

SPECIAL EDITION: A YEAR IN REVIEW

JANET MINICK

Janet, a person with cross-disabilities, became involved with the Consumer Health Coalition through the Health Committee for People with Disabilities (HCPD), a group that among other things provides education to consumers, and empowers them to play an active role in their health care and to be advocates for their needs. A little over one year ago, Janet began attending HCPD meetings and events. Initially, Janet was very introverted and rarely said a word. In time, as she got to know everyone and she began to feel more comfortable, Janet began share her personal story and her passion for advocacy. Janet attended a number of our advocacy trainings, which provided her with the skills she needed to feel empowered enough to take action and work for positive effective change. Janet participated in our creative advocacy projects, and attended numerous events like the vigil and rallies held to save adultBasic, the low-cost, state health insurance program. It was at one of the adultBasic events that Janet shared she had adultBasic as her health insurance and had received notification of its pending cancellation. Until that point, we were unaware that Janet was one of the tens of thousands of Pennsylvanians who were about to lose their health insurance coverage.

Hearing this news, CHC's health care navigators reached out to Janet, and screened her to find out if she was eligible for any other public programs. Fortunately, she was and our staff was able to assist her with the application process for the Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities Program. In March 2011, she was approved, and Janet could not have been more thankful. She had been scared for months that she would be forced to go without health insurance, and wasn't sure how she was going to be able to manage. Our greatest thank you took place at our final rally to save adultBasic, when our previously shy Janet agreed to be interviewed by a reporter for the Pittsburgh Tribune and her comments were included in the next day's story.



Janet's advocacy continues today: She has attended a legislative community forum, traveled with us to Harrisburg for a rally, and visited her local legislator. A few weeks ago, Janet said she wanted to write a letter-to-the-editor, so she came to our offices and we worked with her as she drafted the letter. Her letter ran in the Post-Gazette on Wednesday, 5 October 2011, and it was featured as the headline letter! We are so proud of Janet and all her hard work, and are truly lucky to have such a dedicated advocate on our side!



SUE ETTERS

As a person with a disability, Sue Etters understands the importance of dignity and respect within the health care system. In December 2009, Sue was struck by a car, an accident that required hospitalization and several months in a nursing home. According to Sue, steps taken by both the hospital and the nursing home helped make her transition back home successful. A comprehensive discharge plan helped Sue learn about shower benches, hand-held nozzles, and a walk-in tub, all of which help Sue remain independent and living in her own home.



Many patients like Sue depend on comprehensive and coordinated care to transition successfully and avoid re-admission. Nearly 20% of all Medicare patients are re-admitted to the hospital within thirty days of discharge (www.CommunityCatalyst.org), many times because care was not coordinated properly or the patient did not understand the discharge instructions.

Sue credits her success to the fact that care was centered on her needs, and the treatment plan presented in a format she could understand: "It really made me feel like they cared," Sue said, "showing compassion and concern for the patient is so important." Sue also credits her successful transition to the comprehensive discharge plan: "They told me about different devices they had for the disabled that I honestly did not know about," she said. Post-discharge, patient surveys completed over the phone by a nurse tracked Sue's progress and also contained questions about the quality of her care.

Sue is a tremendous advocate and has become actively involved with both our Health Committee for People with Disabilities and the Pennsylvania Campaign for Better Care, which works to improve quality and coordination within the health care system. In June 2011, Sue completed the Lift Up Your Voice! advocacy training, which teaches people the basics of advocacy and instructs on the why and how of the PA CBC. Sue is now a member of the Healthy Hospitals Workgroup, a committee within the PA CBC that works to create patient-centered plans and active involvement in discharge from a hospital. Since completing the advocacy training, Sue has also joined the monthly Campaign calls, wrote a Letter to the Editor that was published in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, visited her local elected officials, and created a t-shirt for a project that expresses the importance of home and community-based services.

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2011 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

CHC Helpline

In the past year, Consumer Navigation staff have assisted over 1200 callers. To ensure that the consumers' needs were met, over 2,300 follow-up calls were made to families to help them to complete applications for public programs, to assist with program re-authorizations, and to help families reach their caseworkers or insurance providers to resolve any issues.

