



Linking Lives

A Message From Our Director

A large body of research shows belonging supports mental health, wellbeing, and resilience—not only for individuals, but for families and communities. Type “crisis of belonging” into a search engine and you’ll find many recent articles: chronic loneliness, anxiety, and disconnection are affecting people across the socioeconomic spectrum. That’s why we’ve chosen belonging and community wellness as the topic for our community conversation on May 13—see page 3 for details. We hope you can join us.

Fostering a sense of belonging and connection is an essential part of our work at the Center. Many people who come to us say how much it matters to be part of a place where they feel comfortable and welcomed. Trauma, poverty, oppression, addiction, and mental illness often isolate people from their communities and from themselves. Part of the Center’s work is helping people come back to themselves—to belong to themselves—which then ripples out to their families and communities. When we own our inherent dignity, it becomes easier to recognize the dignity in others.

Your support helps us keep this work going every day, helping people like “Rob”, who calls every few years when he hits a rough patch. Sometimes one phone conversation helps; other times a short series of sessions gets his “head back on straight.” And people like “Angela,” who has been with us for over a decade. She arrived profoundly unstable and says she likely wouldn’t have survived without the relationship she found here. Now stable for years, she calls the Center her home base. Her family, she believes, would have missed ?but if she hadn’t made it through.

Thank you for being part of the Center’s community and for making belonging and healing possible.

We also welcomed Mike Boucher, LCSW, to our staff part time in November. Mike brings more than 20 years of experience working with people on the margins. He expands our capacity for seeing clients and for supervision of mental health counseling interns. He will also be covering for me when I’m out—freeing me to pursue additional training and community partnerships. All of this means we can help more people and do so more effectively.

With Gratitude,
Amy Durkee

What’s happening at SCMHC

Clinical Care

Individual, couples, and family therapeutic psychosocial support of uninsured and underinsured youth and adults.

Groups

Support, therapy, and psychoeducational groups to address issues such as anxiety, depression, and sexual trauma

Yoga

Classes offered weekly, in person and virtual to promote overall wellness.

May Community Event

A discussion on Belonging and Mental Health May 13th!



A Rescued Speech Poem



In this art form, client words are used to create poetry. This is an adapted version of words from a session – used with permission from a person who consults Mike Boucher.

Changing My Algorithm

I have been doing way better lately –
Seeing it as the springboard to what comes next

I'm learning to observe but not absorb negativity
And working on life balance
Appreciating the small things
Like the cardinals outside
Feeling the serotonin vs the cortisol

Before, the world had me in a rush
Always thinking, "What am I doing wrong?"
Now I am not in a haste - changing my algorithm
Giving myself permission to do or not do things
Listening to myself and my body
Getting back to the center

A Community Conversation on Belonging and Well-Being: How Our Sense of Connectedness Impacts Our Mental Health with Wade Norwood

May 13, 2026
6:00 PM-7:30 PM
Spiritus Christi Church



Register
Here



Wade Norwood, Chief Advancement and Government Relations Officer at Common Ground Health will be our featured speaker for this community conversation.

To register for the event please give us a call, visit our website, or scan the QR code!





Trauma, Trust, and a Second Chance

by Isobel Davies



In May 2019, the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act (DVSJA) became law in New York. For thousands of incarcerated women across the state, the legislation offered more than the possibility of freedom—it offered long-overdue recognition of the trauma that shaped their paths to prison.

The law gives judges new discretion in sentencing individuals whose offenses were connected to domestic abuse and allows incarcerated survivors to apply for re-sentencing. More than 40 years in the making, the DVSJA acknowledges a reality that advocates have long fought to make visible: gender-based violence is a primary driver of women’s incarceration.

At Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center, we have had the privilege of witnessing the impact of this law firsthand through one woman’s journey: Jennifer’s.

While preparing for her DVSJA re-sentencing in 2020, Jennifer’s attorney connected her with Jess, a volunteer therapist at Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center. The hope was that Jennifer could begin to develop compassion for herself as she navigated the legal process that might finally allow her to return home. Jess, a mental health counselor with extensive experience working with incarcerated individuals, began meeting with her.

