



Interviewee: **Chris Weis**

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Interviewers: **Athena Aardweg, Judy Barricella**
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Voices of Our Region
Chris Weiss
May 12th, 2008

Interviewers: Today is Monday. March 12. March? March? May 12. May 12. Geez. Uh Oh. May 12, 2008. Spending too much time with my mother. And first I'm going to ask you to say again your name, where you live, where you grew up, and a little bit about your family.

Chris: Okay. My name is Chris Weiss. I grew up in Hazelwood, but now I live in Homestead. I live with my mom, my brother, my three sisters, and we have four dogs and three cats.

Interviewers: Wow. Wow. Are your brothers and sisters all grown?

Chris: Yeah we're all grown and we all take care of my mom 'cause she has Alzheimer's.

Interviewers: Mmmm.

Chris: And so we all pitch in and do what we can to help her.

Interviewers: Um hmm. Um hmm. And... So, you grew up in Hazelwood so, you went to city schools?

Chris: Right.

Interviewers: And how was that?

Chris: Horrible.

Interviewers: Why?

Chris: Well, the... With my mom and dad splitting up and everything and I had difficulties in school and difficulties in the community because dealing with my mental health stuff. It was hard to adapt. And... And then... So, I just couldn't... couldn't adapt with everything. And then in '74 we moved out of the city and moved to the Homestead area, which is a different school district and... and the area that we moved in, we found out that my uncle was a cop for... for the... the area that we lived in, which helped out a lot.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And... And... Still have problems with the... with the schools and stuff. And then... And then from '74 I was hospitalized for the first time at Western Psych. And was there for 3 months. And then when I got out of there I was hospitalized 4 more times and... with a span of a year...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Chris: ...since I came out of Western Psych. And then... Then there was more hospitalizations and then I went into... went to Woodsville.

Interviewers: Oh.

Chris: And... Which I call the University of Woodsville, the School of Hard Knocks.

Interviewers: Uh huh.

Chris: Yeah. Which was my joke because I hated it there, but I was only there for 5 months. And then... Then when I was there one of the doctors says I shouldn't have been there.

Interviewers: Ohhhh no.

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: What was... What did they diagnose your mental health problems?

Chris: It was major depression.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Chris: You know. And...

Interviewers: So, when you... How old were you when... in '74 when you first went to WPIC?

Chris: I was 14.

Interviewers: Oh you were 14.

Chris: Went in on my... I was 302ed on my 14th birthday.

Interviewers: Ohhhh. You were 302ed into there?

Chris: Yes.

Interviewers: Ohhhh. Wow.

Chris: Yeah. So...

Interviewers: So, you got diagnosed fairly young.

Chris: Right.

Interviewers: Wow. Wow. And what do they do for you? All these hospitalizations? What... Did they change medicines? What did they do?

Chris: Well, being that I was so young they were more or less experimenting.

Interviewers: Uh huh. Um hmm.

Chris: You know. And... and then with... and then they found out that... they kept saying, oh they'd help and then later on they wouldn't work and he says, 'You must be allergic to it.'

Interviewers: Really?

Chris: Yeah. And some of the medications that they say I'm allergic to was... was Prolixin and Haldol. And then another one was ibuprofen, which was a pain medication because of... with different pains I was dealing with...

00:05:00

Chris: ...from lifting weights and stuff.

Interviewers: Um hmm. Um hmm.

Chris: And... And then I was lifting weights at such a young age also. I started lifting weights when I was 9.

Interviewers: Ooooo.

Chris: And... And they said you're not supposed to be doing that until like... you're like 17 and stuff.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Chris: And... But I used to go to Trees Hall in... in Oakland and lift weights. And...

Interviewers: So, you what? You injured some of your muscles? Or...

Chris: Well, they said that... there's something to do with my ligaments and bones growth and stuff like that. And then... And I would lift weights all time. And then when I was committed into Western Psych, I weighed 189, but can bench press over... over, over 350 pounds. And then the... the staff there wouldn't let me lift weights at Trees Hall anymore. 'Cause that's how they go... And they says that I was a threat to society and stuff like that because I was 302ed. And... and then I would like throw things, which like I say, I'd get mad and just throw things. And... and I could... like one of those regular chairs with... with arms on I could just pick it up over my head and just throw them across the room with ease. And...

Interviewers: So, you did that up there?

Chris: I did that up there was...

Interviewers: Ohhhhh.

Chris: Wasn't throwing them at no one. Just throwing them. And then... And also I was agile too. I don't know if you know what that is.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And... And... Where I would climb up on things and just dive off. And...

Interviewers: Ohhhhh.

Chris: You know. And...

Interviewers: So, you have a problem with impulse control?

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: So... So, then why were you hospitalized all those other times?

Chris: Mainly for just the same thing and stuff like that. And then... then I started going... then in like in '89 I started going to this drop-in center at... on Stanwix Street. And there was a couple people there says that, "I just come here and you don't have to do anything. You're not forced to do anything. Just come here and just do whatever you want." You know. And... But as I was there I just like hung out. And then started asking questions about stuff. And... And then the person there was... that was more or less running the center, his name was Jack Barry.

Interviewers: Okay.

Chris: And... And he was a... charge of this organization called Southwest Consumers. And they do like a lot of advocacy stuff and did lot... had a lot of training that they provided for the members there. And I was good at catching on about stuff and then they taught... So, by doing that I was able to learn how to advocate...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: ...for myself and other people. And then... and then... That's where the start of the... where I started... got... got involved the... the movement more or less.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: Just by going there and just participating. And every time there was trainings offered... I just went to all the trainings and stuff like that. And finding out what resources was out there. Now that I was able to know so much... where... when people would ask me about certain resources I... I don't even have to look them up. I can just give them the information.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And even the phone numbers. And they said, 'Well, how did you come up with that so fast.' You know.

