

# ► InSHAPE:

Shaping the Future  
of Mental Health

A PROGRAM OF MONADNOCK FAMILY SERVICES



## ► In SHAPE Community Partners

*Keene Family YMCA*

*The Moving Company Dance Center*

*Dartmouth Hitchcock Clinic/Cheshire Medical Center*

*Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center*

*The Granite State Monarchs*

*The Wyman Way Cooperative*

*The Community Kitchen*

*University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension*

*Keene State College*

## ► In Appreciation of the Generosity of Our Funders

In SHAPE received a four-year matching grant in 2004 from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the nation's largest philanthropic organization devoted exclusively to health and health care.

Our matching grant funding partners include:

*New Hampshire Endowment for Health*

*The Hoffman Family Foundation*

*The Monadnock Community Foundation*

*The Monadnock United Way*

*The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation*

*The Cogswell Benevolent Trust*

*Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation*



## ► Mental Illness and Early Mortality

Research indicates that the average life span of individuals with severe mental illness is 10 to 20 years shorter than that of the general population. Factors contributing to the profound negative effect that mental illness can have on physical well-being and longevity are complex and include:

- *Individuals with mental illness are at greater health risk for conditions including diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease, often due to the weight gain that results from loss of motivation, poor diet, and the adverse side effects of powerful psychotropic medications.*
- *Individuals with mental illness are frequently forced into poverty, living in isolation on the fringes of society.*
- *Individuals with mental illness often become addicted to tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.*
- *Individuals with mental illness find it difficult to manage their way through a general medical system that has difficulty understanding them.*

In SHAPE, the brainchild of Ken Jue, CEO of Monadnock Family Services, a community mental health agency in rural, southwestern New Hampshire, is designed to reverse or remove the factors that can contribute to early death among the mentally ill.

The need for a program like In SHAPE came to Jue after he attended the funeral of the fourth mental health consumer in as many months. Jue was struck by seeing photos of the deceased in their earlier lives. Many of them had been physically active before the onset of their mental illness, and the reasons why they were dying so young suddenly seemed obvious: first there's the utter anguish of the illness itself, and then all too often the loss of job, home, friends, and family—and finally, the loss of physical health.



“For mental health providers, it is morally indefensible to accept the status quo and do nothing to alter this situation.”

KEN JUE  
CEO, MONADNOCK FAMILY SERVICES

# MATT



Matt is funny, smart, personable, perceptive and there's 40 pounds less of him now than there was a year ago.

Diagnosed with bi-polar disorder in his senior year in high school, Matt had seen his weight fluctuate dramatically over the years as a result of his mental illness. At age 27, he weighed over 300 pounds, smoked two packs a day, ate indiscriminately, and, was by his own admission, “a heart attack waiting to happen.”

He was also leery of new programs aimed at getting him to change his ways. At first glance, he thought In SHAPE was just more of the same. “I got this brightly colored flier, which I would normally toss aside, but I got to reading it and realized that MFS was finally offering something besides ‘oh here’s a depression group, and you’re going to go and hear about someone else’s problems, and if you’re feeling okay, you’re going to be dragged down with them,’” Matt recalls with a grin. “I’d tried these groups before, and it was really discouraging.”

Despite the challenges of the past, Matt doesn’t spend a lot of time focusing on his illness, and that’s one of the things he likes about In SHAPE. He says that his mentor, Josh, is a good listener. “If I have other stuff going on, I can bring it up and not have it judged. It’s the same with the rest of the staff — they are the right people for the program.”

Matt says he’s expressed an interest in most things the program offered, including the cooking class. He started out by going on a tour of the local supermarket with an intern from Keene State College’s Nutritional Program. There, he learned how to judge the nutritional values of foods by reading the information on the packaging. A big leap for Matt, who admits he regularly ingested food that contained, “my daily dose of sodium in the first bite.”

The program has changed the way Matt looks at diet and exercise, and his focus is clearly on staying active and concentrating on his health and the other benefits that the program has brought him. “I knew that each day I had something planned, and was finally working health into my daily living. I used to think that because I went on an hour walk I could eat four huge pieces of pizza. Now, it’s, ‘I did the exercise and I may be a little bit hungry, but it’s something that will go away.’”

