

MONTH 2023

Upcoming Events

NH Mental Health Peer Alliance Feb 28th at 10 AM

Come, let your voice be heard. The Alliance is made up of adults with lived experience who want to improve mental health services in NH, organizing to advocate, educate, and inform. Please use this link <https://meet.goto.com/709997085> to join us.

Board of Directors, Wed, Feb 22nd at 5 PM

Members and staff welcome and encouraged to attend Through this link: <https://meet.goto.com/160387205>

Community Meeting, Mon, Feb 13th at 9:15 AM

Whether offering ideas for new groups or getting updates on Step Up/Step Down, this a chance for our entire community to gather and be involved in making Connections even better. We need your voice! <https://meet.goto.com/709997085>



CALL TO ARTISTS

One of the special things that our staff try to do is to remember, create, have everyone sign and then mail a birthday card. There is a need here to pitch in. In small ways for a few minutes a day, take some time out and find out whose birthday is next on the calendar.

The wall above the printer area has been refreshed and we are wanting your artwork! The colorful differences can really feel happy in the winter months so splash some paint around or meticulously color a sheet for the wall. This is a great way to share yourself and add to the joy.

OUR VOICES

The Gift of Wintertime

As the light wanes to the darkness, winter falls on the town. Snow falls to the earth and covers her in a white gown. School may be canceled today and children run outside to the white and fluffy playground. As the inches pile on top of each other, the morning snow slows us all down.

It is time to get our boots, hats and mittens on for the fun waiting outside. The frozen pond is waiting for us to ice skate and slip and glide. Time for snowmen and fort buildings to hide inside. And don't forget to climb up those hills with a sled to slide.

The kitchen is warm with hot chocolate waiting for everyone. When you are cold enough and need a break from all the fun. Walking inside, hands freezing and red, you can smell the cinnamon. Sleepy and tired and filled with love, the day darkens and down goes the sun.

Snacks and milk devoured and the bellies were all filled. Looking out the window, mom sees the forts built by children so skilled. Time for cartoons and coloring books, a day off from school and work yet so fulfilled. The sun sets and the moon rises as the earth underneath the white and snowy blanket is chilled.

Nicole



I walk around with my head up to avoid too much eye contact.

They say, "Are you ok?"

I reply, "Can you hear the silent fireworks?"

Going off inside my heart, I sit at this table, but I don't know where to start. In simple conversation, I'm at a loss for words

There's so much I have to say
But I sit here unsure

I've heard of resting bitch face, but
I've never heard of lost and dazed

This loss of words has turned my face
into my heart's poster child

Delivering imperfect messages to a
captive audience

Who just wants to be sure I am ok,
when I am so much more.

TJ



VOICES

Intentions for 2023

The beginning of the new year is an exciting time for people and sometimes we may even make a resolution or the hope to change a behavior into the next year. How many times have you said or heard, this is the year I exercise, change my diet, quit smoking, and lose that weight.

Goal setting is more complex than just the final hope. Making smaller and more specific goals that are attainable can be a more supportive way to get to those bigger goals. The bite size changes are often more manageable and can be metabolized more easily.

What is the intention that you would like to see in your life in the new year? How do you want to get there? What is one small thing that you can actually handle in order to move towards the new plan? Cut down one cigarette every third day, change sweetened yogurt to plain and add berries, add one glass of water to each meal and it can go on and on. For those who enjoy and are comfortable with technology-there is an app for absolutely anything you can imagine.

Have fun with this and taking little steps shows that your commitment to self-care can be rewarding.

So Many Talents-So Little Time

There are many individuals both inside and outside the community who offer their talents to share and to enjoy. Music therapy and sing-a-longs, dance, pet therapy, crafting, painting, and the list continues. We will continue to access and offer these activities and if you have a talent to share, please give yourself a new intention and go for it!

February here has several classes and groups that can open a new interest up. On Fridays there is a set time for crafting at 1:30 and this month the selections are fresh and new ideas. There are also many supplies available for your use and there are people around to teach and guide you into a new activity.

