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Education ~ Advocacy ~ Outreach ~ Prevention

June 2010

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**Sandy Brandt Volunteer Service Award**

Mental Health America recently awarded **Sandra Rhodes, PsyD**, the Sandy Brandt Volunteer Service Award. Sandra will accept the award at MHA's Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., on June 12.

Sandra has volunteered at Mental Health America of Colorado (MHAC) for over 20 years! Her commitment to MHAC's mission of promoting mental health in the community has been demonstrated through her involvement as a member of MHAC's Board of Directors, her election and service to the Honorary Board, and in her voluntary work with direct service programs such as our [Speakers Bureau](#), the [Pro Bono Outreach Program](#), and at health fairs.

For over 24 years, Sandra has provided free mental health



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services for countless women at The Gathering Place, a [host site of the Pro Bono Outreach Program](#) that serves homeless women and children. The majority of these women are in a state of crisis related to their homelessness. Sandra is often the sole mental health professional who works with the women and children at The Gathering Place.

Sandra is an integral part of many of our programs. She wears a variety of hats at MHAC. Suffice to say, without her support and hard work over the course of the past 20 plus years, we would not have been able to accomplish many of our organization's goals.

***Congratulations to Sandra for this well deserved award!***



## Check Your Head Program ~ Youth Wellness

The [Check Your Head](#) program underwent great changes this spring semester thanks to an exciting collaboration with the [Get Smart Schools](#) system. The collaboration has:

- Opened new doors for Check Your Head;
- Helped the program expand into new metro area charter schools;
- Allowed the program to effectively serve a greater population of at-risk youth with valuable mental health programming.

Check Your Head is now an in-school program for six to eight weeks. The program was offered at four schools during the 2009-10 school year: [Envision Leadership Academy](#), [Long View High School, West Denver Prep](#), and [Denver Venture](#). Two longtime Check Your Head instructors, **Bianca Mikahn** and **Alex "Skip" Gardner**, taught students ranging in age from 12 to 19. Both instructors led classroom discussions about topics like identifying positive influences, self-harm and resolving conflict and helped students find their artistic voices by channeling their emotions through various art forms including graffiti, spoken word poetry and dance.



The successful semester culminated with presentations of students' final art projects and a Check Your Head [news story by 9 News](#) in May. The Check Your Head program served nearly 70 students during the spring semester, with many students choosing to voluntarily repeat the course. Looking toward the next school year, Check Your Head will continue its collaboration with Get Smart Schools and offer the program at more charter schools in the Denver metro area.

## All Children Face Mental Health Issues from Time to Time

*This article is part of a series of stories by MHAC board members and honorary board members about why mental health issues are important to them. This piece is contributed by Gwen Brewer, past board chair and educator.*

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, one in five children and adolescents will experience a significant mental health problem during their school years. These can include stress and anxiety, worries about being bullied, problems with family or friends, depression, thoughts of suicide or hurting others, alcohol or substance abuse and fear of violence. If ignored, mental health problems can drastically interfere with children's learning, development, relationships and physical health.

The [Check Your Head](#) program is an effective aid in dealing with those students who have mental health issues, but who do not qualify for special education services in the schools. Developed by MHAC for middle school and high school students, Check Your Head "encourages them to explore such issues as self-identity, conflict resolution, depression, and tolerance. The program helps young people identify their mental health needs,



communicate their needs to others and find constructive resolutions to the problems they face." It is not intended to take the place of comprehensive mental health services or special education programs in the schools, but is instead a course that "helps young people identify what mental health AND wellness is and how to identify their own mental health needs, communicate their needs to others and find constructive resolutions to the problems they face."

Classroom teachers find Check Your Head to be an excellent resource because it provides support and strategies to students with mental health challenges who originally had none. And it also provides teachers with information and resources so they can more effectively deal with these students in their classrooms.

[More information about youth mental health](#)

[Contact Check Your Head](#)

## Symbol of a Movement

Join us as we honor Patty & Don Cook at Tribute!

**Wednesday, September 29, 2010**

**Sheraton Downtown Denver**

tribute

The theme for this year's event is **"This bell shall ring out hope"** in recognition of the history of our organization and the progress of the mental health movement.

The Mental Health Bell, symbolized in our logo, was cast in 1953. Mental Health America issued a call to asylums across the country for their discarded chains and shackles. MHA melted down these inhumane bindings and recast them into a sign of hope. The 300-pound Bell serves as a powerful reminder that the invisible chains of misunderstanding and discrimination continue to bind people with mental health conditions. Today, the Bell rings out hope for improving mental health and achieving recovery from mental illnesses.



**The inscription on the Bell reads:**

**"Cast from shackles which bound them, this bell shall ring out hope for the mentally ill and victory over mental illness."**

[More about the history of MHAC](#)

[Details about Tribute](#)

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## Staff Notes

[Lauren Martin](#), Pro Bono Outreach Program Coordinator, was elected to the board of the National Association of Social Workers - Colorado.

[Contact Staff](#)



## News & Announcements

## Get Involved in the Mental Health Community

Join us to learn more about our mission and vision and see how MHAC leads prevention, education, outreach and advocacy programs and mental health services across Colorado. We look forward to meeting you and sharing how we can all make a difference in the lives of individuals and families coping with mental health issues. Light breakfast will be served.

**Thursday, July 8 ~ 7:30am-8:30am**

MHAC Office, 6th Floor Conference Room  
1385 S. Colorado Blvd., Denver CO [Map](#)



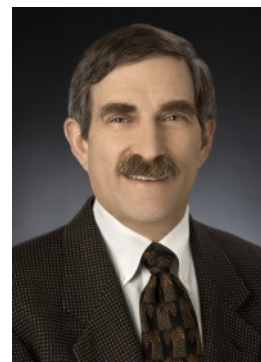
RSVP by Tuesday, July 6. [Email Alyson](#) or call 720-208-2243.

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## Good News in a Tight Economy

At The Denver Foundation's recent Annual Celebration, **President & CEO David Smith**, announced to the guests that the foundation would maintain 2008 funding levels for the Community Grants Program through 2010.

David shared, "All foundations, especially community foundations, must constantly balance current needs and future needs. In my opinion, during good economic times I think it's appropriate to tilt the balance slightly toward the future by growing endowments. During bad economic times, I think it's appropriate to tilt the balance slightly toward the present by helping people who are adversely impacted by the economic downturn."



On behalf of all of the programs, agencies and people served by The Denver Foundation, thank you for your commitment to the community!

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