

# 2010 National Conference Set for Chicago-Metro Area

The 4<sup>th</sup> annual national peer specialist conference is planned for August 23-25, 2010 at the Westin Hotel in Lombard, Illinois.

The hotel, located between downtown Chicago and O'Hare Airport, has been the site of many national mental health conferences in recent years. The newly remodeled hotel features a pool, exercise room, business center and is conveniently located near a shopping mall and restaurants.

A free shuttle will take those who wish to visit downtown Chicago to a nearby train station and NAPS has arranged for free Internet access for those staying in the group discount room block.

Chicago is located within easy driving distance of many Airport serves most major airlines. A special discount will enable conference participants to take a taxi to and from the airport for \$25.

A special lodging rate of \$109 per night was negotiated by NAPS in a special group discount room block and a \$10 per room per night conference registration fee rebate for those staying in the room block will make the lodging rate \$99 per night (plus taxes).

Plan now for another exciting conference where peer specialists from across the country gather to share knowledge, experiences and fun. More information about the conference will appear on the NAPS website, [www.naops.org](http://www.naops.org), as it becomes available.

The Call for Workshop Proposals is featured on the website and is included inside this newsletter. If you have new ideas to share with other peer specialists, please consider submitting a proposal.

Special thanks is owed to OptumHealth and Sue Bergeson for their generous support of last year's conference.



## Caucus Brings Key Issues to Forefront

What does a peer specialist do? What should they do?

Those questions were the focus of a peer specialist caucus held at the Alternatives 2009 conference in Omaha, Nebraska in late October. Although the 35 participants had many issues to discuss, the two-hour caucus dedicated its time on ways to define peer specialist roles.

As peer specialist programs are created and developed across the country, workplace expectations have emerged as a key issue. The caucus recognized that a single job description for all peer specialists in the U.S. would not be practical, general guidelines would be helpful.

After considerable discussion, a Montana peer specialist offered an idea embraced by the group. "Why not ask peers—the people we serve—what they want from us?"

This approach was considered recovery-oriented and NAPS executive director has begun researching to determine if such information is already available and, if not, how it can be obtained.

"Because peer specialists have found so many niches, the challenge of defining roles is formidable," says Executive Director Steve Harrington. "But we should be able to develop some general guidelines that ensure meaningful roles."

**The National Association of Peer Specialists (NAPS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of peer support in mental health systems.**

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This newsletter is published quarterly as a member benefit. Annual, individual membership in NAPS is \$10. Contributions and comments are welcome and should be directed to:

**National Association of  
Peer Specialists, Inc.  
755 Alta Dale  
Ada, MI 49301  
www.naops.org  
Steveh@naops.org**

*Cultivating a culture of  
compassion.*

## **Change is in the Air!**

**Gladys Christian, NAPS President**

As mental health systems face increasing budget woes, peer specialists are finding both challenges and opportunities.

Some mental health service providers are relying more heavily on peer support as a way to continue services for those who might otherwise be left without. But at the same time, some service providers are reducing peer support positions.

While many state and local agencies are struggling there are exciting opportunities yet to come. More attention is being focused on whole health issues and peer specialists are generally viewed as a workforce that can effectively address these issues.

And, as peer specialists continue to prove their value and become more integrated and accepted in the workplace, they are playing an increasingly important role in changing the way services are provided.

Peer specialists are finding new and meaningful roles both in and out of mental health systems. Nursing homes, universities, police departments and other entities are finding a need for hope and peer specialists are naturals for inspiring that hope. One law firm is considering hiring peer specialists because attorneys find it difficult to effectively represent clients who are overwhelmed and depressed in both the civil and criminal justice systems.

While many challenges remain, I am heartened by the fact we have so many advocacy partners. People of all sorts, at all levels and places, are making peer support a reality.

If you have not yet seen the Rand Corporation report on peers as providers, check it out by going to: [www.Rand.org](http://www.Rand.org). Click on the "Reports" navigation bar and search for "tr584." Because the Rand Corporation is an independent and highly respected public policy research organization, the report can be powerful ammunition to convince mental health administrators of the value of peer specialists.

I hope your new year is a blessed one!



## **What We Heard!**

At the national peer specialist conference in Phoenix in August, we were listening! We heard two primary concerns from attendees: 1) workplace conflicts continue to be a thorny issue, and 2) state chapters of NAPS should be formed to support peer specialists and develop peer support programs.

In regard to workplace conflicts, we hope to have more workshops on this topic at the next conference in the Chicago-metro area next August. Also, we invite anyone (including traditional mental health professionals) to write about this issue for publication in this newsletter.

When it comes to forming state chapters, the NAPS board is reviewing options for bylaw changes and several states are already forming such chapters and have formed a Google group to communicate. NAPS President Gladys Christian is coordinating the effort. For more information, she can be contacted at: [Gladys@naops.org](mailto:Gladys@naops.org).



# Join Us!

## 4<sup>th</sup> Annual National Peer Specialist Conference

August 23-25, 2010

### Westin-Lombard

(Metro-Chicago Area)

Sponsored by the National Association of Peer Specialists in collaboration with local mental health organizations.

