



AROUND THE BHN

BHN President Pat Rehmer says lace up your sneakers and join the BHN for the NAMI Walk. • [PAGE 3](#)



FAMILY FUNFEST

Activities, screenings and demonstrations highlight Plantsville event. • [PAGE 4](#)



TRUE PURPOSE

Former drug abuser finds peace and happiness by helping others. • [PAGE 8](#)

Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network

BHINews

Voices of hope in the ER

Behavioral Health Network brings recovery coaches to East Region hospitals

In her time as nurse manager of the Emergency Department at Windham Hospital, Meghan Hilliard has seen first-hand the devastation caused by addiction and substance use disorders in her community. But for all the clinical resources that her department can bring to help revive someone experiencing an alcohol or drug-related overdose, Hilliard and her staff often felt frustrated knowing that the same patient may well return the next day needing the same care.

“Everyone knows this is a serious problem in our community, but there’s only so much front-line emergency room staff can do to address the underlying addiction that leads to overdoses,” Hilliard said. “We can refer a patient to long-term treatment until we’re blue in the face, but we can only hope that they will listen to us.”

That’s why Hilliard was thrilled when leadership within the Behavioral Health Network notified her that they were planning to assign trained recovery coaches to assist substance abuse patients in the emergency departments at Windham and Backus hospitals.

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Where every moment matters



Kevin Evinger, a mental health worker at Natchaug Hospital’s Mansfield site, stands in front of the poster he is featured in as part of Hartford HealthCare’s “Every Moment Matters” program. The new customer experience initiative is being piloted at Rushford and Natchaug as part of a push to build client loyalty. Similar signage will be added across HHC later this month. [See more, page 5.](#)

“These are people who can reach patients in ways that most others can’t”

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“It’s such a wonderful way to offer needed support for these patients,” Hilliard said. “With recovery coaches, these patients will be hearing from people who have a background that gives them special authority and credibility — they have been there themselves.”

Recovery coaches have lived experience with achieving recovery and their experience can be very helpful to individuals who are at the beginning of that journey. These recovery coaches have received extensive training in supporting others who are struggling with substance use disorders, offering insights on their own experiences as a way to provide hope.

“These are people who can reach patients in ways that most others can’t

because their message is so personal and so powerful,” said Patricia Rehmer, president of the Behavioral Health Network, who is a strong advocate for introducing recovery coaches into healthcare settings.

Rehmer said coaches will be assigned to respond to overdose and other drug-related emergencies 24 hours a day, seven days a week, on an on-call basis. Whenever an overdose patient comes into the ED, front-line staff can contact the recovery coach to have them come in and work directly with the patient after they have received emergency care.

“Our goal is for this to eventually be extended to hospitals across the Hartford HealthCare system,” Rehmer said. She pointed out that the ongoing epidemic in opioid and heroin abuse contributed to a record number of drug-related overdose fatalities in Connecticut in 201 — more than 900 deaths. She said the crisis points to the need for involvement from those who have “lived” experience.

“If you’re feeling hopeless and lost, it can be a very powerful thing to see someone who went through the same thing and is now living a happy and meaningful life,” she said.

Aetna partnership takes a bite out of Apple Watch cost

Hartford HealthCare employees can buy an Apple Watch with a \$75 discount from Aetna. The promotion is part of a partnership between Aetna and Apple designed to help employees stay active, track their health and keep track of their insurance.

From practicing mindfulness to reaching fitness goals, Apple Watch is designed to help you stay active, healthy, and productive throughout the day — right from your wrist.

Employees of Hartford HealthCare will be able to purchase an Apple Watch online and pay for it with a credit card or, if they are eligible, spread the cost over a year, using interest-free payroll deductions.

For more details, including purchasing instructions, click on the Wellness Incentives page of HHC Connect.



We have momentum

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We need you to join the The NAMI Walk team

As someone who has been active in the behavioral health community in Connecticut for many years, I know first-hand how important it is to partner with other high-quality organizations to promote mental health aware-

ness and education. This is such an important and widespread issue that you can't make progress operating on your own.



