

QUARTERLY report



Volume 23, No. 4 | 2021

On Pervasive Systemic Stressors and Restoring Safety

By William Stauffer, LSW, CCS, CADC



I was thinking about writing on something entirely positive in the recovery space, and yet here is the piece which does not fit that Bill, pun noted. All things considered, I am optimistic about our future, and underpinning this is the knowledge that a primary facet of recovery (and the recovery movement) is acknowledging uncomfortable truths and facing them, together. This piece and all my writings are intended in the most positive way possible—to generate thinking about what we want and what we need to do to move in that direction. It is vital to ensure that we help develop a recovery service and support systems that can meet the needs of the next generation. What each of us, our agencies, communities, and governmental institutions do to respond to challenges we face matters a great deal to how each of us, our families and communities, heal into the future.

We face unprecedented challenges, what [Dr. H. Westley Clark referred to in his interview with me](#) as a [syndemic](#). Dr. Clark was referencing the addiction epidemic, exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic, influenced by social strife and strain on all of our societal institutions over the last decade or so. One new development is the [Great Resignation of 2021](#): people are walking off their jobs across America. Our substance use care system was already deep into a severe workforce crisis, simmering for over two decades. In May of 2019, the Annapolis Coalition released a [report commissioned by SAMHSA](#) that discussed our workforce crisis in pre-COVID times and estimated that we needed an additional 1,103,338 peer support workers and 1,436,228 behavioral health counselors, as part of the 4,486,865 behavioral health workers conservatively estimated that we need.

Continued on page 4

PRO•A'S 4TH ANNUAL LEADERSHIP IN RECOVERY EVENT



A garden requires patient labor and attention. Plants do not grow merely to satisfy ambitions or to fulfill good intentions. They thrive because someone expended effort on them.—Liberty Hyde Bailey

The recovery community can be compared to a garden in many ways—it requires tending to, rich soil, light water, and care. We thrive in our personal recovery by tending to our needs, through self-care and the building of recovery capital. As a recovery community we thrive not alone but through the sum of or parts. The PRO•A 4th Annual Leadership in Recovery dinner served as a prime example of the fruits of collective care.

Continued on page 3

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Volume 23, No. 4 | 2021

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The PRO•A newsletter is a publication of the Pennsylvania Recovery Organizations Alliance. The newsletter is published four times a year and sent to recipients in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and surrounding states.

Newsletters are mailed in February, May, August & November.

FEATURES

ON PERVERSIVE SYSTEMIC STRESSORS AND RESTORING SAFETY	1
4TH ANNUAL PRO-A LEADERSHIP DINNER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
RECOVERY CENTER: SAGE'S ARMY	6
WELCOME OUR NEW TEAM MEMBER	8
RASE PROJECT HOLIDAY TOILETRIES DRIVE	9
RASE PROJECT SANTA WORKSHOP	9
RETOOLING CARE TO MEET OUR NEEDS	10

ADVERTISERS

TREATMENT TRENDS	7
WHITE DEER RUN	9
THE RASE PROJECT	9
ALKERMES	10
RECOVERY CENTERS OF AMERICA	10
WHITE DEER RUN	12
PA GET HELP NOW	12
NORTHAMPTON COUNTY RECOVERY CENTERS	12
UPMC	13
COMMUNITY CARE	13
TREATMENT TRENDS	13
BEACON	13
THE RASE PROJECT	14
CORNERSTONE FOR HOPE	14
PRO-ACT	14
CREATIVE HEALTH SERVICES	14
QUEST DIAGNOSTICS	15
RETREAT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH	15
DAYSTAR	16
WYOMING COUNTY HOPE COALITION	16
PA STATEWIDE TOBACCO-FREE RECOVERY INITIATIVE	17
JOHN R. GAILEY III & JOELLEN BERGER CHARITABLE FUND	19
PERFORM CARE	20

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Acknowledgments

Without our sponsors and advertisers, this event would not have been possible. We extend our sincerest gratitude for their commitments and generous support.

A sincere thank you to the Leadership in Recovery Steering Committee and the Board of Directors for all of their time and commitment in supporting our mission.

A special thank you to our keynote R. Seth Williams, who freely offered his time, knowledge and experience in speaking at our Leadership Event.

Thank you to our Leadership in Recovery Dinner Event 2021 Speakers, Sean Fogler, Rikki Sargent, William Stauffer, and Laurie Johnson-Wade, for offering their time, experience and insights.

To all PRO•A Staff Members, for their commitment and hard work in support of individuals in the community.

