



## The Gifts of Recovery. September 2023

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Dear friends:

The gifts of recovery are beautiful, abundant, tangible intangible, direct, and indirect. There are the observable first-person changes that you'll read about in the coming pages. These stories of resilience and triumph give me goosebumps every time I consider the strength and courage it takes to get to that place and the generosity - sharing a personal story with others to help and heal. These stories benefit the broader community – starting with families desperate for understanding and hope.

I am passionate about my work for many reasons. I have felt the effects of having loved ones who lived with addiction. I was witness to their pain, their multiple attempts at resolving that pain and in some cases, the incredible transformation of sustained recovery. Over time, I observed others' reactions to those journeys and could readily see how that pain is amplified when it is met with shame and isolation. I also observed how the pain is abated when met with compassion. An important note - compassion is not the absence of accountability.

I know the intense highs and lows that those of us deeply connected with someone struggling with addiction experience. The fear, questioning, anger, worry – and the cautious hope associated with someone starting down the path to wellness – all the while bracing for a return to use. Being a family member in recovery means that there are loving boundaries we must put in place. Another important note here; boundaries are distinct from conditions. Love is not conditional. Compassion and care are not conditional. Boundaries are clear sets of expectations about where responsibility over anyone else's choices belongs. We have a responsibility to ourselves to communicate our boundaries kindly and respectfully as we journey to health and wholeness. We can be whole and healthy even if those we love are still in active addiction. It took me time and an ongoing practice that includes the serenity prayer to sustain and maintain this inner resolve, this freedom and peace.

When anyone recovers, the ripple effects are infinite. People in recovery bring a valued perspective, a deep appreciation for life and the connections that sustain us. I will share that when you do find recovery and discover the fullness of your life – it is a gift to all those around you. An ability to fully exhale....to rejoice in the promise of a fully realized version of your authentic self. It's possible when we create communities that allow for such a journey and meet struggles with compassion (and healthy boundaries). What a glorious thing to celebrate!

All my best to you always,

Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW  
President & CEO



## **September is National Recovery Month. It's also Hispanic Heritage Month. How do they intersect?**

“There are a lot of barriers to accessing services in general,” notes McCall Clinician Ana Aldana-Urquijo, LMSW, in regard to underserved communities, “but we see that there are more barriers for the Hispanic population. One of the reasons is language, yet there are other things in the mix – like folks who are undocumented and don’t have health insurance.”

Ana points out that fortunately McCall has payment plans and options to help all people access the services they need.

Ana acknowledges there's also a cultural stigma in the Hispanic community surrounding mental health and substance use disorders. During the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, it's a good time to break through stereotypes and make sure people are getting the care they need.

### **The language of healing.**

Sometimes when people come to McCall, they know something is wrong, but they don't know how to address it. That's when removing the language barrier becomes more important than ever.

“I’ve had clients who are primarily Spanish speaking who’ve had services only in English. They’re very happy to have these services in Spanish,” Ana has observed. “I think that helps build a rapport more quickly. They know that not only do I understand them linguistically, I understand them culturally as well.”

Ana’s message to the Hispanic community is one that we can all benefit from: “It is a strength to ask for help. It’s a strength to be vulnerable and do the healing work of recovery.”

### **We’ve expanded our capabilities.**

McCall is excited to now offer Spanish-speaking services at our Renato Outpatient Services location in Waterbury. We’re breaking down language barriers even further by providing services in Spanish and Portuguese at our Travisano Outpatient Services location in Danbury.

Here’s an overview of our bilingual capabilities and staff members who will be assisting:

- CLEAR Outreach – Noel Deleon
- Family Services (PSS) – George Reyes Gavilan
- Prevention MHAT and QPR training – Kevin Iglesias, MPH
- Senior Outreach – Jose Colon de la Rosa
- Renato Outpatient Services– Ana Aldana-Urquijo, LMSW
- Travisano Outpatient Services– Brittney Farinha, LCSW

For more information about McCall resources that are now bilingual, please call our main office at 860.496.2100. Individuals who speak Spanish or Portuguese will be connected to Judy Leon, who works at our Renato location, Monday through Friday, from 10:00 a.m. till 6:00 p.m. Judy will direct you to the staff member who can best help with next steps.

**For more resources visit our website's '[External Resources](#)' page.**



### **Learn more on WZBG.**

Did you miss the interview? Don't worry, we've got you covered! Visit our pressroom to hear from McCall’s Ana Aldana-Urquijo, LMSW, discuss the connection between National Recovery Month and Hispanic Heritage Month.

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



## **Working hard to prevent suicides.**

The statistics are alarming. According to a statement from Governor Lamont, an average of one Connecticut resident per every 22 hours dies as a result of suicide. It has become the 2nd leading cause of death for individuals between the ages of 10 and 34.

Officially designated as National Suicide Prevention Month, September is a time when mental health organizations and individuals across the U.S. and around the world raise awareness of suicide prevention.

It's also a time to remember those affected by suicide, and to focus efforts on providing treatment to individuals who need it most.

The goal is to change the conversation from *suicide* to *suicide prevention*. It's important to learn how to recognize warning signs of at-risk individuals and to know how to initiate discussions that can steer people to resources that can help.

A particularly valuable resource is the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#).

For more resources visit our website's '[External Resources](#)' page or call us at 860.496.2100.

