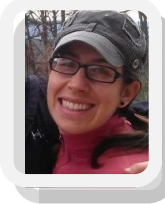




# The UMBC Women's Center Newsletter: May 2012

## Letter from the Director: Jess Myers



*"And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to bloom." - Anais Nin*

It's hard to believe that an entire academic year has passed and our 20th anniversary in coming to an end. What an amazing year it has been! The Women's Center has been overwhelmed with positive responses we have received from our UMBC community. While it had always been our goal to give back to the community and to use our anniversary year to give praise and thanks, I don't think we ever imagined the extent of gratitude we would receive back. Time and time again, we were touched by the energy that buzzed about our space in the wake of 20th anniversary events. Many of our dear friends stepped away from their busy schedules to return to us and celebrate and even more new friends were made over the year of events and celebrations. I started out our anniversary year quoting Maya Angelou: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." While I speak for myself, I know the rest of the Women's Center staff and advisory board

will agree— We will never forget how you made us feel in our 20th anniversary year.

Perhaps, we will not forget because we are dedicated to taking this momentous energy and using it for fuel to move us into the next part of our journey. The bud that was the Women's Center's past 20 years is ready to bloom into the next 20 years. Many great things will come from those blooming petals with plans already in the works to expand the returning women's program, give greater support to our women veterans, and provide a safe space for men to explore masculinity and gender roles. A beautiful tapestry of stories have been told and the next generation of stories are ready to be written. *We invite you learn more about the next generation of stories at our "closing" picnic on May 9th at noon in the Women's Center backyard.*

Best of luck to you all as you finish up your semester. May you study efficiently, test with precision, and grade with grace. Special congratulations goes to all of our graduates... Thank you for being a part of our community during your time here at UMBC! Have a great summer and see you next fall!



Celebrating 20 Years 1991-2011  
100,000 Stories: Which One is Yours?

### What's Inside!

- ☺ Letters from Staff
- ☺ Community Spotlight: Mental Health Awareness Month
- ☺ Ongoing and Upcoming Events & Groups
- ☺ Information about the Women's Center, the list serve, and newsletter submissions
- ☺ Shout Outs!
- ☺ Happy Mother's Day!!!

## Letter from the Coordinator: Galina Portnoy



*"Perhaps strength doesn't reside in having never been broken, but in the courage required to grow strong in the broken places" ~unknown*

### May is Mental Health Awareness Month.

Please take a few minutes to read the personal stories of Women's Center members (students, staff, faculty, frequent visitors) who live with mental health challenges. They offered to share their experiences of resilience. Tara Brach, a clinical psychologist who practices and teaches meditation alongside Western clinical interventions often illuminates the power of **compassion**. Tara writes, "Be kind. Everyone you know is struggling hard."

A theme that comes up regularly in my work as a therapist with clients and other clinicians is **stigma**. A common thread that runs through all the powerful personal sto-

ries on the next page is stigma. Please remember to interact with one another compassionately. Please remember how much stigma impacts people's lives.

**What is Stigma?** Stigma is an attempt to label a particular group of people as less worthy of respect than others. It is a mark or sign of shame or disapproval. Stigma results in rejection or discrimination. People with mental illness often face stigma, discrimination, and blame. **Some individuals who live with mental health challenges report that the stigma is at times worse than the illness itself.** Because of this, stigma can stop people from seeking help when they experience mental health difficulties. This is especially important because identification of mental health and early treatment is generally associated with better outcomes. Here are some ways you can challenge the stigma associated with mental illness:

⇒ Language matters! Challenge any disrespectful terms used in referring to people

with a mental illness. Also challenge words used as terms of derision. This means that if you hear someone referred to as a "psycho" or "crazy," say something; don't remain silent.

- ⇒ If discussing someone's mental health, refer first to a person, not their illness. Rather than using phrases like "my bipolar roommate" you can say, "my roommate has bipolar disorder."
- ⇒ Challenge any myths or misconceptions about mental illness, such as links to violence or misunderstanding about the behavior of those who are suffering
- ⇒ Attend professional development opportunities regarding diversity, mental health issues, and fostering an inclusive environment.

**You can be the change in our community** that decreases stigma and increases people's access to mental health services.



