

July 24, 2018



MHRT/C Certification Program Update

Profile of an MHRT/C Certified Professional: Christine Berry

In our last e-mail update, we profiled one of the longest standing MHRT/Community certificate holders, Elaine Haines of Caribou. In this edition we'd like to introduce you to one of her peers, Christine Berry also received her original certificate in 1992.



One of the first things Christine said excitedly from her office at the Looking Ahead Clubhouse in Lewiston was, "I've never had a C!" Of course she was referring to the fact that she was first issued the MHRT II and III in 1992, as she had earned her degree in Rehabilitation Services from the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF), though never received the MHRT/C. This year, due to the newly re-designed program, Christine received the MHRT/Community certificate joining thousands of colleagues across the state. And this suits Christine, a quintessential team player brimming with enthusiasm for her work, and moving through her day with a visible passion for engaging with and helping others.

Like many college freshman, Christine was unsure where to focus her studies when she started at UMF. She tried Accounting and Business Law until an advisor and mentor strongly encouraged her to look into the rehabilitation services program. There was no turning back for Christine. She had always been a dedicated student and an empathetic people-person, and she found the perfect fit in this program.

Her first job after college in 1987 was at Cony High School in Augusta, working with Project LIVE (Living In a Vocational Environment). She worked as an assistant teacher of boys with special needs and autism, and the project was to expose them to fundamentals of employment and employment options. She facilitated job shadows and provided job coaching. After two years

"First Day Forward"

Clubhouse motto

she went to work at Motivational Services, Inc., as a Pre-Supported Employment Specialist. She quickly rose to supervisor and program manager, with the charge to run the vocational program. It was during this time that Christine earned certification as an employment specialist, as well as

1

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July 24, 2018



MHRT/C Certification Program Update

the MHRT II and MHRT III. She enjoyed the opportunity to network and learn from some of the leading figures in supported employment in Maine. Eventually she took Master's level classes for the MHRT IV, but chose to start a family rather than complete the Master's degree program. In 1996, Christine went to work at Kennebec Behavioral Health (KBH) where she learned of a new rehabilitation model called the Clubhouse. It was in a newsletter called "Dreams Come True"

"Communication is the key to success"

Clubhouse poster

where Christine read about this consumer-driven approach and pursued training on how to develop this model in Maine. In December 1997, the High Hopes Clubhouse opened in Waterville with Christine at the helm as its Director. She learned a lot in the year it took to get underway, and it appears to have served her well; nearly 22 years later she's still working in the Clubhouse environment. The Capitol Clubhouse in Augusta was next to open, and for several years Christine managed both programs. In January 2012, Looking Ahead Clubhouse opened in Lewiston, where she remains as its Director.

The high school cheerleader and classmate tutor was, and still is, very much alive in Christine's approach to her career. Around the Clubhouse positive slogans and motivational quotes are posted on walls. Framed headshots of members and staff line a corridor, and community awards and recognition plaques are visible. Staff and members founded the Clubhouse Maine Coalition believing "We're stronger in numbers." One of the initiatives at Looking Ahead is called Random

"Sunny and 75 with a light breeze"

Acts of Kindness, whereby members and staff reach out to the community. For example, they might bake cookies and deliver them to the local fire department. They also participate in the local NAMI's (National Alliance on Mental Illness) awareness walk each fall, and volunteer at the Dempsey Challenge annual fundraising event. The house is bustling, orderly, clean and vibrant, and twice in its six-year history, Looking Ahead Clubhouse has earned a full three-year accreditation from Clubhouse International.

July 24, 2018



MHRT/C Certification Program Update

When asked about some of the challenges in her work, Christine mentions funding and eligibility requirements. Because membership in the Clubhouse is voluntary, the number of active members fluctuates, making it necessary to be diligent with the budget and manage the program like a business. Another challenge she notes as an eternally optimistic person and supervisor, is managing negative attitudes, something she says she will not tolerate. It's an awesome responsibility to provide services around the clock and on major holidays, but Christine's leadership epitomizes the slogan, "Where there's a will there's a way." If one is not interested in being part of the solution, then she believes it's probably the wrong fit.

Christine partners with several Maine colleges, affording students an opportunity to intern at Looking Ahead Clubhouse. She acknowledges that entry-level students are young and have many choices. She advises that when considering career options to make a checklist, evaluate the pros and the cons, map out some sort of journey, and then start it. Following this path has certainly provided Christine with a satisfying career: She enjoys variety in her job, a sense of autonomy, and says about her employer, "KBH is awesome." Can it get much better than that?

Thank you, Christine, for your many years of committed leadership to the communities you've served. You are making a real difference.

Please keep your questions and comments coming!
We'll continue to update the FAQs page on our website:
<http://cfl-muskie.org/index.php/mhrt-community-certification-program-updates> (scroll to near the bottom)

What will happen if I don't update my full MHRT/C certificate? Full MHRT/C certificates that are not updated with an expiration date, will be invalid after January 1, 2020. Please send us your complete current contact information at the email address below. We'll issue new certificates over the next several months.
updatemhrtcontactinfo@cfl-muskie.org

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3

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