Jennifer expected therapy to be difficult. Instead, she found it eye-opening. “It helped me identify my emotions,” she says, “and understand that those emotions were connected to the trauma I experienced in the past.”

Today, Jennifer is home with her children—something she once struggled to imagine while incarcerated, when they were scattered among different caregivers. “I endured so much while I was incarcerated,” she recalls. “I couldn’t see how I would ever get out. So many things stood in my way. But Jess helped me see that I could turn things around.” Jennifer describes the confidence she gained through counseling as her greatest achievement. “I don’t know where I’d be without her,” she says.



“My state of mind has changed. I believe in myself now. It gave me the courage to move forward.”

That hard-won confidence has reshaped how Jennifer sees her life and her responsibilities. Before prison, she says, she felt pulled in every direction. Now she understands the importance of caring for herself as well as her family. “Jess helped me find my feelings,” Jennifer explains. “Even though I’m a single mother, I’ve learned I don’t have to feel guilty about taking my life into consideration too. It’s okay to take a day for self-care when I need it.”

Jennifer and Jess continue to meet regularly. When anxiety spikes, Jennifer knows she can reach out for support.

“Spiritus Christi as a whole has been remarkable,” she says. “The staff are incredibly dedicated. They push themselves to make sure we stay on track. They’ve been a total blessing.”

Jennifer’s story is just one example of what becomes possible when justice systems recognize the realities of trauma—and when compassionate support helps survivors rebuild their lives.

Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center

121 N. Fitzhugh Street
Rochester, NY 14614
Phone: 585-325-1186
Fax: 585-325-1181

Hours of Operation

Monday 10 am - 3 pm
Tuesday - Thursday 9 am - 5 pm

Center Staff

Amy Durkee, LMHC-D - Director
Michael Boucher, LCSW-R, MA- Mental Health Counselor
Alyssa Carvajal, MPH- Associate Administrator

MORE WAYS TO GIVE:



**United Way Donor Designation:
Program #2403**



SEFA: #66-00525

**Ask your campaign manager for
either pledge form, or contact us
directly for one.**

**Your support makes all the
difference!**

Thanks to our recent funders!

Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation \$15,000
Fred & Floy Willmott Foundation \$6,000
LGBTQ+ Giving Circle \$3,000
Mary Mulligan Foundation \$3,000
McGowan Gin Rosica Family Foundation \$5,400
Paychex Charitable Foundation \$1,000
Polisseni Foundation \$3,125
Rochester Female Charitable Society \$3,000
Women's Club of Pittsford \$650

*Thank you to all of you who have chosen to
donate and support us in various ways. Through
private donations, fundraising support,
memorial gifts, and more, YOU help make our
work possible. We cannot thank you enough!*

Volunteer Staff & Affiliations

Sara Abraha, U of R Counseling Intern
Lynn Acquafondata, LMHC, Private Practice
Ted Aman, LMHC, Delphi Rise, Retired
Patricia Bennett, Phd., Retired
Lieve Bain, LCSW, Retired
Jennifer Bateman, MHC-LP
Michele Caponi, LMHC, Retired
Anne Cliby, Yoga Instructor
Peggy Derivan, LMHC, Private Practice
Sue Elliot, LCSW, Private Practice
Debra Enright, Community Relations
Jessica George, LMHC, CVTC
Sandra Hope, LMHC, Private Practice
Eileen Hurley, LCSW
Mary Kearney, LCSW, Retired
Rick Massie, LMHC, Retired
Ese Moynihan-Ejaife, LMHC, Private Practice
Liz Munson, LMHC

Amy Soriano, SJFU Counseling Intern
Suzanne Spencer, LCSW, Retired
Gary Warner, Ph.D, Retired
Keith Wilson, LMHC, Private Practice

Advisory Board Members

Kate Auberger, LCSW, Retired
Rev. Myra Brown, MA, Spiritus Christi Church
Logan Geen, Esq, URMC
Kim Hess, MBA, Elm and Oak Health
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 or gas gift cards
(Tops, Aldi, Price-Rite)
"Forever" postage stamps