



Spring
2014

Bright Horizons

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Proof that Wellness Works!

It's been four years since BHcare was awarded a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to integrate primary care and wellness services into its outpatient clinics. Primary care is offered on-site in Branford and Ansonia by staff of the Cornell Scott-Hill Health Corporation. The program also offers a menu of wellness services including on-site nurse management, peer mentoring, access to health education seminars and a 10-week wellness curriculum.

Results of the impact that these services have had on the health status of clients over the past four years are staggering. 45.6 percent of clients who participate in our on-site primary care showed an improvement in body mass index (BMI), and those diagnosed with hypertension saw a significant reduction in systolic and diastolic blood pressure. Clients who participated in wellness activities not only showed improvement in BMI status, but they had less fluctuation in their weight and managed to gain less than those who did not participate in wellness activities. BHcare is proud of the results accomplished under this grant and will continue to provide these valuable integrated health services.

Simple tips for your mental and physical wellbeing.

1. Connect with others.
2. Take time to enjoy.
3. Participate and share interests.
4. Volunteer your time for a cause or issue.
5. Be active and eat well.
6. Challenge yourself.
7. Be aware of what triggers your stress and how you react.
8. Get plenty of sleep.
9. Notice the here and now.
10. Ask for help.

Valley Services
435 East Main Street
Ansonia CT 06401
(203) 736-2601


BHcare
Hope • Health • Recovery

Shoreline Services
14 Sycamore Way
Branford CT 06405
(203) 483-2630



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www.BHcare.org



Twitter.com/CTBHcare

A Message from Our President/CEO



May is Mental Health Month and this year's theme from Mental Health America is, "Mind Your Mental Health". Mental health is integral to our overall health. There are many healthy choices and steps that individuals can adopt to promote and strengthen mental health—and overall health and wellbeing.

A healthy lifestyle can help to prevent the onset or worsening of depression, anxiety and other mental health conditions, as well as heart disease, diabetes, obesity and other chronic health problems. It can also help people recover from these conditions.

This May, BHcare is raising awareness of the role mental health plays in our lives and providing tips and resources so anyone can take steps to promote good mental health. These include building social support, eating with your mental health in mind, recognizing the signs of stress, and knowing when to reach out for help.

Just as Americans have learned there are things they can do to reduce their risk of heart disease and other illnesses, BHcare wants to help people learn what they can do both to maintain their mental health in tough times and also to improve their mental well-being throughout their lives.

Throughout this newsletter you'll learn about the different ways BHcare is integrating overall wellness into our behavioral health treatment. You'll also learn about the various activities we have planned in May to celebrate Mental Health Month. I hope you'll be able to join us and show your support, and to spread the message that recovery is possible and BHcare is here to help.

Roberta J. Cook
President/CEO

Central Administrative Office Open House



Over 70 of you joined us at 127 Washington Ave. in North Haven on April 2, 2014 to tour and toast our new Central Administrative Office.

Pictured from left to right are Bill Purcell, Al Canosa, Ron Villani, Roberta J. Cook, Michael Freda, David Yaccarino and Len Fasano.

Bowling Strikes Against Domestic Violence!

Thank you for supporting our 26th Annual Bowl-2-Benefit on Saturday, March 8 at AMF Lanes in Milford. More than 1,200 of you teamed up to bowl a strike against domestic violence and raised over \$91,000 and still counting! Your online efforts through First Giving raised \$13,000 this year.

Our top fundraising team is New Haven Family CONDORS who raised \$10,000 through their amazing efforts and planned fundraising activities. Oxford Center School is once again our youth leader raising over \$3,600.

Many thanks to our sponsors: Marquis Sponsor: Bassett Family Fund, Media Sponsors: Star 99.9 and PLR 99.1 and Primary Tee Shirt Sponsors: AT&T, Shell Bridgeport Ave. Shelton, Valley Community Foundation and Yale-New Haven Hospital.

Thank you volunteers, participants and committee members for another successful Bowl-2-Benefit!



Staff Spotlight



Sandy Lombardi, Director of Community Support Services, has dedicated more than 26 years of service to our organization, our mission, our clients and our community.

Sandy has held many positions throughout her career with BHcare. She joined the organization in 1988 as a case manager and quickly moved her way up taking on various positions such as Coordinator and Director of Community Support Services. She has been administratively responsible for nearly every program within the organization – including the Valley outpatient clinic and our (24-7) ABI and Howe Avenue residential programs. While supervising several programs, Sandy was appointed the Director of Quality Assurance and led the agency through its fifth three-year CARF accreditation. Throughout her tenure, Sandy has been instrumental in securing grant funding from the Office of Alternative Sanctions, Department of Corrections, HOPWA and the Ryan White Title I and II, just to name a few.

