

# Growing HOPE

NAVOS MENTAL HEALTH SOLUTIONS SPRING 2014 NEWSLETTER



## A Story of Recovery:

**“I would not be where I am today if it weren’t for Navos”**



Carrie Bradley came to Navos last May in a desperate search for help. She had spent the last few years suffering from depression. In addition, she had been homeless for much of the time after her divorce in 2006.

“I was a mess when I started here,” she said.

Carrie, a cancer survivor, suffers from chronic severe neck and back pain – pain that not only contributed to her depression but also led her to abuse prescription medications. After entering mental health treatment at Navos, she was referred by her counselor to the agency’s Co-Occurring Disorders program, which treats people with substance abuse issues. Carrie was entered into the Intensive Outpatient Program last November and successfully moved into the next phase of the program in March after coming to terms with her dependence on pain medication.

“Everyone here has been a tremendous help,” Carrie said. “Everybody has been great. I would not be where I am today if it weren’t for Navos. It has allowed me to be me again, to come out from my shell.”

Carrie says she has seen many tangible improvements in her life since entering treatment, but one of the most important has been reconnecting with family.

“One of my brothers had practically disowned me because I was such a mess,” she said. “He would not let me see my nephews. Now he sees the progress that I have made and they are back in my life.”

Carrie’s positive experiences at Navos have led her to another important decision – a commitment to become a peer counselor.

“I am a people person,” she said. “I have found while in treatment, especially in my chemical dependency therapy groups, that people like to talk to me about their problems. I think that I would be great at this because I want to help people as much as I can.”

But most of all Carrie wants people to know that “it’s OK to have mental and health disabilities. But you can’t let it control your life.”



## Why I support the programs at Seattle Children's Home

### A message from Nat Penrose

I was a member of the SCH Board for nearly twenty years and had the privilege of seeing and being a part of an organization that undertook the most difficult and seriously emotionally disturbed children one can possibly imagine, and during the course of the better part of a year teach these youngsters to be all they could be. Whenever I thought it might be time to move on I would visit McGraw, a lock down facility where we dealt with approximately 16 to 18 youngsters and because of the difficulty of dealing with them, the staff to child ratio was nearly one to one. Yet by the time these children were getting well enough to leave, they were helping the staff deal with new arrivals. It was a renewing experience and I was always inspired to continue on. I marvel at the patience and commitment of the SCH staff who worked with patience, commitment and perseverance to whatever was needed to help these children become all they could be and to become a responsible member of our society. The efforts of staff to these children was my inspiration to continue to serve on the Board, and it is why I continue to donate to Seattle Children's Home Programs today!

MAY IS  
MENTAL HEALTH  
AWARENESS MONTH!

# Grow your gift

to Navos, Ruth Dykeman  
Children's Center and  
Seattle Children's Home  
Tuesday, May 6, 2014

# give BIG

GiveBIG on May 6th and your gift will be matched in the Seattle Foundation's GiveBIG stretch pool. Help us continue to provide life transforming services to 23,000 children, youth, families and adults who are vulnerable to mental illness.

**To qualify for the match pool  
make your donation to Navos at  
[www.seattlefoundation.org](http://www.seattlefoundation.org)**

“You don't have to let the past dictate who you are and what your future holds. You do!”

— Kyna, past client of the  
McGraw Residential Treatment Program

# Peer Bridgers —

## Rare mental-health fixers

Written by Jonathan Martin, *Seattle Times* columnist  
Published in the *Seattle Times* November 20, 2013

Crystal looked down at her bowl of handmade pasta like she expected it to suddenly disappear.

You can understand her hesitation. The day before, she was in a West Seattle psychiatric hospital after being committed for wandering Seattle streets, suicidal. This day, she lived in a downtown Seattle homeless shelter, a 57-year-old woman adrift, without a phone, clothes or identification.

