

Celebrating Diversity June 2023



Dear friends:

At the tail end of my morning run yesterday, I saw a momma bear and her cub about 150 yards away. Not a terribly unusual sight in CT these days, so I remained calm and did what any sensible person would do – pulled out my phone to take a photo. Momma didn't like that and let me know in no uncertain terms that I was not welcome anywhere near her cub. Her message was received, and I kept moving in the other direction.

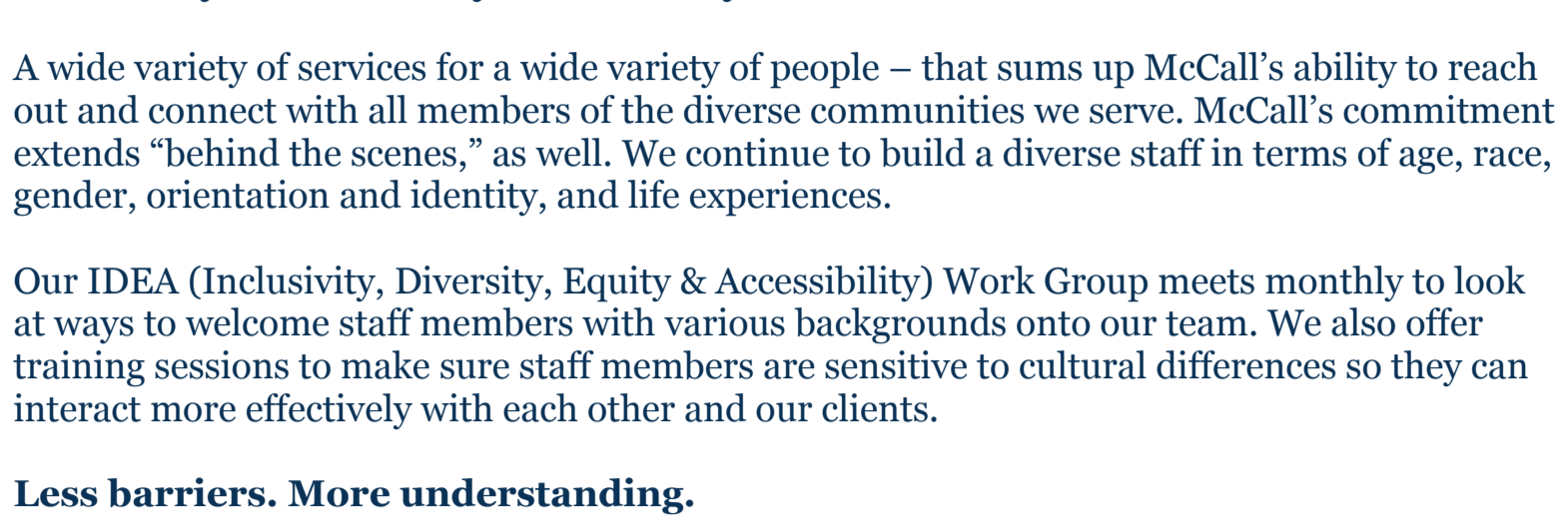
I understand and relate to the powerful instinct to protect our children; we are all too aware of the many perils that kids are facing today and our love for children and desire to keep them safe can supersede all else. Evolution hardwires us to regard people who don't look like us, love like us, or behave like us with caution and judgment. To look again with empathy requires a more evolved aspect of our humanity.

We've witnessed the tragic consequences of bullying, marginalization, and isolation; indeed, the statistics on the status of our children's mental health are alarming beyond words. However, protection is not putting children in bubbles and curating our chosen versions of a moral reality; in fact, that approach stymies resilience. America is a gloriously diverse place and children are paying attention to how the adults in their lives interpret that diversity. Young people are desperately longing for healthy connections built on the foundations of honest conversations about their world; what confuses them, what scares them, what brings them joy. It's how a full, healthy, and well-rounded identity is formed. For the record; exposure to queer people and discussions about slavery and racism is not traumatic for children. Please read that again. There is real trauma and then there is our interpretation of discomfort - and there are distinct differences. Our society is called to have sophisticated conversations to discover those distinctions. By not doing so, we miss opportunities to equip our children with skills of discernment, strength in times of adversity, compassion, and understanding. We risk it all. That thought brings out my most ferocious inner momma bear.

