



## Mental Health ACTION Month May 2023



Dear friends;

It might be surprising that I, a social worker, would take umbrage with Mental Health Awareness Month – but, here I am, taking it. But, before you gasp and scroll past, hear me out. Mental health awareness is a vital first step to reducing stigma and allowing for conversations about conditions that impact each of us, in some way, at some point in our lives. The term awareness suggests passivity, however, and I think what we really need right now is a mental health ACTION month. I see evidence of awareness of mental health in our society, but what has that yielded? We aren't any healthier, in fact, the number of folks who self-identify as lonely, anxious, disconnected and otherwise not okay are staggering. Mental health terminology is practically ubiquitous in the cultural lexicon and an increasing number of people are diagnosing and labeling symptoms with those terms than ever before.

I can understand the pull; you know you are uncomfortable in your skin, you're fighting the urge to cry at small things, feeling lost or angry or not good enough and, where do you turn? The internet, of course! And there you'll find countless resources that convince you that you have any number of conditions from depression to obsessive compulsive disorder to bipolar I. There's a mix of relief and fear in matching how you're feeling with a diagnosis; an explanation helps when in pain; but...what's next?

What I've observed is that we can often stay stuck in that place. We can over identify with the diagnosis, and it becomes who we are. For instance, we tell ourselves that we can't possibly take on that task; depression is stopping us. We may not think – I am a person who is experiencing a depressive episode and I know how to access help to cope – we think of ourselves as depressed, full stop.

We can also pathologize feelings and behaviors that are, in fact, within the range of normal human experience. I often hear things like; “oh, that's my ADD making me distracted again”, or “my child got in trouble again at school – he is oppositional”. It can become a self-fulfilling prophecy and, again, we can become paralyzed.

After more than 30 years in this field; here are a few things I have learned;

- We ALL hurt sometimes; it is part of the human experience to have a very broad range of intense feelings. Give yourself, and others, grace.
- Professional consultation to assess for a diagnosis is critical. It's an involved and collaborative process and can be the beginning of a remarkable transformation to healing and health.
- Healing and health are active processes that all of us can access in our own ways. It is best done in community.
- Fear of diving into our pain keeps us stuck. I'm reminded of A.A. Milne's quote from Winnie the Pooh: "You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think. But the most important thing is, even if we're apart...I'll always be with you."
- We are all works in progress and, if we remain open, can continue our evolution throughout our lifetimes.

Awareness is just that – the first step. And then we need to take the next and the next and the next! Let's GO....together.

All my best to you always,

Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW  
President & CEO

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## MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



### LET'S TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

What does mental health awareness really mean? Simply put, it's the understanding and acknowledgement of mental health issues within our society. It's an ideal opportunity to educate people about mental health and the resources that are currently available for support and treatment.

The ultimate goal is to reduce the stigma and discrimination surrounding mental health. That means having discussions to make sure people feel comfortable about reaching out for help if needed.

“I feel a lot more people are talking about it,” observes McCall Prevention Facilitator, Darian Graells, “and that’s really key to breaking down stigma. During this month, we encourage people to get educated about mental health and even check-in with your own mental wellbeing.”

McCall offers mental health awareness training that teaches people how to identify signs and symptoms in others. These training programs include Mental Health First Aid and QPR (“Question. Persuade. Refer.”) Suicide Prevention Training.

Now’s a good time to connect with people who are close to you. Even simple surface level questions can help. Go ahead and ask: “How are you doing today?” “What’s on your mind?” These open-ended questions can lead to a deeper discussion about what’s truly impacting them.

### **Mental health by the numbers.**

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, **1 in 5 Americans** experience mental illness every year – and **less than half** receive treatment. ([NAMI](#))

To get a better picture of the prevalence of mental health issues in our state, check out these interesting [facts](#).

There are a lot of intimidating terms surrounding mental health that can make a person feel isolated. Darian offers guidance, “It’s really important to reach out and get support. Don’t feel like you have to be in this pain forever.”

The many resources available to help you through your healing journey include options such as art therapy, animal therapy, group therapy, to name a few. Self-care is important too – just getting out and doing the things that you love and that bring you joy.

### **Identify signs and connect to support.**

To help yourself or to help others – from those closest to you to people you may not know as well – we hope you’ll attend one of our awareness training sessions. You’ll learn everything from recognizing symptoms to knowing where people can receive treatment that’s right for them. For more information and training schedules, please call McCall’s main office at **860.496.2100**.

## Mental Health Awareness is Not Equal to Health.

Our CEO was interviewed by Director of Public Affairs, John Voket, on his award-winning program “For the People.” They spoke about our partnership with Gabby Bernstein and her fundraising campaign for McCall as well as gray area drinking and the myth around needing to “hit” rock bottom before reaching out for help.

They then dove into society’s understanding of mental health and how awareness does not equal health. People are self-diagnosing in the mental health space. While research is important, you should always reach out to a trained professional for a diagnosis and treatment plan. To hear the full interview, click on the image to listen or listen wherever you enjoy your favorite podcasts.



