

Winter
2014

Bright Horizons

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My Sister's Place "Pays it Forward"

My Sister's Place offered \$40 vouchers to the 28 adults who lost their homes when the Kreiger Block on Howe Avenue in Shelton was destroyed by fire on January 5th. The fire consumed the building including 24 apartments and several businesses, and had to be torn down. The residents lost everything except the clothes on their backs.

When Nancy Cahoon, Manager of MSP heard about the fire, she immediately offered to help. "It's all about people helping people. The fire is another great example of how the community comes together in time of need," she said.

Nancy said the outpouring of community support was reminiscent of the support MSP received when the store suffered extensive smoke damage from a fire next door and had to close for seven weeks. She said the community's generosity and support during that time was overwhelming. "We are happy to finally be able to give back to those that helped us out after the fire at our store in March," she said.

The displaced Shelton tenants can purchase clothing and household items with their vouchers at the store. MSP will be donating a portion of the store's recyclable profits to the Howe Avenue Relief Fund.

BHcare is offering counseling to anyone affected by the fire and is helping to secure housing for those who lost their homes.


To learn more about how you can support MSP, visit our store at 380 Main Street, Ansonia, or find us online www.bhcare.org, and www.facebook.com/MySistersPlace.

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

www.BHcare.org

 [Facebook.com/CTBHcare](https://www.facebook.com/CTBHcare)

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A Message from Our President/CEO



We are so grateful for the support of so many generous individuals and organizations that help to empower our clients to live safe, productive, healthy and independent lives. Your support makes a tangible and lasting difference in the lives of real people who are meeting the day-to-day challenges of life. Some of you donate your time, others donate goods, some donate money, and each of you is making a difference each and every day.

I am fortunate because I get to witness the impact you're having firsthand. I have the opportunity to meet with our clients, and hear of their successes; new jobs, homes, and breakthroughs. I've had the chance to speak with women and children who've lived in our safe houses, and who've moved on to build independent and healthy lives for themselves and their children. I've seen the responses of the teens, children and professionals who participate in our prevention workshops and seminars and who go on to apply what they've learned in their

everyday lives. I get to witness it all, and I want you to have that same opportunity.

In the coming months we'll be featuring success stories on our website, Facebook and Twitter, and in the local news. We are putting together videos with clients who are willing to share their stories of triumph, and I invite you to view them and share them. Each story is unique and heartwarming, and demonstrates how your dedication to our mission is improving lives and building healthier communities.

We have a number of events coming up where you will have the opportunity to view your contributions firsthand. We kick off our spring calendar on March 8 with our Bowl-to-Benefit The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services. I hope you will join more than 1300 participants to "bowl a strike against domestic violence". I'd also like to invite you to join us for an Open House at our new administrative office in North Haven on April 2. You can tour the suite and learn about all that is on the horizon for BHcare and our clients. Our shoreline social club, OPTIONS, will be hosting its annual Art Show on May 2 at the Blackstone Library in Branford. There, you can witness the talents of the people you're helping and see how they express themselves through painting, sculpture and crafts. I am also excited to announce that we are bringing back our Mental Health Month Block Party on May 29 in Ansonia. The Block Party will be great fun, and will give the community and our clients the chance to celebrate recovery and raise awareness for mental health while enjoying food, music, face painting, games, and arts and crafts.

I hope you will be able to join us for one of the exciting events we have coming up this spring. Please keep an eye out for our success stories and videos so that you can see all that your support is doing to help individuals and families each and every day.

Roberta J. Cook
President/CEO

Meet Margaret Livingston, Chair, BHcare Board of Directors



Margaret first came to BHcare (then Harbor Health Services) in 2008 as a member of the Board of Directors, and was elected chair in 2010. She played an integral role in the merger and formation of BHcare, and served as co-chair with Bill Bassett beginning in 2012. Margaret was elected sole chair of the Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting in November.

Margaret, who recently retired from Guilford Savings Bank after 39 years, held various positions throughout the bank before assuming the position of president and CEO in 2008. She is proud to hold the distinction of being named its first female president, as well as only the 10th President in the bank's 137 year history.

