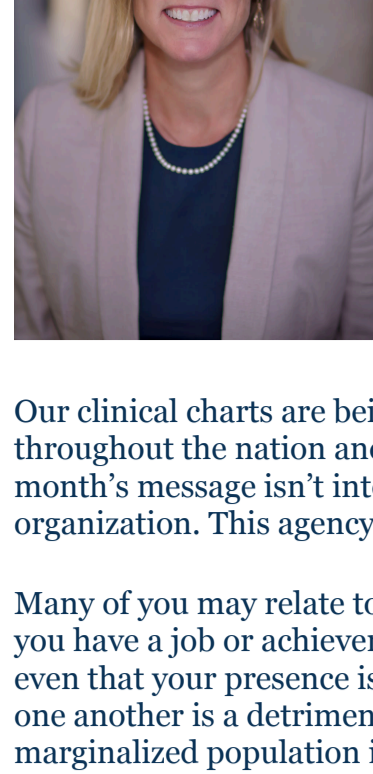




WHY DEI MATTERS. January 2025



Dear friends;

I will admit that I'm sending this message with some trepidation, unsure of the future implications, but with faith that standing solidly in our mission that centers diversity, equity, and inclusion is urgently necessary.

McCall Behavioral Health Network is exceptional – I say this as an objective statement without reservation or qualifiers. Licensed and accredited, we have oversight from state, local, federal, private, and individual entities that evaluate organizations on clinical outcomes, safety, staff satisfaction, client experience, and public health impacts. Because we receive a mix of funding; both public and private, we are required to demonstrate that we are good stewards of those dollars. By every measure, this organization is among the very best.

Our clinical charts are being used as the training model across the state, our staff present on best practices throughout the nation and our funders connect other agencies with us to help stand up new programs. This month's message isn't intended as a promotional piece for McCall but to reiterate a core value of this organization. This agency has, at our foundation, a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

Many of you may relate to feeling, as though you don't belong. Perhaps you can relate to others believing that you have a job or achievement that you haven't truly earned. Or, that you don't bring value to a situation. Or even that your presence is a detriment or that you pose a threat and are somehow a danger. This 'othering' of one another is a detriment to our very survival. The idea that a person who belongs to a traditionally marginalized population is somehow inherently less qualified is beyond absurd – it is also dangerous. I don't just mean that from a moral or humanistic perspective. When we surround ourselves with only others who look, sound and think like we do, we are in echo chambers where no growth or evolution takes place. We languish in our stuck places and quality diminishes.

DEI practices aren't charitable, they are a path to excellence. The rich discussions had amongst our staff from varied backgrounds lead to innovative solutions and allow us to lead the way in caring for others. We have created a community in our workplace and with those we serve that communicates acceptance, values diversity, and celebrates belonging. We are all better for it.

