

WELCOME!

Thank you for your ongoing support for the UMass MIND program! The Central Massachusetts MIND Network was developed to create a more inclusive community surrounding mental health among patients, family members, mental health advocates, local organizations, and providers within the Greater Worcester area. Over the years, we have shared groundbreaking psychiatry research, provided local mental health services and events, and connected over 500 community members. We hope that this network will continue to serve as a catalyst to promote collaboration among the Central Massachusetts community!

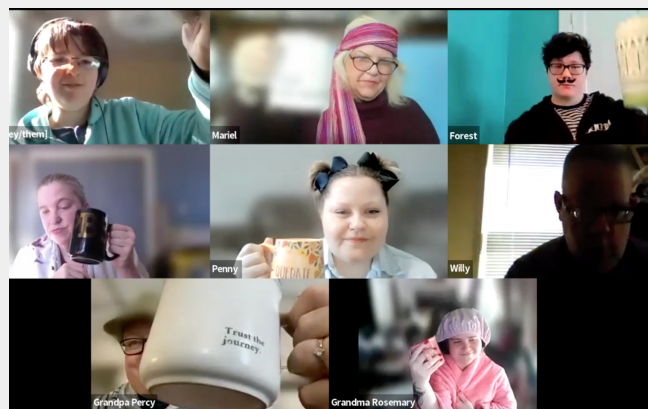
EXPRESSIVE ARTS WITH GENESIS CLUB

By Haley Wynn

UMass MIND partnered with local community organizations to present a co-active theater production titled *It's Bean A Journey: A story of perseverance, a circus, and a great cup of coffee*. The most recent installment of this project was done with Genesis club in Worcester. This production included eight members of the Genesis Club, and was facilitated by Lesley University Drama Therapy staff.

This project allowed participants to share and communicate their own experience with mental wellness and what tools and approaches they used to overcome obstacles. The *It's Bean a Journey* cast decided to communicate their collective experiences through the story of Basil, a motivated, albeit stubborn, character determined to open a coffee shop far from home. During Basil's journey, they encounter various characters that assist them in overcoming obstacles, both physically and mentally. Basil completes their journey with a newfound support system and some personal growth.

This performance was created over 12 weeks, and was created by Lesley University's drama team and Genesis club members with support from UMass MIND. The production concluded with a conversation between the audience and cast members to open up communication about mental wellness & how audience members related to various characters.



Thank you to Genesis Club and Lesley University for this amazing collaboration!

Check out the performance on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNRdt4r17lg&t=2175s>

PATIENT STORY: MEET NICOLE

By Brenna Chuang

Many turn to art as a way of release and expression of emotions, thoughts, and experiences. For Nicole, one of our participants in a UMass MIND project, art is not only an outlet to cope with her mental illness, but a lifestyle. Nicole has experience with almost any form of art imaginable, from the conventional arts like drawing and painting to the unconventional, such as resin crafting, wood burning, jewelry-making, quilting, blacksmithing, weaving, and stained glasswork, granting her the title of jack-of-all-trades in the realm of art. She prides herself in being involved with so many different forms of art, explaining, "I would get bored with one and want to try something different, so I would explore a different area and eventually built up a library of different knowledge." For her, crafting provides a sense of joy and calm, as well as the creative freedom to express her innermost feelings. She reflects, "I've never been good at expressing myself or verbally getting across my thoughts and feelings and art has always been a medium that I can communicate with." Her involvement with art has always served as one of her strongest coping mechanisms. She thoughtfully notes, "Some of my best work has come from my darkest times... I've had a rather extraordinary journey in life so far, and I have to say, I will take the negative just as much as the positive." The joy of art has allowed her to channel her emotions and experiences to create something meaningful to her and others. Nicole has a positive message for others: "Art isn't about whether you're good or bad. Art is about self-expression and everyone should have some form of self-expression. If you sing badly, sing proudly."

CURRENT STUDIES: ACTIVELY RECRUITING!

Study #1: Substance Use Study

The purpose of this study is to see whether Brexpiprazole, an FDA approved antipsychotic medication for schizophrenia treatment, may help reduce substance abuse in individuals with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder. This study is 3 months in length with weekly meetings.

Study #2: Expressive Arts Project

The purpose of this study is to see whether participating in an interactive theatre project can help reduce symptoms of serious mental illness. This consists of meeting in a group setting facilitated by Lesley University's Drama Therapists and constructing a play to share your mental health journey that will be performed publicly.

Study #3: Social Skills Training Study

Are you or a loved one experiencing anhedonia or social withdrawal, and are diagnosed with Schizophrenia or Schizoaffective disorder? This study provides interventions assist in creating goals, refining social interaction skills, and more! This study takes course over 12 months, with weekly group meetings.

Study #4: Negative Symptom Study

Are you or someone you know living with Schizophrenia and struggling with negative symptoms such as social withdrawal or apathy? The Negative Symptom study seeks to determine if an FDA approved medication, AVP-786, is effective in the treatment and improvement of negative symptoms. You will be compensated for your time.

All studies are located at 26 Queen St, Worcester MA 01610.

If you are interested or would like more information about any of our studies, please call 508-856-MIND (6463) or email MIND@umassmed.edu

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