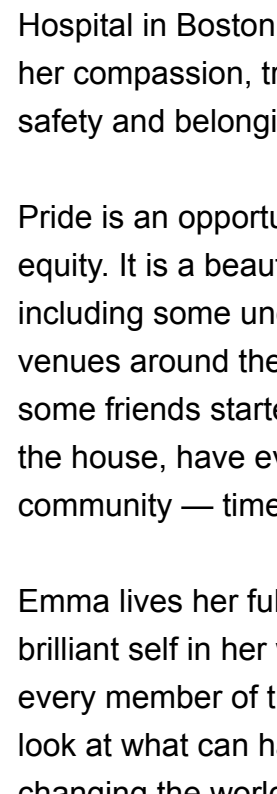


## THIS IS WHAT PRIDE LOOKS LIKE. June 2026



Dear friends,

This month, I'm using this space as an open love letter to my daughter Emma.

For many years, we've used terminology like "tolerance and acceptance" to describe how to treat people who are LGBTQIA+. This has applied to our personal relationships, our communities, and our professional spaces. In healthcare — particularly behavioral health — we have required that staff receive training in "competence" as it relates to care for people in the queer community.

As I examine how those tepid terms translate into the actual care and treatment of others, I find they represent the absolute bare minimum and fall far short of what people deserve. Good healthcare and therapy rest on a foundation of safety and trust. If we are to create spaces of belonging, we must go far beyond tolerance.

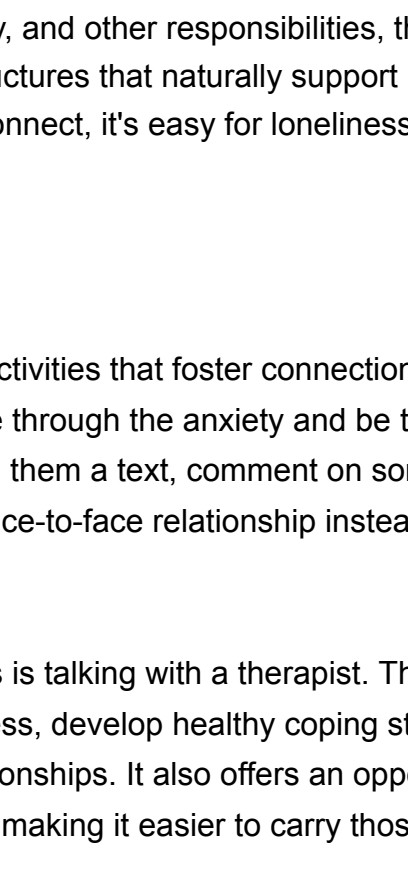
I am very proud to say that my daughter Emma is queer. Her life's journey of self-discovery, acceptance, and joyful celebration is one that leaves me breathless with awe and admiration. She works as a medical social worker in the Center for Transgender Health at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, where she expertly draws on her lived experience as a queer person — as well as her compassion, training, and incredible skills — to provide her patients with that essential sense of safety and belonging.

Pride is an opportunity to reflect on the history of gay rights and the extraordinary work to advance equity. It is a beautiful, joyful tradition of resistance — one that takes several wonderful forms, including some unexpected ones. Emma is also a comedian who performs several times a week at venues around the Boston area, including the esteemed Improv Asylum theater. She, her partner, and some friends started a group called Fruit Basket, which features LGBTQIA+ performers. They pack the house, have every audience member laughing, and simultaneously build understanding and community — time and time again.

Emma lives her full, gorgeous, wholehearted, authentic life — expressing every part of her sparkingly brilliant self in her work and on stage — and communicating to all those around her that she and every member of the queer community deserve so much more than mere acceptance. My friends, look at what can happen when we lift up and celebrate the lives of those around us. My Emma is changing the world for the better.