To our amazing musicians, Anthony Fuscaldo, with his unique instrumental talents and Audra Mariel, with her stunning vocals, who created a brilliant and inspiring tone for the event.



To the Country Club of Harrisburg and their staff, for their hospitality and service.

To Royer's Flowers, Orchard Street in Harrisburg, who again added aesthetic beauty to our event.

To Sweet Confections, who made our wonderful dessert.

To Chris Long and Steven Long, who assisted with the sound and digital technologies.

To Kaylee Marie Photography, who captured some of the memories of the event.

Our guests, who chose to share this celebration with us, and celebrate leadership in recovery.

A special thank you to our individual donators, Rick Esterly, Gary Handler of Clean & Sober Radio and Anonymous, which allowed Scholarship tickets to over two dozen individuals to attend this event.

THANK YOU



continued from page 1

This event was made possible by the remarkable support from our sponsors, Board of Directors and staff. Thanks to our speakers, awardees and cherished guests, the event was a resounding success.

Our awardees included Ibn Quawee “Q” Quawee of [Treatment Trends Inc.](#), of Lehigh County who was, our Individual 2021 Champion of Service Awardee, Lost Dreams Awakening Westmorland County Institution/Organization 2021 Champion of Service Awardee; [State Representative James Gregory](#) Pennsylvania House of Representatives—80th Legislative District of PA; and Kim Bowman Chester County Human Service Director, (retired), the PRO•A, 2021 Lifetime Service to the Recovery Community award.

Our Keynote Speaker, R. Seth Williams (the first African American District Attorney of Philadelphia) imparted a passionate account of his hard-earned journey to recovery and how he is rebuilding his life to have purpose and meaning. He shared the concept of [Ubuntu](#), which he learned during his travels to South Africa. Ubuntu’s meaning is *I am because you are*, the etymology of this powerful phrase at its essence is to be *humane*. He spoke about how we are here because of the efforts of those who came before us, those who travel with us and the value of empathy and service to each other. Mr. Williams not only used humor and raw honesty to convey his powerful message, but also inspired us with a mean sax rendition of *Amazing Grace*.

Laurie Johnson Wade spoke about Lost Dreams Awakening and the building of a grassroots recovery community organization, the vision of her and her husband, Dr. VonZell Wade and how the community has risen, together.

There was a presentation on the groundbreaking stigma composite, a collaborative effort between [Elevyst](#), PRO•A and RIWI of Canada. A press release from [RIWI](#) about the presentation and the ability we have to collect near real time data and use it to measure and improve attitudes about us can be found [here](#).

Secretary of Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, Jennifer Smith, came out to partake in this important evening. Perhaps most importantly we all came together and were all able to celebrate and experience recovery fellowship as a statewide community. One of the most important messages from the evening was that we all need to be at the table and work together to save lives and restore community.

The road ahead may be arduous and the work tireless, but on November 3, 2021, we got to get dressed up, break bread and tend to our garden. The fruits of which will be not only beautiful but bountiful.

See you next year!



to all...
you are simply awesome

PRO•A'S 4TH ANNUAL LEADERSHIP IN RECOVERY EVENT

Moving from Survive to Thrive

re-cap

On Pervasive Systemic Stressors and Restoring Safety

continued from page 1



Do we have a system that is inviting for people to work in, focused on healing or one that is steeped in trauma and not able to deliver its full promise?

We consistently make it more difficult for recovering people to get into the SUD workforce. Ostensibly, this is done out of sense that our recovering workforce are less capable or have more ethical issues than non-recovering people, suggestive of [implicit bias](#) against us. We are raising the bar as the bottom is falling out of our SUD workforce. Maybe on some level, it is done because [our people are not seen as worthy of helping](#). Maybe we don't want an effective care system because we don't think "they" should be helped.

Systemic stressors place a lot of strain on agencies. Such dynamics have been examined and explored in many contexts. One that resonates with me is the work of [Dr. Sandra Bloom](#) who has written about these forces present in all human service organizations. They had a devastating impact on the Sanctuary Program, a program she developed and nurtured for many years. She termed it [destroying sanctuary](#). I have referred often to her work over the years, but I don't think it has ever been as relevant as it is right now.

Dr. Bloom describes that as internal and external challenges become more profound, people and systems become progressively overwhelmed, they lose capacity to constructively deal with the challenges. They become more top-down authoritarian and less inclusive of feedback from the those within these systems. Workers leave or stop trying to be effective. The system further losses capacity to address the needs of the people it serves. As part of this dynamic, systems then tend to eliminate those who share uncomfortable truths to raise the alarm about the problems and move towards solution. We kill the messengers and ignore the messages. Our ability to serve those in need becomes more impaired as it is clear our systems are not open to input and punitive.