When asked how the caller heard about our services, most stated that they heard about us through a friend or family member, picked up a flyer at outreach events, or were referred by one of our 100% Pledge Community Partners. Over 150 organizations have committed to partner with CHC through our 100% Pledge Campaign, a commitment to refer any family or individual who is uninsured to CHC.

In the past year, CHC has educated 257 staff members within our 100% Pledge partner organizations. These individuals learned about public programs, eligibility, and how to apply, and other free and low-cost services.

Over 5600 flyers, brochures, and informational materials were distributed through outreach events including: health fairs, community days, county fairs, food banks, and through on-site outreach at businesses in Allegheny and surrounding counties.

Campaign for Better Care

In the past year, CHC held 4 sessions of the Lift Up Your Voice! Advocacy Training that were attended by a total of 56 older adults and family caregivers across the state (Pittsburgh, Erie, Williamsport, and Wellsboro).

Staff also facilitated three workshops that were attended by 60 people that focused on quality and coordination within the health care system.

CHC developed a total of three Creative Advocacy Projects in the past year to educate elected officials on quality-related health care policy.

In October, CHC launched the monthly PA CBC e-newsletter, the North Star News.

In June 2011, CHC launched the Healthy Hospitals Workgroup, which continues to meet monthly with an average of 15 participants who are advocates, health care professionals, students, and community members.

Health Committee for People with Disabilities

Over the past year, CHC held a successful five-part training series on advocacy skills. One workshop session was dedicated to tips on how to write a letter-to-the-editor and, since that session, seven of our consumers wrote, and had published, a letter-to-the-editor.

The "*Living Together is an Art*" photo voice project was featured prominently at CCAC North and Edinboro University and was also on exhibit at the state capitol building in Harrisburg for three months.

We continued our expansion into other counties: In Westmoreland County, we started a photo-voice project and held a one-day training on the proactive patient guidebook; completed a successful Academy of Empowered Consumers in Butler County; did presentations on advocacy in Beaver and Mercer counties; and had groups in multiple counties join us in our advocacy efforts.

Over the past year, we have continued to add new members to the Committee, which is now 90% consumers.

OUR MEMBERS AND FUNDERS

A SPECIAL THANKS to all of our 2011 CHC Members and those who gave during the Pittsburgh Foundation's Day of Giving! We couldn't do it without you!

ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS

Allegheny County Medical Society
Allegheny Health Choices
Community Care Behavioral Health
East Liberty Presbyterian Church
Epilepsy Foundation of Western PA
Every Child Inc.
Falk Foundation
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank
Hospital Council of Western PA
NAMI Southwestern PA
Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative
Positive Health Clinic
SEIU Healthcare PA
United Cerebral Palsy - CLASS
United Way of Allegheny County
University of Pgh. School of Public Health



FUNDERS

Community Catalyst
US DHS- Children's Health Insurance
Program Reauthorization Act
FISA Foundation
Jewish Healthcare Foundation
McAuley Ministries
Nathan Cummings Foundation
PA Developmental Disabilities Council
Public Welfare Foundation
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Staunton Farm Foundation
Three Rivers Community Foundation
United Way of Allegheny County
University of Pittsburgh

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Eva Bednar
Timothy Berkey
Mary Ann Bezuk
Robert Boyer
Thuy Bui
Tina Calabro
Andres Cardoza
Edward Carey
Robert Cassidy
Morton Coleman
Clair Cornell
Susan Davis
Doyin Desalu
Christina Dixon
Adriana Dobrzycka
Patricia Documet
Robin Eckman
Harriot Ellenberger
John Farmer
Mary Figlar
Andrea Fox
Paul Freyder
Stephen Gallagher
Harry Gillin
Susan Glor-Scheib
Sarah Goldstein
Lester Hadburg
Tom Hollander
Jonathan Han
Beth Heeb
Greg Heeb
Celia Hindes

Dick Jevon
David Kane
Joyce Kane
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Carlinda Kleck
Bobbie Sue Knepper
Julie Kuchta
Jessica Larochelle
Judith Lave
Katie Magoulick
Dan Majewski
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John Tague
Michael Ventura
Kenneth Thompson
Michele Upvall
Geoff Webster
Denise Weis

*Thank
you*

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY

Memberships are collected annually

I would like to become a member of CHC!

