



# At the Heart of Wellness

## The Magnificent Light Within. April 2024



Dear friends;

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to paddle a kayak in the Bioluminescent Bay in Vieques, Puerto Rico. Our group included my husband Greg, two of my dearest friends and two wonderful kids aged 15 and 11. We joined a tour led by a man who goes by Peachy – because that’s his ready answer in response to the question; “how are you?” Together with another group, we boarded Peachy’s large van and set off for the bumpy dirt road that brought us to a muddy parking lot where a few other tours were also gathering. It was about 9:30 p.m. and as we looked up, we noticed spotty clouds, beautiful stars, and a waning crescent moon. Around us were red mangroves with their exposed root systems appearing like long fingers suspending them above the inky waters. Prior to arriving, we had read the instructions and learned that to protect this extraordinary bay, we could not use any products that would harm the delicate ecosystem, which meant no DEET or other chemicals and, no shoes – did I mention the smelly mud? We left our phones behind too. It was very dark, so we needed to communicate with one another to navigate that mud, get our kayaks and paddles, learn safety and paddling directions and then with some help from the guides, set off two by two into the water.

I’ll admit that at first, my mind was occupied with trying not to tip over and working to coordinate my strokes with Greg’s so we didn’t crash paddles... but then I saw it...as I pulled my paddle through the dark water, the beautiful iridescent blue color appearing temporarily with each pass.

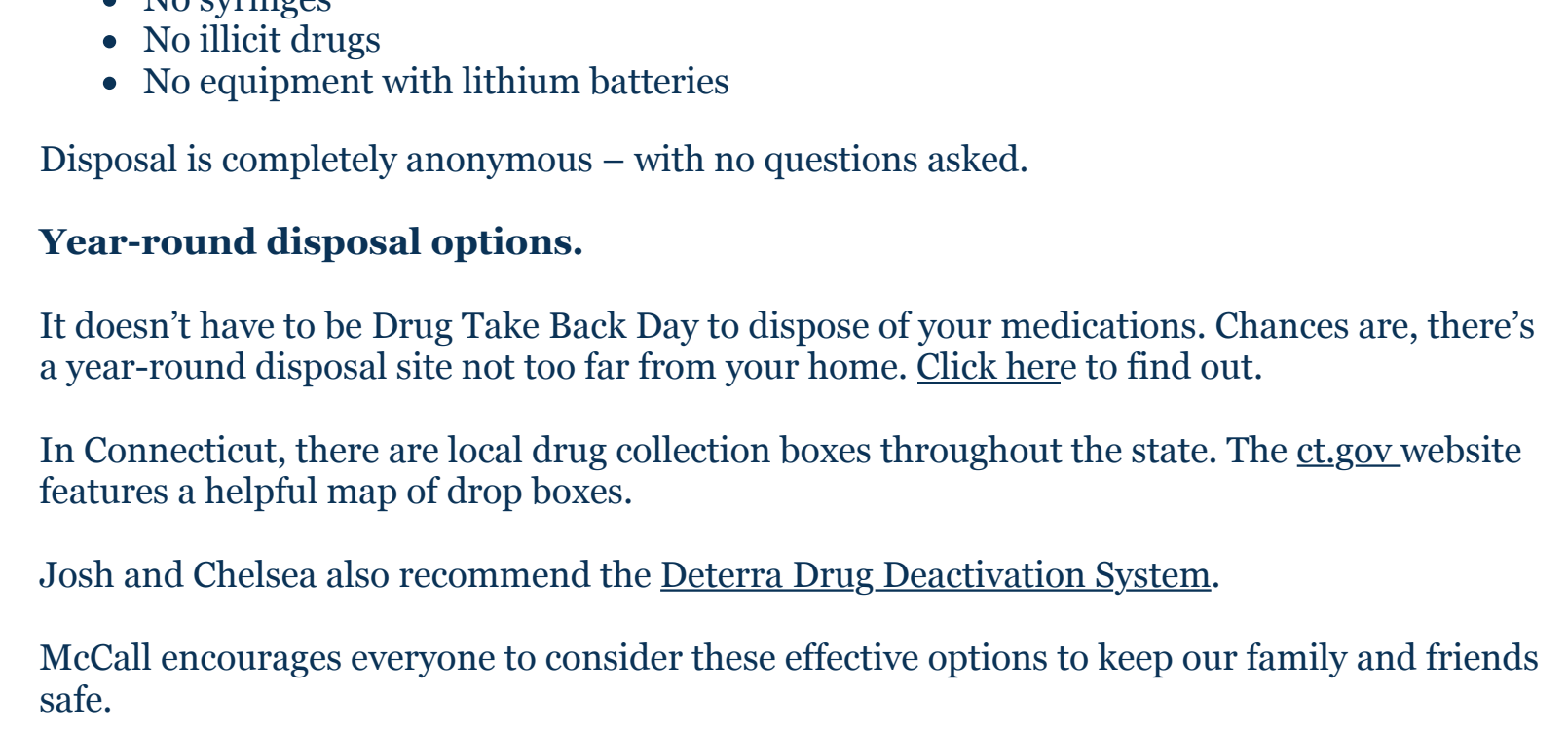
Marine dinoflagellates are single cell organisms that emit a bluish green light when jostled about. This bay has all the conditions that allow for millions of these single cell quasi plant/animals to gather and create the extraordinary phenomenon we experienced. I reached my hand in and marveled at what I was witnessing. By disrupting the darkness, light was emitted. I was enthralled, entranced and overcome.