Interviewers: I would.

Chris: You know. And... And then I... also they would get pamphlets coming in. Ordering pamphlets and started reading the pamphlets and it was... again it was just resources. And...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Chris: And... And... And another thing to help is I have a photographic memory.

Interviewers: Ohhhhhh.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Chris: Where I can just read it once and it's already in...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: I've been in meetings with you and I know you... you're a wealth of knowledge. 'Cause you do. You just think and answer.

Chris: Right. And... And I'm always... And I'm... do what I can to help people.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And... And try to get people connected where they need to go.

Interviewers: Chris, were you ever able to work?

Track 2

Chris: Not able to work until this year. About a month ago I started at the MA... Mental Health America.

Interviewers: Okay.

Chris: And what they do is they have me doing their newsletter. And... And... And one of the things that I'm going to be doing is just... is just giving the information... just... sort of like the... the, "Let Your Voice Be Heard" newsletter they have in the past, but I'm just going to like do a little bit more... more things with it. Just to get more... because I just wanted to... was talking to one of the staff there and... that runs it and she says she has to talk to her supervisor because I would like to put something in it to build people's hand-eye coordination.

Interviewers: Ohhhh.

Chris: And... And, you know, instead of just reading, but they can also build their hand-eye coordination.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: And... And there are tools out there to help them build their hand-eye coordination. One is crossword puzzles and word search.

Interviewers: Oh yeah. Right.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Right. So what... So, "Let Our Voices Be Heard" newsletter is no more?

Chris: Yeah. It's still there.

Interviewers: Is it still there?

Chris: Yeah. But... that's what I'm going to be doing.

Interviewers: Okay.

Chris: And the other thing at... being that... that we're politically active we would send birthday cards to the legislators on their birthdays.

Interviewers: Ohh.

Chris: You know. And let them know how many members we have because they pay attention to numbers.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: So, I asked if they would show me how to... instead of just buying cards that they would show me how to put... make them on the computer...

Interviewers: Yeah.

Chris: ...to keep the costs down. And I says... and what I would do is people that want to learn how to make the cards I would show them also.

Interviewers: Good idea.

Chris: This way if something would happen to a couple of us there'd be people ready to fill in and know how to do it.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Do you go on those trips to Harrisburg?

Chris: No. I don't go any... go on any of the trips.

Interviewers: Okay.

Chris: But I do keep in contact with my state senator and also my congressman.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Yeah. That's great. That's a good thing. They need more information.

Chris: Right. And... one of the things that I'm going to be doing at the MHA this year is helping with the legislative breakfast, helping planning it.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: Because we can't have it at the... our usual place where we use it because our crowd is too big.

Interviewers: Where was... where did you usually have it?

Chris: At the Holiday Inn in Oakland.

Interviewers: Oh yeah. That's right. Ohhh the crowd is too big for that now?

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: Ohhhhhh.

Chris: So, we have to find another venue. So...

Interviewers: Wow.

Chris: So, they're talking about having it at one of the hotel's downtown.

Interviewers: Yeah. They have bigger ballrooms.

Chris: Right. But I mentioned about another place, but they said no. But that's okay. They said that the other place that I thought of would be more... wouldn't meet the needs of our Christmas party.

Interviewers: Oh okay.

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: Where was that?

Chris: At Dave and Busters. Because they have conference rooms.

Interviewers: Yes, they do.

Chris: They can meet the needs of... between 20 up to 1,000.

Interviewers: Really?

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: A thousand?

Chris: Yeah they can. And it's free parking.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And...

Interviewers: But that would be a good place for a Christmas party wouldn't it?

Chris: It... it would be, but also they have a lot of conference rooms. 'Cause I've been there with other organizations and they had conferences there. 'Cause they have... they have rooms in the back where there sectioned off and the... the stuff that takes...

Interviewers: Games.

Chris: And you can't hear the games.

Interviewers: Wow. I know they have that one room up front and another room on the side. I've only seen two of them.

Chris: Mm hmm. Yeah they have about 8 rooms.

Interviewers: Do they?

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: Wow. Wow. Yeah, parking is a problem downtown. No matter what you plan...

Chris: Right.

Interviewers: ... down here.

Chris: And... and also there are easy busses you can get to, to get there. You know. There's a bus you can... two busses you can get from town. There's a bus you can get from Oakland. There's a bus you can get...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: ...from Southside. There's a bus you can get from East Liberty.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: So... and it takes you all right there.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: So, that's how you get around? On the bus?

Chris: Yeah. And... and I was a first person with mental health to be on the Port Authority Board of Directors.

Interviewers: Really?

Chris: Yes.

Interviewers: When did that happen?

Chris: In '90... '92.

00:05:00

Chris: Yeah, but...

Interviewers: So, your term is up there? Or you...

Chris: Yeah, my time was up, but they... but when my time was up I didn't go back on.

Interviewers: Ohh.

Chris: I was on the board plus I was on 3 committees.

Interviewers: And how was that?

Chris: It was rough, but I did it. And... and in the 4 years I only missed 2 meetings.

Interviewers: Psh. That's pretty good.

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Chris: And...

Interviewers: But it was too much for you...

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: ... to do again?

Chris: Too much to do.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Chris: You know. And... but I was on... I'm on several other boards. You know.

Interviewers: What are they?

Chris: I'm on the Transitional Services, which is...

Interviewers: They're right there in Homestead.

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: Uh huh.

Chris: Yeah. I've been on their board since 2003. And... I think that's when it was. Something like that. But I've been on the board for 6 years.

Interviewers: Oh. Good.

Chris: You know. But my time is up next year.

Interviewers: Oh. Is it?

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: What are the other boards?

Chris: I was also in... on the... one of the cofounders of CSP.