Sandy has a BA in Psychology from Fairfield University. She also has a Masters degree in Psychology from Southern Connecticut State University as well as an MBA from Sacred Heart University.

When asked about her longevity with the organization, Sandy said that she was born and raised in the Valley and it was important to her to help out the community. She also added, “The agency always allowed me to grow and develop. I am always willing to learn something new and take on different projects that challenge me, while helping the organization grow and prosper.”

Sandy currently works at both the Valley and Shoreline sites overseeing Community Support Services, Jail Diversion (i.e. Derby and New Haven Superior Courts), Young Adult Services (YAS) as well as Intensive Supportive Housing (ISH) and the Community Living Program (CLP). She continues to work directly with several clients at both sites, emphasizing that she never wants to be too far removed or lose touch with clients.

When asked what she likes the most about her job, Sandy replied, “There is a nice camaraderie here at BHcare. The people are great to work with and they really care about our clients. I am very fortunate to work with a great team!”

Mental Health Month Activities

OPTIONS Art Show

May 2, 2014
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm
James Blackstone Memorial Library
758 Main Street
Branford, CT

Employment Salute

May 14, 2014
12:00 pm - 1:30 pm
Molto Bene
557 Wakelee Ave.
Ansonia, CT

Day of Hope - Poetry Contest

May 14, 2014
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm
Valley Social Club
285 Main Street
Ansonia, CT

Shoreline Benefit

May 15, 2014
5:30 pm - 9:30 pm
Owenego Beach & Tennis Club
40 Linden Ave.
Branford, CT

Annual NAMI Walk

May 17, 2014
10:00 am
Bushnell Park
Hartford, CT

Mental Health Movie Day

May 19, 2014
"King of California"
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
Valley Social Club
285 Main Street
Ansonia, CT

Schizophrenia Awareness Luncheon

May 21, 2014
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm
Valley Social Club
285 Main Street
Ansonia, CT

Enlightened Lunch

Guest Speaker: State Senator Joe Crisco
May 22, 2014
12:00 pm
Ansonia National Guard Armory
5 State Street
Ansonia, CT

OPTIONS Annual Cook Out

May 28, 2014
1:00 pm - 4:00 pm
13 Sycamore Way
Branford, CT

Valley Social Club Art Show

May 29, 2014
4:00 pm - 6:00 pm
BHcare Grounds
435 East Main Street
Ansonia, CT

May is Mental Health Month Community Block Party

May 29, 2014
4:00 pm - 7:00 pm
BHcare Grounds
435 East Main Street
Ansonia, CT

To learn more and to register, please visit www.BHcare.org.

“I’m Safe, I’m Safe”

“I remember walking through the doors of The Umbrella and thinking ‘I’m safe, I’m safe’.”

Judy was in a very controlling and abusive relationship. Her husband did not let her talk to anyone, visit anyone or call anyone. He expected her to do things the way he wanted them done or she would pay the price. If he didn’t like the dinner she prepared, he would beat her. She feared for her life and the safety of her son.

She was living a nightmare and felt very isolated. She felt like she had committed some kind of crime and was always wondering when this sentence of torture and pain was going to be lifted. A concerned friend referred her to BHcare’s The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services (UCDVS).



The Umbrella worked with her attorney and helped her through a three year divorce. Judy had to give up everything to move forward. She said The Umbrella gave her the tools to navigate through the divorce. The staff provided her with child care resources, helped her get employment, and worked with the utility companies to get her on a budget. They provided her son with a safe haven where he received special grief counseling and they always made him feel special. “They helped me make a life for myself and my son.”

Judy attended individual and group therapy that helped improve her self-esteem. She said it was good to talk to other women who had been through the same thing. She feels The Umbrella gives clients a sense of empowerment. “They gave me a place to go, a way out. I felt like I can do this. I can make it,” she said.

Judy feels it is important to let other women know that there is help for those in abusive relationships. “Many don’t handle their escape properly. Please don’t put yourself in a dangerous situation,” she said.

There is hope and it is just a phone call away. The UCDVS Crisis Hotline numbers are **(203) 736-9944**, **(203) 789-8104** and **1 (888) 774-2900**.