Matt is managing his mental illness well. His medications have been cut from eight different prescriptions four years ago, to just one today. Beyond the physical health improvements Matt says he’s gained a lot in the way of self-esteem, through his athletic successes, particularly in tennis, and his evolving perspective on his mental illness.

“The biggest thing with me now is I don’t view myself as Matt with this major mental illness. It’s a component of me, but not me. I try not to make it the forefront of my entire being.”

## ► The In SHAPE Model

Having identified the problem, Ken Jue searched diligently for its solution—an existing, replicable program to transplant to Monadnock Family Services—but came up empty-handed. Undeterred, he decided that MFS would create a program of its own, and assembled a small planning group that included agency directors and potential community partners. From this planning group, a working goal was born:

*“To improve physical health and quality of life, and reduce the risk of preventable diseases of individuals with severe mental illnesses.”*

In SHAPE now serves more than 150 participants, and boasts an attrition rate of only 20 percent, compared to the 25 to 33 percent average dropout rate for healthy adults enrolled in formal exercise programs; quite a remarkable achievement, given the added challenges faced by individuals with mental illness.

**But what exactly is In SHAPE, and what does it do?**

In SHAPE is an innovative wellness program that brings together a broad range of community organizations concerned with health, exercise, and nutrition to provide participants with:

- *Personal health mentors—professional fitness trainers who accompany participants up to three times a week on activities chosen by the participant, from water aerobics and yoga, to weight training*

- *Access to fitness activities provided by program partners*
- *Nutrition counseling and education*
- *Smoking cessation support*
- *Medical liaison support*
- *Encouragement and support for receiving regular medical check ups and active management of chronic health conditions*

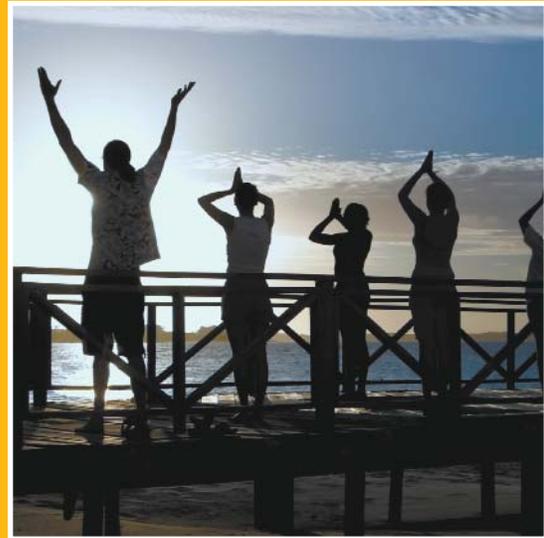
A comprehensive research component affiliated with Dartmouth College rounds out the program’s design, allowing In SHAPE’s effectiveness to be evaluated and potentially replicated in other communities.



“Awareness and reconnection with their bodies, and the understanding that everything is connected gives consumers an understanding of how physical health is central to their overall functioning.”

PENNY REED  
MFS CASE MANAGER

# KATHY



Kathy is a soft-spoken, articulate woman in her early 50s. She has a thoughtful demeanor and speaks with a no-nonsense kind of earnestness as she reflects on her past 15 months as a member of the In SHAPE program.

Kathy has long managed a number of health issues. She recently had surgery for an esophageal problem, and is currently nursing torn cartilage in her knee, for which corrective surgery is scheduled. Despite these challenges, and the constant struggle of living with fibromyalgia, major depression, and a dissociative disorder, Kathy manages to sustain an exercise regimen that consists of varying doses of morning yoga, walking, 30-minute workouts at a women's gym, and a yoga routine before bed.

"When I first started this program, I could only walk for five minutes. Last week I walked for 90 minutes," Kathy reports. "Before this program, I vegetated a lot."

Kathy credits her new ability to commit to such a routine to her mentor, Pam, who twice a week accompanies her on hourly sessions to the gym and on walks. The quality of her relationship with Pam is a prime motivator for Kathy. "I can talk about anything with her, and just being with someone is important. Before, I hibernated; I didn't want to be with anybody."