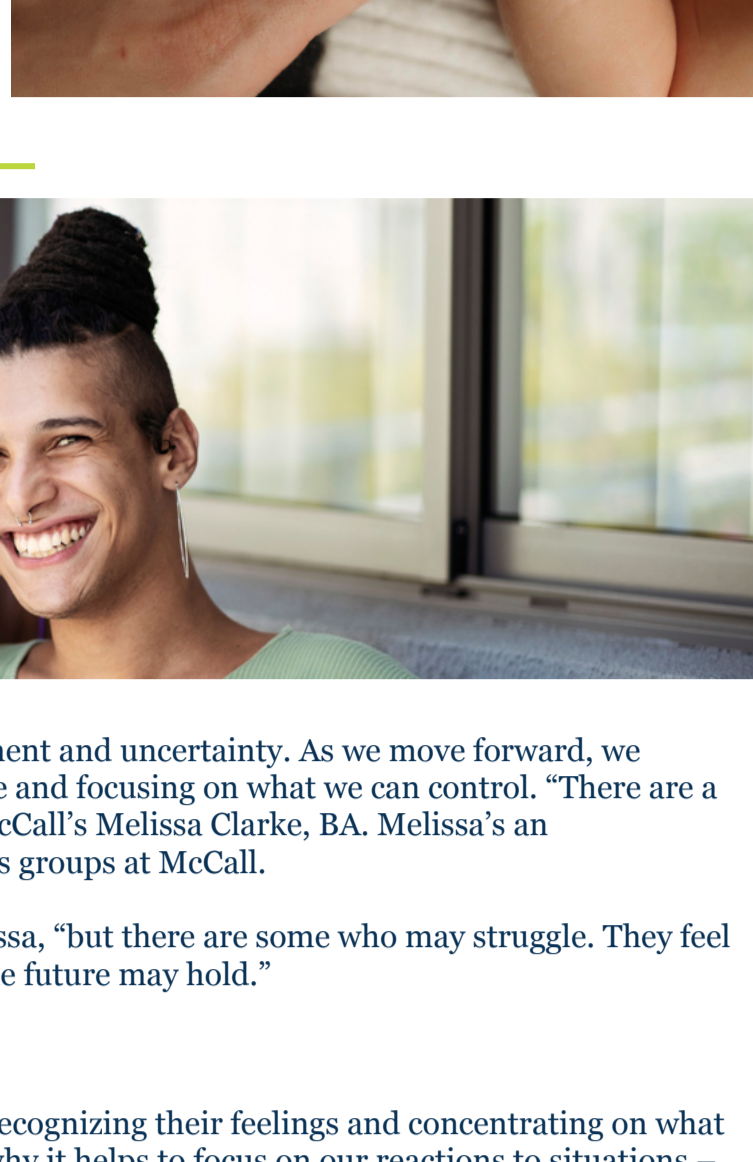
Fostering a sense of belonging in community is essential and it's built on love. Former US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy writes in his [Parting Prescription for America](#). "We are at our best not when we fear but when we love, not when we turn away but when we turn toward one another. This must be our compass as we set out to build community. Leading with love means seeing love as a virtue to cultivate in ourselves, to encourage in our families, to infuse in our workplaces, schools, and halls of government, to insist on in our leaders, and to shape our public conversation. A community grounded in love is a community that will stand."

I will share some incredible news from my life; Greg and I became grandparents on December 29th when our daughter Abigail and her husband Elijah welcomed their son Solomon J'Adore into the world! My friends, my heart is bursting with love for this precious new life! I'm noticing that Solly's arrival has also amplified my feelings about how we are called to show up for one another and is where I'm drawing inspiration to share this message. The world needs us to courageously eschew fear and embrace love.

Yours in loving community,

Maria

Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW
President and CEO



"Some people may adjust well to the changes," notes Melissa, "but there are some who may struggle. They feel a little uneasy or unsettled with the uncertainty of what the future may hold."

Focus on what you can control.

Melissa encourages individuals to ground themselves by recognizing their feelings and concentrating on what they can control. "Life always happens," she says. That's why it helps to focus on our reactions to situations – that's what we have 100% control over.

Melissa's approach with McCall clients involves fostering a mindset of progress and self-compassion. As Melissa puts it, "I like to highlight the fact that I want to have people acknowledge the small successes that they make throughout their journey, whether it's employment goals or also fitness or wellness. Get used to celebrating progress." As a result, the journey itself can be very rewarding.

Taking steps and asking for help.

Melissa believes in setting tangible, step-by-step goals to make progress feel more manageable. Adds Melissa, "Whatever we're working towards, everyone experiences some form of hardship or setbacks or maybe things don't pan out the way that they planned it originally to be, and that's okay. What's really important is how you tackle those challenges – and asking for help."

The sense of community at McCall plays a vital role in supporting individuals during their journeys. "Sometimes people don't feel comfortable asking for help or don't know what to ask for," Melissa acknowledges. McCall offers a community of belonging where people can speak up, even if they're unsure of what they need. Our highly trained clinicians can connect individuals with the resources and support to help them heal.

How to make a fresh start.

For those looking to start fresh this year, Melissa's advice is simple yet profound: Focus on the small steps. Celebrate your progress. And remember, you don't have to do it alone.

If you're ready to take that first step, the McCall Behavioral Health Network is here to help. Visit us online at www.mccallbhn.org or call our main office at 860.496.2100. Together, let's make 2025 a year of growth, resilience, and new possibilities!

RECORDING FROM
JANUARY 22, 2025

MISS THE INTERVIEW?

with
MELISSA CLARKE, BA
EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST

New Beginnings: Embrace Hope and Healing in 2025

LEARN MORE ON WZBG.

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

Visit our pressroom to hear Melissa Clarke, BA, McCall Employment Specialist, talk about making a fresh start in 2025.

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

A FRESH START: MCCALL COMMITS TO A TOBACCO-FREE FUTURE.

