

Seeds of Hope Award is Presented to Carol Kivler, Mental Health Speaker, Advocate and Courageous Survivor

Carol Kivler, Mental Health Speaker and Advocate, has been honored by NJ Monthly as a recipient of the “2008 Garden State Seeds of Hope Award.” The New Jersey Monthly started the Garden State Seeds of Hope Awards to honor exceptional people who go to extraordinary lengths to help and give hope to others.

What makes Carol exceptional is her journey from a severe depression sufferer to mental health speaker and advocate. Seventeen years ago, Carol Kivler lived in dread of her sleepless nights, inability to concentrate, and marathons of obsessive thought, which drove her to exhaustion and despair.

“Those were some of my darkest days,” says Kivler. After being diagnosed with drug-resistant clinical depression, Carol underwent ECT (Electroconvulsive Therapy), a form of treatment often associated with negative images like the one of Jack Nicholson in “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest.” For Kivler, the right treatment, a loving family, and a strong support group were, as she puts it, “the lights that guided me back from the darkness.” Today, Kivler is a highly-respected professional business speaker, trainer, and consultant, as well as an advocate for others living with depression or other mental illnesses.

Three years ago, Kivler created Courageous Recovery, an organization committed to education, compassion, and dispelling the stigma around clinical depression and ECT by supporting its use as a viable and successful treatment option.

“I speak to physicians, nurses, and other medical staff about my experiences and recovery,” says Kivler. “The medical profession itself is still somewhat in the dark about severe depression and how to work with a patient suffering from it. I also tell my story and experience with ECT to those with depression, their family members and friends. Many have the same questions I did and it helps them to hear from someone who has successfully made it through and is now living a healthy and happy life.”

According to the American Psychiatric Association, ECT is coming back into favor as a treatment for severe depression as its success rate is 80 percent whereas medication has a success rate of between 40 and 45 percent. Carol has had over 50 successful ECT treatments during four major

bouts with clinical depression and believes that ECT has become her “ladder out of the depression pit.”

"My dream is that someday the world will regard people living with mental illness as courageous survivors and accept them, not fear or reject them," Kivler says. "There is a terrible stigma of uselessness and helplessness that accompanies those struggling with this disease, and that needs to change. With more than eight years since my last episode of severe depression, I am proof that there definitely is hope."

About Carol Kivler - Carol A. Kivler is currently a member of the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) as well as NAMI-Mercer where she serves as a Board of Trustee member as well as a legislative advocate to the Board. Since 1990, she has had four acute episodes of depression, each time requiring hospitalization and ECT. She has undergone more than fifty ECT treatments during these times. Carol Kivler's Media Kit is available upon request.