Interviewers: Okay.

Chris: Which is Community Support Program. They've been together since 1992. Yeah.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: I was one of the cofounders for that. There's a bunch... There's about 20 of us went to the Department of Human Services and says we need to have a CSP meeting.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: It was the Consumers, Family Members and Providers. And I says you... When we set... You pick the time and the day and we'll be there. And so we've been meeting at Life's Work ever since.

Interviewers: Ever since. Yeah. Wow. Wow. Do you think, Chris that things have changed for people with mental health problems over the years?

Chris: Things have changed a lot but also changes need... need to continue.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And... And... And I can give you an example is things that... that... a lot... One of the things that we are dealing with is the closing of Mayview State Hospital. A lot of people are up tight about it. They think it's not going to work. I'm one of the people who's optimistic about it's going to work. And... And I believe it will work. And... Because I recently submitted an article in the "Changes from Services" newsletter comparing the Mayview closing with the Woodville closing.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And... And it was... And it was all optimistic in comparing it... 16 years then until now where there was no support when they closed Woodville State Hospital.

Interviewers: I know. Yeah. You're right. Now that you say that.

Chris: And since then we have ACHC, which is Allegheny County Health Choices. We have the Mental Health Association, which is now Mental Health America, do a tracking system and Allegheny Health Choices does a tracking system along with the Department

of Human Services. And also the WARM line was developed so people can call. So, there's a...It's...And then we have the peer mentor and the peer specialist program. So, it's going to work. You know. As long as all the agencies would collaborate and communicate with each other it will get done.

Interviewers: Do they do that now? Do they communicate with each other?

Chris: They...They do but it needs to be better.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: And do you... does the county have more money now to put into like housing for folks coming out of Mayview?

Chris: They have the supportive housing specialist for people coming out of Mayview and also personal care homes. And as long as the... the tracking system and the money follows like it's supposed to do it'll work. And I remember when... when they closed Northtown State Hospital...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: They... they...closed it and then they were going to put the money in their general fund. And a lot of people said, 'Oh that's mental health dollars.' And a lot of people fought and... to get the money from the general fund transferred. And... and because of the... the power in numbers...

Track 3

Chris: ...that I mentioned earlier. And people keep calling their legislators and stuff like that. The money did follow.

Interviewers: Ummmm. So, it did work out there?

Chris: Right.

Interviewers: So, this bill that Dan Frankle has to get the money from Mayview to come... stay here, might have a chance.

Chris: It may have a chance as long as people make a stink about it.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: People need to keep pressuring their legislators.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: You know. Because if people don't call their... keep contact in their legislators the legislators, "Well no one's calling about it so, maybe there... we can just do whatever we want with it."

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Chris, I want to ask you something about your life. What... what so far... what's been the toughest thing for you?

Chris: Dealing with issues with my health.

Interviewers: Mmmm.

Chris: You know. And... like I have a tumor in both my lungs and I also have a tumor in my left chest. And... and it's making difficult things getting around and I can't get any surgeries done. I keep getting MRIs done and CAT scans done. And... so, I quit doing it now because they... the... like I... the doctors says I can't get... for me to get radiation and chemotherapy, but they said I can't have it unless I get surgery. But I can't get any surgeries done because my arteries are too bad.

Interviewers: Oh are they?

Chris: Yeah. And the... I do what I can to improve the arteries, but their saying that with walking and stuff like that that I do do and taking the medication they said there is no guarantee that the arteries will clear up. So, therefore I can't get any surgeries. You know.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Chris: And...

Interviewers: You seeing the right doctor?

Chris: Yes. I... one of the doctors I see is on the chief of staff at Shadyside Hospital.

Interviewers: Mmmm.

Chris: He's...

Interviewers: Okay.

Chris: ...the chief residential doctor.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And he says I can't have surgeries.

Interviewers: It'd be too risky?

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: So, the tumors are cancer?

Chris: Their not sure if they're cancer just... because... until they do the surgery.

Interviewers: Aye yoi yoi.

Chris: Yeah. So, I just... so, I just deal with it. You know. You know the old saying is you're dealt with cards and you... you... and you just deal... accept the cards that your dealt with and just go on with it.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: That's what I do.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Does it cause you pain?

Chris: There's pain all the time. I do take several pain medications with... it just helps me get through day-to-day operations.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Wow. So, that's been a struggle for a while for you then?

Chris: Yes. But I just... again I just deal with it.

Interviewers: And what's been the most... the biggest triumph you've had?

Chris: Recently? Or...

Interviewers: Throughout your life.

Chris: I would say being in and out of the state hospital... hospitals and stuff. You know. Where I feel that I have that under control now. Now it's just dealing with situations at... at the house with my mom with her Alzheimer's.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. When was the last time you were hospitalized?

Chris: From... for mental stuff it was in '9... '93.

Interviewers: So, you're doing good.

Chris: Yes. And... and it's been 8 years I haven't had any psychotropic medications.

Interviewers: Really?

Chris: And...

Interviewers: Good for you.

Chris: And it's been 9 years I haven't seen a psychiatrist.

Interviewers: Really?

Chris: And... and this May it'll be 3 years I haven't seen a therapist.

Interviewers: Wow.

Chris: But I do see a psych rehab specialist.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: Which is not a therapist, but... I see...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: ...that person once a month.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: You're doing good.

Chris: Doing the best I can.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: What... they don't have the drop in center anymore do they?

Chris: Wa... Wall Springs, where it was at before, is now moved. It's now on Watson Street. It's been a year since I've been there.

Interviewers: Watson, like up... up here by Duquesne University?

Chris: Right.

Interviewers: Okay.

Chris: And...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And then... but I... hoping that someday they would get...

00:05:00

Chris: ...become logical and no longer calling them drop-in centers.

