



# Montana's Peer Network

## Wellness & Recovery



**Montana's Peer Network now has a Youth Sector!**



Check out our new list of Book Recommendations online from MPN members

[mtpeernet-work.org](http://mtpeernet-work.org)  
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## Happy Holidays

As I sit and watch the snow steadily falling like confetti outside the MPN office in Bozeman, I can't help but think about all we have accomplished over this last year. With 2012 coming to a close and this being the last newsletter of the year my mind begins to drift back over each of the previous months. The memories are strong. I see the people I have met, the conversations I have had with peers. I sense the laughter, I hear the words of wisdom, and I feel the tears too. I think about the growth of the organization and the people who have helped make that happen. I think about the communities we have visited from one side of the state to the other, bringing words of hope and promoting various wellness programs to all who will listen. I think about the shops, the various engagements and the permanence with our membership at the table that about the phone ringing organizations and individuals who want to be part of this recovery movement in Montana. It all feels good, the memories, the accomplishments, even the tears. I am humbled to be the Director of MPN. Eighteen years ago when my own journey began I could not fathom any of this in my future. I often wonder, when speaking to my peers at the State Hospital who in the group will be the future Director of MPN. Someone surely will be. And they will have fresh ideas leading the peer movement in a whole new direction. Now like the snow piling up outside my window the stack of papers for the various projects we are involved with on my desk is piling up too. I view this as a good thing. The price of success I suppose.

As the year comes to a close Montana's Peer Network has a great deal to be proud of but we are also grateful. I would personally

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I believe that at some point in our recovery an individual will come along and ask us a pivotal question. It is so profound that it becomes the single most important question that we have ever been asked.

It was asked of me in a therapeutic setting back when the 45 minute session was desirable, necessary and expected. It could however have been asked by any trusted mentor from any walk of life.

“Examining the events of your life to this point which includes addiction and mental illness, would you say that any of this has given meaning to your life or a point to your existence? What of value have you been able to carry away from having ‘lived’ this experience?”

This question ushered in a turning point in my recovery in the intervening years. Its continued to add to the positive column of the mental illness balance sheet until amazingly at present I come up with more positives than negatives and I am grateful!

**Liz Silliman**, you can follow Liz in the Philipsburg Mail under her column Mind Matters



### *“State of Despair”*

Is a brilliant series of articles written by Cindy Uken of the Billings Gazette. The series which started a few weeks ago is shedding light on high suicide rates in Montana and the state of our mental health system. I encourage you to take the time to read the series. It is well worth it. You can find the articles in their entirety at;

<http://billingsgazette.com/special-section/news/suicide/>

### Peer Support Tip 101.20

Senate Bill 10 has been drafted by the Montana Peer Support Task Force to promote standards and licensing for Mental Health Peer Support Specialists in Montana. Montana’s Peer Network plays an important role on the Task Force and strongly believes in the need for this standardization. Having accessible and affordable training for all peer support specialists across the state is vital. This standardization will open up more opportunities for peer support in non-traditional settings. It will also create more funding streams and it will also increase the level of care peer supports are giving to others. Having a set of standards ensures public safety, raises the level of professionalism in what we do as peer support specialists on a day to day basis working alongside other mental health professionals like doctors, counselors and nurses who also adhere to standards. Visit [www.mtpeertaskforce.org](http://www.mtpeertaskforce.org)



Consider passing this newsletter on after you have finished reading it



Check out [www.wiserconnections.org](http://www.wiserconnections.org)  
 Online community of information sharing

### Member Reading Recommendations

Send us your favorites for next month

*Minority of Mind*

By Ben Boone

<http://www.virginvoices.vi/Minorityofmind>

### Board of Directors Bio

**Kerry Brown** - Before 2005 I was literally at deaths door. Circumstances don't matter much but for the fact that I landed in the hospital Aug. 9, 2005. I was sentenced to 3 years, and had to do every day of it. In 2006 at the hospital I became introduced to Recovery Internationals Low Self-Help Systems and the Wellness Recovery Action Plan or WRAP. Both of their concepts coming together in Self Help. They, and hospital staff I must admit, made me see things I already knew but was not utilizing. Simple things like, Take a breath, Change focus, Laugh.

After getting out of the hospital in Aug. 2008 I got myself in a stable place, transportation, all done only by savings at hospital, I began to volunteer, at the hospital, for R.I. leading weekly groups. Just a year later, still leading the groups, I also become Co-Chair of Local Advisory Council's board; and through that volunteering I found and became a board member also of Montana's Peer Network. My day to day focus is promoting more face to face groups in Montana. Self-Help groups; peer's as provider's.

Cont. from cover story

In a recent episode of the CBS TV series *Blue Bloods* a reference was made to a character who was a "Peer Counselor". This reference was not only done in a positive light it showed the culturally shift in mainstream media towards peer support. Watch for other references to peer support.



like to thank Sandi Glenn, Kerry Brown, Robin Johnson, Tracy Stone, Liz Silliman and Wendy Brodis for working hard and volunteering their time on our Board of Directors. Without their leadership our organization could not have grown as much, or reached as many in Montana. MPN would also like to thank the Montana Mental Health Trust for funding so much of our work. I would also like to thank our members for stepping forward from the crowd. Together we are changing the mental health system and with you none of this would be possible. Thank you and Happy Holidays.

Jim Hajny

A laugh a day keeps the Doctor away!



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Want to be more involved with the peer movement in Montana?

Contact us at 406-551-1058

In 2013 we will be launching our peer leadership program.

**Montana's  
Peer Network**

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Bozeman, MT  
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**mtpeernetwork.org**

MPN welcomes submissions to our  
newsletter

Jim Hajny, Executive Director  
jim@mtpeernetwork.org

**2012 Calendar of Events**

December	WRAP workshop Helena 406-551-1058 for information
January TBD	WRAP workshop Bozeman
January 7	MT 2013 Legislative Session Begins
January 7	WRAP Facilitator Refresher online course begins
January 25-27	WRAP Around the World Oakland, CA <a href="http://www.copelandcenter.com">www.copelandcenter.com</a>
March 8	Disability Rally in Helena

**Not a member? 3 ways to join the peer network! It's easy and it's free**

- 1- Visit our website
- 2- Mail in a membership form
- 3- Call the office to register

Happy Holidays



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Here