



## Gratitude, Community, Empathy. November 2023

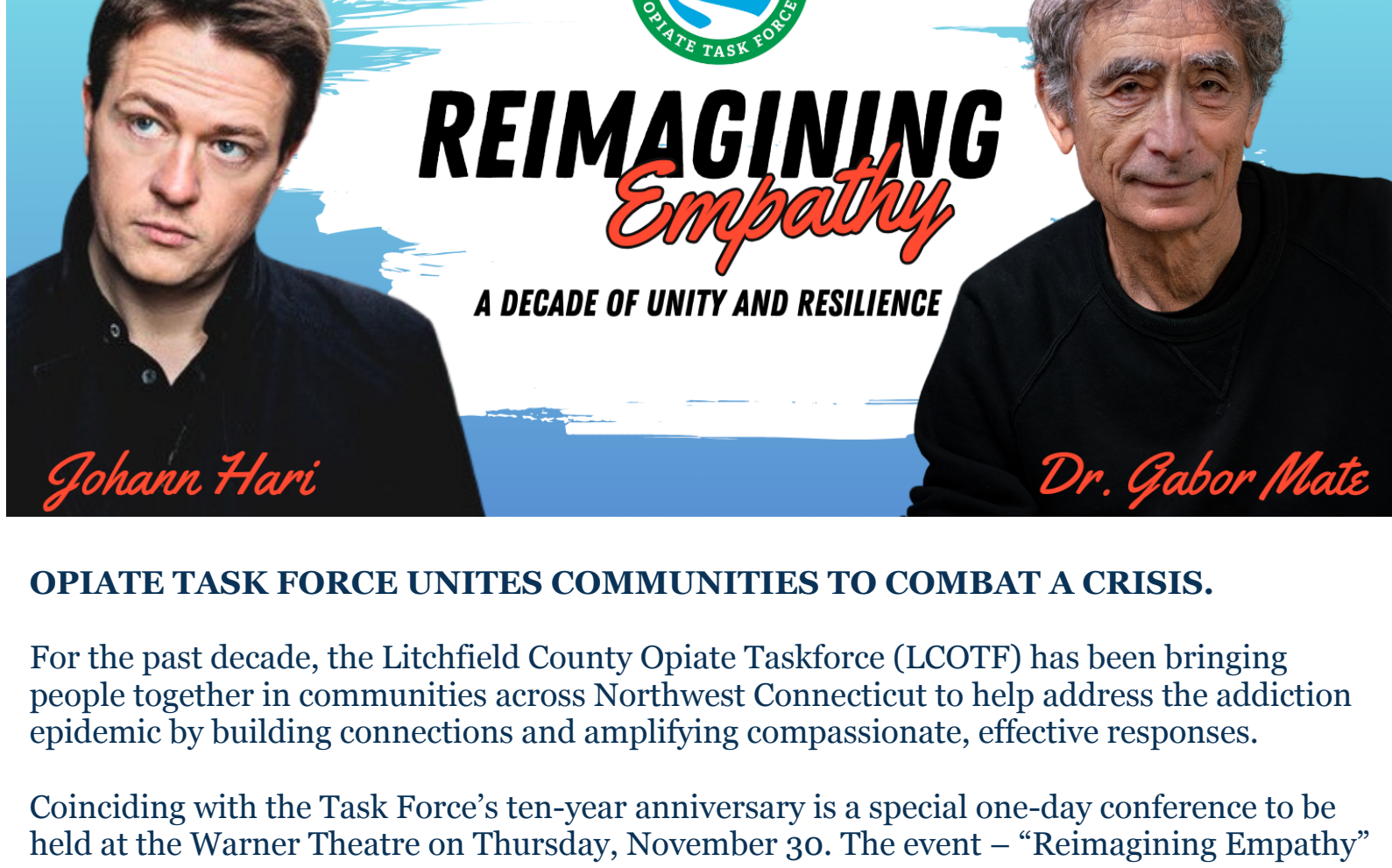


Dear friends:

This month I'd like to dedicate this space to sharing three quick points.