Today's world, our communities, and our children's very lives demand that we step up for one another in our most evolved form to communicate empathy and belonging.

With my appreciation for your efforts in building that community,

Maria Contant Skinner, LCSW
President & CEO



Diversity, Inclusivity, Harmony

A wide variety of services for a wide variety of people – that sums up McCall's ability to reach out and connect with all members of the diverse communities we serve. McCall's commitment extends "behind the scenes," as well. We continue to build a diverse staff in terms of age, race, gender, orientation and identity, and life experiences.

Our IDEA (Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility) Work Group meets monthly to look at ways to welcome staff members with various backgrounds onto our team. We also offer training sessions to make sure staff members are sensitive to cultural differences so they can interact more effectively with each other and our clients.

Less barriers. More understanding.

McCall understands the importance of breaking down barriers to care. "I think a lot of folks are looking for a welcoming and non-judgmental environment," McCall Case Manager Conrad Sienkiewicz points out, "so they can address their needs without having to worry about whether they're going to be accepted."

In the past, there's been a stigma attached to substance use and mental health disorders that can make a person feel alone. Struggling with issues of identity only exacerbates that feeling of isolation.

At McCall, we welcome and serve individuals – younger people and adults – from the LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC communities. We're continually working to eliminate harmful stigma and unnecessary barriers.

Waving a flag of unity.

"So often we look at the world through a binary lens," Mr. Sienkiewicz observes. "Things are either good or bad, high or low, Coke or Pepsi, cats or dogs. There's so much in between, such a variety of life and living." He sees life as more of a spectrum, full of possibilities, which is partly why he's so fond of the Pride Flag. "The Pride Flag, like the rainbow itself, is all colors, everyone is in there."

A final thought.

It's a complicated world and it always has been. There are many divisive voices clamoring to be heard. In the face of all this distracting noise, the McCall Network provides a safe space where you can feel comfortable and accepted. Or, to put it another way... welcome.

