



# vision

PENNSYLVANIA MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMERS' ASSOCIATION

Advocating for persons  
with lived experience  
for over 30 years

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## From the Executive Director's Desk

Hello to our PMHCA family, members and friends!

**T**he holiday season is here, and we at PMHCA are grateful for the support from all of you! We totally treasure your encouragement, insight, and guidance every single day of the year!

With that in mind, we have started a new Membership Committee dedicated to ensuring that we are providing members with valuable services and support. We want to make sure that we are using our time wisely, creating meaningful ways to support recovery, and delivering opportunities where all members can engage and be heard. We are meeting the first Wednesday of every month at 10 am. The Zoom link and telephone number for the meeting can be found on our website or Facebook page. Please consider joining us, everyone is invited!

We also wanted to offer some unique and not-so-run-of-the-mill ways we can expand our wellness and recovery toolkits. We are offering "Wellness Weeks" periodically to anyone who wants to join. During these sessions we are exploring different contemporary and alternative tools for healing and recovery. During the first "Week" we explored the power and healing of tea and essential oils and aromatherapy. Stay tuned for additional Wellness Weeks as we schedule them! They will be posted on our website as well as on our social media.

We are still having our Virtual Drop-In groups on Tuesday and Thursday at 1 pm and on Thursday evenings at 7 pm! You can call in or Zoom in and share some laughter and fellowship! The phone number and Zoom links are on our website and Facebook page! We'd love to see you!

We invite everyone to share your recovery stories with us! We absolutely love hearing



your heroic stories of strength and would be honored to publish them on our website and in our upcoming newsletters! We would also LOVE to start a section in our newsletter and online where we honor those mental health professionals (Certified Peer Specialists, therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, etc...) who have offered us exceptional care and support on our journeys. If you would like to share your personal recovery story or would like to share how a professional mental health worker has impacted your life, please send your submission to [pmhca@pmhca.org](mailto:pmhca@pmhca.org).

During this holiday season we all have the added stress of the pandemic we are living through. Traditional supports and services are changed, are delivered differently, or closed and cancelled altogether. We at PMHCA worry that our voices may not be heard as loudly and clearly as a result! Please let us know if you've been impacted or if you'd like to be part of the movement to ensure that we are not only heard but are respected.

Happy holidays to everyone! 🍷

Kathy Quick  
Executive Director



# Vision

is a publication of  
**Pennsylvania Mental Health  
Consumers' Association (PMHCA)**  
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www.pmhca.wildapricot.org

## Our Mission

PMHCA is a state-wide member organization dedicated to the support of all people who seek aid for recovery from a mental illness at any stage in their journey. We provide resources, referrals, and support to those receiving services or in recovery from a mental illness.

Our Purpose is to promote and support recovery through advocacy and education in order to eliminate stigma and discrimination.

While *Vision* is the official newsletter of PMHCA, it may contain articles and opinions from outside sources.

These materials do not necessarily represent the views of PMHCA, its officers, and Board of Directors. Medical information is of a general nature and does not constitute professional advice.

## Check Your Vision Online!

PMHCA's Quarterly Newsletter, *Vision*, is now available online at <https://pmhca.wildapricot.org/Vision-Newsletter/>

## Board of Directors

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## FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK!

Keep up with the PMHCA family, our activities, and current issues  
[www.facebook.com/PMHCA](https://www.facebook.com/PMHCA)



## LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!

Let us know how you like *VISION* and how we can improve it.

Send comments and suggestions to [pmhca@pmhca.org](mailto:pmhca@pmhca.org).



# ROCKIN' YOUR RECOVERY



Leading humanity to healthy, vibrant lives

Magellan is proud to support PMHCA

At Magellan, we have a unique vision of better and more affordable care that is helping millions of individuals enjoy improved health and brighter futures.

[MagellanHealthcare.com](https://MagellanHealthcare.com)

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# Art



Albright Public Library, Scranton, PA - Brian Kilmer

(8x10) Acrylic, 2019

Through recovery, the Public library has served as a place to find information on a variety of my interests. Sober and in treatment, I can develop my intellect by reading rather than be in my disease and become lazy intellectually. The library, it's a good place.



