Approximately 400 attendees of the conference were graced by the presence of the movement’s two influential pioneers, Jay Mahler and Sally Zinman, who each gave a keynote address. Decades after experiencing involuntary treatment, emotion welled up in relaying what they were subjected to. Both have devoted their lives to making a difference for mental health consumers, and we are so grateful to them! A newcomer to the bay area learned at the conference about the Mental Health Services Act and Jay’s history, and called him an “epic Advocate!”

As in past years, the Wellness Zone, a holistic health room hosted by HHREC, was one of the most popular features of the conference. Members of all our ethnicities sat together for community acupuncture, and let the healing flow on a massage table and a massage chair.

In addition to our tradition of enjoying Dean Chambers’ band, we were treated to the electro-soul duo, Corinita and Josh, of Illexotic. One of the multiple selections Corinita sang was a song about POCC advocacy. She encouraged everyone to vote. Josh rapped and played the keyboard. Illexotic recently released their debut album, and we were delighted by their high-energy performance. Kozi Arrington put his soul into “This is Me,” and the crowd felt it.

A workshop by Black Men Speak featured the stories of some of its newer members, and a recovery song by Ken Davis. Yared Yemane was a guest speaker at Supreme’s “Your Health is Your Wealth.” Renee Ramcharitar, Jules Plumadore, and Delores Blackman led a spirituality workshop encouraging acceptance, integration, and diversification of what spirituality means, to end stigma. Participants added their written ingredients to the Spiritual Gumbo pot.

Visitors to the 50-year history exhibit snapped photos of the buttons on display and marveled at the issues of Madness Network News (“all the fits that’s news to print”) and other chronicles of the Consumer Movement.

by Adrianne DeSantis

(Additional conference photos can be viewed at www.POCC.org)
On May 2\textsuperscript{nd}, PEERS hosted its annual Day of Prayer, honoring the lives of mental health consumers who were not given proper treatment or burials. This year it was held at a new location in the center of the Fruitvale Plaza near the BART. It was a packed event with familiar faces from our ACBH & POCC community, passers-by, and curious Fruitvale Plaza staff.

It was a bright, sunny day as drummer Tacuma King opened the ceremony with a call to honor all those who came before us in the journey of life. We then had a mixture of singing, speaking, dancing, art and marching with signs created by attendees. Our speakers included community spiritual leader Reverend TJ Woodward, PEERS board member Yvonne McGough, and mother of the late Oscar Grant, Reverend Wanda Johnson. They each provided heartfelt messages regarding loving one another without judgement, seeking support when needed, and being active, positive members of the community by taking care of ourselves and our wellness, looking out for one another, and offering a listening ear or a helping hand.

Passers-by on the street stopped and listened to the powerful voices of our speakers. Many of them walked into the event and were provided with sandwich rolls, chips, fruit, and water as well as mental health resources from PEERS.

The most exciting experience of the day was the dance and march. After eating, the dj turned up the tunes and folks began to dance, doing crowd favorites like the Electric Slide, the Wobble, and the cupid shuffle. This was followed by a march led by PEERS Program Coordinator, Zakiya Johnson, with attendees chanting “Love More, Judge Less,” circling the courtyard with the spirit and energy of activism and advocacy that is so deeply embedded in the consumer movement of Alameda County.

As in other Day of Prayer events, there was a strong intent to honor, share, and provide righteous acts of justice for those who were tremendously wronged during our nations dark and twisted past, but it was new and refreshing with a proud, loud statement of community atonement and reflection. It compelled all who attended to act now, in every little way we can, to honor those who have come before us, by honoring ourselves and each other.

By Bre Williams
On May 3rd, HHREC’s 10x10 Wellness Campaign and PEERS sponsored a celebration during Mental Health Awareness Month. Previous locations for the event were at Lake Merritt and Lake Elizabeth. This year we moved for health at the San Leandro Marina. Its Seagull site has become the go-to spot for outdoor consumer events including the annual POCC barbecue (coming in August).

A number of agencies provided resource materials at tables shaded by tents, such as Asian Health Services, the POCC SAGA Committee, and Black Men Speak. At one table, NAMI member Elaine Peng’s mother wrote a message in Chinese characters on each hand-painted drawing that she gave to the amazed recipients who stopped to admire her artistry.

POCC Manager, Mary Hogden, emceed the event. She introduced Collette Winlock, the Executive Director of HHREC, who brought plenty of high quality produce to share with the community. Colette was appreciative of the Community Advisory Board that participated in making the day a success. Some of the agencies on the planning committee were BACS, Telecare, and the Alameda County Network of Mental Health Clients (“ACNMHC”).

Attendees were invited to join in Zumba dance moves, led by Katrina Killian, the Executive Director of ACNMHC, who found her groove and inspired us from the stage. The spacious grassy field was ample for all who kept the beat with her. POCC member Michael Webb shared how rewarding his experience was with HHREC’s “Get Fit” program. “I trimmed down just from exercising two days a week for 30 minutes. I have more energy. “ Michael learned to read labels and how important it is to eat fruit and vegetables. He no longer buys any beverage but water, except for an occasional soda when eating out. He said it has dramatically changed his life.

