



## **Finding the Light.**

### **April 2026**

Dear friends;

The annual National Council on Mental Wellbeing conference in Denver, Colorado just wrapped and I had the privilege of joining three McCall colleagues in attending. This is our industry's 'Superbowl' where experts from our field gather to learn, network and gain inspiration. We heard from keynote speakers about grit from Dr Angela Duckworth, brain health from Shankar Vedantam and how AI will impact behavioral healthcare from Trent Gillespie.

This year, the energy felt different. Colleagues across the field described a palpable heaviness — a collective weight carried in by providers who are absorbing the uncertainty and fear of this moment alongside our clients. It was a reminder of something we don't say often enough: those of us who provide care are not a separate class of healthy people tending to hurting ones. We are all simply human beings, in all our varying states of wholeness and struggle, trying to show up as healers while also tending to ourselves.

Lauren Pristo, Director of Community Engagement and I were very honored to be presenters of a breakout session entitled "Navigating Service Delivery in Politically Charged Environments". The session drew a full room of fellow providers who, like us, are wrestling with how to serve vulnerable and marginalized populations with integrity in an environment that has become, in measurable ways, less safe for many of the people we serve. We centered the conversation around safety — not as an abstract concept, but as a lived, deeply personal experience that varies for every individual. We named directly the populations facing the most acute risks in the current federal landscape: people receiving harm reduction services; individuals with precarious immigration status; transgender and nonbinary people; and those seeking reproductive healthcare. The concept of safety is personal, multifaceted and involves myriad variables. In other words, it's not up to me to define for anyone else what feels 'safe' and we need to acknowledge that truth in how we approach accessing care.

Together with our audience, we explored the complex decisions organizations like ours face every day: how we use language in a climate where words carry political consequence; how we protect funding streams while refusing to abandon the populations

those funds exist to serve; how we hold fast to mission when every directional choice carries risk. There were no easy answers in that room — but there was honest, generative discourse, and that itself felt like progress.

One example I shared with the group was the work we have been doing here at home: our partnerships with law enforcement and public safety entities. These collaborations have become one of the most effective strategies in our current environment because they are built on a truth that resonates across ideological divides: when people in a community are genuinely safe, in the fullest sense of that word, communities thrive.

Behavioral health care reduces incarceration. It stabilizes families. It strengthens workforces and lowers emergency department utilization. These are outcomes that matter to people across the political spectrum and increase safety by every measure. By building relationships with partners who share these goals, we have been able to sustain and expand our work and offer advocacy pathways.

Underlying this approach is a belief I hold deeply: the people who work in government, public safety, and every sector of public life are also fully human. They are also, many of them, on a quest for a better and safer world. When we approach partnership from that place of shared humanity rather than opposition, something different becomes possible.

I closed our workshop with a story. I had recently read Krista Tippett's luminous book, *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living*, which gathers wisdom from years of conversations with theologians, scientists, and thought leaders about how to live with integrity in a fractured world. In it, she shares a passage from physician and author Dr. Rachel Remen, who recounts a story passed down from her grandfather:

*"This is the story of the birthday of the world. In the beginning, there was only the holy darkness, the Ein Sof, the source of life. Then, in the course of history, at a moment in time, this world, the world of a thousand thousand things, emerged from the heart of the holy darkness as a great ray of light. And then,, there was an accident. And the vessels containing the light of the world, the wholeness of the world, broke. And the wholeness in the world, the light of the world, was scattered into a thousand thousand fragments of light. And they fell into all events and all people, where they remain deeply hidden until this very day.*

*Now, according to my grandfather, the whole human race is a response to this accident. We are here because we are born with the capacity to find the hidden light in all events and all people; to lift it up and make it visible once again and, thereby, to restore the innate wholeness of the world. This is a very important story for our times — that we heal the world one heart at a time. This task is called "tikkun olam" in Hebrew, "restoring the world."*

I shared this story because it names what I believe is at the heart of our shared humanity. We are especially called to recognize the light in people who have often been told — by systems, by circumstances, by this very political moment — that they carry none. Every time we extend dignified, affirming, compassionate care to someone who has been

marginalized or made to feel unsafe, we are engaging in the ancient and urgent work of tikkun olam. We are called to seek it out, to protect it, and to celebrate it in every person we encounter.

Together with you in this work,

Maria

**Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW**

President and CEO

## Raising the Roof Together: Give Local 2026



The 2026 Give Local Greater Waterbury and Litchfield Hills Fundraiser was an incredible success for the McCall Behavioral Health Network. This marked our biggest year yet—with both the highest number of donations and the greatest amount raised. It's only fitting, as this year's cause was one of our most ambitious to date. Every dollar raised will support the completion of the Anne and Rollin Bates Family Wellness Center, set to open later this year.

