Working Among Heroes

It’s the morning after our annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. We spent time evaluating the event, as we always do, and then found ourselves sort of basking in the post-event glow. Such incredible people volunteer here — receptionists, lawyers, psychiatrists, peer advocates, therapists, and more — they are skilled, dedicated, and they clearly love those we serve.

One of our therapists, who also has a thriving private practice, talked about how clients benefit from therapy visits at no fee. He said that, because his clients at the mental health center don’t have to worry about mounting bills for their care, they come more regularly. He sees how this frees them up to concentrate on the work they need to do to get and stay well.

If you could spend time with those who consult here, you would be so impressed with them. They work hard. They take incredible risks. They show tremendous courage and resilience.

And of course there’s you. Your investment in their lives makes all the difference. Not just for them, but for our whole community. You are amazing!!

With deep gratitude,
Maureen, Amy & Eileen

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS

On-Site Clinical: Psychiatric and therapeutic consultations for uninsured and underinsured youth and adults

Urban Youth Outreach: Individual, family and group therapeutic consultations and psychosocial support for minority youth affected by violence

The Living Room: Weekly peer support for those struggling with daily living issues

Wesley’s Mothers: An anonymous weekly peer support group for mothers of incarcerated children

To receive this bi-annual newsletter by email, please send your address to adurkee@spirituschristi.org.
A Change of Plan

by Amy Durkee

Jonathan came to us in his late 20’s, a few months after his younger brother’s suicide. While he’d struggled with depression and anger for as long as he could remember, it was losing his brother that brought him to the point of desiring a change for himself. “I just wanted to get my life right,” he recounts. “I couldn’t make heads or tails of anything at that time. My plan wasn’t working and I needed to try something else.”

Jonathan’s a bright guy and he was connecting the dots: An uncle who committed suicide, a suicidal father trapped in addiction, and then his brother’s death. At his first visit, he said, “I think there’s something better for me out there,” and, “Someone has to be here to take care of my mother.”

It took several months of trial and error to find the right medication for Jonathan, but he stuck with it. “Dr. Gloria was very respectful. She gave me options instead of just telling me what to do. I was worried that meds would change my personality, but they didn’t.”

In most cases medication only takes a person so far, and Jonathan’s situation was no exception. In addition to the physiological factors, there are usually other influences at play with mental illnesses like depression. Certain behaviors and ways of thinking can keep us from living the lives we long for. In therapy, we can learn skills and strategies that not only reduce our suffering but actually help us to thrive.

With his mood stabilized thanks to medication and the first anniversary of his brother’s death fast approaching, Jonathan started working with one of our volunteer therapists. In therapy, he was able to express his feelings of anger and grief. He discovered that his habit of “what if” thinking was keeping him from moving on, so he decided to make a change.

“My counselor told me I had a wise mind,” says Jonathan. “She said people think a counselor will solve everything, but that’s not how it works. People know what they have to do. They just need someone to help them find the way through and to support them through it.”

“The meds helped, but I still had to do the work. I had to change my habits and behavior. I’m 41 now. It took a long time. I had to let go of ways I was creating my own problems.”

Jonathan still sees a psychiatrist at the Center, but he doesn’t need to see his therapist regularly anymore. Every once in a while he’ll call for a “tune up.”

“I’ve had my bumps in the road the last few years. The last two years in particular I have seen things I needed to change for myself, not for anyone else – you know, not to try to keep a relationship or whatever, but just for me. I have learned how to be happy on my own.”

“I think more clearly,” he continues. “I let the past go now. I used to bring all the anger with me but now I let it go. Blame and denial are easier but they don’t get you anywhere.”

To others who are struggling, Jonathan advises, “People are here to help you but you have to find it within yourself to make the changes and to stay with it.”

Jonathan has created a whole new life for himself. “For the first time, I’m excited about what the future has to offer. I still have my issues but now I know to stop and reflect on how to change direction when things are going bad. And to be happy for what I have. I enjoy the moments now, like watching my dog grow up.”

SCMHC WISH LIST:
- Forever postage stamps
- Amazon gift cards
- Wegmans gift cards
- Sunoco or Hess gas cards
- Bus passes
- Tracfone minutes cards

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2016
Farewell to Patricia Kendall

On March 1, 2016 — the 11th anniversary of The Living Room peer support meeting — co-founder Patricia Kendall gave up her fight with cancer. Almost every Wednesday for the past 11 years, Patti and her fellow facilitators created a safe and welcoming place along with folks struggling with mental illness, trauma, poverty and other problems.

Patti was known for her deep care for others. In addition to the time she dedicated to the Wednesday afternoon meetings, Patti spent hours throughout the week on the phone with Living Room members.

Members talk of her great sense of humor and the way she made newcomers feel welcome. She let you know you mattered. She was a good friend.

Paula, Steve, Liz, and the rest of the Living Room’s members continue to carry on the mission on Wednesday afternoons from 1:00 to 6:00.

We miss you Patti. No one will ever take your place in our hearts. Thank you for your love and care.
MORE WAYS TO GIVE:

United Way of Greater Rochester
United Way Donor Designation Program #2403

SEFA #66-00124
Ask your campaign manager for either pledge form, or contact us directly for one.

Your support makes all the difference!

VOLUNTEER
To Make a Difference!
Nurse Practitioners & Psychiatrists: Prescribe and manage medications for participants, 2-4 hrs per month
Therapists: Hours negotiable

Thanks to Recent Funders
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JOHN F. WEGMAN FOUNDATION
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WYMAN-POTTER FOUNDATION
$5,000

From Current Participants:
“This has been a haven for me. I have an outlet for things I cannot share with family or friends.”

“Thank you for all you and SCMHC have given me in care, compassion, and patience. I don’t know where I would be without your help. The center has made, and continues to make, a significant positive impact in my life.”

“I am lucky to be here. My therapist is very engaged and committed to working with me and provides a great feedback loop.”