



March 9, 2009

Thomas A. Kirk, Jr., Ph.D.
 Commissioner

DMHAS 2008 Employee of the Year

The quality of the DMHAS healthcare system rests solidly upon the shoulders of staff who plan, support or deliver our services. Through the Employee of the Year program we honor employees who exemplify the quality of our workforce. They are our "Shining Stars."

Congratulations to **Joan Bianchi** for being selected as the DMHAS 2008 Employee of the Year! Ms. Bianchi, who is a Rehabilitation Therapy Supervisor 2 at **Western Connecticut Mental Health Network, Waterbury**, embodies hope for individuals in recovery as exemplified through her compassionate spirit and excellence in service. She displays initiative and responds to the individuals we serve as demonstrated by her role in implementing the Illness Management Recovery (IMR) and Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP). Joan assisted in organizing the peer council at the drop in center, and developed weekly recovery messages that provide inspiration to her clients and staff.



Joan Bianchi, DMHAS
 2008 Employee of the
 Year

DMHAS Facility Employees of the Year – 2008

Janet Bystrek, Administrative Assistant, **River Valley Services** is tactful, kind, diligent and ensures the smooth operation of the facility. She manages the Employee Campaign for Charitable Giving, the Client Holiday Party, and the Legislative Breakfast while treating everyone with respect. She is an inspiration to her fellow employees.

Meredith Cavanna, Rehabilitation Therapy Assistant, **Connecticut Valley Hospital**, General Psychiatry Division in the Traumatic Brain Injury Unit. Her accomplishments include implementing the Sail Connecticut Access Program, High Hopes Horseback Riding Program, and serving as a Lifeguard. She has a gift of making people laugh with a spirit that uplifts the life of those she touches.

Cheryl Decker, Head Nurse, **Southeastern Mental Health Authority**. As case manager, she manages difficult medical, emotional, and material problems encountered by clients. She freely gives of her time to empower clients and erase the stigma of mental illness. She is an exemplary team member who is respected for her skills in assisting clients in achieving many unexpected positive gains.

Angelo DelGreco, Carpenter, recently retired from **Connecticut Mental Health Center** after working over 26 years in plant operations. He is a master of all trades, and his heart and kindness enriched the lives of his co-workers. Every department and every discipline within CMHC knew him for his craftsmanship and the warmth of his smile. Happy Retirement!

Elizabeth (Betsy) Kyne, Head Nurse, **Cedarcrest Regional Hospital**, has an engaging and disarming attitude that helps recalcitrant patients adhere to their treatment plans. She is a good listener and effective counselor with remarkable skills to engage clients in individual counseling. She takes sincere interest in each patient's welfare and goes beyond nursing theory to meet the needs of the clients.

Valerie Leal, Planning Specialist, **Office of the Commissioner**, Women's Services, has greatly improved care for women and families and is recognized nationally for innovative work in trauma informed, gender response programming. She also works with Kairos Prison Ministry International to address the spiritual needs of incarcerated persons, their families, and people working in the prison environment.

David Susanin, Clinical Social Worker Associate, **Capitol Region Mental Health Center**, works within Young Adult Services. He is committed to this population and works very hard at establishing long lasting relationships. He is consumer oriented and goes above and beyond with numerous examples in teaching, coaching, and mentoring staff on PND issues.

A Message from the Office of the Commissioner