The companionship is crucial for Kathy, who lives alone and says, "I don't do things alone, or I feel self-conscious." She is planning to become a volunteer mentor through an opportunity that offers training to current In SHAPE members, teaching them the basics of the exercise equipment at the YMCA. "When I'm a mentor I won't be home as much as I am now. I'll be working with other people."

For the first time in many years, Kathy is focusing on vocational goals. She wants to earn a paraprofessional certificate to work with children in the schools. Kathy visits the vocational rehabilitation office by herself now, and is working with counselors there to access the training she needs to accomplish her goals.

The ability to commit to regular physical activity has changed the way she approaches other obligations as well. "Before, I couldn't commit to anything. I would say I would do something, like for my friends, and then I'd find an excuse not to do it. This program has helped me learn to make a commitment again," she explains.

Life isn't perfect. Kathy says she still gets depressed. She worries about the health of her mother, who lives in another state. She's anxious about an upcoming move, and her chronic health conditions weigh heavily on her.

"Sometimes I get so depressed I want to curl up somewhere, but I just tell myself, 'you're in this program, you gotta do it. If you don't do it there's no use being in the program.' If Pam hadn't been meeting me at Great Shapes this morning, I wouldn't have gone."

## ► In SHAPE: A New Paradigm

The In SHAPE model is distinguished by its focus on wellness, not illness.

According to In SHAPE Program Manager Gail Williams, “Ken Jue was smart in making this exclusively a fitness program. The mentor–participant relationship is built around fitness, not around mental illness. It’s the best thing in the world that the mentors don’t know or care what the psychiatric diagnosis is.”

In SHAPE’s reliance on ‘mentors’ has contributed enormously to the program’s success. Mentors are professional fitness trainers who help participants overcome the discomfort that comes with confronting the unfamiliar by offering companionship, encouragement, and technical expertise.

“Many of the people in the program are lonely. Just having someone to go see can change a person’s outlook dramatically. Sometimes in the summer we just walk through town. We’re not talking clinical stuff. We’re just walking and cashing a check or going to the post office,” says mentor Josh Royce.

Mentor Brenda Buffum agrees. “It’s making them feel more connected with their community because they’re out in the community—just out doing something and enjoying it. Whether they’re going to an exercise class, or one-on-one, they’re not home alone, which is where they might otherwise be.”

Collaboration with community partners—the foundations, businesses, and organizations that provide resources, services, and expertise to the program—also sets In SHAPE apart from programs offered by other mental health providers.



“Our clients have the opportunity to proactively connect with their bodies. Rather than being passive recipients of medication, they become active participants in gaining control and competency over their physical selves.”

GAIL WILLIAMS  
IN SHAPE PROGRAM MANAGER

# MARY & ROLAND



Mary was depressed, underweight, and hard-pressed to get out of bed. Her therapist and case manager at MFS suggested that she check out the In SHAPE program. She refused at first.

“I didn’t want to do it. I wasn’t interested,” says Mary. “When I first started, I would go to the Y, see how many people were there, and run like hell, she recalls. “I don’t like crowds.”

More than a year later, Mary, her therapist, and her case manager at MFS are delighted with her progress and her dedication to her chosen exercise regime of three sessions per week at the YMCA. Mary’s current goals are simple and straightforward: continue to eat regularly and maintain her current exercise program. She’s also committed to joining the next smoking cessation class.

For Mary, the regular exercise has had two benefits. It eases her depression and helps her eat regularly, which has contributed to her 30 pound weight gain. “It’s all muscle and no fat,” she announces proudly. “If I don’t go to the gym, I won’t eat at all. If I work out, then I get hungry.”

In SHAPE has become a family affair for Mary and her 16-year-old son, Roland. An asthma sufferer, Roland was having trouble with his breathing. He recently joined the program on the advice of his pediatrician. Since joining In SHAPE, Roland has seen marked improvement in his breathing and endurance.

A typical 16-year-old, Roland is somewhat taciturn about his experience in the program, although he does admit that he likes having something to do. He meets his mentor twice a week at the YMCA and together they do weight training and 30 minutes on the treadmill. The hardest part, he says, is the last 10 minutes when he really has to push to get through his workout. He’s looking forward to the warmer weather when he and his mentor can ride bikes, one of Roland’s favorite activities. So far he’s lost five pounds and three sizes. “I eat less now,” he says. “And probably healthier foods.”

