Happy Spring to you!

I recently returned from a professional conference, where I learned the importance of self-care as the foundation for resilience. We are all bombarded with so much challenging stuff every day. If we aren’t intentional about taking care of ourselves, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed, angry, or discouraged. The conference speaker encouraged us to have a multi-level self-care plan: things you do daily, weekly, and things you do at longer intervals. So, for example, exercise or meditation might be one of your daily practices. A game night with friends or attending a religious service might be a weekly practice, and taking a vacation or retreat of some sort could be an annual or biannual practice. The point is to establish those “recharge” points so we can thrive and contribute in the ways we long to.

Since our last newsletter, lots has been happening at the Center. Our RIVERWALK fundraiser was a blast, and we raised just under our goal of $30,000. We have been functioning at or near capacity all year, with between 70 and 80 people consulting us at any given time. In fact, we could use another clinician or two, so please spread the word. We have also been attending trainings to help us become a safer, more inclusive, and equitable community.

Just this past week, we received calls from 4 people who were referred by Spiritus parishioners or former clients. They all expressed some version of this statement, “I was told I can trust you to listen.” This warms my heart, because listening is central to our mission. Whether we link someone to care here at the Center or find a better fit for them elsewhere, it all begins with listening.

Thank you to all of you for your investment - through your donations, volunteering, prayers, and referrals. We absolutely could not do this without you!

With Deep Gratitude,

Amy Durkee
I came to Spiritus MHC quite by chance. I am a 58-year-old veteran who learned late in life that I have autism, a brain injury, and PTSD. A great deal of my difficulties were simply the result of the time into which I was born.

People did not know about autism. No one talked about male experience of sexual abuse - as children or adults. Only men who survived combat could experience PTSD. This thinking was how I was raised. Had it not been for a chance comment with a male medical professional during a routine screening, I would never have known that Spiritus offers counseling for issues like male sexual trauma, as well as other conditions.

I experienced some bad times as a gay man in the military in the early 80s. So, when I got home, I withdrew into drugs and alcohol, which led to a party where I hit my head and temporarily lost all language. It's called “aphasia.” My brain was never the same. What’s more, I experienced this as someone with autism – so “meaning” continued, even though words were gone. There isn't even any science for my condition, let alone treatment.

Well-meaning professionals tried for years to help, but did not have the correct diagnoses, so they could not help. What's more, professionals did not listen when I said I was being hurt, because they didn't understand why. This taught me to be afraid of asking professionals for help. Then, in 2010, the team said, “We don't know,” and stopped meds and treatment. With nowhere to turn, at 48, I gave up on society, wandering homeless across the US for the next 3 years.

By the grace of God, out west I encountered a neurologist who explained my brain injury, as well as my autism. There was a brief brain rehab, but only so much they could do after so many years. Still, I found my way in, off the streets, and even got service connected with the VA. But my newfound safety opened me again to memories of my trauma. To rebuild my life, I needed to find a way to work through my past. But I did not have words the way others do, and there was no traditional care approach to be had. I lived scared and alone, until stumbling into care at Spiritus.

It’s been more than a year now in counseling. Though experienced in Twelve Step programs, today I see recovery in a broader context. I think it can be about embracing a journey so necessary after much trauma: re-finding relationship with self and the world.

Experiencing consistent patience and kindness, I feel my life is gradually coming back to me – a piece at a time, with God somehow smoothing it into a new wholeness. But it happened because, with no map, my counselor at Spiritus did the highest service one human being can do for another; she listened.

Thanks, folks. God bless you. My name is Grace Lynch.

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“I think [counseling] can be about embracing a journey so necessary after much trauma: re-finding relationship with self and the world.”

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**Save the Date**

Please join us at Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center's

**Annual Riverwalk**

**October 20, 2024 - 11am**

- Invite family & friends to sponsor you
- After the walk, join us for lunch
- Great music, crafts for kids, and fall fun!