TOPIC:  
MENTAL HEALTH  
AWARENESS MONTH

WEDNESDAY  
MAY 17  
8:20 AM

NEW INTERVIEW

DARIAN GRAELLS  
PREVENTION FACILITATOR

TUNE IN FOR A DISCUSSION ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS  
AND TIPS FOR ACHIEVING AND MAINTAINING MENTAL HEALTH

MCCALLBHN.ORG

A graphic for a podcast interview. It features a central circular portrait of Darian Graells. Above the portrait is a microphone icon and the text 'NEW INTERVIEW'. To the left and right are audio waveform icons. Text at the top left identifies the topic as 'MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH' and the top right as 'WEDNESDAY MAY 17 8:20 AM'. Below the portrait, her name and title are listed, followed by a short description of the interview content and the website 'MCCALLBHN.ORG'.

### WZBG Interview with Darian Graells.

Did you miss the interview? Don't worry, we've got you covered. Head over to our pressroom to listen to McCall's Prevention Facilitator Darian Graells speak about Mental Health Awareness Month.

Click on the image to listen to the full [FM 97.3 WZBG](#) interview.



**For more information about Mental Health First Aid or QPR Suicide Prevention training, please contact:**

Andrew Lyon, MPH, CPS  
Director of Prevention Services  
Phone: 860.496.2139 ext. 2115

**For more resources visit our website's "External Resources" page.**



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### **SPREAD THE WORD**

Our in-person, one-day hiring event is next week and we want you on our team!

Visit our website to register and learn more: [mccallbhn.org/hire](https://mccallbhn.org/hire)













# HIRING EVENT JUNE 8, 2023

**Help others heal. Help yourself grow.  
DON'T MISS OUR ONE-DAY HIRING EVENT**

## Join our team of caring professionals:

-  Thursday, June 8th, 2023
-  Stop by anytime between 9AM and 1PM
-  Main Campus, 58 High Street, Torrington  
(Please enter through the front door of the main building on High Street)

## Walk-in interviews for:

-  Sous Chef
-  Recovery Support Professional, Level I  
(must have a high school diploma)
-  Recovery Support Professional, Level II  
(must have an associate degree)
-  Certified Peer Support  
(associate degree and peer support certification)
-  Multiple licensed positions are also available: Licensed Practical Nurse – LPN, Licensed Clinician – LADC, LPC, LMFT, LCSW, and Clinician Program Director – LPC, LMFT, or LCSW.

**Learn more**



Questions? Contact Danielle Brundage, HR Manager at [danielle.brundage@mccallbhn.org](mailto:danielle.brundage@mccallbhn.org)

[mccallbhn.org/hire](https://mccallbhn.org/hire)



## ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

On March 24th, members of our staff joined hundreds of employees, clients, and supporters of nonprofit service providers at the state capitol to encourage legislature to increase funding for local nonprofits. Read more about the rally [here](#).

There is still time to contact your legislators and let them know you support the increase for nonprofit funding. The increase is critical to ensuring a sustainable future for our clients and our staff. [Click here](#)- it's easy and only takes a few minutes.



## CELEBRATE

May is Asian American and Pacific-Islander Heritage Month. They are one of the fastest growing population groups in the United States. Sadly, they have experienced discrimination like many communities of color in our country. Click the image to watch a video produced by the National Association of Social Workers and learn more and about



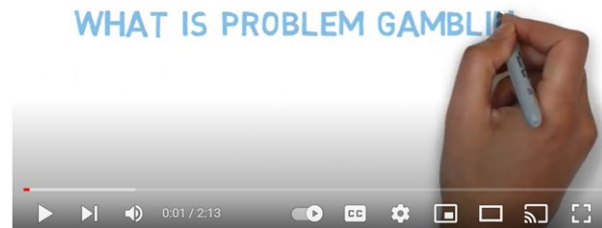
the impact Asian American and Pacific-Islander social workers have had on the communities they serve.

For more resources, [click here](#).

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## **PROBLEM GAMBLING DISORDER TREATMENT AT MCCALL**

Problem Gambling is defined by behavior that leads to adverse consequences for the individual, family, and/or society. For most, gambling is a fun diversion, however 3-4% of the population will fall into the category of problem gambling.



In Connecticut, the legal age to gamble is 21, however those who are 18 and older can participate in Fantasy Sports, lottery, and Keno. For our youth today, gambling behaviors can start even earlier due to playing games online, buying raffle tickets, and participating in fantasy sport team brackets with friends. How do you know if gambling is disrupting your life? Click on the image to watch a video and learn more.

Help is available. Our very own Carissa D'Amico is nationally certified to provide gambling treatment services.

For more information, contact:  
Carissa D'Amico, BS, ICGC-1  
203.754.0322 ext 1315  
[Carissa.d'amico@mccallbhn.org](mailto:Carissa.d'amico@mccallbhn.org)

For more resources, visit our [website](#).

