



# MHA Message

There is **NO** health without Mental Health!

## From The Executive Director



Just as the collective trauma we've experienced for two years thanks to Covid-19 seems to be lifting, our news is filled with distressing updates about Russia's attacks on Ukraine. It can be unsettling to witness the ongoing saga. What can we do to cope and maintain our mental wellbeing? Here are some ideas to incorporate into your life to manage this and other stressors you may face.

First of all, unplug from news and social media. Lori Criss, Director of Ohio's department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, advised early in the pandemic that, "24/7 news is for our convenience, not our consumption." Stay informed but don't keep the news on all day every day. Controlling your exposure will help decrease your level of stress over the situation.

Remember the simplicity of health 101: Stay physically active, eat healthy foods and get plenty of rest. Physical activity gets easier as our spring weather returns. Anyone can get out for a brisk stroll or jog, to play with kids or grandkids or walk the dog. Being outside increases our vitamin D intake, which in turn helps elevate our mood. Get to the gym for a workout, exercise class, to shoot some hoops, jump in the pool or play pickleball or tennis. Follow that up with healthy meals and snacks as well as plenty of hydrating water. Getting to sleep at a similar time every night is important for good sleep hygiene and being well rested will help you deal with challenging times. All of these healthy practices are components of life that you can do something about, giving you a sense of peace and control.

We know that doing good for others is one way to lift our spirits. That can be as simple as volunteering at a nonprofit, church or school for a one-time project or on a regular basis. There are lots of opportunities to donate financially to assist Ukrainian refugees as well as others who were living in Ukraine who have had to flee the country. Be sure that the organization you choose to support is reputable and well established to avoid potential scams.

Finally, stay connected with people. Talk with your family members and loved ones to be sure everyone is taking care of themselves. If anyone is struggling and not able to bounce back from this new wave of bad news, check in with their doctor or a mental health professional. The sooner we seek help for mental health concerns, the better our outcomes will be. There is help available, providing hope for the future.

To your mental health,

Penny C. Sittler  
Executive Director

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## MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

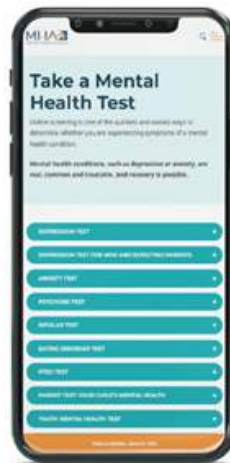
It's **MEMBERSHIP** time! Mail the enclosed form to us or go to [www.mhalc.org](http://www.mhalc.org) to join today.  
Thank you for your continued support!

# MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

Feeling like something  
“isn’t quite right”?

Visit [www.mhalec.org](http://www.mhalec.org)  
to check your symptoms.

It’s free, confidential, and  
anonymous.



MAY IS MENTAL  
HEALTH MONTH

TIME TO  
GET **BACK**  
TO  
**BASICS**  
**LEARN MORE**  
[mhanational.org/may](http://mhanational.org/may)

## STARTING TO THINK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health refers to our emotional and social well-being and impacts how we think, feel, and behave. It plays a role in connecting with others, making decisions, handling stress, and many other aspects of daily life. Everyone has mental health, and it deserves your attention just as much as your physical health does.

### WHAT IS A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION?

A mental health condition, or mental illness, refers to a set of symptoms that have been identified by the mental health community. Mental health conditions are described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V), the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), or by people with lived experience.

People with mental health conditions deal with changes in emotions, thinking, and/or behavior. For some, this means extreme and unexpected changes in mood – like feeling much more sad or worried than usual. For others, it means not thinking clearly, pulling away from friends and activities you used to enjoy, or hearing voices that others do not. No matter what kind of mental health condition someone is facing, it’s always possible to recover.

### IS POOR MENTAL HEALTH THE SAME THING AS HAVING A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION?

No. We all have tough days and weeks and struggling with your mental health doesn’t automatically mean you have a mental health condition. To be diagnosed, the changes in your thinking and emotions must be seriously hurting your ability to do the things you want to do; and sticking around longer than they should – weeks or months, depending on the condition.

