



## PRESS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### OHIO TEEN IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN MENTAL HEALTH

- **Fresh Perspective in Washington, D.C. as Ohio's Youth Voice;**
- **His Personal Story of Mental Illness on DVD;**
- **His Commitment to Helping Others**

Eastlake, OH. 1/23/07. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services hosted the second meeting of the Mental Health Transformation State Incentive Grant (TSIG) grantees on November 13-15<sup>th</sup> in Washington, D.C.

Matt Mikolic, age 18, Eastlake resident, attended and participated in the meeting as the Ohio Youth Representative of the Transformation Working Group. He was appointed by the Governor last September to the Ohio Transformation State Incentive Grant "Transformation Working Group". The Workgroup is comprised of primarily cabinet level state department leaders and other state leaders.



*Matt Mikolic, the youth representative on the Transformation Working Group, with A. Kathryn Power, M.Ed., Director of the Center for Mental Health Services. (Photo: The December 2006 issue of A New Day Ohio newsletter published by the Ohio Department of Mental Health.).*

Other Ohio representatives at meeting were as follows:

- Doug DeVoe, CEO, Ohio Advocates for Mental Health
- Terre Garner, Ohio Federation for Children's Mental Health
- Racquel Graham, Assistant Deputy Director, TSIG
- Kraig Knudsen, Ph.D., ODMH Office of Program Evaluation and Research
- Jim Mauro, Executive Director, NAMI Ohio
- Dee Roth, Chief, ODMH Office of Program Evaluation and Research



- Charleta Tavares, Executive Director, Multiethnic Advocates for Cultural Competence
- Judy Wortham Wood, Deputy Director, TSIG

Mikolic shares his perspective: "We need to start something new in Ohio. We need to create a youth based working group to collaborate with the existing working group to give input on all levels. Right now I am reacting and commenting and giving suggestions on what is already in place vs. new ideas and formats. That's not what you need me for. I can always comment on existing programs, but that isn't what is most important for me to do because everyone else can do that. You need me to identify what is missing and what can be made better and give you new ideas and new perspectives."

Mikolic has also produced a DVD called "My Gift to Others...What I've Learned from Mental Illness" so that he can share his experience with mental illness with others in a very candid way. Matt and his mother, Susan Mikolic also produced a DVD together called "The Journey Through Mental Illness: An Open Dialogue" where they openly answer questions from the audience about their lives.

Mikolic 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. He has come a long way in his journey with bipolar disorder and graduated from high school in 2006. Mikolic is anxious to help others benefit from his personal experiences.

Susan Mikolic, Matt's mother and President of Stepping Stones, says, "I am so proud of Matt and the progress he has made with his life. It has been a long journey with both of my sons diagnosed with mental disorders, but we have learned so much and can now help others find their way and achieve wellness and peace. I am pleased that Matt is willing 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 started Stepping Stones so that she could share her years of knowledge and strategies that helped her family recover and live life to its fullest with others in similar circumstances. Workshops and private consultations that support the *No Child Left Behind* legislation help educators and families learn how they can help their students and children do well in school and in life.

For more information on Susan Mikolic, Matt, services, DVDs, or testimonials, please visit the website at [www.steppingstonesmentalhealth.com](http://www.steppingstonesmentalhealth.com) or contact Susan Mikolic, at 216/513-6098 or email: [info@steppingstonesmentalhealth.com](mailto:info@steppingstonesmentalhealth.com)

#####

---

Releasing the learning potential of students with emotional challenges

34057 Glen Drive Eastlake, OH 44095  
P 216-513-6098 | F 440-953-2377

[steppingstonesmentalhealth.com](http://steppingstonesmentalhealth.com)  
[susan@steppingstonesmentalhealth.com](mailto:susan@steppingstonesmentalhealth.com)