Enter Dennis Villas and Mary McDonald. Their job for the day was to make sure Crystal got a square meal — the pasta at an Italian bistro downtown — and a phone. Then they would get her a first appointment with the public mental-health provider across the street.

“We’re not going to leave until we have a case manager,” said Villas, 43, with inspiring confidence.

Mary and Dennis’s job title — Peer Bridgers — is new to the local mental-health system, but so intuitive it is a no-brainer. Mary and Dennis help ease patients out of Navos, a community psychiatric hospital in West Seattle, and, for up to three months, help to plant them in new lives firmly enough that they won’t quickly need readmission.

After a day with them, I came to see the peer bridgers as fixers. When a reporter is on assignment in an unfamiliar land he or she hires a fixer, a well-connected local to translate and navigate and make sense of what is happening.

In this case, the strange land is the government human-services system. Getting someone like Crystal onto federal disability benefits takes six weeks. Getting her into scarce local mental-health housing? That takes a fixer.



Pictured here is the Peer Bridger team at Navos

What’s unique about peer bridgers is they have to know the territory and be in recovery themselves. Mary was an office-supply saleswoman before she nearly died from untreated bipolar disorder and alcoholism. Dennis had a good career in the investment industry before losing it to methamphetamine and meth-induced psychosis. Their shared struggle offers a quick inroad to gain their clients’ trust.

Crystal, at first, wasn’t interested in help. But when Mary and Dennis shared, she opened up. They spent weeks just helping Crystal gather documents to get an identification card, which is necessary for her to get other help.

“When you’re released [from the hospital] you drop off a cliff into the system, and it’s so complicated,” said Mary, 47.

That’s the human part of their job. The fiscal part makes just as much sense.

Fact: The cost per hospitalization for a patient with mental-health problems averages more than \$22,000, according to the Washington State Institute for Public Policy. At least 11 percent of psychiatric patients are rehospitalized within 30 days, according to national data, mostly due to sparse follow-up care.

Slow that revolving door and it’s better for patients, whose illnesses get worse with each crisis. And it’s good for taxpayers. OptumHealth, the behemoth managed care firm, hired peer bridgers when it took over Pierce County’s public mental-health system in 2009. The result: In the first year, rehospitalizations plunged, saving \$550,000.

Enter Mary and Dennis.

In April, King County got a two-year, \$1.7 million grant to hire peer bridgers at the 68-bed Navos and at Harborview Medical Center. It is fitting that the money came from the state’s settlement with Janssen Pharmaceuticals for deceptive marketing of the antipsychotic drug Risperdal, which Mary takes.

Mary and Dennis are intended to help relieve the county’s crisis-level shortage of psychiatric beds, which causes dozens of patients each night to be left stranded in emergency rooms.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

# Growing HOPE

Formerly Bigger than Breakfast

[growinghopeluncheon.org](http://growinghopeluncheon.org)

## Luncheon

NEW  
THIS  
YEAR



Join us **Thursday, May 29, 2014**  
and be a part of the solution.

LOCATION: SHERATON HOTEL, 1400 SIXTH AVENUE, SEATTLE

RECEPTION: 11AM-12PM, PROGRAM: 12-1PM

RSVP by May 15th at [events@navos.org](mailto:events@navos.org) or call 206-298-9651



2014 EXPANDING HORIZONS AWARD RECIPIENT:

**Dr. Delaney Ruston** For her pioneering efforts and award-winning films to educate and inspire communities around the globe to end the silence and suffering around mental illness.



EMCEE:

**Molly Shen**  
KOMO 4 News

**There is no cost to attend.** A suggested minimum donation of \$150 will be requested during the event. If you are unable to attend, please join our virtual table and make a donation at [growinghopeluncheon.org](http://growinghopeluncheon.org).

### PEER BRIDGERS, CONTINUED:

It will help, but let's not kid ourselves. A few teams of peer bridgers are drops in the bucket. Mary carries a caseload of four patients; there were 3,401 civil commitments in King County last year.

