



Hogg Foundation  
*for* Mental Health



## Episode 155: World Mental Health Day 2023 (Transcript)

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Hi, welcome to "Into the Fold," the mental health podcast. I'm your host, Ike Evans. Today, we're delighted to bring you Episode 155, "Mental Health is a Human Right," but first, [00:00:30] today's mental health headline. Young Minds Matter 2023 will soon be upon us. The theme for this year's event is "Transforming Our Communities Collectively." The conference features some of the most vibrant minds and cutting-edge strategies for collaborating with children, youth, and families as decision-makers and leaders in community transformation. Join us to learn how communities promote mental health and [00:01:00] well-being in everyday life, and how centering young people can transform an entire community. I'll have more to say about Young Minds Matter in a little while, but for right now, let's get on to our main story. This episode is dropping on World Mental Health Day, October 10th. World Mental Health Day 2023 is an opportunity for people and communities to unite behind the theme of "Mental Health is a Universal [00:01:30] Human Right."

Anna Gray: The theme really addresses the way that the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and to some extent the World Federation see that part of our rights not only are to treatment but to full access to life, to jobs, to homes, to education, to housing, to food, to all the things that impact our mental [00:02:00] well-being.

Ike Evans: From its inception, the Hogg Foundation has been working to improve knowledge, raise awareness, and drive actions that promote and protect mental health as a universal human right. But what does it mean to see mental health as a basic human right? What specific obligations come with that? Joining us today to discuss this question [00:02:30] is Anna Gray and Janet Paleo, both with Prosumers International, a grantee partner of the Hogg Foundation. At different times, they have been on the board of the World Federation for Mental Health, which is a driving force behind World Mental Health Day. Anna and Janet--Anna and Janet, thank you so much for joining us.

Janet Paleo: Thank you for having us. My pleasure.

Anna Gray: Yeah, thank you for having us.

Ike Evans: So [00:03:00] you have been among our friends for quite a while, and, yeah, your organization and y'all's is a name that comes up fairly frequently, particularly in any conversation that has to do with consumers, peers. But for those of our listeners who are less familiar, perhaps you could intro us to the both of you, Prosumers, its mission, its vision, [00:03:30] and how you approach this work in general.

Janet Paleo: Anna, why don't you go ahead and go first.

Anna Gray: Oh, I was going to let you go first. A little bit about...so, I'm the executive director of Prosumers and have been in the mental health arena in various capacities since 1985. So it's [00:04:00] been a while. And I am a certified mental health peer specialist. I am also a certified peer-support supervisor and have been actively involved in developing the structures around peer services in Texas and have done--We [00:04:30] do a lot of work. We have programming in Plano and in Houston and in McAllen, as well as San Antonio. And I guess I'll leave it at that because there's a lot of stuff I could say. And it is wonderful to be partners with the Hogg Foundation, I will tell you that. I did just get back from the NYAPRS Conference in New York, and the Hogg Foundation's [00:05:00] name was mentioned several times, even among folks there in New York. So, thank you.

Janet Paleo: Yeah, and I apologize, I have--My throat's kind of foggy from allergies, and sometimes it's fine and sometimes it sounds like I've got frog in my throat, so I apologize. So, my name is Janet Paleo, and I am the founder of Prosumers, along with [00:05:30] Anna. But it was my initial dream, I guess I would say, because when I found recovery, I was 42 years old, and it was the first time I was ever able to say I was glad to be alive. And then my next thought was, "Nobody should have to wait 42 years to say they're glad to be alive." And even though I didn't know what it was going to look like, it became my passion to have people realize that recovery is possible today--not tomorrow, not next year, [00:06:00] and it's sometime in the future when everything aligns but today, and how do people get to it today?

And so that was kind of the origins of Prosumers. We actually formed in 2002. It initially started off as a project. I worked at the Center for Healthcare Services, and it started off as a project then, and I then left that position and contracted with them to do the part [00:06:30] that I liked. And then we became Prosumers. But Anna was with me the whole time getting it started, and what did it look like? And we're a social-impact group, and we really focus on helping people find hope. And with that, advocacy is a huge part of that. Being able to find my voice was definitely a step in my recovery. And being able to [00:07:00] teach other people that no matter what you have going on with you, whatever's

stopping you in life, when you can find the hope and start working to that, then the other things get better.