Flower Garden — Robert Yaklic  
“I feel good when I’m doing my artwork because I’m accomplishing something”.



“American Dreamer” — Kathy Bentz  
The American flag is traveling down Orion’s Belt because it’s the shortest distance between each planet to travel. The stars are spaceships going to new and exotic distant lands.



Anonymous

Juggling My Recovery — Melva Robison  
Sometimes my recovery feels like a juggling act because I have so many things I’m trying to do. Life is like that sometimes but I always try to put my recovery first.



Out of the Ashes I Rise — Lori Rago  
I’ve been in recovery for 6.5 years, clean & sober. I’ve struggled with depression, anxiety, ptsd and borderline personality disorder for many many years. So, painting this, for me is representing my journey through the darkest moments, and the times where I desperately tried to die... coming out of those flames. Being shaped and reborn into a beautiful, powerful strong woman. I believe God can take those struggles we go through and turn them in to something beautiful in order to help someone else.



I try not to let schizophrenia define me. That is why I do art, so I feel connected to the world. It helps drawing in the park next to a lake, in nature. It's almost like meditating because I get absorbed into the drawing and lose track of time. — Nicole Maroni



PerformCare is proud to support the Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers' Association's **Rockin' Your Recovery festival**

We join PMHCA in celebrating the power of the arts in helping individuals on the road to recovery.

At PerformCare, we know recovery works. That's why PerformCare offers hope and compassionate care to members who struggle with behavioral health issues. To learn more about our behavioral health services for adults, adolescents, and children enrolled in the Pennsylvania HealthChoices program, visit [pa.performcare.org](http://pa.performcare.org).

[pa.performcare.org](http://pa.performcare.org)

**PerformCARE**



**Healing is Happenin' — Eric Ayers**  
 This acrylic self-portrait painting from 1986 was lost, forgotten, then found 34 years later in the bottom of a musty basement cabinet. Illustrating mind-racing memories from childhood this time capsule discovery reflects some beginning steps of my healing through God, through art, through family, through community resources and thousands of stories from others willing to share their personal experiences. Healing Is Happenin'!!

**The Fall — Steve Horn**  
 I sat down to paint a bouquet of flowers. As I painted the image turned into my favorite season, Fall, because of all of the beautiful leaves and the changing colors. It really made me feel relaxed.



**Tunkhannock Creek, Nicolson PA — Brian Kilmer**  
 (8x10) Acrylic, 2019  
 I completed this painting at an art-therapy setting from a photograph taken at a local golf course. There was a time in my pre-recovery history when I threw my 7-iron in the creek after an errant shot. Now I enjoy painting and golf from a more serene perspective.



**Take Note — Patti Urich**  
 Medium: Yarn punch tool on burlap  
 Designed and completed during my first psychiatric hospitalization at age 19, this represents my first major attempt at independence behind locked doors. Our art director allowed me to work on this outside the group, trusting me with all the materials. I drew the image, in reverse, on the backside of the canvas, punching in the upbeat colors on a psych unit otherwise filled with dull grey. This was both calming and satisfying. Representing uniquely me.



**Recovery Discovery, (Abstract) 1&2**  
 (12x12) Acrylic, 2020 — Brian Kilmer  
 Signifying recovery in both the 12 step program (AA) and psych Rehab the background indicates the passage of days and the changing of seasons in relationship to the men or women in the "program". The center white leaf is marked with a triangular shape encompassed by a circle. This is an AA Symbol.



# Glenn Koons

## Certified Peer Specialist Scholarship

**W**e continue to honor Glenn's memory and commitment to providing guidance to others through their mental health recovery journeys with this scholarship. The \$1000 scholarship is awarded annually to individuals who exemplify what Glenn stood for. The ability to engage others, the willingness to share life experiences in recovery, provide leadership and guidance, and pass on these skills to others.