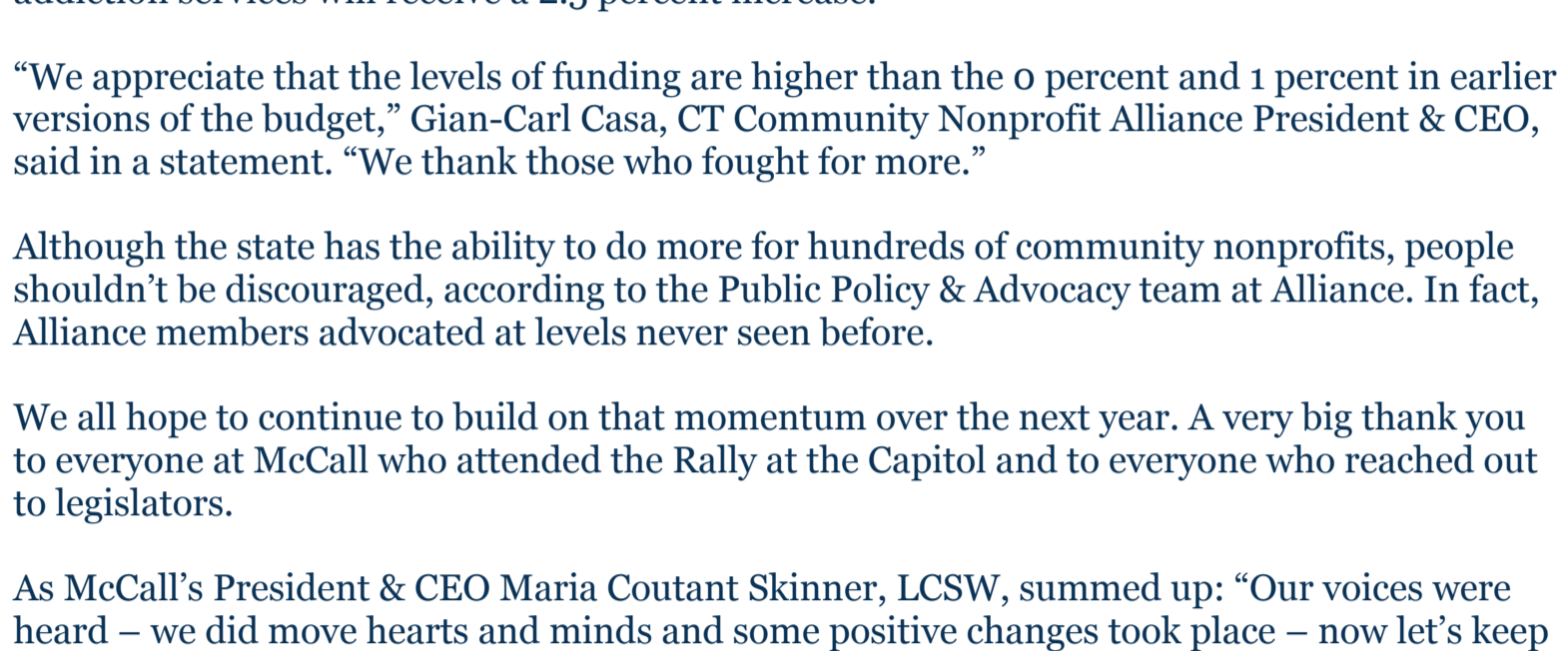
To learn about McCall's services and resources or to explore opportunities to join our team, please visit mccallbhn.org or call our main office at **860.496.2100**.

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

NEW INTERVIEW
CONRAD SIENKIEWICZ
CASE MANAGER AT HOTCHKISS HOUSE
TALKS TO US ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE WITH SUBSTANCE USE AND MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES.

WZBG Interview with Conrad Sienkiewicz

Did you miss the interview? Don't worry, we've got you covered. Head over to our pressroom to listen to Conrad Sienkiewicz, Case Manager at Hotchkiss House, about supporting diversity and individuals in the LGBTQ+ community. Click on the image to listen to the full FM 92.3 WZBG interview.



Legislature increases funding for nonprofits.

On June 6, the Connecticut State Legislature approved the final budget for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025 by near-unanimous margins. While a significant portion will be earmarked for services that help people with developmental disabilities, the providers of mental health and addiction services will receive a 2.5 percent increase.

"We appreciate that the levels of funding are higher than the 0 percent and 1 percent in earlier versions of the budget," Gian-Carl Casa, CT Community Nonprofit Alliance President & CEO, said in a statement. "We thank those who fought for more."

Although the state has the ability to do more for hundreds of community nonprofits, people shouldn't be discouraged, according to the Public Policy & Advocacy team at Alliance. In fact, Alliance members advocated at levels never seen before.

We all hope to continue to build on that momentum over the next year. A very big thank you to everyone at McCall who attended the Rally at the Capitol and to everyone who reached out to legislators.

As McCall's President & CEO Maria Contant Skinner, LCSW, summed up: "Our voices were heard – we did move hearts and minds and some positive changes took place – now let's keep making good noise!"