Dr. Bloom was seeing how the economics of managed care were squeezing the care out of our programming. Similar dynamics played out in the SUD service system in the mid to late 90s, when the value of [substance abuse insurance coverage declined by 75% between 1988 and 1998](#) and there was a drastic reduction in frequency and duration of inpatient hospitalization with no offset in increased outpatient care. It was a cost shift to the public care system and related to a focus on criminalization of addiction. It was a primary facet that led to the rise of the [new recovery advocacy movement](#) in America.

These dynamics lead to [learned helplessness](#). People feel like they have no power to change things when exposed to prolonged aversive stimulation. When overwhelmed, they simply stop trying to solve problems. This is exacerbated by the [bystander effect](#). The term was coined after the brutal murder of Kitty Genovese on a hot summer night when dozens of people could have done something but assumed that someone else would, but no one did. These are the dynamics of people, organizations and systems that become eroded by the threats they face and become increasingly unable and unwilling to acknowledge and face these challenges. They freeze or flee. I suspect that this is part of what is happening in respect to the Great Resignation of 2021.

On a systems level, are we part of the problem or part of the solution, or a mix of both? What can we do as individuals or collectively? What are our personal and professional obligations to our field and the people we pledged to serve? What is our own responsibility for what is happening, and can we assume a role that moves things in a more positive direction? Have we seen similar dynamics before? What lessons may we learn from the past to apply to our current situation? How do we want to be remembered, by jumping into the lifeboats as our ship founders or by bailing it out and getting our vessel back on course?

We are undergoing a mass trauma event, or more accurately a complex combination of traumatic events at the micro mezzo and macro levels of our society. How do we create safety for ourselves and those in our families, workplaces, and communities? Each of us has the power within us to create greater safety for ourselves and those we love. Are we doing so or spreading trauma?

We face formidable challenges, but we are capable people and seasoned institutions who are well suited to facing adversity. I for one will be identifying challenges and working with others so inclined to fix them. I don't know the specifics of how we will rise above the challenges we face, but I know that when more of us are working towards solutions than are adding to them or sitting by the sidelines, the more likely we are to overcome them and create safety and restore the dynamics of healing in ourselves, our families, our communities, and our systems of care.

Recovery Review Article Link [HERE](#).

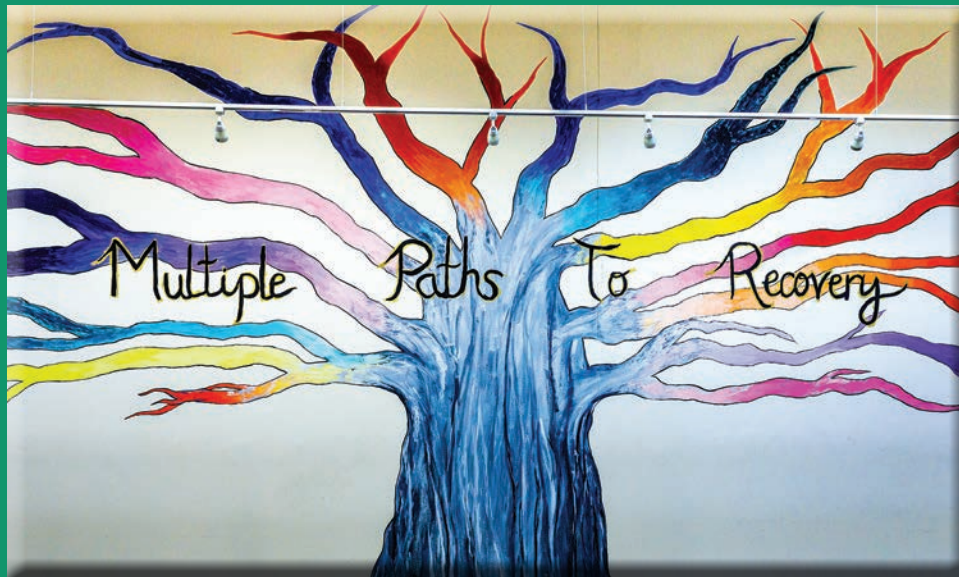
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Sage's Army, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit Recovery Community Organization located in Greensburg, Pennsylvania with a satellite office in Irwin, Pennsylvania. Our organization was founded in 2012 after the tragic death of Sage Capozzi as a result of a fatal overdose. Our mission is to offer support, guidance, and resources to all people who have been affected by substance use and misuse, while also advocating for people who use drugs (PWUD) by facilitating trainings, educating the public, and ending the stigma about PWUD and people in recovery.