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## THANK YOU NURSES

In May, we celebrated National Nurses Week and we'd like to recognize the crucial role nurses play in assessing, monitoring, and assisting in the treatment of people living with a substance use or mental health disorder. Nurses are present at all stages of someone's recovery journey, from the initial assessment through follow-up care.

Thank you to all nurses for your ongoing passion and dedication to your patients and for making recovery possible!

A poster for Juneteenth in Torrington. The top half features the word "Juneteenth" in a green script font and "TORRINGTON" in a red, blocky font. Below the text is a graphic of three raised fists in black and yellow, set against a background of horizontal stripes in yellow, red, and green. A circular logo with a rainbow border contains the text "OCIB OUR CULTURE IS BEAUTIFUL OCISBEAUTIFUL@GMAIL.COM 860-491-0387 OR 203-641-7449 P.O. BOX 811 TORRINGTON CT 06790". At the bottom, a white box with a rainbow border contains the event details: "11 AM - WALKING PARADE FROM COE MEMORIAL PARK TO CITY HALL", "12:30 TO 2PM- JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION WITH MUSIC, ART, DRUMMING, FASHION SHOW, LIGHT REFRESHMENTS AND JOHN BROWN PROJECT FILM.", and "(LOCATION: TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH ON PROSPECT STREET)". The date "MONDAY JUNE 19TH 2023" and "EVENT IS FREE" are also displayed.

**Juneteenth**  
**TORRINGTON**

**OCIB**  
**OUR CULTURE IS BEAUTIFUL**  
**OCISBEAUTIFUL@GMAIL.COM**  
**860-491-0387 OR 203-641-7449**  
**P.O. BOX 811 TORRINGTON CT**  
**06790**

**11 AM - WALKING PARADE**  
**FROM COE MEMORIAL**  
**PARK TO CITY HALL**

**12:30 TO 2PM- JUNETEENTH**  
**CELEBRATION WITH MUSIC, ART,**  
**DRUMMING, FASHION SHOW, LIGHT**  
**REFRESHMENTS AND JOHN BROWN**  
**PROJECT FILM.**  
**(LOCATION: TRINITY EPISCOPAL**  
**CHURCH ON PROSPECT STREET)**

**MONDAY JUNE 19TH**  
**2023**  
**EVENT IS FREE**



Come join us for a great cause and a great time! Help us raise awareness for children, adults and families living with Autism.

On course prizes including a chance to win a car!

TORRINGTON AREA FAMILIES FOR AUTISM PRESENTS THE SEVENTH ANNUAL

# TEE IT UP 4 AUTISM CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

## Saturday, August 12, 2023

FAIRVIEW FARM COUNTRY CLUB  
300 HILL ROAD HARWINTON, CT

**\$75**  
For Dinner Only

**\$175**  
Per Player

Includes 18 holes of Golf, Cart, Brunch and Dinner

Schedule of Events:  
**11:00 Registration**  
**Brunch Buffet**  
**12:00 Shotgun Start**  
**5:30 Dinner and Raffle**

### Interested in Becoming a Sponsor?

- Exclusive Presenting Sponsor: \$2,500
- Exclusive Marketing Sponsor: \$2,000
- Platinum Sponsor: \$1,750
- Gold Sponsor: \$1,000
- Silver Sponsor: \$500
- Closest To The Pin / Longest Drive: \$250
- Tee Sign: \$150



Scan the QR to register and/or donate visit TAFainc.org





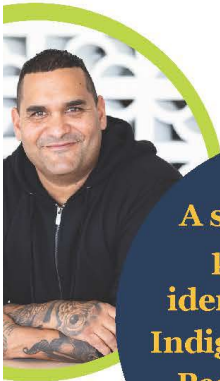
Say it  
**LOUD!**



**Every  
Sunday  
6:00 PM**

*Peer-to-peer, BIPOC and allies*

# RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUP



**A safe space for  
people who  
identify as Black,  
Indigenous, and/or  
People of Color.**

## 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)



860.496.2100

[mccallbhn.org](http://mccallbhn.org)





# LGBTQ+

## Peer-to-Peer Recovery Support Group

**EVERY SATURDAY @ 7PM**

All are welcome! The group is open to members of the LGBTQ+ community, anyone in recovery or who is curious about recovery, and allies.

**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)





**Calling all 55+  
adults in recovery  
and those seeking  
recovery!**



**Join our recovery  
support group luncheon.**

## **WISDOM GROUP**

### **When**

Every Thursday at 12:30 PM

### **Where**

McCall Wellness Center (Flagpole Building)  
58 High Street, Torrington 06790

**To register and/or arrange  
transportation call or text:**

**Glenn Ryan, CAC, CCDP**  
Director of Special Services  
860.485.8605

The event is free for all, and  
lunch will be provided.

Transportation is available for  
Torrington residents upon  
request.



### **Our Contact Information**

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



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