OUT & ABOUT with McCall

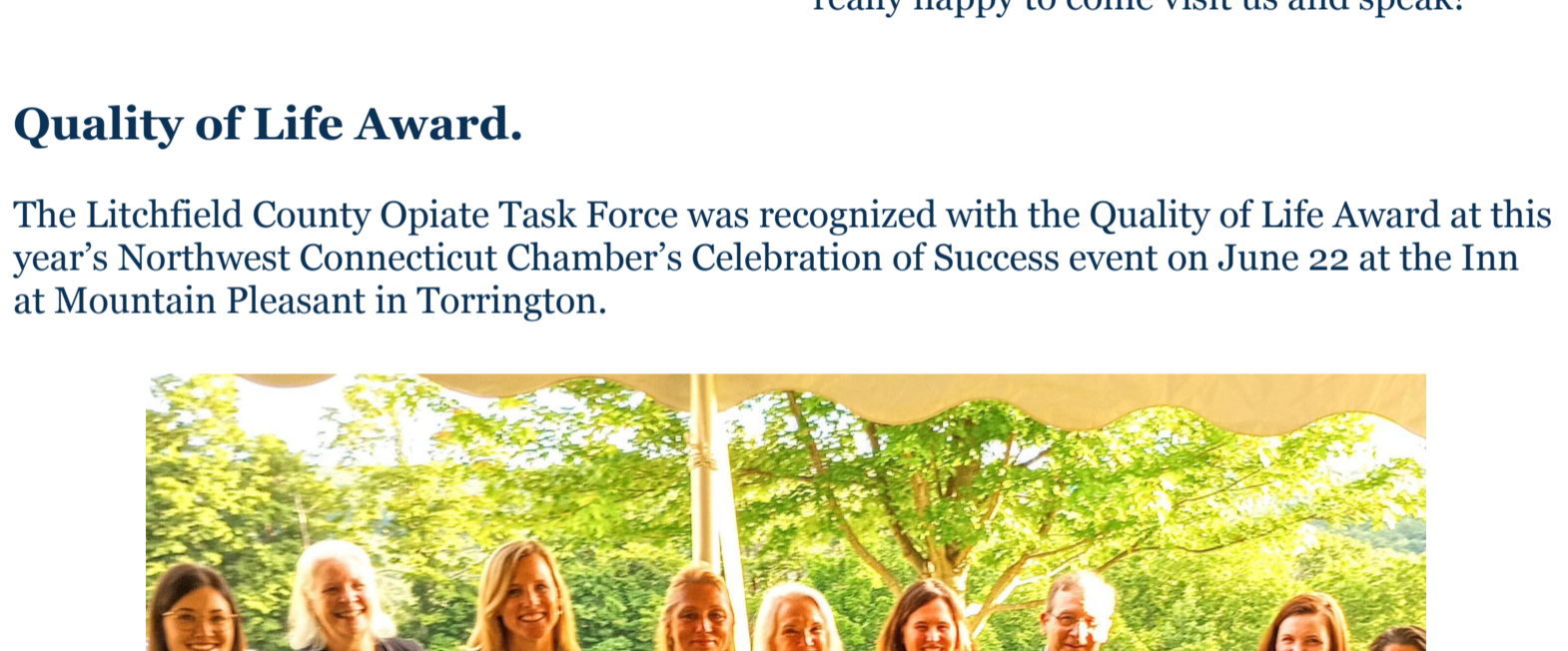
Celebrating Juneteenth.

Sharon Eisenberger, BS, RSS, Family REACH Navigator, Kyle Fitzmaurice, CRC, Community Engagement Specialist, and Marisa Mittelstaedt, MBA, Director of Development and Marketing, attended the Juneteenth event at Trinity Church in Torrington. The event was sponsored by Our Culture is Beautiful.

Juneteenth is a celebration of freedom and is recognized on June 19th. That's the date in 1866 when enslaved people in Texas were free by executive decree. First celebrated on 1866 in Texas, commemorations later spread around the US.

This year's event at Trinity Church included drumming, poetry, the singing of the Black National Anthem, and even a fashion show. The event's MC was McCall's own Conrad Sienkiewicz, Case Manager at Hotchkiss House.