Starting March 1, 2025, McCall will proudly transition to a tobacco-free agency, reinforcing our commitment to creating a healthier, cleaner, and more supportive environment for everyone in our community. This initiative prohibits the use of tobacco products in any form, including vapes and smokeless tobacco products, on all McCall properties and grounds, applying to clients, staff, and visitors alike.

This change aligns with our mission to enhance recovery, foster healing, and provide clean, comfortable spaces free from secondhand smoke. Together, we can create a tobacco-free environment that supports wellness and health goals for everyone at McCall.

Available Resources

We understand the challenges of quitting tobacco and are here to support our staff and clients every step of the way.

To assist those looking to stop using tobacco products, we're offering a range of resources for staff and clients, including:

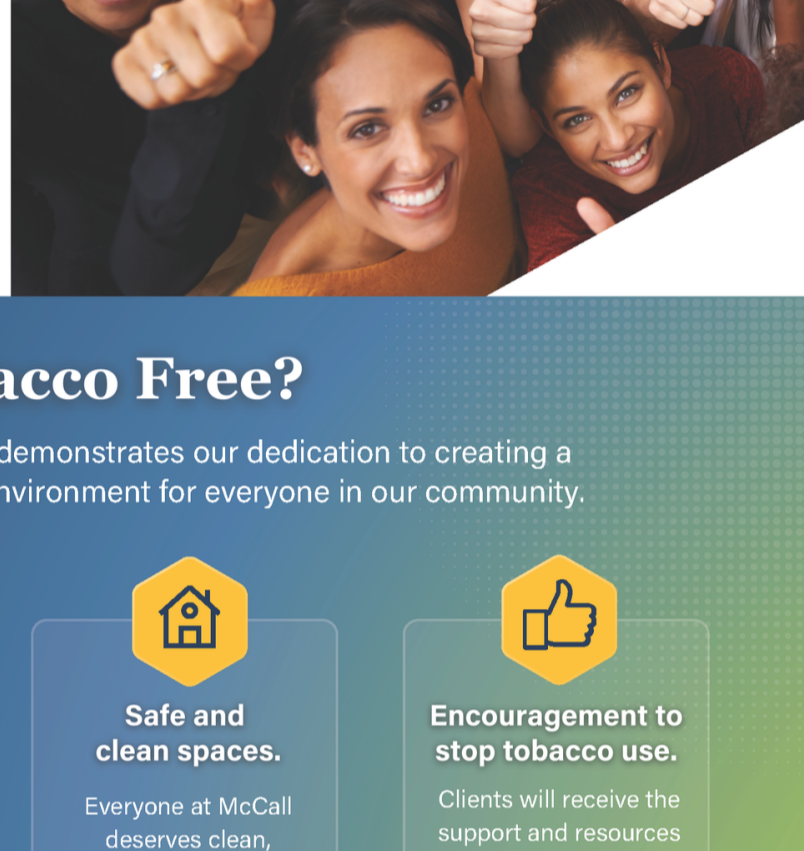
- Free cessation counseling
- Nicotine replacement therapies (for clients only)
- Educational workshops
- Support groups
- Additional resources for tobacco cessation

Thank you for joining us in making this positive change!

A Tobacco-Free McCall.

Starting March 1, 2025.

The use of tobacco products in any form, including vapes, will be prohibited on all McCall properties and grounds for clients, staff, and visitors.



Why Tobacco Free?

Our transition to a tobacco-free agency demonstrates our dedication to creating a healthier, cleaner, and more supportive environment for everyone in our community.

<p>Improved health for our clients.</p> <p>A tobacco-free environment supports client wellness and health goals.</p>	<p>Enhanced recovery support.</p> <p>Eliminating tobacco enhances recovery and fosters healing and growth.</p>	<p>Safe and clean spaces.</p> <p>Everyone at McCall deserves clean, comfortable spaces free of secondhand smoke.</p>	<p>Encouragement to stop tobacco use.</p> <p>Clients will receive the support and resources needed to lead a tobacco-free life.</p>
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Resources for tobacco cessation.

We're here to support you! Assistance will be available for anyone looking to stop using tobacco products, including:

- Free cessation counseling.
- Nicotine replacement therapies.
- Educational workshops and support groups.

For more information or assistance, contact your program supervisor.



Let's create a healthier, tobacco-free McCall together.
Thank you for your support in this positive change!