## Mental Health Awareness Month

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. This year's theme for the month is "Do More for I in 4" which is a call to action for Americans to help the 1 in 4 American adults live with a diagnosable and treatable mental health condition at some point in their lives. The Women's Center's focus on stories during our 20th Anniversary year offers the opportunity for us to "stoplight" a few Women's Center members (students, staff, faculty, frequent visitors) who live with mental health challenges. Please take a moment to read their powerful stories. Theirs' are experiences that demonstrate resilience despite adversity. We hope that these stories inspire you and help you reach out to others who may be struggling.

A year and a half ago I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, however I have been struggling with this disorder since I was in 9th grade. Bipolar disorder includes major depressive episodes and manic episodes. While most people seem to know about the mood shifts of bipolar, there are still many misconceptions about the disorder. **A common misconception is that most people with bipolar are dangerous. That is just not true. I have never met a person with bipolar who is a real danger to others,** that is not to say that there are not people, but I am saying that I have never met one. **Another misconception is that people with bipolar disorder "belong" in a psychiatric ward or have spent a lot of time there. Many people affected by this disorder have spent time in a psychiatric ward, however they spend most of their lives living at home.** I have spent time in a psychiatric ward, however I most definitely do not "belong" there. I have held down several steady jobs and I am a straight A student. I believe that I lead a very successful life outside of hospital walls, however the hospital is always there if I need it.

However some of the perceptions are true. I do take medication daily and I need it desperately. Without it, my daily life is extremely difficult and I do not function well. Also, I do see a therapist on a regular basis. **It is very important to have someone in your life that you can open up to honestly without feeling judged.** Therapy has helped me and many other people with bipolar disorder. I cannot stress enough how important it is to get help if you are struggling with a mental illness. I know firsthand that there is a lot of stigma associated with this disease (I lost my best friend and many other friends because they found out), however **taking care of your health is critical. Without treatment, mental health disorders can be nasty, unmanageable, and may even have a tragic end.** I highly recommend seeking out professional help, or at least opening up to a loved one about your health. I have and my life has changed for the better.

-Lizzy W.

In the summer of 2011, my husband and I learned that our darling baby boy, Alexander, was on the Autism Spectrum. At first, it seemed like such a death sentence and I couldn't stop the mental images of Autistic children rocking, spinning, flapping their hands, etc. **I imagined the worst** - that he would eventually be institutionalized and would be alone in life. Two days after this initial diagnosis, I found out that I was pregnant and my husband left soon thereafter for an over-the-road truck driving job. Talk about stress and living in the unknown! During this time, I cried a lot, worried about my unborn child, and struggled with being peaceful with the hand I had been dealt.

Fortunately, during this time, I was shepherded to Kennedy Krieger Institute, enrolled Alex in their Early Achievements Program, and learned of other families who have raised children on the Autism Spectrum. Through many conversations and several books that I inhaled during this time, **I began to see the gifts of this seemingly tragic diagnosis and instead of seeing brokenness when I looked at Alex, began to see wholeness and even brilliance in some of his bizarre behavior.** During one encounter with Alex where he was spinning the wheel of a bicycle (one of his favorite things to do), instead of getting frustrated and trying to move him away from this 'stimming' kind of behavior, I knelt down on the other side of the wheel and simply observed what he was doing. **In this space of curiosity, brilliance and intelligence emerged.** He wasn't just mindlessly spinning a wheel, he was learning about acoustics and cause and effect. Running his fingers over various parts of the wheel, he was focused on the different sounds that he could make. I decided to follow his lead and also started 'playing the wheel.' When I did, he looked straight into my eyes with a look that seemed to say, 'thank you for seeing me, mom.' He then came over and gave me a big hug and **I felt in that moment a sense of oneness and profound gratitude for being chosen as Alex's mama.** From that moment on, I have been following his lead and it has changed our lives. **Instead of fearing the unknown, we are now dancing in it!**