A lifelong resident of Guilford, Margaret is well known in the community. She is an active Guilford Rotarian and serves on numerous boards of directors including Our Lady of Mercy School in Madison, and SARAH.

Margaret is married to her high school sweetheart and has two daughters.

Your Support = Holiday Gala Success

We were so honored to have 145 of you join us at Grassy Hill Country Club in December for the 13th Annual Holiday Gala. Thanks to your support, the total raised was more than \$55,000!

You all looked fantastic dancing to the live music provided by Higher and Higher, and you all really seemed to enjoy the new martini bar and mashed potato bar. The live auction was great fun and the silent auction raised more than \$9,500.

Throughout the evening, you were given the opportunity to make a direct donation to support programs, services, and victims at The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence safe houses. Facts highlighting the impact of domestic violence and special displays at the event signified how your gifts would be used to help victims and their children throughout the year. Your donations of over \$13,000 will provide individual and group counseling, advocacy, children's counseling programs, safety education and planning, emergency legal advocacy, and other support services.

Many thanks to our top sponsors: Webster Bank, Bassett Family Fund, Cohen & Thomas, Retina Systems, Serra & DelVecchio Insurance, and Valley Community Foundation. A special thanks to Fred Ortoli for providing portraits for the evening's attendees.



300 Holiday Wishes Granted

For several years now, your support has brightened the lives of thousands of individuals and families coping with the affects of domestic violence, mental illness and addiction through the Under the Tree program. Your donations provide gifts to those in need during the holiday season.

You granted wishes for over 300 BHcare clients this year. Most of the wishes were for basic need items such as coats, gloves, socks, etc. For many, your gift was the only gift they received.

Many of you in the community also held various drives for our clients and domestic violence shelters throughout the months of November and December. Items collected included non-perishable food, toys and household supplies.

Thanks to your response and generous donations, we were able to have another very successful year helping those in need.



BHcare's 2nd Annual Meeting

BHcare held its second Annual Meeting on November 13, 2013 at the New Haven Lawn Club. 100 of you gathered to bid farewell to long-term Board Chair, Bill Bassett, to honor the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, and to listen to success stories from BHcare clients.

You joined us in presentation of the first annual Community Partner Award given to the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven for their unwavering support, guidance and assistance to the formation of BHcare. Will Ginsberg, President/CEO of the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven accepted the award.

You bid farewell to Board Chair, Bill Bassett and shared your gratitude for all of his contributions over the years. Bill served as Board Chair for the last 18 years. His civic and charitable generosity is known throughout the Valley community. In addition to the BHcare board, Bill also served on the Valley United Way and the Valley Community Foundation boards. The Bassett family has been a major sponsor and promoter of BHcare events and continues to be the marquis sponsor of Bowl-2-Benefit. Bill's company, W.E. Bassett Co., took on displaced workers in 1994 when they lost their sheltered workshop and continued to provide work for them until Bassett closed its doors in 2012. Bill will continue on as a director on the board.

Visit bhcare.org to view our annual report.



You're Invited

Bowl-2-Benefit

March 8, 2014
9:00 am, 11:30 am, 2:00 pm,
4:30 pm, & 7:00 pm
AMF Lanes
Milford, CT



Shoreline: Rays of Hope

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

Administrative Office Open House

April 2, 2014
5:00 pm to 6:30 pm
127 Washington Ave., 3rd Floor West
North Haven, CT

Employment Salute

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

May is Mental Health Month Community Block Party

May 29, 2014
4:00 pm to 7:00 pm
BHcare Grounds
Ansonia, CT

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

“Don’t label me or put me in a box”



Mia faced adversities all of her life. Cataract surgery as an infant left her legally blind. During her teenage years, Mia was diagnosed with Spinocerebellar Degeneration, a progressive genetic disorder that damages the nerves that send messages from the spinal cord and brain to the rest of the body. She slowly lost her ability to walk and by the age of 18, Mia was bound to a wheelchair.

In 2007, Mia came out as a transgender. Mia was born and raised a male but has always felt like she was a woman trapped in a man’s body. She had terrible problems with her parents because they did not accept her lifestyle. Mia was faced with discrimination, and found out quickly that the world is afraid of what it is not familiar with or does not understand.

