



Linking Lives

Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center

Director's Update

Happy Spring to you!

I recently returned from a professional conference, where I learned the importance of self-care as the foundation for resilience. We are all bombarded with so much challenging stuff every day. If we aren't intentional about taking care of ourselves, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, angry, or discouraged. The conference speaker encouraged us to have a multi-level self-care plan: things you do daily, weekly, and things you do at longer intervals. So, for example, exercise or meditation might be one of your daily practices. A game night with friends or attending a religious service might be a weekly practice, and taking a vacation or retreat of some sort could be an annual or biannual practice. The point is to establish those "recharge" points so we can thrive and contribute in the ways we long to.

Since our last newsletter, lots has been happening at the Center. Our RIVERWALK fundraiser was a blast, and we raised just under our goal of \$30,000. We have been functioning at or near capacity all year, with between 70 and 80 people consulting us at any given time. In fact, we could use another clinician or two, so please spread the word. We have also been attending trainings to help us become a safer, more inclusive, and equitable community.

Just this past week, we received calls from 4 people who were referred by Spiritus parishioners or former clients. They all expressed some version of this statement, "I was told I can trust you to listen." This warms my heart, because listening is central to our mission. Whether we link someone to care here at the Center or find a better fit for them elsewhere, it all begins with listening.

Thank you to all of you for your investment - through your donations, volunteering, prayers, and referrals. We absolutely could not do this without you!

With Deep Gratitude,

Amy Quakee

Overview of Programs

On-Site Clinical

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

Community Outreach

Clinical social work services to youth, adults, and their families. Includes partnerships with Rochester Spinal Association

The Living Room

Weekly peer-led support meeting for those struggling with daily living issues

Groups

Various educational and support groups throughout the year

Yoga

Weekly yoga classes to promote overall wellness

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

Saving Grace

by Grace Lynch

I came to Spiritus MHC quite by chance. I am a 58-year-old veteran who learned late in life that I have autism, a brain injury, and PTSD. A great deal of my difficulties were simply the result of the time into which I was born.

People did not know about autism. No one talked about male experience of sexual abuse - as children or adults. Only men who survived combat could experience PTSD. This thinking was how I was raised. Had it not been for a chance comment with a male medical professional during a routine screening, I would never have known that Spiritus offers counseling for issues like male sexual trauma, as well as other conditions.

I experienced some bad times as a gay man in the military in the early 80s. So, when I got home, I withdrew into drugs and alcohol, which led to a party where I hit my head and temporarily lost all language. It's called "aphasia." My brain was never the same. What's more, I experienced this as someone with autism - so "meaning" continued, even though words were gone. There isn't even any science for my condition, let alone treatment.

Well-meaning professionals tried for years to help, but did not have the correct diagnoses, so they could not help. What's more, professionals did not listen when I said I was being hurt, because they didn't understand why. This taught me to be afraid of asking professionals for help. Then, in 2010, the team said, "We don't know," and stopped meds and treatment. With nowhere to turn, at 48, I gave up on society, wandering homeless across the US for the next 3 years.

"I think [counseling] can be about embracing a journey so necessary after much trauma: re-finding relationship with self and the world."

By the grace of God, out west I encountered a neurologist who explained my brain injury, as well as my autism. There was a brief brain rehab, but only so much they could do after so many years. Still, I found my way in, off the streets, and even got service connected with the VA. But my newfound safety opened me again to memories of my trauma. To rebuild my life, I needed to find a way to work through my past. But I did not have words the way others do, and there was no traditional care approach to be had. I lived scared and alone, until stumbling into care at Spiritus.

It's been more than a year now in counseling. Though experienced in Twelve Step programs, today I see recovery in a broader context. I think it can be about embracing a journey so necessary after much trauma: re-finding relationship with self and the world.

Experiencing consistent patience and kindness, I feel my life is gradually coming back to me - a piece at a time, with God somehow smoothing it into a new wholeness. But it happened because, with no map, my counselor at Spiritus did the highest service one human being can do for another: she listened.

Thanks, folks. God bless you. My name is Grace Lynch.



Save the Date

Please join us at Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center's

Annual Riverwalk

Walk a beautiful 5K with us and help raise funds to benefit the Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center and our clients

October 20, 2024 - 11am

- Invite family & friends to sponsor you
- After the walk, join us for lunch
- Great music, crafts for kids, and fall fun!