That's why I'm encouraging all employees across the Behavioral Health Network to sign up for the annual NAMI Walk in Hartford, which is set to take place at 10 am Saturday, May 20,

at Bushnell Park. NAMI, which stands for National Alliance on Mental Illness, is a national organization dedicated to supporting individuals and families struggling with mental health through education, outreach and streamlining access to services.

Entities within the Behavioral Health Network, including the Institute of Living, Natchaug Hospital and Rushford, have been supporting the annual NAMI Walk for years, with teams of employees joining teams from other behavioral health organizations across the state in a show of support for mental health awareness. The walk takes place around the grounds of Bushnell Park on what has traditionally been a glorious early summer morning.

This year is no different, as the BHN is proud to once again serve as a sponsor for the Walk. But in order for our sponsorship to be a success, we need support and commitment from all of you to take part, whether it's assuming a leadership role as a team captain or participating in the walk or manning our display table at the event.

At this point, we are very much hoping that one of you will volunteer to become a team captain soon. The captains help coordinate the BHN team, handing out informational packets and making sure team members are registered and equipped with everything they need the day of the Walk.

Join us and walk for awareness

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) in Connecticut will be hosting its annual NAMI Walk to support mental health awareness on Saturday, May 20, at Bushnell Park in Hartford.

The Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network will be a sponsor for this event, and we are looking for employees at each of the entities within BHN (Backus and HOCC behavioral health units, Institute of Living, Windham Hospital, Natchaug and Rushford) to sign up as captains to encourage staff to join the BHN walking team. We are hoping for a strong BHN representation at the event. Contact Amanda Nappi at amanda.nappi@hhchealth.org or Matt Burgard at matt.burgard@hhchealth.org for additional help or with questions.



If you are interested in becoming a team captain, please contact Amanda Nappi at amanda.nappi@hhchealth.org as soon as possible so we can begin coordinating our involvement. The work that NAMI does is crucial to the people across our state who need mental health services, many of whom have been or are active clients within the BHN. Let's show our support for working together to raise awareness of this important cause.

Pat Rehmer, MSN, ACHE, is Hartford HealthCare senior vice president for behavioral health and president of the Behavioral Health Network. Her column appears monthly in BHNNews.

About BHNNews

BHNNews is published every other Friday. Story ideas or submissions may be sent to matt.burgard@hhchealth.org or amanda.nappi@hhchealth.org. Articles must be submitted as a Word document. Every effort will be made to run the article in its entirety, but due to space constraints and style requirements, editing may be necessary.

Deadline for the next edition of BHNNews is Tuesday, March 21, at noon.

Healthy Family FunFest



Hundreds flocked to the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville for Hartford HealthCare's annual Healthy Family FunFest. The event featured health information, speakers, screenings, demonstrations and activities for people of all ages, including representatives from the Behavioral Health Network. Above left: Melissa Curtis shares information about the BHN with a FunFest attendee. Above right: Paula Rego, left; Samantha Crowley, center; and Laura Durst from the IOL Family Resource Center. Left: Catherine Stewart and Scott Hannan, PhD, from the IOL Anxiety Disorders Center.

Here's to you!

- A weekly roundup of kudos from staff and patients. Please email your submissions to matt.burgard@hhchealth.org. Editors reserve the right to edit submissions for length and grammar.

Helping all who need it
 Congratulations to the Joshua Center Shoreline staff for having the highest census at Shoreline in its history. Nice work team. Keep up the good work!
 — Angela Hernandez, LCSW,
 Program Director, Joshua Center Shoreline

THE PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING MUSICAL

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music by **Tom Kitt**
 book and lyrics by **Brian Yorkey**

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directed by **Rob Ruggiero**

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Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network
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More moments that matter



Employees at Rushford and Natchaug have been recognized with large “Every Moment Matters” wall-size wrap posters. At left, Rushford front desk operator Maureen Sioch stands in front of a poster recognizing her while, right, Rushford maintenance technician Randy Marks stands in front of a poster recognizing him.