The changes in Mary have been profound. “I’ve never been able to stick with anything before,” she confesses. “This works because it makes me feel healthier, and not so depressed. I can go in there depressed, and once I work out, it’s almost like it takes all the tension out of my body.”

Both Mary and Roland agree that the program has had a positive effect on their relationship as well. According to Mary, there’s a big difference in how they spend their time. “We’re out more, we do more things together—healthier things.” It’s good family time, like watching a movie together.

“We have to have family time. Right, Roland?” Mary asks.

“Sure,” Roland deadpans, with understated teenaged enthusiasm.

## ► It Takes a Community

In SHAPE was established in 2003-2004 with support from its local community and matching funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). According to Polly Seitz, Director of RWJF's Local Initiative Funding Partners program, the fact that MFS had strong backing from funders, partners, and community leaders gave the In SHAPE proposal a lot of credibility.

"The partners were present and actively engaged. There was nothing hypothetical about their involvement," Seitz recalls.

The partners Seitz refers to are the community foundations, businesses and organizations that provide resources, services, and expertise to the program. Monadnock United Way, the Keene Family YMCA, The Moving Company Dance Center, Keene State College Health Science Department, Cheshire Medical Center/Dartmouth Hitchcock Clinic-Keene, Granite State Monarchs, Wyman Way Cooperative, UNH Cooperative Extension, the Hoffman Family Foundation, the NH Endowment for Health, the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, and Dartmouth Hitchcock Psychiatric Research Center all have contributed to the effort.

An important result of this collaboration is the integration of individuals who previously were isolated, into a community where they feel valued, welcomed, and accepted. The natural peer network that develops among program participants reinforces this integration. "Participants take classes together, see each other regularly, and socialize. And, most importantly, they notice if someone is missing," says Carol Batchelder, Executive Director of the nonprofit Moving Company Dance Center, an In SHAPE partner.



“ We run the gamut of special populations, so we never gave welcoming the In SHAPE program a second thought. Everyone fits right in. Entire families, with three and four children, are coming regularly. It’s the greatest thing to see people being active, because that’s what we’re all about. ”

PETER SEBERT  
SENIOR PROGRAM DIRECTOR, KEENE FAMILY YMCA

# MOLLY



Molly is a bright, sensitive, 54-year-old woman who is well on her way to becoming fit. Molly speaks with exceptional eloquence about her experience with the In SHAPE program, while making sure to acknowledge that her years of hard work in therapy, the right medications, and the supports she has received from MFS have also played a critical role in her current state of well-being.

“Yesterday’s therapies and medications didn’t work for me. Psychiatry and therapy techniques are growing up, at least at MFS. There’s more of an emphasis on mental health versus mental illness, and the developing concepts of mind/body connections. My medications have been reduced, I’m off anti-psychotics for the first time in over 20 years, and I feel present and alive for the first time in what seems like forever.”

Molly’s life intersected with In SHAPE at precisely the right time. “When the student is ready, the teacher will appear,” she says of her journey through illness and her current progress into the realm of health and newly realized personal power.

“Right now I’m blessed with having a skilled therapist who’s not afraid to be genuine and caring. I also have a gifted case manager who has been with me through hell and back. The two of them hold my pain and secrets until I can continue to work on and manage them, when and if I choose. I have a psychiatrist who listens instead of tells, and I feel I am at a good place with meds. My primary care providers at the clinic treated me with great care during my last episode of self-harm.”

Molly says that she has grown tremendously because of the In SHAPE program, as have many with whom she’s shared this experience. “I’m waking up and learning to forgive myself for all the years of illness, self-absorption, ego-centricity, and damaged and ruined relationships, which at the time I couldn’t control, or at least didn’t realize I could. Positive begets positive, energy begets energy—that’s my new philosophy!”