### TERMS TO KNOW

#### **SYMPTOMS:**

physical or mental features that indicate the potential existence of a concern, condition, or diagnosis

#### **LIVED EXPERIENCE:**

first-hand, personal experience dealing with a mental health or substance use challenge

#### **STRESS:**

a feeling of emotional or physical tension in response to being overwhelmed or unable to cope with mental or emotional pressure

#### **TRAUMA:**

an emotional response to a disturbing, scary, or shocking experience that overwhelms an individual’s ability to cope

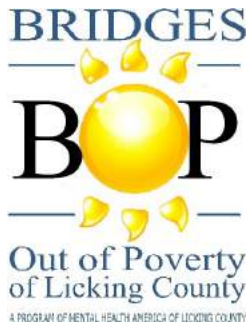
#### **COPING SKILLS:**

a strategy to help you deal with difficult situations and lessen unpleasant emotions, thoughts, or behaviors

#### **MENTAL HEALTH SCREEN:**

an evaluation of your mental health and wellbeing through scientifically validated assessment tools

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



The Bridges Out of Poverty (BOP) program strives toward reducing poverty in the Licking County community. Getting Ahead (GA) classes offered through BOP promote financial literacy and develop opportunities for job training and career advancement.

Program Coordinator Donna Wayt is offering in-person classes again at all the same places including Adult Probation's Day Reporting, Main Place, and Behavioral Healthcare Partners' Courage and Spencer Houses. BOP numbers are growing again with the Day Reporting classes at nearly full capacity.

@mhalcBridgesOutOfPoverty

The Compeer program's mission is to reduce isolation and stigma for individuals who live with severe and persistent mental illness and to improve their quality of life.



Compeers are planning so many fun things to do in the next few months. They are revamping the walking group. On Fridays they will meet downtown and walk around the square, weather permitting. They're planning a hat party, fishing trip, thrift shop exploration, trip to the museum, and many potluck dinners. Compeers are going to amp up their exercise group and will be trying Zumba again. So many people enjoyed that last time. Their audiobook club is going well - 12 people are currently reading "How to Win Friends and Influence People" by Dale Carnegie. Book club participants meet every Monday to talk about the book at 1 pm via Facebook Messenger.

Their "Healing Arts" virtual art show was featured on Compeer's and MHALC's Facebook pages on March 7 at 3 pm. It was so gratifying for the 17 artists to get to show their work to their friends and families. These local artists use art as a coping mechanism and to advocate for those in recovery. Compeer Coordinator Donna Wayt facilitates open art at The Main Place on Thursdays from 12:30 pm - 3 pm.

Compeer's public Facebook group: Compeer Circle of Friends

## Youth Self-Advocacy



Self-advocacy is speaking up for yourself, asking for what you need, negotiating for yourself, knowing your rights and responsibilities, and using resources that are available to you.

The Youth Self-Advocacy program is designed to help youth with developmental disabilities cultivate self-advocacy skills as they transition from high school into adulthood.

Program Coordinator Christina Peña-Whittington's classes are thriving with active participants this year.

@MHALCYouthSelfAdvocacy



May 14 will mark one year since the accidental fire that devastated the interior of our Clubhouse. The YES staff and our members in grades six through twelve have never missed a minute of programming even though we have had to move several times. Thanks to the generosity of The Works, Second Presbyterian Church, and I Am Boundless, YES Club has had a place to be from day one. By the time you read this, general contractor Robertson Construction will have commenced the restoration of the building and we hope to be back home by late summer/early fall. Stay tuned for a grand reopening announcement!

Currently, YES Club is housed in the warehouse in the rear of I Am Boundless at 22 North 1st Street in downtown Newark. We've got it set up comfortably with seating for homework time and other activities, a meal-prep area, clothing closet, and a TV/movie viewing area. We even have room for a pickle ball court! Our members look forward to field trips and swimming on Fridays this summer. Download our application packet for any youth you think would enjoy spending time with us.

@YESClub

## Family Peer Mentoring Services

Our Family Peer Mentors are nationally certified by FREDLA (Family Run Executive Director Leadership Association), a national organization providing resource development, training and technical assistance on topics including parent peer support. Family Peer Mentors have lived experience navigating multiple child serving systems. They offer hope, guidance, advocacy and support for parents and caregivers of children receiving services for mental health, substance use disorders, juvenile justice, child welfare and other service systems.

Family Peer Mentor Katie Burkhard shares her lived experience with families as a parent who has navigated a variety of child serving agencies in and around Licking County for over 20 years. Katie delivers Family Peer Mentoring services that are tailored to the specific strengths and needs of each family. This confidential, focused partnering with caregivers and their families is delivered with respect, determination and hope. Contact Katie at kburkhard@mhalc.org or 740-267-5932 for more information.



