



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**EASTLAKE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT TO SPEAK
AT "NEW DAY CONFERENCE" FOR OHIO'S MENTAL HEALTH
TRANSFORMATION PROJECT**

Eastlake, OH. 4/11/06. Matt Mikolic, age 18, who has been coping with mental illness all his life, was appointed by the Governor last September to the Ohio Transformation State Incentive Grant "Transformation Working Group" representing the youth voice for mental health. The Workgroup is comprised of primarily cabinet level state department leaders and other state leaders.

As part of this group, Matt will speak as "Youth Advocate" at the "New Day Conference" to be held Thursday, May 4, 2006 at the Hyatt Regency in Columbus, Ohio. The New Day Conference is the roll-out of Ohio's Mental Health Transformation Project.

The conference will bring together community service representatives, consumers, family members, social services, business, schools, law enforcement, courts, medical community, and state-level representatives to begin to work on a plan to transform Ohio's fragmented mental health system. It is the most important initiative since the implementation of The Mental Health Act of 1988.

Ohio is one of 7 states to be awarded a \$12M, 5 year SIG grant to transform the entire state mental health system. The grant is intended to implement the recommendations developed by the President's New Freedom Commission. The Commission was chaired by Mike Hogan, Ohio's Director of the Department of Mental Health.

Releasing the learning potential of students with emotional challenges

Mikolic has come a long way in his journey with bipolar disorder and is anxious to help others benefit from his personal experiences. He was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder at age 8 and has been very ill most of his life, sometimes unable to attend school or perform the simplest tasks. In the past two years, his condition has improved and he is looking forward to graduating with his class in 2006.

Susan Mikolic, Matt's mother and President of Stepping Stones, said, "This will be a great opportunity for the youth voice to be directly integrated into large scale planning efforts. I am so proud of Matt's willingness to participate. I know he will serve the state's children well and we are so grateful for this opportunity for Matt. This is a 5 year commitment."

Susan Mikolic served on the NAMI Ohio Board of Directors representing pediatric mental health issues and spearheaded the current Ohio Department of Education/Ohio Department of Mental Health's collaborative initiative to require pediatric mental health and school success coursework in the pre-service curriculum requirements of teachers.

To register for the conference or find out more information on the New Day Conference, log on to <http://www.anewdayohio.org/downloads/may4registration.pdf>

For more information on this announcement or Matt Mikolic, contact Susan Mikolic at 216/513-6098 or email: info@steppingstonesmentalhealth.com.
