

# BLUEPRINTS FOR CHANGE

A step-by-step guide to building a peer-run mental health program



Part Two:  
How to Become a Nonprofit

Brian Parrish  
Cassandra Nudel



# BLUEPRINTS FOR CHANGE

A Step-by-Step Guide to Building Your Own  
Peer-run Mental Health Program

Published by the VOCAL Program Support  
Center, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition

Part Two:  
How to Become a Nonprofit

Brian Parrish  
Cassandra Nudel

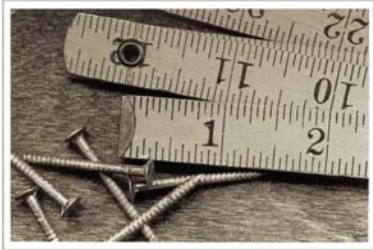


This booklet was produced by The VOCAL Program Support Center of The Virginia Organization of Consumers Asserting Leadership (VOCAL).

If you would like to reprint anything from this booklet, please contact us first at [vocal@cstone.net](mailto:vocal@cstone.net).

Cover Art from “Rhymes with Orange” © Hilary B. Price. Reprinted with permission of King Features Syndicate.

The VOCAL Program Support Center is funded by the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services, and we would like to thank them for their ongoing support and encouragement.



## BLUEPRINTS FOR CHANGE

### Part Two: How to Become a Nonprofit

Welcome

Step One. Write a Mission Statement.

Step Two. Assemble a Board of Directors.

Step Three. Develop Articles of Incorporation.

Blueprint for Articles of Incorporation.

Step Four. Draft Bylaws.

Step Five. Apply for an EIN.

Step Six. Apply for 501(c)3 Nonprofit Status.

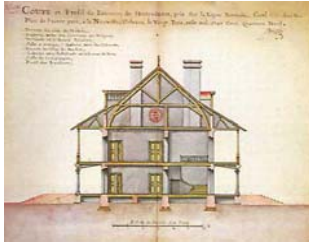
Blueprint for Applying for 501(c)3.

Congratulations & Making Like a Nonprofit.

Contact VOCAL

Training and Assistance

About Us



## WELCOME

Welcome to the VOCAL CONSTRUCTION KIT, Part Two. This guide is designed for any consumer group that wants to grow and strengthen its program, build collective vision, and take the next step forward towards becoming a legally recognized non-profit organization.

### *What is a consumer-run program?*

The terms “consumer,” “consumer of mental health services,” or “peer” refer to someone who has personally experienced serious mental health issues. Consumer-run programs are run by and for mental health consumers. A consumer-run Drop-In Center, for example, would have a staff, director, and voting board made up mostly of consumers. Consumer-run programs focus on individual empowerment and personal choice in working towards the management of symptoms and the hope of recovery.

### *Why should my program become a nonprofit?*

Most grant funders require that your program have 501(c)3 nonprofit status before you can apply. Not every program chooses to pursue grant funding, but if your program intends to apply for grants, you can

start by following the steps in this booklet, and applying for 501(c)3 nonprofit status.

*What if my program does not want to go through all the steps to apply for 501(c)3 nonprofit status? Can we still raise funds?*

Yes. You can still raise funds through small fundraising efforts, such as asking for donations from members and supporters, or by hosting a fundraising event. You can also ask another group that already has a 501(c)3 to serve as your “fiscal sponsor.” This will allow you to apply for grants. A fiscal sponsor is a nonprofit program that is willing to take legal and financial responsibility for your program. Fiscal sponsors are generally used as a stepping-stone for your first year, until you get your own 501(c)3 status.

Some consumer groups have made the choice to collaborate with a local CSB, Clubhouse, or other mental health program in this way. For some groups, this is a convenient and helpful match. If you decide to go this route, we suggest you talk with your sponsoring organization ahead of time, explain your desire to start a consumer-run organization, and make an agreement about who will have the final authority over your program. Will consumers be in charge of the program? Will consumers have final decision-making power? Also, consider your goals. Will some consumers not want to join a group overseen by a traditional mental health institution? Is this collaboration the best match for your program goals?