- Jill Wardell



# S: WHICH ONE IS YOURS?

In my first year of elementary school, I was placed into the "gifted and talented program" in both English and Math, meaning that I scored in the top 10% of students in various testing done. It is perhaps ironic, then, that from seventh grade on, school became an increasingly frustrating and difficult experience for me. **I often wonder if it would have been easier to deal with all of the problems I had if the bar hadn't been set so high, so to speak, at such a young age.** It wasn't until I was finally diagnosed with ADHD at the age of 26 that everything fell into place and my struggles in so many areas of my life, including my academics, finally made sense. Unfortunately by that time, a lot of damage had been done to my sense of self-worth and my confidence in my own talents and abilities. **Many people think of those with ADHD as the kids bouncing off the walls and unable to sit still, but what is not as well known is that there is a second type, known as "Inattentive Type," that presents itself in an almost opposite manner.** Those who are inattentive type ADHD often get overlooked, because they seem to be "spacey" or "dreamers" or, as my dad used to say about me, "off in la-la land." Teachers don't often complain about the especially quiet kids, so often parents don't know that something is wrong in the classroom. The symptoms that make it so hard to succeed with untreated ADHD are all there, though, from inability to focus, to easily being distracted, lack of organization, problems with working memory, and a low tolerance for frustration. These traits take their toll after a while, and you find yourself increasingly falling behind.

**One thing that can be said about those of us with ADHD, though, is that we are resilient, determined people, even when we don't yet know what's wrong with us.** No matter how often I gave up, something always pushed at me to try again, and again...and again. I don't even remember what it was now that made me look up information on ADHD, but after taking an online self-test (highly reliable, I know) I decided to talk to my therapist at the time about it. She gave me much more thorough testing and came to the conclusion that I did indeed have ADHD. I really did very little about it until **a friend of mine convinced me to buy a book on the subject, and reading it was like reading the story of my life.** I was literally laughing with relief and delight as I read through it, because finally everything made sense! I continued to buy every book that I could find on adults with ADHD, and about ADHD in general, and soaked up all the information I could find. It was like the weight of the world was being lifted off of my shoulders. I started on Ritalin in 2009, right before starting at CCBC, and made the Dean's List for the first time in my life that first semester back. I did it again the next semester, and suddenly **I realized that I was actually capable of doing well in school and achieving the goals and dreams that I had for myself.** Additionally, the depression and anxiety that I have long battled have also greatly eased--I have since learned that when one area of mental health is not being treated, none of them will improve to the full extent possible. That's why proper diagnosis and treatment are so very important. I still struggle with many aspects of my ADHD, and probably always will. The difference, however, is that I now know what steps I need to take to remedy the problems and that I can ask for help if I need to.

**I am also able, now, to see the gifts and strengths that my ADHD has given to me--I would not be the same person I am today without it. I have a great sense of humor that is very unique, and I think that is a direct result of my ADHD.** I am able to notice little things and put things together that other people don't. Now when people ask me "where in the world did THAT thought come from," I don't feel weird or bizarre, but instead am happy that I see the world in a way different from many others. I truly believe that's a gift, and I am so happy that I am now able to see it that way. I have also decided that I want to go into the field of helping those with ADHD, and will go on to get my masters in clinical counseling, specializing in working with adults with ADHD. **I want to take everything that I've been through, everything that I've learned, and the passion I have for the subject and use that to help others succeed in ways they didn't think were possible, either.** It really is an amazing feeling, and I want to be able to share that with as many people as I can, and help them reach their full potential, too.

-Michael F.

My head was racing a thousand thoughts, medication would help, I hear the words bipolar. Not knowing what it was I tried to wrap my head around it. I was struggling with homelessness and no food. My last meal was just barely edible bread from the homeless shelter, and I was just barely there, hanging on by a thread. It been years since I really had to worry about food. **But few people realize the tie between housing, mental health, and overall well-being. Its this stigmatized putrid thing we don't talk about.**

We're born with it, it emerges as we age, and most of it is the cause of the root of homelessness. I struggle daily with the tasks I'm presented. I worry about my next meal, even though I don't have to. I'm secure but it always rested in the back of my mind what could happen if just one block fell out of place. My daughter shouldn't have to suffer with that.

**I'm secure now, but what about the others?** Budget cutbacks, societal pressures, and lack of support. **Stigma.** This needs to change, **we have to let people know there is no shame in getting help.**

-Submitted by Anne

Is there an organization, group, or department on campus that uniquely promotes women's issues and stories?

Is there a particular person (student, faculty, or staff) at UMBC that you feel contributes to women's success and well-being?

If so... nominate them!

