

- My name is Katy Smith Coordinator of the Volunteer Program Helping Hands.
- Helping Hands was originally established in 1999
- The project was funded under Mental Health Integration Project till June 2003 .The IAHS called for expressions of interest from non -government organizations to take over the running of the Program
- The Schizophrenia Fellowship was successful in the process and took over the program on 1st July 2000
- . The Program is run from the Junction ,Mental Health Rehabilitation Center in Nowra
- Helping Hands services to the Shoalhaven area, including Milton - Ulladulla
- Primary focus of helping hands is to promote integration in to the community and reducing the stigma of mental; illness
- Volunteers undergo extensive training program that aims to assist them in improving the social and living skills of those consumers in a rehabilitative phase
- volunteers support consumers with non-acute needs such as assistance with shopping , cleaning ,transport and outings
- Consumers receive support in improving literacy, increasing social interaction ,developing the ability to use public transport + support during family crisis
- The program is specifically tailored to help each consumer achieve his or her goal
- The mental health service in the Shoalhaven has limited staff to provide support for clients and the volunteer program was established to provide this
- . The volunteers are very generous in donating their time to assist and support the consumers.
- The consumer is linked to a volunteer suited to them and their needs.
- For many of the consumers that access the program , having someone other than a case worker or family member is of enormous benefit in building self esteem and enjoyment in life
- It sometimes is the only interpersonal contact that a consumer has with a non-clinician
- A key factor in recovery and rehabilitation for consumers is access to services
- .The nature of mental illness means that many individuals are unable to catch public transport alone ,

- Many consumers miss out because of lack of transport, which hinders their recovery process. The helping hands volunteer program goes some of the way to addressing these needs
- The Helping Hands Program is seeking funding for a vehicle
- This would also free the clinical staff to have more time plan and develop activities which would assist the consumers with their rehabilitation
- There are a great number of negative attitudes and misconceptions surrounding mental illness that result in stigma, isolation and discrimination
- Volunteers also provide more formal community education to help reduce stigma and enhance the notion of mental health belonging to the whole community
- Training for volunteers is run over 3 one day sessions .We average about 15 new recruits per 6 months undertake the training .y
- Staff and consumers from the Junction and Mental Health help to provide the training for the volunteer program
- In relation to the recruitment of volunteers, the initiative will be sustainable by networking with various institutions such as the TAFE and various employment agencies and the local media to assist in the on-going recruitment of volunteers.
- The program also links in with Shoalhaven and Illawarra Volunteering Services to ensure the steady flow of new volunteers and ongoing volunteer training
- Social and living skills are the main focus of Helping Hands.
- This area has been identified as the greatest need by both case managers and consumers
- Volunteers have initiated a number of activities designed to improve consumers' access to the community.
- Volunteers assist consumers to access a variety of services from public transport to aqua-aerobics, the library ,neighbourhood centres ,community based groups ,some consumers have gone on to join main stream sporting competitions
- . Helping Hands volunteers also support the West Street Sport and Recreation Club in partnership with a local disability service provider in

Nowra. This club is open to anybody in the community with a mental illness

- . There is a range of activities on offer at West street including tennis coaching, table tennis and darts, board games , bingo ,pool comp, gentle exercises and volunteers also provide transport to West Street
- Outings with volunteer support offers a chance for those consumers to escape their usual surroundings, have social contact and enjoy some of the pleasures of life that the mainstream community take for granted.
- Some of the most recent trips of late were :

Buddhist Temple / Darling Harbour Aquarium /Dolphin Cruise in Huskisson /Shoalhaven River Cruise is coming up soon and a trip to the Royal Easter Show in April .

- Many consumers lack personal and family support to assist them.
- The manifestations of their illness has isolated them .Years of poor self esteem, means that many people who have experienced mental illness are either unable or lack the confidence to effectively approach others for assistance .
- The impact of mental health problems and disorders is significant, often impairing schooling, work life and cognitive development.
- There are masses of evidence showing that social isolation is a major risk factor for relapse ,and that strong social networks are a protective factor against mental illness
- Volunteers aid in the area of
- Self empowerment,
- Work skills for employment.
- Tutoring
- Money Management
- Relationship and social skills
- The role of the volunteer is to be the eyes and ears for the case mangers.
- Early intervention has greater success to help prevent relapse.
- The program has enabled consumers to go longer periods between hospitalization if they need to be hospitalised at all

- The program has minimised the impact of mental illness on the family
- Some of the outcomes include , eating better and regularly / medication compliance /appointments are kept with Doctors and groups are attended .
- Consumers , carers and members of the community have been centrally involved with this program since its inception
- We are very lucky in the Shoalhaven in that we have lots of beautiful places to visit and enjoy and the best thing is that it is for free .

### Wind Up Comments

- Statistics for the last 6 months/ one to one contact 496 hours equillivant to 66.1 working day
- Support the Ten Pin Bowling weekly
- Volunteers Run Lawn Bowling Skills At Local Club Weekly.
- West Street Sports Club Mon and Thurs 3.5 hours weekly
- Walking Program fortnightly
- Women's Group Monthly
- The Music and Art groups are supported by Helping Hands Volunteers
- Numerous outings that the consumers request have been arranged by the volunteers .