\$ _____

_____ **Suggested Individual Membership \$30**

I cannot give \$30, but please accept my membership donation in the amount of

\$ _____

I would like to give an additional donation to CHC

\$ _____

My organization or business would like to become a member of CHC!

_____ **We will contribute \$250** (Organizations with a budget > 1 million)

\$ _____

_____ **We will contribute \$125** (Organizations with a budget < 1 million)

\$ _____

My organization would like to give an additional donation to CHC

\$ _____

Total Amount Enclosed:

\$ _____

Make Check Payable To:

Consumer Health Coalition
415 East Ohio Street, Suite 300
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Or pay online by visiting:

www.consumerhealthcoalition.org and click on **Donate Now!**

Or pay by credit card, please call:

Call 412-456-1877 x200

NAME: _____

ORGANIZATION: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

Consumer Health Coalition is an IRS 501(c)(3) charitable organization. The official registration and financial information for Consumer Health Coalition can be obtained from the PA Dept. of State by calling toll-free within PA, 1-800-732-0900. Registration does not imply endorsement.

THE PEREZ FAMILY

Maura, her husband and 3 children moved to Pittsburgh from Georgia a little more than 2 years ago. Thinking that the medical coverage her children had in Georgia would continue to cover them here, she did not look into health coverage options upon arrival in Pittsburgh. When one of her children became sick and she sought out medical care at a free bilingual clinic, Consumer Health Coalition staff was there to help Maura through the complicated process of applying for Medicaid.



However, due to the language barrier, Maura did not understand paperwork she received from the County Assistance Office in English, and the application for Medicaid was nearly rejected. Thanks to the diligence of CHC staff in serving as a liaison between the consumer and the Medicaid provider, the application was finally approved. "Of course, not having medical coverage with three children is very worrisome. It was such a relief," said Maura.

She applauds the work of CHC bilingual staff for advocating for language-appropriate materials for non-English speakers: *"I want to thank the supporters of this organization, because you truly are our voice here, the voice of those that don't speak English."* CHC works hard to alleviate the barriers that many face in accessing quality health care. These efforts can be seen in our work in the development of Spanish educational materials about the importance of regular medical check-ups, vaccinations and Emergency Room usage, which not only serve to inform our Spanish-speaking consumers, but also to equip them to advocate for themselves and their children.

When asked if she would recommend us to others, she replied, "I already have! I do often, because I know that with whatever worry or question I have, you can help."

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2011 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Health Reform (PHAN)

In the past year, CHC wrote three sign-on letters that were endorsed by more than 140 organizations statewide. Topics of the letters included implementation of the Affordable Care Act and restoration of the Tobacco Settlement Funds into health-related programs. CHC also provided testimony a total of 4 times on health reform, adultBasic, and the Tobacco Settlement Fund.

In the past year, CHC held a total of 4 rallies on adultBasic and the Tobacco Settlement Fund that were attended by over 260 people.

In the past year, CHC developed three creative leave-behind materials to educate elected officials on health-related policy including implementation of the Affordable Care Act, restoration of the Tobacco Settlement Fund, and preservation of Medicaid.

In 2011, CHC celebrated the one-year anniversary of the Affordable Care Act by delivering birthday bags filled with facts about the Affordable Care Act to 35 elected officials at the State Capitol and held a community forum featuring Joanne Grossi, Regional Director of HHS.

In November 2011, CHC gathered community members and advocates across the state to create the *Keep Pennsylvania Covered Quilt* in response to the upcoming Super Committee vote. We collected hundreds of quilt squares with messages about the need to preserve Medicaid and Medicare, and held a statewide Day of Action to rally outside

Education

240 students were educated through medical school talks, class presentations, and at university and college campus events.