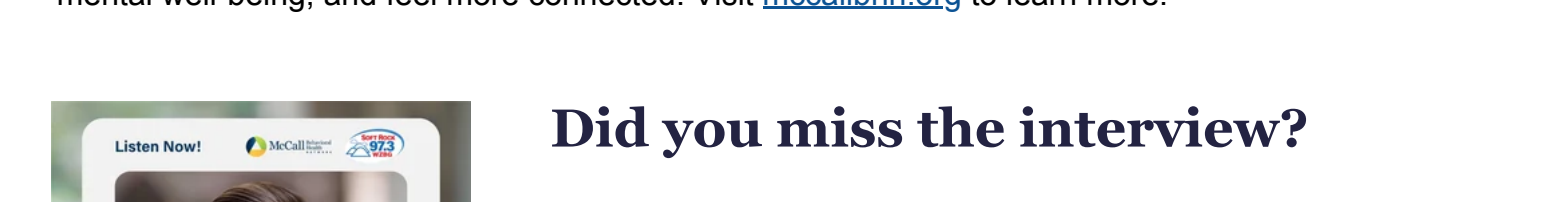
Happy Pride!

Marla Coutant Skinner, LCSW  
President and CEO



*Note: Emma gave me permission to share her story. I am so grateful to her for all she's taught me throughout her extraordinary life — she is a loving, courageous, joyful advocate and a builder of community — she is a gift.*

## Why Connection Is Essential for Men's Mental Health.



June is Men's Health Month, a time to raise awareness about the unique health challenges men face. While conversations often focus on physical health, one issue that deserves just as much attention is loneliness. Although it can feel deeply personal, loneliness is a growing issue that many men experience. The good news is that there is hope, and meaningful connections with friends, family, coworkers, or community can have a profound impact on mental health and overall well-being.

**A widespread public health issue.**

Many individuals might not realize that they are not alone in feeling alone. Millions of other men are experiencing the same struggle, even if they aren't talking about it. Research shows that the percentage of men reporting they don't have any close friends has increased dramatically over the past few decades. In 1990, only about 3% of men reported having no close friends. By 2021, that number had climbed to 15%—roughly one in seven men. Experts believe the true number may be even higher because loneliness is often underreported. Feeling disconnected can contribute to depression, anxiety, stress, and a lower overall quality of life.

**Why are men experiencing loneliness?**

Loneliness isn't a sign that men don't value relationships or that they're doing something wrong. Rather, many men build and maintain friendships through shared activities and experiences that may not naturally open the door to deeper conversations or emotional connection.

"Whether it's school, work, or a sport, the relationships tend to be shoulder to shoulder," shares John Fecteau, LCSW, McCall's Director of Mental Health. "A lot of times, you'll see people after they engage in a sport or activity, and if somebody asks them how the rest of their friends are doing, they really won't have incredibly deep answers on that."

As life gets busier with careers, raising children, caring for family, and other responsibilities, those regular activities often become less frequent. Over time, the structures that naturally support friendships begin to disappear. Without those opportunities to connect, it's easy for loneliness to grow, even when life appears full on the surface.

**Meaningful connection can be rebuilt.**

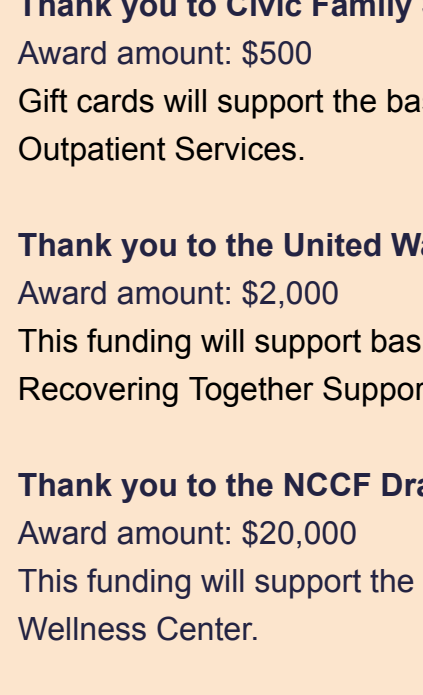
"Men can start by rebuilding those routines, relationships, and activities that foster connection and a sense of purpose," says John. "Sometimes, you have to breathe through the anxiety and be the first person to reach out. If you share an activity with someone, send them a text, comment on something, and start the conversation. Then try to turn that into more of a face-to-face relationship instead of just a shoulder-to-shoulder relationship."