This is another place that we would like to open up to the membership to share a skill with all of us. More tools in the toolbox the better. Another great way to support each other in our creativity!

OUR VOICES

Winterland Coping Skills

Here in New Hampshire we are blessed with a full experience of the four seasons, although some days it seems that it is more like two weather systems, too hot and so freezing you can't think. If you aren't a fan of winter sports such as skiing or snowboarding, ice skating, snowshoeing or making snow angels outside, then the winter season can feel bleak once the holiday season is behind us.

Some days the weather feels paralyzing and can send us into a place of gray skies that seem to be unending. Having a plan for the winter as we head into February may be a great way to support yourself. Some people suffer with seasonal mood swings that may send a person into isolation, because why leave the bed-right?

Some people develop coping skills that may include outside activities, reading, art work, going to the gym or even chopping wood for that matter. Expanding our tool box for the winter months can only be a help when the snow disables everything and we may even lose power or the internet.

Portsmouth has a huge number of outlets for possibilities. New Hampshire's land has a natural abundance of options. One example may be photography, vicariously "visiting" places via magazines or even YouTube-which has a video for anything you can even imagine. Keep Connections in mind too-it is a great resource for socializing as well as many other possibilities.

Dual Recovery Programming Update

Getting the word out about the new offerings of programming is still in the early stages. Word of mouth is usually understood to be the best way to grow a community. Covid has transformed the world to a place where if you can do it from your home, then that is what is a healthier option.

Unfortunately for this idea is the truth that we human beings are hard-wired for belonging to and participating in the physical world. Technology is a good back-up plan as we continue to pull out of the pandemic, but we do have plans to continue this programming for the community in and out of the center.

There are six groups, meetings and classes that are specifically set up to welcome those people experiencing dual recovery concerns. Please check out our calendar on our website or contact the center for details. See you soon!



Connections Peer Support Center Culture

Connections is undergoing some changes including the physical space, the groups and programming offered and the consistent support offered daily in many areas including the center, the warm line and Step Up Step Down.

This new year there are some novel intentions around etiquette, agreements and guidelines. This center would not exist without its members. Many of our members have belonged for decades while others just a few weeks.

The ideas that are manifesting include respect and responsibility as well as self-care and peer to peer support. Staff here have lived experience with regards to mental health wellness and many of the staff also have had their own challenges with the systems that are in place to help, but often fall short. There is an overarching need for more money and staff professionals and this can leave a hole just big enough to fall through.

Statistics show that participating in peer support programs there is a noticeable increase of the ability to not need hospitalizations as often or even at all. Our center survived through the pandemic and on a daily basis tries to offer that support in many ways. There is a need for members to consider taking risks and being a bridge to those newer members who come in to just see if it is a fit.

Eventually we hope to have greeters, tour guides to the center and member-run groups. There have been some beginning positive movements to accomplish these goals, but there is a bigger need to expand our community and the resources that we offer. If anyone is interested in co-facilitating or facilitating a group, please bring it on! We are moving forward in the intention of being a game-changer for those looking to connect.

CONNECTIONS PEER SUPPORT

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

WHAT IS HEARING VOICES?

Hearing Voices Network is a hybrid (in-person and online) support group for those who have the shared experience of hearing voices, visions, and other unusual or extreme sensory realities.

WHAT IS

THE RAINBOW CONNECTION?

The Rainbow Connection is a support group for people in the LGBTQIA+ Community to have a safe and supportive space to process their unique experiences.

