

Spring Newsletter

April 2013



SPIRITUS CHRISTI  
MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

Linking Lives

# A Sound Investment

Dear Friends,

**Relief** from debilitating symptoms and isolation  
**New perspectives** on problems that previously seemed insurmountable  
**Strategies and skills** to make life more manageable  
**Support** for daily living  
**Validation** of difficult feelings and experiences  
**Hope** that positive change is possible

These are some of the life-saving things your investment in Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center provides to those who have few places to turn. Every \$30 donated provides for one visit—one opportunity to support a person in need.

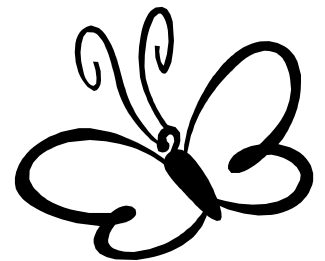
In this issue you'll read about a man who left our care in 2009. He called recently to tell us how grateful he continues to be for his new life. When he asked if there was any way he could give back, we suggested he share his inspiring story with you. You will also get to know a woman, still consulting here, who is also looking for ways to give back. As you read about their struggles and success, remember that **you have played a major part in making their success possible!** So celebrate with us!

Lastly, are you a part of a group (women's or men's group, networking group, Rotary, etc.) that would enjoy hearing about SCMHC? Give us a call at 325-1180. We'd be happy to come share our story.

With Gratitude,

Maureen & Amy

To receive this bi-annual newsletter  
by email, send your address to  
[adurkee@spirituschristi.org](mailto:adurkee@spirituschristi.org)  
or call 585-325-1180



## Overview of Programs

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

I always called it depression. That's what they called it when my grandmother would be hospitalized in either Clifton Springs Sanitarium or R Wing at Strong Hospital. I remember being five years old in the back seat of that massive, late 50's Pontiac with my mother driving and Grandma threatening to jump out of the car.

She had the passenger side door open a little, threatening, "I won't go Annie, I will not go back there! You can just turn around right now because I'm not going in." She was on her way back to Strong for ECT therapy. It was 1960.

Somewhere in my teen years when we were taught about DNA and how certain traits skip a generation, I knew. One of the reasons I never started a family was because I refused to pass on the darkness, desperation and confusion to grandchildren that I might have in the future.

***"I just wanted some clarity—to be able to choose one goal, figure out a plan, and achieve it."***

My whole life was a series of misguided adventures that started with so much promise and ended so badly. I scored very high on aptitude tests in school but barely passed anything but English and literature courses. I started and stopped careers, changed directions, and dabbled with drugs and alcohol because, at the core of it all, I just wanted to feel better. I just wanted some clarity—to be able to choose one goal, figure out a plan, and achieve it. I didn't doubt my abilities. I knew that I was smart and talented, but I also knew those attributes would never come to fruition.

Friends got married, got great jobs, bought houses, had children, and I was still trying to just piece together an existence, day by day.

In April 2002, I was broke. My rental properties were one by one falling into foreclosure. My fiancé would work all day and when she got home at 5:30, she would find me lost in a fog of confusion. She loved me unconditionally, but I was so embarrassed.

We had rescued a little white cat (Sushi) and a badly abused Shepard-Husky mix (Katie) from abandoned houses in the city, and they were our precious angels. They didn't know what a failed life I had, nor did they care. They simply brought unconditional love and joy into our home.

I thought about what would happen if we lost our house to foreclosure. Katie and Sushi would be split up,

adopted by strangers or maybe even euthanized. Something had to happen! There had to be somebody who could help me and my dysfunctional brain. I thought, "If I have to call every doctor, psychiatrist, and psychologist in the phone book, I will." To save our home and our animals, I would find a way.

In the blue pages of the phone book, I started at the top of the list and called every number until I reached Spiritus Christi. Eileen Hurley was the one person who, in a warm, welcoming voice said, "When can you come in"?

All I needed was a chance. All I needed was one little bit of light at the end of the tunnel. Spiritus Christi saved my life and, more importantly, *helped me find my life!*

It didn't happen overnight. My personal story spans years following that initial meeting with Eileen Hurley. But the staff, Maureen and Dr. Isaac, stayed with me through the whole journey.

One day at the end of a session, we looked at each other, smiling, and I knew: It was time to leave the nest. It felt right. I felt strong, armed with clarity and understanding. We had put me back together a piece at a time.

I can't put a price on sanity. I can't say thank you enough. Every day I feel so grateful that I was one of the lucky ones who found Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center.

***"All I needed was one little bit of light at the end of the tunnel. Spiritus Christi saved my life and, more importantly, helped me find my life!"***



## **Second Annual ROC-the-Day raises \$1,926 for the Mental Health Center!**

*That's more than double the amount raised in 2011!*

December 12th was the second annual community-wide ROC-the-Day, a 24-hour period of on-line giving sponsored by United Way. Donors who visited the Roc-the-Day website on December 12 were able to designate donations for one or more agencies of their choice. Thanks to all you ROC star donors who chose to give to the Mental Health Center!