By Adrianne DeSantis
In January I had the pleasure of attending a training to become a Hearing Voices Network (HVN) group facilitator. I felt reaffirmed in this training, in my being the expert on my own experience. I learned how to encourage others to explore their own experiences and find the best way to understand and define these as they best see fit. I myself have been hearing voices since age 10. For the majority of my life, I have been judged for being distracted and constantly locked in a “battle” with voices no one else heard. Once I sought medical help at age 24, I was bombarded with the message that hearing voices was “not normal” and was urged to take medication to “get rid” of something that was a constant state of normalcy in my life. It wasn’t until I found a Hearing Voices Group, and subsequently a Special Messages group, that I began to feel comfortable with myself. This came as a result of talking openly and finding camaraderie with those who also experienced hearing voices, seeing things, and many more interesting, exciting, and at times distressing experiences. After attending for a year or so, and working towards becoming a peer support specialist, I naturally jumped at the opportunity to attend a training to become a group facilitator.

The training itself was empowering, being around so many others who heard voices, and having it reinforced that each individual is the expert on their own experience. There were some clinicians there for the training as well, and we were treated as peers. Conversely, it was a little weird being around people similar to those who have told me my experience is wrong, but it was also nice to see they were open to learning. Hearing the facilitators tell their stories in their own words left an impression on me about the importance of human connection and exploring our voices and experiences to learn about ourselves. While it brought up difficult emotions, I feel that this experience left me feeling more in touch with my sense of self, and confident in my ability to be there for others with similar experiences. I cannot wait to be facilitating a hearing voices group here at the Cove, starting March 13th. I hope to meet many others there! By Corinita Reyes

Do you hear voices?
Experience life as a TV show?
Feel targeted in something bigger than yourself?
Have experience with ghosts or extraterrestrials?
See things others don’t?
You are not alone!

1 in 10 people hear voices, but many choose not to talk about them. A Hearing Voices Group is a place where people can talk about their experiences without judgement. It offers mutual support, friendship and the opportunity to explore your experiences in a non-clinical, social setting and learn from others with similar stories.

Join us at our POCC Hearing Voices Group
Wednesdays 10:30am-12pm
At 2000 Embarcadero Cove, 4th floor
Check in at front desk for room info.
Oakland, CA 94606

For more info email Corinita Reyes @ Corinitareyesaudio@gmail.com

Hearing Voices Network
USA

POCC • P.O. Box 172821
San Francisco, CA 94117-2821

ac•bh
The POCC’s Public Policy Education Committee held its annual training on May 15th. The topic was “Peer Respites: Expanding Peer to Peer Support.” Khatera Aslami-Tamplen, ACBH Consumer Empowerment Manager and Chair of the Mental Health Services Oversight & Accountability Commission, began the presentation by talking about peer support as the heart of our movement.

Peers supported in respites are shown to be 70% less likely to use inpatient or emergency services. These voluntary, short-term stays offer opportunity to turn crises into learning, based on the values of self-determination, mutuality, and the belief that healing and growth, including recovery from trauma, are possible for all. Symptoms may actually be a way of coping and adapting to difficult life experiences. Avoiding the use of force and imbalances of power are characteristic of peer respites. Respite guests are included in discussions that concern them, and they are supported to maintain or develop connections with the family and friends of their choosing.

Adrian Bernard, Manager of Second Story Peer Respite House in Santa Cruz County, spoke of making meaning out of experience, reclaiming what people want to do with their lives, and walking alongside them. Jason Robison, Program Director of “Share! Recovery House” in Los Angeles County, emphasized the need for connecting people with self-help in their community. William Couch, Lead Peer Support at Blackbird House in Santa Clara County, expressed the need for whole person care. Blackbird House and Sally’s Place in Hayward provide a home-like setting where guests have time, space, and support for wellness. Christina Murphy, Program Supervisor at Sally’s Place, gave an in-depth review of the first few months at the respite, where the waiting list indicates the need for more peer respites in Alameda County, throughout California and beyond.

At afternoon breakout sessions, participants brainstormed how to network and grow peer respites throughout California, by educating, advocating, and leading the way. By Adrianne DeSantis
On May 18th, members of the Hearing Voices Network and the POCC Healing Trauma Committee conducted an amazing workshop and introduction to the Hearing Voices Movement, at the South Berkeley Senior Center. Facilitators Marty Hadge and Caroline Mazel-Carlton, Director of Training for the Western Mass Recovery Learning Community, shared gripping stories of intense experiences they extricated themselves from and found meaning in. I marveled that they survived trauma that began in childhood, knowing that it could not have been easy to traverse the places their paths took them. That they now share with others insight on navigating extreme states is something to be thankful for.

