
Community Access' Steve Coe Wins National Award for Mental Health Advocacy

by Community Access

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Steve Coe, CEO of Community Access, a New York City nonprofit organization, will receive the National Council for Behavioral Health's prestigious Individual Achievement in Advocacy award. A panel of health care leaders considered more than 1,000 candidates for this honor before selecting Coe, recognizing both the breadth of his achievements over the course of a 36-year career, and his prominent role in more recent advocacy initiatives.

Coe's award particularly honors his commitment to improving police responses to individuals experiencing emotional distress, via the implementation of Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training for NYPD officers, in partnership with local mental health providers.

Because of Coe's advocacy, hundreds of agencies and caring citizens joined an alliance calling New York City to bring CIT training to the NYPD. These efforts resulted in policymakers investing vitally needed resources

to pilot training for 5,500 officers and to develop diversion centers where the NYPD can bring people experiencing psychiatric distress, keeping them out of jails and hospitals.

The Awards of Excellence honor exceptional people and organizations that improve the lives of people living with mental illnesses and addictions, increase understanding of behavioral health in their communities, advocate for public policy reforms, advance professional development and devote their lives to helping others.

Each honoree receives \$10,000 to be donated to the nonprofit organization of their choice. Coe will give his prize money to Community Access to support the agency's advocacy programs.

"I'm delighted and humbled by this honor from the National Council," said Coe. "I would also like to acknowledge and express my gratitude to all my colleagues who have enthusiastically

participated in our many advocacy campaigns. I share this recognition with all of them.”

Throughout his career, Coe has strived to improve mental health care, and advance the rights of people with mental illness and those who have experienced trauma and abuse.

Over 20 years ago, under Coe’s leadership, Community Access became one of the first New York City agencies to embrace mental health consumers – known as “peers” – as members of its workforce. Today, the agency’s goal is that 51% of staff should be mental health consumers. In 1995, the organization developed Howie the Harp Advocacy Center, an innovative peer-run program that prepares people in mental health recovery for employment in human services. The program has graduated more than 1,000 peers, and is considered the gold standard in peer training.

In 2012, Coe’s efforts also led to the creation and rollout, citywide, of an alternatives to hospitalization initiative, through which Community Access opened New York City’s first crisis respite center and first peer-operated support line. These models are poised to improve health outcomes for thousands and save millions of tax dollars within the Medicaid Managed Care system.

The Awards of Excellence honorees will be recognized at the Celebration of Excellence Concert and Dinner on March 8, 2016 during the 2016 National Council Conference in Las Vegas.

To learn more about the awards and the 2016 honorees, visit the National Council’s Awards of Excellence site.

About Community Access

Community Access’ mission is to expand opportunities for people living with mental health concerns to recover from trauma and discrimination through affordable housing, training, advocacy and healing-focused services. We are built upon the simple truth that people are experts in their own lives.

Each year, Community Access programs help over 10,000 New Yorkers who connect with the organization for a home, a place to learn, and opportunities to reach their potentials. A finalist in the 2014 New York Community Trust Nonprofit Excellence Awards, Community Access runs NYC’s first peer-operated support line (646-741-HOPE), a contact point for New Yorkers experiencing emotional distress, as well as the city’s first crisis respite center, a cost-effective alternative to hospitals, jails and shelters. To learn more, visit www.communityaccess.org.