The past year brought growth and innovation, hellos and goodbyes, recovery and hope. The bottom line is the Behavioral Health Network (BHN) had some memorable moments in 2018, continuing to solidify itself as a state and national leader in mental health and addiction services.

In this issue of BHNews, we are celebrating these milestones and more. Some of our accomplishments in the past year include:

- The Zero Suicide initiative, a program to decrease the number of suicides within and outside healthcare facilities, was launched across the BHN.
- Expansion of the MATCH (Medication Assisted Treatment for Heroin and Opioid Addiction) program.

Top left: The Institute of Living and Hartford Hospital staff honored World Suicide Prevention Day with a flag lowering ceremony. Top right: Jim O’Dea, MBA, PhD, vice president of the Behavioral Health Network, threw out the first pitch at the Yard Goats game in support of Rushford at Dunkin’ Donuts Stadium in Hartford. Bottom right: Natchaug Hospital’s Green Valley School successfully moved from Norwich to Franklin and continued serving students with emotional and behavioral health issues.
Treatment Close to Home) program, with new locations in Vernon, South-ington, Norwich and Middletown, and added services in several locations such as art therapy, community gardens, yoga and a substance abuse partial hospitalization program.

- Rushford received two SAMSHA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration) grants totaling $3.5 million over the next few years to help combat the opioid crisis. One $2 million grant involves first responders in Mer-iden connecting overdose victims with services through the Rushford Mobile Crisis Unit, and a $1.5 million grant will increase help at-risk clients to easier access medication-assisted treatment.

- Joined forces with New Britain, Berlin and Newington municipal gov-ernments, the State’s Attorney General’s Office and other community mental health agencies to announce the HOPE initiative in which police officers will be given the latitude to refer drug users to treatment instead of arresting them.

- The Institute of Living Schizophrenia Rehabilitation Program received the Program of the Year Award from the Association of Ambulatory Behavioral Health. This award is given annually to programs that demonstrate outstanding advocacy, innovation and patient outcomes.

- The Olin Neuropsychiatry Research Center continued a wide range of research, including the impact of marijuana on driving, how pot impacts the brain and pupillometry, which measures pupil diameter to predict some mental health issues.

- With exercise equipment donated by Planet Fitness, a new gym opened at Rushford in Middletown so that clients can make exercise part of their recovery. It was a certainly a banner year.

Looking forward to 2019, John Santopietro, MD, the BHN’s first physician-in-chief, has joined BHN President Pat Rehmer. While there were many milestones in 2018, in the coming year the focus will be on recovery; quality and safety; customer experience; employee engagement; standardization and scaling of our centers of excellence and much more. Thanks to everyone for all they do, every day, to make us the most comprehensive behavioral health organization in the state. We should all be proud.
The Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network is pleased to announce that J. Craig Allen, MD, has been promoted to vice president for substance abuse services for the Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network (BHN).

In his new role, Dr. Allen will oversee substance use treatment services across the BHN. He will develop standard work in the Medication Assisted Treatment Close to Home (MATCH) programs; oversee the BHN’s addiction medicine fellowship, which was recently recognized by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME); provide consultations to facilities on complex clinical situations involving substance use; and help coordinate addiction screenings and interventions across HHC. He will also continue to be the spokesperson in the community and media for substance use topics and current events.

For the past 13 years, Dr. Allen has served as medical director of Rushford. He is also chief of the department of psychiatry at MidState Medical Center and chair of the Hartford HealthCare (HHC) Opioid Management Committee and Addictions Clinical Council.

Dr. Allen is a member of the state advisory board for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, chairs the treatment committee for the Alcohol and Drug Policy Council, is on the Connecticut State Medical Society’s addiction medicine committee and opioid task force and is president of the Connecticut chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine.

He is an associate professor of psychiatry at the Frank Netter School of Medicine at Quinnipiac University and has held faculty appointments at Harvard and Yale medical schools. Currently, he trains addiction medicine fellows in Rushford’s ACGME-accredited program as well as child and adolescent psychiatry fellows and residents from the Institute of Living. He is board certified in child, adolescent and adult psychiatry and addiction medicine.

Dr. Allen lectures and advocates locally and nationally for prevention, screening, early intervention and treatment access for substance use and other psychiatric disorders throughout the lifespan.

Dozens of Rushford staff members, community providers and healthcare consumers attended a roundtable discussion about the Affordable Care Act led by U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy, foreground center, and Pat Rehmer, MSN, ACHE, Hartford HealthCare senior vice president for behavioral health and president of the Behavioral Health Network, foreground left, at Rushford’s Meriden campus on Monday, Jan. 7.