It’s daunting to explore the darkness, stirring up who knows what in the process (remember the mud?). There’re all sorts of ‘stuff’ that we humans avoid because we’re afraid of what’s beneath the surface; buried pain, grief, and parts of ourselves we may feel ashamed by. Dr Richard Schwartz; the founder of the Internal Family Systems model of therapy would invite us to explore those parts and extend them compassion and acceptance. I would highly recommend the book; *No Bad Parts* if you’re interested in how to do that. Dr. Schwartz and all the ancient spiritual traditions posit that the sacred light is present in each of us; that we are imbued with the strength to disrupt the darkness and find it in ourselves – and in others. Indeed, it is the healing source for humanity.

If you get the chance, dear friends, take a trip to see the bioluminescence. Even if you can’t, though, I invite you to take that quest internally. Take a journey of faith, together, to those parts of yourself...cause a peaceful disturbance and find magnificent light.

My best to you always,

Maria Coutant Skinner  
President & CEO



## NATIONAL PRESCRIPTION DRUG TAKE BACK DAY.

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day is an initiative started by the Drug Enforcement Administration. Take Back Day officially occurs twice a year (the last Saturdays of April and October). According to McCall Prevention Facilitator Josh Licursi, MPH, “It serves as a big reminder for people to clean out their medicine cabinet and find any un-used, expired, or unwanted medications.”

### The goal is to reduce access.

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” says Chelsea Kapitancek, B.A., also a Prevention Facilitator at McCall. “Drug Take Back Day is a great community-driven initiative.” It’s supported by coalitions and organizations in Northwest Connecticut, including local police departments.

“Prevention is the focus.” Josh emphasizes. “We’re preventing medications from getting into the hands of children or people who shouldn’t be using those medications. By safely disposing of medications, you can keep other people out of harm’s way. You can prevent accidental ingestion or even accidental overdose.”

“Properly disposing of medications is also really great for the environment,” notes Chelsea. Flushing medication down the toilet or throwing it in the trash can negatively affect waterways and soil.

### Drug Take Back basics.

Step one: Clean out your medicine cabinet(s) and box up your items. Step two: Bring them to a drop-off location near you.

What kind of medications are accepted? You can bring prescription pills, patches, and liquids (as long as they’re tightly sealed in their original containers), and even un-used veterinarian prescriptions. Certain items are not accepted.

For example...

- No aerosol containers
- No syringes
- No illicit drugs
- No equipment with lithium batteries

Disposal is completely anonymous – with no questions asked.