Ike Evans:

Okay, thank you. And so, the Hogg Foundation's focus is primarily the state of Texas. It's a big state, and [00:07:30] making any kind of an impact here is enough of a challenge. But increasingly, we are starting to at least spare a thought for what is happening throughout the world as it pertains to mental health. And I would hope that some of the ways that the Hogg Foundation has been trying to make an impact here in Texas [00:08:00] are also--that there are analogous efforts happening elsewhere. And so you have both been on the board of the World Federation for Mental Health. So first, if there's some background that you could give us about the organization, about how you came to be involved with it, and what it says that someone with your point of view could be on the board of such an [00:08:30] organization.

Janet Paleo:

Well, I will tell you, it was by happenstance. I was on disability. I hadn't found--really found recovery yet. I was on disability, but I was working on it, and Anna and I sat on a committee in Lubbock called the Planning and Advisory Network Committee. And I was being sent as a volunteer [00:09:00] to state-level meetings so that I could provide the peer input and the peer voice. And this is back in the '90s, because as much as the state thought that the community centers needed to listen to the people they serve, the community center that I went to thought that they should hear what the peers have to say at the state level. So they were sending me to Austin all the time, and at one of those points, [00:09:30] one of the peer groups in Austin was selling raffle tickets and giveaway tickets. I don't know if it was actually a raffle or what it was, but I bought two tickets, and because that was all the money I had, and turns out I won first the grand prize, and it was two round-trip tickets to anywhere in the world that American Airlines flies.

And I thought, "Okay, [00:10:00] this is really good, but I have no money because I'm on disability." And the most I could do is I could fly somewhere really nice, walk around for a little bit, and then get back on the plane and come home, because I didn't have any money for anything else. And I was mentioning this to Anna with one of the advisory committees, and she said, "Well, let's look for a mental health conference that you could go to." And I was so new. I said, [00:10:30] "They have conferences on mental health?" I was just shocked. And she says, "Yeah." So we went back and we put in a search engine and we put in "mental health conferences," and the World Federation Congress in Mental Health in Santiago, Chile, popped up and I called American Airlines, and they had a direct flight from Dallas to Santiago, Chile.

So right [00:11:00] then, I didn't even guess. I knew that we were supposed to go, and I told Anna she was going with me because Anna speaks Spanish and I don't, I've never traveled outside the country. I didn't know I needed a passport. I mean, I was so naive. Anyway, through a bunch of circumstances, we finally got the funding because it was a week-long conference. It was pretty expensive. There [00:11:30] was hotel, you had to eat food, stuff like that. But we went,

and we asked--They had a board meeting at the end of the conference, and we asked if we could sit on the board meeting, and we were told, "Yes."

And so we sat in the board meeting, and there was another peer on the board at the time, and her name is also Janet, and she's from Australia, and she's become one of my best friends. We still talk today, but [00:12:00] we really got involved with what they were about and what they were doing. And in fact, volunteered because the conference was in August, I believe, and in December, they were going to do something in Dallas. And so Anna and I drove to Dallas to help with that event. It was about mental health in the workplace, but that was our first foray into it. And then the secretary general at the time, Dick Hunter, [00:12:30] contacted me, and he asked me to apply for the board. He wanted people who were interested and were willing to do things. And so Anna kind of tagged along with me and then took over as I started declining. Do you remember anything different, Anna?

Anna Gray: No, no. That's great. The one thing I would add is once we got involved, we found out that--So this is actually the 75th anniversary of [00:13:00] the World Federation for Mental Health and for the World Mental Health Day. And the organization grew out of the mental hygiene movement. And the big conference in New York that Clifford Beers had organized that Ima Hogg went to that led to her finding how she wanted the Hogg foundation to be structured and that she wanted [00:13:30] it to be for mental health, and it grew out of the mental hygiene movement. So in some ways, the World Federation for Mental Health and the Hogg Foundation have shared ancestry.

Ike Evans: Okay, yes. So thank you for that, even though I've never doubted that Ms. Ima was pretty worldly, but thank you for making [00:14:00] that personal connection. Okay. So, yeah, it was through happenstance that you became involved with WFMH. And so, just maybe try to set the scene for that first conference and what kinds of connections you were able to make while you were there.