*This booklet is Part Two. Is there a Part One?*

Yes. The VOCAL Construction Kits are:

Part One: How to build a new program

Part Two: How to become a nonprofit

...And other booklets are currently in planning.

*What's VOCAL? How can I join?*

We are Virginia's statewide organization of consumers. We are proud to say we are 100% consumer-run – all our staff and board identify as mental health consumers. Our goal is to promote recovery, empowerment, and social justice for people with mental illness, and to transform the mental health system in Virginia. We are a grassroots community-based organization that runs three statewide programs: The VOCAL Program Support Center, VOCAL REACH Recovery Education, and the VOCAL Network. We would love to have you join us. The contact information for all three of our programs is included at the back of this booklet.



**Step One. Write a Mission Statement.**

This is an opportunity to write down what your organization stands and strives for, and to make sure that everyone involved in your group is in agreement with each other's goals. Why does your program exist? What are your core values, your purpose for being and your work in the world? What beliefs guide your work?

Creating your mission statement is especially important before you start filling out legal forms that are expensive and possibly difficult to change.

We recommend that your mission statement should be one simple, clear, easy-to-read, and easy-to-understand paragraph. Here are some real-life examples:

*“The Mission of On Our Own of Charlottesville is to provide mutual support, self-help, advocacy, education, information and referral services to individuals who have experienced significant problems in their lives due to mental illness and who acknowledge this; and to advocate for positive changes within the traditional mental health system.”*

*“The mission of the Laurie Mitchell Employment Center is to aid mental health consumers in their pursuits of meaningful employment.”*

## Step Two. Assemble a Board of Directors.

This volunteer board will be tasked with overseeing your nonprofit organization. You will need at least three unrelated board members (not family relatives) to be considered for nonprofit status by the IRS. Ideally you would like to start with at least four to seven.

In a small organization just starting out, the Board may decide to only meet quarterly. Later, as the organization grows, the Board may need to meet monthly, or perhaps every other month. At a minimum, you will want to have a President, Treasurer, and Secretary serving as initial officers for your organization. Ideally, a Vice-President will round out your Executive Board, and can also chair your meetings when the President is absent. Generally, a board member serves a term of office for one or two years.

If you are just starting a consumer-run program, we recommend that your Board be made up of at least 51% consumer members. Some programs choose to have 100% consumer boards.

Many nonprofits ask local attorneys, accountants, and other professionals to serve on their boards, to take advantage of the services these individuals can provide their organization. This can be an important asset in regards to fundraising as well, which is an important task of every nonprofit board. But, as the Board of Directors has final authority over everything the organization does, the board must retain a majority of consumers to preserve its consumer-run status.

## Step Three. Develop Articles of Incorporation.

In order to become a nonprofit, you must first apply to become a corporation with the Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC). An Articles of Incorporation is the legal document that your group must file to complete this task.

As a general rule, you will want your Articles of Incorporation to be somewhat flexible, and allow room for change as your organization grows. This way, if your group later changes its focus, you will not need to file to amend your Articles with the SCC. Consider using your Articles of Incorporation as a general descriptive overview, and use your organizational bylaws to more accurately describe your current activities, as they change or expand.

While working on their Articles, many programs request legal advice or assistance from an attorney. This can make the process much easier. Some lawyers are willing to work on a “pro-bono” basis (free of charge) for nonprofits.

On the next page is a Blueprint for an Articles of Incorporation template, which includes the basic wording and layout you’ll need to incorporate in the state of Virginia. It also contains language that is required by the federal government to apply for 501(c)3 status. This blueprint is meant only as a guide, to be adapted to your individual program.

\$\$\$ As of this writing, it will cost your organization \$75 to apply for your Articles of Incorporation. Every year thereafter, you’ll need to pay \$25 to the SCC to retain your organization’s corporate status.

