

Spring Newsletter  
April 2015



SPIRITUS CHRISTI  
MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

Linking Lives

## The most beautiful flower of all

This January brought us sad news. Long-time volunteer Patricia Kendall was diagnosed with late-stage cancer throughout her abdomen. One of the founders and facilitators of The Living Room, Patricia is known for showing up even in the most challenging circumstances. In fact, one year she had carotid artery surgery on a Tuesday and was here the very next day. And a few years ago, when she was in the hospital on a Wednesday, Living Room members actually went to Patricia's hospital room to hold their meeting—they just couldn't see having the meeting without her!

This January, however, Patricia was just too sick to make it to The Living Room and too sick at some points even for visitors.

Patricia is a fighter. Among her victories: 33 years in recovery from alcoholism. As with all obstacles,

**The flower that blooms in adversity is the most rare and beautiful of all.**

*-from the film "Mulan"*

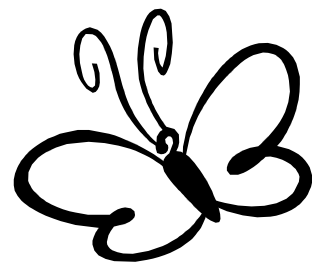
Patricia has taken this one on with courage and determination. "I'm going to fight this," she announced early on. And that's what she's doing. Following a regimen of chemotherapy, clean eating (which she says includes drinking lots of aloe) and positive thinking, Patricia's tumors are shrinking and she has actually gained weight! And, of course, she's back to regular attendance in The Living Room.

We are grateful for Patricia's heartening example of blooming in adversity.

Turn the page for more inspiring stories. You'll see how your support of SCMHC is making a difference in the lives of other brave individuals.

With deep gratitude,  
Maureen, Amy & Eileen

**To receive this bi-annual newsletter by email, please send your address to [adurkee@spirituschristi.org](mailto: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
- **The Living Room** — weekly peer support for those struggling with daily living issues
- **Wesley's Mothers** — an anonymous peer support group for mothers of incarcerated children

# A mile in these shoes

by Amy Durkee

James\* doesn't seem to know it, but he makes quite an impression. Tall, sparkling brown eyes and a shy, mischievous smile, you'd never guess how much sorrow and loss he's had to bear in his 17 years.

Last May, Eileen Hurley got a referral from a teacher at the Monroe County Jail. He said he had a 16 year old in his class - a good student, college material - who was showing signs of depression and traumatic stress. At the teacher's request, Eileen reached out to James.

Of his decision to join Eileen's group, James shrugs, "I needed help and she looked like she knew what she was doing."

Thankfully, Eileen and his public defender were able to make a case for releasing James on Interim Probation, allowing James to get out of jail and back to his school where he had the support of teachers and staff. Jail is incredibly disruptive to a young person's life and statistics indicate that it doubles a teen's risk of further incarceration.

James is what social services agencies refer to as an "unaccompanied youth," meaning he is not under the consistent care and supervision of a parent or guardian. In James' case he has bounced around from place to place - staying with a brother, an aunt or uncle, or with friends depending on what is available.

He lowers his eyes as he quietly recounts the death of his beloved grandmother, who was his primary caregiver until he was 13. Life was especially tough for James after she passed away, leaving him grieving and adrift. One of his older brothers stepped in as he was able. "He made sure I had food to eat, a place to sleep and that nobody messed with me," says James. But now his brother is in prison and James has lost another of his supports. He is currently living with a disabled relative who has a lot of his own challenges. "It's complicated and not 100 percent," James explains of his current caregiver. "Sometimes we have to take care of him."

Because he had no parent or guardian when he was released from jail, Eileen stepped in to fill that role. She helped him find a place to live, re-enroll in school, and take care of court-mandated appointments like getting a mental health evaluation and a drug and alcohol evaluation - all things a minor cannot legally do on his or her own.

Since his release, James has been focused on graduating from high school. Now 17, he has successfully completed interim probation and is on track to graduate with the rest of his class in June.

This is no easy feat, given the many obstacles he has to hurdle, including getting enough to eat and regularly adjusting to unstable housing and transportation situations. Last summer, the highly motivated teen *walked two hours each way* to take a Regents exam (required for a Regents diploma).

He attributes his success to his ability to concentrate, to cooperate, and to what he calls his *Brick Wall Skill*, which involves "blocking out negativity and ignoring others' stupidity."

While he's not certain what he'll do next, he is pretty sure he wants to go to college. Since the death of his grandmother he has known that he wants to help others.

James is a joy to be around - funny and upbeat. When asked what keeps him going he says, "Honestly, I don't know. I just keep my eyes on the positive stuff and don't pay attention to the negative stuff because that will bring me down quick."

Ask James what it's like to be him and he'll tell you, "It's not perfect to be in my shoes. The bottoms are ripped up. The laces are gone. I've been through a lot. And it's harder to get places with these shoes. I've had struggles my whole life."

His advice to others in similar situations is simple: "It's hard out there. Some people just barely making it through and some are on top. You can be what you want to be. Pursue your goal and it will work, whatever it is."

\*Name changed to protect this young man's identity.

*"...I just keep my eyes on the positive stuff and don't pay attention to the negative stuff because that will bring me down quick."*

## “You gave me my life back!”

by B. Tabone

I had no idea what it was. I did not use drugs or alcohol. But at 50+ years of age, I was running from my life or what was left of it. I was suffering through 2+ years of unemployment. My house was in foreclosure. I was broke. I had no job prospects and I spent my days hiding from everyone, just hoping everything would go away.

My whole life had become a game of hide and seek. I separated from family, friends and of course the bill collectors. I had completely disengaged from the life I had previously known. I was lost. I had no idea how I got there and no idea how to get out.

