



TEND TO HOPE NEWSLETTER



February 2020

Issue II

Tend to Hope is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation dedicated to inspiring hope, restoring dignity and providing comfort to individuals during times of crisis.

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Tend to Hope is pleased to announce it began delivering Seeds of Hope Boxes to The Horsham Clinic as of January 2020! Priority will be given to individuals in foster care on the adolescent unit.



Standing (left to right): Karleen Caparro, Annie Stafford, Tracey Riper-Thomas, Tricia Stafford, James Groesbeck, Sheila Hall-Pringle, Conrad Lawson, Berta Britz, Melissa Kaufman, Wendy Cangialosi, Kelsey Righter, Peggy Maccolini

Kneeling: Sue Shannon, Jason Matlack

Pictured above is the Montgomery County-sponsored group who attended The World Hearing Voices Congress in Montreal, Canada this past November. For three days they joined with others from around the world in a spirit of camaraderie, curiosity and compassion. Keynote speeches and small-group workshops from both leaders in the field and young voice hearers just venturing into the public arena made for an inspiring, poignant event. In early December, the group gave a rousing presentation based on their impressions at Montgomery County Community College.



The Tend to Hope Newsletter is a forum for sharing information to help shed light on our common human struggles and make a difference in the lives of individuals experiencing mental health difficulties.

We have no vested interest other than spreading kindness and compassion.

We believe that the more community members join our cause, the more humane our society will become.



INTERVIEW WITH: Angela Feeny-Byrnes & Kevin Byrnes

Two Young People Determined to Pay it Forward

If you're looking for two role models of what the spirit of gratitude and determination can do for you, look no further. In December, we received a \$200 donation from a brother and sister from Norristown — 23-year-old Angela Feeny-Byrnes and her 20-year-old brother Kevin. "I have so much that I'm thankful for," said Kevin, "I don't need anything else." Angela stated, "Instead of gifts under the tree, I would rather donate the money I have to a worthy cause." Our parents always told us that "actions speak louder than words, and this is our way of paying it forward to people who don't have it as good as we do."

Both Angela and Kevin were adopted shortly after birth — Angela at two-and-a-half years old and Kevin at one-and-a-half years old — and they told us several times how grateful they are to their parents for adopting them. When we asked if Tend to Hope's mission spoke to them in any personal way, they told us they have each had their share of mental health challenges and have needed extra support and services to learn how to cope and grow as individuals. Angela struggles with a learning disability and anxiety, and Kevin suffers with lingering PTSD-related difficulties stemming from his junior year in high school.

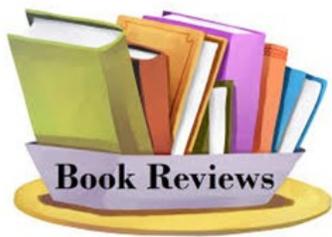
School is very important to Angela, and she was determined not to let her challenges stand in the way of obtaining a college degree. "I wanted the full college experience," she said, "and I did not want my disability to define me!" She boards at Millersville University and is enrolled in the Integrated Studies Program, which is allowing her to achieve that dream. "I have an aide who sits with me in class so I'm able to understand the material better. I'm also learning how to manage my money, my time, and my school work." For the Spring semester she is taking on the added responsibility of a part-time job, which she hopes will move her even closer to her ultimate goal of living independently. "I've gotten A's and B's in all my finals this semester. The program helps me build confidence and self-esteem." Angela said she could not do any of it without her parents, her brother, and God. "Religion has helped me grow spiritually. I have a very strong faith. God gives me strength and that shows through in my actions."

Kevin admitted that good mental health has always been a bit of a struggle for him, but he said that what really led him to seek special services was his tough high school experience. For extra support, he attended an outpatient program at The Horsham Clinic, then another one called "The Light Program," and finally a partial program at Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health. Kevin now works at Hopework, a unique mental health organization in Norristown whose mission is to ensure that individuals receiving mental health services in Montgomery County are indeed satisfied with those services, and if not, to identify ways they can be improved.

