



## Amplifying Hope March 2023

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Dear friends;

My dear friend and colleague, Dean Sheehan, retired today after more than 28 years with McCall. Dean started as the third shift monitor in the Warner House program where he worked for two years before joining administration and quickly becoming an indispensable member of the leadership structure. His signature style made an indelible impression and is evident through McCall from the beautiful renovation of the Torrington outpatient and administrative offices to our dress code and phone etiquette (a live person will always answer our phones). A brilliant communicator, Dean was instrumental in securing funding through bonding, grants and contracts. The last ten years of Dean's time at McCall he has held the role of Director of Operations which is where he has had the opportunity to truly shine. There is a concept called – "Right Livelihood"; a traditional Buddhist teaching and one of the limbs of the eight-fold path taught by the Buddha. Essentially, it means expressing your Life's Purpose through your work and your life. It means knowing who you are and why you are here – in the biggest possible scope – and aligning your life to your vocation, purpose, and values. It's my contention that in this role, Dean found his right livelihood. The place where his bright mind, commitment to service and high-quality standards could be brought forth.

In the article below, you'll see an open letter from Marisa; our Director of Marketing and Development, to her brother, who lives with a diagnosis of bipolar I. Prior to joining McCall, Marisa worked as a public relations specialist in some very prestigious global corporations. When she returned to the workforce after time spent as a full-time mom, she made a decision to bring her gifts to this work and has found her right livelihood; a platform to share and amplify the message of hope made manifest through recovery.

So much has changed in the nearly three decades since Dean began at McCall; in the world, in the field of behavioral health and in the workplace. Particularly since COVID, many have placed their quest for finding their right livelihood as their first priority when looking for where to dedicate their valuable time as an employee. As employers, there is a great deal of conversation around this shift and how to effectively structure workplace cultures to foster this ideal while concurrently having high quality expectations for outcomes. My experience has been that those two concepts are not at odds with one another, in fact, it is the optimal environment for all. In our communities, we are witness to myriad urgent needs that require the fullest versions of ourselves to show up and get to work on solving.

I am forever grateful to Dean for all he has given to our community. My hope for him is to find and live his next chapter with the same authenticity, humor and love he has brought to others throughout his life. My hope for all of us is that we might find and establish our right livelihood which holds a commitment to the interconnectedness of humanity. There is a specific, transformational experience that takes place in those spaces and each of you, my friends, are deserving of that.

My very best always,

Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW  
President & CEO

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# WORLD BIPOLAR DAY



## Ending the Stigma. One Story at a Time.

March 30th is World Bipolar Day, celebrated on Vincent van Gogh's birthday. He was thought to have the disorder, although there is still much debate. Each year we come together to raise awareness about bipolar disorder and reduce the stigma associated with it. The day is celebrated to encourage people to share their stories, seek help and support, and learn more about the condition.

*Our Director of Development and Marketing, Marisa Mittelstaedt, MBA, shares her experience in an open letter to her brother who was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 2015.*

Little brother,

I remember your first psychotic break like it was yesterday. I had just flown out to visit you; I thought you were happy. I clearly remember that beautiful August day when we had gone fishing. We drove to the pond with the windows down. You put on Ram Jam - Black Betty, turned it up loud, and we sang at the top of our lungs, having a great time. Flying back home to Connecticut after our visit I was at peace. You seemed to be doing so well.

I realize now, your zest for life in that moment was mania and inside you were suffering. Only a few short weeks later our lives would be turned upside down and never be the same. At the time it felt like I was grieving the loss of the person I once knew. There was so much I didn't understand about how you were feeling, your illness, or how to help you. I didn't know if you or our relationship would ever be the same.

As your older sister, growing up I was your protector. Once you were diagnosed, all I wanted was to fix it for you. Take your pain away. (Let's face it, I still do.) No one should have to live with the embarrassment and confusion after an episode, with the side effects from the medications, or not being able to trust your own mind. If I could take it all away, I would in a heartbeat.

I want you to know that you are so much more than your disorder. While life may look different than you planned, please don't give up on finding happiness. We almost lost you once, and selfishly, I need you here and so does mom and dad, your brother, and all four of your nieces. I want you to see is how strong and resilient you are. What a fun uncle you are. How much we love and value you. Most importantly, I want you to know that I will never give up on you.

Love you to the moon and back.  
Marisa

*Dear reader: One thing that really helped me during this time was attending support groups and the Family-to-Family class presented by NAMI. McCall has wonderful resources for families too, please reach out for support. You don't have to go through it alone.*

TOPIC:  
BIPOLAR DISORDER

WEDNESDAY  
MAR 15  
8:20 AM

If you want to learn more about bipolar disorder, please take a few minutes to listen to McCall's Chief Clinical Officer, Joy Pendola, LMFT LADC, on WZBG this month. She speaks about available treatment and how family members can help.



Click on the image to listen!

