

Aurora news

First-Time Event to Benefit Aurora Programs!

Spring may have just arrived, with the promise of summer warmth coming soon, but we are already eagerly anticipating something new that's planned for this fall. Aurora is pleased to announce an exciting first-time event for the agency! A **Benefit Concert**, with all proceeds going to support the programs at Aurora, is scheduled for late fall in Harrisburg. The concert promises to be a light-hearted, fun evening for all and will feature **the popular Philadelphia-based band Hoots and Hellmouth** (for more on the band, see below).

The Midtown Scholar Bookstore in trendy midtown Harrisburg is set to host the concert at their soon-to-open coffee house. Beginning with a reception of delicious hors d'oeuvres from the chefs at Creative Quisine, the night will feature the concert, as well a meet and greet with band members.

Stay tuned for more details, and plan to join together with old and new friends of Aurora this fall! ●

“New Music for Old Souls”

Entertains

Popular Philly band **Hoots and Hellmouth** is lending their talents to Aurora's exciting 2008 Benefit Event. With a sound rooted in rock, blues, and gospel, Hoots and Hellmouth's tunes have been described as “new music for old souls.”

If this group is new to you, take a minute to check out their website and MySpace page where you can listen in to some of their upbeat tunes and light harmonies.

Visit: www.hootsandhellmouth.com and www.myspace.com/hootshellmouth. ●



Catch a Preview!

Hoots and Hellmouth is playing in Central PA on April 19th
at Gullifty's Underground in New Cumberland.
For times and directions, contact the restaurant at 717-737-3469.

In this issue:

2

Executive Director's
Report

2

Celebrating 3 Years
in Perry County

3

Meet Bailey - -
Aurora's Wunderhund

4

You Make the
Difference!

Executive Director's Report

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Rebecca Sakala, Program Coordinator, Dauphin Drop-in Services
Violet Swager, Program Coordinator, Dromgold Center
Louise West, ESL Coordinator, Social Rehab Staff
Sundra Boughter, IMHR Specialist
Kim Weirich, Administrative Assistant

MENTAL HEALTH PARITY BILL PASSES THE HOUSE. On March 7, 2008, the U.S. House of Representatives passed HR 1424 bill by a vote of 268 to 148. The Mental Health Insurance Parity Bill would require the same coverage for mental health-related treatment as for physical health-related treatment. The issue has been before Congress for a decade and this vote represents a significant victory for advocates of fair and equal insurance coverage.

Aurora is very happy with the outcome of this vote, but as the website of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) states "difficult negotiations are expected with the Senate, which passed a different bill (S 558) unanimously last year. Both the Senate and House bills require group health insurance plans to cover mental illness and substance abuse disorders on the same terms and conditions as other illnesses -- 'i.e., parity' with respect to the number of doctor visits, hospital stays, co-payments and other provisions. However, there are important differences between the bills that must be resolved."

I urge you to follow the debate closely. More information can be obtained via NAMI's website (www.nami.org) as well as at the Mental Health Association's website (www.nmha.org).



Celebrating 3 Years in Perry County

Congratulations to the Perry County Drop-In Center which recently celebrated its 3rd anniversary. Located in Shermansdale, PA the Center provides important services to the rural population of Perry County. Its creation was itself a success since there was no prior presence of this kind in the area. Through a collaboration with Northwestern Human Service a small facility was identified and developed.

Today the center serves 10 people a week with room to grow slightly to a maximum capacity of 12 to 15. The benefits of the services are evident in the lives of the members. Participation in center activities contributes to their overall well-being -- seen in everything from greater stability in their housing situations to improved skills for managing their individual symptoms. As is often the case, the stigma towards mental illness is present. Over time, the center's ongoing work of making a difference in members' lives may help to break down these barriers. In the meantime, it's a lively place with a wide variety of activities each week including outings, field trips, cooking classes, and even flower arranging workshops. ●

Visit our website!

www.auroraservices.org

Meet Bailey, Aurora's Wunderhund!