Glenn also was one of four NAMI National men who was recognized by President Obama at a reception celebrating the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) 20th anniversary. Glenn brought hope and smiles to everyone around him regardless of where he was. For more information on the scholarship, Glenn, or how you can donate and help the scholarship, please visit <https://pmhca.wildapricot.org/Glenn-Koons-CPS-Scholarship/> 🍷



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# Rita Cisneros

## Health and Wellness Fund



**I**T'S ALL GOOD! These uplifting words exemplified Rita's passion, fortitude and advocacy for uplifting all persons she came in contact with and the furthering of the mission of PMHCA. She served our PMHCA membership for at least twelve years. She was instrumental with creating the KEYSTONE PRIDE RECOVERY INITIATIVE (KPRI) and helped secure federal funding to provide statewide KPRI trainings. KPRI training provides a framework for service providers and individuals to understand and provide a welcoming and supportive services for the LGBTQ community and stimulate community discussions regarding LGBTQI rights. This project continues to this day.

Rita championed knowledge and opportunities for trainings for all individuals no matter what. It is in honor of Rita's passion and fortitude that PMHCA awards a training scholarship to individuals to further their knowledge and advocacy in her name. For more information how you can donate and help the scholarship, please visit <https://pmhca.wildapricot.org/Rita-Cisneros-Scholarship/> 🍷

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# Lynn Keltz

## Scholarship

**T**he Lynn Keltz Scholarship has been established to assist people age 30 and under to access training and educational opportunities that will contribute to their mental health advocacy skills. We use the term 'advocacy' to include advocacy on public policy affecting mental health and wellness whether at local, state or federal policy levels. Advocacy has long been in the mission of Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers' Association (PMHCA). Through this scholarship, we intend to engage members who will continue this legacy.

We envision the leadership of young advocates who will help to articulate and shape recovery oriented public mental health policy that better meets the needs of children, young adults and families. A component of this leadership is the expectation that all recipients will further the education and awareness gained through acquired training to shape the future of mental health policy, supports and services within these communities and beyond. For more information how you can donate and help the scholarship, please visit <https://pmhca.wildapricot.org/Lynn-Keltz> 🍷



# How Someone with a Mental Health Condition Can Qualify for Social Security Disability Benefits

**D**isability benefits from the Social Security Administration are a lifeline for people who have worked in the past but become sick or are injured and can't work. However, many people don't realize that Social Security disability benefits cover people who have a mental illness or condition as well as those who have a physical illness or condition. You can get Social Security disability benefits for a mental health condition. Anyone that has worked in the past and can't work now and expects that they won't be able to work for at least a year can file a claim for Social Security disability benefits for a physical or a mental condition that is disabling.

## Qualifying For Disability Benefits With A Mental Health Condition

Everyone who files a claim for disability benefits has to prove that they meet certain requirements in order to be approved for benefits. All of the mental and physical health conditions that are eligible for disability benefits are listed in one book called the Blue Book that is put out by the Social Security Administration. You can search through the Blue Book on the SSA's website to see all of the conditions that are eligible.

Every listing that is in the book has a set of criteria that applicants must meet in order to be approved for benefits. The requirements are often very specific. For example, if you have ADHD and are applying for disability benefits because your ADHD makes it impossible for you to work you will need to prove that you have:

- hyperactive and impulsive behavior (such as difficulty remaining seated, difficulty waiting, being restless, talking excessively, or behaving as if being "driven by a motor")
- frequent distractibility (with difficulty sustaining attention and difficulty organizing tasks)
- recurrent motor movement or vocalization, or
- significant difficulties learning and using academic skills.

Then you will need to show that you have an extreme limitation in one of these categories or a severe limitation in two or more of them:

- concentrating on tasks (ignoring or avoiding distractions, completing tasks in a timely manner, engaging in an activity close to others without distracting them, engaging in an activity at an appropriate and consistent pace)
- interacting with others (cooperating with others, maintaining friendships, handling conflicts with others)
- adapting or managing oneself (controlling one's behavior, protecting oneself from harm, setting goals, adapting to changes)
- learning, understanding and remembering information (learning new material, following oral instructions, using reason and judgment to make decisions).

You will need to submit as much medical evidence as you can to prove that you meet the requirements. You can submit a doctor's diagnosis, MRIs or PET scans, other medical test results, or statements from a psychologist,

teachers, case workers, past employers, friends, or anyone that talk about how your ADHD limits your ability to work.