Interviewers: What is... what... you know... what is a drop-in center?

Chris: It's just a place where you can go and get support and if... or if you just need to go some... place... where just to get away for... for a day. And just... and just shoot pool and stuff like that. But I... my theory is that... I think drop-in centers is being given a wrong name. I think it's outgrowing.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And... and... where now that you can go to drop-in centers and... and get the support that you need. So, that's why I said they should no longer call them drop-in centers. It's... it's just my theory I have.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And I think that they should be calling them recovery support centers.

Interviewers: That's a better name.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Well, why don't you tell somebody that?

Chris: I've told people that.

Interviewers: Have you?

Chris: Yes. But a lot... a lot of people they... they don't listen. You know. You know. But that's where they're... they're leaning towards, but you know... but they're all getting involved in recovery and... so, why can't they have that part of recovery.

Interviewers: Right. Are you part of the recovery coalition?

Chris: No.

Interviewers: I don't know what they do.

Chris: I don't know what they do either.

Interviewers: Yeah. Yeah. Hmm. Is Renaissance Center still around?

Chris: Yeah. It's still around. And... I used to be a member there but... I had problems with some of the... the staff there at...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: I don't want to get into that.

Interviewers: That's alright. I was just curious if they were still around. 'Cause I don't hear much about them anymore. I knew John Lovelace and he... you know...

Chris: Well...

Interviewers: ... he was there.

Chris: That was like a long time ago.

Interviewers: You don't. Okay. Yeah, that was. That was. Well, whose had the biggest influence on your life?

Chris: People that like Joyce King, Jack Berry, Art Lebowicz, Ron Gibson, Nancy Gable.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: And how? Because they were what (? - 00:07:17)?

Chris: They... they... they were all pioneers at their tra... at their trade. And I learned a lot from them. And I... and another one was John Farmer who was in... out in Philadelphia, who is... still continues to come to Allegheny County. And... learned a lot from those folks. And, to me, they're... they're pioneers and they need to... to be recognized and... and... and they're legends in their own time.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: I was told by Jack Berry in the early 90's... because they're all... all those folks are a lot older than I was. And he told me, one of these days I'm going to be running the county. Yeah. Because they knew that I was knowledgeable and is good at picking up on stuff.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And he told me if I would stick with the... the movement... these... they said that... that I would pretty much re... be recognized of the county, but...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: It's not the purpose, but... but I do... mentioned earlier about how I am... people that need information get the information they... they need. But also a lot of people are now speaking up about stuff and... and... and I seen how things were... were run throughout the state and the county and... and... and comparing it to the way things were 10, 15 years ago. That I'm telling people that when they're doing things they need to be compensated for it.

Interviewers: Mmmm.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: If... if you... if you're at a center and you're doing something, you know. You should be recognized for that.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: You know. Because if you don't speak up, I says, the center is going to take advantage of you.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And I've seen it happen. And... and... and then when the center's are not doing it, you know, the center's are setting themselves up to... to abusing the people that they serve.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: I've seen it happen.

Interviewers: Ummmmm.

Chris: You know. Where the providers were abusing the people that they serve.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: And... and I reported it and some centers are...

Track 4

Chris: ... continue to doing it.

Interviewers: Where do you report it?

Chris: To people like Cart Community Care.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: ACHC. You know. But...

Interviewers: Does anything happen?

Chris: Well, I don't know if people... if things have happened, but the people that were doing the... the abusive are still working at the same facility.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: So...

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Well, sometimes things could change at the administrative level.

Chris: Right. That's... and when that happens we're not aware of that.

Interviewers: Yeah. Right. Right.

Chris: So, that's why I said I'm not sure if anything has happened.

Interviewers: Yeah. Yeah. Wow. So... go ahead. I was just trying to think. Art Lebowicz. Was he about my height?

Chris: About that. Yes.

Interviewers: Yeah. I was trying... 'Cause I used to be on... I used to be on the board (? - 00:00:51) Mental Health.

Chris: Yes.

Interviewers: And I think he was... back in the late, earlier, late 80's, early 90's.

Chris: Right.

Interviewers: Okay. Yeah.

Chris: And...

Interviewers: And Faber (? - 00:01:01) was the one that was...

Chris: Right. He was running it at the time.

Interviewers: At the same time. Yeah. Yeah. I was on the board when Lindsay Nell (? - 00:01:06) was there.

Chris: Mm hmm.

Interviewers: And I remember Art doing a lot of presentations.

Chris: Right. And he doesn't do that anymore. And... but he's still... ke... is still involved in the community, but in a different perspective.

Interviewers: I think there's a lot more community activism nowadays than there used to be.

Chris: Right.

Interviewers: I mean, I think when they closed Woodville people just... they didn't know anything about it and they just thought that all these people will be thrown to the wolves out in the community.

Chris: Well, also... that's one reason why we had the homeless population that we have.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: Is because of when they closed Woodville.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And... and that's why the people that are homeless have no respect for the public service.

Interviewers: Mmmm.

Chris: Because of the way they were treated.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: And... and the county jail is being used as their mental health facility.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: Because there was... the way things were with... with the... the public service. And... and it still continues to be that way, but because of mental health court... getting in... being developed, now the police officers and different communities are being taught to deal with people with mental health issues.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Do you want to ta... do you want to just for the tapes sake want to tell... want to say what mental health court's about?

Chris: Well, mental health court, what they... they do is... is trying to ke... keep people out of the jails and keep them involved in the community. And using mental health court to get people to get services that they need instead of just relying on the criminal justice program. And... and... and with people get... being forced to get treatment the people that rely on the county jails are now being pr... uses... not being used, but they're becoming productive citizens.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And where they can get jobs now because they get... they're able to get treatment and dealing with issues that they were dealing with and they're being productive in their community.

