



**Jacob Barak, Ph.D., MBA, President and CEO**  
**Marcia B. Holman, L.C.S.W., VP for Ambulatory Operations**  
**Harold Moss, L.M.S.W., MA, VP for Residential Operations**  
**John McMasters, Executive Assistant**

## NEWS

*Issue No. 2 The Newsletter of the Postgraduate Center for Mental Health*

### Looking Back: A Brief History of Postgraduate Center for Mental Health

PCMH, a true pioneer in community-based mental health services, has a long and storied history that spans well over six decades. Founded in 1945 by Dr. Lewis R. Wolberg, M.D., the organization began as a small clinic in a townhouse on the Upper East Side, treating veterans returning from World War II.

Dr. Wolberg was trained in psychoanalysis but also developed a belief that there was more to mental health than just psychotherapy; for example, the impact of community on an individual and his/her psychological state. In 1948, as the clinic grew, Dr. Wolberg realized that the organization's major problem was a lack of a trained workforce. In response, he founded the PCMH psychoanalytic training program, one of the first in the country to train both social workers and psychologists in psychoanalysis. The psychoanalytic training program quickly developed an international reputation, with many of its graduates going on to become prominent therapists and analysts across the country.



*Dr. Lewis R. Wolberg, M.D., who founded PCMH in 1945, was a pioneer in psychoanalysis.*



*The West Side Clinic on 36<sup>th</sup> Street was a gift to PCMH from a former patient of Dr. Wolberg.*

In the 1960's, the USA began to move away from keeping mentally ill patients in psychiatric hospitals with initiatives to integrate them back into the community. This important movement marked the beginning of PCMH's venture into community treatment for people with chronic mental illness. PCMH opened its West Side rehabilitation center, on 36<sup>th</sup> Street, in 1977. The building was a kind of "thank-you" present to

PCMH: it was donated to the organization by a former patient of Dr. Wolberg, who had undergone couple's therapy with her husband...and eventually decided to divorce him and donate the building.



*The former PCMH East Side Clinic, located on 28<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan.*

In the 80's, PCMH continued to develop on three primary tracks: providing outpatient treatment, serving as a training center for psychoanalysis at the East Side Clinic, located on 28<sup>th</sup> Street; and focusing more on the chronically mentally ill population at the West Side program, at 36<sup>th</sup> Street. There had long been inherent tension between the two clinics: the West Side clinic, which generated Medicaid revenues from its services, felt as though it partially "carried" the more-respected East Side clinic, where the psychoanalytic training was very expensive and required many philanthropic dollars. Furthermore, the West Side clinic believed its patients were somewhat stigmatized and less valued than those patients seeking psychoanalysis on the East Side. And so the question loomed: in which direction was PCMH going to go?

In 1985, PCMH opened its first residential program, located on 50<sup>th</sup> Street. During the 1990s, it added three more residential programs, for a total of 107 beds. While the residential programs grew, PCMH was beset by financial difficulties, first in the 1980s, then again in the 1990s. As a result, the organization began to weigh the option of merging with another entity, versus continuing on its independent track.

PCMH's independence was assured with the arrival of its current CEO, Jacob Barak, in 1999. Taking into account the huge decline in enrollment in the psychoanalytic training program, as well as the general sense that funding for behavioral healthcare would continue to decline, Barak reevaluated the strategic direction of PCMH. As he saw it, the two areas of growth moving forward would be housing and case management, i.e., helping clients to coordinate the services they needed. Hence, with the support of the board, PCMH embarked on an aggressive real estate and housing development strategy. There are now over 800 operational housing units under PCMH's umbrella, along with an additional 200-300 apartments in stages of design,



*PCMH CEO, Jacob Barak.*

development, and construction. (PCMH's current development projects are structured as partnerships with for-profit investors, with the support of the federal tax credit affordable housing program.)

As a result of this change in strategy, the financial picture of PCMH has improved dramatically: the organization currently has market-valued assets of over \$200 million. Besides its numerous buildings in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Brooklyn, PCMH has a very vibrant outpatient clinical services program (including a children's clinic), which has grown over the last decade to become one of the largest case management providers in the New York City. "We see our role as helping society in the areas where we can have impact, which is primarily in housing for the mentally ill, and as a health/behavioral health provider for this population," says Barak.

Barak credits PCMH's staff, which now numbers over 500, with its ongoing success. "Our workforce and directors have been extremely dedicated, and the agency has developed a culture of promoting from within whenever we can," he explains. "We maintain a unique business culture that helps us to be very lean, and very flat in terms of hierarchy, with everyone involved in all aspects of our operations." He also points to PCMH's central administration as one of keys to the organization's overall efficiency: "Our administration is extremely small, with the core group functioning in multiple areas of responsibility."