To nominate a group or individual for a community spotlight, email Galina at [portnoy1@umbc.edu](mailto:portnoy1@umbc.edu)

# WOMEN'S CENTER & UMBC

## Returning Women's Support Group

The Returning Women's Meeting is a Women's Center program designed to support women returning to college later in life (after the traditional age of 18-22). Campus resources will also be made available in order to help you reach your goals. Email [jess.myers@umbc.edu](mailto:jess.myers@umbc.edu) for more information and/or Join us for meetings Wednesdays at 12pm

*Last Meeting of the Year: May 2nd for an End of the Year Potluck!*

## Mothers' Meetings

All mothers are welcome! Share a cup of tea and your stories/struggles, celebrations about one of life's greatest & most challenging experiences! The Mother's meeting takes place the second Friday of every month

**Next Meeting: May 11th at 12pm**

*We'll Continue to Meet over the Summer!!*

## BETWEEN WOMEN

Between Women is a discussion and support group for women who love women, think they might, or support women who do. Come and discuss topics related to sexuality and share your feelings and experiences with other women.

**Fridays 3-4pm at the Women's Center**

If you have any questions, please contact:

Coordinator of the Women's Center:  
**Galina Portnoy** at: [portnoy@umbc.edu](mailto:portnoy@umbc.edu)

OR

Graduate Coordinator of the OSL Mosaic Center for LGBTQ Programs:  
**Oteri Esiekpe** at: [oesiekpe@umbc.edu](mailto:oesiekpe@umbc.edu)

 **The Mosaic**  
Center for Culture and Diversity  
The Mosaic is a part of the Office of Student Life  
Room 2B23, The Commons, 2nd Floor  
410-453-2686  
[mosaic@umbc.edu](mailto:mosaic@umbc.edu)  
<http://www.umbc.edu/studentlife/mosaic/>



Women's Center at UMBC  
Commons 904  
410-453-2714  
[womenscenter@umbc.edu](mailto:womenscenter@umbc.edu)  
[www.umbc.edu/womenscenter](http://www.umbc.edu/womenscenter)

## MAY IS ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

May! What an exciting month! The semester is ending and summer is quickly approaching. During this month, many celebrate Mother's Day, Cinco de Mayo and Memorial day, however what some may not know is that May is also Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. Consider attending some of the following UMBC events that will take place in recognition of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month!

### UMBC TALKS Series:

*"Being Asian American: Exploring and Dispelling the Model Minority Myth"*

Wednesday, May 2, 2012 12 pm—1 pm  
Mosaic Center (Room 2B23, The Commons, 2nd Floor)

**Asian Pacific American Cultural Fair and Market**  
*Books, Free Food, Music. Celebrate Asian American History*

Wednesday May 9, 12pm-1pm  
Commons Main Street

### International Food Tasting at The Mosaic Center

*Eat great Asian cuisines and meet new people!*

Friday, May 11, 2012, 11:30 am—12:30 pm  
Mosaic Center (Room 2B23, The Commons, 2nd Floor)

Also, check out the following link  
in order to discover other local events:

<http://asianpacificheritage.gov/>

## New Programs to Look Forward to in the Fall!

*Men's Engagement Program*

*Women's Veteran's Community Group*



# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHTS: MAY

## "Catching Fire" and "Mockingjay" Book Discussion!



*Because we can't get enough of The Hunger Games! Join us on Friday, May 11th, 2012 from 4-5PM in the Women's Center to discuss "Catching Fire" and "Mockingjay" (the second and third books in The Hunger Games series)!*

*Happy Reading!*

## Voter Registration Drive!

Tues, May 1st,  
The Breezeway, 11am-1pm

*The first is a voter registration drive co-hosted by Marylanders for Marriage Equality and UMBC College Democrats. Stop by to register to vote and to learn more about how to protect marriage equality in MD this fall.*



## WOMEN'S CENTER 20TH ANNIVERSARY CLOSING PICNIC!



Celebrating 20 Years 1991-2011  
100,000 Stories: Which One is Yours?

**Wednesday, May 9, 2012**  
**12pm - 1pm**  
**@The Women's Center Backyard**  
**(Next to The Commons Circle)**

**Join us end our 20th Anniversary celebration over food, music, sharing of stories and a viewing of The Women's Center 20th Anniversary Documentary. All are welcome!**



## UMBC Women's Center

The Commons, Room 004  
1000 Hilltop Circle  
Baltimore, MD 21250  
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Phone: 410.455.2714  
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[portnoy1@umbc.edu](mailto:portnoy1@umbc.edu)

**Facebook Page:** *Women's Center at UMBC*

**myUMBC group page:** <http://my.umbc.edu/groups/womenscenter>



## This, That, and the Other...

**Newsletter Submissions:** Do you have an event, organization, course, announcement, or other information that would be useful to the UMBC Women's Center community? If so, please send it to [womens.center@umbc.edu](mailto:womens.center@umbc.edu) so we can post it in next month's newsletter.