Interviewers: Chris, how do we get the homeless people with mental illness off the street? How do we get them to want to live in a house somewhere?

Chris: Well, one of the things is... they're going to need... changes are going to have to be done with Section 8 first of all. Because with them being in the criminal justice program they can't get Section 8. And...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: The... so, they can't get housing. So, they use cardboard boxes as their... their house, which isn't... My theory is when a person's homeless that's a violation of their civil rights because housing should be considered a civil right.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Mm hmm. So, you think most people that are on the street have been arrested at some time or another?

Chris: Right. And... and they can't get... get Section 8 so... so...

Interviewers: Right.

Chris: ...means that they can't get Section 8 they... they end up in the streets.

Interviewers: It's a vicious cycle.

Chris: And... and that's a downfall of... of the system. And...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

00:05:00

Chris: Also the big population are... are... are... are vets. You know. They're... they're... and... and... and they're be... they're also being abused by the system.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And... and... and you're going to see more problems with... with the vets in the very near future. You know we... with coming out... out of Iraq.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: You know. And being that George W. hasn't declared it a war, he considers it a... a mission... a... he called it something else. A peace mission...

Interviewers: Mmmm.

Chris: ... and not a war.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And... and Vietnamese, when they're getting injured they can't get health care.

Interviewers: That's terrible.

Chris: You know. And when they can't get health care it means they can't get treated for their mental health and their physical problems, because George W. declared it a peace mission.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: My theory is, if you're using guns and throwing grenades and having tanks, it's a war.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. It's not very peaceful. No. Hmm umm.

Chris: You know. And... and... and if... if it was a peace mission, w... they should have negotiators there.

Interviewers: True. True. What... can... may I ask you more about your family?

Chris: Go ahead.

Interviewers: Hmmm.

Chris: Go ahead.

Interviewers: So, you have one...

Chris: Brother.

Interviewers: ...sister. Oh one brother...

Chris: One brother. Three sisters.

Interviewers: ... and three sisters.

Chris: Right.

Interviewers: Okay.

Chris: Four dogs and three cats. Gotta include them. They're part of the family too.

Interviewers: Okay. Okay. You live in a big house?

Chris: Yes.

Interviewers: Okay.

Chris: We own it.

Interviewers: Okay.

Chris: We don't have to deal with landlords, which is a big help.

Interviewers: Yeah. Yeah. So, all your brothers and sisters live at home?

Chris: I have one brother. Yeah. And three sis...

Interviewers: I mean one brother and three sisters. You all live at home?

Chris: We all live at home. We all take care of our mom. And...

Interviewers: Wow.

Chris: We all take turns doing our thing that we need to do. And...

Interviewers: Nobody got married?

Chris: No. Well, my sister got married, but she got divorced. But our mission was just keeping things...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: ...together with the family.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Who's the oldest and youngest? Or...

Chris: My... my ol... sister's the oldest and... and then my brother, then... then I'm... then me, then my other two sisters.

Interviewers: Okay. So, you have two younger sisters?

Chris: Right.

Interviewers: I see. How old... how old is your oldest sister?

Chris: 50 I believe. She was born in '55 so... Yeah.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. (? - 00:07:29) 53. Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Does she work?

Chris: She used to work until about 2 years ago. She worked at one of the hotels in town. And she was a manager at one of the... the stores inside the hotel.

Interviewers: Ummm.

Chris: It was...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: But it was like a gift shop.

Interviewers: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Chris: So...

Interviewers: Yeah.

Chris: But... her eye... eyesight is... is... it's slowly deteriorating.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And so they left her go and...

Interviewers: Well, now that could have been maybe a lawsuit there.

Chris: Well, it could have been, but I didn't think she wanted perseue it... and... or pursue it, but... But she's involved in advocating 'cause she's... 'cause since then she's gone to a behavior health facility.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And... outpatient and... and then... all the things that I've been teaching other people I've taught her.

Interviewers: Good.

Chris: And... and now that she advocates for her physical health and she's also involved with mental health stuff... in... involving the movements.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: Like she's gone to Community Care advisory meetings. And... and she's gone to CSP. And...

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: And this is going to be her second time going to the PMACA conference.

Interviewers: Ohhhh.

Chris: And next year she's going to be the consumer coach there for CSP.

Interviewers: Ohhhh.

Chris: And she's also involved in Core.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And... and... in... involved in projects with ACHC.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: So, tell us a little bit about the rest of your... your sisters and your brother.

Chris: Well, my one sister helps take care of my other sister because she's bedridden for 6 years now because she got bitten by a spider. And...

Interviewers: Really?

Chris: And her bones has deteriorated in her one leg, so she can't get around. So, she has to just continue changing her dressings and stuff. And...

Track 5

Chris: ... even though she can only walk 20 feet at a time she... she gets around somewhat, but... But we also help her out along with my mom with her Alzheimer's and stuff.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And... and then... my... my brother has a hard time with different things and so we just have him like do errands and stuff. And he'll do like some things around the house, but you got to like remind him a whole bunch of times.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: You know. And... and then when you remind him he gets... deterred sometimes.

Interviewers: Ohhh. Yeah. Yeah.

Chris: You know. So... 'cause he'll say, "I don't need to be reminded."

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: You know. That goes with the territory.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: So, he doesn't work?

Chris: N... he used to, but because of his pr... mental health problems he... he... he quit working.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: But... but he was also one of the ones that was turned off by the system and no longer getting treatments.

Interviewers: Mmmm.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Mmmm.

Chris: And... and he... we feel that along with him having depression issues, we know that he has schizophrenia, but he's not being treated.

Interviewers: Ohhhhh.

Chris: And... and as... as you... as schizophrenia, you know, it gets worse and worse and worse and then it becomes difficult... more and more difficult to treat. But he says, "Oh I don't need treatment." And along with that he's also in denial, but that goes with the territory.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. How old's your mom? How... How old is he?