In SHAPE clients recently formed a garden group, which, according to Molly, epitomizes the philosophies of the program. “We’ve created a sign that reads, simply: “Plants, people, and relationships growing here!” The members of the group all do the best they can with what they’ve got. I think every time I see a garden from now on, or see spinning pinwheels, I’ll think of In SHAPE, of growth and change, of personal challenges, of health, relationships, and resolution. I’ll think of individual and group decisions, acceptance and letting go, and of learning to believe in and accept the growth process. I’m realizing everyone has their own pile of compost, and how they tend it will determine how enriching it will become.”

“To me, if In SHAPE were a plant it would be a beautifully blooming purple perennial, growing, spreading, dropping and sowing its own seeds, returning year after year, popping up in unexpected places in unexpected ways, perpetuating growth and renewal. It has touched me, and I have grown!”

## ► Measuring Success

A study designed and conducted by the Dartmouth Hitchcock Psychiatric Research Center, a research arm of Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, uses the stages of change model originally developed by James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente at the University of Rhode Island to measure the program's effectiveness. In SHAPE participants enrolled in the study are interviewed a total of six times during the program. The first interview gives evaluators a baseline measure of the participant's physical and mental status, and readiness to change behavior. Following the initial interview, participants are interviewed at intervals of 3, 6, 9, 12, and 18 months.

While it is too early in the study to draw firm conclusions, the final data analysis will help demonstrate how the In SHAPE program can be replicated as an evidence-based practice. Among program participants, researchers are observing trends of increased activity, more satisfaction with physical fitness level, greater social confidence, fewer depressive symptoms and reductions in both blood pressure and waist circumference.

Beyond the empirical data, MFS case managers and medical staff can also offer a wealth of anecdotal evidence supporting the program's effectiveness.

Case Manager Penny Reed has seen consumers rediscover and resume activities abandoned years ago. Some exhibit mastery of new skills and improved self-control. "The vital ingredient of this program is that it addresses the individual as a whole person, not just the mental illness."

Dr. Marianne Marsh, Assistant Medical Director at MFS, who sees many In SHAPE participants as patients, says the program has been a tremendous resource because it offers so many options. In time, Marsh expects to see marked health improvements in patients who stick with the program. "Many are just starting the program now," she said, "and I tell virtually every patient I see to look into it."

The In SHAPE model incorporates another important, if unscientific, measurement tool. Every six weeks, the program hosts a celebration where participants are recognized for achieving weight loss, maintaining or increasing chosen levels of activity, or reaching other health goals.



“ The people I work with feel such a great reward from the activity. I've had two participants talk about wanting to go back to work. People who weren't working, or who couldn't work for whatever reason, are talking about returning. This is a big shift. ”

**BRENDA BUFFUM**  
IN SHAPE MENTOR

# JON & WAYNE



Jon has a great sense of perseverance and wit. During workouts with Wayne, his In SHAPE health mentor, Jon often offers up jokes that keep the laughter and conversation flowing. During a recent workout, a red-faced and sweaty Jon glanced at Wayne on the treadmill next to him and commented breathlessly, “Please be sure they serve good food at my funeral so somebody comes.”

Jon may describe his personal growth through the In SHAPE program with heavy doses of sarcasm, but he is quick to admit that the hard work he’s put in toward resurrecting his mental and physical health have dramatically changed his life for the better. For Jon, changing his exercise and eating habits was not easy, but with support from the program, it was possible.

Wayne recalls that he and Jon worked hard together for nine months and were both pleased to see Jon’s physical conditioning and strength improve. Then one day, Jon came to Wayne claiming he had “hit the wall.”

“I just can’t do it anymore,” Jon reported. Although Wayne couldn’t understand the depth of Jon’s depression and anxiety, he continued to make himself available to Jon and told his friend he was sad to see him leaving a program that was improving the quality of his life.

It is not unusual for people to quit an exercise program after a few months, in fact, it’s typical. Wayne has seen it many times, but what gives him great hope about the In SHAPE program is what happened next. Jon came back.

After several months, Jon returned to his regular workouts with Wayne. During one of their first sessions, Jon explained why he came back to In SHAPE. At home, he could no longer make it down his own basement stairs independently. He remembered watching his mother gradually lose her mobility, her ability to move around freely—to get up and down stairs. Jon knew he needed help, and fortunately he knew where to get it.

This is the type of hope In SHAPE offers.

