



## The Timeless Gift of Hope. February 2024

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Dear friends;

My friend Nina Russell, our intrepid CFO for the last 27 years, is set to retire next month. This weighty moment is one of several recent events that have brought to mind the tricky duality of time. It is Leap Day as I write this column and the fact that I'm sitting down to begin to try to capture a complex set of thoughts and emotions in the final hours of the final day of the month will come as no surprise to any of you who know me. You see, my friends, I've long had a rocky relationship with time. There is never enough of it when it comes to all that must be done, and all life has to offer, and I hate to miss a moment.

When people take the courageous step of crossing the threshold of a McCall program, they often share about the time lost during the chapters of their lives spent actively wrestling with an addiction and/or mental health struggle. They work through the shame and blame associated with 'wasting' time in those dark and painful periods where they couldn't access their highest and best selves for their families and loved ones. It's a deep reckoning that takes place to balance responsibility and forgiveness and find peace, knowing that our healing journeys are lifelong.

We are now at the close of Black History Month, a time where we celebrate the remarkable contributions of Black Americans and offer accountability for the atrocities committed against them. Time has not healed the wounds inflicted; it doesn't work that way. Educated, intentional efforts must be made to have an informed citizenry and the critical steps of reparations in all forms taken. We can mark progress made while honestly assessing the work yet to be done. We must make haste to commit to this healing work.

Time can lull us into complacency when we believe it is abundant. The day to day often seems just that – routines of good mornings, meetings and good nights with conversations, laughs and tears mixed in. Nina and I have worked side by side for more than a decade as we've navigated the challenges and triumphs of leading an organization that we both love and believe in deeply. A special bond is forged when you have the privilege to do that work; especially when

your counterpart is a person who is as special and committed as Nina. Endings allow us to reflect and appreciate the sum of those days, appreciating the growth, healing and evolution each of us have experienced as we've served a higher purpose together.

I'm thinking time will remain a challenge for me; I realize that I exist in that tricky dual space of competing priorities. It all feels wonderful and horrible and urgent and too slow – all at once. One of my very favorite books is Madeline L'Engle's "A Wrinkle in Time". It gives me hope that it is never too late and that tesseracts exist. With that, we can triumph over darkness, access the courage and hope for healing and maybe stretch out time just a bit to make the sweet moments last.

All my best for all time,

Maria Coutant Skinner  
President & CEO



Parenting teens in 2024 is no easy feat. With the problems of the world on their shoulders, the fallout from the pandemic, social pressures, and preparing for their futures, many teens are struggling and so is their mental health. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 49.5% of adolescents have had a mental health disorder at some point in their lives.

Wintertime gray skies and cold weather can also make a difficult situation worse. It's during this time that problems at school and at home become more obvious. You may notice an increase in anxiety or worsening symptoms of depression, suicidal ideation, or self-harm, which can often be accompanied by the use of substances to cope. It can affect a young person's friendships and school performance, and it can lead to a loss of interest in activities that they used to enjoy.

**Parents, rest assured, we have your family's back.**

McCall's Adolescent Services program has been successful in helping teens from 13 to 18 navigate their challenges. We offer teens two levels of care: an intensive outpatient program (IOP) and outpatient care. The level of care is based on the needs of each client.

"In addition to our intensive outpatient program, we offer a standard outpatient level of care, and that level of care meets only once a week for an hour," notes Laura Cummings, LCSW, CCDP-D, Director of Adolescent Services. "For both levels of care, we create personalized treatment plans

with each teen and their family. This helps to make sure the goals are appropriate, attainable, and are important to everyone.”

### **IOP. What does that mean exactly?**

Intensive outpatient programs are just that – all the benefits of counseling, just more frequently for longer sessions. At McCall, your teen would meet with our highly trained clinicians three afternoons a week for up to three hours at a time. They will meet in a group setting and will have an individual session every other week. Family sessions are offered once a month to help the family move together as a unit. Medication management is also available if needed.

Through the program, teens are given skills to help them cope with stressors, change behaviors and thinking patterns, build up their social networks, and identify healthy coping activities. We also care for the whole person and look for different ways to engage with your teen. We paint, work with clay, play games, and include yoga to help the youth learn different ways to heal and cope. To help young people learn, we have other agencies and other speakers come in and talk about different topics. We even offer snacks and fidget toys.

