

**Good Afternoon-my name is Lyne Stokes and I am a woman In recovery. I would like to congratulate Governor Rell and Commissioner Kirk for their hard work on the state's budget and the foresight to allocating 18 million dollars to the DMHAS Young Adult budget. Young Adults are the key to the future of DMHAS system of care.**

**Recovery is facilitated by a meaningful role in life. Education and discovering passions are the keys to recovery in the Young Adult population. Young Adults have a tremendous amount of inner gifts to offer to the recovering community. As an educator in the DMHAS system of care I have met many talented Young Adults who work hard to spread the message of recovery through their gifts. Their passion of using their talents to help others is inspiring. They are proud of who they are and excited about what is happening in their life. The YA's are conscientious of the fact that to keep their recovery they must give it away. The support of the DMHAS Young Adult population of the State of Connecticut is critical to their long term recovery.**

**I have learned so much from working with this population. The YA's have taught me that whatever the obstacles are in our lives we can overcome them by perseverance and initiative. The YA's I have worked with have discovered creative solutions to life's daily puzzles that make it a joy to get up in the morning. They radiate hope with each learning lesson they encounter.**

**Without the support and guidance and education from the DMHAS system of care for these YA's our future would be lost. There is a window of opportunity in the YA age group as concerns begin to emerge when most youth are either ignored, end up in the criminal justice system, put into a drug treatment program or committed to a psychiatric hospital without their needs being met. Services to YA's must not be on a band-aid type basis. These opportunities must never be lost.**

**Education must be universal. A recent personal experience in one of the State's largest emergency room shows that YA are often misunderstood and mistreated. To overhear a medical professional inform a YA he was "chronic" and would "never get well" and must just "deal with" his "chronic condition" was heartbreaking. After hearing this declaration it was clear that the young adult began to feel "chronic" about his "condition" and began losing hope. These types of incidents must be stopped. It is through education at all points of service for young adults that hope and understanding and recovery become automatic.**

**YA's deserve to be treated with acceptance, dignity and social inclusion to be able to recover. We must facilitate the process of exploring and educating the issues of mental health and substance abuse concerns. The YA must be guided on identifying the tools of recovery and how to utilize them. Young adults must be provided with the opportunity to showcase the concerns and solutions available to them. These kind opportunities would further educate everyone to the fact that there is a meaningful life full of hope and joy and passion in recovery that we all deserve.**