Four Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network doctors were named to the Best Doctors in Psychiatry list for 2018.

Joanna Fogg-Waberski, MD, interim medical director at the IOL; Evan Fox, MD, assistant medical director for consultation liaison services at the IOL; Harold I. Schwartz, MD, psychiatrist-in-chief emeritus at the IOL; and Samuel Silverman, MD, medical director of addiction services at Rushford were among the seven Connecticut psychiatrists selected for the annual listing.

Four BHN physicians named among national list of Best Doctors in Psychiatry

Founded in 1989 by Harvard Medical School physicians, Best Doctors is a global benefits provider and medical information services company that connects individuals facing difficult medical treatment decisions with the best doctors, selected by impartial peer review in over 450 specialty and subspecialty combinations, to review their diagnosis and treatment plans.
Long before the opioid overdose epidemic hit the news, alcohol-related deaths were taking nearly 90,000 American lives a year.

Despite being the third-leading cause of preventable death in the United States — after tobacco and obesity — alcohol use is often overlooked as an opportunity for life-changing intervention. Decreasing or stopping alcohol intake can have significant benefits for physical and psychological health and, in some cases, even be life-saving.

J. Craig Allen, MD, vice president for substance abuse services for the Behavioral Health Network, said people who drink regularly and heavily may find it challenging when they try to stop.

“If you are physically dependent on alcohol, withdrawal can include stomach cramps, vomiting, sweating, tremors, hypertension, hallucinations, and, for some, can be life-threatening,” he explained. “If you experience physical or psychological symptoms when cutting down on alcohol, a medical assessment is essential. Some people need medically-monitored assistance and specific withdrawal medications to get through the initial period safely.”

When combined with counseling and behavioral therapies, Dr. Allen said there is scientific evidence supporting the use of pharmacologic intervention to treat alcohol use disorders (AUDs). Millions of Americans suffer from an AUD and high-risk binge drinking that can lead to health-related issues as well as financial and personal problems.

However, while they are beneficial, AUD medications are grossly under-utilized, he said. To help increase their use, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 2018 issued guidelines for the pharmacologic treatment of AUD. The Hartford HealthCare BHN Medication Assisted Treatment Close to Home (MATCH) program includes services for people with AUD and drug dependency.

The patient-centered approach offers evidence-based medications including those the APA identified, such as:

- **Naltrexone (ReVia® or Depade®)** is given in pill form. Naltrexone extended release (VIVITROL®) is given in monthly injections.
- **Acamprosate Calcium (Campral®)**
- **Disulfiram (Antabuse)**
- **Gabapentin**
- **Topiramate**

Other medications that may have less evidence but have been effective for some populations are also considered.

“Our goal is to make patients as comfortable as possible so they can use the strategies and therapies that will be...
The Record Journal published a story about a recent roundtable on the Affordable Care Act held at Rushford involving U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy. [http://www.myrecordjournal.com/News/Meriden/Meriden-News/Murphy-tells-advocates-%E2%80%98precarious-time-for-the-ACA.html](http://www.myrecordjournal.com/News/Meriden/Meriden-News/Murphy-tells-advocates-%E2%80%98precarious-time-for-the-ACA.html)

In a story published on Channel 3 on Jan. 8, J. Craig Allen, MD, vice president for substance abuse services for the Behavioral Health Network, spoke to the public health ramifications of raising the age to buy tobacco products in one Connecticut town. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmkAFU75H0&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmkAFU75H0&feature=youtu.be)

Channel 3 tackles New Year’s resolutions ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7yGl22HRUU&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7yGl22HRUU&feature=youtu.be)) in a story that includes an interview with Pat Rehmer, president of the Behavioral Health Network.


After the stabbing death of a child right before Christmas, Laura Saunders, PsyD, ABPP, a child psychologist with the Institute of Living, was featured in stories airing on Channel 3 ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rR8cEmk4egs&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rR8cEmk4egs&feature=youtu.be)), Channel 8 ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1j9xnm0R2k&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1j9xnm0R2k&feature=youtu.be)) and FOX 61 ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwH211dA81Y&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwH211dA81Y&feature=youtu.be)).


After a mother took to social media to discuss her child’s mistreatment in a Rocky Hill school, Dr. Saunders was also featured in a story on bullying that aired on Dec. 18 on Channel 3 ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gQhVnU_poU&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gQhVnU_poU&feature=youtu.be)).

On Dec. 14, Dr. Allen discussed the dangers of Fentanyl in a story that aired on Channel 3 ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYsSt54Tpdk&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYsSt54Tpdk&feature=youtu.be)). For more behavioral health news updates, subscribe to the BHN’s e-newsletter on [www.healthnewshub.org](http://www.healthnewshub.org).

