



# CHANGES...

MARCH 1, 2018

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES NETWORK

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 3

## State Behavioral Health Coalition offers legislative priorities



The mid-shore's very own Rowan Powell, Transitional Age Youth Outreach Project Coordinator with On Our Own of Maryland, Inc., rallied the crowd with her powerful story of how behavioral health services received as a teenager saved her life. Powell was among other brave consumers who shared their stories as well in hopes to show how important it is to "Keep the Doors Open" and fully fund this Behavioral Health Legislation.

They were among hundreds of people flooded Lawyer's Mall in Annapolis last month during the Keep the Door Open Rally

to demand the restoration of nearly \$8 million in budget cuts to community mental health and substance use treatment, to fund the expansion of behavioral health crisis response services and telehealth, and the rest of the state's Behavioral Health Coalition's 2018 Legislative Agenda.

The Coalition thanked all of the legislators who stood with the coalition and participants as well as the speakers who shared their personal stories. Coalition members ask the community and treatment providers to push for several priorities while keeping an eye out for action alerts in coming weeks. The 2017 HOPE Act secured a much-needed increase in behavioral health provider rates, which was an important step in stabilizing the workforce to ensure access to high quality care. The Coalition has a strong legislative platform that will continue to expand access to critical behavioral health services across the lifespan. This year's legislative priorities are:

- **Support of the behavioral health workforce and guaranteed access to a comprehensive system of care by restoring the \$8 million cut from the Keep the Door Open commitment.** State leaders must stand firm on their commitment to protect vulnerable Marylanders by restoring this cut and giving our workforce the resources and tools necessary to treat all residents.

- **Expand crisis treatment and telehealth services to ensure access to urgent care and address behavioral health provider shortages.** Walk-in, mobile crisis services and residential crisis beds offer cost-effective care, stabilization of the immediate crisis, linkage to community resources and reduced hospitalization and incarceration. The Coalition supports crisis legislation SB703/HB1092 and SB704/HB1652.

- **Improve behavioral health services delivered in primary care and enhance programming for children and youth with better data transparency and outcomes measurement.** Coalition members want Maryland to implement the integration practice of the Collaborative Care Model in primary care and improve data transparency for children's services. The Coalition supports SB835/HB1682 and SB977/HB1517

Learn more at <http://keepthedooropenmd.org>.



They say you are known for what you wear. One local group has taken that idea to a new level with a fashion staple: the T-shirt. Chesapeake Voyagers, Inc. (CVI), a peer support organization based in Easton, opted to take a stand against stigma related to mental health and addiction. One method CVI members found to express their message was something that is critical yet often taken for granted: clothing.

“People read t-shirts almost instinctively,” said Executive Director Diane Lane. “And, obviously, everyone has to wear something.”

The idea emerged in 2015 when members and staff of CVI discussed how best to reduce stigma, raise awareness and talk openly about behavioral health. T-shirts came to mind. A simple shirt with an extraordinary message: “Let’s Talk About Mental Health and Addiction.”

Their discussion also included words they associated with themselves, recovery, survival and living. The group put positive words and phrases together, voted on favorites and had them designed in a word bubble. Instead of the detrimental words often associated with mental health, the members chose healthy, positive and uplifting words, such as “courageous,” “strong,” “talented” and “hopeful.”

The multi-colored word bubble is displayed on the back of the shirt with the message, “End Stigma One Word at a Time.”

“The more we can educate, the more we can advocate and help reduce the stigma around mental health,” Lane said. “It’s time these issues be brought out and spoken about, not hidden behind closed doors.”

The numbers support her assessment. Statistically, one in four Americans live with a behavioral health illness or disorder. When engaged in appropriate treatment, nearly 80 percent of individuals see a significant reduction in symptoms and an increase in overall quality of life. The vast majority of those living with behavioral health diagnoses live happy, healthy and productive lives. The t-shirts became an overnight success.

