

the north

# river

JOURNAL

**THE SECOND ISSUE**

S U M M E R 2 0 0 1



## **DIVERSITY OF ART**

Sigfrido Benitez / Jose Guerrido / Ralph Ivery / Louise Hodge  
Dr. Moses A. Kash III / Charlene Sunkel / Michael Dunkley / Sigfrido Benitez  
Kathy Lynch / Betty Olsen / Jeff Koch / Gareth Mackay

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# The river flows

by Frank Marquit

Founder and CEO of NAMH

## From the heart

An open letter to the community

Hello everyone and welcome to another edition of the North River Journal. As you can see from this edition we are constantly striving to improve upon what has come before. I would like to personally thank all those who took the time for interviews and the artists who submitted their artwork and poetry to be included in this edition. All of us here at National Artists do truly appreciate all that you have contributed and ask that others will please contribute also. Contributions are gladly accepted at any time. Contact information can be found on the inside front cover.

### Staying Alive

Ten years ago, our dream became a reality when National Artists for Mental Health opened its doors as the North River Gallery and Empowerment Center in October of 1991 with the vision that recipients could find a heightened quality of life by means of our creative and integrated self-help arts and holistic programming.

Many of our peers have struggled since adolescence, and many have been in and out of large psychiatric facilities. We have tried to give hope, inspiration and recovery alternatives when the traditional medical model was not sufficient. We express



ourselves through painting, sculpture, music and poetry, movement, drama and alternative holistic techniques that help our peers gain self-confidence, well-being and an inner peace with ourselves and the world around us. Through creativity and self-expression, all of us can achieve great success.

### You are the reason

This is the 10th Anniversary of National Artists for Mental Health! As artists, as advocates and as an organization, we have worked hard to keep the Art of Healing alive. As you know, the budget is tight. We ask for your help to keep the North River flowing and National Artists reaching into the communities, supporting our peers.

If you wish, it would be our personal pleasure to discuss any way you can make a difference, not only in our peer's lives, but

also in making sure that our model for self-expression stands as the true alternative it was designed to be, for many years to come.

### See you there...

I would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone of the next Art of Healing Conference coming on the 19th, 20th, 21st of April 2002. This will be our 5th Annual Art of Healing Conference and it will be held in Schenectady, NY. With the success of the Art of Healing Conference this year I am looking forward to an even more rewarding conference next year and to seeing you there.

I wish everyone peace, love and happiness.

Enjoy!

*Frank Marquit*

## A closer view of Terry Bronner



When setting out to introduce Terry Bronner as part of this issue of the North River Journal, I had an inkling of her role in the movement of mental health. What I found was that there is not enough room on these two pages to contain what this woman is about. What follows is Ms. Terry Bronner herself. Read her thoughts, her experiences, her answers – it will make you want to know what you're missing.

### Q: What is important to you?

**A** Most important to me are my primary values. These include truthfulness and purity of purpose, inner as well as outer integrity, respect for persons and all living things, especially the ones who are vulnerable, being a loyal friend, supporting one another in community, and creating beautiful and harmonious environments in which to live and work.

### Q: What got you involved in the field of mental health?

**A** The original motivation to work in mental health sprang from my own need to understand the individual differences among people, some of whom

seemed to enjoy a life with few obstacles and others whose efforts at living were fraught with many difficulties and impediments (my own life fell into this latter category). I wanted to understand the psychological aspects of these differences, but, more than that, I wanted to understand the impact of experiences and environments on people's lives. About 15 years ago, I decided to study the sub-discipline of psychology known as Community Psychology, which examines how micro systems such as families and macro systems such as education, social services and criminal justice obstruct or enhance mental health. I was curious about what promotes mental health and what prevents mental illness. I was convinced that both are far more a function of experience and environment than of individual psychological competency or deficit. I was convinced that mental illness can only be prevented and mental health only promoted by repairing or creating positive experiences and environments that medications and therapies alone cannot get the job done.

I also became interested in how public policy affecting education, mental health, housing, family support and employment works to promote or fails to promote mental health. Public policy strongly determines how systems develop and work for or against mental health.

### Q: What did your work involve?

**A** For ten years I worked in the areas of self-help for mental-health, empowerment and self-determination for individuals diagnosed with mental health problems. I hold an unshakable belief that these dynamics are

crucial to recovery, healing and well-being.

The first several years of my work involved identifying and disseminating a wide range of self-help information to individuals, groups and organizations all across New York State. The last six years were devoted to the development of statewide educational programs for and with individuals with mental health histories. These programs emphasized taking responsibility for one's own life and acting to achieve self-determination. One program, in particular, provided training and other resources to dozens of diverse peer-operated mental health services in New York State. Still another created a voluntary peer accreditation association for peer-run agencies. A third recreated a self-help information clearinghouse for use by the entire community in New York State.

It was a great privilege to be involved in creating and developing these and several other projects from the ground up. I could not have asked for a more creative and energizing opportunity, for which I am most grateful. It required the efforts and support of many hard-working, dedicated and talented individuals to achieve the success we realized in six short years. It was a shared effort and a shared success.

### Q: What does mental health involve from your perspective?

**A** From my perspective, mental health involves being able to make choices that enhance one's life, taking responsibility for one's thoughts, actions and life outcomes, being able to manage problems, treating others with love and respect. Mental health is not a matter of being problem-free. It is rather being healed enough to know that prob-



lems do not have to mean defeat, but can be coped with; being healed enough to not take the actions of others personally and let them spell defeat for you. Most of all, mental health is about appropriate self-respect and self-appreciation.

**Q: NAMH takes a holistic approach towards mental health and well-being, embracing a wide range of alternative approaches, from visual arts to healing arts. How does this differ from or correlate with your own beliefs and practices?**

**A** First, let me say that what NAMH stands for and promotes is absolutely essential to healing and wellness. The arts lie at the heart of the spirit in each of us and it is with the power of the spirit that we find healing and wellness.

My own experience with alternative healing methods convinces me even more that the work of the National Artists for Mental Health is essential and important. No other peer-operated organization does what NAMH does. Their healing arts message and mission is critical to the wellness of individuals seeking mental and emotional healing. In my opinion, NAMH deserves support, both moral and financial, from every sector of the mental health system. NAMH brings unique therapies to those who cannot afford to pay for private healing arts activities and classes - all the more justification for broad support of National Artists' programs.