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**ALCOHOL, from page 4**

long-term tools in their recovery,” Dr. Allen said.

The National Institutes of Health defines high-risk drinking as more than four drinks a day or 14 per week for men and three drinks a day or seven per week for women. High-risk drinkers are at enhanced risk for having or developing an AUD and/or the physical results of alcohol exposure like hypertension, liver disease, gastrointestinal issues and cancers.

“It can be very difficult to stop drinking but the help many patients find through the MATCH program gives them the added assistance they may need to achieve sobriety,” Dr. Allen said. [https://matchrecovery.org/alcohol](https://matchrecovery.org/alcohol)

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**BHN looking to boost social media presence**

Are you interested in joining the BHN Social Media Squad? You can help the BHN improve its social media content and engagement as a member of the Social Media Squad. Participants will:

- Write Health News Hub stories from your professional perspective (i.e. thought leadership pieces, consumer friendly clinical pieces, highlights of published research).
- Take photos/videos at employee and public events for posting to social media sites.
- Lead and monitor support for private Facebook support groups across all institutes and service lines.

For more information or to join, contact socialmedia@hhchealth.org.
Three Olin Center doctors were recently recognized by their respective professional organizations with memberships and awards.

At the 2018 American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP) annual meeting in December, Michael Stevens, MD, was elected as a full ACNP member and Alecia Dager as an associate member.

Godfrey Pearlson, MD, was awarded the American Psychiatric Association’s (APA) 2019 Mentorship Award, which will be presented at the May 2019 APA annual meeting.

The talented “Just4Fun” Barbershop Quartet, including retired Hartford Hospital internist Carl Braren, MD, second from left, came for their annual visit to the IOL, rounding on patient units and the campus, singing lovely holiday songs. All enjoyed them very much!
Family Resource Center Support Groups (continued)

- **Al-Anon Parent Group.** Jan. 17, 24, 31, Feb. 7, 14, 21, 28, March 7, 14, 21, 28. (Every Thursday), 7 - 8 p.m. One-hour topic discussion.

- **Support Group For Those Coping With A New Or Chronic Medical Condition.** Jan. 18, 25, Feb. 8, 15, 22, March 8, 15, 22, 29. (Every Friday except the first of the month), 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 email marissa.sicley-rogers@hhchealth.org.

- **Social Support Group — LGBTQ Issues (Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Questioning).** Jan. 23, Feb. 13, 27, March 13, 27. (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 in their lives. The goal is to discuss support strategies to manage life challenges.

- **Introduction To Mental Health Benefits and Services.** Jan. 29, May 7, 6:30 – 7:45 p.m. This presentation will provide an overview of benefit programs available for individuals with mental health disabilities. To attend, please RSVP to Laura at 860.545.7324.

- **Bipolar: An Introduction To The Disorder.** Feb. 5, April 30, 6:30 – 7:45 p.m. For family members and friends of individuals who have bipolar or a related disorder. It will present a basic understanding of the disorder, its treatment, along with specific suggestions to help cope with the illness. To attend, please RSVP to Laura at 860.545.7324.

- **Substance Use Educational And Support Group.** Feb. 14, March 14, April 11, May 9, June 13. (Second Thursday of each month), 4 – 5 p.m. For family members impacted by loved ones with substance abuse.

- **Managing Schizophrenia.** Feb. 19, 6:30 – 7:45 p.m. This presentation will discuss the impact that symptoms of schizophrenia have on everyday activities, and provide tips on what you can do to make things better at home. To attend, please RSVP to Laura at 860.545.7324.

If you are a student that needs to observe a group for a class assignment, you must contact the Family Resource Center by emailing Laura Durst at laura.durst@hhchealth.org two weeks prior to the group you would like to attend. Please note, not all of our groups are open for observers and it is up to the facilitator and group members themselves.

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**Introducing the HHC EMMie Awards**

Nominate colleagues who made a moment matter for those in our care – patients, residents, clients, families, visitors, and students in our schools.

Recognize moments that matter in four categories:

- **Caught in the Act Award for Integrity**
  - Nominate a colleague who you caught doing the right thing for someone in our care.

- **Customer’s Choice Award for Creating an Exceptional Experience**
  - Nominate a colleague mentioned in a letter, comment, or media story that came from someone who had such an exceptional experience that they felt compelled to share.

- **Excellence in Practice Award for Continuous Improvement**
  - Nominate a colleague who found a way to improve the experience for someone in our care through one of the Lean/GSW continuous improvement venues.