Join us for another stimulating conference for peer specialists from across the country! Discover new programs, employment opportunities and ways to make your practice more enjoyable and effective.

The group discount room rate will be \$109 per night at the Westin-Lombard with a rebate on registration fees for those who stay at the hotel (rebate is expected to be \$10 per night per room).

**More information will be posted on the NAPS website as planning progresses:**

**[www.NAOPS.org](http://www.NAOPS.org)**

**Please post and share with anyone who is interested in peer support!**

# Check Your Membership Status: Renew now to avoid rate increase!

Postage, copying, shipping, website maintenance and other costs have increased since we established the annual individual membership rate of \$10. NAPS has tried to keep costs as low as possible knowing that peer specialists and other peer supporters have little extra money. NAPS is operated solely by volunteers. But the NAPS Board of Directors is considering raising the annual membership fee (the increase is yet to be determined) and you can avoid the increase by joining or renewing your membership now.

On the address label, at the top, is the expiration date of your membership. If the date has passed or you wish to add a year to your membership, please consider completing the form below. We'd also like you to consider donating a membership fee as we have inquiries about "membership scholarships" from peers who would love to receive our newsletter and other benefits but cannot afford even a modest amount.

Members receive this quarterly newsletter, a discount on the annual conference registration fee and bulletins about time-sensitive, peer support issues. NAPS also responds to requests for information from areas interested in developing peer specialist programs or persons interested in learning more about peer support. We hope you can help us continue to serve you and those in need. Thanks!

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## National Association of Peer Specialists Membership Enrollment Form

Yes, I would like to renew my NAPS membership or join the organization to promote peer support:

\_\_\_ I have enclosed a check (made payable to "NAPS") for a one-year membership.

\_\_\_ I have enclosed a check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ for an additional \_\_\_\_\_ years of membership.

\_\_\_ I have enclosed \$\_\_\_\_\_ to sponsor a low-income peer to become a member.

Please Print!

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (as you would like it to appear on your membership certificate)

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail address (if available)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street address or P.O. Box

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

\_\_\_\_\_  
State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Zip

Checks or money orders should be made payable to "NAPS" and sent to:

NAPS  
755 Alta Dale  
Ada, MI 49301

**4<sup>th</sup> Annual National Peer Specialist\* Conference**  
**National Association of Peer Specialists**

*Setting Sails in Windy Weather*

**August 23-25, 2010**

**Metro-Chicago**

**(Westin Hotel-Lombard, Illinois)**

**NAPS Conference Workshop Presenter Application**

The National Association of Peer Specialists (NAPS—a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the use of peer support) is seeking workshop proposals for its third annual national peer specialist conference.

Proposals will be evaluated based on the value of information provided to participants. This means “practical” information and/or skills that can be used by peer specialists in their practice are sought. For example, a workshop proposal that simply describes a program is not as valuable as a proposal that describes not only a unique or unusual program but the barriers faced, mistakes made and lessons learned.

NAPS is open to presentations on virtually any topic useful to peer specialists but is specifically seeking proposals addressing the following topic areas:

- Non-traditional peer specialist roles, such as those in in-patient, corrections, geriatric or other settings.
- Leadership/Advocacy—how peer specialists can avoid co-optation and become effective change agents in the workplace, community and/or government.
- Veterans Issues—addressing special issues relating to veterans.
- Handling conflicts in the workplace.
- Support for Peer Supporters—how peer supporters are finding support for themselves, especially when isolated.
- Peer Support for Co-Occurring individual or groups.
- What have you tried but didn't work? (We can learn much from our failures!)
- Specific Support Programs or Efforts—how can an established program, such as WRAP be applied for specific populations or work environments. How can creativity, innovative communication, alternative healing, literature, plays, films or other efforts be used to help peers?
- How to reach underserved peer groups such as GLBT, minorities, youth, elderly, etc.

\*Note: “Peer Specialists” is one of many terms used by those providing peer support. Other terms include Peer Support Specialist, Peer Recovery Specialist, Recovery Technician, and many others. Peers in supervisory or administrative positions may also be included in this terminology. It is not required that one be a peer specialist to be a NAPS member or present a workshop.

Note that participants find handouts useful and are strongly encouraged. About 65 copies should be available for participants (extra copies—if unused during workshop sessions--will be made available at a literature table for those who cannot attend a session).

All contact between the conference planning committee and workshop proposal applicants will be with the listed “primary presenter.” Each workshop proposal must be submitted on separate forms.

All workshop presenters selected are responsible for lodging, non-conference meals, travel and other expenses. Up to three (3) presenters will receive a 40 percent discount on conference registration fees and a one-year NAPS membership. Presenters must register for the conference and pay registration fees no later than July 31, 2010.

NAPS welcomes workshop proposal submissions from both experienced and novice presenters. Although not required, those submitting proposals may provide a resume with the proposal if they wish. Proposals will be received only by U.S. Mail (NAPS, 755 Alta Dale, Ada, MI 49301) or via e-mail: [steveh@naops.org](mailto:steveh@naops.org).

Some audio-visual equipment will be available but presenters are encouraged to bring their own such equipment and should be proficient in its use.

