On Wednesday, November 20, 2013, Peer Assistance Services, in collaboration with Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA), hosted the Statewide Discussion on Prescription Drug Abuse: Denver Town Hall. The event was organized by Laurie Lovedale, Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Program Manager, held at Anschutz Medical Campus and streamed live to ten remote locations across the state.

The event began with Colorado State Attorney General John Suthers outlining the scope of the prescription drug abuse problem in Colorado and highlighting the collaborative efforts taking place throughout the state. Katie Greene, senior member of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), discussed national trends on prescription drug abuse and described the four pillars of ONDCP’s strategy that includes education, tracking and monitoring, proper medication disposal, and enforcement. General Arthur Dean, CEO and Chairman of CADCA, discussed the national prevention efforts taking place throughout the country to address prescription drug abuse and described the four pillars of ONDCP’s strategy that includes education, tracking and monitoring, proper medication disposal, and enforcement.

A panel of speakers provided personal perspective and insight into overdose prevention. State Senate Assistant Majority Leader, Irene Aguilar, MD, addressed the importance of overdose awareness and prevention, and the significance of Colorado’s third party Naloxone legislation that passed in the spring of 2013. Ingrid Binswanger, MD at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, explained the hazards of mixing medications with alcohol, and the importance of prevention at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. The evening ended with two personal stories from the community. Dawn Fosket, whose son died from a prescription drug overdose, shared her family’s story. She emphasized the importance of talking to youth about this issue and “never giving up the fight.” Clay Hart, a young adult in recovery from prescription drug abuse, shared his personal struggles, clearly outlining the signs and symptoms of substance use disorders. He discussed the preventative efforts individuals can take to help a family member.

Peer Assistance Services continues to collaborate with the Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention, the Quad-Regulator Group, Denver Office of Drug Strategy, the Colorado Pharmacy Coalition, the Denver Epidemiological Work Group, and the Colorado Pain Initiative to further prevention and awareness efforts on prescription drug abuse. We are pleased to announce that the Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Program, along with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) will be hosting a full day course for health care professionals titled, “Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain: Balancing Safety and Efficacy” on July 11, 2014. The course will be held at the Cable Center in Denver featuring national and local experts in the field of opioid use and chronic pain management. Watch for more information in May at www.peerassistanceservices.org.
n 1999, the PAS Board of Directors created an award named in honor of the founders of the agency to recognize individuals, foundations, corporations, community organizations and others who have made outstanding contributions that further the mission of Peer Assistance Services, Inc. On February 20, 2014, PAS held an awards reception to honor this year’s recipients. The reception included PAS board members, staff and honorees’ family, friends and colleagues. The 2014 honorees are…

• Jeannie Ritter, former first lady of Colorado and Mental Health Ambassador at the Mental Health Center of Denver.

Jeannie was nominated by Megan Marx, SBIRT Sustainability Coordinator, for her outstanding work with the Colorado Coalition for Parity. The Coalition has worked to ensure enactment of a final rule on the Parity Act requiring that mental health and substance abuse treatment insurance benefits are provided in parity with physical healthcare benefits. In her leadership on the Coalition Steering Committee, Jeannie has enabled providers of substance use and mental health treatment to forge alliances. These efforts, among others, serve to further the mission of Peer Assistance, and in particular the sustainability of the SBIRT Colorado Initiative. Her efforts on behalf of the Colorado Coalition for Parity contributed to the success of the 2013 Colorado Parity Field Hearing. Of the 9 hearings held nationally, Colorado’s was the most well attended with over 300 participants. Congratulations Jeannie!

• Kelly Perez, Human Services Policy Advisor to Governor Hickenlooper.

Kelly was nominated by Laurie Lovedale, PAS Prescription Drug Prevention Program Manager, for her work on Colorado’s statewide plan for prescription drug abuse reduction. In her leadership role with the National Governors Association Prescription Drug Abuse Project, she made significant contributions to the state’s important efforts. Her influence in creating coalitions of stakeholders to participate in statewide prevention efforts has been invaluable. Congratulations Kelly!

• Tonya Wheeler, Executive Director of Advocates for Recovery.

Tonya was nominated by Cynthia Koenck, PAS Operations Director, for her tireless support of our mission and community efforts. She has worked closely with our staff, clients, stakeholders and programs. These programs include SBIRT Colorado, Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities and the Colorado Coalition for Parity. She works in the community to promote substance use disorder treatment and recovery support. She is such a positive example that recovery works. Her passion for helping individuals recover from substance use disorders is inspirational. Congratulations Tonya!

Each year the Colorado Chapter for the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (CO-EAPA) presents awards to individuals, organizations and programs for their advocacy of employee assistance in Colorado. EAPA is a membership organization founded in 1971 for employee assistance professionals. Peer Assistance Services is pleased to announce that Lee Ann Aden, Chief Finance Officer, was presented with the Daetweiler Award for Outstanding Individual Members by CO-EAPA. Lee Ann received this award for her professional expertise and dedication to the sustainability of the local and national organization. The award was presented at the Annual CO-EAPA Holiday Luncheon on December 13, 2013.

CO-EAPA also honored the Colorado Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) with a Community Service Award. The award was presented to Stan Paprocki, Director of Community Prevention Programs at OBH.