Janet Paleo: Well, I think it was really [00:14:30] fortunate when we went, because we had--the federal government actually sponsored a lot of peers to go. And so there was a good group of peers in Santiago. And so getting to know those, getting to know, again, just how things are done in other countries, we learned very quickly that what we refer to as "peers" or "consumers" here in the States, [00:15:00] they use the term "users" in other parts of the world, and the users include the parents, not just the person receiving services. So that was one of our first things that we learned. But we got to connect with a lot. And again, we still keep in touch with some of them that we became really involved with, but there has always been a push to have everybody's [00:15:30] voice represented at WFMH, which was one of the reasons I really liked that organization. There are times that they're leaner on the peer voice than they are psychiatrists' and other professions', but they try to bring all the professions together so that as they come up with ideas or things that they want to work in, they have input

from everybody, from the social workers to the nurses to the physical doctors to psychiatrists to [00:16:00] the peers. So they try to encompass all of that.

Anna Gray: The first president was actually Margaret Mead. Sociologists, social anthropologists, it really is the whole world of "What does it mean to be mentally healthy, and how do we see mental health in our world?" And it ebbs and flows as to how medical model it becomes depending on how many physicians and psychiatrists [00:16:30] are on the board. But there continues to be pushback for it to be a little broader than that.

Ike Evans: Okay. Yeah. So, getting to our main theme, what it means for mental health to be a human; that is the theme for this year's World Mental Health Day, and just your understanding, what it is that [00:17:00] we are obligated to do if we subscribe to the idea that mental health is a human right, because my sense is that means something a lot more than just, "Well, gosh, wouldn't it be nice to expand access to mental health treatment?" Yeah. So I'd just love to know y'all's thoughts on that.

Anna Gray: Well, the World Health Organization [00:17:30] has taken the theme and coined a statement: "Our minds, our rights." And the whole emphasis on human rights also follows a push in the United Nations around the idea that there is no health without mental health. And it is a right to have access to those things [00:18:00] that allow us to develop in a way that is healthy throughout our lives, including our mental health. And in the work that all three have done pretty much together is the--I'll run through it--is the voice of people with lived experience. Unfortunately, last year, Celia Brown passed away, [00:18:30] but she was a significant leader in the consumer-survivor patient movement and did a lot of work in helping the World Health Organization write their human rights and peer-support guidelines and did a lot of work on implementing peer support and also worked tirelessly at the United Nations to ensure that mental health was included in the convention, people with [00:19:00] disabilities.

So at one point, you had said that the connection between this theme and peers, peers have actively been involved in ensuring that the rights of people who deal with psychiatric--who have been given psychiatric diagnoses are seen as full human beings with the full range of rights. And within those human rights, it's included what we call the social determinants of health. In [00:19:30] Texas, we like to call it the non-medical determinants of health. My own thought of that is "Why do we have to keep going back to the medical model?" If we're talking about actual well-being, then it's the social determinants of well-being; it's access to full society. And the World Federation for Mental Health is actually made up of organizations that serve civil society, which is the international [00:20:00] term for nonprofits or non-governmental organizations. And so, the theme really addresses the way that the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and to some extent the World Federation see that part of our rights not only are to treatment but to full access to life, to jobs, to homes, to education, [00:20:30] to housing, to food, to all the things that impact our mental well-being.

And so it's broader than treatment. Treatment alone does not get us to recovery; access to life does. So I see the theme as being broader. It also addresses that there doesn't need to be a power differential between those in the treatment arena and the people being served. We [00:21:00] are the ones who hire them. They work for us. And that is not the way this is perceived. And so, as we celebrate this theme, I would like to really highlight our right to our own physical autonomy, our right to bodily autonomy, and our right to freedom. [00:21:30] And we have lost that right in the United States with the advent of forced treatment and assisted outpatient treatment. And in the Special Rapporteur reports to the Committee on Human Rights at the United Nations General Assembly, have very clearly stated that coercion does not work for mental well-being. And yet in the United States, we're seeing a rise in more coercive and more punitive [00:22:00] approaches to mental health care, including the criminalization of human behavior and using carceral systems as mental health treatment centers. And I can go on and on, but those are some of the things that this theme really stands out for me, is we are full human beings with full human rights. We have a right to our own bodily autonomy. We have a right to choose what we want and do not want done with us. And [00:22:30] in reclaiming that sense of agency is truly when recovery begins. So it's extremely important in the peer field.