## ► In SHAPE: Shaping the Future of Mental Health Care

The data from In SHAPE's Dartmouth study will be used to leverage more research funds to conduct a control study in New Hampshire. After that, Ken Jue hopes to introduce the concept to the state Medicaid system, and perhaps see the menu of reimbursable services expanded to include a fitness component. He also hopes public and private insurance providers will see it as an important health benefit—as important as anything else provided to individuals with serious mental illness—and one that may actually prove to be much more cost effective.

Jue isn't the only one with real enthusiasm for the potential impact of the In SHAPE model. Partners like Mary Kaplan, Vice President of Programs for the New Hampshire Endowment for Health, the program's pilot year funder, also has "high hopes for In SHAPE and the potential influence it could have on mental health care nation-wide," as well as on insurance reimbursement policies for preventive care for people with severe mental illness.

But for Jue, the potential is even greater than that—he sees the program as an opportunity for the mental health community to consider new ideas

for working with clients with severe mental illness. Specifically, he hopes the In SHAPE model will encourage mental health administrators to shift their focus outward and find ways to meet their missions by building external relationships broadly within their communities, not just with funders.

"We need to translate our thinking to a community level, and the mental health center has to take the initiative. We have certainly learned from our experience with In SHAPE that collaboration works."



“The impact on people’s lives has surprised me. When I was thinking about how to create the program, I didn’t think I had a particularly creative or innovative idea. I just thought if we were going to do it, this was how it was going to get done. At the time, I didn’t realize that this model would affect so many aspects of our participant’s lives.”

KEN JUE  
CEO, MONADNOCK FAMILY SERVICES

# JEANETTE & JO ANN



Jeanette and Jo Ann are friends. They have been for years, but they've become better friends since joining the In SHAPE program. Science claims that exercise and diet can make all the difference in a person's health, but, in the end, the power of relationships might be the most potent force of all—as these two friends can attest.

Jeannette, 51, is surprisingly cheerful and philosophical as she recites a litany of medications she's taken and treatments she's undergone over the years. In 2003, she had radiation treatment for cancer. And, she currently receives ongoing treatment for diabetes, high blood pressure, thyroid problems and high cholesterol. "When I go to the doctor, I say 'well what are you going to treat today—the diabetes, the cholesterol or the blood pressure? You pick it and we'll work on it.'"

Jo Ann, a former competitive figure skater, is no stranger to exercise. After spending many punishing years on her feet, both as an athlete and a nurse, her right ankle finally gave out and was surgically reconstructed. She wears a heavy brace now, but that doesn't stop her from walking and swimming regularly.

Jeannette admits she struggled during her first 12 months of the program, but is back on track with help from her health mentor and, of course, Jo Ann. So far, she's established an exercise routine and lost 13 pounds. Now, her new focus is nutrition. She confesses that her diet isn't always what it should be and she's insulin dependent, sometimes taking five to seven shots daily. "I'm looking forward to the program's nutrition classes, and hope to lower my insulin dependence through a better diet," says Jeanette. "All the stuff improves when I stick to it. I just have to get off my butt and get with the program."

Jo Ann reports good news. Her blood pressure and cholesterol levels are down. Her life is different in other ways as well. "I'm out more, doing more," she says. And her friendship with Jeanette has blossomed to include shopping trips outside of the In SHAPE program. "I can walk for two hours with a cart," she explains. "Jeanette and I plan each day which stores we'll walk in, and sometimes we'll go out to eat afterwards."

Ask Jo Ann what the most challenging part of the In SHAPE program has been and she'll tell you, "Getting Jeanette there." Ask Jeanette what her favorite exercise is and she'll tell you, "Walking the stores with Jo Ann." They're both doing the hard work of changing ingrained behaviors and leading healthier lives, while encouraging and supporting each other along the way.

Other than making sure that Jeanette keeps to her routine, Jo Ann says the hardest thing about the program is anticipating new things and not knowing how her body will respond. "There's soreness from using muscles you don't normally use. But we keep going back. You gotta keep going or you're not going to get any better. And that's exactly why we go."



## ▶ **Contact Us**

To learn more about implementing In SHAPE  
in your community, please contact us at  
(603) 283-1675

To make a donation to In SHAPE, please call  
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