Mia came to BHcare in 2009 for help with severe social anxiety. Back then, there were very few places where she felt safe and had a very small social network. Mia started seeing a BHcare clinician, Marie, who helped her sort out her feelings. She helped Mia become comfortable with who she was, and ease her anxiety about “coming out.”

Marie also helped Mia move out of her parents’ house and find a place of her own. She connected Mia with a BHcare Community Support Specialist who helped her set up home health aides, doctor appointments and even helped her get a power wheelchair. Mia also participated in a cognitive behavior therapy group (CBT) for two years. The CBT group helped her express her true feelings about how miserable she was living as a man, and the difficulties she faced with her parents.

Marie introduced Mia to another clinician, Jason, who further helped her learn how to present herself as a female and how to not be consumed by social situations, always worrying about what people think and if they were looking at and talking about her. Jason started a transgender group this past September that Mia attends weekly where she shares her feelings, anxiety and other social issues among her peers.

Jason, Marie and others at BHcare helped Mia learn that she could make a positive impact on people rather than fight the world that had misconceptions of mental health and transgender. She could be an advocate and educate society to help eliminate the stigma associated with both.

Your generosity is helping to support people like Mia live healthy, happy, and independent lives.

Mia is very independent and is the head of the neighborhood watch in her apartment building. She frequently helps out by shoveling snow and issues warning tickets to people who park illegally.

About a year ago, Mia met her girlfriend, Debby. Debby says, “Mia brought me back to life.” Mia and Debby take frequent trips to places like the Big E and museums. Mia does whatever she can to be a good partner, even helping Debby after she had hand surgery.

Mia has made a lot of progress over the past four years. She says she still has many battles but keeps a positive outlook. Her goal is to be a role model for people with mental illness, the transgender community and for those who have a physical disability. She doesn’t want to be labeled or put in a box. “Mental illness does not equal unintelligent. Social anxiety doesn’t mean introverted. Don’t judge me by the way I look,” says Mia. “Get to know people, give them a chance.” View Mia’s video at www.bhcare.org.

Doctor's Corner

Being Silly

The patient had just sat down, visibly angry, upset, telling me about everything that was going wrong in her life. I looked at her chart, open in front of me on my desk. I saw my notes from the previous visit, the medication. Something was very wrong with the chart, and then I saw it – the name! I had the wrong chart. I interrupted the patient, embarrassed, and apologized. I called the assistant, annoyed, to bring the correct chart.

Patient and doctor sat silent. A knock on the door. The assistant held up the chart and held it so I could see the name. The patient looked at me and, with an anxious voice asked, "Is it the correct chart?" I looked at her, straight faced, and replied, "It's close enough", and took the chart. The patient, stunned at first, started laughing, really laughing. Then she said, "This is the first time in months I've been able to laugh." And then we talked.

What had happened? My answer was certainly not planned. It just slipped out. It was risky. It could have misfired, stoked the patient's anger, and continued her suspicion of being just a number. "Close enough." Luckily my offhand quip brought relief to both her and me.

Silliness is the kid brother of humor, the more mature, thoughtful older brother. It tickles. It is spontaneous and impossible. It is the child in you that wants to play. You see it in children. They like to fool around, be funny, laugh. They make us laugh.

The other day, Paula, our Intake Coordinator, came to my office. She needed a chart. She was in a hurry. I felt a bit overwhelmed myself and started telling her all the things I still had to do – or should have done already. After listening to me for a minute or two, she interrupted me saying, "I appreciate your sentiment, but I've got to go." I started laughing and then she did. Her wording was a bit off – and perfect. The tension was gone. If she had said, "Excuse me, but I have more work to do", neither of us would have laughed.

Listen once in a while to the silly thoughts in the playroom of your mind. Loosen up.

Doctor's Corner

by Karl-Otto Liebmann, MD

How I'm Helping...

Walnut Hill Community Church

Easter Run/Walk
April 12, 2014
8:00 am
Derby Greenway



All proceeds benefit
The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services.
Learn more at www.easterrunwalk.com

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 Receives \$20k Grant from Prudential Foundation

The Prudential Foundation awarded \$20,000 to BHcare's The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services (UCDVS) to support the provision of counseling and advocacy services to children, adolescents, and teen victims of domestic violence and their mothers. Children will be provided emotional, social, and educational support by a part-time child advocate who will work specifically at the Valley safe house.