Family in Recovery Newsletter

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

Learn how Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) can impact individuals in recovery and what family members can do to provide support. From understanding symptoms to fostering a compassionate environment, explore practical steps to help your loved one regain hope and stay on track.

Don't miss these insights from our Family in Recovery Newsletter – [click here to read the full article.](#)

Alicia Peterson, RSS
Family Recovery Coach
959.229.4814
alicia.peterson@mccallbhn.org

GRANTS AND GRATITUDE.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING MCCALL'S ANNUAL APPEAL.

2024 Annual Appeal

Thank You!

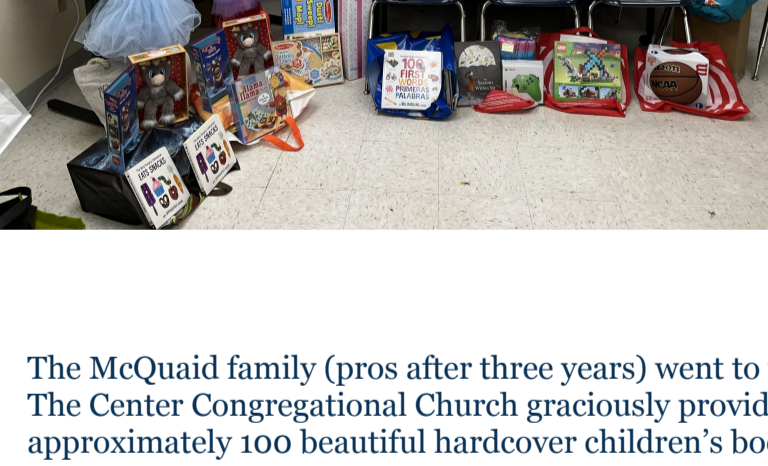
Together, we're creating a garden of hope and healing.

A huge THANK YOU to our amazing staff, board members, and donors who went above and beyond to contribute to McCall's 2024 Annual Appeal! Thanks to your generosity, we have raised an inspiring \$20,476 from 88 donors to support vital behavioral health services for our community.

While we celebrate this success, the need for support continues. Behavioral health services remain critical, and your donations ensure that individuals and families receive the care they deserve – when they need it most. If you haven't had a chance to give yet, you can still make an impact! Donate today at mccallbhn.org/donate.

Thank you for being a part of our mission – we couldn't do this without you!

SPREADING HOLIDAY JOY IN WATERBURY.



Kelsey Dlugozajska, LCSW, Director of Outpatient Services at McCall's Renato Outpatient Services location in Waterbury, tells us about this year's successful Holiday Angels program in Waterbury and extends her thanks to the Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation for funding support that made it all possible.

The award we received from the Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation was not only a gift to our clients but to us as well. The excitement our staff feels about planning, organizing, purchasing, and giving the toys is something we look forward to every year!

This year we provided toys for six families with a total of 15 children. For many of our clients, despite holding jobs or receiving support, they still don't have enough left over after their monthly bills to afford Christmas gifts for their children. We planned a small party with decorations, snacks, and sweets and then gave out the presents. The smiles, the tears, the joy, and the relief we get to experience on our clients' faces is now one of the most treasured holiday traditions we have at Renato.

I'm sharing a photo of a child of one of our clients opening a gift. His family has struggled with secure housing for a long time, and they were unable to provide anything outside of the basic necessities. This is our third year being able to gift him a few things for the holiday (and it has been so fun to kind of "watch him grow up" through the gifting process).

A HEARTFELT LETTER OF THANKS FROM KATE GIBSON, BS, MCCALL PARENT EDUCATOR.



I just wanted to tell everyone about this year's extraordinary 2024 Holiday Angels program in Torrington. As you can see in the accompanying photo, many amazing elves jumped in to help make the holiday season a very special one for our Parent Support Service families. This year, we were able to serve 34 families and 71 children. We handled over 350 gifts and gift cards and were able to deliver them to many extremely grateful and relieved parents.

We were again blessed with many gracious donors. Cigna immediately embraced the spirit of the season and started early, making sure that we had the "wished for" gifts and gift cards for 40 children.

The McQuaid family (pros after three years) went to work finding the Amazon links for the requested gifts. The Center Congregational Church graciously provided gifts for 15 children, and a publisher donated approximately 100 beautiful hardcover children's books.

