

Yet another “initiative” to cover up abuse of homeless, disabled, and mentally ill?

## PCB to join statewide initiative

Communities for a Lifetime aims to improve services, connect young and old

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### PANAMA CITY BEACH

Panama City Beach has joined a state initiative designed to identify a community's strengths and weaknesses in dealing with its young and elderly populations and help organize citizens in mapping the city's future growth.

Communities for a Lifetime, a partnership between Florida's Department of Elder Affairs and the AARP, helps cities identify areas in housing, transportation, health and employment that need improvement, Beach Mayor Gayle Oberst said Friday.

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TERRY BARNER | The News Herald

Carol Durham, who has struggled with mental illness since childhood, is a volunteer and mental health counselor with Life Management in Panama City.

## Organization shedding stigma of mental illness

By Donna Vavala

Contributing Writer

### PANAMA CITY

Since she was sexually abused at age 4, Carol Durham has suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, panic attacks and chronic depression. Despite years of prescription drugs, hospitalization and counseling, she still battles those dragons daily.

Between 1992 and 1994, Durham spent 200 days in a mental hospital and most of her life feeling worthless and socially inept.

However, since volunteering at Life Management of Northwest Florida, a Panama City mental health organization, in August to lead a depression support group and provide peer-to-peer mentoring, Durham said her self-esteem has soared.

"After 55 years, I feel like I can accept that I have value, that I am a success," she said. "I can accept that my experience can help someone else."

The first week in October is "Mental Health Awareness Week," as almost 58 million people in the U.S. suffer from mental disorders. They are ranked as the leading cause of disability in this

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