I insideiol

Family Resource Center Support Groups

The IOL Family Resource Center (FRC) holds regular support groups. For additional information, please contact the FRC at **860.545.7665** or **860.545.1888**. All programs are free of charge and, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Massachusetts Cottage, First Floor Group Room at the IOL Campus, 200 Retreat Ave., Hartford. The upcoming IOL FRC Support Group schedule is as follows:

■ **Support Group For Those Coping With A New Or Chronic Medical Condition.** March 10, 17, 24, April 7, 14, 21, 28 (Every Friday), 1 - 2 p.m. in the Center Building, First Floor Conference Room. For young adults ages 17-26 struggling with a new diagnosis, chronic medical conditions, physical symptoms or limitations. The group will help with difficult losses and limitation due to a medical condition,

and build a positive, future-oriented focus with realistic goals. To RSVP, please call Elizabeth Alve-Hedegaard, APRN, at **860.545.7050**.

■ **Depression Bipolar Support Alliance Group (DBSA).** March 13, 20, 27, April 3, 10, 17, 24 (Every Monday), noon – 1 p.m. in the Todd Building, Bunker Room and March 15, 22, 29, April 5, 12, 19, 26 (Every Wednesday), 7 – 8 p.m. in the Commons Building, 2nd Floor, Litchfield Room. Peer run support group for those who have been diagnosed with depression or bipolar disorder.

■ **Alcoholics Anonymous.** March 14, 21, 28, April 4, 11, 18, 25 (Every Tuesday), 12:30-1:30 p.m. Join us for coffee and a one-hour topic discussion. To learn more, contact the AA General Service Office at 212-870-3400 or P.O. Box 459,

New York, NY 10163.

■ **Depression: An Introduction To The Disorder.** March 14, June 6, 6:30 – 7:45 p.m. This program is for family and friends of individuals who suffer from depression. It will present a basic understanding of major depression, its treatment, and ways family members might better cope with the illness.

■ **Autism Spectrum Support/Educational Group Meeting For Parents.** March 15, April 19, May 17, June 21 (Third Wednesday of the month), 6 - 7 p.m. Providing a place for parents of children on the autism spectrum, or with another related disorder, to come together and get support and information. Monthly, peer-run sup-

Continued on next page

Family Resource Center Support Groups (continued)

port groups interspersed with special guests and speakers to offer additional guidance and perspective.

- **Hearing Voices Network (HVN).** March 16, 23, 30, April 6, 13, 20, 27 (Every Thursday), 5 - 6:30 p.m. in the Todd Building, Bunker Room. Peer run support group based firmly on a belief of self-help, mutual respect and understanding where people can safely share their experiences of voices, visions, unusual sensory perceptions. The groups offer an opportunity for people to accept and find meaning in their experiences that help them regain power over their lives.
- **Support Group For Families Dealing With Major Mental Illness.** March 16, April 6, 20, May 4, 18, June 1, 15 (First and third Thursday of each month), 5:15 - 6:30 p.m. in the Center Building, First Floor Conference Room. For family and friends of individuals who have schizophrenia, bipolar or other related disorders. Share your success and struggles. Learn to care for yourself while caring for others.
- **Al-Anon Parent Group.** March 16, 23, 30, April 6, 13, 20, 27 (Every Thursday), 7 - 8 p.m. One hour topic discussion.
- **Dementia Lecture: An Introduction.** March 21, May 30, 6:30 - 7:45 p.m. This program is for family members and friends of individuals who have dementia or a related disorder. It will present a basic understanding of the disorder, its treatment, along with specific suggestions to help family members and friends better cope with the illness.
- **Social Support Group — LGBTQ Issues (Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Questioning).** March 22, April

12, 26, May 10, 24, June 14, 28 (Second and fourth Wednesday of each month), 5 - 6:15 p.m. in the Center Building, Young Adult Service Group Room. Support group for 16- to 23-year-olds who identify LGBTQ issues as being prominent in their lives. The goal is to discuss support strategies to manage life challenges.