## Blueprint for Articles of Incorporation

---

### ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION OF [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION]

We hereby associate to form a non-stock Corporation under the provisions of Chapter 10 of Title 13.1 of the Code of Virginia, and to that end set forth the following:

#### ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this corporation shall be: **[INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME]**

#### ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

1. This corporation is organized exclusively for charitable, educational, or scientific purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as now enacted or hereafter amended, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that also qualify as Section 501(c)(3) exempt organizations.

2. Subject to the foregoing provisions and in furtherance of its express purposes, the Corporation has the following objectives:

**[INSERT MISSION HERE:** To provide mutual support, self-help, advocacy, education, and referrals to individuals who have experienced significant problems in their lives due to mental illness, and to serve as a model for positive changes within the traditional mental health system. Our goal is to empower mental health consumers in a caring, understanding environment that fosters individual choice and empowerment. ]

3. The Corporation shall be operated exclusively for the promotion of the common good and general welfare of the people of the community. All funds, whether income or principal, and whether acquired by gift or contribution or otherwise, shall be devoted to said purposes.

#### ARTICLE III. LIMITATIONS

At all times the following shall operate as conditions restricting the operations and activities of the corporation:

1. No part of the net earnings of the corporation shall inure to any member of the corporation not qualifying as exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as now enacted or hereafter amended, nor

to any Director or officer of the corporation, nor to any other private persons, excepting solely such reasonable compensation that the corporation shall pay for services actually rendered to the corporation, or allowed by the corporation as a reasonable allowance for authorized expenditures incurred on behalf of the corporation.

2. No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall constitute the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, or any initiative or referendum before the public, and the corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including by publication or distribution of statements), any political campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office.

3. Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as now enacted or hereafter amended.

#### ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP

1. The Corporation shall have members. Membership shall be open to all individuals who subscribe to the principles and purposes of the Corporation and who meet such other membership requirements as may be set forth in the bylaws. The class or classes of members, the designation of such class or classes, and the qualifications and rights of each class shall be set forth in the bylaws of the Corporation, as permitted pursuant to Sections 13.1-819 and 13.1-837 of the Code of Virginia, as amended. No member or Director shall have any right, title, or interest in or to any property of the corporation.

2. The business and affairs of the Corporation shall be managed and directed by a Board of Directors, which shall be comprised of not fewer than three (3) nor more than seventeen (17) Directors. The duties of the Directors and the manner in which the Directors shall be elected by the members shall be set forth in the bylaws.

3. The Initial Directors, together with their mailing addresses, are as follows:  
**[INSERT NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF AT LEAST THREE (3) INITIAL BOARD MEMBERS WHO ARE UNRELATED HERE]**

#### ARTICLE V. OBLIGATIONS AND PERSONAL LIABILITY

1. No member, officer or Director of this corporation shall be personally liable for the debts or obligations of this corporation of any nature whatsoever, nor shall any of the property of the members, officers or Directors be subject to the payment of the debts or obligations of this corporation.

2. There shall be no liability for the acts or omissions of any officer or Director of the Corporation in any proceeding brought by or in the right of the Corporation, unless otherwise provided by the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, arising out of any single transaction, occurrence, or course of conduct, pursuant to Section 13.1-870.1 of the Code of Virginia, as may be amended from time to time.

3. The Corporation shall indemnify, to the fullest extent permitted and required by the Virginia Nonstock Corporation Act, as such Act exists now or may hereafter be amended, its Directors, Officers, and employees who are made a party to any proceeding by reason of their acts or omissions performed in their official capacity.

#### ARTICLE VI. DISSOLUTION

Upon the time of dissolution of the corporation, assets shall be distributed by the Board of Directors, after paying or making provisions for the payment of all debts, obligations, liabilities, costs and expenses of the corporation, for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by a Court of Competent Jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

#### ARTICLE VII. INCORPORATOR

The address of the initial registered office of the Corporation is **[INSERT ADDRESS OF LAWYER, OR ADDRESS OF CENTER IF FILING WITHOUT A LAWYER]**. The name of the County in which the initial registered office is located is **[INSERT COUNTY HERE]**. The name of its initial registered agent is **[INSERT FULL NAME OF ATTORNEY, OR BOARD MEMBER FILING THE ARTICLES HERE]**, who is a resident of the State of Virginia, currently residing at **[INSERT FULL ADDRESS HERE, WITH ZIP CODE]**.