JOY PENDOLA, LMFT LADC  
CHIEF CLINICAL OFFICER

SUPPORTING THOSE LIVING WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER STARTS WITH  
UNDERSTANDING THE FACTS AND MISCONCEPTIONS.  
TUNE IN LIVE TO LEARN MORE!

MCCALLBHN.ORG



### **There is Help Available**

One in 40 Americans live with bipolar disorder. You are not alone, and treatment can help. The McCall Behavioral Health Network offers a wide range of outpatient treatment options for various mental health disorders, including bipolar disorder. Call 860.496.2100 to get connected with one of our compassionate counselors or visit [mccallbhn.org](http://mccallbhn.org) for more information.

### **More Resources**

[988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#)

[NAMI CT Family to Family Class](#)

[Bipolar & Depression Alliance](#)

[International Bipolar Foundation](#)

[International Society for Bipolar Disorder](#)





Transgender Day of Visibility is celebrated on March 31st! The day is dedicated to raise awareness and celebrate the lives and contributions of trans people, while also drawing attention to the poverty, discrimination, and violence the community faces. At McCall we support everyone on their journey to wellness and pride ourselves on being a safe space for the LGBTQIA+ community.

To learn more about what it means to be transgender or to find resources visit:

[Transgender FAQ | GLAAD](#)

[The Trevor Project](#)

[Trans Lifeline](#)

[CT LGBTQ+ Resources](#)

If you haven't had the chance to watch [McCall Alumni, Jesse's story](#), we encourage you to watch. He is a member of the LGBTQIA+ community and has an important message to share.

**JOIN US AND GAIN THE TOOLS YOU NEED FOR ALL STAGES OF RECOVERY!**



**LOCATION**

McCall Wellness Center  
(Flagpole Building)  
58 High St., Torrington, CT 06790

**QUESTIONS? CONTACT:**

Michele Smedick  
Recovery Support Professional II  
[michele.smedick@mccallbhn.org](mailto:michele.smedick@mccallbhn.org)

# Teen Drug & Alcohol Fact Week



National Drug and Alcohol Fact Week kicked off on March 22nd. McCall's Prevention Services, Family Services, and Adolescent Services staff wants every family to know that no matter what you are going through, you don't have to go through it alone. Visit us at [mccallbhn.org](http://mccallbhn.org) to see how we can help.



Unfortunately, there's been a surge in teen opioid overdoses in recent years. One of the best ways to prevent opioid overdose deaths is to have Naloxone in your home. Naloxone is a medicine that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose, and is commonly distributed as NARCAN Nasal Spray. Learn more by visiting [NORA](#), a free app that walks you through the signs of an overdose and how to administer NARCAN.

You can prevent prescription drug misuse by safeguarding medicine using drug lock boxes, and safely disposing of unused or expired medications. April 22 is national drug takeback day. Search [here](#) for locations near you.

Quitting vaping can be hard, but you don't have to do it alone. Visit [this link](#) to learn about McCall's youth prevention and substance use treatment programs.



SAMHSA recently announced that in 2021, 94% of people aged 12 or older living with a substance use disorder did not receive any treatment. Substance use remains highest among young adults aged 18 to 25, making youth prevention and recovery programs more important than ever.



**Can we count on you this year?**

Save the date – Give Local is coming soon! For 36 hours on April 25-26, 2023, Connecticut Community Foundation will host Give Local Greater Waterbury and Litchfield Hills for the 11th consecutive year. Nonprofit organizations will also compete for cash prizes, adding to the excitement and fun!

**This year your gift will bring pet therapy to McCall clients!**

Our board has generously pledged a \$5,000 challenge gift if we reach 75 unique donors. To do this we need your help. We hope we can count on you this year to make the campaign a success!

For more information, contact:  
 Marisa Mittelstaedt, MBA  
 Director of Development & Marketing  
[marisa.mittelstaedt@mccallbhn.org](mailto:marisa.mittelstaedt@mccallbhn.org)



After months of hard work, our new, combined website will be live by the end of the day today!! The site is still a work in progress and will be updated throughout the coming weeks. Please take a few moments to look around. We are excited to welcome you to our new virtual space! [Click here](#) to view the new site!



### **Supporting Nonprofits in CT**

Our CEO, Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, testified on March 9th in support H.B. 6659, the Governor's Budget. She supported the request that to increase funding for community nonprofits during the biennium by 9% in FY24, the first year, and 7% in FY25, the second year, and to index future increases to inflation.

Included in her testimony, she said:

"While the COLAs were appreciated, they have not come close to keeping pace with inflation and many staff have had to make the difficult but understandable decision to leave the field in order to make ends meet. They have moved to other industries that have higher wages with much less demand on their bodies, minds, and spirits.

I must emphasize that the workforce shortage in healthcare – particularly in the nonprofit sector - represents the most critical element of the public health crisis. We employ doctors, allied health professionals, clinical social workers,

marriage and family therapists, professional counselors and paraprofessionals who provide direct care. The

people who take care of vulnerable people are exhausted, stressed, stretched, and burned out beyond what words can adequately describe.