### Year-round disposal options.

It doesn’t have to be Drug Take Back Day to dispose of your medications. Chances are, there’s a year-round disposal site not too far from your home. [Click here](#) to find out.

In Connecticut, there are local drug collection boxes throughout the state. The [ct.gov](#) website features a helpful map of drop boxes.

Josh and Chelsea also recommend the [Deterra Drug Deactivation System](#).

McCall encourages everyone to consider these effective options to keep our family and friends safe.

TOPIC: PRESCRIPTION DRUG TAKE BACK DAY

WEDNESDAY APRIL 17 8:00 AM

### NEW INTERVIEW!

**CHELSEA KAPITANCEK, BA**  
Prevention Facilitator

**JOSHUA LICURSI, MPH**  
Prevention Facilitator

Saturday, April 27th, marks National Prescription Drug Take Back Day! It's a perfect opportunity to clear your cabinets of any unwanted, unused, or expired prescription medications. Tune in to learn more!

McCall Behavioral Health | WZBG 97.3

### LEARN MORE ON WZBG.

Don't worry, we've got you covered! Visit our pressroom to hear McCall Prevention Facilitators Chelsea Kapitancek, B.A., and Josh Licursi, MPH, talk about the importance of safely disposing medications. Click on the image to listen to the full FM 97.3 WZBG interview.



## INTEGRATED THERAPIES AT MCCALL.

When it comes to treating mental health and substance use disorders, integrated therapies are all about using different types of solutions together. Think of it like mixing and matching tools from a toolbox to help people in the best way possible. This can include approaches such as art therapy, yoga, and mindfulness exercises. It’s about finding what works best for each person and putting together a plan that covers all the bases for their unique needs.

We’d like to introduce you to two members of McCall’s Integrated Therapies team.

*Pictured from left to right: Employment Specialist Melissa Clarke, B.A. and Robin Sullivan, B.S.*



### Robin Sullivan, B.S., Employment Specialist.

“My name is Robin Sullivan and my primary role at McCall is Employment Specialist within the Supported Employment Program. Recently, I’ve also started providing Qigong within the Integrative Therapies Department.

My professional journey encompasses two distinct yet complementary realms: the practical and the holistic. As a Qigong practitioner and facilitator for a variety of McCall programs, I’m able to offer a holistic approach to wellness, focusing on the cultivation of energy, balance, and inner harmony. I guide students through gentle movements, breathing exercises, and mindfulness practices aimed at promoting physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Qigong helps our clients manage stress, build resilience, strengthen their recovery, and maintain a positive mindset throughout their journeys.

Moreover, Qigong teaches principles of focus, intention, and mindfulness, which are invaluable skills in the realm of healing. By cultivating these qualities, clients can enhance their productivity, concentration, and overall effectiveness in pursuing their life goals and dreams. I strive to support individuals in achieving success, fulfillment, and balance within both their professional and personal lives.”

### Melissa Clarke, B.A., Employment Specialist.

“Hello, I’m Melissa Clarke, an Employment Specialist (ES) in Torrington, where I play a crucial role in guiding individuals on their journey to healing from substance use and mental health disorders through Supported Employment. I also lead the Wellness Fitness programs for our clients within the Integrative Therapies Program.

I love seeing the positive impact that the Wellness Fitness has on our clients, as it not only improves physical health but also boosts a person’s mood, reduces stress, and fosters a sense of accomplishment.

Engaging in regular exercise can also alleviate symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress, which are commonly experienced by individuals in recovery. Participating in fitness activities fosters a sense of accomplishment and self-esteem, increases confidence, and improves motivation at every stage of one’s recovery journey. It also encourages social interaction and support among peers, creating a sense of community and belonging.”



## REMEMBERING MARIE WALLACE. 1.27.26 – 4.8.24

Marie Wallace was a longtime board member of the McCall Foundation. “Marie was the consummate volunteer, a public servant of the first order,” said McCall President and CEO Maria Coutant Skinner. “She had a beautiful and giving spirit and believed deeply in the mission of McCall.” We are proud that Marie was such an integral part of the McCall family and our organization’s history. We will all miss her very much.

