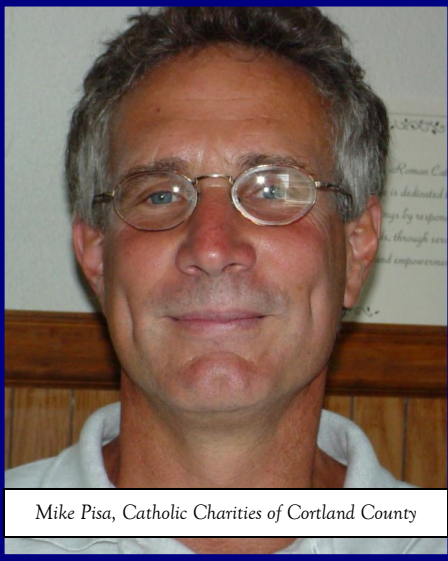


MHA NEWSLETTER

A LASTING IMPRESSION



Mike Pisa, Catholic Charities of Cortland County

We all looked up to someone when we were children. For each of us, there was someone – a parent, an aunt, a crazy uncle, a sports figure, a writer – someone who inspired awe in us. We looked up to this person and thought they were amazing – almost superhuman – in their ability to do something.

As the years go by and we develop into maturity, the high regard we have for that person generally fades. Cracks form in the pedestals of perfection we saw as kids. We see they were nowhere near as amazing as our child minds had conjured. Every so often, though, life presents us with an exception to this rule. We find someone who remains remarkable to us regardless of whether we are viewing them through the eyes of a child or an adult.

Michael Pisa is one of these exceptional people by any standard of the term exceptional. In his incredible 31 years at Catholic Charities in Cortland County, Mike has left anyone watching him in awe. His efforts have not only trans-

formed the agency he works for, but also our community. He has served on the Association for Community Living (ACL) board – a trade organization supporting supportive housing for individuals who struggle with mental health issues, and was President of ACL at one point. In fact, he sits on so many boards and is a part of so many organizations, he always has a meeting and is endlessly on the move. He has a deep and abiding passion for housing and making lives better. He has been an invaluable advocate for rural communities and has zealously sought policy improvements to those communities. In particular, he has spent his career and his energy being a tireless advocate for housing for individuals who struggle with chemical dependency or mental health issues. He initiated the independent housing option in 2000 and helped Catholic Charities of Cortland to develop their own model without state support. Very recently, Mike has played a key part in developing the new Riverview Apartments that just launched in 2017.

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FINDING DAWN

"It's always darkest before the dawn." We've all heard this phrase. It has provided great solace to many people going through many kinds of struggles. The basic idea conveyed in the phrase is that we have to reach our lowest point before we can get relief. It is an invaluable phrase for those suffering from mental illness.

In particular, this phrase is ideally suited for those whose mental illness has them contemplating suicide. Using the metaphor above, suicide is, truly, our darkest point. For anyone who has been truly intent on their own self-destruction, there are no words that can describe the pain, fear, and darkness of it. It is a decision that no one wants to make but some feel there is no alternative. Anyone suffering from mental illness who is lost in this darkness must

consider that it is truly always darkest before the dawn.

Every mental disorder has a cycle which descends from its peak darkness into a valley, when the sufferer can most clearly see the dawn – that the suffering is not all in vain. Individuals with eating disorders commonly develop tremendous, Buddhist monk-like abilities of self-control. Individuals with OCD often develop incredible abilities to concentrate and categorize their thoughts. Individuals with psychosis often develop wonderful gifts of insight in a wide array of different fields.

One other example of a specific mental illness that truly illustrates that it is always darkest before the dawn is Bipolar Disorder.

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App(s) of the Month: Zombies Run

Zombies, Run! is a story-based running app that narrates an apocalyptic adventure while tracking a run. It records the same information as most running apps ~ distance, average speed, a map of the runs ~ while it motivates and entertains younger runners especially, with stories of zombies. While you run to the perfect mix of heart-pumping audio drama and pulse-pounding songs from your own playlist, you'll collect supplies to grow your base back home. The app and initial content is free but then you must subscribe if you want to make in-app purchases. A fun way to combat childhood obesity. Common Sense Media suggests age 16+ for appropriateness due to some violence in the game.

iPhone: <http://apple.co/2g2Xxq5>

Android: <http://bit.ly/2xpZal6>



SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL CHILDHOOD OBESITY AWARENESS MONTH

According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, obesity in children can lead to poor self-esteem, depression and eating disorders. Encouraging children to eat a healthy diet and to engage in regular physical activity can help with weight management and reducing their risk for many chronic diseases. **In Cortland County, 39% of middle and high school students are overweight or obese.** Explore Cortland County's obesity data on HealtheCNY to find out more about childhood obesity in your community.

<http://www.healthecny.org/ObesityData>

NY CONNECTS RESOURCE FAIR AND SUICIDE PREVENTION WALK

Cortland County Area Agency on Aging/NY Connects and Cortland County Mental Health are pleased to announce that they are partnering to hold the 3rd annual NY Connects Resource Fair. The fair will be held on September 14th, 2017, from 12:00pm to 4:00pm in the Cortland County Office Building Gym.

