

## **New Jersey State Psychiatric Hospitals Celebrated MIAW with Open-Houses.**

Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) was established by Congress in 1990. This was the result of efforts from various organizations across the country to raise mental illness awareness.

In honor of Mental Illness awareness week: October 7 – October 14, 2016, the New Jersey State psychiatric hospitals Ancora, Trenton, and Greystone Park celebrated their Open-Houses. Each year, the week provides an opportunity for the hospitals to fight stigma, provide support, educate the public, and advocate for equal care.

All three hospitals were well attended by visitors who represented multiple factions of society, not just consumers and family members.

Stigma Council Member representatives David Jacobs-Ancora, Debra Wentz-Trenton, and Deborah Lerner-Greystone Park called on everyone to shine a light on mental illness and replace stigma with hope and to dispel the myths of stigma. The Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma also provided a resource table at the three open-houses. The recipients of mental health services spoke with sincerity and passion about their experiences and their capacity to recovery. Sharing their personal stories of success, hope and their journey to recovery from mental health problems was the highlight of each open-house.

Each facility welcomed their attendees with impressive activities which included:

- Representatives from the Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma
- Featured Guest Speakers
- Representatives from various community organizations
- Entertainment
- Plant Sales
- Displayed Art Work by consumers
- Facility Tours
- Refreshments

Assistant Commissioner Valerie L. Mielke, of the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addictions Services, emphasized that the participation at these events was vital for all to attend. She indicated that the open-houses are not just for the "mental health staff" but for everyone in the system of care.

The Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services work closely with the state agencies, consumers, family members, providers and mental health advocates to strive to promote opportunities for mental health consumers to live in the community enjoying life as vital neighbors, friends and citizens.