



At the *Heart* of Wellness With McCall & Help

Message from Maria



Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, *CEO*

Dear friends,

We've been focusing on the topic of trauma this month. Unfortunately we had a real-time situation that tested our staff and clients' capacity to cope with a terrifying, traumatic experience. On Sunday, July 24, we had an electrical fire at our Dempsey inpatient residence. Windows were blown out, there was extensive water damage and damage to personal and facility property. Thankfully, everyone is safe, and our beautiful building will

McCall & Help, Inc.

Now Officially One!

On July 1, 2022, we announced the official merging of Central Naugatuck Valley Help, Inc. and McCall Center for Behavioral Health. This is the culmination of years of discovery, review, and hard work by both organizations to ensure that people throughout the communities we serve have access to a robust continuum of behavioral health services. Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW will continue to lead the organization as CEO and a new name will be announced soon.


McCall and Help, Inc. affiliated in July of 2020. Under the direction of Help, Inc.'s former Executive Director, Roberta Murtagh and Maria Coutant Skinner, then Executive Director at McCall. Leadership at both organizations had a vision. They knew they shared similar values and goals, which provided the perfect opportunity to combine and expand the clinical and geographic continuum of care for both agencies.

Our clients, volunteers, and staff were at the heart of this decision. Keeping them in mind, we have been thorough and thoughtful as we craft our new identity; one that pulls from our past and focuses on our dreams for the future. Working with expert consultants, we developed our new vision and mission statements and a plan that will shape our strategy for years to come.

eventually be restored. For now, we are working around the clock to support our clients and staff as we process all the challenges related to an event of this magnitude.

A situation like this one is the type of trauma that we can all clearly identify. There is an event, there are visible signs of damage and loss and there are multiple witnesses to the fear and devastation. More often, trauma is insidious, and we can minimize, dismiss, or rationalize events and feelings not recognizing them as such.

Trauma can occur as acts of commission; such as physical or sexual abuse, or omission; for instance, a child not getting their emotional needs met because of a parent's unaddressed mental illness or addiction. Some may wonder why it's important to know and understand our own trauma if we're just going along through life and are seemingly not impacted by it? Why would we want to dig around in our memory for painful experiences?

<h2>Mission</h2> <p>We are a nonprofit organization which inspires hope and promotes wellness and healing through a continuum of behavioral health services – prevention, treatment, recovery supports, and community engagement – for individuals of all ages and families across western Connecticut.</p>	<h2>Vision</h2> <p>We will be strong and committed advocates for the needs of the communities and those we serve. We will be a multi-cultural, anti-oppression presence in our communities and within our own organization. Individuals and families will find welcoming, caring, and effective programs and services for their behavioral health needs. We will attend to whole person health needs and wellness – sometimes through our strong collaborations with partner organizations to assure that each client's unique needs are met. Our staff is dedicated, informed, solutions-focused, and draws satisfaction and joy from their work. We will be a learning and teaching environment for all staff and those new to the work.</p>
 <p>Take a look back at our FY 2021 -2022. Click on the image to read more!</p>	<h2>Our Board</h2> <p>Officers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joseph Stanley, Chair• Paul A. McLaughlin, Jr., Vice Chair• Deb Ullman, Treasurer• Gail Petteway-Hardy, Secretary <p>Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Michelle Aplado• Roslyn Campbell• Nancy Cannavo• Dana Coelho• Eugene Andrew Field• Jim Jones• Pamela Kennedy• Judge James Lawlor• Tami-Jo Lind• Tom Quinn• Susan Suhanovsky• Frank Trivisano• Marie Wallace

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Healing Invisible Wounds

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is born out of trauma. We often associate PTSD with military veterans, but anyone who has lived through what we call “Capital T” or “Lowercase t” trauma can experience symptoms. We had a recent example inside one of our own facilities just last week.

On Sunday, July 24th, there was an electrical fire at Dempsey Services, our 34-bed inpatient facility in Waterbury. The excessive heat put an enormous strain on the electrical system and a fire broke out in a resident's bedroom.

While the fire raged and windows blew out, staff and clients evacuated the building. Some went out fire escapes and others out emergency exits. Many worried about friends and colleagues being left behind as the building filled with smoke.

Thankfully no one was physically injured, and the fire department was able to extinguish the fire. While extensive damage to the building took place, a beautiful thing happened. Our staff, who is trained in facilitating the healing of trauma, gathered our clients together and they supported each other for most of the night. They shared their experiences and worked through the event. They even discussed past traumas that bubbled up to the surface.

As Bessel van der Kolk explains in his book [The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma](#): “As the ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) study has shown, trauma including child abuse and neglect is the single most preventable cause of mental illness, the single most common cause of addiction, and a significant contributor to leading causes of death such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, stroke, and suicide.”

Leaning into the healing process can be very frightening; and it’s also where healing and resolution reside. And resisting the healing amplifies our pain. As Dr. Gabor Mate says: “the attempt to escape from pain, is what creates more pain.” The initial steps involve radical acceptance that we cannot deny or minimize the pain from the trauma and that the pain lives in our minds, hearts, and bodies.

My friends...I want you to believe and know that you are capable of that acceptance and worth the work of healing.



No one wants to think of themselves as a victim. There are neurobiological reasons for this, so we employ defense mechanisms to cope. Some of us try to stuff our trauma deep down, bury it, or shrug it off. Other times we turn to other things we think will work such as the use of substances, to numb ourselves and forget. What we know for sure is that what we don’t deal with will invariably haunt us in one form or another. In the case of our clients, our staff was able to wrap them in evidence-based care, process the event, and provide continued services as needed. We had the opportunity to walk our folks through the optimal trauma response, and they are doing very well.

To learn more, listen to Maria’s [WZBG interview](#). If you have experienced trauma, big or small, we have experienced staff waiting to hear from you. Healing is possible. Contact us today:

[McCall Center for Behavioral Health](#)

(860)496-2100

[CNV Help, Inc.](#)

(203)756-8984

To be fully human is to experience the full range of emotions. In processing this recent trauma with our clients and staff, we created nonjudgmental spaces to be together, inviting folks to talk when they are ready. We also moved our bodies a lot, worked to be quiet and meditate and get good rest. Importantly, we fed everyone delicious and nutritious meals.

Healing takes place in every part of our selves; physical, emotional, and spiritual. The connections with one another were of vital importance and our team most certainly rose to meet that need in beautiful and compassionate ways.

Please know that we are all doing well and are deeply grateful for the outpouring of love and care from our board, staff, neighbors, and partner organizations. I wish each of you well and want you to know that you are not alone in your own healing journey. We are here for you. We heal in communion with one another.

With my deepest gratitude,
Maria



Save the Date

We hope you will join us!

Click on the image for more information.

Lights, Camera, Action!

This month we launched a new combined [YouTube channel](#) that now hosts a catalogue of videos filmed by [Defining Studios](#). The videos were a labor of love and created to demystify and remove some of the stigma around behavioral healthcare.

We encourage you to watch. You will hear from our staff, see our facilities, and find hope in our client's stories. Please share the videos with your colleagues, family, and friends! Don't forget to subscribe!



Our Contact Information

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AUGUST 31, 2022

Overdose Awareness Day

Resource Fair & Vigil

COE MEMORIAL PARK, TORRINGTON
6:00 - 8:00 PM

Join us as we come together to commemorate the lives of those lost to overdose. The event will offer local resources and support, followed by speakers and a candlelight vigil to share messages of remembrance, healing, and hope.

For more information please visit
<https://www.lcctf.org/overdose-awareness-day/>

