

Long Island Volunteer Hall of Fame

Archive Project

Inception to Induction

Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (LICADD)

Year of founding: 1956

Issue(s) Addressed: To provide professional guidance to people in need of treatment because of drugs and alcohol abuse.

Induction Category & Year: Health/Substance Abuse, 2007

Founder: R. Brinkley Smithers

Personal Quote from Steve Chassman (Clinical Director): "Addiction is a family illness. It is vital for each member to receive support and treatment; not just the individual afflicted."

History: In 1956, alcoholism was a rising addiction problem. The founder of LICADD, Mr. Smithers, was a wealthy philanthropist. He was diagnosed with alcoholism after many years of drinking and visits to the hospital. In 1954, he stopped drinking and started the LICADD to help others in need. He was assisted by his friends, Sherman Pratt and George McCarthy and the foundation was named "Smithers Foundation." This foundation, established in 1956, provided the necessary help to the Nassau County chapter of the National Committee on Alcoholism. George McCarthy said, "Alcoholism is a disease, not only for the individual, but of the entire family."

In the early days of the foundation, its focus was on alcohol abuse in the workplace but then it expanded its focus to other drug dependencies. The committee did not operate on its own. They were sponsored by many independent people and organizations, such as the Long Island Railroad and Long Island Lighting. The LICADD was managing its own organization by assisting alcoholic hold onto their jobs. In the beginning it was nonprofit, but then Mr. Smithers decided to include labor within the organization after he met with The New York City Central Labor Council. The goal that LICADD set in the year 1957 was to make the public more aware of the treatments that they provided for alcohol abuse. To achieve this goal, they worked with alcoholics and hospitals in the local areas. By doing this, the organization didn't only help alcoholics, but provided a place where one could get useful information that could help in their recovery.

Ellen Pratt became a key officer of the committee and her idea for local hospitals to offer alcohol treatment helped her attain her position within the organization. In 1957, the organization added more than 100 members and was on its way to becoming a well-known agency. During the second year they had grown even more by adding a second location in Suffolk County. In 1958, the committee was getting recognized by the local courts and instead of sending people with alcoholism to jail, they were sent to get help and treatment by LICADD.

Between the years 1958 and 1968, the organization grew and was recognized in their treatments of this abuse. The LICADD also got assistance from the Blue Cross (BCBSA). During this time period, they organized the Employee Alcoholism Program (EAP) which was designed to help prevent alcohol abuse caused by tensions in the work place.

In 1971, the LICADD named Reverend Peter Sweisgood as executive director. Because of his vibrant personality and ideas, he was extremely successful and the organization became well known. The affect this had on the LICADD showed in the growth of volunteers who helped to get the word out about the organization. The reverend even spoke about the program on radio shows. In the 1980's, there was a need for more funds to be brought into the organization. The LICADD did fundraising by hosting special events and had guest celebrities speak about the organization and its causes. As time went on, the funds doubled and they were able to expand to three more locations. The current locations are in Garden City, Hauppauge and West Hampton Beach. In 1992, the founder, R. Brinkley Smithers, died but the organization kept on growing.

Agency Mission: The mission statement of LICADD is to provide help and treatment to people who suffer from alcohol and drug related addictions. The actions of these people affect everyone around them especially their children, family and friends. The LICADD is also a non-profit organization and includes social workers, alcohol and substance counselors.

Activities/Services: The LICADD provides multiple types of programs to put their mission into practice. The types of programs offered are problem evaluation, family and workplace planned interventions, employee and union assistance services, prevention through education, criminal justice system alliances, and task force development and advocacy. The problem evaluation program is an offsite program that provides guidance; consultation and referral help to families and individuals. The work place planned interventions are meant to provide understanding of the alcohol and drug usage and to help motivate patients towards recovery. Prevention through education is there to educate anyone who is in need of more knowledge on drugs and alcohol. This can prevent people from becoming an alcoholic and/or addicted to substances. Education can be done throughout schools and workplaces. The criminal justice system alliances program is a referral service for courts, attorneys and probation officers. This service provides treatment and help for those who were in trouble with the justice system. There is also group and individual counseling. In this type of counseling, there is always someone you can talk to and set your goals and/or express yourself in front of your peers in group counseling.

Affiliations: The LICADD has many affiliations with other organizations, not just local but national, statewide and regional. The first affiliation is with the Long Island Recovery Association. In this organization they help with the treatment of addicts and alcoholics and help others gain an understanding into the illness of addiction. Another affiliation is Nassau Alliance for Addiction Services. This is also a nonprofit organization and they help individuals and families who are in need due to the abuse of addictions such as gambling, drugs, abuse to others and more. The other affiliations are with New York State Aids Advisory Council, Council on Addictions of New York State, Quality Consortium of Suffolk County, Veterans Health Alliance of Long Island, Employee Assistance Professionals Association and Mid-Island Clinical Connection. These organizations work together to provide help and success in curing addictions.

Volunteers/internships/employment: The LICADD volunteer plays a major role in the organization and in keeping the organization alive. As of today, the LICADD needs volunteers and can use any type of help. Volunteers can help in the education programs where you educate people from a wide age group. LICADD will give you all the training you need so that you can volunteer. You can also volunteer by answering the phones at their multiple offices. Other volunteers needed include graphic designers, community outreach and mentors. Employments and internships are available. Qualified applicants need to have a degree in communications, marketing or public relations. The organization requires the knowledge of social media, communication skills, commitment to the goals of the organization, and knowledge of Microsoft Office. Some of the roles that you will be asked to perform are to be aware of current events within social media and take part in the current programs within the agency.

Donations: Donations are always welcomed if you do not have the time to volunteer. When you make a donation, the money is used for hosting programs and events that can help to save lives.

Contact Information:

LICADD
207 Hillside Avenue
Williston Park, New York 11596
Office Phone: 516-747-2606
Fax: 516-747-0714

Submitted by:
Brian Singh
4-12-11

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