**[LAWYER OR PERSON FILING SHOULD SIGN HERE]**

INCORPORATOR: **[PRINT NAME OF LAWYER OR PERSON FILING HERE]**

DATE: **[INSERT DATE HERE]**

## Step Four. Develop Bylaws.

Bylaws should reflect your current organization: the structure of your Board, how your meetings will work, how someone will apply for and be accepted for membership, the rights and responsibilities of members and the Board of Directors, and financial considerations.

Don't forget to include specific language in your bylaws to the effect that the organization is going to be a nonprofit, subject to the rules and regulations of IRS exempt organizations. Later, you will be required to submit your Articles of Incorporation and your bylaws to the IRS when you apply for 501(c)3.

- ✚ You may find it helpful to consult the free Virginia SCC Business Registration Guide at: <http://www.state.va.us/scc/division/clk/brg.htm>
- ✚ The Virginia SCC does not require corporations to file their bylaws with them. But be sure to keep a copy handy for reference at meetings, and keep a signed original in a safe place.
- ✚ You might find it easier to start off with a copy of the bylaws from another organization similar to yours. You can find a copy of VOCAL's organizational bylaws, online on our website, at: [www.VocalSupportCenter.org](http://www.VocalSupportCenter.org)

## Step Five. Apply for an EIN.

An EIN is required for the identification of your organization, for opening a business checking account, paying employees and taxes, as well as for applying for IRS 501(c)3 nonprofit status.

Applying for an Employer Identification Number (EIN) is done with a fairly straightforward one-page application, Form SS-4. The instructions are fairly descriptive, currently weighing in at 6 pages in a separate document.

- ✚ Form SS-4 is available online at the IRS web site: <http://www.irs.gov/formspubs> Be sure to also download the instructions. You can also order a copy of both at 1-800-TAX-FORM.
- ✚ If you apply by mail, it may take at least 4 to 5 weeks to receive an EIN number. You may receive an EIN more quickly by instead using the internet, your telephone, or a fax machine to apply. Full instructions on how to do this are included with the instructions form.
- ✚ As with all IRS forms, it is extremely important to read all the instructions before completing the form. It is sometimes useful to make an extra copy of the form, and fill it out in pencil first, to make corrections more easily.

## Step Six. Apply for 501(c)3 Nonprofit Status.

You are now ready to apply and make your program a legal nonprofit organization. Applying for 501(c)3 can be a long process, six months or longer, so give yourself lots of time and room to breathe. We recommend finding a buddy or someone you enjoy working with to collaborate on the project with you.

The application is several pages long and comes with very specific instructions. You will want to follow all directions exactly, and make sure you have someone double check all the small details (page numbers, page sizes, etc), or the IRS will return your application, and you'll have to wait many more months.

The IRS offers a free technical assistance helpline for organizations attempting to complete this application: 1-877-829-5500. It is a service well worth taking advantage of.

There are more details and tips for applying on the next page in the Blueprint for Applying for 501(c)3.

\$\$\$ As of this writing, the one-time cost to apply for 501(c) 3 for most organizations is \$500. Some small groups may choose to pay only \$150 instead, if they don't expect to receive more than an average of \$10,000 a year for their first four years.

## Blueprint for Applying for 501(c)3

---

**The Buddy System.** Applying for 501(c) 3 nonprofit status takes some significant planning and time, as well as ferocious attention to detail. You may want a buddy – at least one other person who will work with you closely on the project until its final completion. This application process can easily take six months. It's good to have a buddy, someone to keep you on track, and double check all the details.