Sage's Army employs a team of Certified Recovery Specialists and Certified Family Recovery Specialists who have specialized training through the Pennsylvania Certification Board and who have lived experience as people who self-identify as a person in recovery and/or a family member of someone who uses/used drugs. With empathy, compassion, experience, and knowledge, our team provides direct one-on-one peer support to PWUD, people in recovery, and their family members by providing support, resources, and a safe recovery environment to enhance the participant's journey of recovery and wellness.

Our Recovery Center in Greensburg, PA supports multiple pathways of recovery by facilitating and hosting a variety of support groups and meetings, such as: All Recovery Meetings, SMART Recovery Meetings, 12-Step Meetings, Family Support Groups, Religious Based Groups, a Veteran Support Group, and a Life Skills Group. Sage's Army also provides a 24/7 HelpLine for members of the community that is staffed by volunteers and staff members who provide support, resources, and referrals to treatment providers in the region for all levels of care. Our staff provide educational trainings, attend outreach events, facilitate Naloxone trainings, and advocate for person-first language throughout the region."



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Please Welcome

our new PRO•A team member!



Stan Hough Recovery Support Specialist

Stan is a Recovery Employment Coordinator representing the York, Lancaster and Adams County area for PRO•A's Workforce Support Program. He has been in the drug and alcohol treatment field for three years and is approaching five years in recovery from substance use.

Stan is a former journalist who strived to meet the profession's higher calling by exposing social inequities and highlighting the lives and struggles of the less visible while speaking truth to power. He believes in meaningful work that supports and strengthens a community and has found that working in the recovery field fits his desire to be of service to others, in the same way he's been helped at every point of his personal recovery.

He is also the son of a career foreign service officer and has lived in various countries, including Japan, Taiwan and the Dominican Republic. Those experiences have taught him that there are basic human values that transcend cultural and socioeconomic differences.

Stan is a history reader and documentary film watcher. He places great importance on family and the quality of his relationships. Recently, he and his wife have become day hikers and enjoy planning and plotting out excursions throughout Pennsylvania.

At one point in his life, Stan found himself disillusioned, embittered and profoundly isolated in body and soul. He sees his recovery as both redemptive and hopeful but not a given, so he tries to live in a way that reminds him daily that "to love something is to know it can be lost."

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PRO•A is the Pennsylvania Recovery Organizations Alliance | PHONE 717.545.8929 or 800.858.6040 | pro-a.org



The RASE Project Holiday Toiletries Drive

This year we are asking for toiletries donations, for our Santa workshop event!! (workshop December 20th)

Donations we are looking for.

- *socks (men & women)
- *Toothpaste & toothbrushes
- *Deodorant
- *White T-Shirts
- *Shampoo and conditioners (first 4 ingredients can't be alcohol)
- *Body wash & Bar soaps
- *And any other Toiletries appropriate for inpatient centers
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All donations can be dropped off from now until our Santa workshop on December 20th. Drop off location The RASE project office in York (55 S Richland Ave, York PA 17404)

