Welcome to a special edition of the MHAGC newsletter. The fall and winter seasons are always a time of reflecting on past, present and future for MHAGC. International Survivors of Suicide day on November 14 is a time of looking back and remembering the loved ones we have lost to suicide. Every Christmas, we have our Operation Santa Claus Drive, which allows our community to take a brief moment to remember those who are presently struggling to make ends meet. The week of September 10-16, National Suicide Prevention Week, was a time to look forward and think of what we could do for the future of suicide prevention. This November, we have our Colors 4 Hope run fundraiser, which is a time to look to our agency’s future as well. All of these events provide an opportunity to increase awareness of mental health issues.

“Promoting positive mental health for all persons in our community through advocacy, education and service.”
needs, struggles and successes. Awareness, particularly mental health awareness, is rarely something taken lightly. If awareness were a house guest, it would quickly outstay its welcome. Awareness never knocks. It never politely asks to come into your life. It certainly doesn’t bring housewarming gifts. In fact, it usually barges in when least expected or wanted and takes over, often turning your life upside down.

Awareness is also not easy to get rid of. I would say the unwelcome houseguest is easier. I’ve often equated ignoring awareness to trying to keep your eyes shut once they have been opened, or trying to un-learn how to read. Once you have it, it’s there to stay.

This, as mentioned, is particularly true of mental health awareness. In our society at this point in time, it isn’t always that easy to come by, but once you have it, it stays. People who come to MHAGC with awareness of issues in mental health speak of a moving lecture they attended in class, an inspirational event in which they participated, or, all too often, a personal event in themselves or a loved one that forever changed their outlook on life. Regardless of reason, they will never be the same.

So what do you do with this awareness once you have it? I have a suggestion: don’t be afraid to let it be life-changing and don’t be afraid to act on those changes. After all, allowing yourself to be changed is the easy way to go, much easier than trying to live with your eyes closed. This season, allow yourself to see the joy in a young girl’s face as she runs through a kaleidoscope of color in MHAGC’s Colors 4 Hope Run. Show your support by wearing purple and turquoise on Survivors of Suicide Day. Picture the joy on a man’s face as he receives an Operation Santa Claus bag, what may be his only Christmas present this year.

To be aware of mental health strides and struggles means to be aware of the past, present and future of mental health in Greenville County. Participate. Give. Grieve. Remember. Hope. Awareness never knocks, but opportunity does. And at MHAGC, doors are opening.

Colors 4 Hope is a 4 mile walk/run dedicated to promoting mental wellness in our caring community. Run through a kaleidoscope of color and raise awareness that mental health matters. One in four Americans will be affected by mental illness this year. They are our mothers,
fathers, sisters, brothers, children and friends. They are our neighbors and co-workers. One in four means that mental illness isn’t just something that happens to people we don’t know. One in four means that whenever four buddies are out golfing, two couples are dining together, or when four singers harmonize, one person in the group is likely to be affected by a diagnosable mental illness. Mental illness doesn’t just affect strangers. It affects people we know and love. Mental Health America of Greenville County asks, “Who’s your 1 in 4?” Because it’s not one in four of them; it’s one in four of US.

Who benefits from this race? Besides everyone who participates due to the race greatly improving your mood? All proceeds will go to Mental Health America of Greenville County. The money raised from this event will be spread across a range of MHAGC’s programs.

How does this race work? All participants will start off wearing white. At the beginning, end, and every mile in-between, you will run through clouds of colored powder, turning you into a kaleidoscope of color!

Where did this concept come from? The idea of throwing colored powder actually dates back to an ancient Indian tradition of the Holi Festival. This concept of colorful powder being thrown or used has now expanded to runs, softball games, volleyball games, birthday parties, engagement shoots; pretty much anything you can think of.

What about children? Children are welcome! You are responsible for your own children. We suggest you either encourage your children to walk/run the 4 mile with you or you bring another adult along who can watch your child while you are running. We are also holding a 1 mile race for kids.

Do I need to be a runner to participate? No. That is the beauty of this run, it is for fun! We encourage families to come out and walk/run as well as those dedicated runners. You have the option to walk or run through the four miles of color. Once it is over you will realize that is the most fun you have had exercising.
I want to run in honor/memory of someone who has a mental illness is that a possibility?
Yes. When you register there will be a question asking if you are running in honor or memory of someone and you can put in their name and relation to you.