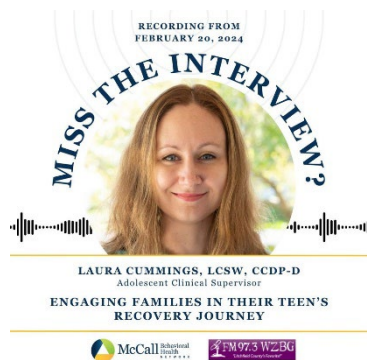
### **Accessing services for your teen is easy.**

For a family entering treatment, it can feel overwhelming. Our compassionate staff is here to welcome you and make the process as easy as possible.

First, the parent or guardian should call our main office number, 860.496.2100. We will take some basic information and schedule an intake appointment with one of our clinicians.

At that intake appointment, the parent or guardian will sign consent and release forms, and your teen will submit a urine sample for a drug screen. Caregivers are then asked to complete a survey and your teen will be asked to explain why they are there for treatment. Once this is done, our clinicians create a comprehensive biopsychosocial history. Together with the parents or guardians, we will make a treatment plan and decide how to move forward as a unit.

Asking for help is a courageous act and it is never too early to receive services. If you have concerns about your child, help is a phone call away. [Click here](#) for more resources.



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

Don't worry, we've got you covered! Visit our pressroom to hear Laura Cummings, LCSW, CCDP-D, McCall's Director of Adolescent Services, discuss how teens can build coping skills to help them navigate their way through challenges they may be facing.

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



We're thrilled to announce the launch of our Open Access Program in Torrington and Waterbury, providing expedited support for substance use and mental health disorders. We plan to launch the program in Danbury this March.

**How it works.**

Clients must first call 860.496.2100. Following a 20-minute phone interview, we will provide them with an Open Access time slot for their initial screenings, and, in certain instances, they may be able to secure an appointment on the same day as their call! Clients should bring a photo ID and insurance card.

**Open Access Hours at McCall's Outpatient Services in Torrington:**

- Mon: 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
- Tue: 12:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
- Wed: 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
- Fri: 8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

**Open Access Hours at McCall's Renato Outpatient Services in Waterbury:**

- Tue: 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and Spanish-speaking hours from 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
- Wed: 12:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- Fri: 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

It's important to note that while this service is a valuable resource for those seeking support, it is not intended for individuals experiencing a crisis. In such cases, immediate medical attention at a hospital emergency room is strongly recommended.

[Click here](#) to read the full press release.

**LISTEN HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OPEN ACCESS.**

To learn more, click on "For the People" to hear our President and CEO, Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, speak about Open Access on John Voket's radio program and podcast. (Maria's interview begins at 14:35).

**FOR THE PEOPLE**



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CONFRONTING  
A SOMBER  
EXPERIENCE.



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

Every month, while creating reports for the Task Force Monthly Meeting, I do my best to relay any findings or takeaways from the Community Engagement Team (CET).

Past topics such as collaboration, education, and perspective have highlighted the positive efforts made by our team and the LCOTF. This month, however, the subject is not a lighthearted one. This month's topic is of a more serious and somber nature as I would like to discuss suicide and suicidal ideation.

Right before the holidays, the CET began to hear more and more individuals expressing thoughts of suicide. Having been trained in QPR, we made every effort to ask direct and difficult Questions, to Persuade individuals to seek professional help, and to Refer them to the appropriate providers.

With many of these interactions, the individuals were simply expressing their distress and feelings of hopelessness. By asking questions, the team ascertained that most of the people we interacted with had no intention of completing suicide. Many had mentioned suicide in order to emphasize the depths of their angst. Regardless of how casually folks spoke about suicide, every mention was taken seriously. While many only talked about taking their life to illustrate how bad things had gotten, this was not always the case. On some occasions, using the QPR method led to further assessment and calls to the DHMAS Mobile Crisis Team (MCT).

On one such occasion, during a meeting to discuss their wellness plan, a participant shared that they felt hopeless and just wanted to die. After being asked if they had a plan, they shared that they not only had a plan but also had the means to complete suicide. When asked what they felt would happen if the means were removed, they very honestly shared that they would easily reacquire them. The direct questions that were asked and the responses received led to the DHMAS Mobile Crisis Team being called in.

This particular individual was sent to CHH for psychological evaluation – and is still with us today. They've continued their connection with the CET. This outcome is the result of the rapport fostered with the individual, the training received by the CET and MCT, and most importantly the

individual's willingness to share. Unfortunately, not every individual is willing to share their feelings to such an extent.

On Thursday, February 8, while at a rover site, I received the news that a longtime rover participant had completed suicide. Having known this individual since the beginning of my time with the CET, I was left in a state of shock and profound sorrow. The support of my coworkers Hailey Collins and Alicia Peterson, along with my supervisor, Lauren Pristo, helped to buoy my emotions and allowed me to compartmentalize and reinforce my professional boundaries.

