



“Peers” Know What It Takes

BY PAUL BASS | SEP 8, 2015 2:47 PM

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PAUL BASS PHOTO
Mattison, Ward, Gail and Samantha.

Samantha knows how it feels to struggle with mental illness and feel to anxious to get on a city bus.

Gail remembers how hard it was to quit smoking while also wrestling with her own mental-health setbacks.

Both succeeded—in getting on the bus and kicking butts; and in establishing successful working lives.

These days they work helping other people with mental illness, 50 “peer recovery” specialists at the Continuum of Care’s [South Central Peer Services](#) organization.

Gail and Samantha (they preferred not to use their last names) spoke about the work along with two people who oversee the organization, director Ed Mattison and program chief Elsa Ward, on an episode of WNHH radio’s “Dateline New Haven.”

Theirs was a story of hope—of how agencies helping mentally ill people struggling to live stable lives in the post-institutionalization era have found that some of the most effective workers are those who have made that successful journey themselves.

To hear the full episode, click on the above audio file or find the episode [in iTunes](#) or any podcast app under “WNHH Community Radio.”