Faces of Peer Support: Christina Moody

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Christina Moody wasn't looking for a career in peer support—it found her.

Before becoming a peer supporter, Christina worked as a bus driver, but she couldn't shake the feeling of how lost she felt in her profession. "I was 46 at the time, just driving the bus. And I was just like, what am I doing?" she remembers.

She decided it was time for her to leave, and it was that moment that set her on the path to her new purpose. "I decided to go back to school and finish getting my GED," Christina begins. "And when I was doing so, I saw a flyer in the library, and it just had RECOVERY on it."

At the time, Chrstina didn't realize the impact of what she could bring into the peer world by simply calling the number on the flyer to inquire about a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS) training. But just three months after completing the training, Christina started working at Richard Hall Community Health and Wellness Center.

Today, she is in her 4th year of employment working as a dually certified peer, and she wouldn't have it any other way.

While working at Richard Hall, she focused on the Opt for Health and Hope Program, a "prosecutor-led diversionary program aimed at diverting non-violent, low-level offenders ("participants") whose crimes are motivated partly by substance use into treatment rather than formal prosecution." The program is grant-funded through the Attorney General's Office of New Jersey and overseen by the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office and works to "provide stability and guidance needed to help participants get their lives back on track and out of the criminal justice system."

"The program is doing really, really amazing to date since we launched in 2024," Christina shares. She works with individuals who may be living with substance use, mental health, or co-occurring issues.

Christina received her participants through referral from the Franklin Township Municipal Court and Somerset County Prosecutor's Office. Two days a week, Christina went to court, either in person or by Zoom, and made contact with arrested individuals to explain what

the program is and see if they are interested. They were also eligible to get a full expungement of their municipal charges if they successfully completed the program.

“I go back and think about that day when I got arrested and how I was in that police station and had nobody to talk to. I had a million and six things running through my head because I was using substances and I had a problem and I needed help. So, I just try to be that person for the individuals that I work with to try to help them navigate their way into recovery however they see fit.”

She also facilitates groups. “I love facilitating groups. It’s one of my strengths. I know how to keep people engaged, and I think I know what people want to talk about,” she says. “We do art group and a creative expressions art group, which is very well received. They [also] always look forward to coffee and karaoke.”

Christina also had success in seeing her proposal to bring Narcotics Anonymous (NA) to the Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) at Richard Hall to help individuals with substance use. “It was received very well by them, and it’s amazing to watch because you’re giving a person as many options as possible.”

Christina is a person in long term recovery of substance use and mental health but disclosed that she didn’t always consider herself in mental health recovery until she started her work as a peer and eventually received a diagnosis. “It’s been a rocky road with that,” she says, “because the substance use is one thing, like ‘Christina, don’t use,’ that’s it. But with the mental health, it’s like layers and layers to peel back of me.” But Christina doesn’t see this as a hindrance. “I look at it as a strength for me, to be of hope to other people, that we lived with some things, but we survived them and we learned how to navigate them.”

Christina completed the Core Training with Consumer Connections in 2025 and expressed that it opened her eyes in an entirely new way of supporting others in their mental health journey as a peer. “The tools that I’ve learned have been very effective with me [and] with the people that I work with, helping them advocate for themselves and helping them understand that they have a say-so in their recovery. It has been very rewarding.” She also brought to light a comment that she had coined during the training that she continues to use today: that peers have the “special sauce.” “I was in group and I was telling the clients about [it]. I said, ‘you have a Big Mac, right?” But the Big Mac doesn’t taste good without the special sauce, and I think that’s what we bring as peers in this field individually, because it’s through our lived experience that we get to do this work. And only through that.’” Christina even continues to keep up with some of the students in her training cohort, and recently received a call from one of them who was reaching out to just check in.

While being a peer supporter is fulfilling, Christina emphasizes that "sometimes the help needs help too." Christina continues to work on her own wellness daily with prayer, meditation, and therapy. Having supportive colleagues to lean on also plays a huge role in maintaining her wellness in the workplace. Another way Christina likes to work on her wellness is by using her WRAP, or Wellness Recovery Action Plan. WRAP is a personalized wellness and recovery system created by Mary Ellen Copeland that helps people to "decrease and prevent intrusive or troubling feelings and behaviors, increase personal empowerment, improve quality of life, and achieve their own life goals and dreams." Christina was also a WRAP facilitator. "If we have something structured like the WRAP plan, then we will always be in a state of wellness, and even if we're not, we have the WRAP plan to refer to. So that's my go-to." WRAP has also been incorporated in the services provided at Richard Hall, and Christina hopes to see that momentum continue.

For someone considering a career in peer support, Christina invites them to consider their "why." "It's not to knock anybody in the peer world, but I've worked with or ran across some peers that are not in it for the right reasons." She shared. "Check your intentions. Do you want to be a part of the solution or part of the problem?" Continuing, she adds, "It's never about you. It's always about the person you're working with." Most importantly, Christina finds it crucial to just be you. "Be authentically yourself, you can never go wrong with that. I have never been wrong with that since being a peer. [Sometimes] it's just about telling them, 'Okay, this is what happened to me and how I got through it.'"

Today, Christina works as a Peer Recovery Specialist for Behavioral Health at JFK Hackensack Meridian Health. She is pursuing a degree in social work at Walden University and is in her second year as an honors society student with a 3.8 GPA. Christina has six classes in her field experience before she earns her degree and would love to work in jails and prisons. "Looking back at all the courses that I have taken, like psychology, sociology, understanding why we do the things that we do…the behaviors, the patterns, the ideas, all that has been very helpful to me in my work as a peer."

No matter where her journey takes her, Christina is confident that she will always be a peer. "I don't ever want to lose touch with that." Her future plans are to continue her studies and get her master's degree to work in policy advocacy. "We need to change things inside the system to make change outside the system." "[There's] a lot going on right now for everyone and I just want to do my part."

If one thing is for sure, Christina knows that this is where she is meant to be. "I'm supposed to be doing this work," she says. "I'm supposed to be in the field helping people, because that's the only way I can continue to navigate my own personal recovery, giving up myself and helping people; help them see that there is a better way, there is another way, and that recovery is possible."