**Women's Center List-serve:** To learn about upcoming events, scholarships, and other opportunities from the Women's Center, please email us at [womens.center@umbc.edu](mailto:womens.center@umbc.edu) and we will add you to our list-serve.

**And please, visit us!** We're located in The Commons, Suite 004 (right next to the Yum Shop). We have: a private lactation/mediation room, comfy couches, library, free coffee, tea, tampons/pads, condoms/dental dams. We're also here if you just need to talk... if you are going through a hard time, have something to celebrate, or need a hug, we are here :)

**Please Note: Our Spring Hours are Monday-Thursday, 9am-7pm and Fridays from 9-5pm. *Stay tuned for Summer 2012 Hours!***

## May 2012 Women's Center Shout Outs!

We would like to offer our "Shout Outs!" section to everyone in the UMBC Women's Center community. If you would like to send a Shout Out! To someone who has achieved something great, made a positive difference in your life, or just deserve a few kind words, email the UMBC Women's Center at [womens.center@umbc.edu](mailto:womens.center@umbc.edu) and we'll include them in our next month's newsletter.

♀ **Diane Lee**—Thank you for your continuous support of the Women's Center. We feel lucky to have you as an advocate! — Jess

♀ **To All of Our Awesome Moms—**  
**Happy Mother's Day! May your day be full of love and thanks.**

**Men's Engagement Committee (Max Barnhart, Galina, Ben Goldberg, Craig Berger, David Hoffman, Dan Sym, Renzo Meza, Josh Gamse, Toby Le)**—Thanks for dedicating your time to helping the Women's Center create a men's engagement program that will allow for safe and health spaces for men to explore masculinity and gender roles.

♀ **Lisa Druillard and Shobhna Arora**—Thanks for presenting your popular couponing workshop to the Returning Women/Mom's group. What a great skill to share!

♀ **Elle and GWST**—Thanks for the printer donation! We love that we'll have a color copier, scanner, and fax! Thanks for thinking of us!

♀ **Jessica Guzman-Rea**—Thank you so much for your "non-Christmas" donation to the Center. We're set on coffee and tea supplies for a while thanks to your generosity!

♀ **Erika & Jim from Creative Services**—Thanks for all the website support and revamping! We love the new site and can't stop telling folks about it!

♀ **Monique Nicaastro, Yuliya England, and Sarah Gardenghi**—Thanks for reaching out to us and being open to building new partnerships between the Center and ELI. The MaryKay event was great and we hope more like it will continue next year!

♀ **Mickey Arora, Alison Rohrbach, Galina, Cassandra Morales, RVAP Advocates, and UHS Peers**—Thanks for all of your help in planning and staffing the Sexual Assault Awareness Month events. You helped spreading awareness a success!

♀ **Lindsey Mitchell and Stefanie Mavronis**—Thanks for making I <3 Female Orgasms a reality for campus. It was such an engaging and important program to offer during Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Big thanks to **UHS Health Education, GWST, and WILL** for financial co-sponsorships!

♀ **Simon Stacey and Jodi Kelber-Kaye**—Thanks for working with us on a new initiative. We're looking forward to the Honors College/Women's Center internship!

♀ **Women's Center Advisory Board**—Thanks for a great year. To those who will be graduating or stepping down, know your dedication and commitment will be greatly missed!

♀ **Janet McGlynn**—Thank you for all of your hard work on URCAD and for putting together a list of Women's Center related research projects! -WC Staff

♀ **To All 20th Anniversary Quilt Square Makers**—Thanks for taking the time to get creative and share your group's story as it relates to the Women's Center! Excited for the big reveal on May 9th!

♀ **Women's Center Staff**—Thank you for being patient with me during the busy and crazy times of this year. Thank you for all the work you did in helping the Center always be better and more capable of serving our community. I couldn't have done this year without your support and dedication! - Jess

♀ **Christy**—Thank you for our early morning conversations, they are one of the highlights of my week! -Galina

♀ **Lizzy, Jill, Michael, & Anne**—Thank you for sharing your personal stories; they are powerful and inspirational! -Galina