Chris: He's 40... 48. And my mom is... is... she'll be 78.

Interviewers: Does your mom get any services through the Area Agency on Aging?

Chris: She's going to because we signed her up for that.

Interviewers: Okay.

Chris: And we signed her up for ACCESS.

Interviewers: Okay.

Chris: And so she... and one of the things that we're going to have the Department of Aging do is... 'cause she don't even want to leave the house...

Interviewers: Okay.

Chris: So, we're going to try to... to get the Department of Aging to... to encourage her to, maybe one day a week, go to a... a... a...

Interviewers: Senior center?

Chris: Right. You know. Just to see what it's like. Just...

Interviewers: I'm sure there's one near you.

Chris: There's one near, but...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: But she doesn't want to go. We tried to get her to go 4 years ago and she says, 'I don't want to be around those old people.'

Interviewers: Ohhhh. That's how...you know... My dad used to say the same thing.

Chris: And... and... and...

Interviewers: But he found out he could get a cheap meal.

Chris: And... and then... and... this was like... she was just 70 at the time, we told her, you know, why don't you go to the... to the Heritage House?

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: You know. Which is now called Lifespan. And... which is about 8 blocks from my house. And... and... and she goes... and we told her that... that they do... go places and they do things and she goes, "I don't want to be around those crabby old people."

Interviewers: Mmmmm.

Chris: So... so... so... so we... we just left her room and just left her go and just laughed. I say, "Crabby old people." I said, "What do you think she is?"

Interviewers: Does she leave the house to go to the doctors or anything?

Chris: That's it. She just... that's all she does.

Interviewers: Goes to the doctor.

Chris: And that's it.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: And... and... and... but when she goes to the doctor, she don't even tell the doctor like her Alzheimer's is like so far gone. She'll go to the doctors and... and... and she'll say, "Hi. How are you today?" to the doctor.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: You know. And the doctor ask her stuff and she goes, "Oh. I'm fine." And don't even tell her what's wrong. And... and then we would tell the doctor with... what... what's going on with her. The doctor's, "Well, we have to hear that from her."

Interviewers: Hhhh. Please.

Chris: You know. You know.

Interviewers: Where's the doctor? In Homestead?

Chris: Yeah. In Homestead.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: So, that's just the way it goes. And he knows the problems she's having, but again they said that they have to hear it from her.

Interviewers: So, you don't have any problems with her not knowing you guys? She knows... she still knows all of you?

Chris: Sometimes. You know.

Interviewers: Now what about her wandering off?

Chris: She doesn't do that.

Interviewers: Oh.

Chris: Because she... she don't even want to leave the house.

Interviewers: Right. I hear you. I hear you.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Yeah. Yeah.

Chris: So, we... were not worried about that part yet because she don't even want to leave the house.

Interviewers: And somebody's there with her everyday.

Chris: There's always somebody there.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Chris: Even the dogs look after her.

Interviewers: Yeah?

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Well, that's good.

Chris: You know. And... and...

00:05:00

Chris: And like she'll sit in the recliner chair and... and there'll be a dog in front of her and a dog beside her and she knows that she's not supposed to be wandering around. And...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And she gets up out of the chair and... and the dog'll bark, 'cause dog knows.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Yep. Who does the cooking?

Chris: My two sisters do that.

Interviewers: Do they?

Chris: You know. And... I... I can cook, but they... they don't want me cooking. And so, like when I would go to different centers, and like right before Thanksgiving and they'd have to ask people, "How do you dress a turkey?" And... and I would tell them... okay. And once I tell them my theory is a joke and it got to my sister she goes, "Well you ain't cooking here anymore."

Interviewers: Tss.

Chris: You... you know.

Interviewers: Oh my.

Chris: And they would say like what temperature do you put the... the oven on? And I says, "350." They go, "How do you know when it's done?" I said, "When you hear the fire trucks."

Interviewers: Oh. Oh my.

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: Oh my my.

Chris: But the... but I... I joke around a lot and I have a biz... bizarre sense of humor and also dry humor. But the whole method of my humor is to get people to laugh. My theory is laughter is the best medicine.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And people have their own issues, their own problems. If I can get somebody to laugh, to get them off... their mind off their problems, just for a minute. You know. That's fine.

Interviewers: It's a great thing.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: It's a great thing.

Chris: I can... I can watch the news and... and major headlines... I can find something to joke about. You know.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Well, that's a gift. Let me tell ya. 'Cause the news today...

Chris: Right.

Interviewers: Chris, I'm sort of curious about your... your pole... stick... your staff. Whatever you call it.

Chris: It's a walking stick.

Interviewers: (? - 00:06:56)

Chris: Helps me... it helps me get around. I have a real... real bad leg and... and... and it helps me get around and...

Interviewers: Is that easier for you than maybe a cane? Or...

Chris: Well, a cane doesn't work 'cause I had 3 canes and I've fallen on top of them and they would break.

Interviewers: Ohhhhh.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Ohhhh.

Chris: Where that's more sturdier than... than a cane.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: And... and also it gives you an extra skip when your walking. You know. And...

Interviewers: Ohhhh.

Chris: The... but the medical profession does not consider that a medical necessity. They consider it a weapon.

Interviewers: Oh really?

Chris: Yes.

Interviewers: Where'd you find it?

Chris: I bought it.

Interviewers: Did you?

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: Here in Pittsburgh?

Chris: Here in Pittsburgh. At the Dick's Sporting Goods in the North Hills.

Interviewers: Oh really?

Chris: Yeah. They make 'em in two types of wood, cherry and oak. And you can get them in the outdoor section, the outdoor department.

Interviewers: Hmm. So, it really helps you?