9:15 Morning Meeting **1**
 10:15 SMART Recovery
 10:15 Wellness Topics Member Choice
 11:15 Journaling
 12:00 Al-Anon
 12:00 Lunch at CPSC Courtesy of Middle St. Baptist Church
 1:00 Positive Thinking

7:00 Narcotics Anonymous **6**
 9:15 Morning Meeting
 10:15 Dance 4 Connections
 10:15 WRAP Topics
 11:15 Meditative Art
 12:00 TED Talks
 1:00 ONLINE & IN PERSON Hearing Voices Network
 1:00 Journaling
 2:00 PTSD & Complex Trauma

9:15 Morning Meeting **7**
 10:15 Chair Yoga
 11:15 Managing Stress
 12:00 Bring Your Own Lunch
 1:00 Arts & Crafts with Barbara

9:15 Morning Meeting **8**
 10:15 SMART Recovery
 10:15 Wellness Topics Member Choice
 11:15 Journaling
 12:00 Al-Anon
 12:00 Lunch at CPSC Courtesy of Middle St. Baptist Church
 1:00 Positive Thinking

7:00 Narcotics Anonymous **13**
 9:15 Community Meeting
 10:15 Dance 4 Connections
 10:15 WRAP Topics
 11:15 Meditative Art
 12:00 TED Talks
 1:00 ONLINE & IN PERSON Hearing Voices Network
 1:00 Journaling
 2:00 PTSD & Complex Trauma

9:15 Morning Meeting **14**
 10:15 Chair Yoga
 11:15 Managing Stress
 12:00 Bring Your Own Lunch
 1:00 Arts & Crafts: Cards with MaryBeth


9:15 Morning Meeting **15**
 10:15 SMART Recovery
 10:15 Wellness Topics Member Choice
 11:15 Journaling
 12:00 Al-Anon
 12:00 Lunch at CPSC Courtesy of Middle St. Baptist Church
 1:00 Positive Thinking

7:00 Narcotics Anonymous **20**
 9:15 Morning Meeting
 10:15 Dance 4 Connections
 10:15 WRAP Topics
 11:15 Meditative Art
 12:00 TED Talks
 1:00 ONLINE & IN PERSON Hearing Voices Network
 1:00 Journaling
 2:00 PTSD & Complex Trauma


9:15 Morning Meeting **21**
 10:15 Chair Yoga
 11:15 Managing Stress
 12:00 Bring Your Own Lunch
 1:00 Arts & Crafts: Games with MaryBeth

9:15 Morning Meeting **22**
 10:15 SMART Recovery
 10:15 Wellness Topics Member Choice
 11:15 Journaling
 12:00 Al-Anon
 12:00 Lunch at CPSC Courtesy of Middle St. Baptist Church
 1:00 Positive Thinking

7:00 Narcotics Anonymous **27**
 9:15 Morning Meeting
 10:15 Dance 4 Connections
 10:15 WRAP Topics
 11:15 Meditative Art
 12:00 TED Talks
 1:00 ONLINE & IN PERSON Hearing Voices Network
 1:00 Journaling
 2:00 PTSD & Complex Trauma

9:15 Morning Meeting **28**
 10:15 Chair Yoga
 11:15 Managing Stress
 12:00 Bring Your Own Lunch
 1:00 Arts & Crafts with Barbara

WHAT IS GRASP?

GRASP stands for Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing, and provides understanding for families or individuals who have had a loved one die as a result of substance abuse or addiction.

MONTH 2023 SCHEDULE

Thursday

Friday



9:15 Morning Meeting **2**
 10:15 IPS Topics
 11:15 The Rainbow Connection:
 Friends & Allies **ONLINE**
 12:00 The Common Table lunch at St.
 John's Episcopal Church
 1:00 Music Appreciation **ONLINE**
 5:00 Dual Recovery **ONLINE**
 6:00 GRASP **ONLINE**

9:15 Change Makers **ONLINE** **3**
 10:15 MAT & Harm Reduction **ONLINE**
 10:15 Meditative Art
 11:15 Journaling
 12:00 Bring Your Own Lunch
 1:00 Crafts: Valentine's, Stamping, &
 Paper Crafts

All groups are in person unless marked as ONLINE.

All services free of charge.

No referral needed.

We offer transportation.

In case of bad weather, the center may close - check our Facebook page for announcements and the special snow day schedule.

Masks are optional.