Barak's own professional background has also informed PCMH's success. He holds both a PhD in clinical psychology and an MBA—a very rare combination. In fact, no other comparable organization has a CEO with these qualifications. "I started my career in private practice and clinical work, and quickly realized that the world of managed care/healthcare was changing," he explains. "I wanted to have a larger impact on social health issues—and to do that, I decided I needed to get an MBA." Barak notes that most of his daily work is oriented primarily in the business world—legal considerations regarding partnerships, managing investments, etc. But his early training informs all of his business decisions. "My clinical work is always in the background, enabling me to try to comprehensively understand human behavior, and the needs of PCMH's clients," he says.

According to Barak, PCMH's future challenges are three-fold: maintaining the organization's entrepreneurial culture, continuing to empowering its senior managers as the organization grows, and smartly using data to reach sound business and clinical decisions. Judging from PCMH's growth over the last decade-plus, it seems to be squarely on the right track.

## **Residential Snapshot: 2950 Grand Concourse**

2950 Grand Concourse, the latest addition to PCMH's residential portfolio, is located on the corner of a relatively quiet block of the Grand Concourse, the wide, tree-lined boulevard in the Bronx that was modeled after the Champs-Élysées in Paris. Having opened its doors on June 21 to residents, the modern, red-brick building, which houses 76 single-



*The exterior of 2950 Grand Concourse.*

occupancy units, is now home to 61 people, 25 of whom are community clients, and 36 of whom came to the residence through New York's Department of Homeless Services (DHS).



*Apartments at 2950 Grand Concourse feature hardwood floors and other amenities.*

From the bright, sunny lobby to the freshly painted, well-lit hallways and public spaces, it's easy to see why residents are happy to be here. The units feature hardwood floors, ample closet space, individual thermostats, and large, modern bathrooms, while the 51 apartments designated for DHS clients come furnished. On a recent visit, tenants were helping to unpack new, cozy armchairs that will soon outfit the building's community rooms.

Edna Sams, the friendly program director of the building, says that she and her team conduct intake interviews for new applicants two days a week, scheduling appointments with 15-20 people per day. Criteria for acceptance include legal residency within the United States, as well as some form of income—either benefits, such as Social Security, or employment—so that they can pay their rent. (Tenants contribute 30% of their income toward rent, but are not responsible for gas

and electricity expenses.) Residents, who are responsible for administering their own medication as needed, meet on a biweekly basis with their residential counselors, who also help to coordinate appropriate external services that each tenant may require. There is always at least one counselor on duty to provide support to tenants, along with a front desk counselor, who works overnight to assist with tenant needs and ensure safety. Ms. Sams is also available daily to meet with residents. Initially, tenants are subject weekly housing inspections, which become less frequent the longer they reside there, as they consistently demonstrate their ability to keep their units clean and tidy. (Residential counselors also help with building this skill set.) Counselors also are available to help community clients with acquiring furniture vouchers via the public assistance system as necessary.



*Edna Sams, MSW, CASACT, program director at the 2950 Grand Concourse residence.*

Ms. Sams is eager to get a full roster social activities up and running soon at 2950 Grand Concourse, including a “spoken word” program that will be held in one of the two community rooms (there's a large TV presently on order for one of the rooms as well). She is also in the process of converting the building's backyard into a garden/gathering place, complete with flowers and other plantings, with the help of tenants. Says Ms. Sams: “We want our residents to be get involved in helping to improve the building, so that they'll feel invested in living here.”

## Program Focus: Making Healthy Choices

Making Healthy Choices is an innovative wellness program available to PCMH clients. Located in Room 109 at the 36<sup>th</sup> Street Postgraduate West Rehabilitation Center, the program welcomed its first client in February 2011. It aims to integrate behavioral and physical health, explains Nathan Gammill, a Family Nurse Practitioner who is also the program director. Making Healthy Choices is funded by a four-year grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

According to Gammill, the program's objectives are to identify clients who are at risk for certain illnesses—such as those who are heavy smokers, and/or are obese—and then help them achieve jointly-determined wellness goals. Participants in the program are screened for conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol. Gammill and his staff of three—Robert Potter, Peer Health Educator; Sonya Pittman, Administrative Assistant; and Lanette Reese, CASAC—provide one-on-one counseling to clients to help them set and then realize their program objectives, such as weight loss. “We’re here to support the physical health needs of our consumers and collaborate with our partners in behavioral health,” he explains. The program, which has enrolled over 150 clients, now has about 100 active participants as it approaches the end of its second year.