Despite the support and my reinvigorated mindset, I couldn't help but ponder. I was aware that my coworkers and I made every effort to help the individual in the time we knew them, yet I couldn't help but feel like I should've done more. That thought was quickly quashed by what I learned from training and from my own life experiences, reminding me that at the end of the day we can only do our best and that we have no control over another's actions.

Later that evening, as I engaged with the community at the overflow shelter, I had discussions with a few folks and did my best to not think about a face I would never see again, a voice I would never hear again, and a soul I would forever miss. However, these introspective thoughts ended abruptly as a couple of gentlemen who utilize the shelter came in and were clearly in a gregarious mood. While their laughter reminded me of another's laughter that I would never hear again, it also reminded me that life goes on – and that my mission to serve was far from over.



## Substance use, society, and social impact: A presentation and fireside chat with Dr. Gabor Maté

Tuesday, March 19, 2024, 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. Eastern time

Join leading experts to:

- Learn the social basis of addiction in economic, cultural, and political dislocation and disempowerment.
- Enhance self-awareness to foster a reflective approach that positively impacts the delivery of behavioral health services.
- Understand the correlation between chronic conditions (such as substance use) and social environments.
- Explore ways to support a healthier population and the development of therapeutic relationships in addiction treatment.

### Your speaker:



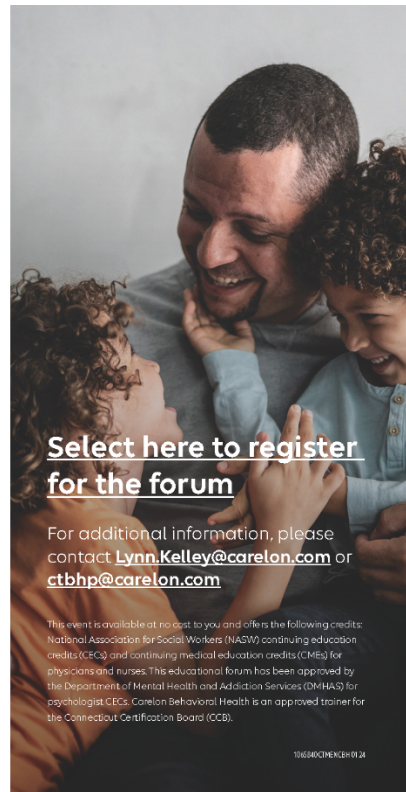
**Gabor Maté** (pronunciation: GAH-bor MAH-tay) is a retired physician who, after 20 years of family practice and palliative care experience, worked for over a decade in Vancouver's downtown Eastside neighborhood with patients challenged by substance use disorder (SUD) and mental illness. The bestselling author of five books published in 35 languages, including the award-winning "In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction," Gabor is an internationally renowned speaker highly sought after for his expertise on addiction, trauma, childhood development, and the relationship of stress and illness. For his groundbreaking medical work and writing he has been awarded the Order of Canada, his country's highest civilian distinction, and the Civic Merit Award from his hometown, Vancouver. His latest book, "The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness & Healing in a Toxic Culture" remains a Canadian best seller and was a 19-week New York Times best seller.

To learn more, join his e-news list at [www.drgabormate.com](http://www.drgabormate.com)

### Your host:



**Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, CEO of the McCall Behavioral Health Network (BHN)**  
After serving in many diverse roles, Maria became the CEO of McCall BHN in 2013. That same year, she co-founded and continues to co-chair the Litchfield County Opiate Task Force, a multilateral, multidisciplinary community collaborative that works to reduce addiction and overdoses in the region. The group has had far-reaching impacts on shaping culture around root causes of addiction, education, community connection, and influence on healthcare policy. Maria is Board Chair at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, past president of the Rotary Club of Torrington and Winsted areas, serves on the boards of multiple non-profit organizations, and co-chairs the treatment committee of the CT Alcohol Drug Policy Council.



Select here to register  
for the forum

For additional information, please  
contact [Lynn.Kelley@carelon.com](mailto:Lynn.Kelley@carelon.com) or  
[ctbhp@carelon.com](mailto:ctbhp@carelon.com)

This event is available at no cost to you and offers the following credits: National Association for Social Workers (NASW) continuing education credits (CECs) and continuing medical education credits (CMEs) for physicians and nurses. This educational forum has been approved by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) for psychologist CECs. Carelon Behavioral Health is an approved trainer for the Connecticut Certification Board (CCB).