**First things first.** In order to apply for 501(c) 3, you'll first need to:

- 📌 Assemble a Board of Directors with at least 3 unrelated members.
- 📌 Incorporate in the state of Virginia with an Articles of Incorporation.
- 📌 Receive an Employer Identification Number.

**Form 1023.** The next step is to get your hands on a copy of IRS form 1023, and the instructions for the form. Form 1023 has recently been revised, and is available online for download from the IRS web site. Make sure you also download the instructions, which includes an index and glossary of terms. You may also call 1-800-TAX-FORM.

- 📌 Form 1023: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f1023.pdf>
- 📌 Form 1023 Instructions: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i1023.pdf>

**Get it right the first time.** The 1023 form is several pages long, and requests both narrative details about your organization, as well as specific financial information. *It is important to read all of the instructions, and fill out the application completely, following the directions to the letter.* We really can't stress this enough. Don't be ground to a pulp under the harsh wheels of unstopable bureaucracy just because you didn't read or follow the directions. It's easier to do the right thing the first time, than to wait four months for the IRS to mail its initial response, only to find that you have overlooked some small direction, and now have to re-write your whole application and send it in -- and wait again.

**Check the checklist.** Included at the back of the Form 1023 application is the Checklist, which offers a list of tasks that need to be completed, final reminders, as well as the *exact order* the IRS would like to receive all the various parts of your application. Make it easy on yourself, and them, and do anything you can to streamline their process.

**Get Help.** If you're stumped on any section or question, the IRS offers a free helpline for organizations attempting to complete this application. The number is toll-free 1-877-829-5500. Their call center is open from 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Eastern Time. When we were applying for 501(c) 3 for VOCAL, we found some representatives were more knowledgeable than others, and some easier to understand than others. If you are ever confused after getting off the phone, and still aren't sure what the answer to your question is, try calling back. We never got the same representative twice, and that was often helpful, in getting a better explanation.

**Fill out the application.** We recommend first making a copy of the blank application itself, and use a pencil to fill out the copy you've made. This will save you many headaches. When you're satisfied that all of your answers are correct, complete, and concise as possible, then you can complete a good final copy to send the IRS. It is possible to download versions of the application that can be filled out on the computer using Adobe Reader, but the problem is that you cannot then save the document you're working on. In which case, you have three options:

- 📌 One: You can fill out the application by hand. Avoid the whole mess.
- 📌 Two: You can fill the application out one page at a time, and print each page out when you're done.
- 📌 Three: You can get your hands on a copy of Adobe Acrobat Fill-in, or pay for the full version of Adobe Acrobat, and then save them.

**Triple Check.** Follow directions, and pay attention to every detail. Check and double-check your application before mailing it in. Then have someone else check it – someone fresh, who hasn't been working on it for months.

**Make a Copy.** Once you've completed your application, be sure to make a complete copy. If your application is lost in the mail, you'll be able to re-create it without any problem. You'll also want a permanent file with your 501(c) 3 application and any additional information the IRS has asked you for. One of the IRS requirements is to have your application available for public review, and there are penalties if you aren't able to produce it, when requested to do so by an interested party.

**The Top Ten List.** The IRS, on their web site, has a document entitled The "Top Ten Reasons for Delays in Processing Exempt Organization Applications." It's about two pages long, and it's just like the famous weekly David Letterman list, except not as funny. You can find the list by going to the IRS webpage and searching for "top then reasons for delays". Here are a few popular reasons:

- ✚ Number One – No check. As of this writing, the application fee is \$500. Very small organizations may qualify for a \$150 fee instead.
- ✚ Number Two – No bylaws. You will need a copy of your bylaws. If you don't have bylaws, you'll need to explain how your Board of Directors is selected.
- ✚ Number Four – No signature. The application needs to be signed by your organization's President, Vice President, Secretary, or Treasurer.