The shirts were offered for sale to members, staff and the general public. Members and staff wear the t-shirts out to events sponsored by CVI and on any other given day. Sure enough, people ask about them and what they are about. “It’s amazing how many people would come up to us and ask where they could get one,” said CVI Peer Support Specialist Maria Jenkins. The shirt was even featured on the front page of *The Washington Post* after a photographer snapped a picture of an individual wearing one during a Keep the Door Open Rally in Annapolis.

Currently shirts are \$5 and the sweatshirts are \$10. Anyone interested in purchasing a shirt may call the center at 410-822-1601. Please note that sizes are limited, so please call ahead to inquire on size availability.

Learn more about CVI online at [www.chesapeakevoyagers.org](http://www.chesapeakevoyagers.org), Facebook, or call 410-822-1601. Stop in to CVI at 342C N. Aurora Street in Easton.

**Our Mission** To continually improve the provision of behavioral health services for residents of Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne’s and Talbot counties through effective coordination of care in collaboration with consumers, their natural support systems, providers, and the community at large.

**Our Vision** A rural behavioral healthcare delivery system that is clinically and culturally competent. This system will ensure access, have a community focus, be cost-effective, and be integrated to serve the community as a whole.





**Lisa Bortolotti is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Birmingham. Her research interests n the philosophy of psychology and psychiatry. Here, she explores confabulation, and why “telling ourselves stories makes us feel better.**

In a now classic [experiment](#), psychologists Richard E Nisbett and Timothy Wilson at the University of Michigan laid out a range of items, such as pairs of stockings, and asked people to select one. Participants consistently preferred the items on their most right-hand side. When asked to explain their choices, individuals did not mention position of the items. Instead, they attributed choices to the superior texture or color of the chosen stockings, even when the displayed pairs were identical.

People *confabulated*. Not knowing some of the factors that were determining their choices, they produced an explanation that was not based on evidence relevant to their choices, but instead noted plausible reasons the chosen item was better.

This type of behavior is not confined to experimental situations. In our everyday lives, individuals often explain choices earnestly. When offering an explanation, we propose some plausible argument for choosing the way we did. Suppose a panel shortlists two candidates for a job, and is assessing them after carefully considering their qualifications and performance at the interview. Most people on the panel express a strong preference for John (a white male) over Arya (a woman of color).

When asked to explain their preferences, the panelists say that John has more experience than Arya, and performed more confidently at the interview. But actually, both candidates have the same amount of relevant job experience, and exhibited the same level of confidence at the interview. The panelists' preference was the result of an implicit bias against women of color. As the panelists are not aware of this bias, they lack information relevant to the factors determining their preference. They explain their preference by giving the sorts of reasons commonly accepted in a hiring context. The panelists in this scenario *confabulate*.

‘Confabulation’ comes from the Latin *fabula* (‘story’) which can be either a historical account or a fairytale. When we [confabulate](#), we tell a story that is fictional, while believing that it is true. As we are not aware that our story is fictional, this is very different from a lie: we have no intention to deceive. So in confabulation there is a mismatch between what we aim to do (tell a true story) and what we end up doing (tell a fictional story). We tend to confabulate when we are asked to explain our choices because we don’t always know the factors responsible for our choices. Yet, when asked why we made a choice, we offer an explanation. The explanation can sound plausible, but is not grounded in the relevant evidence because it doesn’t take into account some of the factors determining the choices.

It seems obvious that confabulation is something we should avoid if we can. It is the result of ignorance and it further spreads misleading information about ourselves (eg, that we choose stockings based on their color) and about the world (eg, that Arya was less confident than John at her job interview). Yet, counterintuitive as it might seem, confabulation can have benefits as well as costs.

*See Confabulate, page 4*

# Confabulation



## CONFABULATION

I suggest that when we confabulate rather than acknowledge ignorance, we construct a better image of ourselves; we integrate disparate information about ourselves into a coherent story; and we share information about ourselves with others.