## Filing A Claim For Disability Benefits

You can file a claim for Social Security disability benefits online if you are able to do that. Or, if you need assistance with the claim forms you can make an appointment at your local Social Security Administration branch office. Take all of your documentation and information to the appointment and a customer service associate at the SSA will help you fill out and submit your claim for disability benefits. ♡

Resources Found Via:

- <https://www.ssa.gov/>
- <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/disability/>
- <https://www.disabilitybenefitscenter.org/glossary/blue-book>
- <https://www.disabilitybenefitscenter.org/glossary/acceptable-medical-source>
- <https://www.ssa.gov/applyfordisability/>



**beacon**  
health options  
formerly Value Behavioral Health of Pennsylvania

**Beacon Health Options is proud to sponsor PMHCA's Rockin' Your Recovery Festival. We at Beacon understand and recognize the prevalence of mental illness. We also know that when recognition is coupled with reeducation and acceptance, health-seeking action can be taken. These actions lead to recovery, which is achievable for everyone.**

[pa.beaconhealthoptions.com](http://pa.beaconhealthoptions.com)

# LEADERSHIP IN RECOVERY (LIR) and I'm the Evidence

**PMHCA** is featuring the LIR / ITE program during 2020 – 2021. It has been one of PMHCA's projects since 2002. During this time by help from a SAMHSA Grant, PMHCA held four regional three-day retreats.

These retreats provided an opportunity to foster and strengthen leadership skills that resulted in peers holding Community Support positions on a county level and representing peers on the OMHSAS Stakeholder meetings. Also, by strengthening self- advocacy and systemic skills peers have built a grass roots support network statewide.

The following are the LIR goals: Strengthening consumer individual and group leadership which will expand leadership roles at local, regional and state level; Strengthening effective consumer advocacy across the Commonwealth; To foster at the community level a full expression of individual and collective voices for recovery.

ITE (I Am the Evidence) MH Campaign holds the values of belief, hope, giving, connectedness, action, encouragement, and possibilities. ITE provides opportunities for consumers to acknowledge of putting self forward in themselves and the community the ITE values. Therefore, LIR coupled with ITE puts forth for individuals a strong voice for Hope, Leadership and Voice.



**Please contact Pat Madigan, PMHCA Special Projects Coordinator for information about LIR and ITE MH Campaign** 



**>>> PMHCA PRESENTS <<<  
WELLNESS WEEKS**

Are you seeking different and unique self-care tools? Do you want to learn new and distinctive ways to maintain your well-being? PMHCA would like to announce the beginning of "Wellness Week"! During Wellness Week we will explore different tools, activities, and methods you can use to boost your daily regime. Keep a lookout on our Facebook for upcoming Wellness Weeks in January!

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PMHCA](http://www.facebook.com/PMHCA)  
Website: [pmhca.wildapricot.org](http://pmhca.wildapricot.org)

**QUESTIONS? REACH OUT TO OUR EMAIL AT  
PMHCA@PMHCA.ORG.**



ATTENTION ALL:

# PMHCA AND YOUTH MOVE PA ARE HOSTING A VIRTUAL DROP-IN CENTER

If you are interested in participating in a social call to brighten your day, below are a few options that we are offering along with the information you will need to join the call via Zoom.

COME CHECK OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING AND ZOOM CHAT WITH US AND OTHERS.

Check out the next page for details and a time that works for you!

Hope to see you there!

Here at the Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers' Association (PMHCA), Youth MOVE PA, and the Pennsylvania Peer Support Coalition (PaPSC) we understand the toll social isolation can take on our mental health. Connecting online can be a good way to alleviate this issue. Our agencies have collaborated in hosting a series of **"Virtual Drop-In"** zoom meetings to help reduce the sense of social isolation we can experience during this difficult time. These are NOT clinical or therapeutic groups!