**Q: Has the scope of mental health changed? What would you like to see?**

**A** The positive changes I have seen in the mental health field are encouraging. Self-help, empowerment, involvement of those who use services in determining what they are and how they work, growth of peer-run services, greater use of healing arts, emphasis on employment for individuals with mental health problems - all these changes are useful, but need to become more a part of the mainstream. They should be given a much greater place in the mental health system and, it goes without saying, more funding.

I would like to see a strong growth of peer-operated services for mental health. Addictions services delivered by individuals recovered from or in recovery from addictions have a proven track record of success. The same can happen in mental health services, given the right set of conditions.

**Q: If you could keep something going so that others could experience it, what would it be?**

**A** There are two things I would keep going. The first would be a school where enriching, interesting interdisciplinary education takes place combining history, arts, literature, music, science, philosophy, spirituality and service to the community. The second would be an alternative, healing arts center for those without money, a place where people seeking healing, but without financial resources, could come and participate in a full range of healing modalities.

**Terry Bronner - opening doors for others!**

**PILLOWS of UNREST.** An Art & Recovery Public Awareness Campaign. Deep down we all recognize a good resting point when we see one... but there's no need to sleep on the job! Pillows of Unrest is an expressive arts and public awareness campaign dedicated to providing an outlet for personal healing while creating a platform for education, anti-stigma and anti-discrimination. The project, conceived by CEO Frank Marquit, utilizes a pillowcase as a "canvas" and encourages those who participate to express the personal turmoil that can exist within one's recovery from mental health issues. Those pillows could talk, and they tell a story. The collection is growing daily and it is our hope to bring the exhibit to a space near you. A few ways to offer your services and help us start things up; Donate Pillowcases, Pillowspace, and Materials

#### **How to Create Pillowcase Art**

Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the address below to receive a Pillows of Unrest brochure and policy agreement.

Find a Pillowcase, and turn it into your canvas. A white pillowcase works best but you may use whatever color you wish.

Any materials, such as markers or glitter, can be used but should be non-fading and permanent. You may draw, paint, write poetry, create a slogan, or do a short story on your pillowcase. Try to reflect on personal issues in your recovery and the effects of stigma.

We would also appreciate a brief letter stating your opinion of this project - has your participation been beneficial? If so, how? A letter of your thoughts and ideas is not required, but would be very helpful.

Send your completed pillowcase and signed policy agreement.



# Jose Guerrido

One to reckon with

## Latin Roots

Traditional Folk Culture and Street Culture - the backbone and soul of Jose Guerrido, and up to this point, the predominant influences on his art. At 5 or 6 years of age, his mother showed Jose a picture. Curiosity spoke up - "What's this mom?" "This is from your ancestors." Jose's reaction? "Whoaaa... This is deep!!! It's time to put this on canvas!"

Puerto Rico. Visually distinctive? Definitely. "You can tell Puerto Rican art... the colors, design... it's a style. When you look at Haitian art - there's a distinct style. They have, certain symbols, petroglyph, african colors." Not to mention content. "There's a lot of oppression in art. Go way back to the Spanish conquest and slavery... some of it's happy... the African side, the drum circles."

## Staying in touch

"Back then I didn't realize I was living a culture. Around 1966 I moved to Spanish Harlem from Puerto Rico. I didn't realize I was painting a culture. As I became an adult and became an artist... WHOA, HOLD IT! - It blew my mind."

## NY art world

"Now I run around NY... there's all this sub-culture. Gotta run around with the Jones'... so I break all that down... call that Hip Hop. All of it is political. Growing up around the Panthers, the revolution. I lived all that. Saw the shoot-outs. To me that was common. The drug-infested neighborhood. But you want me to be honest with you? It's all about the cheese - money. That's the culture. The way you live. The food you eat. The people you socialize with. When I grew up in Spanish Harlem, it wasn't like that. You took care of each other. People used to love each other. The new culture is the green dollar. How does money play

into it? - I need medium to create art. If I don't have it, it depresses me. Necessary evil? Nah - money's not evil..."

## Trickling down

Culture, by nature, has a trickle-down affect. The life in that culture is apparent in Jose's work, as well as in the work of others. To sustain that life sometimes is another matter. What does it take? It depends on where you're coming from. Mr. Guerrido had his own thoughts.

Artistic people... we think different. I think we need a lot of support. A lot of support. I can be insecure. I mean really insecure. Afraid. If it doesn't look good, it destroys me. Like a junk head - you crash. I didn't realize a lot of artists were that ill. How the hell did they make it? They don't have the medication. Vincent Van Gogh - made 700 paintings, only sold 2. No wonder he took his life."

## Van Gogh

So take Van Gogh. The impact of his art is without question. But where does the art stand without the artist? And from Mr. Guerrido's standpoint, the artist without the art? Can you imagine Van Gogh if he had available to him the resources and support he needed? Now take Jose Guerrido. Is there a bigger picture here??

Talk about impact. Once the means are in place, there is no telling where or what direction art can take. This is what Jose Guerrido had to say, "Visual art has a lot of power. Life imitates art. Art imitates life. The art I create is a part of me. It's my life. I become the character and sometimes I play it out. It's strange how... as the creator - I'm the character. I have a relationship and once it's over... it becomes part of my depression. The medium can be anything... people... but exploit them in a positive way. My mind is creative. I see things and need to project. I go into a creative manic stage and keep creating... becomes so power-

ful it overtakes me... that's how I get out of control."

## It's in the balance

"(Medication) slows the process down... slows the reality down... so once I get in creative mode, I can shut it down. I start focusing... start drawing... keep focusing... keep focusing. The problem is once I'm there, how do I get back? What's the balance? My mind is always creating... 24 hours a day. To relax, it's like I'm fighting my brain. You need to talk to somebody."

Different people react to different things in different ways. Which perhaps, is Mr. Guerrido's point. What medication may have done for Van Gogh, an open ear or a good heart-to-heart may do for someone else.

Jose's balance at the moment may just be the hunk of technology in his home and the places he can travel while staying at home.

"I'm in transition... ever since I bought this computer. It's like my brain.. can't get that with a brush. I can get it with a computer - it's amazing. It's like I finally found a friend I can relate to. I can give my painting life instead of tripping out. Now people can see what I see. That's influence. Gaming, fantasy. A lot of my art deals with fantasies. I'm looking to give them more life. Make them talk, move. Animation. Maybe it will help me out. I'm frustrated. A friend broke it down to me - that maybe I need to go to next level and I said, 'What do you mean by that, 'go to the next level?' He says - film, video. And I'm like, 'Wow, you're right.' He told me your art is animation. Go back to being a kid - it was all animation.'" What comes around goes around. Go figure.

continuu



# Ralph Ivery

Mapping the human face

Ralph Ivery is, without question, an integral part of National Artists for Mental Health. He has been a part of the organization since its inception. His belief in the arts goes further back, and his involvement in the arts goes even further back than that.