- Gratitude. 'Tis the season to count our blessings and let me tell you, they are abundant here at McCall. Our staff, those we serve, the board, volunteers, and community members who show up to support the mission and vision of this special place – I am extremely grateful for all of you.
- Community. To celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the Litchfield County Opiate Task Force, we put together a documentary that examines what makes this group of folks continue to care so deeply for others amidst extraordinary challenges and even heartbreak. It's been an extraordinary journey to witness, and the short film is a gorgeous testimony to what empathy in action can accomplish. The film will debut at the conference on 11/30.
- Empathy. Last month I wrote about this necessary trait. I'm excited beyond words for Thursday's conference where we will explore how to access and expand our capacity to connect with our own humanity and one another. Tickets will be available at the door on the day of the event. I do hope you'll join us.

With a heart full of gratitude,  
 Maria Coutant Skinner  
 President & CEO



### OPIATE TASK FORCE UNITES COMMUNITIES TO COMBAT A CRISIS.

For the past decade, the Litchfield County Opiate Taskforce (LCOTF) has been bringing people together in communities across Northwest Connecticut to help address the addiction epidemic by building connections and amplifying compassionate, effective responses.

Coinciding with the Task Force's ten-year anniversary is a special one-day conference to be held at the Warner Theatre on Thursday, November 30. The event – "Reimagining Empathy" – is not only for health care professionals but for all concerned members of the community.

According to Lauren Pristo, Director of Community Engagement for the LCOTF, the conference will be a discussion about using empathy as a way to move forward from struggles people are currently facing in everyday life. It goes beyond the opioid crisis. The headlines are filled with stories about war, as well as political and social unrest.

"Right now, we're in a world marked by crises and struggles," Lauren notes. "How do we come together as a community and bring back empathy and move through this?"

#### One day. A one-of-a-kind event.

World-renowned speakers will be in attendance during the conference. Johann Hari, a *New York Times* best-selling author, will deliver the keynote speech in the morning and sign books at the event. Dr. Gabor Mate, well known for his work in trauma and healing, will join virtually for an afternoon presentation.

Lauren extends an invitation to all individuals in the Litchfield County area to attend. It's easy to register at [lcof.org/conference](http://lcof.org/conference). Tickets are \$60 per person. You can purchase them in advance or buy them at the Warner Theatre on the day of the event.

If cost is a barrier, special discounted and even complimentary scholarship tickets are available. Reach out to [lauren.pristo@mccallbh.org](mailto:lauren.pristo@mccallbh.org) to see if you qualify.

#### The empathy factor.

Though the opioid epidemic continues, Tom Narducci, Co-chair of the LCOTF, is encouraged that more people are getting the care they need, through medical-assisted treatment and access to residential treatment facilities, to name two examples.

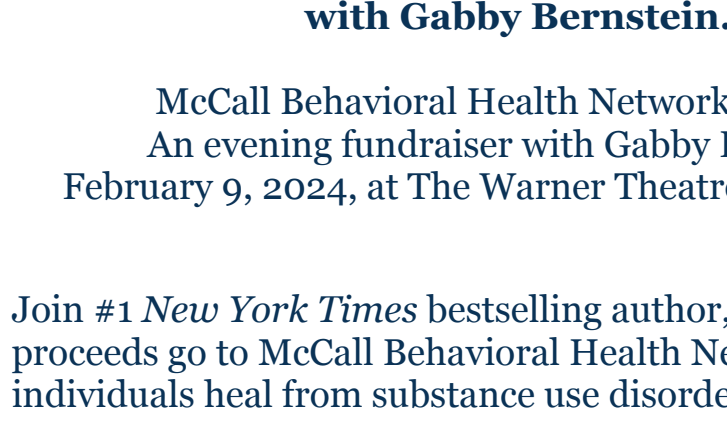
"We now know that for most folks that struggle with substance use, they're suffering from pain or some type of trauma, maybe anxiety or depression," Tom explains. "Substance use was a temporary masking of that pain. We know that if we want to engage someone in recovery, we need to reach out and see them as human beings, suffering deep inside." And that's where empathy and compassion come in.

#### Coming together as a community.

The LCOTF hopes people from across the Litchfield County community will attend and support the "Reimagining Empathy" conference. Attendees will better understand how they can reach out to their friends and neighbors with compassion, which is the first step to getting individuals on the road to recovery.

"It's the prime time to come together and think about where we're going as a community," Lauren adds. "This work has been going on for some time in the northwest corner of Connecticut and Litchfield County leads the charge."

Please, set aside the day to attend, to learn, to become involved, and to make our community the best it can be.