9:15 Morning Meeting **9**
 10:15 IPS Topics
 11:15 The Rainbow Connection **ONLINE**
 12:00 The Common Table lunch at St.
 John's Episcopal Church
 1:00 Music with Larry
 5:00 Dual Recovery **ONLINE**
 6:00 GRASP **ONLINE**

9:15 Change Makers **ONLINE** **10**
 10:15 MAT & Harm Reduction **ONLINE**
 10:15 Meditative Art
 11:15 Journaling
 12:00 Bring Your Own Lunch
 1:00 Crafts: Watercolors & Paint Pens with Stencils

9:15 Morning Meeting **16**
 10:15 IPS Topics
 11:15 The Rainbow Connection:
 Friends & Allies **ONLINE**
 12:00 The Common Table lunch at St.
 John's Episcopal Church
 1:00 Music Appreciation **ONLINE**
 5:00 Dual Recovery **ONLINE**
 6:00 GRASP **ONLINE**

9:15 Change Makers **ONLINE** **17**
 10:15 MAT & Harm Reduction **ONLINE**
 10:30 FIELD TRIP: BOWLARAMA
 12:00 Bring Your Own Lunch
 1:00 Crafts: Friendship Bracelets

LAST CHANCE FOR FIELD TRIP SIGN UPS ARE THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH BY 3:00 PM - SPACE IS LIMITED!!

SIGN UP!

544 Islington St,
 Portsmouth, NH 03801
 (603)-427-6966

Center Hours: 8:30-5:30
 Mon-Thurs, 8:30-4:30 Fri
 Warmline Telephone Support: 5-10 PM 7 days a week

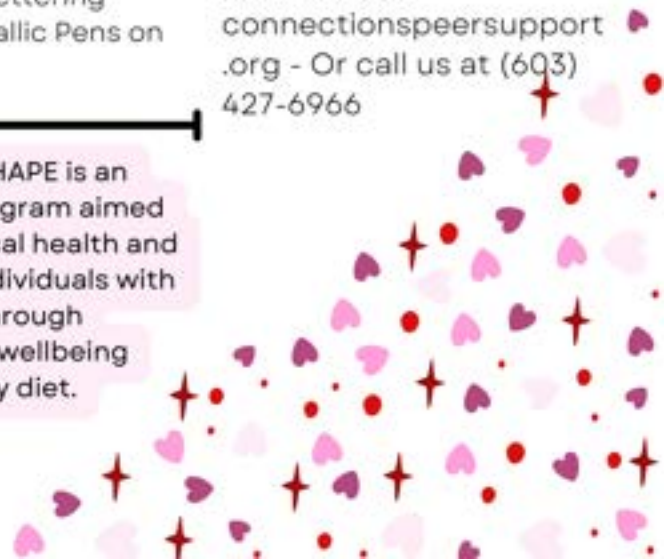
9:15 Morning Meeting **23**
 10:15 IPS Topics
 11:15 The Rainbow Connection **ONLINE**
 12:00 The Common Table lunch at St.
 John's Episcopal Church
 1:00 Music with Larry
 5:00 Dual Recovery **ONLINE**
 6:00 GRASP **ONLINE**

9:15 InShape Presentation **24**
 10:15 MAT & Harm Reduction **ONLINE**
 10:15 Meditative Art
 11:15 Journaling
 12:00 Bring Your Own Lunch
 1:00 Crafts: Decorative Lettering with Golf Leaf & Metallic Pens on Black Paper