Each day the Aurora drop-in centers are a bustle of activity revolving around the members, staff, and visitors. One of the "staff" whose efforts make an important contribution is Bailey, a rather large and very loving greyhound. Bailey belongs to Louise West, ESL Coordinator and Social Rehab Staff at Aurora.

When Louise decided to adopt a retired racing greyhound she told the placement agency she didn't have any preferences about the color or size of her dog. She wanted to help and she knew that any greyhound would become a wonderful pet. With many looking for homes, she wasn't particular about the specifics.

The next thing she knew, she received a phone call from the adoption director, "Well, I have a dog for you ... but he's a big dog." So big in fact that if you are familiar with greyhounds, you may be a little surprised when you meet Bailey. At close to 100 pounds, he is as much as *twice* the size of other greyhounds. With his light beige coloring and loping gait, sometimes he even reminds you of a deer.

Bailey came home with Louise and joined the West family. At first he was their loving pet, fitting well into the daily routines of their life, but soon his ease with people and gentle temperament led Louise to consider Bailey's potential to become a therapy dog. He began to go to work with her most days at the former Harrisburg State Hospital. And there her intuition proved correct. Each day the patients warmed to Bailey, one by one sitting with the large greyhound. As Louise says, "It was just magic."

Patients of all types are often very responsive to therapy dogs, who bring stability, consistency and nonjudgmental love into their world. Given Bailey's striking size, it's not a surprise that people are typically a little hesitant at first. But Bailey wins them over quickly, a testimony to his calm and gentle spirit. For those who may not have someone in their lives to hug, a registered therapy dog like Bailey is there to give comfort and lend support. ●



Becoming a Registered Therapy Dog

Bailey has completed the rigorous process to become a Registered Therapy Dog. The steps included a 20-point test that assesses everything from temperament to obedience. Bailey also obtained certification as a Canine Good Citizen. He passed his tests with flying colors and has the highest level of certification a dog can receive.

With more than 250 therapeutic visits under his belt, Bailey is a professional.

Bailey loves to work, and these days he can be found with Louise at one of the Aurora drop-in centers where he spends time with members and enriches their lives. At Aurora he is a well-loved and integral part of the center activities. In addition to his "day job," Bailey also visits group homes for adults with mental illness.

So what does Bailey think of his occupation? As Louise says, "Bailey loves to work. He knows in the morning that he's the only one of our four dogs who is going with me, and he'll come flying across the couch when it's time to leave."

His pay? He's pretty pleased with it ... *biscuits!* ●



social rehabilitation services

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MISSION STATEMENT

Aurora Social Rehabilitation Services, a nonprofit organization, has been providing social rehabilitation services for adults with mental illness and mental retardation since 1962.

While our programs and services have expanded and adapted to the changing needs of our members over the years, we remain true to our mission: to serve adults with mental illness and mental retardation in Cumberland, Dauphin, and Perry Counties. The agency's social rehabilitation programs provide opportunities for personal growth and satisfaction through life skills training and social activities in a safe and supportive environment.

Aurora Social Rehabilitation Services is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. The official registration and financial information for the agency may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State.

You make the difference!

Community support enables us to continue to directly and positively impact the lives of those we serve. Your contributions allow us to provide services that are critical to the wellbeing of our members. Please give an amount that is significant and meaningful to you. Checks should be made payable to Aurora Social Rehabilitation Services. Or call the Harrisburg drop-in center at 717-232-6675 to discuss donations of goods and services. Whatever you give will be appreciated and will make a difference.

In addition to financial support, our current needs for goods and services includes:

- Fund Development Committee Members
- Field trip chaperones
- Canned goods
- Tickets to local sporting events or recreational facilities
- Movie theater gift certificates
- Arts and crafts supplies

You also can support Aurora Social Rehabilitation Services through your gifts to the United Way. Just designate nonaffiliated agency #10530 to be the recipient of your United Way support. ●