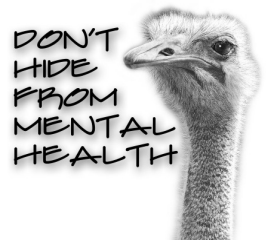




Mental Health Association of the New River Valley

303 Church Street Blacksburg, VA 24060



ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE AND HISTORY

The Mental Health Association of the New River Valley grew from a Blacksburg-based grassroots initiative named the *Community Counseling Center*. This organization was formed by three local clergy in 1961, with the Rev. Alfred Payne, then Secretary of the YMCA at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, as its Chairman. Other initial members were Roswell E. Round and Col. Robert Turner. Mrs. Raleigh Sandy was hired as the first Executive Secretary and an office was established at 102 Church Street. The primary goal of the group was to extend counseling services to residents of the Blacksburg community and to students at VPI. A group of ten clergy was recruited to serve as volunteer counselors.

The following year, the organization took the name *Blacksburg Chapter for Mental Health*. Volunteer counseling continued, and the office began offering referral services to callers. A formal Board of Directors was formed, and activities were expanded to include community education, a speakers' bureau, community surveys, and training of clergy-counselors.

In 1965, the organization received its charter as the *Blacksburg Mental Health Association*, affiliating with the National Association for Mental Health and the Virginia Association for Mental Health. Volunteer-based services to improve the quality of life for patients at Southwestern Hospital in Marion and the Veterans Hospital in Salem were initiated. State-level advocacy in the form of reviewing relevant legislation was also added at this time. Financial support came from individual contributions and the Blacksburg United Fund. The total budget for 1965 was \$3,250.

The agency expanded in 1973 to become the *Mental Health Association of Montgomery County*, to coincide with a similar expansion of the area's United Fund. Incorporation followed in 1989. Throughout the 1970's and 1980's, services focused on community education, support of hospitalized persons, and information and referral. Programs included "I'm Thumbbody" (a self-esteem program for elementary school children) and "Operation Santa Claus" (a holiday gift drive for patients at Southwestern State Hospital). The mental health landscape had changed, as mental health services were now provided by the area's Community Services Board. VPI and Radford University established their own internal student counseling services as well.

In 1993 the agency again expanded to become the *Mental Health Association of the New River Valley*, covering the entire 4th Planning District. In the mid 1990's, programs were revamped to reflect the changing needs of the community and the presence of multiple service providers. Some programs were discontinued (e.g., I'm Thumbbody); some were altered (e.g., Operation Santa Claus); and some were added (e.g., Children of Divorce Seminar, Pro Bono Counseling Program). The agency's Pro Bono Counseling Program received national acclaim and won the National Mental Health Association's Innovation in Programming Award in 2001.

A United Way Partner Agency

◇ 540-951-4990 ◇ 1-800-559-2800 ◇ mhainfo@mhanrv.org ◇ www.mhanrv.org

The early 2000's marked substantial growth of the agency with the successful procurement of federal grant monies to fund law enforcement/mental health training and a rural outreach addition to the Pro Bono Counseling Program. The Pro Bono Counseling Program became the state's first official "Mental Health Free Clinic" in 2002. Foundation funds were secured to initiate local planning to respond to the mental health needs of the community in times of crisis or disaster.

The agency has become a leader in the development of jail diversion programs for persons with mental illness. The Mental Health Association of the New River Valley developed the first rural, multi-jurisdictional crisis intervention team program and was charged with the mission of leading the statewide expansion of the program throughout Virginia by the Commonwealth's General Assembly. More recently, the organization received a three year \$1.2 million grant from SAMHSA for the development and implementation of a post-booking jail diversion program for individuals with mental illness or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorder.

In response to the great national tragedy that riveted Blacksburg and the New River Valley on April 16, 2007, the Mental Health Association of the New River Valley, in collaboration with several partner agencies, led the planning and implementation of the community's healing and recovery activities. The organization created the Center for Community Healing After Tragedy (CHAT) to coordinate and lead the vast provision of clinical services, education and mental health outreach and has assisted thousands of individuals.

The agency budget for FY 2008-09 is approximately \$650,000. Funding comes from federal grants, foundation grants, United Way agencies, private contributions, program and service fees. A 15-person Board of Directors, a staff of seven, and a volunteer force of over 100 works together to oversee and provide the many diverse and outcome-driven programs of the organization.

The Mental Health Association of the New River Valley, Inc. is a private, non-profit mental health organization dedicated to equitable access to appropriate mental health treatment, the promotion of mental health, and the prevention of mental illness. We work toward this mission advocacy, community education, and direct service programs.