

19 March 2015

Knox Social & Community Health Celebrates Recovery

We believe everyone can recover, discover and transform - will be the theme of the day at Knox Social & Community Health's (KSCH) annual *Celebrating Recovery* event in April.

Every year the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Counselling team invite people who have participated in the service and their families to share their recovery stories with an audience of their peers, KSCH staff, general community and stakeholders from external services.

The event is part of the Commonwealth Government funded *Project Hope* program, which aims to create a safe and welcoming environment for people and families where there are co-occurring substance use and mental health concerns. It aims to provide opportunities to have a voice and reduce stigma in the community.

"As well as a support service, Project Hope is advocating for individuals, families and health professionals by working to reduce stigma for people living with substance use and mental health illness through addressing language, labels and other subtle ways to maintain stigma," said Peter Ruzyla CEO of EACH Social & Community Health.

This year's event will include service participant and family stories through individual and panel presentations, a special music performance from the KSCH Peer Support group and an afternoon tea.

The *Project Hope* team will also be launching the documentary *Walk a Mile in My Shoes*, which tells the story of recovery from both the perspective of the participants of the service and the counselling team who supports them. Through the documentary, KSCH aims to highlight the value of hearing the voice of lived experience and inspire others along their journey.

Celebrating Recovery will also host the visit of internationally renowned Psychiatrists Dr. Ken Minkoff and Dr. Christie Cline from the United States, who will be speaking to service participants and their families during their upcoming tour in Australia. The *Project Hope* service model is based on the work of the two doctors and the team is looking forward to celebrating the success of the program with them.

"We are inspired by core values, driven by principles of exemplary integrated care and bound together by shared passion, our aim is to improve systems, policies and service delivery by providing welcoming, empathy and hope," Said Dr Minkoff.

The *Project Hope* model is about providing a welcoming and safe environment and culture. It's about being respectful and non-judgemental and raising the awareness of the impact language and attitude on the stigma felt by people with co-occurring condition and their families. It's about offering opportunities for people to have their story heard and acknowledged at events like Celebrating Recovery.

“By being public about the achievements of those experiencing wellness around their substance misuse or mental health, we can help to counteract the negative stereotypes which society uses to form prejudices which often lead to active discrimination. We all can choose to play a positive role in reducing stigma and it can be as simple as being careful with the language we use,” said Steve Adams, Project Hope Peer Support Worker at KSCH.

Celebrating Recovery will be held in the Shire Hall at Knox Social & Community Health on Wednesday 15 April at 1063 Burwood Hwy Ferntree Gully from 2pm - 4pm. Places are limited, so please RSVP to annette.adams@each.com.au. For more information about *Project Hope* contact Knox Social & Community Health on 03 9757 6200 or for a media photo opportunity at the event, please contact EACH's communications team on the details below.