There is no cost to attend, and door prizes, raffles and coupons will be available! The goal of this event is to raise awareness regarding long-term care services and supports that are available in Cortland County. These services include home health aides, insurance, day programs, etc. that are often useful to older adults, caregivers and people with disabilities.

This event will be an opportunity for community members to learn about the various resources available in Cortland County. Information about agencies will be available and attendees can also talk directly with service providers. The fair will close at 4:00pm with a Suicide Prevention Proclamation given by a local government official. Following

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FINDING DAWN

Continued ...

Bipolar Disorder carries with it a very high risk of suicide. According to the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry (Jamison, 2000), between 25 to 50% of individuals with bipolar disorder will try to commit suicide at least once in their lives. The crushing and seemingly endless depressions rob many of bipolar disorder's victims of their lives. At the end of a brutal depressive cycle there will always be the ecstasy of mania or hypomania.

When looking at suicide prevention, it is important to remember that this dawn is contained in all mental illnesses. There is always a silver lining – a bright light that can enable the sufferer to transcend what sometimes feels like vast darkness. It will be different in each illness but that difference – whatever it may be – can help us to transcend any overwhelming desire to commit suicide. Hope is amongst the very best of feelings. And finding one's dawn can bring with it bounding hope that can point us away from the devastating "solution" that is suicide. Finding this dawn is our task and our mission and can be our means to survival. Suicide does not have to rob us of the greatness that mental illness so often does. It is endlessly brave to trudge through the darkness of the night to find the dawn. But sometimes we need some help remembering that the dawn always comes.

*-Kurt Warner, Board Member
Mental Health Association of Cortland County*





A LASTING IMPRESSION

Continued ...

At any given moment, Mike is presiding over more than 100 individuals sleeping in beds provided either completely, or partially, by his programs. If you take this number and consider how many times it has flipped over in 31 years (taking into account this number has changed greatly from when he began to present), the amount of people whose lives he has made better is simply staggering.

His work ethic is also staggering. If you live in Cortland, I can almost assure you that you have seen Mike Pisa at some point. He moves about in a sort of frenzy all day long and can be seen going to meeting after meeting, talking to person after person, and entering building after building. He never seems to tire and the following day you will see him interacting with someone else with the same amount of zeal and frenetic energy. His attendance at work would shatter Cal Ripken's record. He has a great memory (although he will tell you it is terrible) and will be able to tell you a vignette about someone he met 25 years ago in almost perfect detail.

His acumen remains as sharp as you will find across any age group. Most importantly, his dedication to those he serves remains seemingly unwavering and timeless. He loves people and embodies the very idea of service.

Equally as laudable as his devotion to service is his humility. He won't acknowledge any of this praise. He defines humility. In preparation to write this article, the one person I knew I could not go to for my research was Mike himself. He will not – he refuses – to acknowledge any of his accomplishments. He always presents himself as just another worker who plods away on a daily basis.

For instance, I can remember when I met Mike. I was in graduate school for social work, and, when I would ask him what he did for a living, he'd reply curtly, "I work in housing at Catholic Charities of Cortland." I'd further my inquiry by asking, "What do you do there?" He'd just reiterate, "I work in housing." I came to learn that not only did he work in housing, he was the Director of Housing Services at Catholic Charities in Cortland. This humility invades all aspects of his life. In fact, in ten years of knowing him, I've never heard him boast or brag about anything.

I like to believe that Mike Pisa's profound humility is derived from his sense of purpose in life. Marian Wright Edelman, a lifetime advocate for children, sums up this notion well. She states, "Service is the rent we pay for being. It is the very purpose of life, and not something you do in your spare time." Mike has selflessly and laudably maintained this attitude for the last 31 years at Catholic Charities of Cortland County. He remains one of those rare people who we stand in awe of, now and forever. Thank you, Mike, for your selflessness and your invaluable service that has benefitted so many for so long.

-Kurt Warner, Board Member
Mental Health Association of Cortland County



Mental Health Association
OF CORTLAND COUNTY

We are a volunteer Board of Directors that act to initiate and promote advocacy services, educational presentations, prevention programs, and information and resource referrals.

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To learn more about the
Cortland MHA visit:

<http://www.mhacortland.com>

or contact:

mhacortlandny@gmail.com



Seeking applicants for **MOBILE CRISIS SERVICES** in Cortland, Cayuga, Oswego, Onondaga, and Madison Counties.

Mobile Crisis Services provides immediate, comprehensive response to adults and adolescents in crisis situations after hours and on weekends. Using a multi-disciplinary team approach provided by a crisis response team consisting of a licensed clinician, a case manager, and a peer specialist, the ultimate goal of this project is to de-escalate the crisis situation, maintain a safe living arrangement, reduce inappropriate use of hospital Emergency Rooms, and prevent inappropriate hospitalizations or re-hospitalizations. Liberty Resources is now hiring to fill both Case Manager and Therapist team positions. For full job descriptions visit:

www.Liberty-Resources.org/Careers and search "Mobile Crisis"

NY CONNECTS RESOURCE FAIR AND SUICIDE PREVENTION WALK

Continued ...

the proclamation will be a short Suicide Prevention Walk at 4:15pm.

