



BOB RILEY  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF ALABAMA  
**DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH  
AND MENTAL RETARDATION**  
RSA UNION BUILDING  
100 N. UNION STREET  
POST OFFICE BOX 301410  
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-1410



JOHN M. HOUSTON  
COMMISSIONER

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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*Contact: Office of Public Relations  
334.242.3417*

**MAY IS NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH MONTH**

*Various national and state organizations working to promote the theme of  
“Live Your Life Well”*

MONTGOMERY – For more than 50 years, National Mental Health Month has been observed in May. This year’s campaign to “Live Your Life Well,” focuses on the stress and economic troubles many families are facing. The Live Your Life Well campaign seeks to provide people with 10 specific, research-based tools that can combat stress and promote health and well-being. The 10 tools include getting better sleep, improving eating habits, promoting relaxation techniques, and more. A full listing of the tools, along with information about seeking the help of mental health professionals, can be found at the Live Your Life Well website at [www.lifeyourlifewell.org](http://www.lifeyourlifewell.org).

Mental Health America sponsors National Mental Health Month each year, which serves to raise awareness about mental illnesses and the importance of mental wellness for all. In keeping with the theme set by the national organization, Mental Health America Montgomery is hosting a Live Your Life Well spring education workshop May 21, 2009 at the Capital City Club in Montgomery. The workshop is targeted toward mental health professionals, nurses, social workers, and counselors with continuing education credits offered. Various expert presenters will host four sessions throughout the day that fall into the program’s theme of how recovery from a mental illness is multifaceted and includes physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health. More information about this workshop can be obtained by contacting Mental Health America Montgomery at 334-262-5500.

The Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation is finding success in encouraging a distinct population to Live Their Life Well through its Certified Peer Support Specialist program. For some time, the department has staffed its psychiatric hospitals with Peer Support Specialists. Recently, the department expanded this initiative to train and hire new Peer Support Specialists to work in community mental health centers across the state. A Peer Support Specialist is a person who has a history of mental illness, been hospitalized, transitioned into community-based care, and experienced recovery. These individuals can relate to others seeking treatment from a “been there – done that” perspective. They are able to connect and inspire people who, in many cases, have lost hope.

An example of someone who has “been there – done that” is Daniel Pitts, who struggled with depression, anxiety, ADHD, and alcohol and drug abuse. Daniel’s long journey towards recovery is a success story that serves as an example of how the state’s mental health system has transitioned from one of institutionalization to consumer-centered recovery. Daniel is now a Certified Peer Support Specialist, and says, “This gives {me} an opportunity to talk to people who are in situations like I was in. I can understand them because I’ve walked in their shoes. I can help them.” Daniel’s full story can be found on pages 28-30 of the LISTEN newsletter, published by the Department’s Office of Consumer Relations, which can be accessed by visiting [http://www.mh.alabama.gov/MI/MI90320\\_Listen\\_10.pdf](http://www.mh.alabama.gov/MI/MI90320_Listen_10.pdf).

RESOURCES

For more information about Mental Health Month in Alabama contact Wanda Laird, Executive Director of Mental Health America in Montgomery at (334) 262-5500.

Information about mental health services in the state of Alabama can be obtained by contacting the Department of Mental Health & Mental Retardation's Public Information Office, or by visiting us online at [www.mh.alabama.gov](http://www.mh.alabama.gov), or by calling (334) 242-3417.

For more information on National Mental Health America and their initiatives, visit [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net).

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