## Working with a variety of mediums...

Art has surrounded Ralph since he was young, and he gives his family - both his mother's side and his father's side, the initial credit for influencing on his interest in the arts. "Art was something you do. It was always there." From his childhood on up, Ralph has surrounded himself with art. He works with a variety of mediums, ranging from oils to acrylics, to watercolor, to inks and ashes. "When drawing with ink and ashes, I feel comfortable, (there's) freedom. Drawing with pencil... I do it on a basis of being right. Doing the same sketch in ink - there's more liberty. Ashes - it just turns me on (to) smear it on and see what comes out." A true media mogul, Ralph mixes with the best of them, rendering in two and three dimensions what he senses through his mind, through his heart, through his senses and through what he calls the third eye, "the bird's eye - giving you guidance." Taking all this art into account, one sees a portfolio of a man with many dimensions.

## The spirit moves me.

Ralph's belief in the difference spirituality makes is a part of a bigger picture, and plays a vital role in his art, his spirit and his person, not to mention his work at NAMH. "ninety-five percent of your conscious level is dealing with society, the commercial value you should give to system. You are always living up to standards dictated to you." Stopping for a moment, you take a serious look at Ralph Ivery, as a



man, an artist, and as Executive Deputy Director of NAMH, and this is when his words hit you. "You are important. What you do affects others. Take things as they come. There is no such thing as failing. It's ridiculous living up to other people's standards. They deny themselves." He continues, "I don't influence people, don't do it to influence people. I pass through the system, being aware of social existence and spiritual, living a dual existence, pulling it apart to communicate it to someone - the total balance there; living at the same time for social and spiritual." That these standards are essential to his being is apparent. But where did he find what shaped the beliefs that hold his heart in place, creating a vast territory of ideas to pull from and use in his work as an artist and as an advocate?

"In my early teens, I started on my journey." A time of inner turmoil and questioning for some, for Ralph the Vietnam War was a time of resolve and strength, of speaking out and finding himself. "There were a lot of protests trying to communicate a lot of love and peace. I found my art on a spiritual quest... and used art to interpret a lot of what I was saying."

Ralph Ivery speaks to a lot of different people on a lot of different things. "When I meet I give 100%. You can't judge people too hard. People say you should be free... if you put people in categories, you're

left out. Can't put them in that ball game because they'd be operating under your ideals. When things come up negative it's a part of life's test." He looks at the chain around his neck and finds more to make his point. "Take the rock around my neck as opposed to something else... what is more valuable?" He explains "This little rock is not just a rock, it's been around for many years, been so many things. It's a building block, it's a tool." A rock is not just a rock and a person is more than just a person. Think big. Then think bigger.

## Building on it

Building blocks are everywhere, and when pointed in the right direction, worthwhile. NAMH is such a building block, and there are building blocks that preceded NAMH, serving as the foundation to Ralph's journey.

"When I first got out of High School, a friend worked for people and used to bring them to my house. The clients loved it and I ended up in the mental health field. A lot of communication is done through art. I got a contract with Hudson to do a program once a week. I was doing that and working in a group home. Groups in AM... next thing you know... National Artists started. We did an art show - it turned into a once a year conference. Art helps people talk, transcend themselves... shows them they can do something." Transcend. Going from there, he adds, "People are dealing with stigma in the wrong way, turning against themselves." He continues, "They should be proud. We control our own fears. Usually it's the underdog that gets bashed. It's the consumer who can turn it around. On a national level, if we had consumers who officially voted, people representing themselves, New York represents 62 counties - address mental health and the arts on a county level... where people are voted in, not appointed - that would make a difference. Someone needs to push for that issue."

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## Louise Hodge

Working within the community

Louise I. Hodge is an artist and Board Secretary with NAMH. Like most artistic individuals, she wears many hats. For three years she has been the Director of Harlem House, a psychosocial club program with Generations Plus, Northern Manhattan Network, and Harlem Hospital. She also is an adjunct professor at Audrey Cohen College where she graduated in 1997 at the top of her class with a Masters degree in Human Services Administration. Hodge is also a second year doctoral student at Yeshiva University, Wurzweiler School of Social Work, where her areas of interest are mental health stigma, and administration. It seems there are no limits to what Louise Hodge can do. In addition to her current concentration of work in academia and mental health administration, Ms. Hodge's roots are deeply imbedded in the arts - in the creative world of painting, drawing, creative writing and poetry.

### Working toward change

"Creativity is not just a process; it's also a state of mind. For me, art is the visual communicator's voice that process of creating from within. The visual communicator's eye is the vessel that translates the abstract artistic question into a tangible reality. I am on an endless quest in my artistic journey to express creative thought, imagery, feelings and ideas. Art keeps me grounded, serves as a sense of catharsis amidst the chaos that my world can sometimes become, and is the one constant thread that has weaved its way through the fabric of my life."

Louise is a 1986 graduate of the University of the Arts, Philadelphia College of Art, where she majored in illustration with concentrative studies in Scientific and Medical Illustration. She began her career as an art teacher at Thomas Eakin's



House with the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Since that time, she has worked as an art teacher, lecturer, facilitator, illustrator and graphic artist. She moved to New York in 1988, and went on to work in the party goods industry as a graphic designer and illustrator. Hodge then made the shift to her area of interest; biomedical communications and medical media.

"While at PCA, I was struck by the experiences of my classmates who were battling with issues such as rape, mental illness, and poverty. Their experiences manifested in their work. I was fascinated by what I had learned, and knew that I would someday concentrate my work in this area. My experiences at the Center for Biomedical Communications at Columbia University's College of Physician and Surgeons, and the New York VA Medical Center gave me an excellent opportunity to utilize my skills in this area. The VA's medical media department in particular, allowed me to work independently to produce graphic arts and illustration materials for some of our country's most pre-eminent doctors and researchers. It was an opportunity I will always remember."