1. Primary Contact/Presenter

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State/Province \_\_\_\_\_

Zip & Country \_\_\_\_\_

Day Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Title of Workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Description (50 words maximum):

4. Learning Objectives: (Please list at least three learning objectives and state them as skills. For example, it is preferable to say: "Participants will be able to communicate effectively with homeless persons," as opposed to: "Participants will learn how to communicate with homeless persons." This is necessary for CEU granting entities).

5. Will handouts be available? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_No

6. Have you presented this or similar workshops before? If so, please explain.



## Facing Reality Leads to New Rewards For NC Peer Specialist

**A**t age 18, Antonio Lambert was carrying the scars of nine bullets, drug addiction and a 22-year sentence in a state prison. Slightly more than two decades later, he is a respected member of his community. That turnaround did not come easily and Lambert remains mindful of how far he has come.

“When I look in the mirror and see those scars, I remember I am not where I used to be,” Lambert says.

“I was consumed with anger and hate,” he says. “I was an honor roll student but by 17, I was on my own and subject to all the negatives that come with street life.”

He spent sixteen years in prison where Lambert says he continued his “street attitude.” He experienced deep depression but hid it from corrections officials for years but began taking medications shortly before he was released.

Back in the community, Lambert sought services through a community support program in Greensboro, N.C. He found he enjoyed helping others. A discipleship program encouraged him to serve God and work in a youth ministry.

***I once thought prison was where I was supposed to be. But I was wrong.***

“I saw all these young guys heading down the same road I had been. I saw kids the same ages of my own heading toward life sentences. I felt I had to give them some encouragement or they would spend the rest of their lives in prison,” Lambert says.

An attitude change came with the help of his wife who, he says, had faith in him throughout his imprisonment. That led to changes in Lambert’s social network.

“I started hanging out with positive people. I stopped hating and feeling like everyone owed me something. I decided that if things were going to change, I had to work at it,” he says.

Lambert also credits his current supervisor, Tomeko Moore of Envisions of Life for his new life.

“She saw me as a peer specialist before I did,” he says. “She gave me an application and I was hired to work on an ACT (assertive community treatment) team in 2007.”

Today, instead of threatening others’ lives, Lambert is intent on saving them. In addition to encouraging young people to live positive lives, he teaches first aid and intervention skills to mental health staff and is a peer specialist instructor and instructor trainer. Special rewards are found in working as a peer specialist, according to Lambert.

“I discovered I had to be versatile and help staff understand what a peer specialist is and does,” he says.

“I go where people are. I help others get what they need without judging or being a ‘peer bully.’ I help people with housing, finding substance abuse support groups, adult reading classes, riding the bus or get back to college,” he says. “I help people with all the stuff I never got help with. There’s nothing I can’t help a person with when it comes to wellness.”

Although times are often difficult financially, Lambert looks forward to the future. “Sometimes I get a little down, especially on pay day,” he jokes, “but I don’t have the deep, long depression I once had. My dream is to start a drop-in center where people can come for peer support.”

“I want to go wherever people need help and teach others how to help others. I once thought prison was where I was supposed to be,” he says. “But I was wrong.”

## NAPS Partners with DBSA on Grant Proposal

In an effort to improve recovery knowledge and practice among peer specialists, The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) and NAPS will submit a grant proposal to a new endeavor funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

If approved, the project would enable the two organizations to work together to review the current state of knowledge about recovery, learn what areas are deficient and develop a curriculum to address issues. The project would be led by NAPS and involve extensive peer input throughout.

“The prospect of obtaining this grant is exciting because there are so many opportunities to develop the profession and collaborate with other organizations along the way,” says Executive Director Steve Harrington. “DBSA was our earliest supporting organization and teaming up with them on this project would be a natural fit.”

### Quarterly Quote

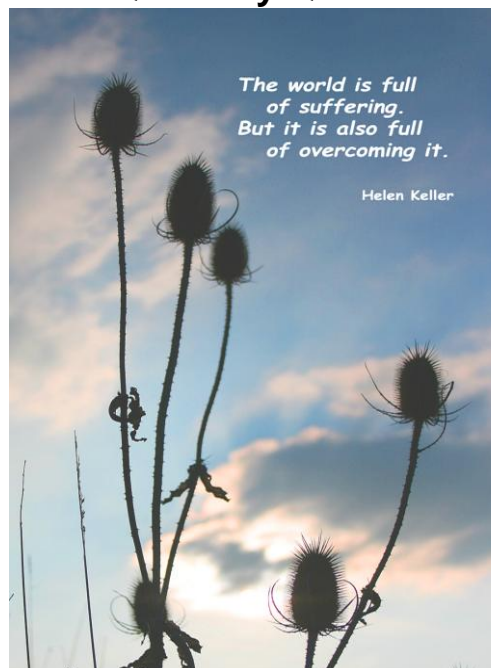


Image courtesy of RecoverResources.com. Recover Resources is a peer owned/operated micro-enterprise website and provides logistical and financial support to NAPS. This image is available on posters, postcards and note cards.

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### National Association of Peer Specialists

A non-profit organization

755 Alta Dale

Ada, MI 49301