Janet Paleo:

Yeah. The only thing I would add on that is that oftentimes, you lose your right to freedom because of somebody else's thoughts about who you are or what you're doing or [00:23:00] whatever, frighten them or whatever. And I remember a mother who was talking about, she took her son to a psychiatrist's office at the local mental health authority, and he went in to see her, and he came back out, and they were told to wait, and so they're sitting in there, and the next thing you knew, a police officer came in, told him to stand up, put his arms behind his back because he was taking him in, [00:23:30] and he hadn't done anything, but they were going to transport him to the jail, not to the hospital, but in order to transfer him to the hospital, he got treated like a criminal to do it. And of course, then he was frightened and his mother was frightened. They wouldn't even talk to her. But a lot of times, we lose our rights, and people--I have sat in meetings where judges say, "I know this goes against the law, but [00:24:00] I'm going to do it anyway." I've heard physicians say that. They don't even obey the law in order to do what they think needs to be done with us, even though the law clearly says they can't do what they're doing, but they do it anyway. People go into hospitals voluntarily and then asked to leave and then are told that they can't.

So anyhow, our rights so many times get stepped [00:24:30] on, ignored, and just disregarded.

Ike Evans:

Okay. And I really want to hang on to that. I want us to kind of just sit with that for a moment, I guess, the sense that Anna communicated [00:25:00] that here in the United States and maybe even here compared to some other places, that we may be going backwards when it comes to the human rights element of mental health. And like Anna said, the move toward a more medicalized

approach sort of waxes and wanes over time. And so I would just love [00:25:30] to know from either of you, if you have any personal examples of stories of the difference that you are trying to make in this area or difference that you have made just having consumers like yourselves at the table of global mental health initiatives. I think our listeners would really appreciate that.

Janet Paleo:

So, one of the things that Prosumers is huge on [00:26:00] is having people find their voice and speaking up for themselves. We had one young man, maybe not so young, in our Houston group who went in and told his doctor what he wanted to have happen, and the doctor didn't agree with him. And he said, "Okay." And in fact, he says, "But this is what I want to have happen." [00:26:30] And anyhow, they wound up in a fight, and then the doctor says, "Well, I'm just going to take you out of services, then you can't have any services," which is illegal. It goes against the Texas administrative code because you can refuse any service and get any other service that you qualify for. But because he was a Prosumer, he took it up the chain of command and asked for a hearing and told that he was being threatened with his housing [00:27:00] if he didn't do exactly what the doctor said.

But he was very proud of the fact that he had that voice and he knew what to do. So many times when you wind up in the system, you have no idea what's going on, you have no idea what your rights are. And again, they get abused so easily and so quickly. You become--People are coerced or promised things [00:27:30] that they can't have happen, are told that we can't get services unless you do this, this, and this. And that's not true. If you qualify for services and they have room for you, they can do that. You have to. That's just part of the law. Anna, can you think of another example?

Anna Gray:

Well, I'll add a couple. So I think the impact that we've been able to have is at the individual level, to actually prevent people from ever getting anywhere near [00:28:00] the carceral systems and having to deal with police when something's going on with them. I could give you numerous examples of people calling Prosumers and saying, "Hey, I'm just not doing well." And within a 10-minute conversation, they are excited about the possibilities of their future. And we've had several say, [00:28:30] "There's been two or three times you've saved my life with a 10-minute conversation." And so we have the impact at the individual level. We have the impact at the level of people in our prosumer groups advocating for each other.