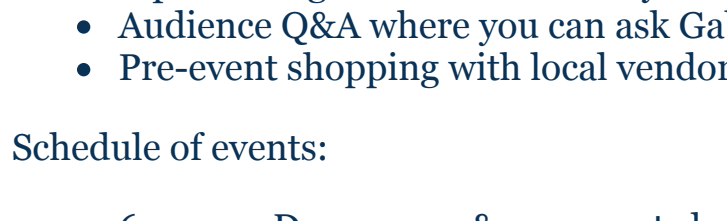


**Learn more on WZBG.**

Don't worry, we've got you covered! Visit our pressroom to hear Tom Narducci, Co-chair of the LCOTF, and Lauren Pristo, Director of Community Engagement for the LCOTF, set the stage for the November 30 "Reimagining Empathy" one-day conference.

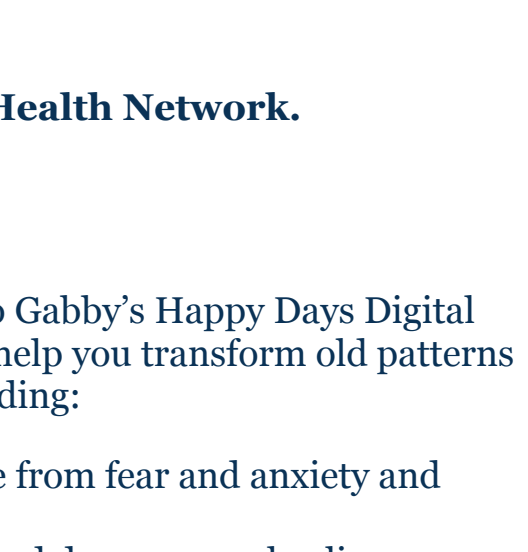
Click on the image to listen to the full FM 97.3 WZBG interview.

LCOTF CONFERENCE "REIMAGINING EMPATHY: A DECADE OF UNITY AND RESILIENCE" WITH LAUREN PRISTO, RPH AND TOM NARDUCCI, LSW



**TICKETS ON SALE MONDAY**  
 We do expect this event to sell out quickly.  
 Be sure to check your inbox in coming days for more info.

**"Accessing Inner Peace and Resilience" with Gabby Bernstein.**



McCall Behavioral Health Network Presents  
 An evening fundraiser with Gabby Bernstein,  
 February 9, 2024, at The Warner Theatre in Torrington

Join #1 *New York Times* bestselling author, Gabby Bernstein, for this intimate live talk. All proceeds go to McCall Behavioral Health Network to support our vital work in helping individuals heal from substance use disorders, mental health disorders, or both.

Here's what you can expect:

- An inspirational talk to help you access inner peace and resilience
- Transformational techniques for serenity and genuine happiness
- A powerful guided meditation—you'll walk away with a sense of calm and serenity
- Audience Q&A where you can ask Gabby anything
- Pre-event shopping with local vendors

#### Schedule of events:

- 6 p.m. — Doors open & pre-event shopping at local vendor tables
- 7 p.m. — Talk & Q&A
- 8:30 p.m. — End

**Ticket Info**  
 All proceeds will go to **McCall Behavioral Health Network.**

- Regular admission — \$69
- VIP Admission + Happy Days Digital Course — \$129

The VIP ticket includes preferred seating and lifetime access to Gabby's Happy Days Digital Course and Guided Practices Album — A spiritual program to help you transform old patterns so you can experience genuine inner peace (\$540 value). Including:

- 4+ hours of video training, with lessons on breaking free from fear and anxiety and uncovering a deep sense of inner peace
- Guided meditations to help settle your nervous system and deepen your healing practice
- PDF worksheets to help you tap into your inner world and dissolve boundaries to freedom and peace
- Detailed instruction on powerful techniques to break free from anxiety, including Somatic Experiencing, EFT/ tapping, and more

**Please note your email address will be shared with Dear Gabby, Inc. in order to fulfill delivery of the digital course — Access details will be sent via email within 7 working days or your purchase.**