According to a Mental Health America publication in 2017, studies show that “comprising only 13% of the U.S. population, individuals aged 65 and older account for 20% of all suicide deaths”. The addition of Suicide Prevention activities to the resource fair is meant to bring awareness to the importance of mental health care for elderly people and people with disabilities and is the impetus for Area Agency on Aging / NY Connects and Cortland County Mental Health’s event partnership.

NY Connects staff members are happy to answer any questions or concerns regarding the resource fair. Please call (607) 756-3485 for more information.

By Alexis Conway
Aging Services Specialist,
Cortland County Area
Agency on Aging

PREVENTION METHODS

Advice for parents, friends and teachers of vulnerable young people

DO:

- Monitor levels of moods. Warning signs to watch for include:
 - ♦ Feeling low, depressed, agitated or socially anxious
 - ♦ Disturbed sleep
 - ♦ Increasing levels of drug and alcohol abuse
 - ♦ Social withdrawal from the peer group or family
 - ♦ Failing grades at school
 - ♦ A loss of interest in things which were previously enjoyable

DO:

- Talk to the young person and open up the channels of communication and trust
- Be a bridge and be willing to refer them to help to any other form of youth-friendly counseling

DON'T

- Give way to denial and assume everything is going to be OK and it will blow over

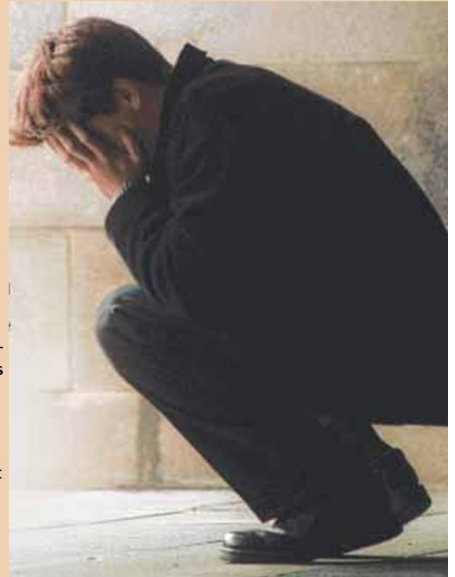
For young people feeling at risk of mental health issues

DO:

- Monitor your moods and watch for warning signs.
- If you are feeling this way, you should definitely try and learn more through websites like suicidepreventionlifeline.org and headspace.com and investigate whether you need to seek help
- Be willing to seek advice and help from a friend or adult you can confide in and trust

DON'T

- Be ashamed to ask for help or think nobody will understand how you are feeling



Infographic: The Parsons Company, Inc. : <http://www.parsonscorporation.com>

Community Events & Support

607 Healing Hearts

Monday, September 18th; 6:00 - 8:00pm
28 N. Main St., Cortland, NY

Grief support group for parents/guardians who have lost a child due to an overdose.

For more information: 607healinghearts@gmail.com

Food for Thought: The Other Side of Suicide Prevention

Wednesday, September 13th; Noon - 1pm
Cortland Elks Lodge, 9 Groton Ave. Cortland, NY

Featuring Garra Lloyd-Lester, Associate Director
Suicide Prevention Center New York (SPC-NY)
Free lunch provided. Please RSVP to

FoodForThoughtRSVP@gmail.com or call 607-756-8970

NY Connects Resource Fair / Suicide Prevention Walk

Thursday, September 16th; Noon—4:30pm
County Gym, 60 Central Ave., Cortland, NY

For more info: ahuntingtonofner@cortland-co.org OR

Cortland LGBT Men's Group (Monthly)

- Where: Cortland LGBT Resource Center, 73 Main St.
- Contact: (607) 756-8970

Parents & Change Support Group

Sep 11 Oct 9 Nov 13 Dec 11

(Monthly/2nd Monday)

- When: 6:00 to 7:00 PM
- Where: 90 Central Avenue
- Contact: Beckey Tripp (parentsandchange@yahoo.com)

Caregivers Support Group (Monthly)

- When: 4th Thursday at 12:30 PM
- Where: County Office Bldg (Dining Rm.)
- Contact: The Area Agency on Aging @ (607) 753-5060



If you have an upcoming community event or article you would like considered for inclusion in the MHA Newsletter, send your submission to susan@sevenvalleyshealth.org by the 14th of the month prior, or email to request to be subscribe to the newsletter via email.

Disclaimer: The information presented here does not constitute professional medical advice. Individuals respond to treatment for mental health conditions in different ways, and treatment plans often need adjustment over time. Patients should work closely with their doctor and other health professionals in order to achieve optimal control of symptoms.