# Finding Hope

by Amy Durkee

When Almeda called the Mental Health Center just before Christmas, she was an emotional wreck, on the verge of homelessness. Almeda is a survivor: smart, competent and eager to work. She moved here from Florida about a year ago to escape domestic abuse and to make a better life for herself and her two girls. She bears the scars of having been beaten by her partner with an axe handle.

After a rocky start she secured housing, a decent job and enrolled in an LPN program. Things were going well. But in August, due to the unethical practices of two staff members at the place where she rented, she was threatened with eviction on unjust grounds. “I’d come home to notes on my door accusing me of things that weren’t true. I’d go and talk to them. I’d never raise my voice or anything. I’d just go to ask questions. But they just kept it up. They’d have one reason for eviction, then when that didn’t fly, they’d come up with another.”

As often happens for those with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, the cruelty she was experiencing and the helplessness it caused triggered flashbacks of her past abuse and sent her spiraling into depression and anxiety. As a result, she had to drop out of the LPN program before the first class. With her housing situation continuing to deteriorate despite her efforts to resolve things, she could no longer function at work. “I know it sounds strange,” says Almeda, “but I have experienced more pain from this situation than I ever did from being beaten.”

Almeda stopped working in November to focus all her energy on trying to find housing, provide for the two children in her care and manage her anxiety. She was successful in securing a new place to live, but depression and anxiety were still keeping her from returning to work. And with no income, she knew she would soon be facing homelessness again.

SCMHC was able to give her the emotional support and validation she needed to stabilize her

***“People went out of their way to show there was still hope. They gave me what I needed to keep going.”***

mental health, to navigate the DHS system and to pursue a medical leave through her employer. “I was down to nothing when I came to Spiritus Christi,” she says. “People at Spiritus provided household items, laundry detergent – all the things we needed at that point. People went out of their way to show there was still hope. They gave me what I needed to keep going.”

Almeda is now preparing to return to work and tells us repeatedly how grateful she is for helping her in her time of crisis. Her two beautiful girls, age 10 and 11, have also received support in dealing with the crisis from one of our therapists.

“If it wasn’t for Spiritus Christi,” she insists, “I wouldn’t have made it.”



**Now celebrating our  
5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!**

**MAY 14 & 28  
JUNE 11 & 25**

**Film, theatre, art  
and discussion  
addressing the  
social stigma of  
mental illness and  
brain disorders,  
providing a message  
of HOPE that  
recovery is possible**

[www.reelmindfilmfest.org](http://www.reelmindfilmfest.org)



**Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center**

121 N. Fitzhugh St.  
Rochester, NY 14614

Phone: 585-325-1180

Fax: 585-325-1191

Email: mmarlow@spirituschristi.org

**HOURS OF OPERATION**

**Monday—Thursday**

**Daytime and evening sessions by appointment**

**CENTER STAFF**

Maureen Marlow, RN, CASAC—Director

Eileen Hurley, RN, LCSW—Community

Health Outreach

Amy Durkee—Administrative Associate

**Wish List**

- *Bus passes*
- *Gift cards for McDonald's, Dunkin Donuts & Target (for emergency meals and supplies for program participants)*
- *Sunoco or Hess gas cards (for transporting participants to appointments)*
- *TracFone Airtime Cards*

**Support  
Spiritus Christi  
Mental Health Center**

**United Way  
Donor Designation  
program  
#2403**

**SEFA pledge  
#66-00124**

**Ask your H.R. representative  
for a pledge form**

***We appreciate and need your  
support***

**Join Our Team!**

Give us a call to volunteer

**NEEDED:**

**Psychiatrist or Nurse Practitioner** to prescribe and manage medications for participants (2-4 hrs/month)

**Therapist** (hours negotiable)

**Special thanks to the following for financial support:**

*Canandaigua National Bank*

*Northwest Savings Bank*

*Visions Federal Credit Union*

**Many thanks**

to all of you for your gifts of time, funds, and expertise.

You are impacting the lives of more than 300 people in our community!

**SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR MEDIA PARTNERS AT**



“You’ll Like  
What You Hear”

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Fr. Jim Callan, Assoc. Pastor, Spiritus Christi Church  
Nancy Carlucci, CCSI, Retired, Genesee Hospital  
Laurie Donohue, MD, Jordan Health Center  
Patricia Kendall, The Living Room  
Kim Hess, VP, The Monroe Plan  
Tim McGowan, LMSW, Spiritual Growth Counseling  
Trish Pielnik, MD, SUNY Potsdam

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Maria Barilla, LMHC, Private Practice  
Tom Christiansen, LMHC, Private Practice  
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Ruth Cowing, Fundraising  
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Paula Sauers, The Living Room  
Keith Wilson, LMHC, CASAC, Private Practice  
Tom Wright, IT Consultant  
Liliana Yohann, MS, Pharm D., Pharmacist Consultant

**This list does not include all the cherished volunteer receptionists and other volunteers that make our fundraiser possible**

***From Current Participants***

***“This Center has been a life saver for me! My life has drastically improved since coming here.***

***Thank you so much! ”***

***“I am very grateful for all that SCMHC has done for and with me. I believe they save lives and don't even know it every day!!!***

***God Bless You All!”***