Making Healthy Choices offers a range of services to clients, including workshops that are skill-specific, such as cooking workshops designed around healthy meal preparation; classes that focus on topics ranging from nutrition to weight management to smoking cessation; and activities that include a walking group and exercise classes. Exercise groups meet three times per week in the dedicated exercise room. In addition, Gammill and his staff are available to help clients with other specific health-related issues, such as referrals to a general practitioner.

For more information on the Making Healthy Choices program, please contact **Making Healthy Choices** at 212.560.6758 or [ngammill@pgcmh.org](mailto:ngammill@pgcmh.org).

## Client Spotlight: Felicia Pierce



Felicia Pierce, 48, a PCMH client, is an avid fan—and a triumphant success story—of the Making Healthy Choices program. Ms. Pierce came to the program in January 2012 because she had gained a lot of weight—with a total weight above 255 pounds—and her diabetes and high blood pressure were, as she puts it, “out of whack.” Besides wanting to get healthier, she also wanted to reduce her stress levels.

Now in her seventh month of the program, Ms. Pierce reports impressive weight loss (exceeding 20 pounds), and her diabetes and high blood pressure have

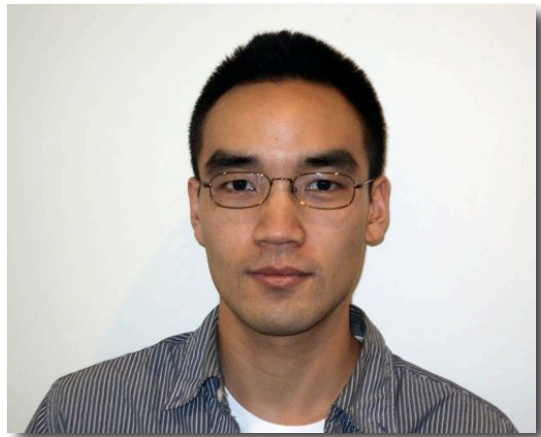
stabilized. She's taken advantage of many facets of the program—her favorite is the exercise room—and she's learned to cook and eat healthier, thanks to the weight management and nutrition classes offered by Making Healthy Choices. “I learned how to cook a roast chicken and wild rice, and to make stuffing from scratch,” Ms. Pierce says proudly. She urges other PCMH clients to take advantage of all that Making Healthy Choices has to offer. “It's a really great program,” she continues. “Nathan, Lanette, Bob and Sonya are always there to help you on a one-on-one basis whenever you need it.”

## **New Faces at PCMH**

### **Patrick Chang, Data Management Specialist**

Hire Date: 7/16/2012

Patrick Chang is the Data Management Specialist at the Town House, and also makes frequent residential site visits. He graduated from City College with a B.A. in Communications, and is currently pursuing an MPA at CUNY, Baruch College. In his new position, he is responsible for ensuring PCMH's compliance with tax credits and building codes, interfacing with government entities, and managing the maintenance operations of the facilities.



### **Phyllis Greene, Program Coordinator**

Hire Date: 6/19/2012

Phyllis Greene is Program Coordinator at PCMH's Bronx Park East residence. She has over seventeen years of experience in a variety of human services responsibilities. Phyllis graduated from College of New Rochelle with a B.A. in Psychology, and received an MSW from Yeshiva University. Before joining PCMH, she was the Addiction Counselor Assistant for Bronx Addiction Treatment Center.

**Maybelline Daniel, Accounts Payable Clerk**

Hire Date: 6/25/2012

Maybelline Daniel is Accounts Payable Specialist at the Town House, where she is responsible for all of PCMH's accounts payable. A 20-year veteran of the accounting industry, she graduated with a B.A. from Lehman College.



**James Nixon, Building Superintendent**

Hire Date: 7/2/2012

James Nixon is the building superintendent at the West 36th Street residence. He comes to PCMH from Edgecombe HDFC with over 20 years of experience. In his new role, James is responsible for building maintenance including small repairs, plumbing, and carpentry.

**Andrew Smilowitz, Human Resources Coordinator**

Hire Date: 7/16/2012

Andrew Smilowitz is the Human Resources Coordinator at the Town House. A graduate of Rutgers University with a B.A. in Psychology, he is currently in the process of obtaining a Masters of Science in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. In his position as Human Resources Coordinator, he is responsible for carrying out numerous tasks related to administration, including coordinating functions such as hiring and recruiting, development, and maintaining employee records.