**The Long Wait.** Once you have completed and mailed the application, it may take up to four months for an initial response from the IRS. At that point, they may accept your application as it is, or they may request more information, or they may reject your application entirely. If your application is rejected, you will have an opportunity to challenge the decision. Most likely, if your mission is in line with the concepts of nonprofit community service, it is mostly a matter of making sure that all the proper information is in the appropriate area.

## Congratulations & Making Like a Nonprofit.

If you have made it this far, congratulations. Getting 501(c)3 status is a huge accomplishment. Once you are officially recognized by the IRS as a nonprofit, you will want to start acting like one:

- ✚ Read up on the requirements and limitations of being a 501(c) 3 nonprofit, which are available online at the IRS website.
- ✚ Each year, you'll need to file Form 990, which is the tax return form for nonprofit organizations. There are actually some pretty steep late fees, so make sure you file it on time.
- ✚ Make sure all of your staff knows what "legislative activity" is. "Legislative activity" means contacting a legislator and asking him or her to vote a certain way on a particular bill. "Legislative activity" also means encouraging someone else to do this (like writing in your newsletter "call your legislator"). The IRS has specific rules about this. Before you do anything, read the guidelines, and consider filing IRS Form 5768.
- ✚ As an IRS 501(c) 3 nonprofit, you will not be allowed to engage in anything considered political activity, i.e. endorsing any political candidates or political platforms. This is one sure-fire way to lose your IRS nonprofit status.
- ✚ You will also want to read up on the IRS documentation regarding the acceptance and documentation of charitable donations, and fundraising requirements.

## CONTACT VOCAL

VOCAL has a few different programs at a few different locations. Here's how you can...

### JOIN VOCAL

VOCAL Network is a statewide consumer association. If you are a consumer and you would like to become a member of VOCAL, or to get on the mailing list for our newsletter, meetings, and programs, contact us at: [network@vocalvirginia.org](mailto:network@vocalvirginia.org) or toll-free 1-877-VOCLNET.

### FIND NONPROFIT ASSISTANCE

The VOCAL Program Support Center offers free nonprofit program assistance to new, established, and newly-forming groups in Virginia. Please contact us at: [vocal@cstone.net](mailto:vocal@cstone.net) or toll-free 1-888-771-2030.

### FIND OUT ABOUT RECOVERY EDUCATION

VOCAL's REACH program provides free education and training on mental health recovery and wellness. If you are starting a mental health recovery education group, or would like to be trained as a recovery education facilitator, please contact us toll-free at: 866-647-9500 or [reachinghigher@reachvirginia.org](mailto:reachinghigher@reachvirginia.org)

### FIND A LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Please keep in mind that VOCAL is a small grassroots organization and we are not able to provide crisis services, mental health treatment, or referrals. In the next section is a list of consumer-run mental health programs that provide services in Virginia.

## LOOKING FOR MORE TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE?

*CELT Leadership Academy* is a free three-day training designed to give mental health consumers important tools for successful leadership and the skills to make your voice heard. CELT is run by the Mental Health Association of Virginia. For more information contact 434-953-9798, visit their website at [www.mhav.org](http://www.mhav.org), or email [programs@mhav.org](mailto:programs@mhav.org)

*The National Mental Health Consumers Self-Help Clearinghouse* provides assistance in self and system advocacy, on-site consultations, training, educational events, assistance in starting a group and technical assistance to consumer-run groups. 1-800-553-4539, TDD: 215-751-9655, online at [www.mhselfhelp.org](http://www.mhselfhelp.org)

*National Empowerment Center* is a consumer-run center that provides information on self-help resources, conferences, networking, conference calls and workshops. 925-681-0880, TDD: 1-800-889-7693, [powertwou@aol.com](mailto:powertwou@aol.com), [www.power2u.org](http://www.power2u.org)

*National Consumer Supporter Technical Assistance Center* works to strengthen organizations supporting mental health consumers by providing research, informational materials, and financial aid. Call toll-free (800) 969-6642 or [ConsumerTA@nmha.org](mailto:ConsumerTA@nmha.org)

