

June 2006 Edition

# CONNECTIONS

The Monthly Newsletter of the Ohio Department of Mental Health

Bob Taft, Governor

Michael F. Hogan, Ph.D., Director

## ***On Playing a Poor Hand Well: Mark Katz on Resiliency and Mental Health*** by the Resiliency Workgroup, & Rick Shepler, Center for Innovative Practices

With the support of the Ohio Department of Mental Health (ODMH), and ODMH's Resiliency Workgroup, the Center for Innovative Practices recently hosted Mark Katz, author of the book *On Playing a Poor Hand Well*. Dr. Katz, is in the process of writing his second book on resiliency and returned to Ohio in his quest to catalogue resiliency in youth who experience special challenges and find ways to succeed in life. He is fond of quoting Robert Louis Stevenson, who once said that *"life is not so much a matter of holding good cards, but of playing a poor hand well."*



On May 12, Dr. Katz presented a workshop on his most recent work on resiliency. In the presentation, Dr. Katz discussed the key role of four main protective processes that research has shown to offset the effects of multiple childhood risks. These include:

1. *Reducing the amount of exposure to the risks factors;*
2. *Preventing a chain reaction of negative life events; Creating safety nets;*
3. *Experiences that promote a sense of mastery; and*
4. *Opening the door to turning point experiences or second chance opportunities*

Dr. Katz was a captivating speaker, weaving wisdom, stories of resilience, and giving the audience the hopeful message, *"there is never anything wrong with us that something right with us can't fix."* To this end he encouraged all of the attendees to be *"talent scouts"* in the lives of youth, searching for each youth's unique talents and abilities.

Dr. Katz's workshop presentation was one of the many highlights of three days of celebrating resiliency for Ohio's youth and families. The Resiliency Ring, hosted by the Ohio Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health (OFFCMH), was a "hope-lifting" event, capped off by a human ring encircling the state capital. Youth, families, professionals, and representatives from the Ohio Departments of Mental Health and Education participated in a unified display of support and resolve for the resiliency of the youth of Ohio. For more on this exciting event, and an interview with Dr. Katz, please read the recent article published in the Ohio Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health newsletter, *The Child and Family Advocate*.

The three days concluded with a meeting of the ODMH Resiliency Workgroup, which is a youth and family-driven workgroup charged with developing recommendations for a resiliency-based mental health system for Ohio's children and adolescents. Dr. Katz attended the workgroup, anxious to learn what our youth and families do to maintain resilience in their lives. Dr. Katz met with each youth individually and listened intently while each youth shared their unique story of courage and resilience, living and thriving with mental health challenges. We all felt quite fortunate to have Dr. Katz meet with us and look forward to his return to Ohio in the near future.