The Employee Assistance Program Award was presented to the Poudre Valley School District Employee Assistance Program and accepted by Cindy Guillaume.
On October 31, 1963, President John F. Kennedy signed the Community Mental Health Act into law, clearing the way for transformative changes in our nation’s approach to substance use disorders, mental illness, and intellectual disabilities. On October 23, 2013, the Colorado Coalition for Parity celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Kennedy Forum and the passage of the Mental Health Parity Act. The local event was emceed by former First Lady of Colorado, Jeannie Ritter, who introduced the impressive lineup of presenters. The first to speak was Lisa Clements, Director of the Office of Behavioral Health, Colorado Department of Human Services, who discussed the Department’s vision to transform the state’s behavioral health system. Dr. Robert Freedman, chair of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, spoke next about the current state of our scientific understanding about substance use and mental health disorders. Don Mares, President and CEO of Mental Health America Colorado, and Art Schut, CEO of Arapahoe House, then addressed the transformation of care and the delivery of services for mental health and substance use disorders, respectively.

Participants then watched the live national webcast of the Kennedy Forum from Boston, Massachusetts. Former U.S. Congressman Patrick Kennedy welcomed the audience and emphasized that, “Together, we must seize this moment if we are going to finally end the stigma associated with mental illness and help millions of our fellow citizens lead better, healthier lives.” Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, affirmed Congressman Kennedy’s proclamation stating that work remains to be done to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental illness as a barrier to treatment. Vice President Joe Biden was the final speaker in Boston, affirming the Administration’s commitment to increasing access to mental health and substance abuse treatments, eliminating the stigma surrounding mental illness, and supporting research to better understand the functioning of the human brain.

The local event closed with a call to action from Dr. Carl Clark, CEO of Mental Health Center of Denver. As an advocate and a family member, Dr. Clark reminded the audience that discrimination still happens and urged all audience members to support legislation that eliminates discrimination and supports access to services. In closing, Dr. Clark encouraged the audience to “just talk about it” in order to help remove the stigma of mental health and substance use disorders in the community.

The Colorado Coalition for Parity is currently working to ensure that individuals with substance use and mental health disorders, their families, treatment providers, advocates, and insurance providers have access to resources that clearly define the implications of the final rule for the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act. In addition, they are engaged in conversations with key stakeholders regarding how the final rule will be implemented in the state, and what the process will be for filing complaints. The Coalition has authored a monograph entitled “Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act: A Watershed Moment for the Future of Behavioral Health Care. Uniting the Community with What We Know Now to Transform Our Systems of Care.” This can be accessed at www.peerassistance services.org/news.

Peer Assistance Services, Inc. has been awarded a contract to provide Mental Health Professional Peer Health Assistance Program by the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies. The program was fully operational on March 1st. The new program serves psychologists, licensed professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, social workers, registered psychotherapists and certified addictions counselors.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**MAY 5-7** • NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH • [www.thenationalcouncil.org](http://www.thenationalcouncil.org)
**MAY 7-9** • NATIONAL TASC CONFERENCE • [www.nationaltasc.org](http://www.nationaltasc.org)
**MAY 10** • COLORADO NURSES FOUNDATION NIGHTINGALE AWARDS • [www.coloradonursesfoundation.com](http://www.coloradonursesfoundation.com)
**JUNE 15-20** • UTAH SCHOOL ON ALCOHOLISM AND OTHER DRUG DEPENDENCIES • [www.medicine.utah.edu/utas](http://www.medicine.utah.edu/utas)
**JULY 11** • SAMHSA TRAINING—RESPONSIBLE OPIOID PRESCRIBING • [www.peerassistance services.org](http://www.peerassistance services.org)

CONGRATULATIONS!

AGNIESZKA BAKLACEZ, MA, LPC, LAC, CPS II was named Manager for the Mental Health Professionals Peer Health Assistance Program.

Laurie Lovedale, MPH was named Manager of the Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Program.

Lee Ann Aden, MS, CEAP, CPA received the Daetweiler Award from the Colorado Chapter of EAPA. (See article, Page 2)

WELCOME NEW PAS STAFF

Alyssa Auck, Christine Brice, Sonya Eckenroth, Bridgette Fuson, Katherine Garia, Kellie Harris, Erlene Hernandez, Laura Hoder, Justin Jacques, Greg Martin, Molly Olson, Jennifer Place, Kurtis Rivera, Erin Sharp, Carolyn Swenson, Kelly Thompson, Justin Ward and Stacy Zuehlke.
In celebration of 30 years of service to the community, the Peer Assistance Services Annual Awareness Event will be held at the Denver Art Museum on May 22nd, 2014. This celebratory occasion, emceed by Dr. Brett Kessler, DDS, will include a reception, seated dinner, and keynote address by David Sheff. Mr. Sheff is a renowned journalist and bestselling author of Beautiful Boy: A Father’s Journey through his Son’s Addiction and Clean: Overcoming Addiction and Ending America’s Greatest Tragedy. Sheff frequently speaks to schools, community groups and conferences about addiction and effective methods for preventing drug use and abuse. His ongoing research and reports on the science of addiction earned him a place on Time magazine’s list of the world’s most influential people.

To purchase a ticket, sponsor the event, or find more information, please visit our website at www.PeerAssistanceServices.org, or contact Alyssa Auck, Executive Coordinator, at 303.369.0039 extension 254.