- **Yoga.** March 28, April 25, May 30, June 27, 5 - 6 p.m. in the Commons Building, Hartford Room. Open to adult staff and family members. Mats are provided or bring your own! The class begins with breathing exercises and gentle stretches, followed by a series of

poses and ends with relaxation and meditation. Instructor: Valerie Raggio, LCSW, Yoga Fit, Level 1 Certified. To RSVP or inquire, call the FRC at **860.545.7716** or email **laura.durst@hhchealth.org**

- **Schizophrenia: An Introduction To The Disorder.** March 28, June 20, 6:30 - 7:45 p.m. This program is for family and friends of individuals who have schizophrenia or a related disorder. It will present a basic understanding of the disorder, its treatment, along with suggestions to help family members and friends cope with the illness.



- Are you a parent/caregiver of a child (ages 5-12) who has a mental illness?
- Would you like to learn more about your child's mental illness?
- Would you like to learn new coping skills to help you and your child?

Join us during Mental Health Month (May 2017) for any or all of the group meetings to help you and your child with mental illness

Managing Your Child's Mental Health

A group series for parents and caregivers

Thursdays • 6 - 7:30 p.m.

Hartford Room, Commons Building, 2nd Floor

Facilitated by: **Jeevitha Kempegowda, Psy.D.**

Discussion topics will include:

- **May 4:** Understanding mental health in children
- **May 11:** Helping my child and I cope with mental health stigma (*Facing judgment and criticism from others*)
- **May 18:** Play-based activities to manage aggression and impulse control
- **May 25:** Helping my child who has experienced trauma
- **June 1:** Helping myself (*Self-care for caregivers*)

RSVP by May 1

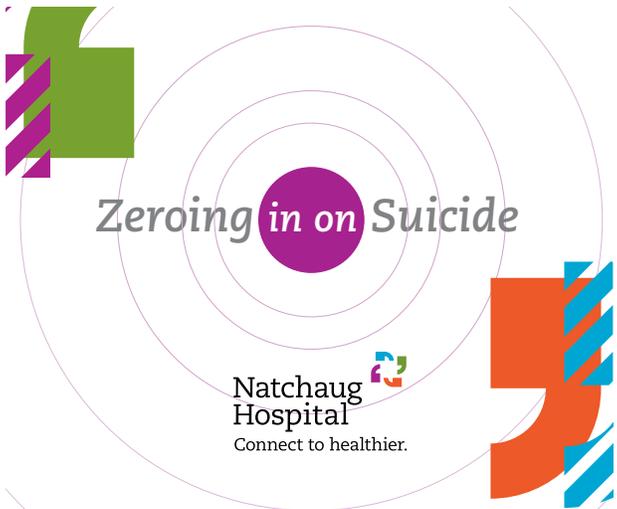
Call **860-545-7706**

or e-mail **jeevitha.kempegowda@hhchealth.org**

National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week • May 1 - 7
National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day • May 4

Hartford HealthCare
Behavioral Health Network





Empowering Young Adults:

A Fresh Approach to Mental Health Programming

When:

Tuesday, March 14, 2017
Noon – 1:30 pm

Where:

Betty R. Tipton Room
Student Center, Eastern Connecticut State University, Willimantic

Hosted by

Elsa M. Núñez - President of Eastern Connecticut State University and
Pat Rehmer - President of the Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network

Guest Speaker

Marisa Giannela-Porco - President of The Jordan Porco Foundation

- Minimum donation of \$100 per guest
- Sponsored tables of ten available

RSVP to Sherry Smardon

860.465.5910 or
sherry.smardon@hhchealth.org

Luncheon sponsored in part by

The ECSU Foundation, Inc.

All proceeds will benefit Natchaug Hospital's educational programs.

natchaug.org/events

Natchaug Hospital
Connect to healthier.

New look for pharmacy



Natchaug pharmacy staff celebrated the official opening of their new space at the main hospital with an open house event. The new pharmacy offers more than double the working space of the original pharmacy. Shown here, from left, are Trish Hayward-Paige, Jose Scarpa, Vinita Mistry and Greg Cichowski.