### With a strong back ground

Louise currently freelances in this area. She made the shift to the more therapeutic use of the arts in psychiatry in 1994, when she studied art therapy for two years with renowned art therapist, Dr. Erika Steinberger, Director of the Studio Workshop School. Louise worked from 1994-1999 as the Fine Arts Unit Coordinator at Harlem House where she worked to develop the creative and artistic talents of the program's members. Coining the phrase, "Creativity lives at Harlem House," As Director of Harlem House Ms. Hodge went on to motivate and encourage the talents of members in the areas of the visual arts, performing arts and literary arts. Louise is also the creator of KIDS EXPRESS!, an expressive arts therapy workshop series for children ages 3-12 affected by HIV/AIDS. This project has been in existence since 1995, and is sponsored by the NYS AIDS Institute and the Family Health Center of Newburgh, Inc. Her influences, like her work, are an eclectic mixture of masters. The works of impressionist Camille Pissarro, surrealist Salvador Dali, Leonardo Da Vinci, and sculptor Constantine Brancusi generate artistic inspiration. "The themes that are evident in my

continued on p.



# Dr. Moses A. Kash III

## Love for language

Dr. Moses A. Kash III. You speak to him and realize that he believes in the power of the word. With ten publications to his name, Moses is a gentleman who puts his word out there. He writes on his past. He writes on his present. He writes on who, what, where, and when all of these combine and his words reach you, he touches you because he takes so much in and sees so much with his heart. When you hear his voice you hear through his ears, and your world expands.

## The power of the word

"Poetry is a vehicle of my inner-mind, an expression, a mental expression. I use my mind's eye and make it believable. It's like a vision I have and a bunch of parts coming together for the reader to understand. Poetry is an avenue."

## Roots

Perhaps it's his ties to his family while growing up that shape the values he holds today. "My childhood was beautiful. My parents worked very hard. There were nine of us. They tried hard to do the best they could. Mother was always taking us to church. My father took me to North Carolina on trips every summer. I was very close to my family."

While speaking, he remembered an incident growing up, an early encounter with discrimination. When Dr. Moses was a young child, a neighbor threw oil on him as he sat on the steps of his porch. His mother came out, reacting with the intensity of a woman who loves her son, asking what was going on. "Don't you ever..." What registered in his head? What did he see, and what did he take with you? Part of the whole.

Words collect and form conversations. Conversations between people move in and out of one's inner-being. Stored, a thought. The thought, filtered through the experiences of one's life and spoken, a voice.

## A non-violent man

From Dr. Moses' past is a book he read - *Little Black Sambo*. "It turned me off. I thought 'that's ridiculous', but I said, 'It might be true.'" He reached further into literature, and expanded on what he had previously taken in. Shakespeare came his way, and others. He continued "To make a long story short, everything was so white then. There were not many black kids in the system."

Dr. Moses was the opposite of most of his friends who were violent, always egging him on to fight. "I shied away from trouble. I just liked everybody." When he speaks of his feelings now, they are of the same vein, "I'm not a racist. I believe in people loving people. I believe in making a difference."

## "... Poetry is a vehicle"

People. Words. Connect. Contact. Making a difference. The Harlem Writers' Guild, Maya Angelou, Louise Merryweather, Nancy Covington, James Baldwin, John Oliver, and Quincey Troope. Those filtering through Dr. Moses' heart, speaking to his soul are many. "I devoured the words, reflected on what they told me." And from his experience, their words - from his words, your experience.

While Dr. Moses grew up in NYC, he has been almost everywhere; from California to Chicago and back, studying sociology, philosophy, creative writing, history and black studies. To be where he has been, or to go where he is now - would require some serious traveling. The more direct route might be to sit down with him and hear him roar.

"The difference is in thinking. Trying doesn't make you a failure, not trying does."



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# In Memory of John Webb 1925 - 2000



I sadly report that John Webb passed away early in 2000.

Mr. Webb began painting in an HAI (Hospital Audiences, Inc.) art workshop in Brooklyn, New York about fifteen years ago, where he discovered a talent and devotion to art that lasted for the rest of his life. He immediately began working in acrylic paint, later adding watercolor and pencil to his favored mediums. He explored a wide range of figurative subjects that he created with accuracy in detail. His work has been exhibited at North River Gallery, Union, the Theological Seminary, Gallery M, Fulton Street Fair, Brooklyn Botanic Garden Fair, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, Starrett City Public Library and Max Fish.

Mr. Webb was born on March 8, 1925 in Baltimore, Maryland. He served in the United States Navy during World War II in the Pacific Theater. He also worked in the resorts of the Catskills during their heyday. After moving to New York City, he lived in a proprietary home for adults in Brooklyn for a number of years. He moved to a single room occupancy residence in Manhattan about five years ago, where he gained more independence and financial security. He renewed his family contacts, traveling to in Maryland for visits and, shortly before his death, he attended a large family reunion where he was recognized for his accomplishments as an artist. The move to Manhattan allowed Mr. Webb to partake more fully of the city's cultural resources and he truly bloomed with happiness during his last years.

Betty Mark,  
(HAI) Hospital Audiences, Inc



# Charlene Sunkel

From across seas

## A view from across the seas

Let me provide you with a few things that you might find interesting.

I was born, 08 June 1972, in (what I think you would call) the countryside - a small town in Mpumalanga, South Africa. I stayed 16 years in my hometown and then I moved to Pretoria. Pretoria is the capital of South Africa and is quite a big city. My family setup is a complicated one to explain, so I won't bore you with details. Unfortunately both my parents have passed away. My mother passed away in 1985 and my father in March of this year. But I do have in my life, my stepmother who is very dear to me, and my two sisters and my brothers, who all mean a lot to me.

## Getting back on my feet

I was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia at the age of 19. At first, and for some time, I had no idea what was happening to me. I was trapped in "a world very far from earth." So much was happening inside my mind at that stage that I instinctively took pen and paper and started scribbling down my thoughts. At first, nothing made sense of what I had written down. My thoughts were in a ratrace and I only managed to grasp fragments of the contents of my mind. Later, my thoughts slowed down the more and more I wrote. I rebelled against fighting this mental state until the beginning of 1998 after my admission to another state psychiatric hospital in Krugersdorp (Sterkfontein Hospital). There I was admitted to a closed ward, that was intensely traumatic to me. Eventually I was discharged back to the psychiatric rehabilitation center (Gordonia) where I had already spent 2 years. At that very point, I decided that I would no longer stand by and watch myself destroying my life and giving up on my



life. I then discharged myself from Gordonia and started a whole new life in Pretoria. I dedicated myself to what is important to me - writing poetry. The more I spent writing, the more I noticed improvement in my ability to cope with what's going on in my mind and within myself. I wasn't the only one who noticed a remarkable difference in myself. My family and friends took great joy in "having me back."