During the 36-hour campaign on April 21 and 22, we raised \$18,300 from 114 individual donations. Not only did we surpass our goal of 100 donors, but doing so unlocked a total of \$3,000 in gifts from our corporate sponsors and a generous \$5,000 gift from our Board of Directors. Each donation, no matter the size, played a critical role in helping us reach this milestone.

### **A Regional Movement of Generosity.**

[Give Local Greater Waterbury and Litchfield Hills](#) is a two-day online giving event in April that brings together donors and nonprofits to support causes that matter most in our communities. Organized by the Connecticut Community Foundation, this annual campaign encourages individuals to give back and make a difference locally.

This year, the impact was remarkable: a total of \$2,946,231 was raised from 7,568 donors in support of 355 nonprofit organizations. These numbers highlight the

collective power of community giving and the meaningful change that can happen when people come together with a shared purpose.

### **Building a Foundation for Stronger Families.**

For years, there has been a dream to bring our Prevention Programs, Family Services, and Child & Adolescent Outpatient Services together under one roof. That dream became reality in 2023 with the purchase of the historic building at 263 Migeon Avenue in Torrington, made possible by a \$2 million investment from the Anne and Rollin Bates Family Foundation and \$1.4 million from the State of Connecticut Community Investment Fund. Since its acquisition, the facility has undergone extensive renovations to preserve its architectural heritage.

There are renovations still needed to complete the project, and we're facing a funding gap to fully bring this vision to life. That's why we chose the Anne and Rollin Bates Family Wellness Center as our focus for Give Local this year—because it's more than a building; it's a gift to teens and families across our region. This first-of-its-kind facility will offer a welcoming space where teens can connect with prevention experts, families can strengthen relationships, and young people can access the care they need to heal and grow.

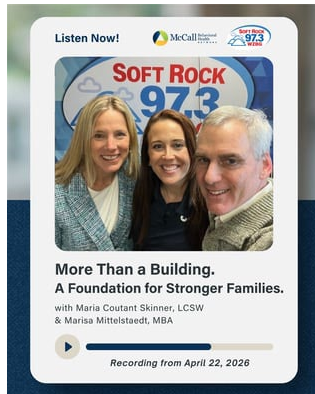
### **Thank You for Making It Possible.**

Throughout the fundraiser, the strength of our community was on full display, along with a shared commitment to expanding access to care for children and families across our region. We are deeply grateful to everyone who supported McCall with a donation.

A special thank you to our incredible staff, whose passion and dedication were at the heart of this campaign—from promoting the fundraiser to participating in videos and sharing their stories.

We invite you to watch our [thank-you video](#) featuring team members from our Prevention, Family, and Child & Adolescent Outpatient Services as they reflect on what this support means to them and the families they serve.

Missed your chance to give? Donations can still be made to support McCall and the Anne and Rollin Bates Family Wellness Center through our website. [Click here to make a donation.](#)



### **Listen to Learn More!**

McCall President and CEO Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, and Marisa Mittelstaedt, MBA, Director of Development, spoke with 97.3 WZBG about the vision behind the Anne and Rollin Bates Family Wellness Center, sharing the rich history of the building and the impact it will have on our region.

[Listen to the full FM 97.3 WZBG interview.](#)



The McCall Funding Committee is excited to announce recent financial support extended to our organization. We're extremely grateful for the generous gifts that will help further our mission.

### **Thank you to our Give Local 2026 Corporate Sponsors and Board of Directors!**

This year's Give Local fundraiser was our most successful yet, and it would not have been possible without our incredible corporate sponsors and Board of Directors. Thanks to their support, we raised an additional \$8,000 toward the completion of the Anne and Rollin Bates Family Wellness Center, unlocking funding as we reached each donor milestone:

🏗️ 50 Donations unlocked \$1,000 from our Roof Raiser Sponsor, Borghesi Building & Engineering JHM Group!

🏠 75 Donations unlocked \$2,000 from our Foundation Builder Sponsors, Millennium Technology Solutions, Inc., and JHM Holdings LLC!

👤 100 Donations unlocked \$5,000 from our Board of Directors!

### **Thank you to Wicked tulips Flower Farm in Preston CT!**

Every Spring, Wicked Tulips Flower Farm donates bouquets to local nonprofit organizations as part of their Tulips for Love and Hope Initiative. McCall was selected and received four beautiful bouquets that were shared with our Prevention, Family, and Child & Adolescent Outpatient Services teams as a heartfelt thank-you for their support during our Give Local fundraiser.





