

Jacobi CAB member Lask wins NYC Health + Hospital award

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

A long time advocate for people with mental illness has received a newly created award from NYC Health + Hospitals.

Sylvia Lask, a member of the NYC Health + Hospitals / Jacobi Community Advisory Board, is the winner of the first Agnes Magdalene Abraham Humanitarian Award after being chosen from among six finalists from hospital advisory boards from around the city.

She was presented the award at the 2016 Council of Community Advisory Board's Educational Conference on Friday, November 4.

The award is named after a chairwoman of the NYC Health + Hospital's Council of CABs.

Lask is well known for her work on a behavioral health committee and for her event planning for annual 9/11 memorials, legislative breakfasts and mental health conferences on behalf of Jacobi's CAB, multiple sources confirmed.

"It was amazing to me to win it, because I really felt that everyone that was in the running must do a wonder-

ful job for their facilities," said Lask, adding "I have been on the Jacobi CAB for more than 40 years and I love what I do there."

Lask said she recently successfully lobbied in the state capital in Albany for the passage of an education bill that mandates mental health education for junior high and high school students, adding that Governor Cuomo has now signed it.

The governor's office confirmed his signature and Cuomo said in a statement that the legislation would "work to destigmatize mental illness."

"The thing is not to run away from it, but to accept it," said Lask of mental illness issues, adding the bullying at schools is a growing concern.

She believes that one in four people have some sort of psychological condition.

Silvio Mazzella, chairperson of the Jacobi CAB, said that Lask's award was well deserved and that the board nominated her because of her outstanding work overall and in planning events.

"She has been giving of herself for many years," said Mazzella, adding

"she is in charge of our events and she does a great job with them."

Since 2011, Lask and Jacobi CAB have held an annual mental health conference in May as part of National Mental Health Month. Lask spearheaded the conference's creation and the plans them every year.

The conferences are designed to "bring significant, meaningful, and relevant information" to patients, staff and community, according to a biography of Lask submitted to H+H.

Topics from previous year's conferences include preventing suicide, trauma's impact on mental and physical health, and housing for the mentally ill.

Lask said she would reprise the housing topic for the conference planned for May 2017.

Lask said that it has been a long struggle over several decades to overcome to the stigma that is often associated with behavioral health issues, a stigma which is not entirely gone today and is often a barrier to treatment.

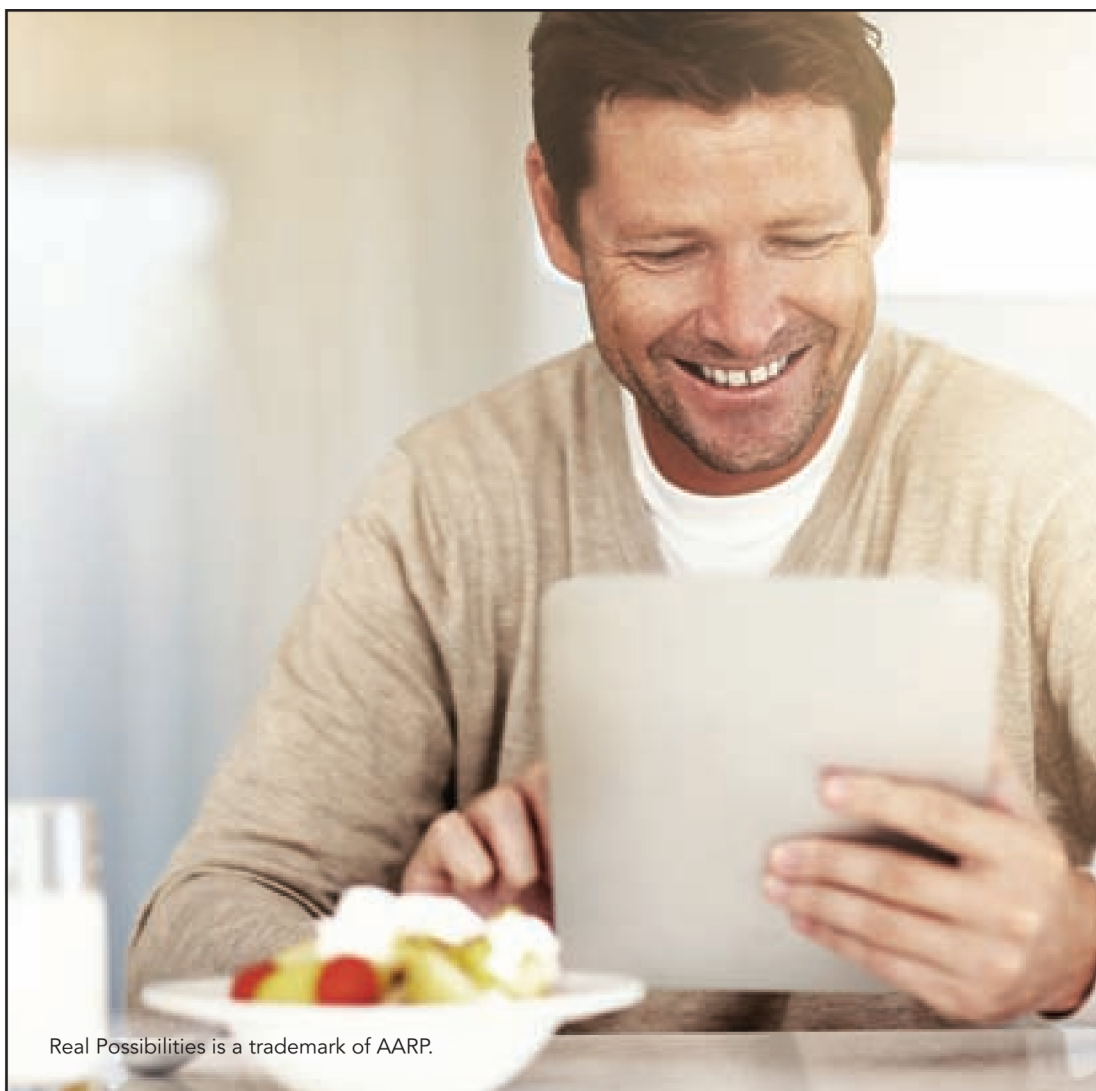
Over the decades, Lask said she has confronted both members of var-



Sylvia Lask accepts the award from William Foley, New York Health + Hospitals/Jacobi CEO. Lask is a member of Jacobi's Community Advisory Board.

Photo courtesy of New York Health + Hospitals/Jacobi

ious boards and the general community, as well as elected officials, using a variety of methods to try to advocate for people who might otherwise be forgotten.



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