## World of art

Since then I gradually rebuilt a life for myself. I started fighting with all I had to make it in this world. Today I am spending as much time as possible writing poetry. I would say that I have never been this well in all the time I have lived with schizophrenia or even long before that.

Art is magic - it creates a unique world where one lives in total freedom of being who you truly are. It's a world where one has a golden glow of being a special and precious entity of the entire universe. It creates a place where one belongs, where one feels safe. Having this magic in one's life is a miracle of healing.

My poetry expresses mainly my innermost feelings, my deep thoughts, my perception on life and on living it, and expresses the battles I fight as a person suffering mental illness. To date, I have written 50 poems for my poetry collection. Even my very first poems are part of the collection - thus, a 10

year compilation of my work. Many of my poems reflect depression and desperation to stop hurting and struggling. By portraying tears and by portraying a plea for mercy through poetry is like, all the words of the poem building a sentence and the sentences forming layers, building a safe home for my soul. Some poems are more subject to what I experience mentally, and others focus on my personal perceptions of certain aspects of life.

## A dream to be published

My goal is to publish my poetry collection. It's not just a goal. It is a great dream of mine. Currently I am working on compiling a book of my poetry collection as well as the story behind each poem. I hope to complete this manuscript by the end of June 2001. It is very difficult to get published in South Africa as the market for books, especially poetry books is very small. Publishing oneself is very expensive. So, unfortunately, this is holding me back from publishing my work at this stage. But I will not give up on my dream.

## Impact on one's life

I would not say that living in South Africa has an impact on my writing, although all the many different cultures in this country do have an impact on life in one way or another. Like they say, we are the rainbow nation. Each culture is so different from each other, and what is amazing to me is that everyone still stands strong for his/her cultural upbringing. It's like standing up for who you are and that is a quality that I really admire and appreciate. In a way I relate to that in my poetry, as each one of my poems tell the story of who I am and where I come from. My style of writing is unique to who I am, and so does culture reveal one's identity.

## Respect

My perception on mental health... All we need is respect, understanding, love and care, just like any

continued on p.26



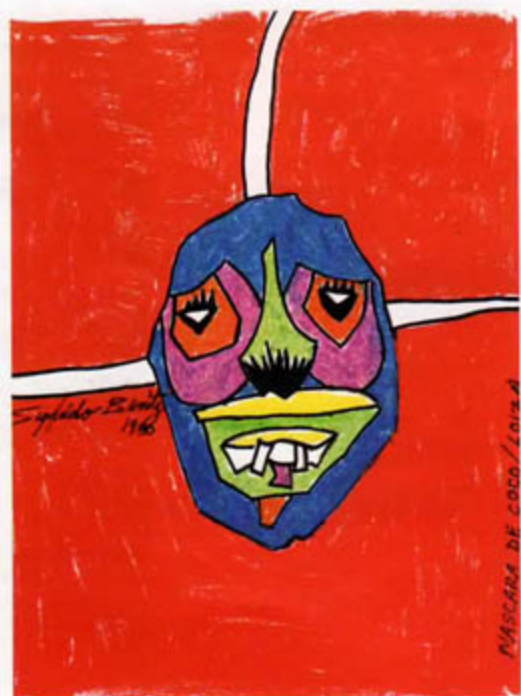
## Sigfrido Benitez

It changes people's thinking from "I can't draw" to "Look what I've done!", and experiencing with our members the magic they see in art. I am interested in seeing the Activity Therapy department at Harlem Hospital do symposiums, presentations, conferences that will look at art as a clinical and treatment modality to give activity therapy the respect it is due for its role in research, treatment, rehabilitation recovery, and its relationship to disease and illness. People's recovery is not just limited to chemistry, chemicals, or medicine."

Harlem House and Harlem Hospital Center are truly blessed to have the "socio-cultural-artistic force" of Sigfrido on board.



# Sigfrido Benitez





# Michael Dunkley

Venture into NAMH and you will walk into the world of Michael Dunkley, AKA. Domesko. He has been doing art since the age of 9 when he found himself thoroughly entrenched in cartoons. Looking at his work today, you would have to ask to find the nine or ten year cartoonist. "I've built on my talent as time progressed." Mostly working in pastels, his color palette varies, moving from vibrant and rich, to monotonous. Domesko likens it to Impressionistic Realism. "When you look at my work you can see form, depth... something being expressed... but it's not tangible." His influences range from Van Gogh, Monet, Renoir, reaching all the way to Cezanne... but it is Da Vinci that has captivated him the most. What is it about Da Vinci? Domesko mentions the areas that Da Vinci has touched... as an inventor, a mortician and as a sculptor. Perhaps it is the range. Perhaps it is the skill within that range. But if you hear what Domesko speaks on with regards to his own canvas... you might think that it is the spirit within Da Vinci that got passed on to Domesko. It came up during a conversation of cultural backgrounds, including Domesko's own "Anything the black man, ANY man wants... if you pursue and are diligent, you can achieve your goals. There are so many opportunities." It surfaced when talking about art and one's well being. "There is a balance. You gotta find an equilibrium. If you have physical and mental, emotional will follow. Your self-esteem will be lifted, you'll be more eager to look at what life plans. There's self-growth, you have a more positive outlook, you're more objective." And then he quoted Maya Angelou, "if the caged bird can't fly, what else can you do but sing?" And his own path lends credence to that. Having emerged from his own



*continued on p.14*

# Michael Dunkley

continued from p.13

struggles, Domesko doesn't, as he says, gettootied up in the down side... "there's too much conflict. You have to be flexible, accept certain things. Change what I can. Be a productive individual. Co-exist."

And after that, the quiet grit of a man who has seen many things and perhaps been through even more, stares you right in the face when he speaks of where he wants to go - "I'm striving for getting on the market. Artwork on a nationwide scale, where I can pursue making my life more manageable." Think about that.





# Michael Dunkley



# Jose Guerrido

continued from p.6



Untitled  
Acrylic



Boriquin, Island of the Brave Lord  
Acrylic



# Jose Guerrido



Ivy the Flower of Life  
Acrylic



The Last Taina Women  
of Puerto Rico  
Oil



Untitled  
Acrylic



Bomba Festival  
Acrylic

# Louise Hodge

work tend to range from the surreal and very detailed to the very abstract. Everything I see and feel around me has the potential to contribute to a project. I enjoy self-portraits, which allows me to examine the self, and the depiction of imagery that reflect my Caribbean heritage. St. Thomas is a vibrant island of extremes; extreme colors, scents, textures, and a rich history of a proud people. I often explore the relationship of the environment to its people. In addition, inspiration may come from the sensual twists of a spiral staircase, autumn leaves and the changes of seasons, or mask making. This allows me to produce work that reflects the tensions and energy of life, movement, and vitality."

