley prepares low fat, nutritious, low cost meals



Chef Jim in the White House garden.

for people who use services, staff and the public. Kokenyesdi joined famous TV chefs such as Rachel Ray, Marcus Samuelsson, Tom Colicchio and Cat Cora at the event.