- The **"Adult Virtual Drop-In"**, is a topic-driven, social gathering hour that is scheduled twice a week. While we are all house bound during this health crisis, let's take some time for some good old socialization and conversation. We would love to discuss many different

topics such as our "favorite things" and our "go to coping skills" with whoever wants to join us. One topic that is off limits is the COVID-19 virus! Meetings will take place using Zoom on Tuesday and Thursday from 1 pm to 2 pm. Meetings will be moderated by Kathy Quick, Jason Rilogio, and Samantha Harkins. Meeting ID: 131-337-859, Meeting Link: <https://zoom.us/j/131337859>

- Youth MOVE PA is excited to host a **"Youth Virtual Drop-In"** that is all about getting some social interaction, even if we can't go out and do our normal things like school, sports, going to the game store, or hanging with our friends. We know how stressful it can be when our routine is messed up and it is just as frustrating when everyone is talking

about Coronavirus as if there might be impending doom!! We would like to help you feel better about the outside world and the stress it may bring by meeting new people who join this group. We will be talking about ourselves, what we like, and be discussing a specific topic with each other during each meeting. This gives us some distraction from the anxiety that can arise from being stuck inside all the time. Our meetings will be hosted every Monday from 3:30pm to 4:30pm on Zoom. Meetings will be moderated by Zack Karenchak, Tristan Schnoke and Aaron Zimmerman. Meeting ID: 410-999-098, Meeting Link: <https://zoom.us/j/410999098>

- The **"CPS Virtual Drop-In"** is designed specifically for Certified Peer Specialists. As Certified Peer Specialists, we are familiar with taking care of others needs over our own, as well as our paychecks depending on our billable hours. In this time of uncertainty, we must take care of our personal wellness, so we can continue to be an inspiration to those we serve, whether by phone or through other technology. This is a statewide support group that can be molded to fit the needs of those attending. We are resilient, we're Peer Specialists, we are living breathing examples of recovery, and we will get through this together. Join us Mondays from 11:30am – 12:30pm. This meeting will be moderated by Jason Rilogio, Dave Measel, and Keith Elders. Meeting ID: 305-863-445, Meeting Link: <https://zoom.us/j/305863445>
- PMHCA invites you to join us in our **"ART IN RECOVERY GROUP."** We envision a safe space where we can share our artwork as part of our recovery – whatever that is for you – and grow and develop our artwork, friendship, and community together. Let's share our artwork, in whatever form your art takes, such as painting, photography, sculpture, coloring, diamond art, crocheting, crafting, or whatever you enjoy! This is a virtual meeting in order to accommodate everyone's schedule and maintain everyone's safety. Every Thursday at 7:00 P.M. The Zoom link will stay the same for every meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/93997640863> 🎨

## @ DEATH'S DOOR

**E**vanesce had woken up to another day. It has been about two weeks and he just had not been feeling like himself. As each day comes, he feels worse and worse. He has a harder time eating, focusing, wanting to do things, talking to people and even going out.

Evanesce is trying to make sense of all of this. He is fighting inside and out, but slowly stops caring.

One day, Evanescence goes to his mirror in his closet. As he stands in front of the mirror staring, he notices something strange, that something strange is him. His flesh is slowly detaching from his hands and arms.

Startled, he slams the door shut and pulls a dresser in front of the closet door to make sure it will never be opened again.

Evanescence goes deeper into the dark. Sitting there all alone, he starts thinking of a lost loved one. He decides to take a ride.

As Evanescence gets into his car, one again, he notices something strange

happening. As he goes to look into his mirror to reverse, he sees his flesh has detached from his face. Evanescence thinks he is seeing things, maybe even imagining these visions.

Evanescence turns the car off and runs down the steps into his house panting. He continues to run, as if he were the FLASH, to the back of the house where the closet is. He grabs the dresser that is in front of the closet, as if he were the HULK, and thrust the dresser aside, He grabs the doorknob and slowly begins to turn it. As it squeaks, Evanescence hesitantly starts to peek as it continues to open. Finally, once the door opens, the mirror appears.

Evanescence reluctantly, slowly, moves in front of the mirror. He is shocked to see what appears before him. It is him, but parts of him are missing. His flesh is gone. He is down to all bones. Evanescence has slowly turned in a skeleton.

He stands frozen, in front of the mirror, his jaw to the ground and his eyes wide open. As he is standing there, he notices

a reflection in the mirror. He turns to the corner of the closet. In that corner, deeply tucked away, sits a backpack.