*CONTAC* is a center for mental health consumers and consumer-run organizations. Technical assistance for organizing and maintaining self-help groups, listserv, electronic library, on-line peer support. 1-888-825-8324, [usacontac@contac.org](mailto:usacontac@contac.org), [www.contac.org](http://www.contac.org)

*Mindfreedom* unites 100 grassroots groups and thousands of members to win campaigns for human rights of people diagnosed with psychiatric disabilities. "MindFreedom leads a nonviolent revolution of freedom, equality, truth and human rights." office@mindfreedom.org, (877) MAD-PRIDE, online at www.mindfreedom.org

*Ask the experts.* You can get a lot of great feedback and guidance by talking to other people who have started consumer-run programs. You can meet other people in the consumer movement at VOCAL meetings and other consumer events, or give them a call. A few consumer-run programs we have worked with are:

- ✚ ABIL, Inc., 804-353-3964, abil1996@aol.com, <http://www.anxietysupport.org>, Support Groups, Education, Advocacy, Newsletter, Help in Establishing Support Groups for people suffering from phobias or agoraphobia.
- ✚ GLOUCESTER DROP-IN CENTER, P.O. Box 2144, Gloucester, VA 23061, peer counseling, social activities, and consumer networking.
- ✚ LAURIE MITCHELL EMPLOYMENT CENTER, 703-461-3886, [lmecc@lmecc.org](mailto:lmecc@lmecc.org), [www.lmecc.org](http://www.lmecc.org), Peer Support, Employment Assistance and Computer Training Center
- ✚ ON OUR OWN OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, [onourown@cstone.net](mailto:onourown@cstone.net), <http://avenue.org/onourown>, 434-979-2440, Drop-In Center, collaborative support services with local CSB, Transitional Housing Program, Hospital Liaison Program, peer advocates.
- ✚ ON OUR OWN OF ROANOKE VALLEY, 540-362-0061 Drop-In Center, self-help, recreation, education.
- ✚ PENINSULA DROP-IN CENTER, 757-380-1535, Drop-in center, lunch program, transportation, peer counseling.
- ✚ WARSAW DROP-IN CENTER, 804-333-3671, Drop-In Center, Warm Line, peer counseling, social activities.

## ABOUT US

*The VOCAL Program Support Center* offers free nonprofit program assistance to new, established, and newly-forming groups in Virginia. Our goal is to help to enhance services, strengthen organizations, and create a network of vibrant, flourishing consumer-run programs throughout the state. We developed this booklet based on our experiences with other peer-run programs throughout the state.

*Cassandra Nudel* is a consumer, writer, educator, and co-founder of The VOCAL Program Support Center, VOCAL Network, and VOCAL's REACH recovery education program. She is also an award-winning writer with publications in over 30 magazines and literary journals, and her documentary photography has been exhibited at The Smithsonian Institute, and The National Library of Congress. Before moving to Charlottesville, and becoming involved with VOCAL, she spent five years homebound with chronic illness, and living in solitude in a rural area in upstate New York. Her experiences with VOCAL have had an enormous impact on her life, and has helped her re-connect with others, re-enter the work world, and re-vision the way she experiences her own mental health and recovery issues.

*Brian Parrish* is a consumer and the Executive Director of VOCAL, Inc. For the past four years, Brian has built and led the VOCAL Program Support Center, serving as a program consultant for consumer-run programs throughout the state. In an effort to provide support, training, and networking among local programs, Brian has helped organize over thirty statewide VOCAL coalition meetings, and has co-designed and initiated several new statewide programs, including REACH, The VOCAL Network, and the Two People Two Chairs Program. Mr. Parrish serves on the Executive Board of the Virginia Mental Health Planning Council, and regularly offers participation and presentations at mental health councils and conferences around the state. Brian first became involved with consumer-run programs through working as a peer advocate at On Our Own of Charlottesville. "Working at On Our Own was a real turning point in my life. Previously, I was working as a computer technician. When mental health issues came up in my own life, it led me to try a different line of work. I found it was really rewarding helping people while working on my own issues."