### **McCall Takes the Stage at NatCon.**

McCall staff attended NatCon 2026 this week—the largest conference in mental health and substance use care, bringing together thousands of professionals from across the country for three days of learning, collaboration, and innovation. Designed to explore emerging trends, share real-world strategies, and strengthen the behavioral health workforce, NatCon offers dynamic sessions, expert speakers, and valuable networking opportunities that help shape the future of care.

We were especially proud to have two of our leaders, Maria Coutant-Skinner, LCSW, and Lauren Prito, MPH, present a breakout session titled “Navigating Politically Charged Environments.” Their interactive workshop explored the growing challenges behavioral health organizations face in today’s complex policy landscape, including funding uncertainty, evolving regulations, and maintaining mission-driven care. Attendees engaged in thoughtful discussion on ethical decision-making, transparency, and practical strategies to sustain services while continuing to advocate for the communities they serve.

### **Healing On Wheels.**



The Art Bus—[a mobile art therapy studio from Artlighten](#)—visited the Dempsey Center on April 28, bringing a unique and engaging creative experience directly to our clients. Each week, up to eight participants step aboard the bus for an hour of guided art-making with a licensed art therapist, using creativity as a tool for expression and healing. The Art Bus will return weekly for five more weeks, with clients rotating so everyone has the opportunity to take part in this inspiring and therapeutic experience.

### **Another Successful Drug Take Back Day**



The last Saturday in April marks National DEA Prescription Drug Take-Back Day, a reminder to safely dispose of unwanted, unused, or expired prescription medications to help prevent misuse, accidental ingestion, or improper disposal.

Staff from our Community Engagement and Prevention teams were out in the community supporting this initiative, connecting with community members, and sharing helpful McCall resources.

At the Burlington Collection Site, 24.2 lbs of medications were collected, while Troop B in North Canaan collected 1.8 lbs of medications.

Missed Drug Take Back Day? Check with your local police department to see if they offer a year-round drop box for safely disposing of prescription medications.

### **Rally for Nonprofit Funding & Advocacy Day.**



It was a beautiful day at the Connecticut State Capitol for the annual Rally for Nonprofit Funding & Advocacy Day. We were grateful for the opportunity to connect with Senator Stephen Harding, Senator Julie Kushner, and Representative Joe Canino, who took time out of their busy schedules to discuss the importance of strengthening Medicaid rates for nonprofit behavioral healthcare providers. These conversations are essential to ensuring organizations like McCall can continue delivering accessible, high-quality care to the communities we serve.



## **A Day of Advocacy in Hartford.**

On April 21, the McCall Behavioral Health Network joined dozens of nonprofits from across the state for CT Nonprofit Alliance Day, highlighting the broad reach and meaningful impact of the nonprofit sector. The event took place at the Capitol, and our staff spent the day engaging with local representatives and state senators to share our work, strengthen partnerships, and advocate for the communities we serve.

📷 Pictured left to right: Nathan Lannan, Prevention Facilitator, Katie Irish, Development Manager, Rebecca Lee Reivera, Executive Assistant, and Donna Bielefield, Prevention Facilitator (not pictured).

Join us for our "The More You Know"

# SPEAKER SERIES

Presented as part of the Recovering Together Support Group  
The following Wednesdays from 5:30 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.  
*Attend in person or join us on Zoom.*

**May 27**  
**What Is CLEAR?**  
with Michele Flowers, CLEAR Program Coordinator, Maeve Kayle, Community Engagement Specialist, and Sgt. Brandon Kelly.  
The McCall Behavioral Health Network and the Torrington Police Department

**June 24**  
**What Are the Warning Signs of Suicide?**  
with **Donna Bielefield**, Prevention Facilitator  
The McCall Behavioral Health Network

**July 15**  
**What Is Digital Wellness?**  
with **Nathan Lannan**, Prevention Facilitator  
The McCall Behavioral Health Network

**August 12**  
**What Is Holistic Healing?**  
with **Thuan Nguyen**, Spiritual Life Coach/Wellness Practitioner  
The Zen Den Center

 **For More Information:** Contact Ewa Szura, LMSW  
[ewa.szura@mccallbhn.org](mailto:ewa.szura@mccallbhn.org) 860.496.2100 ext. 1143

## **"The More You Know" Speaker Series.**

We're excited to announce our next Recovering Together Support Group Speaker Series. These FREE educational sessions are designed to provide practical tools, resources, and peer-informed perspectives to support individuals, families, and the broader community.

For more information, contact

Residential Clinician, Ewa Szura, LMSW at [ewa.szura@mccallbhn.org](mailto:ewa.szura@mccallbhn.org) or call

860.496.2100 ext. 1143.

In-person sessions are held at McCall's Connection Hub at 883 Main Street in Torrington. You may also join virtually.

[Click here to view the flyer.](#)

