

Zarow Mental Health Conference looks at Aging in Place

Mary Lou Walker Seitz, Preservation Housing Management

"Serving Older Adults with the Goal of Aging in Place" was the topic of a panel at the 2012 National Zarow Mental Health Symposium & Mental Health America Annual Conference co-presented by **Mary Lou Walker Seitz**, Resident Services Coordinator at two of POAH's senior housing complex in Boston.

Her co-presenter was **Barbara Moscovitz**, Director of **Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH)** Senior Healthwise and Coordinator for Geriatric Social Work.

They discussed the success of a program resulting from a collaboration among **Boston Senior Home Care**, a state funded home care agency, the **Senior HealthWISE Program**, a community program of MGH and the **Blackstone Apartments**.

The program is designed to enhance the health and well-being of older adults to help them to live independently and to remain in their homes through education, socialization, and coordination of their healthcare. It also provides support to those frail residents experiencing diminishing health and cognitive abilities.

The three-day conference drew 800 attendees from 35 states and three countries and focused on sharing life-changing ideas that will provide housing, recovery and community supports for those battling mental illness.

Other presentations covered health care reform, the anticipation of Accountable Care Organizations and opportunities and challenges for the chronic mentally ill. A group from California is working on new approaches to help hoarders and an advocate from a rural community is building a cadre of trained volunteers to reach out to older adults who are isolated by depression and illness.

The Zarow Conference draws from a diverse group of grassroots advocates many of whom work with complex individuals with chronic mental illness and cognitive deficits, many of whom go unnoticed and untreated in their communities. A segment of participants are in recovery and attend the conference to give back to the organization and others are family members of mentally ill individuals and view their work with Zarow as a means to care for their family member. The conference draws hundreds of mental health professionals who travel from around the country to share their strategies and experiences.

The conference brought out passion, creativity and innovation and served as a reminder to all of the work that must be done and what has already been accomplished throughout the country on behalf of the mentally ill.

View plenary and keynote address at <http://www.fromhousingtorecovery.org/>



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