To stay up to date, visit: smentalhealth.org



Mental Health Awareness Month May Community Event

Support for those with PTSD & their loved ones

About 6 of every 100 people in the U.S. experience Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The symptoms can take a toll on those diagnosed with the condition and their loved ones as well. But there is help for those affected.

Join us and our presenter, Scarlett Aeckerle, LMSW, to learn about warning signs and symptoms of PTSD, as well as resources for those seeking help.

This is a free event open to the public.
Register at smentalhealth.org or call 585.325.1186

Wednesday, May 15, 2024

6:00 - 7:45 PM

**The Hallock Lounge at
Downtown United Presbyterian Church
121 N. Fitzhugh Street Rochester, NY 14614**



Scan above to
register for free

Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center
121 N. Fitzhugh St Rochester, NY 14614

585.325.1186
smentalhealth.org

This February, clinicians from the Veterans Administration (VA) came to the Center to teach us about Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and the latest research and best practices for suicide prevention. Our paid and volunteer clinical staff, along with social workers from Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach, spent a morning broadening our understanding and skills so that we can better support those who consult us. It was a great experience, and we plan to partner with the VA again next year for another training.





Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center

121 N. Fitzhugh Street
Rochester, NY 14614
Phone: 585-325-1186
Fax: 585-325-1191

Hours of Operation

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

Center Staff

Amy Durkee, MHC-LP - Director
Eileen Hurley, RN, LCSW - Community Outreach
Mark Potter - Associate Administrator

MORE WAYS TO GIVE:



**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!**

From Current Participants:

"You all are amazing, and your work is life-changing! I think the person I was when I started at Spiritus Christi Mental Health Center would be surprised but proud of the person I am today because of you."

"Administration staff is awesome, also. They talk to me like a person, always friendly and open to chat a bit, and make the whole going-to-therapy as unstressful as could be managed. It's like getting a shot. Nothing can make that 'un-icky,' but having friendly folks involved makes it not a bad experience to get through. I am grateful for the staff and the community I feel when I am there."

Thanks to our recent funders

Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation \$15,000
Feilbloom Foundation \$8,000
Fred & Floy Willmott Foundation \$6,000
LGBT Giving Circle \$2,000
Polleseni Foundation \$2,000
Rochester Female Charitable Society \$3,000
Women's club of Pittsford \$400

Thank to all of you who have chosen to donate and support us in various ways. Through private donations, fundraiser support, memorial gifts, and more, YOU help make our work possible.

We cannot thank you enough!

Volunteer Staff & Affiliations

Lynn Acquafondata, LMHC, Private Practice
Lieve Bain, LCSW-R, Retired
Samantha Bradley, St. John Fisher Intern
Michele Caponi, LMHC, Retired
Anne Cliby, Yoga Instructor
Kathleen Conti, LCSW, Retired
John Connors, MD, Private Practice
Peggy Derivan, LMHC, Private Practice
Brenda Devine, LCSW, Retired
Sue Elliot, LCSW, Private Practice
Jere Fletcher, Esq., Advocate
Jessica George, MHC-LP
David Hall, Peer Support Specialist
Steve Hoffman, The Living Room
Sandra Hope, LMHC, Private Practice
Mary Kearney, LCSW, Retired
Michael Kelly, Esq., Advocate
David Markham, LCSW, Private Practice
Rick Massie, LMHC, Retired

Jerry McElroy, Advocate
Ese Moynihan-Ejaife, LMHC, Private Practice
Jennifer Bateman, MHC-LP
Mark Potter, B.S. Psych, Social Work Intern
Liz Powers, The Living Room
Paula Sauers, The Living Room
Suzanne Spencer, LCSW, Retired
Gary Warner, Ph.D, Retired
Keith Wilson, LMHC, Private Practice

Advisory Board Members

Kate Auberger, LCSW-R, Retired
Rev. Celie Katovich, Spiritus Christi Church
Kate Kennedy, Monroe BOCES One
Kim Hess, MBA, Monroe Plan
Luz Flores Lee, MS, PMP, LLS-MBB, Consultant
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 gift cards
(Tops, Aldi, Price-Rite)
McDonalds Gift Cards
Subway Restaurant Gift Cards