



The Surviving Spirit Newsletter – Healing the Heart Through the Creative Arts -

Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars. - Kahlil Gibran

Greetings folks,

March 2011

I hope all is well for everyone, no complaints here....well maybe one, it's quite chilly here in my little corner of New Hampshire – where's Spring??? I thought that March "comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb"; not this year, more like a frozen polar bear. I think it's time for the snow to melt that is outside of my home.

Hmnnn....just a few weeks ago I was in sunny Hawaii with eighty degree temperatures – oh well. Speaking of Hawaii, the three presentations were well received. It was truly an honor to be able to work with Sharon Wise and David Fuller for all three of the events – Tonier Cain joined us for one of them. To hear them share of their life's struggles and what they have overcome was truly inspirational and at times, heartbreaking. There were several times I just wanted to get up and give them all a big hug. And yet, they have turned these adversities into opportunities to help others who have also been impacted by trauma, abuse and mental health concerns. The world is indeed a better place because of folks like them for what they do. They are one more example of what I like to term - *The unsung heroes of life*

I think of them and so many others also doing good works and these quotes come to mind

"Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experiences of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired and success achieved. It is in the most trying times that our real character is shaped and revealed." - Helen Keller

"Dare to reach your hand into the darkness, to pull another hand into the light." - Norman B. Rice

We had the good fortune to present at [Wow - try pronouncing this tongue twister!!!] – Ka Hale Ho ala Hou No Na Wahine [The Home of Reawakening for Women] *"Empowering women to successfully transition from prison to the community"*
<http://www.reawakeningforwomen.org/>

Lorraine Robinson and the staff do so much to help make this into a place of Hope, Healing and Help; please visit their website to learn more. I hope in time that the Surviving Spirit will be able to share the creative endeavors of these remarkable women who are working hard to make a better life for themselves and for those they love. I was blessed with the gifts of two of their books of poetry – powerful and inspiring.

We also presented at the Women's Correctional Center in Honolulu – words fail me in trying to convey what a powerful experience this was for all of us who presented and attended. Kudos to Warden Mark Patterson and his staff for all that they do in helping to address the concerns of trauma and abuse and how it has impacted those that they work with – they recognize that 80-90% of the population they work with have been adversely affected by these issues.

"Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which has the potential to turn a life around."

Not to belabor a point, but all four of us [David, Sharon, Tonier & myself] have been told by so many of how we would never amount to anything because of our trauma and abuse histories and coupled with the label of being “mentally ill” – not only is that sad, but it is wrong. We still have a long way to go in eliminating stigma and discrimination, but I feel energized and hopeful when I get to hear others break down those myths and see so many others who are also working hard to change that paradigm and live the life they so richly deserve.

Success is to be measured not so much by the position one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which one has overcome while trying to succeed.” –Booker T. Washington

Please follow this link [Facebook] and you can see a few pictures from Hawaii that Sharon Wise so graciously shared with me, if you scroll onto the photos themselves I have some comments to share - <http://www.facebook.com/album.php?id=138180506227288&aid=43678>

And if you visit Sharon's Facebook link you can see lots more stunning photos of Hawaii & one remarkable lady - <http://www.facebook.com/album.php?id=138180506227288&aid=43678#!/album.php?id=1730072256&aid=32350>

The Surviving Spirit has some sad news to share – we have lost a dear friend and fellow board member with the passing of Barbara Burke. Barbara's involvement with our organization and all that she brought to the table helped to embody so much of what we strive to do in helping others. Despite her many challenges and difficulties, she still embraced life and is a shining example that one can still do so much despite one's health concerns and the adversity that confronts them. Please visit our website and take a few minutes to read how she created our logo design – her example helps to exemplify inspiration, motivation and tenacity for all of us.

http://www.survivingspirit.com/logo_design.html

While visiting the website you will also get a chance to see the beautiful banner she created for our website at the top of the page – in time we will be sharing even more of her creative gifts – her Surviving Spirit lives on in our works and deeds.

"In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity." Albert Einstein

On a personal note, this newsletter has been a little harder to put together – for Barbara was also a close personal friend of mine who I have know since the 80's – a long time.

Family and friendship have always been the two most important things to me. Barbara and her husband Peter Zins helped define what true friendship and peer support is all about. When I was devastated by the impact of complex post-traumatic stress and major depression, they stood right there and never wavered in their support for me as a friend. A few years later when I had to face the challenges of a very difficult divorce and how that too did a number on my health concerns, once again, there they were. When the clouds finally started to lift and I could once again embrace my musical talents; there were Barbara and Peter lending their incredible gifts of music via their keyboards, guitar, vocals and emotional support. Their creative gifts can be heard all over my first album release – “Train of Tears”

To help honor Barbara’s passing and her incredible gifts of musical talent and what she so graciously gave to me in so many ways as a friend and peer – I would like to share some of those gifts and information with all of you. In the midst of all of my turmoil she gave me a book – “Care of the Soul” by Thomas Moore – this healing treasure is in my Top Ten listing of books that have helped me in my healing journey. You can learn more at - <http://www.careofthesoul.net/> He also has a new book out titled “Care of the Soul in Medicine”

I would like to offer the gifts of some of my music that Barbara and Peter performed on – please visit my own website at - <http://www.mskinnermusic.com/mskinner.html> click on the Music tab and then the link for “Train of Tears” – that will send you to CD Baby where you can hear short snippets of all of the songs from that album. I will gladly send you three MP3’s [for free] of your choosing in honor of my dear friend. A slight suggestion for one of them would be, “Not the One”, because then you not only get to hear her incredible keyboard work, but her beautiful singing voice as well. Thank you.