Three days a week, Hopework is also the hub of compassionate community, a place where people dealing with any degree of mental health issues are welcome to congregate and socialize. As part of the Consumer Satisfaction Team, Kevin befriends whomever drops by. He feels it is important to get to know the visitors, learn what they care about, and maybe figure out what "triggers" them before asking any of his survey questions. Kevin also connects with them by sharing his own story of mental health difficulties, which he said "has been very healing for me. I still have a lot to learn about this work and I'm nervous, but it's a good nervous at the same time. I'm proud of myself for taking this on. It took a lot of courage. Trying to help others has really helped ME. I love this job!"

As Angela and Kevin's mother Maureen commented, "These two kids took the bull by the horns. They got the help they needed and kept going. Angela even travelled to Washington, D.C. to advocate for passage of the ABLE Act (Achieving Better Life Experience Act). She was asked specifically about how the Integrated Studies Program is helping young adults like herself. And when Angie and Kevin heard about Tend to Hope, they 'got it,' immediately, no questions asked. They saw the opportunity to help and they followed through."

We're grateful and humbled to have met Kevin and Angela, and we wish them the very best!



Lost Connections: Uncovering the Real Causes of Depression — and the Unexpected Solutions

By: Johann Hari

“No matter how high a dose I jacked up my antidepressants to, the sadness would always outrun it ... how could I still be depressed when I was taking antidepressants? I was doing everything right, and yet something was still wrong. Why?”

Johann Hari, an award-winning journalist based in London, suffered from extreme depression and anxiety since he was a small child. Medication usually helped, though he inevitably hit a plateau before then switching to a different drug. He was grateful for these powerful medications, and in many of his journalistic reports even touted their virtues and benefits. Whenever his sadness returned, he attributed the decline to a “medical process” beyond his control.

By the time Hari was in his early 30s, he found himself wondering if something “*other* than bad brain chemistry” might be at fault. He decided to turn the investigative lens on himself, and what he discovered radically challenged his previous assumptions. Rather than an “illness” emanating from a “broken brain,” Hari contends the primary reasons for distress in our modern society are “largely in the world and the way we are living in it.”

Human suffering, he tells us, is a normal response to chronic stress and negative life events. When there are few stabilizing influences in one’s life, that combination of stress can become explosive. Ultimately we may become profoundly disconnected, which he likens to a form of grief: **“What if depression is, in fact, a form of grief — for our own lives not being as they should? What if it is a form of grief for the connections we have lost, yet still need?”**

Disconnection for Hari takes various forms: disconnection from satisfying work that we have some stake in; physical disconnection from other people as we move further away from our tribal roots; disconnection from meaningful values amid our materialistic culture; disconnection caused by the shame and secrecy of childhood trauma; disconnection from nature with its awe-inspiring beauty and ability to put human lives in perspective; disconnection from a sense of purpose or hopeful future.

The second half of Hari’s book outlines ways we can “reconnect” — through action. He narrates the true story of “The Cow,” in

which a South African psychiatrist visits Cambodia to study the psychological effect posed by hidden land mines. Shortly before he arrived, antidepressants had just emerged on the Cambodian market; however, they sold poorly because there was no clear translation for the word “antidepressant.”

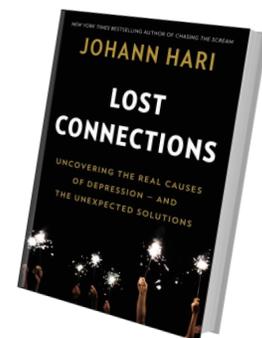
When the psychiatrist tried to educate the villagers, they told him of a farmer they knew who might once have been described as “depressed.” However, there was no need for the doctor’s pills in his case, they said, because they had already successfully dealt with the situation.