For many men, another important tool for overcoming loneliness is talking with a therapist. Therapy provides a safe, confidential place to explore feelings of loneliness, develop healthy coping strategies, and build the skills needed to create deeper, more fulfilling relationships. It also offers an opportunity to practice opening up emotionally in a supportive environment, making it easier to carry those conversations into everyday life.

**No one has to navigate loneliness alone.**

Take a moment to reflect: Do you have meaningful relationships in your life that bring you joy and support? Or is there someone you wish you felt closer to? It might feel uncomfortable at first, but those honest conversations with yourself and others are often where genuine connection begins.

If you're struggling with loneliness or finding it difficult to reconnect, our therapists can provide personalized support and practical tools to help you strengthen your relationships, improve your mental well-being, and feel more connected. Visit [mccallbh.org](https://www.mccallbh.org) to learn more.



**Did you miss the interview?**

Listen to our recent interview on 97.3 WZBG, where John Fecteau, LCSW, Director of Mental Health, explores the growing issue of male loneliness and how meaningful relationships can support better mental health.

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

## In The News



**Northwest Corner Gives Starts Tomorrow.**

From July 1-22, you can help children and families access care. Every donation made to McCall will be matched dollar for dollar by the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation. That means your gift will have twice the impact in helping children and families across our community.

This year, we're raising funds for McCall's No Child Turned Away Access to Care Fund, which helps ensure that no child or teen is denied mental health or substance use treatment because of financial hardship.

[Visit this link to give!](#)

## Our 2024-2025 Fiscal Year Annual Report is here.

During our 2024-2025 fiscal year, we expanded whole-person care across Connecticut—growing prevention, treatment, recovery, and community services to help more individuals and families than ever before.

Inside, you'll see highlights including the expansion of our Waterbury Whole Health Center, the opening of Heron House, expanded recovery initiatives, and the life-changing impact made possible by our staff, community partners, and donors.

[Read the full report.](#)

## Need a Primary Care Provider?

Our Primary Care offices in Waterbury welcomes new patients and walk-ins. We provide exceptional, comprehensive care for adults, children, and seniors—plus help with routine checkups, illness, chronic conditions, and more.

Everyone is welcome! You don't have to be a McCall client to receive primary care.

Call 203.754.0322 to schedule an appointment.  
Located at McCall's Whole Health Center at 969 W. Main Street, Unit 2D, Waterbury.

[Click here to schedule an appointment.](#)

## Public Health Alert!

The Connecticut Overdose Response Strategy (CT ORS) is urging communities to be aware of a concerning trend involving a dangerous combination of synthetic opioids known as nitazenes and illicitly manufactured benzodiazepines that may be entering Connecticut's drug supply.

This alert serves as an important reminder that the illicit drug supply continues to change and become more complex. Emerging substances and unexpected combinations of drugs can make overdoses more difficult to recognize and respond to, creating additional challenges for public health and safety efforts.

[Read the full report.](#)

## GRANTS AND GRATITUDE.

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 the Union Savings Bank Foundation.**  
Award amount: \$10,000  
This funding will support our in-school Insight Prevention Program.

**Thank you to Civic Family Services.**  
Award amount: \$500  
Gift cards will support the basic needs of clients in our Family Services and Child & Adolescent Outpatient Services.

**Thank you to the United Way of Northwest Connecticut.**  
Award amount: \$2,000  
This funding will support basic needs for clients participating in Parenting Support Services and the Recovering Together Support Group.

**Thank you to the NCCF Draper Foundation Fund.**  
Award amount: \$20,000  
This funding will support the completion of a conference room at the Anne and Rollin Bates Family Wellness Center.