This put George Reyes Gavilan, Parent Educator, and volunteer Bill Hayes immediately on high alert, as they monitored the packages coming to their home and brought them to Trinity. I'm sure the neighbors are now gathering evidence that they might actually be Santa (you know two years in a row isn't a fluke). Susan Leo-O'Connor, Parent Educator, became a much-valued Fact Checker! Meanwhile, I fretted with checklisters and highlighters. And McCall's Director of Family Services, Leann Mitchell, LCSW, was able to use the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation's Critical Needs grant to help with the remaining 16 children, including those last-minute items that put smiles on kids' faces!

Additionally, Cigna's Kim Rexford (Cigna co-lead and long-time supporter of Holiday Angels), Sarah Tolisano (Cigna co-lead for Holiday Angels), Sarah's mother, and many friends pulled together to help a very hard-working, young single mother of two special needs children as well as her disabled mother. The family had recently been forced to relocate because of lead contamination and had to throw away most of the children's toys and books. As the children have special needs, this team went the extra mile and found high-quality toys and items that will benefit the children and promote their development for years to come. Additionally, they found bedding reflecting the children's preferences and helped them to feel that their new bedroom was extra special. Then, they put together lovely packages for the children's mother and the grandmother!

Here's a quote from the mom in response: "Everybody had such an amazing Christmas. Mom! I can't even begin to thank you for all you've done for me and my family. The kids loved everything about it. The bed set is perfect! You'll have to come and see the beds when you have a moment!"

I continue to find myself humbled by everyone's generosity and I am very grateful to have a part in this lovely Parent Support Service tradition. I hope this message finds everyone looking forward to a happy and bright New Year!

ADVENTURE RECOVERY IS A HIT WITH HOTCHKISS HOUSE.



The following account was written by our esteemed Guest Contributor, McCall Case Manager Conrad Senkiewicz.

On January 14, five men from Hotchkiss House and I enjoyed a wintery afternoon at the Adventure Recovery basecamp in Canaan. Max Elder and Jamie Megrue were our guides. With them, we explored the grounds, got an explanation of the sweat lodge site, observed the ice on the Housatonic River, checked out the remains of an old chimney in the woods, and enjoyed the winter beauty.

We then learned how to start a fire with flint and steel – each person had the experience of starting a fire in their bare hands, before tossing it into the shared fire. Next, we began to carve cedar spoons around this fire, using hot coals to burn out a small bowl in the cedar – this was a very mindful activity, as we had to focus on the hot coal and the burning cedar. We talked about what it takes to start and keep it going, and how it applies to building recovery. We also enjoyed hot cocoa and hot cider. It was a very cold day, but our spirits were warmed by the activities and camaraderie.

We look forward to returning to Adventure Recovery in February and March, as a recent grant from the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation is generously funding three outings for Hotchkiss House residents.

Below are some quotes from the guys:

"Adventure Recovery was great. Being outdoors was immeasurable, learning about the ways of our ancestors, and the companionship that we gained was invaluable. I would attend all future Adventure Recovery dates with optimism and gratitude."

"Adventure Recovery was an incredible experience. Minus being cold, I had a great time learning a little about a different culture and their elders, making fire without the use of modern lighters or anything advanced, and crafting spoons with coals. Overall, ten out of ten. I would like to further this experience."

"Adventure Recovery was an amazing experience. Just being out in nature among peers was so relaxing and freeing of all worries and stress. I look forward to any and all other outings. It was great to feel a connection with my surroundings as well as with my inner self."

"I had an amazing time at Adventure Recovery. The men working there were very knowledgeable and made the time there very enjoyable. I love being outdoors and I'm hoping to be able to do more activities with Adventure Recovery in the future."

"I had a blast at Adventure Recovery. I learned a lot from the guys running it. I really enjoyed their time, patience, and knowledge. I am hoping to return for other activities. It really helps with my recovery and connection with nature – thank you."

OUT & ABOUT with McCall

TAKING OUR RESOURCES OUT ON THE ROAD.

McCall brings services directly to the community. Here's our Mobile Wellness Van parked at the TJ Maxx lot in Torrington, providing easy access to care and support.

With no appointment or insurance necessary to receive services, and a weekly schedule in convenient, the Mobile Wellness Van makes it easier for individuals to access the recovery care and support they need.

To find out more about McCall's Mobile Wellness Van, including the daily schedule, [click here.](#)