## WE’RE HIRING AN OUTPATIENT CLINICIAN IN WATERBURY.

Looking to make a meaningful impact in the lives of individuals struggling with substance use and mental health challenges? We’re seeking dedicated individuals like you to join our amazing team.

- Up to \$6,500 sign-on bonus
- \$10,000 retention bonus
- Competitive salary
- Outstanding benefits package
- Generous PTO
- Named a Top CT Workplace
- Training opportunities
- And much more!

[Click here](#) for all the details.

There are still many other opportunities for others to join our awesome team. Go to the [Careers page](#) on our website to see the current openings that we’re looking to fill.

MAKE A LIVING BY MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

McCall is now hiring an Outpatient Clinician in Waterbury.

[GET THE DETAILS](#)

## 2024 Give Local Raises \$10,342 from 85 Donors.

We’re pleased to announce that this year’s Give Local campaign was a smashing success thanks to everyone who contributed. In total, we raised \$10,342 from 85 donors. The final tally includes the generous matching donation from our Board of Directors. The funding that was raised will help support McCall’s in-school Insight Prevention Program to support Teen Wellness.

Here are a few fun facts:

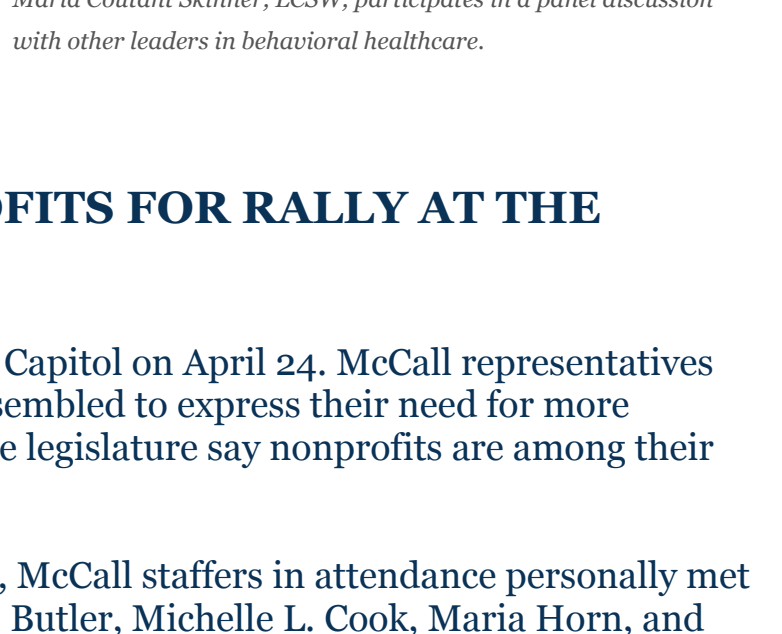
- Considering all organizations we ranked **49th** out of **311** in total dollars raised.
- Considering the number of donors, we ranked **30th** out of **311** organizations.
- Overall, Give Local raised for **\$2,174,428** from **6,455** donors for **311** organizations.

We couldn’t have done it without the participation of our amazing staff and awesome community of supporters. Thank you so much. Together, we are making a difference.

## THANK YOU, COUNSELORS.

Counselor Awareness Month is celebrated in April every year. It’s a month-long observance of raising awareness and promoting mental health to people of all ages.

It also highlights the importance of counseling professionals – including behavioral health counselors. It’s the time when your contributions, not only to the healthcare sector but also to society in general, are honored.