Chris: Helps better than... a lot better than the cane. You know. I have 3 canes; two wooden ones and one metal one. Two wooden ones broke. The metal one bent.

Interviewers: Oh my. Oh my.

Chris: You... you know.

Interviewers: Well, you... you walk around with your stick, you look like some... and your long coat and you look like a prophet or something. I don't...

Chris: Well, I don't look at that way.

Interviewers: I see you...

Chris: Some... some people have called me Moses. Some people have called me Noah. You know. They call me all... you know. Some people have called me John the Baptist. And... You know. Yeah.

Interviewers: Hey, whatever... whatever helps.

Chris: Yeah. And... and... and some people have called me Lucifer.

Interviewers: Ooooooooooooo.

Chris: Because... because of... of my theory about stuff. You know. Because I... I don't go to church. You know. And... and stuff like that. And I have different theories about religion and I'm... we don't want to get into that.

Interviewers: No. We're not going to do religion on this tape.

Chris: Yeah it's...

Interviewers: No.

Chris: But I have... but we... we can talk about it after this show, but...

Interviewers: Yeah. Yeah.

Chris: But... it all boils down to is... is... but we'll talk about it later if you need to.

Interviewers: Okay. Alright. So... I mean... I was just trying to picture back... What was it like for you in '74, the first time you got...

Chris: It wa...

Interviewers: It... if you sort of... like what's sort of the whole experience of that? I mean if... if you have any recollection. Or...

Chris: Well, back in...in... in the 70's, again I was... had a hard time with things, physically, mentally, and dealing with people and hard time adapting to the mental health system as we know it with its... with their philosophy and stuff. And... and I wasn't hip into their... their... their th...

Track 6

Chris: ...thing. You know. And... so, it just became difficult adjusting to it. And... and... and the school systems didn't help. You know. Where... like even... I have my humor back then. Okay. And... and... one teacher would... would call me Mr. Insanity. You know. And... and... and things... things like that. And... and... and Mazzo. You know.

Interviewers: What school were you in when that happened?

Chris: It was in a Pittsburgh public school. Yeah.

Interviewers: Geez. So... do... do you think... I mean... I was just trying to think... I can't ever... I... you know... growing up I can't think of any 9 year old that was driven to lift... lift weights. I mean... what...

Chris: Because the... the system just drove me to it. Where it was just a way to just re... release anger and stuff. And frustration. And the weight room was more or less my classroom.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: You know. I would... I would not go to school and act like I was going to school, but go to Trees Hall and lift weights.

Interviewers: And nobody at Trees Hall said, "What are you doing here kid? Why aren't you in school?"

Chris: Well the... the reason why is because the person that authorize the... the pass... 'cause he taught law there as a pro bono... And... and... and the guards there wouldn't question it because...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: ...the person was teaching law there as a pro bono in '74.

Interviewers: Mmmm.

Chris: And... and I was able to use the weight room and... and also the Olympic pool.

Interviewers: Mmmm. Mm.

Chris: You know. S... but that they knew that I wasn't there to cause pr... the...

Interviewers: Okay.

Chris: ...guards knew... knew me. They knew I wasn't going to cause trouble. They knew the person that signed the... authorized it.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: So, they... if there was any problems, they would just, I guess talk to them. But they only questioned it once and then... then after they questioned it and they saw who authorized it... you know... they didn't question it anymore after that.

Interviewers: Now where did you say you lived in the city?

Chris: In Hazelwood.

Interviewers: In Hazelwood? And then you...

Chris: Went to...

Interviewers: What'd you do, walk to Trees Hall?

Chris: I got... got the bus.

Interviewers: Oh, you got the bus? At 9 years old?

Chris: 9 years old.

Interviewers: Whoa.

Chris: You know. And... and I would be... go... another thing I would do is... I knew how to connect buses. Been doing that since I was 7. On my own. And I would go there... go different places with a group from different facilities. And things didn't go right. Like for example we went to... to Three Rivers Stadium. Okay. Which is no longer there. And as... as a group we go to watch... watch a ball game and... and somebody didn't treat me right. You know. Either someone in a group or a staff person. I would say "I'm going... I'm going to... to... to the bathroom" and I'd just leave.

Interviewers: Mmmm.

Chris: And... and then I wouldn't even tell them that I was leaving. Just, "I'm going to the bathroom. I'll be back." And they said, "Okay. Do you know where you're going?" They said, "Well here's your ticket just in case you get lost. Just give it to the usher." I

said, "Okay." I got the bus and went home. You know. And then they would... then they'd spend like all... a long time looking for me.

Interviewers: Looking for you.

Chris: And... and then... and then they would come to the house, and my mom would answer the door at the time, and they'd say, "We have a problem. We can't find Chris." And stuff like that. And then... then she'd just go along with their song and a dance and... And then she goes, "Well, he's here."

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Oh wow. Oh wow.

Chris: That happened many times.

Interviewers: Do you... or... you were pretty much on your own?

Chris: Right.

Interviewers: You raised yourself kind of.

Chris: Well, I had help.

Interviewers: Uh huh.

Chris: You know. I had people to... always there to get me connected to things. And always paid attention to my surroundings.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: You know. And... and always observing.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: You know. If I was going somewhere on a bus I would look for landmarks.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Does anybody give you trouble these days?

Chris: There's some people that give me trouble, but I just like... just take it with a grain of salt.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: Even some professionals give me a hard time.

Interviewers: Really?

Chris: And... you know. I just... you know...

Interviewers: People on the street they don't though?

Chris: Yeah. They... they... they do. The people like are... I... be walking places and be yelling stuff out their car windows and stuff like that. You know. I don't pay no mind to that. You know.

Interviewers: Yeah. Right.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Right.

Chris: And I have... I have... a...