In March of 2014, I was on the verge of homelessness and still trying to find a way out. I attended a job fair at RochesterWorks (there was no real effort on my part. I was in a deep funk and just going through the motions) where I received a pamphlet with information on counseling. I went home that evening, began searching the internet, and found Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center. For any normal person you figure their dreams for help were answered? Not me! I made and canceled three appointments before a kindly worded ultimatum from Maureen Marlow made me realize that help was there; I just had to be willing to accept it. The decision to attend Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center proved to be the most intelligent one I had made in the last 5 to 6 years.

Spiritus Christi saved my life! Maureen Marlow & Dr. Richard Russell gave me the strength to reach out to my family. They provided counseling, care, and the tools to help me deal with and manage my anxiety and clinical depression. Although I eventually lost my house (the situation was unrecoverable) the counseling and support I received from the SCMHC was key to me dealing with the situation in the most positive way possible. Maureen also helped me navigate through the Social Services system and I was able to access the life-sustaining resources needed to start over again.

It is March 3, 2015 as I write this. I am now capable of managing my own mental health care and treatment. I now have stable, secure and supportive living conditions and I am employed by one of Rochester's TOP 100 companies! I owe a debt that can never be repaid to Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center. Somehow saying thank you doesn't seem quite enough when they gave me my life back!

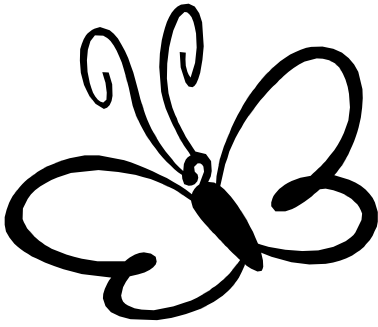
*“They provided counseling, care, and the tools to help me deal with and manage my anxiety and clinical depression.”*

## The Living Room celebrates 10 years

This March, The Living Room celebrated 10 years of “being there” for those struggling with problems in living. Every Wednesday afternoon those burdened by poverty, mental illness, trauma, family troubles, or other issues have a safe place to both give and get support. We recently asked a few regular attendees why it's important to them. One man said, “It's a place where my anxiety is reduced. I can be myself.” Others appreciate the camaraderie, the safety, and “being able to talk to everyone.” Many thanks to the faithfulness of our facilitators (shown at right). They are here every week to provide a welcoming space.



*From left to right: Living Room facilitators Paula, Patricia and Steve*



**SPIRITUS CHRISTI  
MENTAL HEALTH CENTER**

121 N. Fitzhugh St.  
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**  
(State Employees  
Federated Appeal)  
**#66-00124**

**Ask your campaign  
manager for a pledge form  
for either program  
Or contact us and we can  
provide you with one**

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

**Make a difference,  
Volunteer!**

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  
those in need in Greater Rochester

**...and special thanks for grants  
received since October**

Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation  
\$10,000  
Rochester Female Charitable Society  
\$1,000  
Women's Club of Pittsford  
\$500

**ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS  
& AFFILIATIONS**

Kate Auberger, LCSW-R, Unity Health Systems  
Fr. Jim Callan, Assoc. Pastor, Spiritus Christi Church  
Nancy Carlucci, CCSI & NAMI  
Laurie Donohue, MD, Westside Health Services  
Kim Hess, Preferred Care  
Patricia Kendall, The Living Room  
Tim McGowan, LMSW, Spiritual Growth Counseling  
Trish Pielnik, MD, SUNY Potsdam

**VOLUNTEER STAFF & AFFILIATIONS**

Jodi Aman, LCSW-R, Private Practice  
Eileen Atwell, MHC intern, St. John Fisher College  
Gloria Baciewicz, MD, University of Rochester  
Leive Bain, LCSW, Private Practice  
Maria Barilla, LMHC, Private Practice  
Amy Bliss, LPN, MHC intern, St. John Fisher College  
Thomas Christensen, LMHC, Private Practice  
Sandra Condry, PhD, Psychologist, Retired  
Pat Condry, MD, Dermatologist  
John Cook, LMHC, Retired  
Mary Dibley, Fundraising  
Liz DiMartino, RN, MS, Retired  
William Dwyer, LMSW, Retired  
Jere Fletcher, Esq, Advocate  
Trevor Gates-Crandall, PhD, SUNY Brockport  
Peggy Gold, LMHC, Private Practice

Jean Hawkes, Consultant, JG Hawkes Consulting  
Kathe Healy, LMHC, Private Practice  
Steve Hoffman, The Living Room  
Robert Holloway, MD, University of Rochester  
Sandra Hope, LMHC, Private Practice  
Mary Kearney, LCSW, Retired  
Michael Kelly, Esq., Advocate  
Patricia Kendall, The Living Room  
Patrick Lane, Esq., Advocate  
David Markham, LCSW, Private Practice  
Paul Mastrodonato, Consultant, Non-profit Works  
Thankamma Mathew, MD, Retired  
Gene McCabe, PhD, Easter Seals & St. Joseph's Villa  
Jerry McElroy, Advocate  
Trish Pielnik, MD SUNY Potsdam  
Rich Russell, PhD, Retired  
Paula Sauers, The Living Room  
Keith Wilson, LMHC, Private Practice  
Liliana Yohonn, PharmD; Consultant

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



*"You'll Like  
What You Hear"*

**From Current Participants:**

*"I find the MHC very effective  
in guiding me through my life  
issues. The right balance of  
help, listening, and doing my  
own work outside to improve  
my situation."*

*"I am alive and walking my  
path because of the help I  
receive here. I'm grateful to  
God and all involved in  
making it possible."*