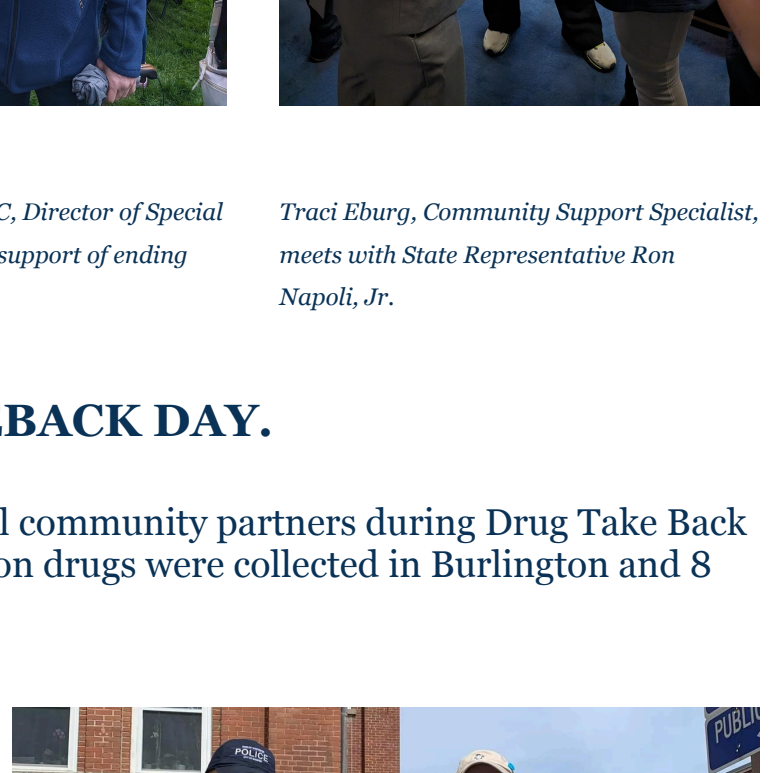
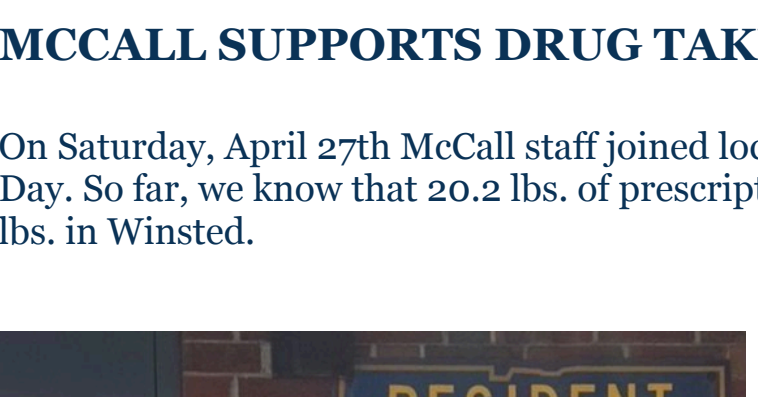
### Counselor Awareness Month

Thanking your commitment to compassion, guidance, and unwavering support for everyone you support.

McCall Behavioral Health | April 2024

## CLIENT RESOURCES.

Learn more and see what’s new.



## EXTERNAL RESOURCES FOR ALL.

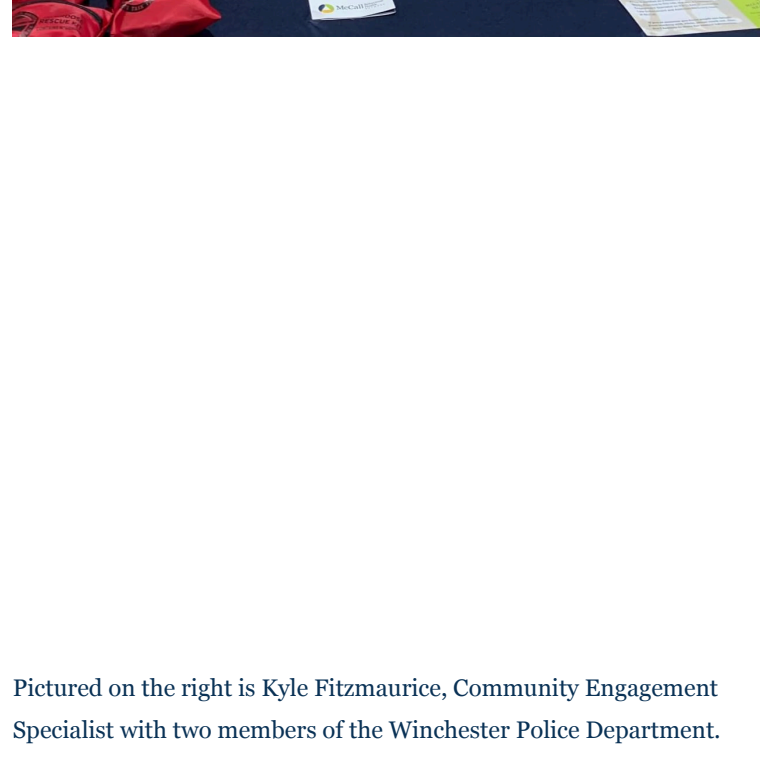
McCall’s External Resources page is full of information that may be helpful to you. [Click here](#) to learn more.

Don’t forget about our events calendar, [click here](#) to see what’s new.



## THE PHOENIX: DOWNLOAD THIS FREE APP TO FIND YOUR COMMUNITY.

The Phoenix model leverages the transformational power of connection and human resilience to build a sober movement. Find hundreds of weekly sober events and activities. They’re creating safe spaces for all individuals to connect, build friendships, find support, and have fun. [Click here to learn more!](#)



Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, participates in a panel discussion with other leaders in behavioral healthcare.

## MCCALL STAFF ATTEND NATCON24.

McCall staff members spent several days (from April 15 through 17) in St. Louis for NatCon24. Professionals, policymakers, advocates, and individuals with lived experience from across the nation gathered to discuss key issues, share best practices, and promote mental health awareness and support.

*Pictured from left to right: Kevin Iglesias, MPH; Kelly Binkowski; Teesha Huertas, LCSW; and Donna Bielefeld, B.S.*

## MCCALL IS REPEATED AT THE SPRING EXCHANGE.

From April 21 through 23, in Orlando, FL, High Watch Recovery Center held a Leadership and Management Training seminar featuring engaging presentations by Dr. Keta Joy and Janet McDonald. The event attracted individuals from across the country. However, McCall was the only nonprofit organization serving vulnerable populations. Among the many lessons learned: organizations may serve clients from various segments of our society, yet our challenges are remarkably similar.



*Pictured from left to right: John Fecteau, LCSW; Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW; Marisa Mittelstaedt, MBA; Shaun Lewinson, MBA, SPHR.*

Traci Ebury, Community Support Specialist, meets with State Representative Ron Napoli, Jr.

## MCCALL JOINS OTHER NONPROFITS FOR RALLY AT THE CAPITOL.

Members of McCall attended a rally at the State Capitol on April 24. McCall representatives joined other nonprofit service providers that assembled to express their need for more funding for the next fiscal year. Democrats in the legislature say nonprofits are among their priorities.

To address the concern of rising operating costs, McCall staffers in attendance personally met with Connecticut State Representatives Larry B. Butler, Michelle L. Cook, Maria Horn, and Ronald Napoli, Jr. McCall continues to advocate for best-in-class care for vulnerable populations in our local communities.



*McCall staff and friends show their support with State Representatives Michelle Cook and Maria Horn.*

*Glenn Ryan, CAC, CADC, Director of Special Services, wears blue in support of ending homelessness.*

*Traci Ebury, Community Support Specialist, meets with State Representative Ron Napoli, Jr.*

## MCCALL SUPPORTS DRUG TAKEBACK DAY.

On Saturday, April 27th McCall staff joined local community partners during Drug Take Back Day. So far, we know that 20.2 lbs. of prescription drugs were collected in Burlington and 8 lbs. in Winsted.



*Pictured from left to right: Traci Ebury, Community Engagement Specialist, and Darian Graells, B.A., Prevention Facilitator & Tobacco Treatment Specialist.*

*Pictured on the right is Kyle Fitzmaurice, Community Engagement Specialist with two members of the Winsted Police Department.*

## LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!

Anyone can leave a review for McCall. Use this link: <http://tinyurl.com/ReviewMcCall> to let us know how we’re doing.