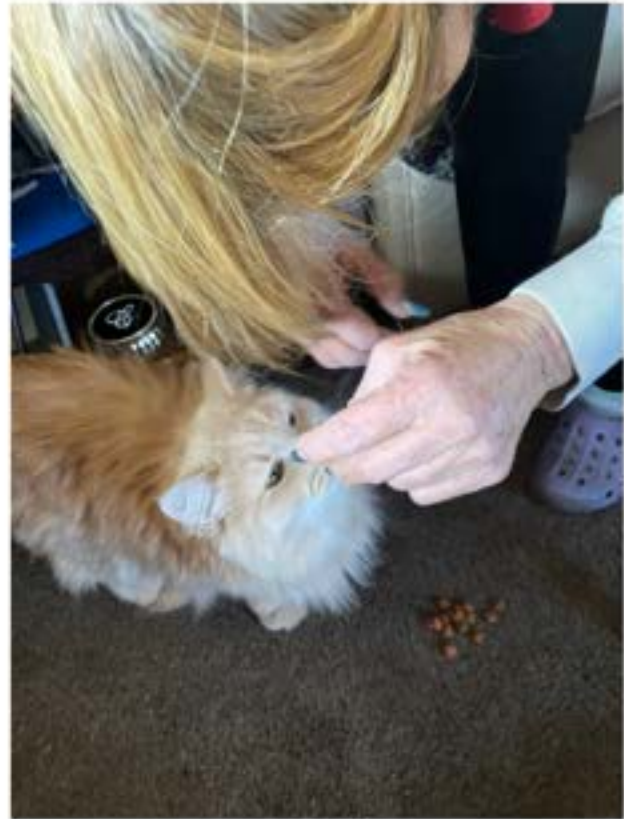
For more information, including group descriptions, please visit our website: connectionspeersupport.org - Or call us at (603) 427-6966

SIGN UPS FOR GRASP NEED TO BE MADE AT LEAST 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE! Please call the center or contact Nicole at nicole@connectionspeersupport.org to sign up

WHAT IS INSHAPE? InSHAPE is an innovative wellness program aimed at improving the physical health and the quality of life for individuals with severe mental illness through promotion of exercise, wellbeing education and a healthy diet.



OUR VOICES



Toffee and Cindy

To continue our look into that special connection between animals and humans we are bringing you a snippet from Cindy about her gorgeous cat named Toffee. She entered Cindy's life around four years ago in August, a gift from her daughter.

Toffee is a constant in Cindy's life giving her the connection that expands her world and heart. Toffee is a loving and affectionate cat that loves head rubs. She is very aware of Cindy and if a guest is around. She has an adorable and sassy personality.

When Cindy has moments without her roommate, Toffee is there for those times. She tries to crawl into Cindy's lap and lavishes her with love. She is an energetic and rambunctious cat always on the move. Cindy feels protected and supported with Toffee. In closing, Cindy said, "If it wasn't for Toffee, I don't know where I would be.

This is another example of how pets can fill that place that we all deserve and need.

PUZZLE

Created with TheTeachersCorner.net Word Search Maker

Valentines Day

F E B R U A R Y V D Y Y I D P F W J V L
B C A D V V I H M V D H P I T Y Y A D F
B M I W D T N E Z H T L Y P J N L D Q E
V S G E W U R T E Z R T P U A E I X S T
O I R J Q A G A U Z A T Z C N H M A U J
D T E D G G R L D A E V F T I W G U S W
O V E J N T F O P I H N I I H T E A E P
T J T E M W G C D I T N I S G B B J N F
F Z I F W Q H O O N E I R M E B P D T O
K F N P S S F H N U E E O Y W A M I I U
E E G X V S P C D E W I N N F S W D M R
C A N D Y J E E J O S O R R N E W P E T
E S R B E I P N L H G J O F A S Y A N E
Y T O H W Z R F D H P M R E X O S O T E
R B F C W P C I T N A M O R S R E U A N
T J I R A A C J T N I Z C A R D K V L T
H A D M I R E R T A L K Z P Y Y X J O H
S Y U V Z T I E H X T H M C N O K D F L
D J S M E Y G N B L V A I W B K N I P B
Q V G K R K X X G R D O E X B R X C R D

ADMIRER
CARING
DAY
FLOWERS
GIFT
HEART
MINE
RED
ROSES
SWEET
VALENTINE

CANDY
CHOCOLATE
FEAST
FOURTEENTH
GREETING
KINDNESS
PARTY
ROMAN
SAINT
SWEETHEART

CARD
CUPID
FEBRUARY
FRIEND
HAPPY
LOVE
PINK
ROMANTIC
SENTIMENTAL
TRADITION

OUR VOICES

Music Therapy: Looking Forward to 2023

What are we leaving behind in 2022 and what are we looking forward to in 2023? This is the question Vanessa from Sonatina Music asked during our first music therapy group of the year. Vanessa used art as well as music to encourage the group to think about what we can let go of and what we are looking forward to in 2023. The group was asked to represent their feelings about letting go and moving forward by using colors on paper.