*In the case of a true medical or mental health emergency, please call 911 or the mobile crisis team at 860.482.1560.*

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## **An inspirational story we are proud to share.**

*Our thanks go out to McCall Harm Reduction Coordinator Cameron Breen, RCP, for contributing the following article:*

On September 18, 2023, I was invited by the national Police Assisted Addiction Recovery Initiative (PAARI) to fly to Washington DC to present two Leadership Awards to members of government for their strides to address the opioid epidemic.

I am an active member of PAARI's Lived Experience Council. PAARI implemented two different councils, one in Public Safety and the other for those with Lived Experience, in order to best understand the needs of the communities they work with and serve.



Due to my membership in the Lived Experience Council and my work in the field, I was asked to attend these meetings with the members of congress. The awards were announced on May 30, 2023, for the following three categories: Leadership in Advocacy and Community, Leadership in Government, and Leadership in Public Safety.

Two of the congresspeople were unable to attend PAARI's 8th Anniversary Celebration and Awards Ceremony, which was held on Tuesday, June 6, 2023, in the Foundation Room at the Boston House of Blues. As a result, PAARI arranged meetings with these members of congress to present them with the awards at their offices in Washington DC.

Congressperson Seth Moulton of Massachusetts's 6th congressional district and Congressperson Paul Tonko of New York's 20th congressional district met with Stephen Jesi (a member of the Board of Directors at PAARI), myself, and Max Joseph (PAARI Recovery Corps Member/Social Media Coordinator). We met with Congressperson Tonko at the Rayburn Building at 3:30 p.m. and Congressperson Moulton at 5:30 p.m. at the Longworth Building on September 18.

It was an immense honor to represent PAARI and their Lived Experience Council to present these awards. It was also a time of personal reflection as I thought of the growth that has taken place during my recovery.

When pulling into Bradley Airport, I realized the last time I was there I was working "outside clearance" while incarcerated at Cybulski Correctional Institution. Fast-forward a few years and I'm flying out to Washington DC to meet a congressperson with a national agency that works on advocating for deflection pathways for individuals experiencing substance use disorders.

During years of active addiction, I never would have imagined that something like this was remotely possible. The obstacles and the path forward had seemed insurmountable.

Moments like this show that people in recovery do have a voice, and regardless of where you are on your path, there should always be hope. Recovery is about any positive change and the pathway forward and should always be viewed as such.



## We've got some exciting news to share!

We've been named a Top Workplace in Connecticut for the SIXTH consecutive year. It's a particularly significant achievement since this award is based entirely on staff feedback from a survey we administered a few months back.

The award is even more meaningful...

We've been officially designated as a certified Recovery Friendly Workplace (which is an honor in itself). Below you will find a wonderful video about this great initiative, featuring our fellow staff members.



*Celebrating six consecutive years as a Top Workplace in Connecticut!*

**TOP  
WORK  
PLACES**  
2018-2023

*McCall is now a certified Recovery Friendly Workplace!*





## **INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY VIGIL.**

On August 31 – International Overdose Awareness Day – many of us gathered at Coe Memorial Park in Torrington to attend a vigil commemorating loved ones lost to overdose.

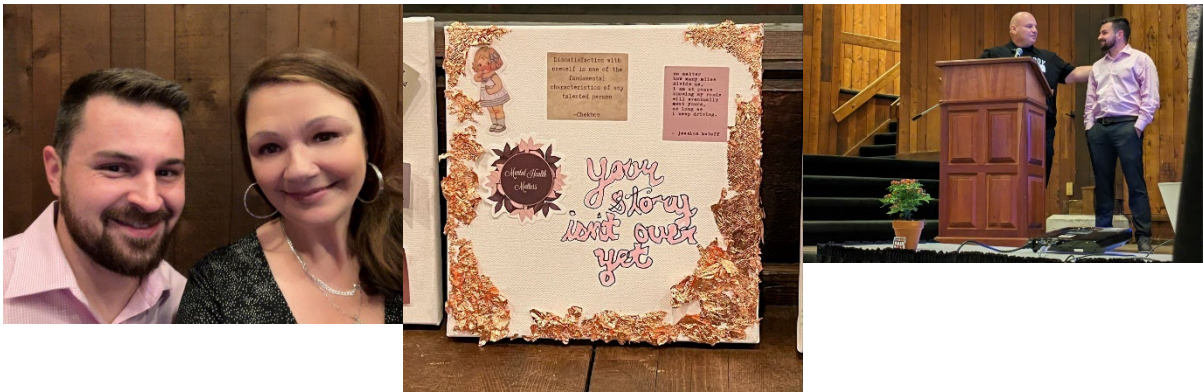






## **A MOSAIC OF RECOVERY: CELEBRATING INCLUSIVITY.**

On September 28, the Western CT Coalition held an event in Southbury that embraced connectiON. Amy Grinnell, Women's REACH Navigator, and Cameron Breen, RCP, attended the event, which celebrated fellowship in recovery. Cameron was even one of the featured speakers.





*Find your path to recovery!*



## OUTPATIENT SERVICES



Outpatient Treatment Groups



Medication-assisted Treatment



Mental Health Services



Holistic Therapies



*Now offering services in Spanish and Portuguese!*

*mccallbhn.org | 860.496.2100*



### Our Contact Information

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