



Spring is possible!

Was this a long, hard winter or what?!?

Throughout these past months, so many of us have expressed our discouragement, frustration and, at times, utter disbelief at just how long and difficult a winter could be. The bitter temperatures, the snow and ice – it seemed relentless. And now? Well, now it is spring! The snowdrops have already made their appearance and, at this writing, the tulips and daffodils are starting to bloom. The robins are back and are singing their hearts out in the early morning. It all seems like a perfect metaphor for the situation in which so many of those who consult the mental health center find themselves.

When folks first call for help they have often been mired in a winter-of-sorts for a long time. In the harsh winters of anxiety, depression, trauma, grief, addiction, and financial hardship due to unemployment or underemployment, we can feel like we are victims of some

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powerful force. We can wonder if it will ever end, how we will get through. But there can be a “spring” for our hearts and minds! Where the metaphor falls short is just this: while we can’t do much about the weather (other than to accept it which, by the way,

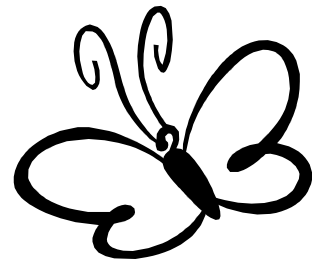
can really help), *there is a lot we can do to improve our mental health and life situation.* This is often difficult to manage on our own but, *with the help of resources like those offered at SCMHC, wellness is possible!*

Your support is crucial to this “spring-making.” Really. Take a moment right now to let that sink in.

Your contributions matter in the lives of real, hurting people just like you. Celebrate that! And know how very much you are appreciated!

With deep gratitude,

Maureen, Amy & Eileen



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

Overview of Programs

- **On-Site Clinical** — psychiatric and therapeutic consultations for uninsured & underinsured youth & adults
- **Urban Youth Outreach** — individual, family & group therapeutic consultations and psychosocial support for minority youth affected by violence
- **Living Room** — weekly peer support for those struggling with daily living issues
- **Mental Health Support Group** — support group for those who have a loved one struggling with mental health issues or who have mental health issues themselves
- **Wesley’s Mothers** — an anonymous peer support group for mothers of incarcerated children
- **Grief Support Group** — for those who have lost a loved one

Somebody to Lean On by Mary Lou Lunt

As a musician and artist, there is always a song or image going through my head as the backdrop to life. Most times I don't even know it's there until I hear myself singing the song that is the perfect solution to whatever challenge I'm facing in the moment. So as I write my testimony of how the SCMHC is making me whole again, I find myself humming "*Lean On Me*" by Bill Withers.

"Sometimes in our lives__We all have pain__We all have sorrow__But if we are wise__We know that there's always tomorrow."

Thirty-three years is a long time to be married. Two great kids. Family and friends, a house, good jobs. A life filled with lots of love and many blessings. I thought we were going to grow old together and live out "till death do us part"—but that was not to be. I struggled and cried and thrashed and prayed. *Grief and depression flooded my life as I lost my husband and the family we created together.* The devastated look on my son's face and the sound of my daughter howling as I told them we were getting a divorce still makes me physically ill.

"Lean on me when you're not strong __And I'll be your friend__I'll help you carry on__For it won't be long__'Til I'm gonna need somebody to lean on."

Something really terrible happened to my brain. I was unable to do simple things like drive to the grocery store. I didn't know how to get there, even though I had driven there hundreds of times. If someone asked my phone number I became mentally paralyzed. Working on a computer became an impossible task as I couldn't string words and sentences together. I thought I was going crazy and this terrified me. Then, I lost my job.

Finances were extremely tight. In the past, I had great success as an entrepreneur, but the local business landscape was quickly deteriorating. Being resourceful and hard working no longer landed me on my feet. Jobs were fewer and I was now an older worker. Trying to help my kids get through their last years of college, divorce, dividing our household, and unemployment left me only one choice: sell my house. Another great loss.

"Please swallow your pride__If I have things you need to borrow__For no one can fill those of your needs__that you won't let show."

I have always been a fiercely independent person. Being the oldest of five kids in an alcoholic family, I became a caretaker at an early

age. I took pride in the fact that during the most turbulent of times I could hold my siblings together despite the violence in our household. Being a leader is in my DNA and I was out to prove it in my career as I was driven to build a large advertising agency. Employees became my work family. Ego and pride were the navigation tools for my life. I knew how to take care of everyone but myself. As my life, marriage and family unraveled I didn't have the skills to cope in a healthy way. I could not function on a daily basis. No money, no job, no home, no security. *I had reached rock bottom. I had to "swallow my pride" and ask for help. I reached out to the Mental Health Center.*

"You just call on me brother, when you need a hand__We all need somebody to lean on__I just might have a problem that you'll understand__We all need somebody to lean on."

Angels come in all colors, shapes and sizes and I am lucky to have so many around me. The sweet, tiny, Angel of Love is Maureen Marlow, the Director of SCMHC. I told her I was unemployed, uninsured and severely depressed. Her blend of compassion and take charge style was just what I needed to get my recovery started. She arranged for me to meet with a therapist that week and for the first time in over a year, I felt *hope...* literally. My new therapist's name was Sandra Hope.