So in the area of not getting involved with crisis services where a lot of the retraumatization happens but also in people getting the services they need in areas [00:29:00] in treatment settings where they're told, like Janet said, they're told they're not entitled to a particular thing. Recently, somebody spoke to her doctor that had just been assigned to her. She knew what medications worked for her. The doctor refused to prescribe them--to prescribe them, said he was going to prescribe something else that would work better. She didn't want to change her medications. And when she asked for a new doctor, she was told she couldn't change. Well, that is not true [00:29:30] under the Texas Administrative

code, and she's a Prosumer, so she called me, and I gave her the name of the rights officer at this particular center, and within a week, she had a new doctor and the medications that she wanted. If we are going to get vilified, which we do all the time for, quote-unquote, "not taking our medications, being treatment resistant, not doing what we're told to do and being noncompliant," the other side of that story is we go in and say, "We want to be compliant, we [00:30:00] know what works for us," and we're told we're crazy, we don't know what works for us. And so the power differential is so great that even when we actually want the services, we're told, "No, you don't need that. You need something else."

And that's an area where us being able to raise awareness, to bring a new understanding of what it is to direct our [00:30:30] own life, and that includes directing our own care. And when we do that, we do really well. And we have a lot of people that have been actively involved in Prosumers who've gone on and gotten their education. We've had a couple who've gone on and completed master's degrees and are now licensed professionals of the healing arts themselves. We have people who've bought their own house, who've [00:31:00] started living independently, become their own payees after having a payee for their benefits forever. I mean, just people get to have a life. And so I don't know if that answers your question, but you can make a difference one person at a time. And then we partner with the Hogg Foundation to make a difference at the state level and have worked very closely with [00:31:30] the Hogg Foundation staff on policy.

Janet Paleo: Well, and you said on every committee that the state has just about, to put in th Prosumer voice or the voice of peers, and I'm thinking of JCAFS, which I can't think of what that stands for.

Anna Gray: It's the Joint Committee on Access to--The Joint Committee on Access and Forensic Services, which is all [00:32:00] about how beds are allocated in the state hospitals and how to address access to hospitals. We deal a lot with the forensic commitments in the hospitals, and the state hospitals are full of people who have been committed by courts, either because they're not competent stand trial, which is the [00:32:30] legal term, or not guilty by reason of insanity. And people who believe that accessing hospital-level services is part of their recovery journey cannot access public mental health hospital without declaring that they're a danger to self or others, which keeps us in a cycle of dangerousness and totally interrupts the recovery journey. [00:33:00] And Texas says they have a recovery-based system, but that is not true. They have a crisis-illness-based system.

Ike Evans: So I want to go back to the glimpses of how mental health is talked about and approached beyond U.S. borders, because one thing working for [00:33:30] the Hogg Foundation that I think is really important is that we leave listeners with some sense that a better way is possible, or just to leave them with a sense of what the world could yet look like if things change just enough. You've already done a great job of that, actually, with your responses just now, [00:34:00] but



have you seen or just heard tell of approaches to mental health elsewhere that kind of made you go, "Gosh, it really would be awesome if more of our folks back home had access to this or just had the opportunity to have this kind of an experience?"

Janet Paleo: Well, we've had the fortune of traveling around the world to look at lot of these things, and there's some places that do it better or [00:34:30] have--seem to have it--do it better. And there's others that are way behind. In Argentina, they're amazed when I speak up and talk about the chronicity of my illness, because my first hospitalization was two years long, and they told me I would never leave, and then I had 50 hospitalizations after that. And to see me today, they go, "But you don't seem like anybody that has a diagnosis." [00:35:00] And so when we're talking about recovery being possible, we really mean recovery is possible. And so in that realm, they're just barely kind of learning about what peers are and that peers could have a voice and could make their system better. Some places like Australia and New Zealand are really on the cutting edge. In fact, they had a person with lived experience in New Zealand being part of their [00:35:30] parliament. Anna, is that--

Anna Gray: She was the commissioner of health or something at one point, Mary O'Hagan

Janet Paleo: In Hong Kong. They had set up a really great kind of system for people to be able to get back into the work setting. And they had partnered with Starbucks, and even though their coffee cafe was not called Starbucks, but it was [00:36:00] just called The Coffee Shop, it was at a subway terminal. But they came in and they learned how to be a barista, and they learned how to wait tables and how to do all that stuff until they could get the confidence out to go out and get other jobs

Anna Gray: Well, and they learned how to manage and how to run a commercial enterprise. It was fully staffed by people with lived experience.