1102 individuals participated in our educational forums and workshops.

20 new organizations took the 100% Pledge

CHC in the News

In 2011, CHC was featured in nearly 50 news articles and TV interviews with media outlets across the state:

→ Radio outlets featured 10 interviews and event coverage

→ Television stations broadcast 8 interviews and event coverage

→ More than 20 articles were published in local newspapers

→ CHC was featured in 4 news articles published in Eastern and Central PA

→ Local newspapers published 8 Letters to the Editor by consumers and coalition members, including 1 in Central PA

→ Media outlets attended over 20 CHC events

CAL SCHUCHMAN

Cal Schuchman doesn't need much help with learning the advocacy ropes: He has been an advocate for over 30 years! Cal began advocating in 1978 when he became a volunteer with the Mon Valley Unemployed Committee. Later he became an advocate for Just Harvest, a local hunger organization. Throughout the years, Cal has participated in several lobbying trips to Harrisburg, legislative visits, letter writing and post card campaigns, and spreading the word about what he believes in.

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To me, health insurance is a need. People deserve to have access to a healthy, safe, and dignified living environment.

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In January of 2010, Cal received some disturbing news: He was going to be one of the 46,000 people in Pennsylvania to lose their adult Basic health insurance benefits. At the time, Cal was working a couple of part-time jobs that did not offer any health coverage and could not afford to purchase insurance privately. He was being treated for a herniated disk in his back and had a surgery to put in a titanium plate. “I woke up one day and could not move from the pain. It shot from my shoulder down to my thumb.” Frightened by the thought of losing his coverage, Cal continued to fight to keep his benefits. That’s when he became involved with Consumer Health Coalition.



Cal testified at a citizen's hearing for affordable care, met with state legislators and voiced his distress about the profiting health care companies in our region, while thousands are losing their health coverage. He took trips to Harrisburg for legislative visits, rallied outside of Highmark, and helped to conduct phone banking to legislators to raise awareness of the critical need to find an alternative funding source for the program. To no avail, the program ended in February, and Cal was without coverage.

Hearing about Cal's situation, CHC's Helpline staff were able to screen him to find out if he may be eligible for another program. Due to his medical conditions, Cal was assisted with an application for Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities (MAWD.)

Fortunately, Cal was found eligible for the program in August. “Because I was able to communicate my needs, have a great doctor that helped me to explain my health problems and obtain my medical records, and worked with CHC to complete the application process, I am now eligible for MAWD and can continue light duty work.” Cal stated, “My work ethic was instilled in me as a child and my faith does a lot of things for me.” CHC is lucky to have such a dynamic advocate on our team.

100% PLEDGE ORGANIZATION OF THE YEAR



Just Harvest is an anti-hunger, anti-poverty organization that works to eliminate poverty in Allegheny County from a policy perspective. Their mission is to promote economic justice and work to influence public policy and to educate, empower, and mobilize the citizens of our community toward the elimination of hunger and poverty.

Just Harvest has been partnering on advocacy projects with CHC for many years, but within the last few years we broadened our partnership to include cross-referrals. Just Harvest took the 100% Pledge and committed to referring any uninsured individual to CHC for assistance with navigating the public health care system. In turn, CHC utilizes Just Harvest as a resource for helping families with hunger issues. Over the past year, Just Harvest has referred 65 individuals to CHC for assistance.

In 2012, Just Harvest is looking to expand their primary services, including tax assistance. They anticipate significant work on PA State Welfare Policy, and are aiming to refocus on grassroots organizing so that individuals will learn techniques to organize themselves.

A special thanks to all of the staff and volunteers at Just Harvest for your important work and commitment to helping the underserved.

A special thanks to all of our 100% Pledge Partners!

Thank you

Second Runner Up — North Hills Community Outreach

Third Runner Up — Epilepsy Foundation of Western PA



In our ongoing efforts in defense of Medicaid and Medicare, several of our consumers made quilt squares that were sewn into a statewide “Keep Us Covered!” Advocacy quilt. We displayed our efforts at a rally in front of Senator Toomey’s office.

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