"Every instance of heartbreak can teach us powerful lessons about creating the kind of love we really want." Martha Beck

And as always, we are pleased to share some more helpful healing resources to aid you in your journey of advocacy, awareness, education, healing and so much more:

1] Jon Brock’s story is another shining example of Hope & Healing – a short but powerful piece - *“The doctors told my parents that I was hopelessly insane.”*

Jon Brock tells his daughter Glenny Brock about being committed to Bryce Hospital, Alabama's oldest psychiatric facility, in 1965. <http://storycorps.org/listen/>

You can learn some more about Jon by scrolling down a bit on this document – <http://www.mh.alabama.gov/brycehospitalproject/Articles/VoicesAndVisions.pdf>

2] **Want to be part of SZ Magazine?** <http://www.szmagazine.com>

SZ Magazine is looking for caregivers to share their stories for an upcoming issue. If you are a parent or sibling to someone diagnosed with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder, we want to hear from you! Email your name and contact information to

editor@szmagazine.com , along with a brief summary of your situation. Your story could be an inspiration to thousands of others!

3] Thanks to Laurie Beth Mathews for sharing this helpful resource – <http://www.friends4recovery.org>

Friends 4 Recovery Whole Health Center's mission is to provide educational and wellness resources, personal wellness coaches, and peer to peer support that enhance the whole health of people who have experienced significant mental health issues.

4] **Killer Stress -A National Geographic Special** - <http://www.pbs.org/stress/>

“The stress response: in the beginning it saved our lives, making us run from predators and enabling us to take down prey. Now, scientists are showing just how measurable — and dangerous — prolonged exposure to stress can be.”

Folks, I saw this show a few years ago when it first aired and saw it again a few weeks ago – it is well worth the effort to find out when it will be aired on your own local PBS TV Station. A lot of disheartening news for those of us who have been impacted by traumatic stress – BUT, the good news, a community of caring and peer support does wonders in helping to negate and heal from its harmful effects. Just learning how it attacks our immune system and creates a distinctive type of fat is well worth watching to learn. **And that concludes today's editorial comments.**

5] **Nominations Being Accepted for 2011 VOICE Awards** - Championing Those Whose Voices Make a Difference for Behavioral Health

Join the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in recognizing consumer/peer leaders and TV and film professionals who have given a voice to individuals with behavioral health problems (mental health and/or addiction issues).

This year, SAMHSA is putting special emphasis on the impact of trauma and the significant effects it can have on individuals, families and friends, communities, and our Nation. Consideration is being given to consumer/peer leaders who have successfully advocated for the rights of trauma survivors and promoted the importance of trauma-informed care. Additional consideration is also being given to TV and film productions that accurately and respectfully portray the experience of trauma, healing, and recovery.

The Voice Awards honor consumer/peer leaders who have done exemplary work promoting the social inclusion of individuals with behavioral health problems. The awards also recognize TV and film writers and producers that incorporate dignified, respectful, and accurate portrayals of individuals with behavioral health problems into their scripts, programs, and productions.

If you know a consumer/peer leader who has led efforts to promote the social inclusion of individuals with trauma histories and behavioral health problems; personally demonstrated that recovery is real and possible; and made a positive impact on his/her community, workplace, or school, please nominate him/her for a 2011 Voice Award.

Similarly, if you know of an eligible TV or film production that was released after April 15, 2010, please nominate it for a 2011 Voice Award.

<http://www.whatadifference.samhsa.gov/voiceawards/nominate.html>

I can think of a few films and folks to recommend – not sure if they were released after 4/15/10 – but it's worth looking into.

How about –

a] **“Boys and Men Healing from Childhood Sexual Abuse.”**

From the folks at Big Voice Pictures – Kathy Barbini & Simon Weinberg, along with those who took part in the film documentary – lots of powerful testimony and courage displayed here. You can see a ten minute promotional clip of the film at our website -

http://speakersbureau.survivingspirit.com/boys_men_healing.html

b] **“Healing Neen”** - is another powerful consideration from producers Laura Cain and Thom Stromer that features Tonier Cain – more powerful testimony to the power of the human spirit. <http://www.healingneen.com/index.html>

Finally, for our friends that are close by to Manchester, NH – please come support the Surviving Spirit in our presentation and service at the Unitarian Church on Sunday, April 3rd, 2011 starting at 10am. It is located at 669 Union Street Manchester, NH 03104 – this will be a time of sharing, educating, advocating and having fun – do join us.

(603) 625-6854 <http://www.uumanchester.org/>

This newsletter was a bit longer than we like to do, but it was important for us to take some time to share about our dear friend and colleague Barbara Burke.

Take care, Mike

ps. Please share this with your friends & if you have received this in error, please let me know.

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.

~Martin Luther King, Jr.

A diagnosis is not a destiny.

www.survivingspirit.com – Healing the Heart Through the Creative Arts

http://survivingspirit.com/Speakers_Bureau.html - Speakers' Bureau

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Surviving-Spirit/138180506227288> – Facebook – Surviving Spirit

www.mskinnermusic.com - Hope, Healing, & Help for Trauma, Abuse, & Mental Health through music, resources, & advocacy

www.new.facebook.com/profile.php?id=635415804%20 – Facebook - Michael Skinner
- Friends, Music & Advocacy

mikeskinner@comcast.net 603-625-2136 38 River Ledge Drive, Goffstown, NH 03045

"BE the change you want to see in the world." Mohandas Gandhi