

## AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY

November 5, 2009

One of the foundational principles of the Mental Health & Recovery Board is that our system of care provides “help for today and hope for tomorrow”. This is only possible with the active support and collaboration of our contract agencies, community partners, and citizens of the counties we serve. On November 3, 2009 the voters gave us a resounding vote of confidence by approving separate levies in Clark, Greene, and Madison Counties by 68%, 67%, and 69% respectively. Although these renewal levies will not replace the funding lost because of state cuts, they do allow us to retain the local funding so vital to sustaining the excellent services our consumers, families, and community partners rely on. Thank you for your support.

This levy effort was a true collaborative effort. Each county had a steering committee made up of MHRB staff and board members, agency administrators, and community partners that helped direct the campaign and personalize it for each county. There was also a coordinators committee in each county made up of agency staff that provided the “person power” needed to sign up voters, distribute yard signs, and do the work needed to run a successful campaign. Without the dedication, energy, and commitment of these individuals, I do not believe the levies would have passed. It is one thing to say “we are with you” and quite another to say “here we are, how can we help”. These groups did what they said they would do, they showed commitment through action.

Where do we go from here, you may ask? What we know for sure is that we have secured local funding; we have staggered the levy terms so that they do not expire at the same time requiring simultaneous campaigns, and the voters have given us a strong endorsement. What we do not know is what will happen at the state level and what the future local impact will be. We hear that recovery from the recession will be slow. Unemployment in Ohio currently is over 10%. The federal stimulus money currently tied to the Medicaid reimbursement rate is scheduled to end in December 2010 leaving a significant hole in our local system. Renewal levies do not raise taxes but they also do not increase revenue, so passage of the levies does not address these problems.

However, in spite of these problems, I am encouraged by the resilience, fortitude, and dedication of the MHRB staff and Board members, our contract agencies, and most importantly the consumers and family members who benefit from the services we are able to provide. I believe there are more tough times ahead before we see a significant turn around in funding and we have the ability to build back some of what we have lost. Rest assured that the MHRB staff will use every opportunity to apply for grants, leverage outside dollars, and look for other ways to strengthen our ability to improve

services in our region. We are gratified by the confidence the voters have shown us but we are not satisfied with the status quo. We will continue to move forward.

Thank you all for your efforts, support, confidence, and collaboration. As a community with a shared vision, common goals, and combined efforts, I believe we will accomplish much more than we can individually. The success of passing three levies, in three different counties, in the midst of the worst economic conditions in recent memory proves that great things are possible.

Dr. Wm Kent Youngman  
CEO Mental Health & Recovery Board of  
Clark, Greene, and Madison Counties