- **Great Catch Award for Safety**
  - Nominate a colleague who did the safe thing by catching an error and preventing harm to someone in our care.

**Nominations due no later than Feb. 15, 2019**

Eight regional finalists and one winner from each category will be honored at an awards ceremony in April. Visit HHC Connect for nomination and eligibility details.

**Hartford HealthCare — Connect to healthier™**
JC-Enfield club spreads community cheer

The Joshua Center Enfield CDT school leadership club participated in a few community events in December.

The students made more than $300 at their craft sale fundraiser to adopt a family for Christmas at the domestic abuse shelter in Enfield.

Through their can and bottle drive, they were able to give 11 children at the Hope Center gift bags for Christmas.

The students also visited the Evergreen nursing home in Stafford to sing Christmas carols and made more than 80 holiday cards to send to recovering vets and to some of the nursing home residents.

'Tis the season

After visiting Natchaug Hospital, representatives from iTi, the new HHC translation services vendor, saw that toys were being collected for the child and adolescent inpatient unit and offered to help.

Employees from iTi donated dozens of gifts to help make the holidays special for clients who were hospitalized during Christmas.

Sweaters on parade

Clients at the Mansfield campus, including students at Mansfield CDT school and inpatient and Journey House clients, were visited by Santa, two of his elves, and Oliver, the rein-donkey, on Friday, Dec. 21.

Journey House residents and staff participated in a make-your-own ugly sweater contest on Friday, Dec. 14. Residents voted for the ugliest sweater work by staff, and staff voted for residents, with prizes awarded to the winners.
CSS/Prevention gifts help family in need

Rushford Community Support Services and the Prevention Department worked together to help a family receiving treatment participate in the Meriden-Wallingford United Way adopt-a-family program.

Henry Thomas, community support specialist, and Krystle Blake, manager of prevention services, met with the client to review the needs for himself and his three children, ages three, six and seven. Shortly after the interview, the family was matched with a local business who “adopted” the family. They enjoyed shopping for the family and dropped off the donations at Rushford where they were wrapped and delivered before the holidays.

The client, who is a single father, and the child’s grandmother, who was caring for the child while her son was at MidState with medical concerns, were incredibly grateful for the gifts and support they received from Rushford and the United Way.

Vasileff gains RN board certification

The Silver Street nursing leadership team would like to congratulate Elizabeth Vasileff, RN, on recently becoming board certified in psychiatric-mental health nursing. Liz has been an integral part of the nursing team in Middletown over the past four years and has remained a valuable resource for both her coworkers and patients. Her journey of professional development has been both exciting and inspirational. Congratulations again and we are so proud to have you on our team!

Anything to share?

Are you interested in sharing your clinical experience or knowledge with co-workers? Consider submitting an article to the Clinical Corner.

To learn more, e-mail amanda.nappi@hhchealth.org.
Teen groups help spread the word to stop underage drinking

Youth members of the Middletown Substance Abuse Prevention Council and students from RAMS In Action, a peer-leadership group at Woodrow Wilson Middle School advised by Rushford prevention specialist Erica Skoutas, participated in a social marketing campaign — “Sticker Shock” — to help reduce and prevent underage drinking.

Students decorated local package store bags with stickers that remind adults not to provide alcohol to teens and statistics relevant to underage drinking.

With the help of Metro Liquors and CT Beverage Mart students were able to decorate more than 200 bags with prevention messages that will be distributed to customers throughout the holiday season. Sticker Shock was also conducted in Westbrook by the Westbrook SADD Chapter and advisor Lyn Connery from Rushford prevention.

White Out Walk

The Middletown Substance Abuse Prevention Council held its 14th annual White Out Walk on Thursday, Dec. 27, to encourage adults and teens to be mindful of the dangers of drinking and driving on New Year’s Eve. Another White Out Walk was hosted by the Meriden Healthy Youth Coalition in Meriden on Friday, Dec. 28. Youth participants in the events made signs and t-shirts to display as they walked through downtown to raise awareness of the dangers of drunk driving.

Multi-Family Group
Allies in Recovery Model

Join us for a support group focused on helping the parents, family members, caregivers and friends of those with addiction. Find support and understanding while also working to:

- Reduce pain, anger, & worry
- Gain skills proven to work
- Reduce substance use
- Get your loved one into treatment
- Improve your well-being

Sundays from 10-11 AM
Starting Dec. 2, 2018
Rushford at Stonegate
459 Wallingford Road, Durham, CT

For questions, confirmation, and all other inquires please contact:
Peter Doria 860-349-2043 x308 or Lareina Lacz 860-349-2043 x303