Let's consider each of these three effects in turn. By having an explanation for our choices rather than acknowledging ignorance, we enhance our private and public self-image. Despite our actual state of ignorance about the factors influencing our choices, we present ourselves as agents who know why they make the choices they make and who make choices for good reasons. If the research participants in the Nisbett and Wilson study hadn't explained their choice of stockings, they would have given the impression of choosing randomly or of not being discerning customers. If the panelists hadn't provided any reason for preferring John to Arya for the job, their preferences would not have been as authoritative.

Further, when we offer an explanation, an instance of behavior whose causes are elusive to us can be integrated into a wider system of beliefs, preferences and values that contributes to the overall sense of who we are, which is often called *identity*. Particular choices fit a pattern of preferences and become part of comprehensive narratives, where reasons make sense of our past behavior, and shape our future behavior. If the research participants in the Nisbett and Wilson study attribute to themselves a general preference for brighter stockings or softer nightgowns, such a preference can also be used to interpret their previous behavior or predict their future consumer choices.

Finally, when we confabulate, we share information about ourselves, and our choices can become an object of conversation and discussion. We receive external feedback on issues that are relevant to our choices, and we can revisit the reasons we use to explain our behavior. If the panelists claim that their preference for John is due to his greater work experience, the fact that he is better than Arya in this respect can be challenged. John's CV can be looked at again, leading to a change of preference.

Although our choices are often influenced by external cues and unconscious drives, we tend to see ourselves as competent and largely coherent agents who do and believe things for good reasons. This sense of agency is partly an illusion, but sustains our motivation to pursue our goals in critical circumstances. When we overestimate our competence, we tend to be more productive, more resilient, better

at planning, and more effective at problem-solving. When we view our choices as driven by reasons, and integrate them in a coherent pattern of behavior, we are more likely to fulfill our goals. The implications of explaining a particular choice on our overall sense of agency become more significant when the choice is self-defining, such as the vote for a political party at a general election or the choice of a life partner – also types of choices that we often explain in a confabulatory manner. Articulating reasons for self-defining choices can be a starting point for dialogue and reflection, potentially leading to change and self-improvement.

Someone could object here that a better-grounded explanation for choice, including the accurate explanation (eg, 'I chose these stockings because of the position, of which at the time I was unaware'), would be better than the confabulation (eg, 'I chose this pair of stocking because it is more brightly colored'), and also spare us from false beliefs. But even if the accurate explanation were available to us, it would be unlikely to play the same self-enhancing and self-integrating role as the confabulatory explanation. Explaining consumer choice based on an unconscious tendency to favor items on our right-hand side does not support the sense that we are competent and coherent agents. Confabulation compromises our understanding of reality and of ourselves, but, when it comes to supporting agency, it often fares better than a well-grounded explanation, or even the accurate one.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ui9ZzlldFs0>



# March 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8 BHSN C&A 3-4	9	10
11 Daylight Savings Begins: Spring Ahead	12	13 Roundtable on Homelessness 1:30 Consumer Council 3-4 @ CVI	14	15	16 BHSN Forensic 9-11 @ Talbot DSS	17
18	19	20 BHSN Aging 11-12	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



Celebrate Recovery, Centreville UMC Church, the Kent Island Elks Club 2576 and Warren and Cathy Wright have partnered to bring comedian Ray Lozano for an evening of laughter, food, fun and games. The free event is 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday, March 29 at the Centreville United Methodist Church, 608 Church Hill Road in Centreville.

Lozano has a talent for presenting a drug and alcohol prevention message in a fun and humorous way.

Having performed at the Improv, Lozano shapes his message to address adolescents, increasing their knowledge about the effects drugs and alcohol on the body, the addiction process, consequences of risky behaviors, alternative choices and the ability to make positive life decisions. Call 410-739-4363 for event information. Learn more about Lozano at [www.raylozano.com](http://www.raylozano.com).

Mid Shore Behavioral Health is located at 28578 Mary's Court, Easton, MD 21601. To participate in BHSN workgroups go to <https://www.midshorebehavioralhealth.org/bhsn> and contact the individual listed with the group you're interested in joining.