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PHOTO VOICE PROJECT A SNAPSHOT OF LIFE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

GREENSBURG, PA, April 23, 2012 … Seeing the world through someone else's eyes can sensitize a person to the struggles and challenges others face. That's one goal of a photography exhibit on tour during May as part of the local observance of Mental Health Month.

The display, which debuts May 1 during an opening reception at the Megan Intermission Suite in Greensburg's Palace Theatre, is presented by Westmoreland County Behavioral Health and Developmental Services in collaboration with Sally Jo Snyder of the Consumer Health Coalition, Mental Health American of Westmorland County and local drop-in centers.

The show called "Westmoreland Photo Voice" is patterned after an Allegheny County project that put physical disabilities in the spotlight.

The 24 photos in this exhibit were taken by 13 individuals recovering from mental illness throughout Westmoreland County. Each picture and accompanying narrative developed by the photographer represents "What I Need to Live Well."

The participants, selected from around the county, received photography instruction on framing and focus and were each given a digital camera with which to work. The resulting pictures have been cropped and enlarged and professionally framed for the exhibit.

Ray Grabowski, director of Behavioral Health Services for Excela Health and a member of the team assembling the show, noted that the photos depict "ordinary things – sunsets, vegetables at Walmart, winding paths – images that are meaningful to their life and recovery." The photos may be reproduced in a calendar or other venue as part of continuing advocacy.

The Photo Voice exhibit will be on display in the following locations:

May 1 – Gala Opening, 3 to 6 p.m.. Palace Theatre, Megan Intermission Suite, Greensburg. The event is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served.

May 3 – Mental Health America Innovations Annual Dinner – Ramada Greensburg Hotel & Conference Center

Week of May 7 – Excela Square at Norwin

May 14 to May 16 - Excela Frick Hospital

May 17 to May 19 – Excela Latrobe Hospital

May 21 to May 23 – Excela Westmoreland Hospital

May 24 to May 31 – Westmoreland County Courthouse