Janet Paleo: So we've seen some of those. Can you think of others, Anna?

Anna Gray: [00:36:30] So, one of the things that stands out for me is the United States is the only country I know of that practices polypharmacy and the idea that a medication is the best way to treat mental health. In other countries where pharmaceuticals can't advertise on TV and the [00:37:00] medications that are prescribed are between the doctor and the person who has come to identify an issue, there is a greater level of partnership in countries where there is universal health--access to health. Doctors are not seen as separate from the population or different from the people who come to see them. [00:37:30] So there is a power differential but not as great as the power differential in the United States. That isn't to say that especially in the Western countries, they still use medications. Yes, they do. But that isn't necessarily the very first line of treatment for people who come in seeking support for mental health issues. And they [00:38:00] don't have the level of disability because so many of those

medications cause diabetes, they cause metabolic syndrome, and they cause tardive dyskinesia.

Janet Paleo: Have us dying at an earlier age than anybody else.

Anna Gray: In the United States, people, especially in public mental health systems. And it's mainly--I would say the reason the research shows that is because they're the easy ones to access, but people in public mental health systems [00:38:30] tend to die sooner than the average population. So that's one of the things that I see that there is a difference in more and more. There's also a better understanding internationally in the almost cause-and-effect relationship between trauma and mental health issues. And that is still something that in the United States [00:39:00] you're hearing more about. You definitely hear it in the peer movement and in the consumer-survivor ex-patient movement and in the peer-crisis respite movement, but it's still something that you do not hear in classical training. And it's amazing to me. Recovery is actually part of the curriculum in other countries for clinicians. Here, it isn't. [00:39:30] And that is just very, very surprising.

Ike Evans: So I am going to get y'all out of here on this. Yeah. Another thing I like to leave listeners with is just how they can get themselves involved. So if you could direct our listeners [00:40:00] to anywhere they can go to learn more about your work and any way that they can give support, now is the time.

Janet Paleo: And I would also add...

Ike Evans: Yes

Janet Paleo: ...to read the United Nations--I'm having trouble speaking on it. Can you tell about the United Nations reports?

Anna Gray: So there have been two reports, one in 2014 and one in 2017, by the special rapporteur to the [00:40:30] Human Rights Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. Those are posted on our website under resources. People can access them there. I would encourage you to look at those. Additionally, I would say our website, which is [theprosumers.org](http://theprosumers.org), T-H-E-P-R-O-S-U-M-E-R-S.org, to find out more about prosumers and what we do, [00:41:00] and we encourage you to reach out to us. You can reach us at [info@theprosumers.org](mailto:info@theprosumers.org), and that email is actually read every day. So, please feel free to reach out. And I would say, give a plug for Prosumers. We are in a strategic plan where we are working on accessing more resources in order for us to build [00:41:30] the foundation to scale up and to provide more of these services in Texas and to spread the word that people can and do recover and how to go about doing that. So if you are interested in any way in supporting us in those endeavors or have something you would like to share or offer or ideas, please feel free to contact us. I really would appreciate it.

Ike Evans: [00:42:00] Okay. Well, Janet Paleo, Anna Gray, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us today. October 10th is World Mental Health Day, and learn as much as you can about things that are going on, and find something to join because everyone is needed for this.

Anna Gray: Absolutely.

Ike Evans: Thank you very much.

Anna Gray: Thank [00:42:30] you. Thank you so much. Appreciate it, Ike. And just remember, mental health is a universal human right.

Ike Evans: Yep. As I said at the top, Young Minds Matter, Transforming Our Communities Collectively is a free convening co-hosted by the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health and Prevention Institute. The event will be happening on November 7th, 2023 at the Harris County Department of Education Conference Center in Houston. [00:43:00] In-person tickets are currently sold out, but you still have the option to participate via Zoom or to register for the in-person waitlist. I've included the registration link in the show notes for this episode. There will be 25 workshops and panel discussions on such themes as sustaining partnerships and collective efforts, youth and community as change [00:43:30] agents, challenges and opportunities on the horizon, self-care and creating healthier environments, racial equity and justice, youth voices for change. I really want to focus in on that last one. A defining element of Young Minds Matter is its intense focus on the capacities of young people to drive change. Episode 125, titled "A New Deal for Youth," [00:44:00] explored what is possible when we focus on the power and agency of young people rather than just their vulnerability. Here's a quick sample.