You Can Help Make a Difference



Like Judy, there are thousands of women and their children who would be living in fear each and every day if not for the free and confidential services provided by BHcare’s The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services (UCDVS).

You can help make a difference in the lives of other domestic violence victims by participating in The Great Give 2014. This is an opportunity for you to maximize your support for the programs and services at UCDVS.

Every dollar you give will go toward helping the more than 7,000 women and children that walk through the doors of UCDVS each year live happy and safe lives.

To participate in this special 36 hour appeal and help make us eligible to win thousands of dollars in challenge and grant prizes, visit www.thegreatgive2014.org between 8:00 am on May 6 and 8:00 pm on May 7, search for BHcare, and make an online contribution of \$25.00 or more. To keep updated and to learn about special prize announcements throughout the appeal, follow us on Facebook and Twitter. You can help even more by sharing the donation page via Facebook, Twitter and email and encouraging family, friends, and colleagues to participate.

Your gift provides a safe haven and the services necessary to help these families escape violence and rebuild their lives. You are the reason why thousands of women and children are safe.

Doctor's Corner

Doctor's Corner
by Dan A. Oren, M.D.

As I write this column in mid-March, I note the mounds of dirty ice left over from this challenging season that we've all experienced. More than 400 years ago, in William Shakespeare's famous play Richard III, theatergoers were exposed to his famous line of "Now is the winter of our discontent".

Let us be honest: it has been a brutal winter for all of us in Connecticut, and for that matter, the entire Northeast. On top of the usual onslaught of lethargy and sometimes sadness and irritability that many people feel during the short days of winter, which in its worst form becomes seasonal affective disorder and a major depressive episode, we have all had to deal with what has seemed like a relentless set of plagues of cold temperatures and snowy streets.

The good news is that I am confident that by the time this column is published a month or so from now, there will be flowers blooming where today there is ice, and there will be smiles on many of the faces that yesterday might have borne scowls.

The phenomenon of winter depression is useful in helping doctors and nurses and clinicians think about the broader picture of the mental illnesses we treat at BHcare. This syndrome, which clearly depends upon the length of the day and exposure to bright light each year, in which people can feel almost as sensitive to light deprivation as a plant without sun, reminds us that mental illnesses can be brought on by many different causes. It could be the length of day. It could be a gene we are born with. It could be our immune system revved up in some unwelcome way. It could be a substance of abuse that we chose to take voluntarily, but found ourselves later involuntarily addicted to it. It could be the emotional consequence of a terrible life experience. The list goes on.

This syndrome also reminds us that none of us are helpless bystanders on this earth. While the biological mechanisms of most psychiatric illnesses are still extremely poorly understood, there are effective treatments for many of them. Sometimes the treatment is psychotherapy to help understand psychological ways to cope with the illness. Sometimes it is a pill or pills. Sometimes it is a changed living or work environment. And sometimes it takes moving to a new and safer or healthier environment. The syndrome also reminds us that, like the seasons, while it may seem dark and cloudy today, there will be sunnier days ahead if we can get ourselves through the darkness.

All the staff at our agency are dedicated to offering the best treatment and support possible to those who seek our help. We are fortunate to be living in an era when so many treatment and support options are possible, thanks in large part to the generous individuals, companies, and government agencies that give us the resources to do so.

How I'm Helping...



June 15, 2014

10:15 am

Branford Green, Branford CT

Support The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services!
Complimentary registration available for people who fundraise
or donate \$200 to UCDVS.

Learn more at branfordroadrace.net.

If you'd like to learn more about how you can help, visit our
website at www.BHcare.org or call 203-736-2601 x1327.

UCDVS News

UCDVS offers weekly support groups for women who are in an abusive relationship. Attendees share feelings and experiences that support the process of healing from the emotional pain and fear they experience while living in a violent relationship.

"Saying yes to happiness means learning to say no to the people and things that hurt you."

Recently clients were encouraged to write the negative thoughts and feelings they experienced as victims of domestic violence on rocks. They placed the rocks in a bowl of water where they sank to the bottom.



Then the women were asked to write the way they are feeling now that they have left their abusive relationships on ping pong balls and place them in the same bowl of water. The positive feelings stay on top.



For more information about the programs and services offered through UCDVS, please visit bhcare.org.

Make Sure Your Voice is Heard!