What is the powder made of?
The powder is made out of hyperpigmented cornstarch. It is non-toxic and not harmful to the environment. However, it is not suggested to eat large quantities of the powder. Also, it is recommended that you and your children wear some type of protective eyewear or close your eyes when running through the powder.

You can register now! To register, to go bookevents.com/colors4hope. Have more questions? Please email colors4hope@mhagc.org

How can I volunteer?
If you are interested in volunteering for this event (throwing color, standing at corners to direct the runners, handing out water at our water stations) please contact us at colors4hope@mhagc.org.

What should I wear?
As much white as possible! Every person in the race will be given a t-shirt as part of their race day packet. You are welcome to wear this t-shirt on the day of the race or wear your own white t-shirt. White shorts are not necessary but are suggested to get the color to show up best. If you do not have white shorts/shoes light colors are recommended.
Suicide Awareness Week
by Jessica Kelliher

November 28, 2007 was the day my life changed forever. I was a college freshman hanging out in my dorm room when my phone started ringing and my mom’s name popped up on the screen. She never called this late at night; I wondered what was going on. I picked up, she asked me how I was and after a little chit chat she asked me for the phone number of one of my college friends. I asked her why she wanted it and she was persistent in just getting the number without giving me reason. I kept pleading with her asking her why she needed the number, when finally my dad got on the phone. I could hear my mom crying in the background, I knew something was wrong. “Jessica, Jeff is dead,” my dad’s voice trembled over the phone. “What? Jeff? My cousin?” I asked in a panic, my dad’s response, “Yes, Jeff killed himself.” I left my room and ran down the hall screaming and crying to my friend’s room and put her on the phone with my parents. I collapsed on the floor, breathing heavy, barely could move. How could this happen? I only saw him at Thanksgiving 6 days ago. He was fully alive and being the typical goofball he was; how could he have completed suicide?

Jeff is the reason I participate in National Suicide Prevention week every year, as a way not only to celebrate his life, and remember the lives of all others who have also left us too soon due to suicide, but also to bring awareness to those who have never experienced suicide and educate others on this horrible tragedy. This year, National Suicide Prevention Week took place from September 9th through the 15th, with National Suicide Prevention Day on September 10th. This year, MHAGC handed out suicide prevention ribbons at local events, including volunteer fairs, grief seminars and health fairs.

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States, rising in recent years from 11th, and is the most preventable form of death. It’s also the 3rd leading cause of death for individuals between the ages of 15 and 24. In the United States, every 17 minutes, somebody dies by suicide, and every 40 seconds, someone dies by suicide across the world; that is over 1 million people per year. Although these rates are devastatingly high, suicide is easily prevented with knowledge of the warning signs and treatment. That is why I am asking you to help advocate and become educated in the warning signs of suicide.

There are many ways you can become involved in suicide prevention, whether you want to sit at home and simply tweet about it or formally hold a program at your school, church, or community center; there are a multitude of ways to get involved. Social media is one of the best and most efficient ways to communicate information in our society today. Any little thing you can do to spread the word and raise awareness will help.

There are many great resources on the International Association of Suicide Prevention and American Association of Suicidology websites about suicide prevention, and MHAGC offers QPR classes, which are aimed at teaching the
public about suicide prevention. Talk to your boss at work, a professor at school, or your minister at church and ask them if they would let you hold a program about suicide prevention. Put up flyers. You can also hand out brochures on the facts and myths about suicide and how to intervene if someone you know is suicidal. Suicide is 100% preventable, but without the resources and knowledge about this topic, it is difficult to pick up on the warning signs and know how to properly intervene if someone you know is suicidal.

Getting involved and educating your community on suicide prevention and awareness is extremely important. In South Carolina every year there are more suicides than homicides, with the suicide rates steadily increasing each year. With your help we can reduce those rates by educating individuals and reaching out to those who may be considering suicide. You can make a change, you can make a difference, you can help prevent a suicide.

For more information, please visit www.suicidology.org or www.iasp.info. To get prevention materials or ask questions about suicide prevention, please email mhagc@mhagc.org. More importantly, if you or anyone you know is suicidal call 864-271-8888 or 1-800-273-TALK.