"We are so pleased that Prudential has been able to support our work with children at the safe house," said Susan DeLeon, Director of UCDVS. "It is because of their generosity that children are being provided with counseling and activity groups. The special attention they receive helps them to feel safe and happy."

The Prudential Foundation's mission is to promote strong communities and improve social outcomes for residents in the places where we work and live. Each year, the Foundation invests more than \$25 million in grants to support the revitalization of communities and the community engagement efforts of Prudential employees.



Prudential Foundation

Social Club News

BHcare social clubs hosted their annual Thanksgiving dinners for clients and their families this past November.

Staff and volunteers cooked and served a complete Thanksgiving feast that included turkey, stuffing, gravy, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, vegetables, breads and many delicious desserts.

OPTIONS held their dinner on November 21 at the Congregational Church in Branford. This year we had a record turnout with over 175 people!

Valley Social Club's dinner was held on November 27 at Christ Church in Ansonia with approximately 120 staff and clients in attendance.



BHcare Receives \$200k Grant from CFGNH & VCF

BHcare was awarded a multi-year, \$200,000 grant from the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven and the Valley Community Foundation to support general operating expenses. Funds from the grant will help BHcare continue providing life-changing and life-saving behavioral health, prevention and domestic violence services for more than 14,000 individuals and families in its 19 town service area.



The grant award represents financial commitments from the two separate Community Foundations to provide a total of \$50,000 per year over a four year period.



“The generosity of our community foundations will ensure that all who need us will continue to have access to our programs and services in their local community. We are so grateful to the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, and the Valley Community Foundation for all that they do to support our mission, our clients, and our community,” said Roberta J. Cook, President/CEO of BHcare.

The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven is a philanthropic institution that was established in 1928. Their mission is to create positive and sustainable change in Greater New Haven by increasing the amount of and enhancing the impact of community philanthropy.

The Valley Community Foundation (VCF) was established in 2004 to serve Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour and Shelton. VCF is dedicated to making the Naugatuck Valley a better place to live and work, both now and in the future.

Medical Marijuana Workshop Educates Community

The Greater Valley Substance Abuse Council held a free seminar, “Medical marijuana: How will it affect your workplace and community?” on October 18, 2013 at Scinto Tower Auditorium in Shelton. The seminar was attended by over 100 people which included employers and human resource managers, as well as other community members.

Presenters included John Daviau, President, Connecticut Association of Prevention Providers; Mark Saycher, Human Resources Counsel for the Connecticut Business and Industry Association; and Dr. Philip Adamo, Medical Director, Employee Health and Occupational Injury Care at UMass Memorial Health Care and Medical School in Worcester, MA.



Under the medical marijuana bill, marijuana can be sold in multiple forms at dispensaries, which must have a licensed pharmacist on staff. It can be marketed only to patients authorized to use it.

Daviau stated the law requires an extensive process to register to use medical marijuana. He said the state Department of Consumer Protection Board of Physicians oversees the program. Some of the debilitating conditions the law recognizes include cancer, glaucoma, Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy and post-traumatic stress disorder.

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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Upcoming Events

26th Annual Bowl-2-Benefit
March 8, 2014
AMF Milford Lanes
Milford, CT

Bowl A Strike Against Domestic Violence!



Sponsored by:

Bassett Family Fund



For more nfo, call Debbie Soulsby at (203)736-2601, ext. 1321, or visit: bhcare.org.

Shoreline: Rays of Hope
May 15, 2014
5:30 to 9:30 pm
Owenego Beach & Tennis Club
Branford, CT

Mark your calendar and plan to join us for BHcare's new Shoreline event.

The casual summer evening will feature music, a silent auction, friendly cupcake wars 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.

We are currently seeking sponsors and donors for the event. Sponsorships range from \$500 to \$2,500.

Sponsored by:



For more information or to sponsor the event, contact Debbie Soulsby at (203)736-2601, x1321 or dsoulsby@bhcare.org.