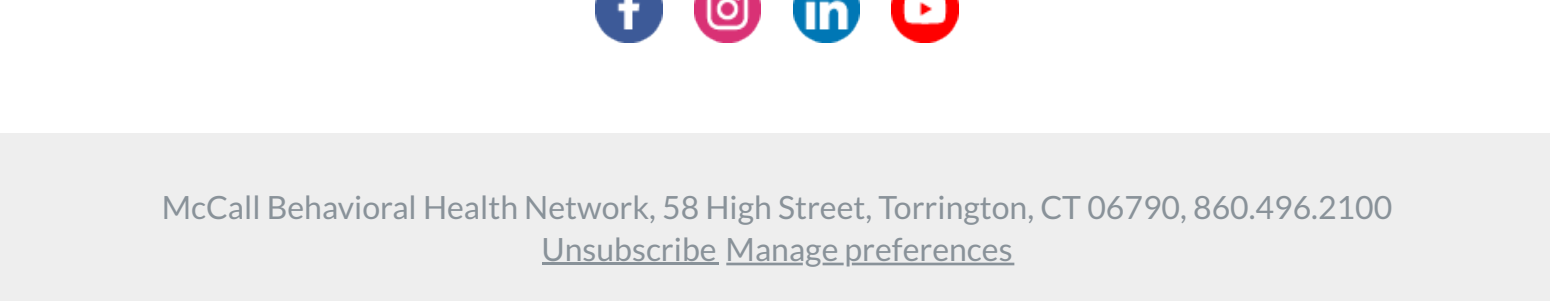
**Thank you to the NCCF Draper Foundation Fund.**  
Award amount: \$10,000  
This funding will support the Litchfield County Opiate Task Force Strategic Plan.

## OUT & ABOUT with McCall

**10 Years of Celebrating Impact.**

For the past 10 years, the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance has played a vital role in strengthening Connecticut's nonprofit sector and amplifying the voices of organizations serving communities across our state. On June 4, we were honored to attend their gala celebrating a decade of advocacy, collaboration, and impact!

**Pictured left to right:**  
Shalyn Sheldon, MSW, Senior Director of Administration & Accreditation  
Rosamma Vithayathil, MS, Chief Financial Officer  
Marla Coutant Skinner, LCSW, President and CEO  
Krislie Scott, VP of Clinical Operations, Ruffinford  
Monika Nugent, Manager of Public Policy and Advocacy, CT Nonprofit Alliance  
Marisa Mittelstaedt, MBA, Director of Development and Marketing



## Congratulations to Our Three Leadership Northwest Graduates!

The Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce Leadership program helps develop the next generation of leaders who are committed to strengthening our region and making Northwest Connecticut an even better place to live and work.

Our graduates spent the last eight months learning from local organizations, connecting with community leaders, and gaining a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing Northwest Connecticut.

We're proud of their hard work and excited to see how they continue to make an impact in our communities.

**Pictured left to right:**  
Rebecca Lee Rivers, Executive Assistant  
Katherine Taylor-Klimkoski, BA, Employment Specialist  
Joshua Licursi, MPH, Digital Marketing Manager

Participants in the Leadership Northwest program complete a group project designed to address a need in the community. A special shout-out to Rebecca and her team for creating a community cupboard, recently installed at Community Health & Wellness in Torrington, to help neighbors experiencing food insecurity.



## Bringing the Best in Prevention Back to Our Communities.

We're grateful to members of our Prevention team for attending the Montana Summer Institute this month and bringing home new knowledge to share with our communities!

Prevention strategies are always evolving, and we take pride in staying informed on innovative, evidence-based practices that help teens and families thrive. The Montana Summer Institute was an incredible opportunity to learn from prevention professionals from across the country and explore ways to build healthier, safer communities through substance use prevention, mental health, suicide prevention, and more.

**Pictured left to right:**  
Nathan Lannan, Prevention Facilitator  
Donna Bielefeld, Mental Health Awareness Training Coordinator  
Darian Daniels, BA, CPS, Supervisor of Prevention Coalitions, Tobacco Treatment Specialist