Remember when we all had signs on our lawn thanking the heroes for caring for us? Across CT, 18% of nurses have left the profession, there are staggering vacancy rates for therapists across the service system and yet the ever more urgent, complex, and acute needs of our clients persist. The current workforce cannot sustain this pace and those we serve deserve SO much more.

As we emerge from the pandemic, the needs of the community are growing rapidly. Demand for our services has increased dramatically. The opioid crisis is still raging, with record numbers of fatal overdoses the last two years. Waiting lists for children's services are growing longer and longer. Providers are being asked to serve kids with increasingly high needs, while inpatient services and emergency departments can't find places for kids to go in the community. But we can't meet the need without increased funding."

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### Advocating for Change

Community Engagement Specialist Traci Eburg, Harm Reduction Educator Cameron Breen, and Director of Community Engagement Lauren Pristo, MPH, gave testimony at the state capitol in support of creating Overdose Prevention Centers (OPCs)

According to the National Institute of Health:

"OPCs, are facilities that intend to reduce the health and environmental risks often associated with public injection, like discarded syringes and related litter, incarceration, the spread of infectious disease, and fatal drug overdose. These facilities fit into a



continuum of harm reduction services and are designed to provide a space for people to consume pre-obtained drugs in controlled settings, under the supervision of trained staff, and with access to sterile supplies for smoking, insufflating, or injecting drugs. Participants can also receive health care, counseling, and referrals to health and social services, including drug treatment."

Traci lost both her son and husband to an overdose while they were at home because they were too embarrassed and/or ashamed to let her know they had returned to use. If an OPC was available she testified that people who are in active addiction could be shown that they are loved and cared for, even while they're at the worst. Eventually, they would come to believe it to be true and follow a path to recovery.

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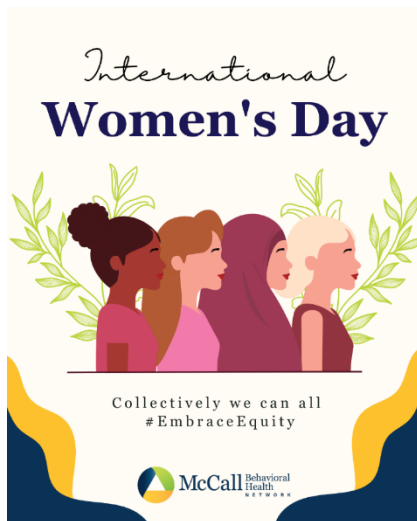




We are so grateful for our amazing social workers!! In March, we shine a light on the profession and those who have chosen it. The celebration reinforces the notion that we are all connected, and our future depends on every person's involvement in building a socially just future.

This month we celebrate all of McCall's Social Workers – those who are licensed and those working towards their goal! Thank you for all that you do at McCall, especially for the support and encouragement you give our clients.

Happy National Doctor's Day to our very own Dr. Natalie March! Thank you for your tireless efforts to keep our clients and staff healthy and safe. We are so grateful for your guidance, kindness, and dedication to excellence in behavioral health care.



Happy International Women's Day to all of the incredible women in our lives!

International Women's Day is a global celebration of women's achievements while acknowledging ongoing discrimination and inequities.

We all can play a role in moving the needle toward a more gender-equal world. [Click here](#) to learn how you can help.

# FEEL GOOD STORY



The above photo shows the staggering number of syringes collected by McCall's CLEAR team in just over one month. Noel DeLeon, Community Engagement Specialist, reflected on the photo at this month's Litchfield County Opiate Task Force meeting. Here is what he had to say...

*The photo hits from so many perspectives and highlights the good being done by the program in so many ways.*

*For me it's all of it. A heart wrenching reminder of the very human cost of this disease, the relief that they aren't in the streets where they might do harm and create more stigma and outrage towards folks suffering, and of greatest importance they aren't being reused.*

*I see this picture and I see the work we do to keep our fellow humans as safe as possible, doing everything can to keep them alive.*

*Every day alive is another day for hope to become reality.*



**Family Recovery Coaching**  
with the CLEAR initiative.  
*Recovery for the entire family.*

- ✓ Family Recovery Plans
- ✓ Addiction Education
- ✓ Individual Support & Guidance
- ✓ Practicing Skills (self-care, boundaries, communication)

Contact Julia Merchant, LMSW, with any questions or referrals. 959.229.4814 julia.merchant@mccallbhn.org



**Teens, We Can Make Quitting Easier**

Join us for a free, youth Tobacco Cessation Group

- Every Tuesday Starting Feb. 7
- 3:30pm-4:30pm
- Email Darian Graells to sign up! [darian.graells@mccallbhn.org](mailto:darian.graells@mccallbhn.org)

QUITTING VAPING IS HARD!



**Our Contact Information**

McCall Behavioral Health Network  
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Torrington, CT 06790  
860-496-2100  
[www.mccallbhn.org/](http://www.mccallbhn.org/)



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