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



Grit Integrity Presence (Grit) has had a good rebound from COVID. Classes are meeting in four school districts including Heritage and Wilson middle schools in Newark, Licking Valley, Licking Heights and Watkins. Newark High School also has a Grit group meeting each week. Students have been able to meet in-person for the majority of the school year, and most have completed at least 15 in-person sessions

which has allowed for full delivery of the core program. Along with the core socio-emotional curriculum, additional focus is added as needed within individual classes. Many students are in foster or kinship care. Subjects of loss, grief, parental and sibling absence, addiction and abuse are some of the topics that students request help with.

An all boys Grit class has begun for second semester! It is going extremely well, and the boys are excited to be part of history in the making. It has been requested for years, so it is exciting to step into this new chapter for Grit.

Dozens of fleece tie “Care Blankets” have been completed and delivered to an area agency that works with children in crisis. More will be completed within the next couple of months now that in-person classes are meeting consistently. All in all, it’s been a good academic year for Grit, with many more students participating again and getting the full benefit of the program.

@GirlsInProgress is the public Facebook page

**All Boys Grit Class Sign-In Sheet**

<b>Grit</b> SIGN-IN SHEET	Date: <b>3-4-22</b>
School/Class/Time: <b>WT 5B 11:01-11:11</b>	
<b>YOUR POSITIVE AFFIRMATION (PUT-UP) THAT YOU WILL PRACTICE THIS WEEK</b>	
I can get through this	
It isn't Monday	
I am better than Gaminis	
I am respectful	
I am smart	
I am special.	
I am great	
I am brave	
I am thoughtful	

## Parent Support

**Positive Parenting Program**

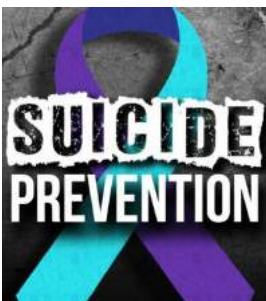
**Is this for you?**  
Do you enjoy parenting, but wish you knew how to deal with specific problem behavior?

**Triple P can help you**

- Encourage behavior you like
- Deal with problem behavior
- Become confident as a parent
- Be realistic about parenting
- Take care of yourself

For additional information on free classes being offered at various times and locations contact:  
Mental Health America of Licking County  
740-522-1341 mhalc.org

MHA’s Parent Support program has resumed Triple P in-person sessions and continues to offer them virtually on Zoom. This is an opportunity for parents and caregivers to interact during individual and/or group sessions while receiving proven Triple P Parenting strategies. To register or for more information, contact [mhalc@alink.com](mailto:mhalc@alink.com) or 740-522-1341.



The Suicide Prevention program is reaching out to educate youth and adults on the signs and symptoms of suicide in Licking County to help save lives. Whether it’s teaching Signs of Suicide (SOS) in area middle and high schools or offering Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention training to adults, this critical program is working hard to improve the mental health of the community.

Suicide Prevention Program Coordinator Christina Peña-Whittington has returned to the schools to facilitate the SOS program in-person.

The Bipolar/Depression support group meetings are in-person and held every Wednesday at the MHA office from 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm. The Survivors After Suicide support group meets on the second Tuesday of each month from 6:30 pm – 7:30 pm via Zoom. Contact Christina at [cpena@mhalc.org](mailto:cpena@mhalc.org) or

740-788-0303 for the link. Consider attending a group with peers where you can talk about challenges and find encouragement for your journey.

Christina continues to post updates and resources on the Suicide Prevention Facebook page [@mhalcSuicidePrevention](https://www.facebook.com/mhalcSuicidePrevention).

## **We Grow Together**

By MacKenzie Morton  
Ohio State University Newark student and MHALC Intern

“You don’t even know what stress is!”

“Just wait until you get into the real world; you have it easy now.”

“You have nothing to be sad about.”

Have you ever been told one of these statements? Maybe by a parent, family member, or an adult within your environment? Children as young as 6<sup>th</sup> grade have most likely heard one of these statements whenever they express their feelings of stress, anxiety, or even depression. Adults seemingly push aside a child’s feelings of distress because they’re “young” and “don’t understand the struggles of real life” but that just is not true.

Mental Health America of Licking County (MHALC) promotes mental health for any age group because mental health is important at every age.

As children grow and develop, they face many difficulties in their lives while they are physically and mentally changing in ways they don’t understand. They often look at adults for comfort to let them know that everything they are going through is normal, until it is not.

MHALC has a program that provides children in middle and high school a safe space to talk about their feelings and life troubles. This program is Grit Integrity Presence (Grit), formerly known as Girls In Progress.

