

## **Local conference encourages “self” discovery for consumers with mental health needs**

Resiliency and wellness were common themes during the 2017 Day of “Self” Discovery Conference and Celebration, held May 18 at Rodef Shalom in Oakland.

Established in 2000 by local advocacy group Multicultural Outreach & Education (MOE), the Day of “Self” Discovery is a free, annual conference of, for and by people in recovery. The event focuses on wellness, recovery and discovery, as well as the importance of human connection and natural supports in healing from serious mental illness and substance use disorders. From its modest beginnings of 80 attendees, the event has grown exponentially, with more than 250 attending in 2017. The Department of Human Services (DHS) Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) has been a Day of “Self” Discovery sponsor for all the event’s 17 years, along with Community Care Behavioral Health and Allegheny Health Choices, Inc.

“Unlike other conferences that focus on medicine or recovery techniques, the Day of ‘Self’ Discovery is focused on the fun side of things like hands-on activities, networking and community-building,” said Aurelia Carter, family support specialist in OBH. “It is by far my favorite conference of the year.”

This year’s event featured workshop sessions that included art therapy, healthy eating, yoga and meditation, and music therapy, as well as vendors and resource tables. After lunch, an attendee was presented with the Joyce King “Everyday People” award, which recognizes the significant individual contributions made towards promoting advocacy and recovery in Allegheny County. OBH deputy director Denise Macerelli read a proclamation from Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald declaring May 18 Mental Health Awareness Day and May as Mental Health Awareness Month; the City of Pittsburgh also issued a similar proclamation for the event.

“It brings me great joy to see our people smiling and having a good time, enjoying positive experiences instead of feeling stereotyped in a negative way. This event means everything to our consumers,” Aurelia concluded.