As we focused on this task, Vanessa played some of our suggested songs. Songs about letting go included: Don't Speak by No Doubt, Shooting Star by Bad Company and Hell is for Children by Pat Benatar. Letting go of fear was a consistent theme within our group. This included fear of the past as well as the fear of uncertainty about the future.

Participants are looking forward to a variety of things, including being in better relationships, keeping good memories and a continued belief in a higher power. The music we chose to end the group included You raise me up by Josh Groban and Let it Be by The Beatles

While the rest of us crumpled and threw away our versions of what to leave behind, Donna shares her vision of looking forward. She is wishing that eternal hope and faith will be a constant in her life. "I am fortunate to have the opportunity to be her to share my feelings in the group."

		6	8	4			
2		1		6			7
	3	9					1
				9	8	3	
	6						9
		7	3	2			
	4					1	3
7				1		8	4
				3	5	7	

8			9	6		1		
7		1	8		4			
6	3			1		8		
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			2		6			
							9	2
		5		2			1	6
			3		7	2		5
		4		5	1			8

COMMUNITY RESOURCES



Are you in crisis?

There is help available. 24/7 call, text and chat access to trained crisis counselors who can help you or a loved one experiencing suicidal, substance use, and/or mental health crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress.

NH Rapid Response can meet you where you are, provide follow up appointments, or refer you to inpatient options 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

New Hampshire
Rapid Response Access Point
1 (833) 710-6477

2.1.1

Are you looking for services?

To connect with local resources in the Seacoast area, go to www.211nh.org OR call 211

Get Connected. Get Help.™
An Initiative of Granite United Way

The Sonatina Center

Our primary focus is...

...to empower individuals of all ages, improve self-esteem, promote a positive sense of self-worth, support development, enhance wellness, inspire creative self-expression and connect with the community through music, art, movement, storytelling, and play.

thesonatinacenter.com



Community Calendar

'Relics' at 3S Artspace

Friday, February 3 from 5-8pm at 3S Artspace

Reception includes an additional exhibit in the Lobby Gallery featuring works by James Tucker in our Portsmouth NH 400 Series. Free and open to the public

"The work I make comes out of a complicated relationship with the American South. I spent my first 30 years in Georgia, and it will always be my home place, where my earliest and most important questions arose."

Kris Ringman, The Hoot Portsmouth Poet Laureate Reading

Wednesday, February 1st, 7pm at Book & Bar in Portsmouth

Kris Ringman (she/they) is a deaf queer author, artist, and wanderer. They were born hearing with a late-deafened mother and gradually lost their own hearing by their early 20s. Kris spent two years living on sailboats in Block Island and Key West before the loss of their trimaran home. Their multicultural, lyrical fiction, and poetry plays along the boundaries of magical realism, fantasy, and horror.

WHAT WE OFFER

Groups Mon-Fri in our
Portsmouth center

One-on-one support for
computer, budgeting, or job
skills

Warmline telephone
support, 5-10 PM seven days
a week

Residential program staffed
24/7 by peer specialists



Open to everyone 18 and older
seeking support in pursuing
mental health wellness with an
emphasis on hope and recovery.
All services are free, and no
referral is required.

Managed by and for individuals who have or are
at risk of having mental health issues, our mission
is to support one another on our journey to
wellness, and recovery.

Connections Peer Support Center
544 Islington St
Portsmouth, NH 03801
(603) 427-6966
connectionspeersupport.org