Louise is an artist who utilizes various mediums in unlikely combinations. "I enjoy using textures; oils,

acrylics, pastels and charcoal, and constantly experiment with surfaces; acrylics, inks and dyes on masonite, or charcoal, pastels and glass on canvas." She looks forward to the completion of her doctoral course work studies so that she can devote more time to creative projects. "I have had a few one woman and group exhibitions in Brooklyn. There has also been involvement in artistic, cultural exchanges with Japan, where I have submitted my work and the creations of Harlem House members for exhibition. I hope to expand these experiences, and visit Japan soon." Louise Hodge, a woman who stretches her horizons, everyday.



Louise Hodge



**Louise  
Hodge**



# Ralph Ivery

continued from p.7



The Mask  
Acrylic on Canvas, 50 x 30



Sisters  
Acrylic on Canvas, 16 x 20



Farewell  
Acrylic on Canvas, 35 x 50

### Of like mind.

Ralph Ivery knows the issues at stake. Through workshops, conferences, or on the phone, you can hear him open his heart and his mind, getting into the spirit of things. There are many people out there, coming from many different backgrounds. His belief is that living on one earth, all cultures become one. That history of one is the history of many, a collected history. That in being together, we need to work together. And when the life force of society is headed in a unified direction, things really start shaking.

Ralph Ivery: A part of the whole, keeping things in balance, keeping the arts alive. Keep him in mind.





# Self-Expression Art of Healing Conference 2001

held at the Ramada Inn, Schenectady, NY

## Experiences

by Dr. Moses Kash, III

Songs of beauty  
people gathering together and making noise  
poetry and art, food mood connection  
the dream box, reaching across the arts  
yoga, body language and color.  
The Press, laughter and happiness,  
people coming in and going out of the  
Ramada Inn. Love in the air  
people everywhere  
children helping their parents  
parents guiding their children  
staff guiding traffic  
and handing out brochures  
music is piped into the walls  
and the sounds fill the air and  
the rhapsody move throughout  
the building  
selling books, artwork, trinkets  
flowers and clothes are a way  
of life at the Art of Healing Conference.  
Yes, we had a grand time.

## Have a grand time together in April 2002!

### Art of Healing Conference April 19th, 20th and 21st

Ramada Inn, Schenectady, NY

for more information contact  
**National Artists  
for Mental Health, Inc.**  
P.O. Box 151, Catskill, NY 12414

Tel. 518.943.2450

Fax. 518.943.3825



Eva Marie



Helen Stratford



## COMING EVENTS

Binghamton Conference  
Ramada Inn  
Oct 23, 2001

Harlem House Conference  
New York, New York  
Oct 30, 2001

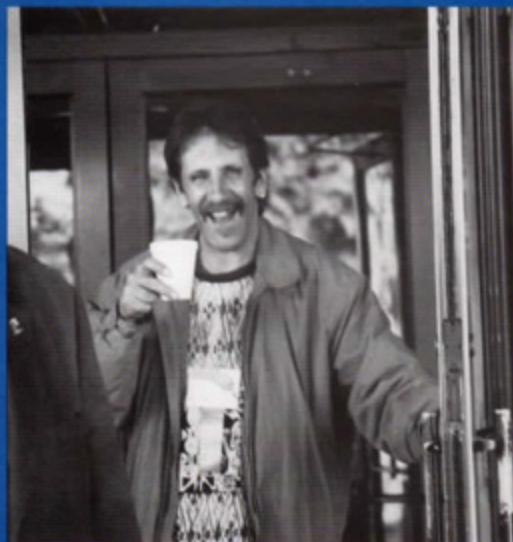
### Helping People Recover Through the Art



Kathy Lynch



Frank Montano, Frank  
Marquit, Midge Montano



Roger Poole



James Dees

## An Advocate's Prayer

by **Kathy Lynch** – (Dedicated to those in Leadership)

O Great One

Blessed are those who toil and suffer for you  
For they shall be united together in love.

Blessed are they who work in government and or human resources.

May they

Receive your vigor and strength. For these are confusing times.

Blessed are they who hunger for justice.

We are weary of doing battle.

May we find nurturing in the loving

Embrace of your universe.

Blessings and healing to those who have been shattered within.

May they find perfect rest, for this work though

Rewarding, can be exhausting.

Health to those whose passion is electrified

By deep abiding purpose. For the

World often turns a deaf ear.

May we find a way to be heard.

Healing to those who are overextended;

For there are too few of us doing this work.

Blessings and strength to those in government

And in leadership positions

For they sometimes distracted

And fail to walk the path.

We are sometimes lost. Bestow thy grace.

Help us to remember our stewardship,

To honor always the people we serve

We are all a circle of one.

O Great Mystery,

The work we do is joyful, yet difficult.

Often we are despised and forgotten

We live in a world which chooses

To wall off the different, the poor, the sick,

The wounded in spirit; from those who have much,

May we include all in thy circle of rich harvest.

May we light with our work

The ember of hope, ignite with

Our passion and purpose,

A kinder and gentler world

Encircling the lives of all

Bless Us Great Spirit

Bless our work

Bless our gifts. Blessed be.

The gift I offer to the world is \_\_\_\_\_.

Light The Candle.

by **Jeff Koch**

I wonder if you believe

in God the way I do.

Animals and plants living in

harmony throughout

the ages.

Only war can destroy the truth in Genis' pages.

Hope and love shine from the eyes of a newborn child.

A lamb representing humanity as kind and mild.

I cannot understand the hatred that permeates my life.

Do they not know that God's love can cure any strife?

Joy and peace will survive.

Also remember; this will keep you alive.

The beautiful flight of a dove.

God is love.



## **Black Power**

(dedicated to Stokely  
Carmichael)

by **Dr. Moses A. Kash III**

you were the symbol of  
Black Power  
With fist raised high in  
the air. Proud.  
Black People envied you  
and followed you.  
you were a good  
man and you were  
tall and you stood  
tall. You were a giant in  
the Civil Rights Movement.  
you worked in the movement  
with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
you overcome. you were a  
bright shining star.  
you had grace and faith  
now you are gone. May  
god Bless you and keep you.

