



Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.

Glenn Liebman, MA
CEO

Ellen Pendegar, MS, RN
Board Chair

Karl Shallowhorn Clifford W. Beers Award Nomination

This nomination is in support of Karl Shallowhorn for the Clifford W. Beers Award. I believe Karl is well deserving of this honor.

I have known Karl since 2012, prior to his joining the Board of Directors for the Mental Health Association in New York State, of which I am the Executive Director. Karl joined the Board in 2013 and has been actively involved, including currently serving as the Chair of the Affiliate Relations Committee.

Karl is a passionate and dedicated advocate for mental health. His journey living with a mental health disorder began in 1981 when he was a freshman at General Motors Institute. It was at this time that Karl suffered a severe psychotic break which resulted him being in a catatonic state. He was first diagnosed with catatonic schizophrenia but after subsequent hospitalizations was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 1982.

Karl's condition was complicated by a co-occurring addiction disorder which kept him cycling in and out of Buffalo area mental health facilities. Karl was even hospitalized in the Buffalo Psychiatric Center, an institution for those who are most severely affected by mental illness.

Eventually after years of psychotherapy and psychiatry Karl was able to gain a degree of stability in his life. This was much due to his participation in Narcotics Anonymous which he is still actively involved in after 30 years of living drug-free.

Karl's new lifestyle was the catalyst for him getting certified as a Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor in 1992. He joined the staff of the Buffalo General Hospital Alcoholism Clinic where he served as an alcoholism counselor.

Karl was married to his wife Suzy in 1994, however the following year, as a result of a medication change, he experienced another manic episode. He took a leave of absence for three months and eventually returned to work. He returned to school and earned a Master's Degree in Student Personnel Administration in 1998.

Karl worked in the higher education field for 12 years however it was towards the end of his tenure in this area that he began to feel the pull to go back into human services. It was in 2008 that Karl had a life changing moment. As a result of the publicity surrounding Britney Spears and her alleged struggle with bipolar disorder Karl wrote an op-ed for the Buffalo News, *Many living well with*

HEALTHY MINDS FOR A HEALTHY NEW YORK

194 Washington Avenue, Suite 415 • Albany, New York 12210-2314
Phone: 518-434-0439 • Fax: 518-427-8676 • MHANYS.org

disability. Karl's argument was that despite the stories published in the media, many people are able to lead fulfilling lives while managing their mental health disorder.

At this time, Karl was working at a Buffalo area college. No one on campus knew of his condition. By writing this article, Karl "outed himself" as one living with bipolar disorder, thereby risking his professional status at the college. Undeterred by any potential consequences, Karl began to reach out to local mental health organizations, first with the Buffalo Chapter of NAMI, where he conducted his first talk sharing his personal journey and followed by a connection with the Western New York Children's Psychiatric Center (WNYCPC) where he spoke to residents and family members. Karl even developed a 10-week college prep curriculum for students at the WNYCPC Outpatient Day Program called *ACCESS*. He delivered this program on two separate occasions.

Karl eventually reached out to Horizon Health Services, where he had received treatment many years before, to conduct a weekly one-hour group for its Personalized Recovery Oriented Services (PROS) Program called *"Working on Wellness."*

It was in 2010 that Karl had another pivotal moment. In conversation with his Vice President at the college where he worked, the VP said, "If this isn't your passion (meaning working in higher education) then you need to find out what it is."

It was at this time that Karl approached Horizon about working full-time for which he was offered a position. Karl worked in the PROS Program for 3 ½ years. It was in 2012 when I was in Buffalo that I met Karl. Recognizing Karl's unique skill set he was offered a position on the MHANYS Board.

Eventually Karl decided he wanted more than simply working in a clinical setting. His calling was in the area of mental health advocacy. He had also been serving on the Board for the MHA of Erie County. Executive Director, Ken Houseknecht and Michele Brown, Executive Director of Compeer Buffalo offered Karl a shared position of Director of Community Advocacy. It was through this affiliation that Karl began to shine.