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## **SIGN UP FOR MCCALL'S FAMILY IN RECOVERY NEWSLETTER!**

McCall's Family Recovery Coach, Alicia Peterson, RSS, uses her own experiences to help others. She has over seven years of continuous recovery. She can relate to the seemingly daunting task of supporting people who struggle with substance use disorder and has sadly lost family members to this disease.



Every month, Alicia publishes a free newsletter filled with helpful insights for people with family or friends who have a substance use disorder.

It's easy to have Alicia's monthly "Family in Recovery" newsletter emailed to you, just visit the [News page](#) of our website.



## **HELP US SPREAD THE WORD!**

McCall's marketing team is hard at work ensuring our clients can find us online. One way to improve our visibility is through reviews.

Anyone can leave a review for McCall! Use this link: <https://link.edgepilot.com/s/34b3efeb/1ErTPqhEOoeKMfrwMKD3ww?u=http://tinyurl.com/ReviewMcCall> or click on the image to leave a review!



## **AN EVENING WITH GABBY BERNSTEIN.**

*Contributed by Kelly Scherker, B.A., Supervisor of Supported Employment and Integrative Therapies.*

"The Universe has big plans for me and it's time to claim them. I am a super attractor." That was the quote card on my assigned seat at Gabby Bernstein's talk, which took place at the Warner Theatre on 2/9/24. This fundraising event for McCall brought in so many different people from so many organizations and people from across the country. It was incredible to see the following that Gabby has and how impactful her work has been to people in all walks of life. But it didn't surprise me. As the quote card indicated, Gabby really helps people to tune in to

their worth and manifest the change they want in their lives. As this was the first thing I saw upon walking into the theatre, it set the tone for the night ahead.

Gabby started her talk by asking the audience to think about who they want to be and how they want to feel. These questions have stayed with me during the last few weeks – and have helped me shift my thoughts from going down a path that wasn't helpful to a more peaceful and productive state of mind.

Some of my takeaways from the night include:

- In order to live our best lives (or at the very least get through difficult situations), we have to turn inward and be our own biggest supporters.
- Manifest the change you want to see in your life.
- Believe that change is possible.
- Ask for help when needed.
- Be of service to others.

The above suggestions are ways to change the course you're on in order to get to where you want to be.

In addition to spending meaningful time with colleagues and hearing Gabby's insightful perspective, there were a handful of unique vendors offering holistic wares.

It was truly a wonderful evening and a night to remember. Thanks to Gabby we were able to raise \$16,033 for McCall! We're truly grateful for her support and to everyone who came out and contributed to such a special night.

Check out the vendors:

[R-Yolo Washable Yoga Mats](#) – use code Gabby24 for a discount and free shipping!

[Kelly's Crystals](#)

[My Dad's Jewelry](#)

[The Imagined Postcard](#)

[Personalized Happenings](#)





## HEALTHCARE CABINET REPORT, FOX 61 WITH MARIA.

On Sunday, February 4, Emma Wulfhorst from FOX61's The Real Story interviewed our very own President and CEO, Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, and Dr. Paul Dworkin from Connecticut Children's, regarding their work in the Comptroller's Healthcare Cabinet and the recently published Cabinet Report. Maria co-chaired the Mental Health Subcommittee and Dr. Dworkin co-chaired the Children's Healthcare Subcommittee.

In the report, the Cabinet outlines key priorities and recommendations for improving healthcare accessibility and affordability in Connecticut.

To read the report, [click here](#). Click on the image to watch the interview.



## SPREAD THE WORD: MCCALL IS HIRING!!

Human Resource Manager, Danielle Brundage, B.A., SHRM-CP, and Director of Development and Marketing, Marisa Mittelstaedt, MBA, attended the Northwest Chamber of Commerce Job Fair at the City Hall in Torrington on February 6. We were also featured in the Republican American. [Click here](#) to read the article.

McCall is proud of the safe, welcoming, judgement-free environment that we can offer new hires. Our staff members are passionate about what they do. Their motivation comes from a place of kindness and compassion. Now there's an opportunity for others to join our awesome team. Go to the Careers page on our website to see the many openings that we're looking to fill. If you know someone who may be suited for a particular role, be sure to give them our [Careers page link](#)!

Internships are also available to help someone get started in a career in human services. The person to contact is Jamie Calvano, LADC, ADS, Senior Director of Quality & Compliance, at: [Jamie.Calvano@mccallbhn.org](mailto:Jamie.Calvano@mccallbhn.org)





**Our Contact Information**

McCall Behavioral Health Network  
58 High Street  
Torrington, CT 06790  
860-496-2100  
<http://www.mccallbhn.org/>

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