00:05:00

Chris: ...a theory for that.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: You know. They're miserable, so they try to get other people to be miserable. You know the old saying is "Misery loves company?"

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: You can be a... need a drink and you go a bar and... and... and be hungry.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: But they'll buy you a drink, but they won't buy you a sandwich.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: You know. 'Cause they're miserable themselves.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: You know.

Interviewers: Right. Right. Well, that's kind of interesting. I think that one of the things that the mental health movement has been trying to do is to get rid of the stigma.

Chris: Right. Well, the... Well, they're going about it the wrong way.

Interviewers: You think?

Chris: Yeah, I think so. And... and I'll tell you why. And... and I've been telling the people at the county for a long time. That for you to get rid of the stigma you have to use it in the same definition as discrimination. If you're not going to use the word 'stigma,' you always have to attach 'discrimination' with it because that's the only way you're going to fight it. Because that's what the... the stigma is. Discrimination.

Interviewers: Yeah. Absolutely.

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: Absolutely.

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: But there are a lot of people that have mental illness that don't want to admit they have it.

Chris: Right.

Interviewers: And... because they're afraid people are going to make fun of them or...

Chris: Right.

Interviewers: (? - 00:06:19)

Chris: Well, it co... co... comes with education.

Interviewers: Right. Right. Right. Wow. Well, is there anything... any questions you guys have? Do... do you find there's more of an acceptance now than what... (? - 00:06:32) than what there was before? Or...

Chris: There is an acceptance, but there also needs to be improvements. You know. More education is... as the people are coming out of Mayview. You know. The issues that we dealt with 16 years ago with Woodville are... are... are going to be approaching. And we just have to be ready for it.

Interviewers: How... how many people at Mayview? Pardon me. What... what is the population of Mayview? Ahh. I think they only have about a hundred people left. Mm hmm. There was an article in today's paper talking about... the whole state is not ready for...

Chris: And I believe it.

Interviewers: ...aging population. The aging population. The population... yeah... of... of...

Chris: And I believe it.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. 'Cause there's going to be more and more Alzheimer's and that's just... you live long enough. I mean it's... Well, that's the fastest growing population in Pennsylvania is the over 65.

Chris: Mm hmm. And... and the people that are coming out of Mayview's are going to have to deal with the same issues that we had closing Woodville.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And peop... we just have to be ready to educate them. You know. Soon as they start asking questions, give them answers. Have answers ready.

Interviewers: You weren't at Woodville when it closed were you?

Chris: No.

Interviewers: No.

Chris: But I was... visit Woodville as they were closing it.

Interviewers: Oh did you?

Chris: And... and we would go there as a group and...

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: And... and as you were visiting people at Woodville you could see buildings being torn down as you're being...

Interviewers: Really?

Chris: Yeah.

Interviewers: Wow.

Chris: Now they made it a golf course.

Interviewers: Is that what it is now?

Chris: Yeah. It's a big golf course.

Interviewers: Huh. You weren't ever at Torrence were you?

Chris: No.

Interviewers: No.

Chris: But they're going to be closing that too. You know.

Interviewers: What's next?

Chris: Yeah seriously.

Interviewers: They got enough on their plate with Mayview right now.

Chris: They're going to close Torrence and... 'cause the state... they want to get out of the state hospitals. They don't want any state hospitals.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Chris: And another thing is it's going to be interesting is when they closed the state hospitals in New York and there's a... People's belongings were left behind. And... and they tried to find who owned these belongings and they couldn't find... they either died or... or... or whatever. And now they're in these suitcases. All their belongings and it's part of a... a tourist attraction.

Interviewers: Wow.

Chris: And... and... and... and the Allegheny County Coalition for Recovery is... is paying to have them come to Pittsburgh. And... and we're targeting for May of 2010.

And they're called the staircases. That's what they're calling it. And it's not staircases. Suitcases. And it's going to be all of the... their belongings of... from people in New York State Hospital.

Interviewers: What's the purpose of that?

Chris: The... it's create awareness.

Interviewers: Mmmmm.

Chris: And that... that they're human beings and they're left there. And then when they leave they don't even give them their belongings.

Interviewers: Yeah. Right.

Chris: And there just wor... worrying about getting them out of...

Track 7

Chris: ... but not worrying about their belongings.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Chris: And their personal items.

Interviewers: That's a shame. Is there anything you... any final words you have...

Chris: Well...

Interviewers: ...for... that you want on this tape?

Chris: One of the things that I would like to see is more people getting involved in Allegheny County Coalition for Recovery. And... because that's where it's at. There's... we have several committees and we need more people to get involved. And... and... and also in Allegheny County CSP. We need more people. And... and... and not only to get involved in the movement, but also become politically active. Because we need more people to be politically active, be connected to the legislators, their congressman to let them know what the issues are.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: And... because a lot of us are slowly getting out of the movements. And... and... and start just dealing with our own lives. So, we need other people to step in. And... and to be ready.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Chris: Because their voice is their power.

Interviewers: You're right. I like that as the headline. Yeah. Mm hmm. Their voice is their power. Yeah. Mm hmm. Yeah. Well, I really appreciate you taking the time. Sorry you came down so early. And...

Chris: Well... well, I have a county MHMR board meeting tonight.

Interviewers: Ohh. So, you're going to be here?

Chris: Yeah so... 'cause I'm on the board.

Interviewers: Yeah. Yeah. Is that at 4:00?

Chris: Yes.

Interviewers: Yeah. Yeah. Oh. Well that's good. Who chairs that board now?

Chris: Walter Smith and George Owens.

Interviewers: Ohhh. George Owens? Does he?

Chris: Yes.

Interviewers: Hm. Hm. Okay. Alright. So, you're here for the day?

Chris: Yes.

Interviewers: Okay. Thanks so much Chris.

Chris: You're welcome.