Evanescence slowly moves toward the bag. As he reaches the bag, he slowly begins unzipping it. Once unzipped, he cautiously peeks inside. He realizes the bag is full of all the secrets he had been carrying and holding on for everyone for years.

These are the same secrets he was protecting everyone from, so they did not hurt or feel hurt. Meanwhile, no one was protecting Evanescence from his own hurt from these secrets.

Evanescence was slowly being eaten away from this inside out. He was slowly dying inside. The emotional hurt was becoming overwhelming and too much for him to bear. Evanescence was finding himself at death's door.

He realized the toll these secrets had been taking on him physically and emotionally, after all these years. It was time to let go of those secrets. It was time for Evanescence to free himself of all the

# Recovery. Resiliency. Wellness.

Community Care, a nonprofit behavioral health managed care company, proudly supports the Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers Association.



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suffering he has been bearing all alone.

If no one was going to protect him, then Evanesce was going to start protection himself. Evanesce began to believe it was ok to love and put himself first. He also decided it was time to get rid of the pain, hurt and guilt in order to be able to move on.

Letting the skeleton and secrets out of the closet was the first step Evanesce took for his pain, hurt and guilt to begin the healing process. It was not easy for him and it required hard work and acceptance on his part. Allowing help and acknowledging his own worth was a struggle, but with work and support of great people he found himself getting there. He would learn to love himself again. He was evolving into a new beginning, a fresh start.

After the release of the secrets, many positive things became of Evanesce. His confidence began getting stronger with each passing day. He started standing up for himself, used skills with positive outcomes and understanding and would say “no” to others without feeling any guilt. He felt like a new person and never felt any happier and uplifted. What a change this was for Evanesce within himself.

Two years after Evanesce finally let go of the secrets and with all the hard work he put into himself, he decided he wanted to help others who struggle like he once did and knows he may still have future bouts with struggles.

Evanesce became a peer specialist. He loves helping, educating, listening, inspiring and working with others who struggle with similar heartaches and pain both physically and mentally.

Evanesce has a much better understanding of his struggles and if he can help reach just one person, he feels it is well worth it, because one person’s worth is well worth it to him. He has come to accept this is his faith and purpose to help that one and/or others.

Evanesce is an advocate for others and himself till this day. He shares his story to whomever, whenever, and wherever he can, to educate those who will listen. In the process, he hopes to inspire those struggling and feeling alone that it is okay to reach out for help.

He also is hoping for those struggling, feeling abandoned, alone, to extend their hand so Evanesce and people like him can take their hand and walk with them, side by side, step by step, day by day and even moment by moment if needed. He wants

to walk with them through their journey and then some, so they never have to be or feel alone again. Evanesce believes all people should feel loved and feel their worth.

Evanesce feels we have similar stories. In the end, we all have pain and sorrow. We seem to be in the same story book, with different titles, chapters and scripts. Evanesce would like to see everyone’s endings be changed so that each night when we close our books our story ends with a happily ever after.

THE END

—Tracy Kremer

YOU'RE INVITED!

# PMHCA Membership Committee Meeting

*PMHCA has begun a membership committee made up of individuals interested in ensuring that we represent you and your needs. This committee will address membership retention and recruitment as well as look at ways we can keep our members engaged and up to date on all of our advocacy efforts.*

Please join us on the first Wednesday of every month at 10 am on Zoom.

ZOOM LINK: [ZOOM.US/J/95976114150](https://zoom.us/j/95976114150)







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## Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers' Association

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### Membership Application | Join us on the road to recovery!

#### Member Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Work) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

#### Membership Levels

Member — \$20 (or as much as you can afford)

Donation — \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Corporate — \$250

Consumer Run Organizations — Based on budget

\$30 — Under \$25,000 per year

\$50 — \$25,000-\$49,999 per year

\$75 — \$50,000-\$100,000 per year

\$100 — Over \$100,000 per year

*Donations in excess of the \$0-\$20.00 membership fee are tax-deductible. PMHCA confirms that no good or services are provided to you in exchange for this contribution.*

**Or Sign Up and Contribute Online: [www.pmhca.wildapricot.org](http://www.pmhca.wildapricot.org) — click on Membership**

I would like to receive a PDF copy of the *Vision* newsletter via email instead of USPS mail.