In the words of Opal Leigh, who spent years campaigning to make Juneteenth a federal holiday: "The fact is none of us are free till we're all free."



Daryl McGraw Visits IOP Clients.

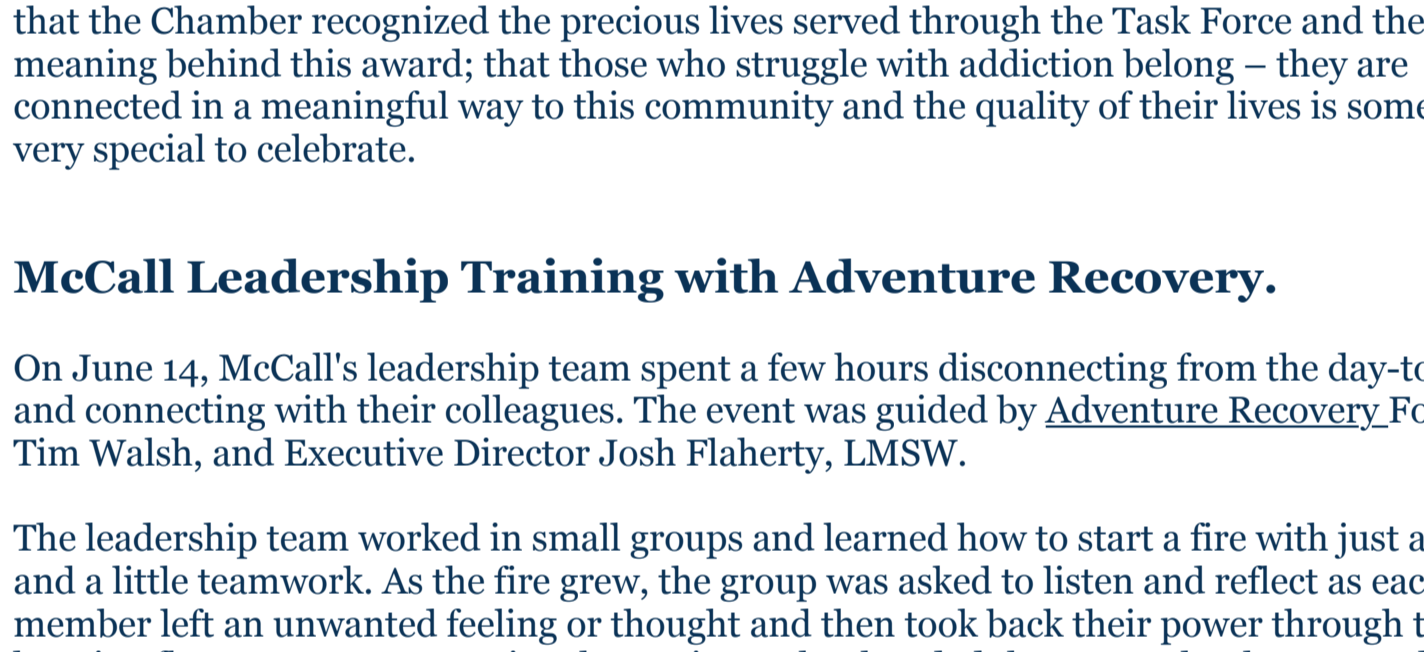


Daryl McGraw, MS, CAC, CCIIP, Director of Diversity Equity and Inclusion, State of CT Division of Public Defender Services, met with McCall staff and clients in our Intensive Outpatient Program on Wednesday, June 14.

As Jennifer Surlam, LMSW, Clinician, noted, "we had an amazing group! There are a lot of takeaways and new perspectives." Everyone in attendance agreed that Daryl can be successful in a career and recovery, they can too. They all spoke about how his story gave them a new level of hope – and many of our clients saw a part of themselves in Daryl. "I've been in touch with Daryl since Wednesday," Surlam said, "and he was really happy to come visit us and speak!"