To stay up to date, visit: scmentalhealth.org
This February, clinicians from the Veterans Administration (VA) came to the Center to teach us about Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and the latest research and best practices for suicide prevention. Our paid and volunteer clinical staff, along with social workers from Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach, spent a morning broadening our understanding and skills so that we can better support those who consult us. It was a great experience, and we plan to partner with the VA again next year for another training.
**Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center**
121 N. Fitzhugh Street
Rochester, NY 14614
Phone: 585-325-1186
Fax: 585-325-1191

**Hours of Operation**
Monday 9 am - 3 pm
Tuesday - Thursday 9 am - 5 pm

**Center Staff**
Amy Durkee, MHC-LP - Director
Eileen Hurley, RN, LCSW - Community Outreach
Mark Potter - Associate Administrator

**More ways to give:**

- **United Way**
- **Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center Foundation** $15,000
- Feilbloom Foundation $8,000
- Fred & Floy Willmott Foundation $6,000
- LGBT Giving Circle $2,000
- Polleseni Foundation $2,000
- Rochester Female Charitable Society $3,000
- Women’s club of Pittsford $400

**From current participants:**

“You all are amazing, and your work is life-changing! I think the person I was when I started at Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center would be surprised but proud of the person I am today because of you.”

“Administration staff is awesome, also. They talk to me like a person, always friendly and open to chat a bit, and make the whole going-to-therapy as unstressful as could be managed. It’s like getting a shot. Nothing can make that ‘un-icky,’ but having friendly folks involved makes it not a bad experience to get through. I am grateful for the staff and the community I feel when I am there.”

**Thanks to our recent funders**

Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation $15,000
Feilbloom Foundation $8,000
Fred & Floy Willmott Foundation $6,000
LGBT Giving Circle $2,000
Polleseni Foundation $2,000
Rochester Female Charitable Society $3,000
Women’s club of Pittsford $400

Thank to all of you who have chosen to donate and support us in various ways. Through private donations, fundraiser support, memorial gifts, and more, YOU help make our work possible.

We cannot thank you enough!

**Volunteer Staff & Affiliations**

- Lynn Acquafondata, LMHC, Private Practice
- Lieve Bain, LCSW-R, Retired
- Samantha Bradley, St. John Fisher Intern
- Michele Caponi, LMHC, Retired
- Anne Cliby, Yoga Instructor
- Kathleen Conti, LCSW, Retired
- John Connors, MD, Private Practice
- Peggy Derivan, LMHC, Private Practice
- Brenda Devine, LCSW, Retired
- Sue Elliot, LCSW, Private Practice
- Jere Fletcher, Esq., Advocate
- Jessica George, MHC-LP
- David Hall, Peer Support Specialist
- Steve Hoffman, The Living Room
- Sandra Hope, LMHC, Private Practice
- Mary Kearney, LCSW, Retired
- Michael Kelly, Esq., Advocate
- David Markham, LCSW, Private Practice
- Rick Massie, LMHC, Retired
- Jerry McElroy, Advocate
- Ese Moynihan-Ejaiye, LMHC, Private Practice
- Jennifer Bateman, MHC-LP
- Mark Potter, B.S. Psych, Social Work Intern
- Liz Powers, The Living Room
- Paula Sauers, The Living Room
- Suzanne Spencer, LCSW, Retired
- Gary Warner, Ph.D, Retired
- Keith Wilson, LMHC, Private Practice

**Advisory Board Members**

- Kate Auberge, LCSW-R, Retired
- Rev. Celia Katovich, Spiritus Christi Church
- Kate Kennedy, Monroe BOCES One
- Kim Hess, MBA, Monroe Plan
- Luz Flores Lee, MS, PMP, LLS-MBB, Consultant
- Paul Mastrodonato, MPA, Nonprofit Works

**Volunteer with us!**

**Nurse Practitioners & Psychiatrists:**
Prescribe and manage medications for participants, 2-4 hours per month minimum

**Therapists:**
Hours negotiable, as little as 2 hours per week

**Our Wish List**

- All-day bus passes
- Grocery gift cards (Tops, Aldi, Price-Rite)
- McDonalds Gift Cards
- Subway Restaurant Gift Cards