Grit is a program that uses creative and fun ways for girls to express their feelings and emotions. During my time with Grit, the program used art journaling as a coping and communication tool. Shari Johnston, Program Manager of Grit, explained that emotions cannot always be expressed through words so by allowing these girls to use their creative freedom, they are still releasing their feelings.

Grit is offered during school hours in a classroom setting. There are lessons included that educate the girls on a variety of topics including coping mechanisms for stress, depression, anxiety, etc. It is offered throughout Licking County including Wilson Middle School, Licking Valley Middle School, Heritage Middle School, and Watkins Middle School.

Throughout my years in school and life, I have dealt with depression and anxiety. In school I looked for a way to express my feelings outside my home. I am thankful to MHALC and Shari for allowing me to join in at Wilson Middle school to experience Grit. The dynamic of each group is nothing short of excellent because although every personality is different and every outside life is different, they all share support and care for each other.

I wish that I had access to this in my school aged years and it makes me so happy to see how easily accessible help is. I hope that Grit continues to grow and one day my own daughter feels the love and acceptance that I have personally witnessed from the groups of girls I sit with every week.

Overcoming mental health issues is not something one does alone. As they say about children, “it takes a village” and the same goes for making your mental health healthy again. There truthfully is NO health without mental health.



## It's membership time at MHA!

More than a membership, it's a partnership. On the previous pages you read about all of the amazing things MHA is doing to impact the lives of the people in Licking County, but none of it would be possible without you! By renewing your membership or becoming a new member of MHA, you can help us reach thousands of your community's members by promoting and continually reinforcing mental health and wellness through education, prevention and advocacy, and eliminating the stigma of mental health issues.

See the enclosed membership form. For more information, call 740-522-1341 or visit [www.mhalc.org](http://www.mhalc.org).

*"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."* – Helen Keller

## **\*Save The Date\***

# LOU MITCHELL MEMORIAL GOLF OUTING FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

Denison Golf Club  
555 Newark-Granville Road, Granville, Ohio

**Monday, July 25, 2022**

Check in: Noon ~ Simultaneous Start: 1:00 pm ~ Dinner 6:00 pm

Register Online at [www.mhalc.org](http://www.mhalc.org)



**Please contact Rhea Pierron at  
[rpierron@mhalc.org](mailto:rpierron@mhalc.org) or 740-522-1341 for more  
sponsorship information.**

## **\*Save The Date\***

***MHA's Night of Hope fundraiser***

**March 4, 2023**

**Thirty One West**

**Stay tuned for details!**





# THANK YOU!

## TO ALL OF OUR DONORS

Mental Health America of Licking County would like to recognize the following individuals and organizations for their support received from July 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021.

*We make every effort to accurately acknowledge our donors.*

*Please call 740-522-1341 to report an error or omission, and please accept our apologies.*

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\* Signifies MHALC member

“No duty is more urgent than that of returning thanks.”

—James Allen

Thank you!

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## TWO MORE WAYS TO HELP MHALC



### HOW THE KROGER COMMUNITY REWARDS PROGRAM WORKS FOR ALL OF US!

Every time you use your Kroger Plus card, you will still receive fuel rewards and coupons and MHALC receives a portion of every dollar you spend. This is such an easy way to contribute to our programs.

Please follow the easy instructions below to become part of the MHALC community. If we can be of any assistance, please call our office.

- Go to [www.kroger.com](http://www.kroger.com).
- Go to the Main Menu.
- Click on Savings.
- Click on Kroger Community Rewards.
- Click on the COLUMBUS Enroll Now button.
- Put in your information and Kroger card #.

Be sure to link your card to MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF LICKING COUNTY, Group # AX606.

Don't forget to buy gift cards at Kroger when you are going out to eat or shopping at stores such as Lowe's, Kohl's or Best Buy or when you start your holiday shopping. **BE SURE TO SCAN YOUR KROGER CARD WITH EVERY PURCHASE!**



### If you shop on Amazon, you can support MHALC!

Through the AmazonSmile program, 0.5% of your purchase will be donated to the charity of your choice.

Sign-up is simple:

- Go to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) and sign into your existing Amazon account.
- Search and select Mental Health America of Licking County to make it your charity of choice.
- The purchasing process and products are exactly the same on AmazonSmile as they are on Amazon.

Donating has never been as quick and easy! Please share with your friends and family and help MHALC continue to provide our much needed services.

Thank you for your continued help and support!