Letters, emails, or calls to your State legislators can make a difference when it comes to educating your legislator on issues that are important to you, such as the impact of community behavioral health services, domestic violence services, education and prevention, and community providers in general. Your legislator will listen to you to understand the view of the people he/she represents. Keep in mind that your legislator receives numerous pieces of correspondence on a daily basis, so you need to be clear and concise. Please take a few moments to email or call legislative leadership, your local legislator, and the Governor, and explain to them, in your own words, the importance of the programs and services provided by BHcare.

Here are some basic tips on how to correspond effectively with your legislators:

- Identify yourself as a voting constituent in your legislator's state or district.
- Provide facts and examples to support your position, for example: My son would not have the services he needs without community providers. Or, my brother would be homeless without the supportive housing provided by human service agencies.
- Personalize the issue you are writing about and how the legislation would positively or negatively affect you or those you represent.
- In conclusion, thank your legislator for his/her time and interest and ask for a response in a timely fashion. Provide a method for follow-up, such as a phone number or email address.

Opening Doors in New Haven

BHcare was elected to become a part of the Greater New Haven Opening Doors Steering Committee to prevent and end homelessness. This regional alliance is modeled after the federal Opening Doors Initiative, and coordinates the strategies of advocacy, prevention, housing, employment and services to ensure that episodes of homelessness are rare and of short duration.

Opening Doors seeks to increase access to stable and affordable housing, retool the homeless crisis response system, increase economic security, improve health and housing stability, and increase leadership, collaboration and civic engagement. Using the Rapid Results approach, leaders in the New Haven area are building a coordinated access system to use as a pathway toward ending chronic and other types of homelessness. One common assessment tool for the entire region is being developed. On March 6, BHcare sponsored a Homelessness and Housing Meeting at the Legislative Office Building to inform legislators about the priorities set for reaching our goal of ending homelessness.

Beginning on April 19, the Rapid Results Institute will launch The 100-Day Challenge to accelerate the number of people who can be housed in 100 days.

Red Watch Training Helps Prevent Drinking Deaths

The Greater Valley Substance Abuse Action Council (VSAAC) held a Red Watch Training on March 4, at Emmett O'Brien High School in Ansonia. 18 students completed the potentially life-saving course on toxic drinking.

The mission of the Red Watch program is to provide campus community members with the knowledge, awareness, and skills to prevent student toxic drinking deaths and to promote a student culture of kindness, responsibility, compassion, and respect. Students who successfully complete the Red Watch training program are awarded the Red Watch Band, as a symbol of their role as peer mentors who are trained "to watch over one another when 'every second counts'."

The students now know how to handle alcohol emergencies and summon professional help.

Samantha said, "I know how to save someone from dying. I know what alcohol poisoning looks like."

"If a person is on the ground, I know to check to see if they are breathing. I will try and wake them with a pinch to their elbow," said Leilani.

"I'm not going to look stupid and just sit there when someone is passed out on the floor. I know what to do," expressed Tatiane.

Ms. Muckell, RN, Department Head of Health Technology at Emmett, said the Red Watch Training is a great program. "Lorrie, the instructor, has such a great connection with the kids. She engages them and keeps them interested throughout the program," said Ms. Muckell.

For more information about Red Watch and other trainings, contact VSAAC at (203) 736-8566.



BHcare is supported by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Guilford Community Fund, the Guilford Human Services Council, the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, The Valley United Way, United Way of Milford, The Valley Community Foundation and the Towns of Bethany, Branford, Derby, East Haven, Guilford, Hamden, Madison, North Branford, North Haven, Orange, Oxford, Seymour, Shelton and Woodbridge.

BHcare is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities and is licensed by the Department of Public Health.

BHcare is a partner agency of CommuniCare, Inc.

An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer

We apologize for any omissions or oversights. If your department, foundation or municipality has been overlooked, please bring it to our attention.



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Shoreline Benefit



Thursday, May 15, 2014

5:30 to 9:30 pm

Owenego Beach & Tennis Club

Branford, CT

\$50 per person

Purchase tickets online at BHcare.org

Event Chair: Charlotte Mattei, SVP WebsterBank

CUPCAKE WAR PARTICIPANTS

JCakes

Marjolaine Pastry Shop

Meriano's Bakery & Cannoli Truck

Pastry Fusions

Sugar Cupcakery & Bakery

Take the Cake

The casual summer evening will feature music, a silent auction, friendly cupcake war between local bakeries, and grilling on the deck.

Attendees are encouraged to wear their "Shoreline Chic" attire to this fun-filled Shoreline soiree, Tommy Bahama for the men, summer stylish for women.

Sponsored by:

