



At the Heart of Wellness

THE GIFTS OF RECONCILIATION & REPAIR. November 2024



Dear friends;

Many years ago, when I was a new therapist, I worked with a young family who came to my office after a bitter divorce. The contentious custody issues regarding their 9-year-old daughter were central to our work together. The parents had caused immense heartache to one another and their pain impacted how they were caring for their daughter. They could see the harm they were doing to her as battles to be won or lost. Each parent was so deeply entrenched in their position that any steps toward compromise were viewed as capitulating to the enemy. The little girl was a pawn, caught in the middle of the two warring factions, both of whom loved her deeply and reported that she was the most important person in their respective lives. They could see the harm they were doing to their child, were wholly invested in doing better by her, and thus, were open to options for reconciliation.

Doris Kearns Goodwin's book, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, details the President's intentional assemblage of a cabinet with disparate viewpoints, many of whom were dismayed and angry that they were not the ones who had ascended to the highest office in the land. Lincoln possessed an extraordinary ability to put himself in the place of others, to experience what they were feeling and understand their motivations. It was his empathy and capacity to be challenged in his thinking that allowed him to marshal this group toward solutions through times fraught with war over slavery and a potential fracturing division of our country. He encouraged respectful conflict amongst his closest advisors in the pursuit of profound progress. Lincoln remained open, curious, and humble throughout his presidency.

What the family in therapy and the 16th president had in common was a courageous commitment to resolution and repair for a higher purpose. Empathy, curiosity, and humility are difficult to access when we feel threatened or hurt, so effort must be expended to cultivate them.

Too often, we resort to an oxymoronic approach to conflict; we employ countless mechanisms to discharge our discomfort and pain in all sorts of ways and directions to find relief or validation. We cancel, unfriend, or talk disparagingly about people with whom we disagree rather than having challenging conversations.

I need to be very clear about some caveats to this approach. By NO means should anyone abide abuse or oppression. There are groups of people who are being dehumanized in our society, and we have a moral obligation to draw a firm line when we are witness to such treatment. Racism, transphobia, and misogyny are not ever to be tolerated much less allowed to be weaponized and used to advance policies that cause further harm. It's worth noting that none of Lincoln's cabinet members supported slavery.

The family I worked with found a path forward. It wasn't always easy, but they kept their eyes on the vitally important goal of creating a trusting foundation for their daughter. Each parent did their own deep healing work so that their actions were coming from a healthy and generous place, rather than from a wounded one. They agreed on basic ground rules for communication and common values for their family. When things got tense, they referred to their shared goals and had challenging but respectful conversations where each perspective was given its due. Space for generous compromise was built.

Reconciliation and repair are gifts, not just to the person who is on the receiving end of that grace but to the person extending it as well. There are opportunities for growth every time we work to understand another's perspective and evolve through our pain. Please know that if you're hurting, you are not alone. I'm with you, as are countless others. We can sit in these uncomfortable places together and do our work alongside one another.

All my best,
Maria Coutant Skinner
President & CEO



Understanding OCD.

The acronym "OCD" has been used casually in recent times, often referring to someone who is considered a bit of a neatnik or who likes things to be "just so." But the fact is, OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) is more than just a preference for neatness -- it's a challenging mental health disorder marked by unwanted thoughts and repetitive actions that can disrupt daily life.

Although the McCall Behavioral Health Network has historically been associated with the treatment of substance use disorders, it's important to share that we are a comprehensive healthcare organization that helps individuals with all kinds of behavioral health needs. While we do have significant expertise in recovery from substance use, we also have a great deal of expertise in treating mental health concerns -- including OCD.

Intrusive thoughts.

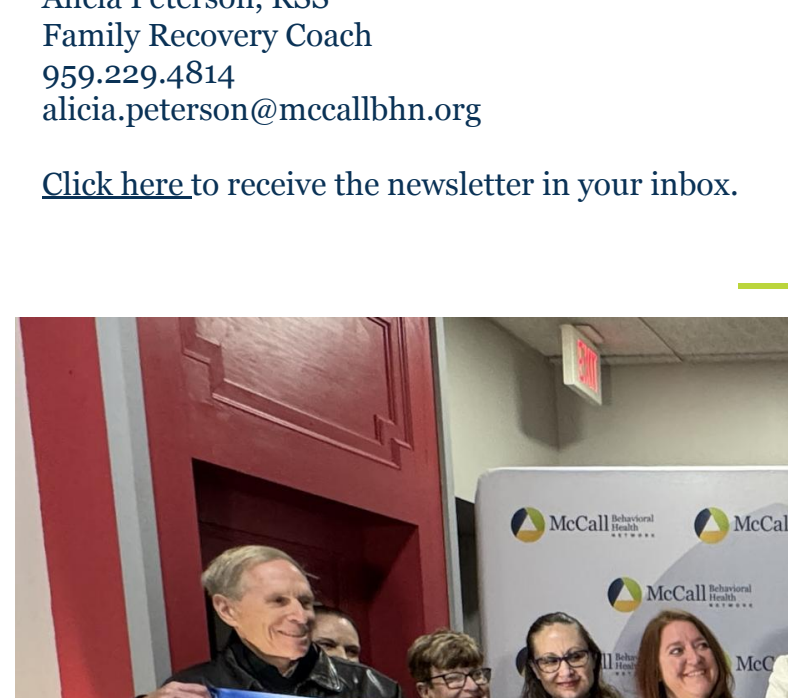
"People will often say 'oh, that's my OCD' if they find themselves organizing something or triple-checking that their alarm is set," says Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, President and CEO of McCall, "but OCD is a specific disorder that falls under the category of anxiety disorders. It impacts people's lives to the point of where it's challenging to function."

"A lot of people associate it with germs and contamination and hand-washing. That is a very common way that it manifests," Maria notes. "It can be other things too. It's really characterized by doubt and intrusive thoughts that are so hard to turn off." Obsessive thoughts can lead to compulsive behaviors that people use in order to cope. For example, we might constantly check to make sure the lights are off or the oven isn't on. At its core, this struggle stems from a deep need to feel safe, accompanied by persistent thoughts convincing the individual that their safety depends on completing specific tasks. It can be terribly limiting and make a person's world shrink to what they perceive is manageable but can really become a sort of prison.

Interrupting the loop.

Fortunately, there are ways to interrupt intrusive thoughts that can get caught in a loop. "There are really effective therapy models that people have found relief with," Maria adds. "There are also medications that are incredibly helpful."

The bottom line is that OCD is a very real condition and thankfully help is available. Valuable resources include NCOCD, the International OCD Foundation, and SAMH. Or, right here in western Connecticut, come and see us at McCall. Our expert clinicians will provide pathways to healing for individuals impacted by OCD (as well as for people who may have a loved one struggling with OCD).



LEARN MORE ON WZBG.

Did you miss the interview? Don't worry, we've got you covered!

Visit our pressroom to hear McCall's President and CEO, Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, provide a more in-depth exploration of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

Click on the image to listen to the full FM 97.3 WZBG interview.



Cultivating Gratitude.

Graciously written and shared by Alicia Peterson, RSS, Family Recovery Coach.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES IMPACTED BY A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER.

"Gratitude turns what we have into enough." -- Aesop

A growing body of research underscores the invaluable contribution of family members in the treatment and recovery of individuals with a substance use disorder.

Since families can play a crucial role in the healing process, it's important that they cultivate a sense of gratitude and find their own avenues of support.

By practicing gratitude, family members can shift their perspective and refocus on the positive aspects of their lives.

As we navigate the ups and downs of our daily lives, it's important to pause and reflect on the positive aspects that surround us. Cultivating gratitude is an essential practice that can enhance our overall well-being and improve our relationships.

The benefits of gratitude.

In the heart of every family experiencing the challenges of a loved one with a substance use disorder lies a unique tapestry woven with threads of resilience, love, and vulnerability. While the journey toward healing may often feel overwhelming or dark, it's also a journey to foster a sense of gratitude that honors both the struggles and the strengths that emerge from this experience.

Practicing gratitude in the face of adversity may seem counterintuitive, especially during moments of distress or disappointment. Yet, cultivating thankfulness can help shift perspectives and nurture hope. Here are some meaningful ways families can embrace gratitude in their journey together:

- 1. Acknowledging Strengths:** Celebrate the perseverance of both your loved one and family members. Acknowledge the small victories, whether it's a day of sobriety, a moment of connection, or simply the bravery it takes to face another day. These achievements can remind everyone of the capacity for growth and change.
- 2. Finding Connections:** Gratitude can help deepen the bonds between family members. Take time to express appreciation for each other's support, patience, and dedication. Write notes to one another, sharing specific moments when their actions or words made a difference. This practice helps reinforce that love is present even amidst hardship.
- 3. Embracing Learning:** Every challenge teaches us something valuable. Reflecting on how navigating substance use disorder has shaped your family can reveal profound lessons in empathy, communication, and resilience. Perhaps it has fostered a greater appreciation for mental health, creating an environment that encourages open dialogue and emotional transparency.
- 4. Creating Rituals:** Establish gratitude rituals that can serve as a touchstone for your family. This could include a weekly dinner where everyone shares something they are thankful for, not limited to their current struggles. Such gatherings can reinforce positivity and unity, allowing laughter and joy to flourish.
- 5. Recognizing Helpers:** Remember to express gratitude for those who support your loved one and your family throughout this journey -- be it therapists, support groups, friends, or community organizations. Understand that gratitude extends to allies who reinforce the message that no one is alone, and every step toward recovery is a team effort.
- 6. Practicing Self-Compassion:** Perhaps most importantly, it is crucial to nurture gratitude toward yourself. Acknowledge your own limitations and the emotional turmoil you may face while caring for someone with a substance use disorder. Show appreciation for the efforts you make, even when they seem insubstantial in the grand scheme. Recognize that caring for yourself allows you to better care for others.

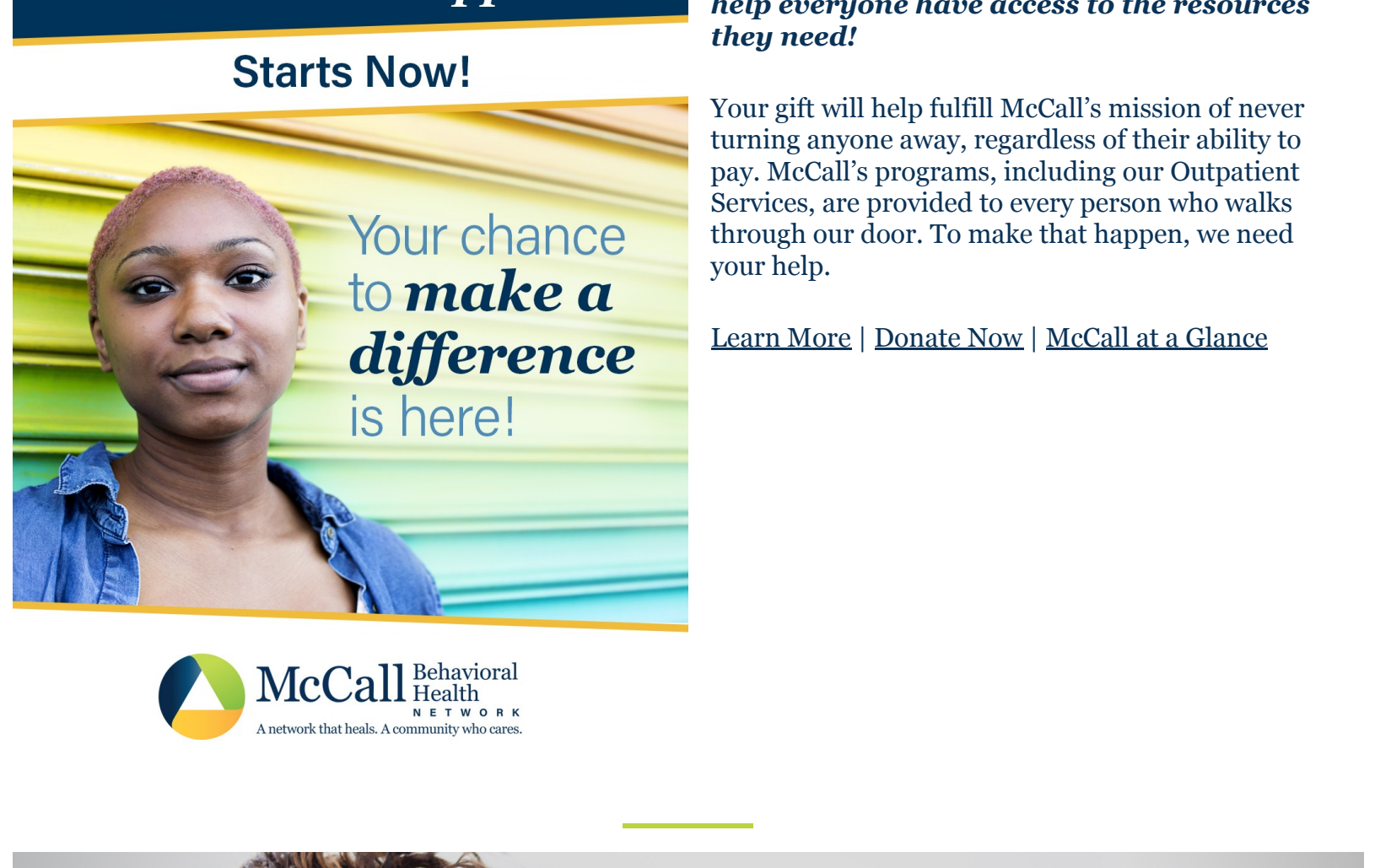
Acknowledging both the challenges and victories helps families navigate the stormy sea of substance use disorder with uplifted spirits. By cultivating gratitude, families create resilience, reaffirm love, and carve pathways toward understanding, helping to transform a landscape of pain into one enriched with compassion and hope. Together, through shared gratitude, families can emerge stronger, celebrating their journey and the enduring bonds that have been fortified along the way.

As we cultivate gratitude, let's remember that it's a journey, not a destination. Every step taken in the spirit of thankfulness can lead to greater joy and fulfillment.

If you're struggling in your relationship with a loved one who is using substances, don't hesitate to reach out to McCall's Family Recovery Coach.

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[Click here](#) to receive the newsletter in your inbox.



A SUCCESSFUL RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY IN WATERBURY.

The November 22 ribbon-cutting ceremony at 969 West Main Street in Waterbury celebrated McCall's new Primary Care office as well as the expansion of our Child & Adolescent Outpatient Services to now serve families in the area. The address is also the home of McCall's Renato Outpatient Services and Genoa Pharmacy.

The momentous occasion was attended by members from McCall's Board of Directors, McCall staff members, and community leaders, as well as representatives from Cigna Healthcare and state agencies such as DCF and DMHAS.

McCall's President and CEO, Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, kicked off the ceremony by referencing the merger between CNV Help, Inc. and the McCall Center, harking back to the agency's earliest days.

"There was a group of Waterbury parents who were worried about their kids and decided to start a nonprofit to help families in the area. They were so dedicated to bringing this goal to fruition that they'd stand outside grocery stores with cans collecting funds to establish the seed money necessary to open our doors. Help, Inc. (now McCall) has served Waterbury for more 55 years and today marks a significant step in fulfilling the promise those parents made to this community."

Senator Blumenthal acknowledged the significance of the work McCall does for the health and wellbeing of communities in western Connecticut. "I've seen it firsthand," the Senator remarked. "I've been there with some of your clients and heard their stories of recovery, resilience, and resolve."

The Senator also expressed his appreciation for Cigna for generously contributing \$150,000 to help fund the expansion of McCall's Child & Adolescent Outpatient Services. Rob Phillips, VP of Sales at Cigna Healthcare, New England, addressed those in attendance, saying, "On behalf of the entire Cigna team, we celebrate the important work McCall is doing for young people. The Cigna Group is committed to building healthier communities by showing up and giving back in ways that make the biggest difference."

In addressing what these expanded services would mean to residents in the Waterbury area, McCall's Chief Clinical Officer, Joy N. Pendola, LMFT LADC, said, "I was born and raised in Waterbury, so this is very meaningful to me on a personal level to bring these services to my community. Having the opportunity to give our clients health care without shame, without judgment, makes all the difference in their lives."

U.S. Congresswoman Jahana Hayes talked about the importance of McCall's services for a growing population. "It's about the people," she said. "I understand what happens to families and especially young people when they don't have access to those services... we have the ability to address systemic issues in our communities, health care disparities in our communities, the lack of access to care in our community. We have the ability to do all of these things."

Commenting on the evolution of behavioral health care, Connecticut State Senator Joan Hartley said, "Behavioral health was not recognized. It was stigmatized." Being able to provide the proper resources needed to support behavioral health has been a long road, the Senator pointed out. "The truth of the matter is, it affects every family somewhere, somehow... if we provide early intervention, we provide safe havens, it leads to healthier families and communities."

Check out the coverage from the [New Haven Register](#) and [NBC Connecticut](#). Also, you'll find more photos from the event later in this newsletter.

Click below for details about these valuable services and resources that are now available to the Waterbury community.

[Primary Care Services](#)
[Child & Adolescent Outpatient Services](#)
[Genoa Pharmacy](#)
[McCall Renato Outpatient Services](#)

Read the full Press Release [here](#).



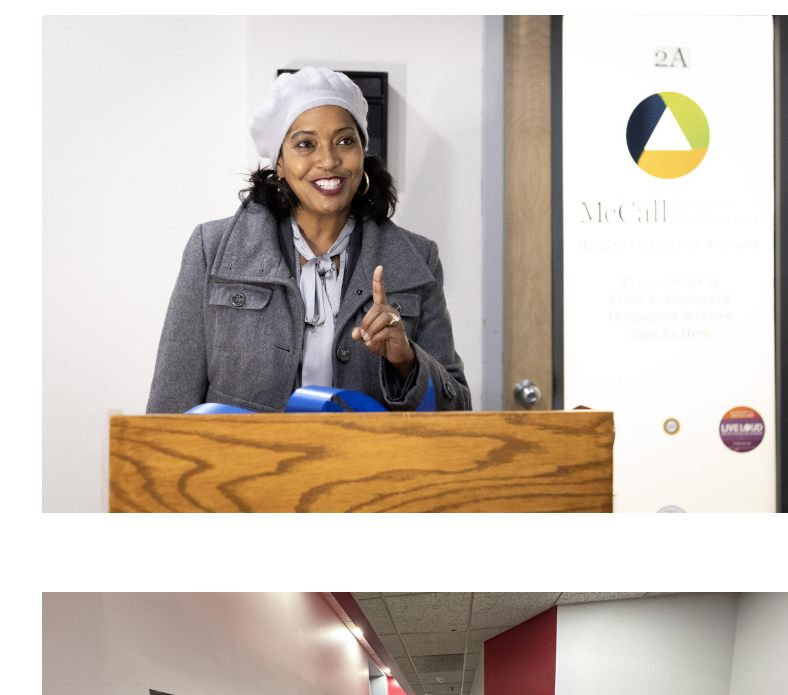
GRANTS AND GRATITUDE.



Thank you to: Gengras Subaru Torrington
Award amount: \$500
Funding will be used for: McCall's programs and resources that serve individuals and families throughout the Torrington area.



Thank you to: NCFP Draper Foundation Fund
Award amount: \$40,000
Funding will be used for: Helping to sustain the Litchfield County Opiate Task Force Coordinator position, enabling continuity of services.



Thank you to: The Bureau of Justice Assistance/ Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program (COSSUP)
Award amount: \$7 million dollars over three years
Funding will be used for: Expanding our CLEAR (Community and Law Enforcement for Addiction Recovery) initiative.

SENATORS MURPHY AND BLUMENTHAL ANNOUNCE \$7 MILLION BOOST TO COMBAT CONNECTICUT'S OPIOID CRISIS.

U.S. Senators Chris Murphy and Richard Blumenthal and Congressman John Larson were joined by Deputy Commissioner Colleen Harrington of DMHAS; Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, McCall President and CEO; Lauren Pristo, MPH, Director of Community Engagement at McCall; John Hamilton, LMFT LADC, Liberation Programs President and CEO; Liz Evans, RN, Liberation Programs Senior Director of Harm Reduction; and Mark Jenkins of the Connecticut Harm Reduction Alliance, announced \$7 million in federal funding to combat the opioid crisis in Connecticut.

This grant, awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice, will build upon CT's Community and Law Enforcement for Addiction Recovery (CLEAR) program which enhances community-based overdose prevention and partners public health with public safety to build safer, more compassionate, and effective responses to substance use challenges.

The program includes a Family Recovery Coach and trauma-informed support for children impacted by substance use. The new funding will expand to include referrals from all first responders and provide reentry services for those who have been incarcerated, a particularly at-risk population. It will also strengthen drug analysis to identify emerging threats and expand partnerships with law enforcement, first responders, and hospitals.

The initiative will focus on seven urban and rural sites in Western Connecticut, targeting areas with high overdose rates and diverse populations. This funding marks a critical step forward in saving lives and addressing the opioid crisis across the state.

SHARE THE CARE: MCCALL'S ANNUAL APPEAL IS HERE!

Starting now through December 31, you can help everyone have access to the resources they need!

Your gift will help fulfill McCall's mission of never turning anyone away, regardless of their ability to pay. McCall's programs, including our Outpatient Services, are provided to every person who walks through our door. To make that happen, we need your help.

[Learn More](#) | [Donate Now](#) | [McCall at a Glance](#)

PARTNERING FOR A HAPPY THANKSGIVING.

On Friday, November 22, Jamie Calvano, LADC ADS, Senior Director of Quality & Compliance, represented McCall at the First Congregational Church's annual Turkey Drive, organized by the Western CT Coalition Region 5 Gambling Awareness Team.

ROAD TRIP: HOTCHKISS RESIDENTS TRIP HIGH WATCH.

On Saturday, November 9, McCall's Thommy Birk and six residents from our Hotchkiss House location went to High Watch Recovery Center in Kent, where they enjoyed a dinner of prime rib and halibut. Next, they attended a recovery meeting featuring three speakers.

The Hotchkiss men had a terrific time, offering up comments such as:

It was very good food! "Excellent night!" "A great evening!" "Really nice meeting." "Next time, I'll dress a little nicer." Thommy adds, "We all had a great time and we are grateful for the experience. We had front row seating for the speaking event."

About 300 people were in attendance for the evening. The Hotchkiss men look forward to returning to High Watch for dinner and a meeting, as well as the fellowship that was shared by all. Kudos to Thommy for suggesting this outing (and doing the driving)!

A FEAST OF GRATITUDE.

On November 21, Glenn Ryan, CAC, BADC, Director of Special Services, and his team hosted a heartwarming luncheon for local seniors in need, bringing the spirit of the holiday to life. With a delicious feast lovingly prepared by the talented Carnes Weeks kitchen staff, the event was a true celebration of community and generosity. Thank you to everyone who made this day so special!