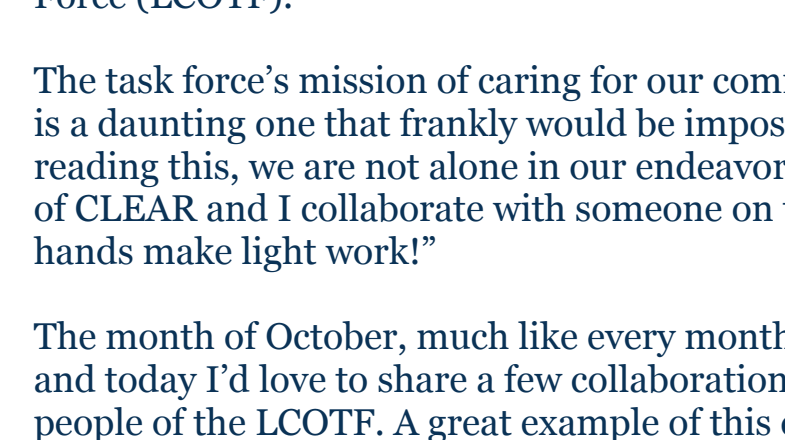


**GIVING THANKS TO SUPPORTERS FOR GIVING TUESDAY CONTRIBUTIONS**

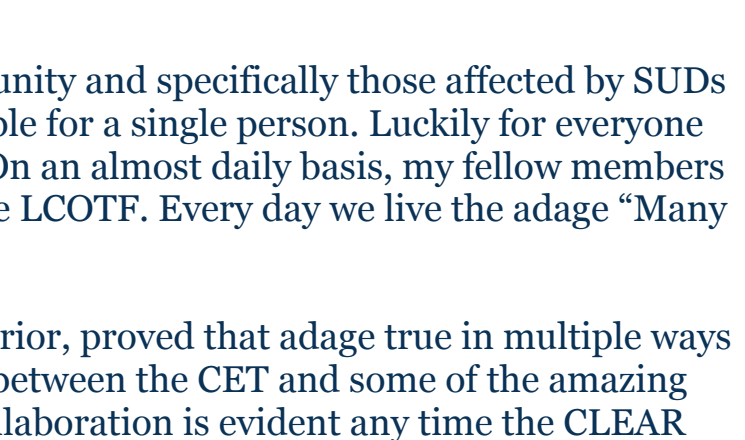
We'd like to thank supporters who shared the campaign and/or made generous donations to McCall's 2023 Annual Appeal on Giving Tuesday (November 28), a global movement that unleashes the power of generosity. We raised \$3,151 and we couldn't have done it without you!

If you missed Giving Tuesday, there is still time to donate! Our Annual Appeal runs through December 31st. Click the link below to give today.

**DONATE HERE**



**TEAMWORK IS EVERYTHING FOR CLEAR AND LCOTF**



**Guest contributor, Noel DeLeon, Community Engagement Specialist, gives us an update from the CLEAR and the LCOTF. (Picture on the left.)**

This October, while at home decorating for Halloween with my family, the topic for this article leapt its way into my consciousness.

It happened while my wife, my son, and I struggled together to set up a 13-foot Jack Skellington. When we finally got the massive animatronic figure set up, I was struck by how easily we had managed the task by sharing the duty. The literally gigantic task was made smaller and simpler due to the three of us working together.

All the efforts made by the CLEAR team and members of the Litchfield County Opiate Task Force (LCOTF).

The task force's mission of caring for our community and specifically those affected by SUDs is a daunting one that frankly would be impossible for a single person. Luckily for everyone reading this, we are not alone in our endeavor. On an almost daily basis, my fellow members of CLEAR and I collaborate with someone on the LCOTF. Every day we live the adage "Many hands make light work."

The month of October, much like every month prior, proved that adage true in multiple ways and today I'd love to share a few collaborations between the CET and some of the amazing people of the LCOTF. A great example of this collaboration is evident any time the CLEAR team connects with The Gathering Place to locate individuals experiencing homelessness who have recently dealt with an overdose or who may benefit from our support.

Linkups with the folks from CHH are another regular occurrence as we work to ensure continuation of care or to locate clients who may be hospitalized.

Our partners at Greenwood are in regular contact with our team as well - whether it's sharing docs to ensure outreach efforts aren't duplicated, making calls to assure supplies reach clients when one of us has a day off or a meeting/event to attend, or coordinating schedules to make sure our cross-agency rovers are stocked. In these ways and more, we work hand-in-hand with them to serve our folks.

Likewise, team-ups happen regularly with the DHMAS mobile crisis team and the CET - either going together to meet an at-risk individual with co-occurring struggles, sending and receiving referrals, and/or taking walks in the woods to locate and support individuals that reside within.

The fine people of APEX are another amazing resource that we utilize when a client needs an HIV, HEP C, or STI test. We also direct anyone who needs Harm Reduction supplies and can't make it to a rover to visit the APEX location in Torrington.

