

PATHWAYS PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM LAUNCHES “WRITING FOR RECOVERY” GROUP

Creative writing is beneficial for healing and recovery, and for expressing thoughts and feelings about mental health issues, life challenges, and adverse experiences. Ultimately, recovery can be promoted by finding your voice as a writer, individual in recovery, and advocate; by describing your recovery journey; and by creating and sharing all or part of your life story, particularly identifying pivotal or transformative experiences.

The Mental Health and Recovery Board (MHRB) of Ashland County launched a “Creative Writing for Recovery” initiative in 2016, funded by the Margaret Clark Morgan Foundation, which kicked off with a recovery-focused seminar, followed by a series of eight intensive weekly writing clinics. A spin-off writing group started meeting monthly in October 2016.

The MHRB is proud to announce that the writing group transitioned to being under the auspices of Catholic Charities Services, Pathways Peer Support Program, in July 2018. The writing group is facilitated by Diana Spore. Writing group sessions take place on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month, from 1:15 – 2:45 in the Community Meeting Room, Professional Building. Ashland Professional Building at 34 W. Second St. downtown Ashland.

The innovative Pathways’ writing group program is strengthened by what has been learned since the start of the initiative, which was grounded in a vision. A writing group member captured this vision by writing: “Open your mind, heart and soul by expressing yourself in writing. These words are meant for your eyes only at the outset, until the day you decide otherwise, and share them with those who listen and care, who are supportive and respectful, who truly understand. Your message will begin to shine through as you find your voice. As you share your writings, you will touch the lives of others who listen and hear you, and will make a difference. And you will be empowered by doing so.”

So why is sharing your story so important? Priscilla Ridgway, an expert in this area, and her colleagues describe some of the reasons. First, by sharing our stories, we are able to make it clear that recovery is possible. We are survivors, and can send a message to others that we made it through, and bring hope to others. Second, by sharing our stories and listening to others, we bring meaning to our lives; make a difference; find strength and support; heal; learn different ways to relieve stress and adapt; and maintain connectedness with peers and others. Third, we are empowered by becoming “role models” as we reveal what struggles we have faced, and what has proved to be successful.

The writing group is open to anyone who is interested in participating and there is no cost for the program. It is financially supported by the Ashland County Mental Health levy.

For more information about the “Writing for Recovery” writing group, please contact Beth Gardner, Pathways Peer Support Program, 419-496-0140 x 25.