Over the past year and a half Sandra has gently guided me through the crisis and overwhelming feelings of grief, failure, shame and anger. My weekly sessions have helped me release toxic emotions and get my life on a new track. Sandra has supported choices I have made that have improved my physical and mental health. This Angel of Hope reminds me that I am a woman of great strength at times when I forget.

Maureen has coordinated all aspects of my care, including scheduling and attending regular visits with Dr. Mathew. Together we discuss my health, medications, and how I am coping overall. *When you have no income or insurance, taking the necessary medication on a consistent basis is impossible.* SCMHC has helped me overcome this barrier by finding cost effective resources. Without it I would not have been able to overcome the depression and anxiety I was experiencing. *(continued on p. 3)*

Investing in Urban Youth

So many of you have been incredibly generous and supportive of my work with the young men affected by violence who have captured my heart. *Your partnership allows me to be available 24/7* to those who are so often forgotten. Below are a few examples of how, together, we are making a difference in the lives of some of our city's most vulnerable youth.

In 2012, a *judge granted one of our young men a sentence of community supervision in lieu of a prison term based on his continued involvement in our program.* Two years later, he persists in our work together and says the 'pain in [his] soul' has diminished. What's more, *he expects to graduate from high school this year,* is linked to a youth employment specialist and, after an extended period of homelessness, *he now has stable housing.*

When their childhood friend was murdered, many of the incarcerated youth with whom I work were devastated. He'd been a good friend and his death seemed unreal given their isolation from the grieving community of friends and family. I was able to deliver their eulogies and condolences to the wake on their behalf and also to share the details of the service with them. The young men remarked that *it was a relief to express their hurt and anger and to remember aloud the details of their friendship* in the wake of their friend's sudden violent death,

On a recent Sunday afternoon—six years after our first meeting in the County Jail- a young man contacted me for help. He left a message saying, *I've been stressing lately, real hard. Really, I need someone to talk to. I need some help. I need... I just need help. I need someone to talk and share my feelings with. It's been hard out here. I just need to talk to someone that's professional that I know can help me. You're the only one I know that I feel could probably help me in this situation.* If you could, please, just give me a call back. **Within the hour, we talked by phone and made arrangements to meet face-to-face the next day.**

I can't thank you enough for standing with these young men as the fight for their lives, and for giving me the opportunity to accompany them. It's an opportunity I appreciate everyday!

Eileen

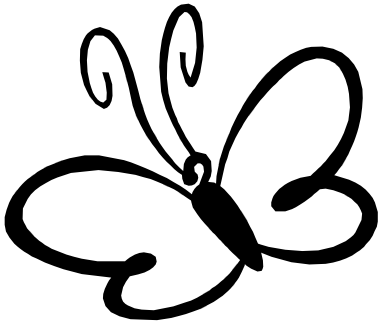
(Continued from p. 2)

Every Wednesday I get a friendly call from Amy Durkee to remind me of my appointment. Some weeks we talk briefly, other weeks just listening to Amy's message reminds me that people care about me.

I am blessed in so many ways and filled with gratitude for the generous spirits of my professional team. If it weren't for this outreach I would not be moving toward a healthier, happier life. Today, with the help of my Angels *I am over 100 pounds lighter, more active, and take less medication. I can think clearly again and I am excited to start a new job next week.* I have a wonderful new man in my life who loves me deeply and treats me like a queen. Instead of sadness, there is joy back in my life. Most of all, I have learned to be humble and accept God's gifts with grace.

Thank you Spiritus Mental Health Center for allowing me to "Lean on You."

"If there is a load__You have to bear that you can't carry__I'm right up the road__I'll share your load__If you just call me__Call me__if you need a friend__Call me__when you need a friend."



*In Loving Memory
of Joe Alessi
July 3, 1951—April 4, 2014*

*We say goodbye to Joe Alessi, a
former SCMHC volunteer who
passed away this April.*

*We are grateful for the
opportunity to have learned from
and worked with Joe and we
wish his family peace.*

Make a difference!

We need volunteers

Nurse Practitioners & Psychiatrists
to prescribe and manage
medications for participants
(2-4 hrs per month)

Therapists (hours negotiable)

MANY THANKS

for your generous gifts.
They are bringing hope and healing to
347 youth and adults in Greater
Rochester

...and special thanks to funders

Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation
\$8,000

Rochester Female Charitable Society
\$2,000

Fred & Floy Willmott Foundation
\$3,000

**SPIRITUS CHRISTI
MENTAL HEALTH CENTER**

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Rochester, NY 14614
Phone: 585-325-1180
Fax: 585-325-1191

HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday - Thursday
9 am - 5 pm

CENTER STAFF

Maureen Marlow, RN, CASAC — Director
Eileen Hurley, RN, LCSW — Urban Youth
Outreach Program Coordinator
Amy Durkee — Associate Administrator

Two Other Ways to Give:

**United Way
Donor Designation
program
#2403**

**SEFA pledge
#66-00124**

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Room

**SPECIAL THANKS TO
OUR MEDIA PARTNERS
AT:**



“You’ll Like
What You Hear”

From Current Participants:

*“I always feel I have
support. Thank you for a
great job! Much help!”*

*“It’s going to be a process,
but I am so grateful for
what I have already
accomplished.”*