## **The Strawberry Pickers**

a prose poem

by **Dr. Moses A. Kash III**

Mamma, Peter, my brother, and I  
picked strawberries on Mr. Colliers farm.  
It was a hot day.  
We were down on our knees.  
We did what we had to do.  
I hated it.  
Mamma was a fast picker.  
She was a beautiful woman  
Yes, she was quick.  
I was eating all the strawberries as quick  
as I picked them.  
Peter was eating, too.  
Mamma had to baby sit and work.  
I said to myself "I am not gonna work  
in no mans strawberry field when i  
grow up."  
The Sun was burning us up.  
Mamma turned in her crates and got  
her money.  
Then we drove home.

## **For a peace of mind**

by **Ralph Ivery** – Executive Deputy Director of NAMH

Artists are the color of our dreams, the keepers of our past history.  
Artists are gems of reality, having passion of humanities.  
Artists are the keepers of human faith; they show joy and pain.  
They are the dreams of kings and queens who have reigned.  
Artists illuminate the spiritual wisdom and faith of your soul that show expression on your face.  
Artists are the builders of future homes and schools.  
They are the mothers and fathers of innovation, keepers of life.  
Artists bring comfort with their creations and leisure to most of life.  
Their vision is to show you the realms of their rays of light; the many realms of earthly life.  
They are pure with inner wisdom and light.  
Artists are the windows of hurt and rejection; bitterness and resentment; joy and happiness;  
Godliness and peace and pain and death.  
Artists are truly the testimony of all life.

other person. But this lacking in many of our lives, I believe, demotivates us to battle our difficulties to cope with our destructive mental illnesses. Medication does relieve some or all our symptoms, but in my opinion, medication only covers a low percentage of our well-being, the rest depends on ourselves. Developing coping mechanisms and understanding our illness play the major role in maintaining remission and keeping well. It is difficult to do this on our own, and society, our family and friends' support and understanding can really make our lives a lot easier.

#### **Standing up for who you are**

Over the years I discovered many coping mechanisms which I apply to my every day life, and without it I doubt whether I will cope at all. Writing, of course, is my most effective coping-mechanism and is the biggest part of my life. Writing poetry provides me with calmness, clarity on my thoughts and emotions, security within myself, and it makes me believe in myself. I also apply other coping-mechanisms to my life such as taking walks, doing something physically strenuous, listening to loud music, writing my diary, designing a poster on my "mind-vision" of that very moment on my computer, or just being involved in what is beautiful and meaningful in life.

Love, CHARLENE SUNKEL

## **For this moment of inner peace** by Charlene Sunkel

For this moment I'll live and I'll die  
Only to breathe its pit of contentment  
Cleared from all past resentment  
For this moment I will live and I will die

I will not cry  
Not a tear I will shed  
Not will I sleep on anger's bed  
Only upon this moment's godly heart I will rely

I will let my enemies and its attached scenarios fly  
... fly so far away  
Banning them from where they came to stay  
Waving them all a one last goodbye

For this moment I will live and I will die  
This moment my eternal desire  
A long fought obsession for escape from a hell on fire  
Only for this inner peace will I live and will I die.



## Viciously diagnosed – Schizophrenia

(No One To Share It With, No One To Listen To,  
No One To Understand)

by **Charlene Sunkel**

Said to be "Never a Dull Moment".  
A phrase very true. But oh God, a life so lonely and deserted.

A world rich in elaborated information,  
No one to share it with, no one to listen, no one to understand.  
God, a world excluded and secluded.  
Excluded from everyone, from everything,  
Excluded from life itself,  
Secluded within an arcane dimension.

The fear meets you face to face  
Staring into your mind;  
The bewilderment takes you by the hand  
Jerking you in and out of subsistence;  
Your thoughts dwell in the indistinctness of its contents  
And only you fear not to follow;  
Your existence reveals more significance  
Than mechanized life of the human race;  
Every moment you experience  
Hack so deep into its heart of indisputable reality;  
No one to share it with, no one to listen, no one to understand.

Second by second you depart so far away  
Right into another world, (... without escape)  
A world much greater than the world you came from,  
A world foundationed by spirituality of the extreme  
A world no other ever crossed threshold.  
No one to share it with, no one to listen, no one to understand.

Then mankind and its material world becomes a distressing threat.  
And you discover that you are all alone in this world of yours  
... As well as in the world out there,  
you cry deeply, begging inquiry  
as to what you have done to deserve veto,  
what transpired the vanishing of everybody from your side?  
No one to share it with, no one to listen, no one to understand.

Fear strikes again, bewilderment strikes again,  
So does all that mankind lack to acknowledge and understand.  
Loneliness the emotion that's demolishing????  
And all you can do is let it happen.  
No one to share it with, no one to listen, no one to understand.

## Alone With Me

by **Betty Olsen**

I was upset, the world is wrong -  
Who put me here, where do I belong?

Hours go by, my head still hurts -  
Outside I hear loud noises, cars by the  
throng!

Tomorrow will come, I must endure -  
Shower, dress, put on my face, out the  
door.

I cannot hide, run from what I fear -  
I smile, nod, keep it all inside.  
Talk and tell, it will  
go away.

No one said each day is peace -  
Hard work pays off, much better than a  
childhood you had.

So much awareness, telltale signs -  
Guide you in the right direction;  
one, two, three, found.

The day ends, back home again -  
No harm has come, you have done it all again.

by **Betty Olsen**

All alone, sitting in a tree  
Down below, busy little bees

Stop your work for awhile  
Time goes by the sundial

Listen to a single thought  
Someone, somewhere surely taught

Swing your legs, hum a tune  
The day will end all too soon

## Surviving the Down

by Gareth Mackay

Damn this down thing  
It won't leave me alone  
Life was a rainbow sing  
Now a discordant tone.

I'm waiting for an upswing  
Relief from its rule  
Cycle after cycle  
Brings me down hard and cruel.

It is sick, evil, no good  
Refuses to turn me loose  
I wear a black head hood  
It slowly ties a noose.

Describing tormented feelings  
Is a useless endeavor  
It controls all my dealings  
Before, now, and forever.

But I have a secret that keeps me alive  
I know its powers and vital signs  
And with patience and passage of  
Its fettering time  
It moves on, I suppose,  
To other minds.

And I reclaim for an interlude  
Myself as mine.