You Are Not Alone

Support Group for Children and Families Living With High Functioning Autism Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD)



The focus of the group is to provide support and education to parents and families raising children with Pervasive Developmental Disorders. The group will:

- Connect parents with similar concerns
- Help families understand the needs of children with PDD
- Develop strategies to parent and educate children with PDD
- Support family members who live with a PDD child
- Support the children identified as PDD

Natchaug Hospital
Connect to healthier.
www.natchaug.org

Dates: March 29 - April 26
May 31 - June 28 - July 26 - Aug. 30
Time: 5:30 – 7 p.m.
Where: Joshua Center Thames Valley
11A Stott Ave., Norwich, CT

Parent Support group

Understand the nature of the disorder
View things differently
Poor social skills
Over stimulated
Have melt downs
Develop strategies to provide consistency, predictability and understanding (especially during a meltdown)

Client Support Group

Learn conversational skills, social skills and behavioral expectations or "rules of engagement"

Sibling Support Group

Provide care and fun for siblings while helping them learn and understand that everyone is different, and therefore, have different needs

If interested in attending, please contact:

Carleigh Hannah
860-696-9984
Carleigh.Hannah@hhchealth.org



Please register for these FREE support groups, so we will have enough PIZZA

Finding a true purpose by helping others

As a young man in New York, coming of age in the '60s, Harris* thought his purpose in life was to be an investigative reporter or a concert promoter, but instead found himself a hopeless drug abuser. It wasn't until much later, after three attempts at recovery, that he discovered his true calling.

"My path is to work the 12 steps as they were meant to be followed, and to guide other people to find hope, and even joy in recovery — after their history of addiction," said Harris, who now offers 12-step workshops to those struggling with addiction to alcohol and drugs. He recently began sharing his story with patients in the Intensive Outpatient programs at Rushford, and he finds that the more he reaches out to help others, the more he finds peace and fulfillment in his life.

"It's all very simple, spelled out right there in the 12 steps, but it took me over 30 years to surrender to the process," he said. "Now, when I work with others trying to find their way, I see them struggling to make the same concession and offer them a way out of their dilemma."

Harris said his journey of recovery began in the early 1980s when he found himself overwhelmed by fear and consumed by an addiction to drugs. His fear, he said, wasn't that he would die; it was that he would continue to live a life of addiction.

Desperate for help, he reached out to his father and connected with a behavioral health clinic in Connecticut where he embarked on a path of recovery that would keep him free of drugs for 10 years. But despite his commitment to going to 12-step meetings and relying on fellowship alone for his recovery program, he relapsed into drug use as he tried to cope with a family crisis. Eventually he returned to the 12-step

program, committing himself to do things differently. This time he was going to get a sponsor and start working the steps. But again, after another 10 years of sobriety, he relapsed on painkillers while attempting to recover from a medical issue.

It wasn't until 2006, he said, when a friend of his in recovery introduced him to a step-study workshop, that he fully embraced the meaning of the steps. In these workshops, attendees were led by experienced mentors and worked the steps together as a group. By being part of that environment, he said, he felt the program finally took on a "deeper meaning" making him realize the importance of incorporating the steps into his life.

That true recovery is attained by having both fellowship and steps in one's life.

"These workshops have become the focal point of my life, giving it direction and meaning," he said. He now offers two workshops a week, on average, while holding down a full-time job as a sales manager at an auto dealership in the New Haven area.

Anyone interested in learning more about Harris's workshops can send an email to thebigbookstudy@aol.com.

**In keeping with the tradition of anonymity, Harris asked not to use his real name for this story. He said he does not share his story of recovery out of ego gratification, but in hopes that it may help and inspire others.*



Help Rushford help others!

We are currently interviewing for membership on the

Rushford Client Advisory Council

The **Rushford Advisory Council** is a volunteer collaborative partnership between Rushford staff and our clients and their families to help make Rushford's great client service **even better.**

We are seeking members from **across Rushford's programs, services and locations.**

The council meets on the second Wednesday of every month at 5 p.m. at Rushford's Paddock Avenue location in Meriden.

If you have a client or client family member who might be interested in providing ongoing constructive feedback about their experiences with Rushford, please contact Caitlin.Swartz@hhchealth.org.

Rushford
A Hartford HealthCare Partner