It's also troubling that peer bridgers make so much sense, yet are still rare in the mental-health industry.

As I see it, that is because of the way society views mental illness — as a permanent disability rather than a health problem from which one can recover. We focus on the second descriptors for Mary and Dennis — their illnesses — rather than the first: their skills.

Earlier this month, I tagged along with Mary as she drove a Navos patient to Greenwood to interview for one of the too-rare spots in a mental-health housing unit. In the movie version of Mary, she'd be the wisecracking, self-deprecating bridesmaid character.

That effect hides a harrowing personal story: she lost a good sales career to untreated illness, was hospitalized three times, saw a brother die to a similar illness and spent 16 months in intensive treatment before re-entering the workforce via peer support.

"You couldn't tell me then I'd be working, driving, that I'd be paid for helping people based on my past history," she said. "I rebounded faster than I thought I could."

**I choose to move forward in my recovery by looking ahead instead of behind."**

# Recent Highlights

- **Happy Birthday Seattle Children's Home, Celebrating 130 years!** Founded in 1884 by the Ladies Relief Society, today the programs at Seattle Children's Home respond to the mental health needs of children, youth and their families throughout Seattle, King County and Washington State. The generous support from our community allows us to continue to build and expand essential programs and services.



Pictured here are some of the Trustees from the Ladies Relief Society, this photo was taken in the early 1900's

- **The public health clinic at our new Mental Health and Wellness Center has provided care to over 700 patients since it opened last April.** Navos is developing a national model for providing people with a health care home where they can receive full spectrum coordinated care and a range of other services to support each individual's recovery and wellness.



- **Last September Navos held a groundbreaking celebration on the new campus for the Behavioral Healthcare Center for Children, Youth and Families.** Today, construction is well underway, with the new Independence Bridge housing program (for foster youth 18 to 24 transitioning to independence) building already framed up. The new campus (funded with state, county, private donations and other sources of capital funds not available for operational expenses) will allow us to help more families in need of our comprehensive array of services in one bucolic location on Lake Burien.

- **CEO Dr. David M. Johnson received the 2014 Alumni Professional Achievement Award by Seattle University.** David has nurtured the development of many pioneering and outstanding programs and is frequently asked to serve on policy-setting task forces and be a public speaker on mental health issues. "My work is my life's mission" he says. "My passion is to make this a better world for those with huge challenges and meager resources."

Pictured here are David Armstrong, Peer Employment Training Class graduate, with Navos CEO, David Johnson.

- **On February 27, 2014 Navos graduated the 16th Peer Employment Training class.** This program is six months in duration, the students completed 80 hours of class time and 50 hours of homework. Each graduate worked tirelessly not only to learn the skills and tools of PET they also learned to apply the information to their daily lives. The people in the class shine as examples of Hope for others to begin the path to recovery, and to help others with mental health issues see that recovery is not only possible, it can and does happen.



“Getting over a painful experience is much like crossing monkey bars. You have to let go at some point in order to move forward.”

Help us go green and reduce waste and cost. Email [news@navos.org](mailto:news@navos.org) to receive our e-newsletter.

**MISSION**  
Improving the quality of life of people vulnerable to mental illness by providing a broad continuum of care.

**FOCUS**  
We serve the most vulnerable in our community: low-income people with serious and persistent mental illness, providing a full spectrum of services to an ethnic, age, and gender diverse population.

## Board of Directors

Tom Mitchell  
PRESIDENT

Matt Mihlon  
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

Tom Powers  
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

Patti Neuberger  
TREASURER

Don Gilmore  
SECRETARY

Bobbe J. Bridge

Jody Carona

Chris Dobbelaere

Jean Ellsworth

Chuck Hoffman

James Johnson

Betsy Jones

David M. Johnson  
CEO



Ruth Dykeman  
Children's Center



Join us on Facebook at [facebook.com/navoshelps](https://facebook.com/navoshelps)

[NAVOS.ORG](https://NAVOS.ORG)