The “patient” was a Cambodian rice paddy farmer whose leg had been blown off by a land mine. He had become intensely anxious and “filled with despair” at the loss of his livelihood. Eventually he was fitted with an artificial limb, though he still felt traumatized and was in considerable physical pain. At that point, the villagers banded together and had the idea that perhaps the rice paddy farmer could become a dairy farmer instead because it involved less walking and had none of the traumatic associations. They pooled their resources and bought the farmer a cow. He soon learned to master this new trade and his deep depression gradually subsided.

Hari states, “This wasn’t an individualistic solution — they weren’t telling him the problem was all in his head and to pull his socks up or swallow a pill. It was a collective solution. He could never have gotten that cow on his own; the solution couldn’t have come from him alone because he was too distressed, and anyway he didn’t have the cash. Yet it did solve his problem and that solved his despair.”

Maybe, Hari suggests, what we really need to do is re-define just what an anti-depressant truly is.

— Tricia Stafford



The Concept behind Seeds of Hope Boxes:

Admission to any type of crisis facility can be a frightening and impersonal experience. Individuals find themselves alienated from everything they know and lacking the most basic amenities of home. Imagine receiving an unexpected gift at this most vulnerable time!

What We Do:

Distribute "Seeds of Hope Boxes" to mental health crisis facilities. Boxes include:

- * *Pair of cozy socks*
- * *Toothbrush and toothpaste*
- * *Shower Gel or soap*
- * *Hair brush*
- * *Deodorant*
- * *Shampoo and conditioner*
- * *Non-spiral-bound journal*
- * *Activity book or coloring book and crayons*
- * *Card of hope*
- * *Letter of encouragement with ideas on how to build hope*
- * *Package of sunflower seeds*
- * *"Tactile toys" for stress reduction*
- * *Chap stick*
- * *Small stuffed animal*



Seeds of Hope Box



Ways to Donate...

Click [Donate](#) button on website or Facebook page

Send a check to:

Tend to Hope
234 Central Avenue
Hatboro, PA 19040

Arrange for product donations:

215-208-6105

tendtohope@gmail.com

How We Are Funded:

We rely on monetary, as well as product donations.

(All donated items must be new, sealed or have tags on them.)

Benefit to the Community:

- Instill dignity and generate hope in this often-neglected population
- Relieve the financial burden on families and loved ones
- Provide comfort to those without family or close friends
- Plant seeds of hope for the greater well-being of the entire community
- Contribute to the recovery movement in a tangible and memorable way through a show of community support and compassion

DONORS AND PARTNERS

Community Support Program (Hopeworx)
Foundations Community Support
Lenape Valley Foundation
The Horsham Clinic
NAMI Bucks and Montgomery Counties
Asher's Chocolates
Burpee Seed Company
Sheila Hudson
Rosetta Wester
Fran Wasserman
Joseph Betz, Ph.D., Villanova University
Jeff Black
Kendy Killhour
Brian Meck
Jason Matlack
Peggy and Joe Maccolini
Hatboro-Horsham High School
Paul and Jeannine Bardo
Anna Trout
Maureen Mulholland
Cheryl Hostert
Angela and Kevin Feeny-Byrnes
Michael Pleasants
Mickey Weisman

THANK YOU, ALL!



When Cheryl Hostert heard about Tend to Hope, she was immersed in holiday shopping, ticking off the endless gifts on her Christmas list and preparing for her huge annual party. Yet she made time in her busy schedule for one more task. With her father along for an extra pair of hands, the two visited Kohl's and stocked up on several bags of items for our Seeds of Hope Boxes — small stuffed animals, stress toys, toiletries, coloring books. As she stood in line to pay, the woman behind her asked what all the items were for. When Cheryl told her about Tend to Hope, the woman promptly gave her enough money to fill up another whole bag!



Please let us know if you would like to partner with us, use our services or help with volunteer work.

Let's be in this fishbowl together!

Thanks for reading our second issue of the Tend to Hope Newsletter!

Tricia Stafford



Annie Stafford