## My Sister Liked My Poem

by Gareth Mackay

She liked my last poem  
Said so several times  
Unprompted, alone

Getting closer to essence  
Not a subject new  
Bipolar disorder-me and you  
I've prodded and pried  
Laughed and cried  
Nearly half a life now

Trying to pull words  
From a stealth of fog  
Or a blast of sunshine  
That obscure or blind windows  
Of reality, reason, or emotions  
Out of focus  
Sometimes

And whether to inward or to outward  
Of mind's windows to stand  
Not sure even  
Sometimes

But getting closer to precision words  
That more than tell and more than feel  
Words that transform you to what I am

At the least, at the most  
Just for an instant  
Then return  
To a gentler, kinder world  
Accepting  
Respecting

Understanding

Renew, refill, refresh forever.



## The Daily Press by Gareth Mackay

Think and Feeling and doing.  
Fragmented now  
Day by week  
Torn bits  
Sodden, smeared life's print.

More than is fit  
All that's unfit

"Let go. Sign off. Manic."  
I shout.  
"Wrap me up or wrap me down.  
Cut the copy  
Edit, scrape headlines off the leads.  
Stop the presses.

Manic said, "I spit at you."  
After an edition  
He spit me out.  
Left.

I breathe out clear and smooth  
Good straight, natural type.  
Copy me?  
This is the real me!

Is it?  
Check the copy again.  
Observe unstable margins  
Bizarre sequences.  
Chemical imbalance, splattered, blotched  
Jumbled of upper and lower case.

It just happens  
Now and again.  
What is the "scoop?"

What an I, please.  
Daily accurate, responsible?  
Fragmented, vaulted, jagged?  
Smeared black on black?

Wouldn't being  
All three  
Be a mean joke?

## Time Out by Gareth Mackay

Unstable is my name  
Bipolar is the game.  
I do not like this game.

It begins with an alien invader pushing in my head,  
It smashes my puny homeguard resistance of vows and lithium.  
Sometimes it strolls and smiles and whistles.  
Sometimes it rushes like a rabid, red-eyed wold.  
But it always, always, always gets in.  
Then I am made a puppet, strung for a time in insane buffoonery.  
Taut cords jerk me into helpless, bizarre, senselessness.  
I am wild until his whimsy rips them away.  
Deep and cold pull me face down through grave mistings.  
Then in an evil hilarity  
Or sadistic satisfaction  
It leaves.  
Game over. Game over again. Game over again and again.  
I do not like this game.  
In a shadow on a path  
Around another corner  
Something waits  
Always. For me  
I know that.  
Bipolar is my name. Unstable is the game.  
I do not want to play this game anymore.

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National Artists for Mental Health organization has been in existence for 10 years helping people recover using the Arts

### What we do;

- mask making
- art gallery
- pillow unrest

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p 518.943.2450

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email [namh@francomm.com](mailto:namh@francomm.com)





We raise our heads high to be

called American. We only lower

our heads to pay our respects to

our fallen heroes and fellow Americans.

Together we gaze upon our flag with pride knowing

we are the children of a proud America.



### With Grace and Our Regards

National Artists for Mental Health, sends their thoughts and feelings out to all of the heroes who have fallen, to save our loved ones. We wish to let them know they have fallen with grace and will be remembered

## Self-Help Source - A New Informational Clearinghouse in New York State

**servicing** consumers/survivors/  
ex-patients in New York State in the  
spirit of self-empowerment and self-  
determination, free of the stigma  
long associated with mental illness

The Self-Help Source, a project of  
the Resource Center, Inc. is a  
statewide, peer-run clearinghouse  
providing mental health-related  
self-help information to c/s/x's in  
New York. We offer a wide range of  
information including the availabil-  
ity of self-help literature both in  
print and on the Internet, reviews of  
currently available resources  
(books, audio, video) current mutu-  
al support groups throughout the  
state, and information on starting  
and facilitating self-help groups  
where they are needed. The Self-  
Help Source has been providing

this information since it's beginning  
last summer and continues to grow  
in its ability to do so.

The Self-Help Source relies on  
feedback to help us keep our infor-  
mation current and we invite c/s/x  
participation to make this a truly  
collaborative venture. If you have  
any information about a mutual  
support group or self-help program  
in your area, please let us know so  
that we can include it as a resource  
for others. We also encourage fellow  
c/s/x's to contribute their own  
reviews of self-help resources  
(books, articles, etc.) for inclusion  
in our newsletter. By sharing this  
information we can make the Self-  
Help Source another means to join  
in support of recovery.

To receive information about any of

the services that the Self-Help  
Source provides, to be put on the  
mailing list or to contribute infor-  
mation, please contact Shifra  
Lawner, Director, by Phone at  
(888)230-6138; by Fax at (518)482-  
4985 or by E-Mail at  
selfhelp@nycap.rr.com. Watch for  
the announcement of the opening of  
the Self-Help Source website, due  
this spring.

Shifra Lawner  
Director

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### SAVE THE DATE AND REGISTER NOW!

National Artists for Mental Health, Inc. and  
Harlem Hospital Center, Dept. of Behavioral Health and Harlem House  
are hosting a Creative Arts & Wellness Day Conference

### “Recovery Through the Arts”

**When:** Tuesday October 30, 2001 9AM to 4 PM

**Where:** Harlem Hospital Center - Herbert G. Cave Auditorium  
MLK Pavilion, 506 Lenox Ave., 2nd Floor  
135th Street & Lenox Aves.

**How Much It Will Cost: NOTHING! It's Free!**

(This will include refreshments and lunch)

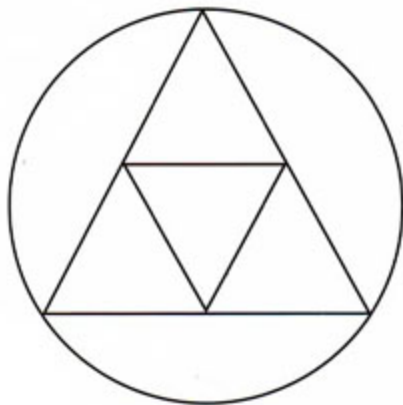
**To register call:** 212-932-8122, 8124  
or 212-316-1284 (Louise Hodge, Director)

**Space Limited**

Be sure to give: Your name, a contact phone number, address, the organization you belong to (if any), or fax a list of persons who will be attending, giving all above information



**Special Thanks to Mental Health Empowerment Project, Inc.**



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HEALTH  
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Help start, and connected with, over 500 self-help groups

This organization is a statewide agency that offers training programs in the advocacy, empowerment, self-help and technical assistance to consumers of mental health services or consumer operated organizations.

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**Peter C. Ashenden - Executive Director**

*river*



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