

THE PULSE

EnRICHing lives and keeping a pulse on healthcare integration at RBHA



MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Nearly 60 million adults in the United States experience mental health illness each year. May is mental health awareness month, which makes it the perfect time to share stories and help create connection; as well as enhance understanding surrounding mental health. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)'s slogan this May is "Stigma grows in silence. Healing begins in community." **One in 20 Americans are living with a serious mental illness, such as bipolar disorder, major depression, and schizophrenia.** One in five children in the United States have a mental or behavioral disorder. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) states that mental health illnesses are disorders ranging from mild to severe that can affect a person's thinking, mood, and/or behavior. Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health illness in the United States and affects over 19% of adults each year. Many with mental health illnesses also have substance use disorders. Some factors can increase the risk of mental health illness such as a family history of mental health illness, chemical imbalances in the brain, witnessing violence, sexual assault, childhood history of abuse or neglect, as well as chronic medical conditions. **Having a mental health condition can make it a struggle to work, stick to a regular schedule, have healthy relationships, maintain hygiene, keep up in school, socializing, etc.** Mental health treatments such as therapy, medication, and self-care can help make recovery a reality for those experiencing mental and behavioral health conditions. However, **only an estimated 50.1% of adults with a mental health illness receive treatment. This is why sharing stories of recovery are so important.**

For more information visit the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) website at <https://www.nami.org/get-involved/awareness-events/mental-health-awareness-month/>.

THERE IS POWER IN PEER SUPPORT!

Peer Recovery Specialists (PRS) are individuals in long-term recovery who have been successful in their recovery process and assist others with their experiences in similar circumstances. Peer Recovery Specialists have lived experiences with either or both mental health or substance use. By having walked the path of recovery, Peers are equipped with the knowledge to assist individuals beginning their own recovery journeys; as well as encourage individuals in recovery to achieve their goals. Peer Recovery Services can help extend the influence of treatment far beyond the typical clinical setting. Also, peer engagement has been known to help some individuals stay engaged in their journey and reduce relapse. For more information on how to become a peer visit the Virginia Peer Recovery Specialist Portal at <https://www.vaprs.org/about-peer-family-support/prs-certification/>.



October 2025 Class



March 2026 Class

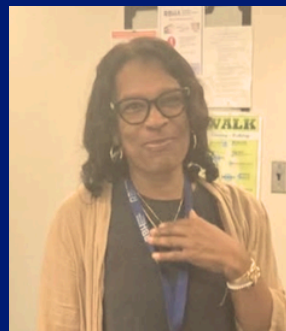
We Love our RICH Peers!



Genita Huggins
Peer Recovery Specialist



Peggy Page
RCPRS, PRS-T, CSAC-A



Gayle Hobson
R-CPRS (CPRS-T, APPR-T, PAR-T)
Lead Peer Recovery
Specialist



Patricia Andes
CPRS

We at the RICH Recovery Clinic would like to thank our Peer Recovery Specialists for all their hard work and dedication to our clients! RICH Peers have a Peer to Peer Group every Wednesday. The group discusses various topics including sober living, healthy relationships, peer support, living skills, coping skills, positive self-talk, wellness tools, etc. For more information contact Peggy Page at peggy.page@rbha.org.

Mental Health & Your Heart

Many may be unaware that mental health and heart disease are deeply interconnected. **Conditions like depression, anxiety, and chronic stress raise the risk of heart disease by 50%.** Many mental health struggles can cause physical effects such as high blood pressure, inflammation, and reduced heart rate variability or HRV. HRV measures the time interval fluctuations between heartbeats. **Individuals with mental health conditions face a significantly higher risk of developing chronic cardiometabolic diseases, including diabetes, stroke, and heart disease.** Individuals with mental health conditions can help improve heart health by reducing stress, exercising regularly, quit smoking and/or drinking alcohol, participating in therapy and/or group, and maintaining a healthy diet.

For more information visit the American Heart Association website at <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/mental-health-and-wellbeing/mental-health-and-heart-health>.



ALLERGY SEASON IS HERE!

According to the Mayo Clinic, allergies happen when the immune system reacts to a foreign substance that enters the body. These substances are known as allergens. Allergens can include pollen, bee venom, and pet dander. Allergies can also occur with certain foods and medications. These allergies can cause symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose, congestion, and itchy/watery eyes. Women are more likely to have allergies than men and over 80% of people with asthma also suffer with seasonal allergies. In 2026, approximately 80 million adults in the United States are expected to have seasonal allergies triggered by pollen. This year has seen longer and a more intense pollen season, leading to increased allergies and allergic asthma symptoms nationwide. Over the counter antihistamines or saline rinses can help manage seasonal allergies symptoms. It is important to speak with a physician about long term relief and treatment.



MAY CLIENT RESOURCES

- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline**

- *The 988 Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the United States.*
- *English and Spanish available*
- *Just dial, text or chat 988!*

- **Free Blood Pressure Screenings**

- 1st Mondays & 3rd Saturdays of each month at the Main Library (101 East Franklin St.) from 11:00 am - 1:00 pm.
- Join us for a free blood pressure screening. This program is provided in partnership with VCU Health, the American Heart Association, Daily Planet, and Capital AHEC.
- Screenings will take place on the 1st floor near the Information Desk.

- **Adult Education GED® (High School Equivalency) Classes**

- May 5th, 7th, 12th, 14th, & 19th at Hull Street Library (1400 Hull St Richmond) from 11:00 am - 2:00pm.
- Call RPS Adult Education at 804-780-8311 to register or for more information.

- **Baby Prom!**

- May 18th at the Main Library (101 East Franklin St.) from 10:30 am - 11:15 am.
- Join us for Baby Prom, a playful, music-filled event for infants, toddlers, and their caregivers! Designed for children ages birth–3, this event features dancing, sensory play, photo opportunities, and a chance to dress up and celebrate.

- **Dignity on the Go: Mobile Showers**

- Every Wednesday from 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
- The Saint Paul's Baptist Church (Belt Campus) 700 East Belt Blvd Richmond
- Additional support from weekly community partners includes free haircuts, ID services, housing assistance, workforce support, veterans support, finance counseling, and mental health services.
- For more information email Outreach@myspbc.org.

- **Fitness Warriors: “Feeling Fit with Pat!”**

- Every Monday from 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm at Ginter Park Library (1200 Westbrook Ave Richmond)
- Come join Pat for a fun, relaxed, low-to-moderate impact workout!
- Pat is a fitness instructor with many years of experience leading people of all ages and fitness levels.

- **Feed More Help Line**

- (804) 237-8617
- Monday- Friday 9:00 am - 4:00 pm
- <https://feedmore.org/help-line/>