MHAGC is looking for basic-need items for Operation Santa Claus. These items are used to create gift bags for members of the Greenville Community who have severe and chronic mental illness. Items that are needed the most are winter hats, lotion, shaving cream, blankets, brushes, deoderant, shampoo and umbrellas. Financial donations, used to buy special request items, are also welcome. If you would like to donate, please call MHAGC at 864-467-3344 before December 5th and ask to speak to Pam Teems. You can be part of making the dream of a wonderful holiday season a reality for so many!

There is a new training session for CRISISline starting in October. Trainees will learn how to provide a listening ear, information and resources and crisis intervention to those in the community who are struggling with hardships in life. If you are interested in volunteering, please call Stacey Cobb at 864-467-3351x211 or email volunteer@mhagc.org.

DID YOU KNOW??

October 11th is National Depression Screening Day. MHAGC has free, confidential screenings for depression and other mental illnesses on our website. Screenings tell the likelihood that a person would be diagnosed with an illness. Just go to www.MHAGC.org and scroll down on the home page to “Free Online Depression Screening.” Don’t forget that depression is a diagnosable and treatable illness.
MHAGC is thrilled to be working with the Open Hearts Gallery (www.openheartsgallery.com) to bring a broader prospective to mental wellness. If you or your agency are interested having a person or piece featured in the MHAGC newsletter, please email stacey.cobb@mhagc.org for more information.

Points of View—Ligia Cantrell:

Featured Artist:

Ligia Cantrell: Painter, Sculptor

As a small child in her native Guatemala, Ligia felt withdrawn, isolated, and had difficulties communicating. She expressed herself early on by creating sculptures out of bread dough. Although sculpture and three dimensional art remain her favorite mediums, she is multi-talented and quite prolific. After studying drawing and painting, she started creating striking, vibrant works on canvas and intricate pen and ink drawings. Her colorful clay and paper mache masks are also popular pieces. “I find a lot of my inspiration in nature” states Ligia and her remarkable talent inspires us all.
**2012 with MHAGC**

**September**

10  World Suicide Prevention Day  
10-16 National Suicide Prevention Week

**October**

11  National Depression Screening Day  
Screenings Available at MHAGC.org

**November**

17  Colors 4 Hope  
Visit Facebook.com/colors4hope for details  
17  National Survivors of Suicide Day  
Time and Location TBA

**Mental Health America of Greenville County Programs:**

**Nationally Certified Crisis Intervention Services**

**CRISISline | 864-271-8888** CRISISline is a free, confidential, 24/7 hotline offering a non-judgmental sounding board for people to talk about life’s struggles as well as resources and crisis intervention. The line is for anyone, anytime, any reason.

**TEENline | 864-467-TEEN ( 8336 ) | online crisis chat at www.TEENlineSC.org**  
TEENline was opened in 1995. Trained teens answer the phones Monday through Friday from 5pm to 9pm. After these hours, all calls are answered by CRISISline. An online Crisis Chat is also available.

**Reassurance Line | 864-467-3350** This unique MHAGC program connects and supports clients of mental health centers through a peer to peer support line. The line promotes consumer independence, self-confidence and compliance with individual treatment plans.

**Survivors of Suicide | 864-271-8888 | e-mail sos@mhagc.org**  
Survivors of Suicide (SOS) is a comprehensive support program for those who have lost a loved one to suicide. SOS provides an array of survivor services including an open monthly support group led by veteran survivors, support team visits, a resource library and an 8 week closed group for adults, youth and children.

**Mental Health Matters! Education Programs (outreach@mhagc.org)**

**Outreach Programs and Initiatives**

**Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR )** is a one-hour nationally recognized suicide prevention training. It consists of 3 simple steps that anyone can learn to help save a life from suicide.

**The I.C. HOPE® “Don’t Duck Mental Health” campaign** is a public awareness and education campaign committed to educating students about the importance of mental health.

**Free and Confidential mental health screenings** for a variety of mental illnesses are offered 365 days a year. Screenings are offered by appointment or on-line at www.mhagc.org.

**Consumer Independent Living Support Services (864-467-3344)**

**Representative Payee Program** provides financial management services for over 200 individuals with chronic and severe mental illnesses.

**Affordable Subsidized Housing** for individuals with chronic mental illness.

**Operation Santa Claus** is an annual holiday gift collection project for individuals with chronic mental illness.
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Susan and James Zickos-in memory of Lee Robinson

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