Shortly after being hired he became a Certified Adult Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Instructor. He would go on to earn his certification for Youth, Veterans, Older Adults, and Higher Education. Karl eventually became the coordinator for the MHFA program at Compeer and was responsible for overseeing 9 instructors. In 2017 Karl was recognized by the National Council on Behavioral Health as one of the Top 100 MHFA Instructors in the U.S. Karl was also the Project Director for a SAMHSA Project AWARE Grant.

Karl currently serves as the Director of Curriculum for TherapyLive and its initiative, Prepare U, a social emotional learning mental health education program for high school students. He also supervises a weekly Youth Peer Mentor group at the MHA of Erie County.

In addition to these responsibilities he initiated a workplace wellness program and created mental health-related trainings for Western New York companies, such as New Era Cap, Upstate Milk Cooperative and Hospice Buffalo. In his four years at the MHA and Compeer, Karl has completed nearly 150 MHFA and community-based trainings, workshops and presentations. He held a series of peer panels at three local colleges called, "Walking in My Shoes." In 2017, he initiated a series of

panel presentations on teen mental health that were held in various parts of Erie County and focused on the Netflix series *13 Reasons Why*.

Karl has conducted many regional and national workshops and presentations, including the United Church of Christ (UCC) National Youth Event, the National UCC Widening the Welcome Conference, Mental Health Association in New York State Annual Conference, the New York State Youth Bureau Conference, the Western New York Regional Family Peer Advocate Retreat, the Association of Community Living Western Regional Conference, the Western New York Collegiate Consortium of Disability Advocates, the Erie County Council for the Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse) and the Western New York Independent Living Center Mental Health Peer Connection.

In addition to these responsibilities, Karl also holds several Board positions, including in addition to MHANYS and the MHA of Erie County (where he was recently re-nominated), the United Church of Christ Mental Health Network, the Erie County Mental Hygiene Community Services Board, the Anti-Stigma Coalition of Erie County and the recently formed WNED/WBFO Mental Health Advisory Council. In addition, Karl is a member of the prestigious Health Foundation of Western and Central New York Health Leadership Fellows Program.

Karl's skills go beyond these affiliations. He is also a writer and blogger. In 2010, he published *"Working on Wellness: A Practical Guide to Mental Health."* In the past he was a blogger for HealthyPlace.com and has been an active blogger for BP Magazine's bphope.com website since 2012 and has also had several articles published in the magazine. He currently coordinates and blogs for the United Church of Christ Mental Health Network blog, *"The Journey,"* and writes his own blog, *"The Hope Shot."* In addition, Karl is a featured contributor for *The Mighty*. Karl has written several op-eds published in the Buffalo News, including, *"Hope is the medication to ease societal stigma," "Every child needs love and support of family," "Many children would be hurt by move to adult facility,"* and *"Discrimination slows treatment of mental illness."* His work has also been featured in Buffalo Business First.

Karl has also been a featured guest and sought-after expert on mental health by Buffalo area TV and radio media outlets. The story he was interviewed on the newly legislated NY State Mental Health Education Law was broadcast on several national TV outlets.

Karl has received many awards and honors reflecting his dedication to the field of mental health including:

- Mary B. Talbert Civic and Cultural Club "Unsung Hero Award" – Induction April 2018
- Buffalo Black Achievers - October 2017
- Men of Integrity – November 2017
- Sweet Home High School Distinguished Alumni Wall of Fame – November 2016
- Friendship Foundation Courage to Come Back Award – November 2015
- Mental Health Association of Erie County Courage to Come Back Award – March 2015
- Compeer of Greater Buffalo Googie Butler Award for Advocacy – 2012
- Horizon Health Services Professional Service Award – 2012
- Horizon Health Services Community Leadership Award - 2011
- Horizon Health Services Rehabilitation Service Award – 2010

- Erie County Executive Disabilities Award – 2008

Karl is as committed and devoted to the field of mental health as anyone I've known. His hard work and determination to not only overcome great odds but to also use his lived experience to help others exemplifies the same kind of work that Clifford Beers himself did over 100 years ago.

I highly recommend Karl for this great honor and believe him to be well deserving of this recognition.

Glenn Liebman
Executive Director
MHANYS