Event flyer for Santa workshop details

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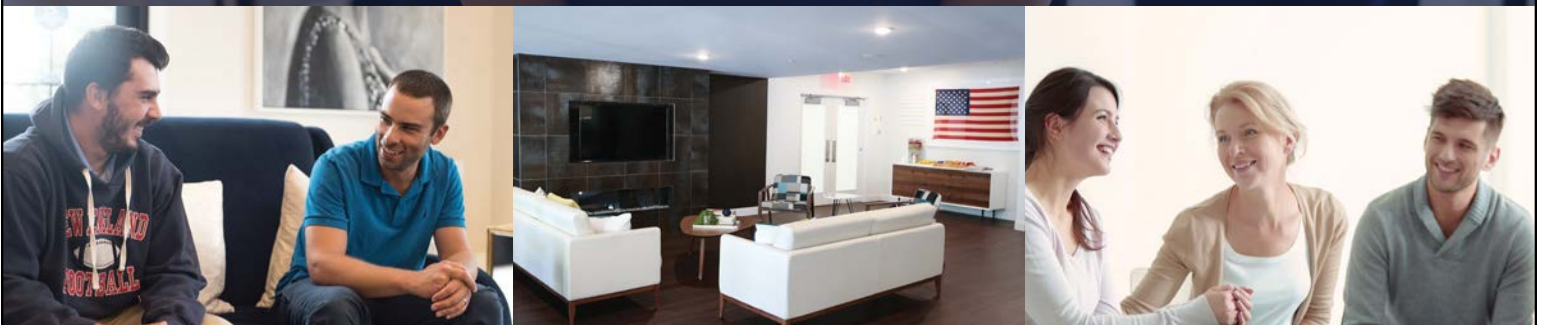
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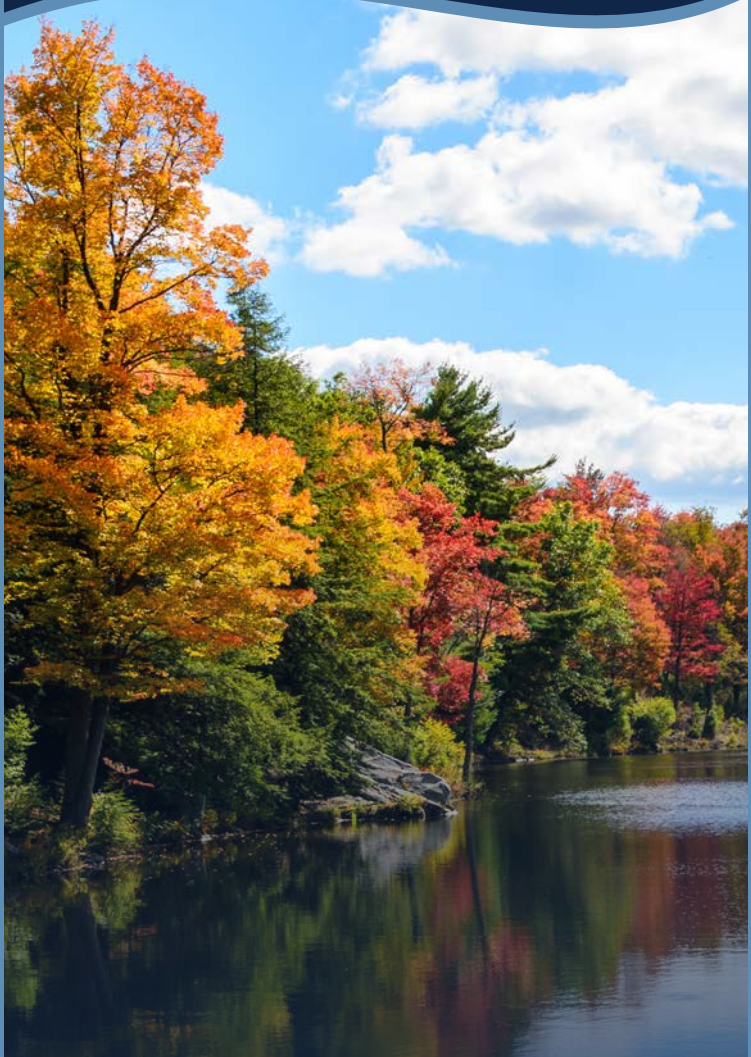
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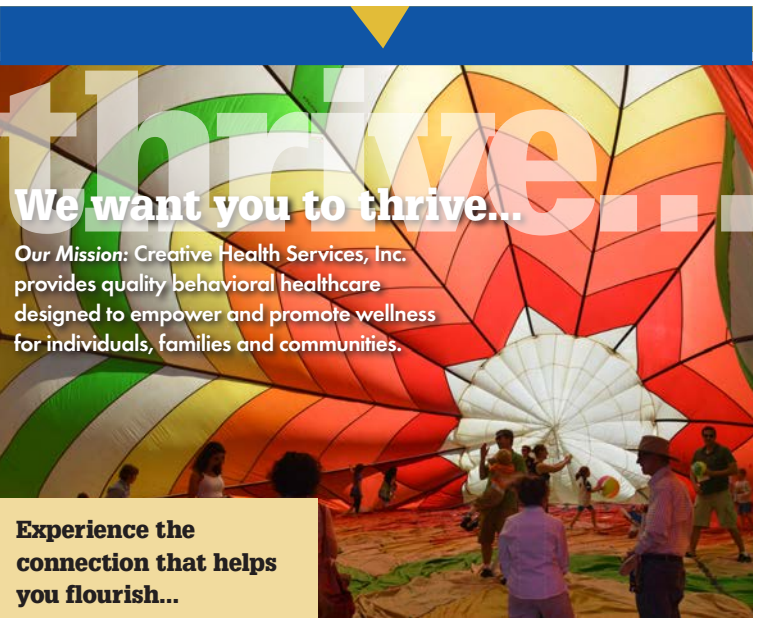
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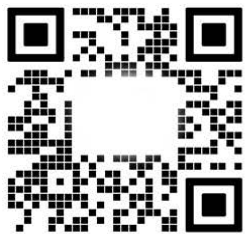
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