Whitney Lee: And I wanted to start advocating, and I talk on various things that people don't talk about, because I kind of grew up around this shame of mental illness and that it was a tough taboo, especially on my dad's side. My grandparents were institutionalized, [00:44:30] and there was a big stigma that my dad's family faced for having both of my grandparents institutionalized for mental illness. And I was--I'm not going to let society tape my mouth shut for this, especially since it's an innate part of my life. So even at an early age, I was always going to be talking about being autistic and [00:45:00] dealing with mental health issues, even on some of the more serious aspects, because I didn't feel like it was right to keep my mouth shut for the comfort of others.

Ike Evans: The voice you just heard belonged to Whitney Lee, one of the New Deal for Youth Changemakers, a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy organization. Whitney, along with some of her [00:45:30] fellow changemakers, was part of a panel at the 2021 Young Minds Matter conference and was also kind enough to drop in for Episode 125 of the podcast, which you just heard. I've included a link to Episode 125 in the show notes, but it does give you a sense of what is on offer for this year's Young Minds Matter. So go to our website and register. We hope to see you there.

[00:46:00] Speaking of World Mental Health Day, I can't think of a better time to do a quick callback to an extraordinary example of young leaders coming into their own, one that also had an international flavor. Last September, the community of Bastrop, Texas, played host to Hogg Foundation staff, local community leaders, and representatives from the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership. [00:46:30] But the real headliner was her Majesty Queen Maxima of the Netherlands. As the honorary chairperson for the MIND Us Foundation, queen Maxima's passion for Youth Mental Health served her well on this day. She interacted in small-group circles with the youth ambassadors who were on hand for that day. These ambassadors, aged 14 [00:47:00] to 21, proudly represented Resilient Bastrop County, one of the collaboratives being funded through the Hogg Foundation's Collaborative Approaches to Well-being in Rural Communities grant. Here are some highlights from the event.

- Presenter 1: [00:47:30] The Hogg Foundation is leveraging the power of inclusivity and shared decision-making to create and implement community-driven solutions.
- Presenter 2: It is a real pleasure to be here in Bastrop to share with you this amazing experience with the youth of this community.
- Presenter 3: I wanted you all to have the opportunity [00:48:00] to understand that this is real, right? And mental health, we all have moments in our lives that we deal with challenges and for us to normalize that and to provide support for our youth in our communities.
- Presenter 4: Adults need to understand about youth mental health is that it is no less important than adult mental health.
- Presenter 2: One thing that's helping me cope with it is definitely talking to people knowing that there's other kids like me and that I'm not alone with this.
- Presenter 3: Because of our county judge and some work from Hogg Foundation [00:48:30] and the international leadership, we have declared today, September 8th, Youth Mental Health Day here in Bastrop County. This is a day to honor the youth here, the work that's being done in our community, especially for all of us.
- Ike Evans: I've included a link to [00:49:00] the full blog post about the event in the show description, so check that out. So now for some final thoughts. One thought that occurred during my conversation with Anna and Janet is that seeing mental health as a human right isn't just about the what, expanding access to services and treatment, for example, but also the how in a way [00:49:30] that respects the dignity and personhood of people with mental health concerns. Even at a time when most people, thankfully, recognize the need for access to treatment, the consumer voice that you just heard, which sees treatment as one part of a dynamic process that radically centers the personhood and lived experience of the people that we're trying to help, is still [00:50:00] important and needs to be

heard. And more to the point, it marks the point at which mental health goes from just being a thing that matters to a true universal human right.

And that does it for this episode. We're glad that you could join us. Production Assistance by Kate Rooney, Darrell Wiggins, and Anna Harris. Music provided courtesy of Anna Harris. Just as taking care of ourselves enhances our ability to help others, so [00:50:30] it is as well that by helping others, we enhance our own resilience. Thanks, as always, to the Hogg Foundation for its support. Please leave us a review and subscribe to us on Apple Podcasts, Google Play Music, TuneIn, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts. And taking us out now is "Anna's Good Vibes" by our friend Anna Harris. Thanks for joining us.