Quality of Life Award.

The Litchfield County Opiate Task Force was recognized with the Quality of Life Award at this year's Northwest Connecticut Chamber's Celebration of Success event on June 22 at the Inn at Mountain Pleasant in Torrington.



The Litchfield County Opiate Task Force received this distinguished honor for their nearly ten years of service to those living with addiction. The Task Force is more than 100 members strong, representing more than 60 organizations that work collaboratively to reduce the harm done by the addiction epidemic. During the Celebration, the Task Force was graciously introduced by State Representative Michelle Cook and Maria Horn.

Our CEO quoted Marianne Williamson in her remarks as she accepted the award on behalf of the group. "In every community, there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart, there is the power to do it." Marisa recognized the late D'Arny Lowfere, former McCall board chair, who in 2013 suggested that a meeting be held to address the sharp uptick in overdose deaths. D'Arny's daughter Jodi had died of an overdose years earlier, so her heart knew all too well the sharp pain of that devastating loss and desperately wanted to spare others that heartache. Concurrently, conversations were happening at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital between then Director of Adult Behavioral Health, Joy Pendola and Tom Narducci, Administrative Director of Behavioral Health, about the fact that a full public health response would most certainly be mobilized if this number of people were dying from any other disease.

With that, the Task Force was established and much work has been done to create a community that conveys to people that they are seen, valued, and loved with no conditions attached. The group's continued dedication to preventing and reducing harm from opioid use disorder has been a true triumph despite all odds, but there are still many miles to be traveled to get to any sort of acceptable solution to the overdose epidemic. They are deeply grateful that the Chamber recognized the precious lives served through the Task Force and the meaning behind this award: that those who struggle with addiction belong – they are connected in a meaningful way to this community and the quality of their lives is something very special to celebrate.

McCall Leadership Training with Adventure Recovery.

On June 14, McCall's leadership team spent a few hours disconnecting from the day-to-day and connecting with their colleagues. The event was guided by Adventure Recovery, Founder Tim Walsh, and Executive Director Josh Flaherty, LMSW.

The leadership team worked in small groups and learned how to start a fire with just a spark and a little teamwork. As the fire grew, the group was asked to listen and reflect as each member left an unwanted feeling or thought and then took back their power through the burning flame. It was an emotional experience that bonded the team. Thank you to Adventure Recovery for an event we won't forget!



Say it LOUD!
Every Sunday 6:00 PM
Peer-to-peer, BIPOC and allies
RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUP
LOCATION: McCall Wellness Center (Flagpole Building) 58 High St, Torrington, CT 06790
QUESTIONS? CONTACT: Michele Smedick Recovery Support Professional II michele.smedick@mccallbhn.org
860.496.2100 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 identifies as 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
A network that heals. A community who cares. mccallbhn.org

ARE YOU BACK TO WORK?
McCall's Supported Employment Specialists help individuals diagnosed with a mental health disorder obtain and maintain employment.
About Our Program: We recognize that people have different needs and employment goals. Working alongside you, your Employment Specialist will provide you with the support you need for a healthier and happier future.
We'll Help You: Identify career opportunities, Connect with local employers, Write your resume, Sharpen your interview skills, Receive follow-up support.
For more information, contact: Kelly Scherker, BA Supported Employment Program Manager 860.496.2100 kelly.scherker@mccallbhn.org
Scan the QR code to learn more about McCall's Mental Health Services.

TEE IT UP 4 AUTISM CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT
Saturday, August 12, 2023
FAIRVIEW FARM COUNTRY CLUB
300 HILL ROAD HARWINTON, CT
Includes 18 holes of Golf, Cart, Brunch and Dinner
Interested in Becoming a Sponsor?
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- Platinum Sponsor: \$,750
- Gold Sponsor: \$1,000
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- Closest To The Pin
- Longest Drive: \$250
- Tee Sign: \$150
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