What's more, our team regularly receives support from the great folks at The Torrington Area Health District. They supply us with Narcan, facilitate our usage of ODMAPS, open the doors of their meeting room for the Harm Reduction subcommittee, and much more.

I would also be remiss if I didn't mention how members of my own team carried each other throughout our efforts in October. At a time when it seems like we are seeing more suicidal ideation than ever, the CET worked together to get emergency services to a client dealing with suicidal ideation. One member kept and supported the client on the phone while testing another team member to connect with emergency services. The client was safely taken to CHH.

Later, at the beginning of November, two members of our team also split the workload during an overdose at the soup kitchen. One member helped revive an individual, alongside kitchen staff and community members, while the other called emergency services, did crowd control, and consoled the friends of the overdose victim. Yet again, thanks to the magic of teamwork, the individual made it safely to CHH.

Throughout all these incredibly difficult and emotionally taxing actions, there is one common aspect. We make it happen together! Regardless of how monumental it can all seem, I am constantly reassured by the knowledge that some of the most compassionate people to walk this earth are my colleagues. With all of us working side-by-side, the mission of this task force goes from an impossibility to a foregone conclusion. The empathy, love, and dedication everyone brings to the table ensures that everything that can be done will be done for our community.

I'd like to wrap up by explaining how my recent thoughts on "perspective" followed me into October.

It was in a meeting with my team, recapping the lessons learned from the PTACC conference, that my ruminations on perspective returned. We were discussing our takeaways from the action planning session that covered all the work done and work yet to be implemented. Unanimously, we were blown away by the efforts made by the CLEAR team and the LCOTF in the past year. All of us but one - our notetaker.

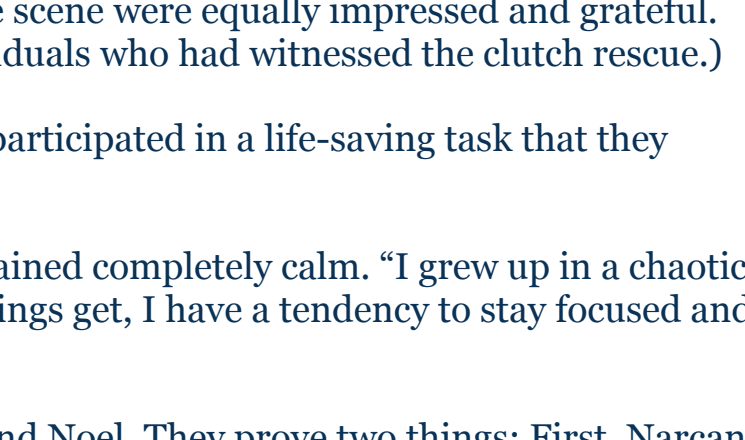
Our notetaker for those sessions was Kyle Fitzmaurice. Kyle shared that, unlike us, he was struck by another thought. He had stood up in front of the group to take notes and his takeaway had been shaped by that particular perspective.

Kyle shared that, from his point of view, he was completely taken aback, humbled, and honored to be sharing a room and sitting at the faces that would be the future of the community care efforts here in Connecticut.

I have to say, I understand how he felt - because I'm working with folks who aspire to make the future of our communities a brighter one!

**CLEAR TO THE RESCUE.**

A little over three months after the McCall Prevention Services Department administered Narcan to save a life, members of the CLEAR team were called upon to perform similar heroics.



McCall Community Engagement Specialists Alicia Peterson, RSW, and Noel DeLeon were in the middle of a routine workday, providing harm reduction services to people in need. It was about ten minutes past noon on Tuesday, November 7. They were at the Torrington Community Urgent Kitchen.

Suddenly Alicia heard an urgent cry of "help!" and ran to the person in distress, a young man in his 30s. His entire face was turning blue. Alicia instantly thought "overdose," having been through a similar experience with a member of her family.

Alicia called 911 and urged onlookers to step back. Meanwhile, Noel calmly administered naloxone - not once but three times!

After three doses of naloxone plus CPR, the person started to open his eyes, his chest began rising and falling. And that's when EMT arrived.