Members of the POCC Healing Trauma Committee, with support from the committee staff, Michele Moncrief, enacted an engaging skit about contending with voices. It was creative and entertaining, while expressing competing struggles and influences inside of someone.

I attended this workshop out of a desire to understand more about what my son experienced that crescendoed into a crisis which responders did not handle with compassion and skill. My grandson, who began hearing voices after this trauma, came with me to the training. This was the first time he heard non-clinical views about visions and voices, and the first time he was around others who share this experience. The mutual acceptance and understanding was healing and encouraging.

Caroline Mazel-Carlton, who is studying to become a rabbi, re-claims cultural and spiritual wisdom as a certified Spiritual Emergence Coach. And creating a life he finds worth living, in a healing environment, has made life bearable and rewarding for Marty Hadge.

The openness to many ways of understanding the experience of hearing voices, raising the awareness of supporters, and providing opportunities to talk freely among peers without judgment is much needed.

By Adrianne DeSantis
Jaleah Winn and Michele Moncrief with supporters at the 2019 ACBHCS Service Awards recognition ceremony.

Michele was honored for 20 years of service. She was the first “BestNOW!” (formerly called “JobsNOW”) graduate in 1998 to be hired for a county position. She continues working for the county, in the Office of Consumer Empowerment, and is a member and staff of the POCC. Michele expresses gratitude that she is still able to support and serve others despite her mobility issues.

Jaleah was recognized for 10 years of service. Jaleah’s 10 years with the county have all been with Behavioral Health. She attributes her ten years to her spirituality and support networks. She is grateful for her ten years of service and will keep on in service to the county.

POCC and CAMHPRO members with Senator Beall in Sacramento for a hearing on SB 10, the Peer Support Specialist Certification bill, July 2, 2019
The 6th Annual POCC Sexuality and Gender Alliance Committee celebration took place on April 26th, and, as always, it was a fantastic time! The space was transformed from a simple conference room into a true party complete with multi-colored balloons and decorations. The room was filled to capacity with many friends and supporters of the SAGA committee, and the love was palpable in the atmosphere.

The event opened with comedy, which served to set the tone and kick the entire event off with levity and joy. The theme of the event was “We Stand Together,” and it was clear from the outset that celebrating not just the SAGA committee and its accomplishments throughout the year, but also celebrating LGBTQ+ people was the goal of the event. This was accomplished through various media including informational handouts on famous/important dates and trailblazers within the LGBTQ+ movement and LGBTQ+ history.

The speakers at the event captivated the audience and had us all hanging on their words. Julian Plumadore, the Senior Programs Manager at PEERS, shared their lived experience as a transgender person, and educated those in attendance on transgender issues.

Joe Hawkins, the CEO and co-founder of the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center, spoke of the founding of the center and how it has grown from humble beginnings to become a shining beacon of hope and a meeting place. There, people in the Bay Area connect, whether members of the LGBTQ+ community or an ally seeking a place to help, learn, grow, and find their place.

Joe also shared some of his personal struggle that inspired him to establish the center, and how he desired to have a place in Oakland for others with similar struggles, who felt there was not a place in their own community where they could go. His passion was evident through his words, and is evident through the work he continues to do.

One of the other speakers was DeAngela Cooks, the co-founder of the Mosaic Collaborative, an organization providing “for-profits, non-profits and educational settings with the framework and tools needed to incorporate all voices in decision making, cultural norms and programmatic innovations.” DeAngela told how the collaborative came to be and why she and her co-founder, Taunya Black felt the need to create the organization.

By Steve H.

LaMar Mitchell and Kozi Arrington performed at the annual SAGA event.

In Memoriam: Joe Anderson
We are deeply saddened by the loss of POCC member Joe Anderson on July 19th. The next edition will include a remembrance of Joe.
Performing at the conference were Dean Chambers on the right, with the Unity Band, featuring members of Funkstar
2019 POCC Awards

Barbara Majak Mental Health Provider of the Year Award
  L.D. Louis
  Mario Aguilar
  Michael Caminero
  Carol Harris

Jay Mahler Consumer Leadership Award
  Lynn Rivas

Mary Hogden Leadership Award
  Veronica Alder

Sally Zinman Consumer Advocacy Award
  Madlynn Johnson

Dr. Marye Thomas Consumer Volunteer of the Year Award
  Marlene Hudson

TAY/Advocate of the Year
  Glen Hong

Media Award
  Joshua Walters

Older Adult Advocate of the Year
  Rosario Valdez

2019 Unsung Hero Award
  Dale Bunce

Family Award
  Elena Lamas

Consumer Provider of the Year Award
  Pam Miles
  Charlissa Jones

Carol Patterson POCC Special Recognition Awards
  Sheena Cooper

LGBTQ + Linford Gayle Award
  LaMar Mitchell
  Walter Callen

Peer Specialist of the Year
  Connie Coelho
  Seth Bryant