

JAN 2020 ISSUE

CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS MIND NETWORK

WELCOME BACK, COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Thank you for your continued support of the UMass MIND Clinical and Research Program. The Central Massachusetts MIND Network (Previously the Central MA Psychosis Network) was developed to create a more inclusive community among patients, family members, mental health advocates, local organizations, and providers within the Greater Worcester Area. Over the years, we have shared groundbreaking research, local services, various events, and connected hundreds of community members. We hope that this network will continue to serve as a catalyst to promote collaboration within the Central Massachusetts community.



UMass MIND
Clinical and Research Program

Beautiful Mind | Productive Life

Email: MIND@umassmed.edu
Phone: (508) 856-MIND (6463)

THIS ISSUE:

Welcome Back
PAGE 01

Dramatherapy
Performance
PAGE 02

Healthy Holiday
Baking Demo
PAGE 03

Brush Painting
PAGE 04

Job Postings and
Ongoing Research
PAGE 05



DRAMATHERAPY PERFORMANCE

Over ten weeks last Fall, patients with a dual-diagnosis (serious mental illness with co-occurring substance use disorder) worked with a drama therapist to craft, rehearse, and stage a drama piece reflecting their journey towards recovery as part of a collaborative project between UMass MIND and Lesley University. This pilot study aimed to assess the feasibility, acceptability, and initial efficacy of drama therapy for dual diagnosis patients, as well as reduce stigma and redefine the public’s understanding of mental illness. The final performance and a post-performance talk-back session was presented on October 19th, 2019 to the general Worcester community at the University of Massachusetts Medical School campus. The program was a success – both the audience and performers enjoyed the modality and found it impactful.

When asked what part of the process they enjoyed the most, one participant explained, “The camaraderie of the people in the program. To be honest, I had a difficult process with it, but I enjoyed it. [Drama therapy] got me through some things I didn't know I needed to go through, and express myself in a creative way.”

At the end of the talk-back session, audience members were asked to describe the performance. The words that came up were:

FRIENDSHIP HONESTY
STRENGTH ARTISTIC
INSPIRATION PERSEVERANCE

The UMass MIND Program hopes to engage more individuals with mental illness and/or substance use and implement more events similar to this in the future.





HEALTHY HOLIDAY BAKING DEMONSTRATION

The holidays are a time to enjoy family, friends, and great food! Contrary to popular belief, you can have all three and still maintain a healthy lifestyle. On November 13th, UMass MIND partnered with Tradewinds Clubhouse, Bean Counter Bakery, and UMass Clinical Nutrition Service to organize a healthy holiday baking demonstration.

Individuals affected by a serious mental illness have a mortality rate that is 2-4 times higher, a life expectancy that is 20-30% shorter, and a higher prevalence of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease than that of the general population. Therefore, UMass MIND hoped to engage with individuals suffering from mental illness and empower them to make healthier eating choices. The event began with Alice Lombardi, owner of the Bean Counter, and Doug Alves, her head baker, demonstrating how to make an apple dumpling — a healthy spin on apple pie. After attentively observing the two bakers create their masterpiece, participants were invited to bake their own tasty treat. Working together in a team assembly line, everyone peeled and cored their apples, rolled them in cinnamon sugar, and enfolded them in pie dough. Then, before sticking their creations in the oven to bake, participants decorated their dumplings with a fresh apple stem and delicate leaf-shaped pieces of dough.

While the apple dumplings were baking and filling the room with an enticing aroma, Jen Parker, a dietician from UMass, led a group discussion about how to enjoy eating during the holidays while still being mindful of nutrition and caloric intake. Participants brainstormed different strategies for making healthier eating choices during the holidays and then had the opportunity to read and compare different cereal labels. Be wary of those very sugary Honey Nut Cheerios!

Based on post-event surveys, the program was a great success—the participants enjoyed making their dumplings and were very engaged with the healthy eating discussion. One participant even channeled his creativity into making a trio of snowmen out of pie-dough in addition to his apple dumpling. When asked for feedback on the event, participants said that the class was “informative” and “fun.” One participant said they learned how to live a “healthy lifestyle.”

All participants enjoyed the event and expressed interest in attending similar events in the future!





ASIAN BRUSH PAINTING EVENT

With soothing music playing in the background, participants let their paint brush glide across the paper, creating beautiful ink strokes at UMass MIND’s Mindfulness Based Asian Brush Painting event. Bayda Asbridge, an artist and teacher at the Worcester Art Museum, led the event in which Genesis Clubhouse members learned numerous techniques of traditional Asian brush painting.

Bayda began with a mindfulness exercise, inviting participants to clear their minds and focus on the upcoming painting activity. Participants learned how to prepare their ink into different shades as well as the varying pressure techniques used to create different brushstrokes. The participants were then able to practice their new skills and by the end of the event, painted beautiful bamboo forests with long leaves and orchids with elegant flowers. Nearly all participants indicated in a post event survey that taking part in a mindful art exercise helps them reduce their stress. Participants also indicated that this group art session has helped them connect with others in their community, demonstrating the importance of meaningful community engagement.

This event was organized by UMass MIND’s Community Intervention Program in partnership with Worcester Art Museum and Genesis Clubhouse as part of the *Celebrating Beautiful Minds* public event series. This event series aims to showcase the talent and resilience of individuals with lived experience of mental illness in our local community through educational and fun events. All participants enjoyed the event and left with a bundle of their favorite bamboo forest and flower paintings.



JOB POSTINGS

The University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester is offering full-time research positions for:

Clinical Research Assistant and Research Coordinator I or II

Under the supervision of the Principal Investigator, the Clinical Research Assistant or Coordinator is responsible for carrying out multiple research initiatives and for performing various tasks and procedures involving human subjects in support of clinical research protocols.

[Please click here to learn more!](#)

ONGOING RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Are you experiencing negative symptoms of schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder?

If so, you may be eligible to participate in a research study at UMass Medical School. The purpose of this study is to see if an investigational drug has effects on negative symptoms of schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder. Your participation will last approximately 5 months. You will be compensated for your time.

Are you or someone you know currently living with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder? Do you or that person also use alcohol, marijuana, or any other drugs?

If so, you or someone you now may be eligible to participate in a research study conducted at UMass Medical School. The purpose of this study is to see whether Brexpiprazole, a recently FDA approved antipsychotic medication to treat schizophrenia, may help reduce substance use in individuals who are living with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder. The medication is considered investigational for the purpose of the study as it is not approved to reduce substance use in people living in schizophrenia. Your participation will last 12 weeks. You will be compensated for your time.



**ALL STUDIES
TAKE PLACE AT:**

**26 QUEEN ST.
WORCESTER, MA**

**CALL 508-856-6463
TO LEARN MORE**