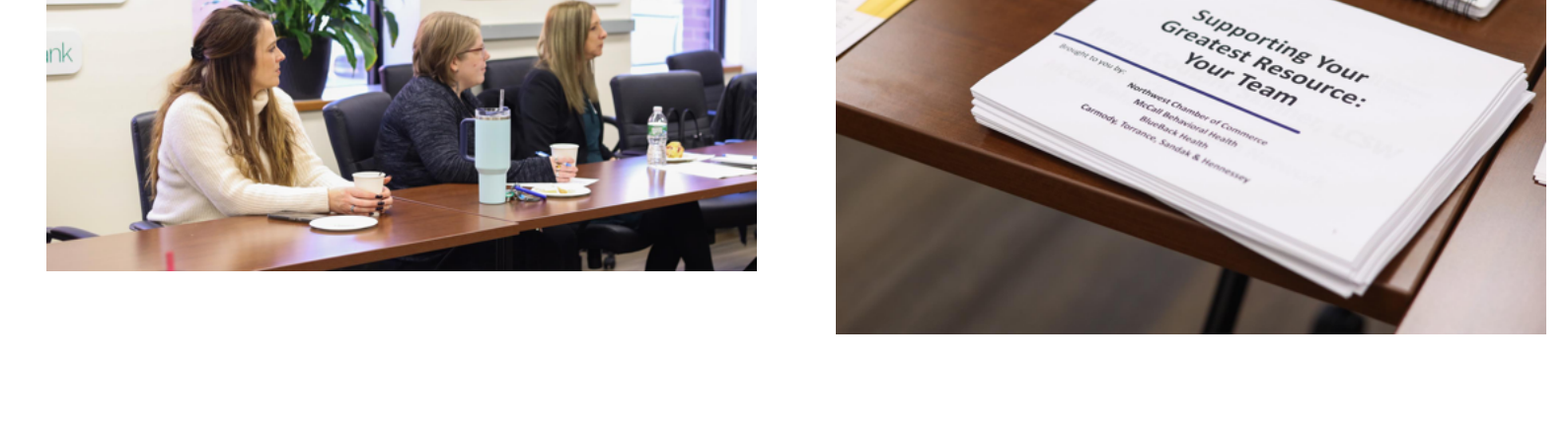
The person was rushed to the hospital and was reportedly up and about in an hour or so.

The Fire Department was impressed and congratulated Alicia and Noel for their quick response since time was so critical. People at the scene were equally impressed and grateful. (Alicia and Noel passed out Narcan kits to individuals who had witnessed the clutch rescue.)

As CLEAR team members, Alicia and Noel had participated in a life-saving task that they teach to others on a routine basis.

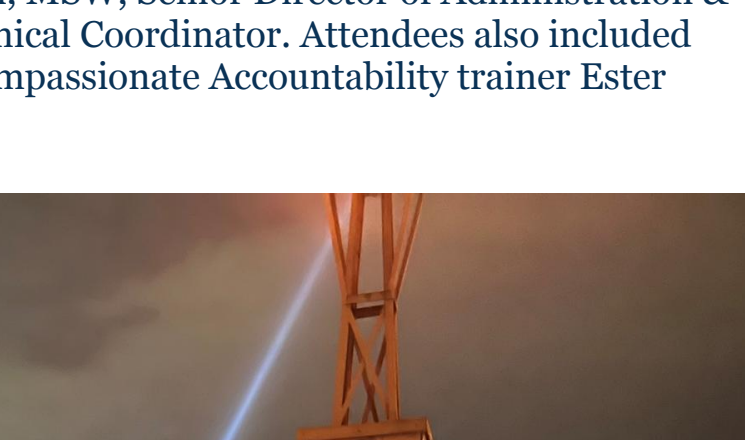
Throughout the nerve-racking rescue, Noel remained completely calm. "I grew up in a chaotic family," he said afterward. "The more chaotic things get, I have a tendency to stay focused and calm."

Yet at McCall couldn't be more proud of Alicia and Noel. They prove two things: First, Narcan training is extremely important. Second, McCall staff members go the distance when it comes to helping and caring for others!



