

Awards Committee
Mental Health America

March 29, 2017

To the Committee:

It is my great honor to write this letter in support of Michael Rafferty's nomination for the 2017 Clifford W. Beers Award. Michael has been a volunteer with Families for Depression Awareness since 2010; I have known him since 2013 and have been struck by Michael's extraordinary commitment to openness about living with depression. It has by no means been an easy road, but Michael has navigated through losses and setbacks with remarkable resilience.

As an FFDA volunteer, he has generously shared his time and talents on several fronts. From initial brainstorming through the final assessment, Michael helped to develop and implement event-based and online fundraising efforts. His efforts were especially appreciated when we conceived and launched our "Strides Against Stigma" event.

On the more public stage, Michael has been a regular contributor to *Esperanza* magazine, sharing personal insights into living with depression, usually with a bit of humor to help others face the day. His consistent theme is to offer hope to others, knowing the high stakes of the negative feelings, low sense of self-worth, and persistent hopelessness experienced by people living with depression.

In one column, for example, Michael revealed that he had to learn to give himself a break when he is struggling with depression. He made it easy for people to grab ahold of his strategy: recognize that there is more life ahead. He wrote,

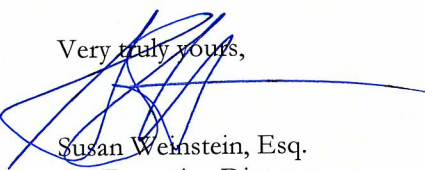
In this particular version of my richly diverse states of depression, the my-life-has-been-a-waste version, my only reliable escape strategy is the simple recognition that I'm not finished yet. Even at 61, I can reasonably expect to have another 20 years ahead of me, perhaps more. There's still time.

("Viewpoint: Saving Your Self-Esteem," *Esperanza*, Nov. 4, 2014.)

Recently, [Michael shared memories of his "worst day"](#) as part of a Care for Your Mind blog series about workplace mental health. His willingness to publish a story of his most vulnerable moment – potentially opening himself to scrutiny and judgment – is a good indicator of how he wholeheartedly believes in the value of putting a face on depression, increasing understanding and awareness, and advancing hope for those affected by mental health issues.

I urge your favorable consideration of this application and hope for your recognition of Michael Rafferty's work to improve the position and perception of people living with mental health conditions with the Clifford W. Beers Award. Please feel free to contact me at susan@familyaware.org or 781-890-0220 if I may be of assistance.

Very truly yours,



Susan Weinstein, Esq.
Co-Executive Director