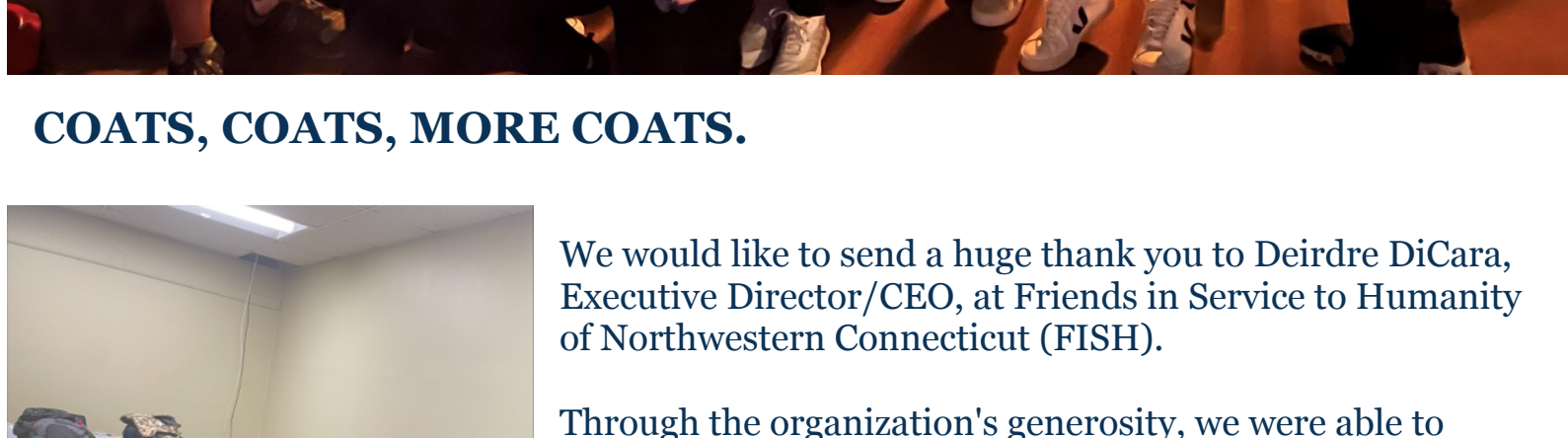
**SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE.**

On November 8, McCall partnered with BlueBack Health for a breakfast presentation at the Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce in Torrington. The event was geared toward business leaders and HR professionals and explored the mental health needs of employees in today's workforce. It was another successful step in taking the stigma out of mental health disorders.



### ORLANDO HOSTS WORLDWIDE CONFERENCE ON GLOBAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS.

The Global Exchange Conference 2023 in Orlando, FL, was a four-day event, from November 12 through 15, that brought together professionals and organizations from around the world, focusing on Mental Health, Leadership, and Holistic Wellness. The conference was dedicated to professionals who want to elevate their knowledge regarding therapeutic practices, treatment models, and the latest mental health and wellness innovations. Attending from McCall were Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, President & CEO, Kelly Scherker, BA, Supported Employment Program Manager, Shalyn Sheldon, MSW, Senior Director of Administration & Accreditation, and Jillian Yard, LCSW, MAT Compliance Coordinator. Attendees also included members of Liberation and CCRAR, as well as Compassionate Accountability trainer Ester Nicholson.

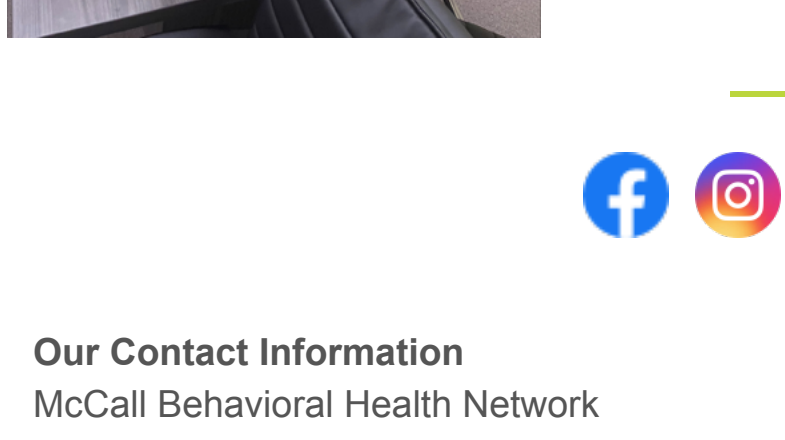


**COATS, COATS, MORE COATS.**

We would like to send a huge thank you to Deirdre DiCara, Executive Director/CEO, at Friends in Service to Humanity of Northwestern Connecticut (FISH).

Through the organization's generosity, we were able to procure 35+ coats from their annual coat giveaway, for clients in our residential programs in Torrington and Waterbury. As well as hats, gloves, and socks!

Thank you for keeping our clients warm this winter!



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