A gathering of addiction experts from across the state — including two leaders from the Behavioral Health Network — met at a special roundtable convened on Monday by U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., to address the growing crisis in opioid and heroin addiction across Connecticut and the nation.

“It’s a path of death and destruction,” Blumenthal told the panel that gathered at Community Mental Health Affiliates in New Britain to lend insights on an epidemic that has seen skyrocketing rates of overdoses and fatalities in recent months — including a spate of overdoses in the New London area over the past weekend.

The assembled experts included Hartford HealthCare Senior Vice President and BHN President Patricia Rehmer, MSN, ACHE, and Rushford Medical Director J. Craig Allen, MD, as well as a cross-section of community specialists, law enforcement officials and people with first-hand experience — including two young people who are now in recovery.

Many of those on the panel said that society’s response to the rising rate of overdoses has been hampered by time-worn misperceptions and shame associated with addiction, which is only just beginning to be widely understood as a disease. Rehmer said the term that is commonly used to describe that shame — “stigma” — needs to be abandoned.

“We need to call it what it is, and that is discrimination,” she said. “People who suffer from this disease are facing discrimination.”

She thanked Blumenthal for convening the special roundtable while

Continued on page 2
Empowering parents can help stop addiction early

Overdoses from heroin and other opiates are on the rise in Eastern Connecticut and parents need to become empowered to address the issue with their children was the message at a public forum Feb. 3.

More than 300 people packed the cafeteria at Bacon Academy for a panel discussion sponsored by Colchester Youth Services Youth First Coalition.

“There is a marked increase in the number overdoses. We are seeing a significant amount of presentations at the Backus, Plainfield and Windham Emergency Department — averaging at least one case per day across the region,” said Karen Butterworth-Erban, RN, MSN, Hartford HealthCare East Region Director of Emergency Services and one of the presenters at the forum.

“This is not necessarily a young person issue; It’s an ‘everyone’ issue,” she said.

The forum, which included a panel of leaders from community organizations, a man in recovery, and the parent of a former user, comes amid a rash of recent overdoses in New London County and statewide from cities to suburban towns.

Butterworth-Erban told the crowd about the importance of immediate patient intervention in emergency departments and building community partnerships to address drug addiction.

Greg Plakias of Orange told parents and students the cautionary story of his drug use and addiction. In recovery for nearly 15 years, the 35 year-old told the crowd how he went from a popular high school athlete to being homeless and prostituting himself for drug money.

“I always kind of felt uncomfortable in my own skin. I wanted to fit in. From age 15 to 17, I went from smoking pot to drinking beer, to trying ecstasy, to cocaine. At 17, I was introduced to OxyContin. That led to heroin, and then my life just spiraled completely out of control,” Plakias said.

Plakias encouraged students to ask for help if they’re struggling with substance abuse.

“I feel like I’m the fortunate one because my family connected me to resources and they never gave up on me. I reached a point where I needed to make a change and that change started with me,” he said.

About BHNews

BHNews is published every other Friday, except for the weeks of Independence Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s.

Story ideas or submissions may be sent to matt.burgard@hhchealth.org or amanda.nappi@hhchealth.org. Articles must be submitted as a Microsoft 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. Thank you.

Deadline for the next edition of BHNews is Tuesday, Feb. 16, at noon.

The perception of shame needs to end

urging him and his colleagues in Congress to continue pushing for resources to help fight the problem, including special “recovery high schools” for young people who require a safe environment to complete their education. Blumenthal told the forum that he is pursuing legislation that would provide more resources for treatment and prevention as well as law enforcement, and hoped to bring feedback from Tuesday’s forum back to Washington.

Dr. Allen spoke about the importance of understanding the biological and developmental processes that contribute to addiction, especially among young people who abuse substances in their teens and early adolescence.

“Research is showing how extremely important it is to try to keep kids from using addictive substances before their brains are fully developed,” he said, citing statistics showing that people have a much greater chance of living without addiction if they avoid substance before the age of 21.

One of the young people in recovery who spoke at the forum, Allison Kerrianan, said more compassion needs to be extended to those who suffer from addiction.

“My mother should not have to be ashamed when she tells people her daughter is in recovery,” she said.
In my years in the behavioral health field, I have noticed that providers and caregivers too often focus on treating people in the desperate stages of their disease, and lose focus once their patients seem to stabilize.

That is a huge problem, and it goes to the heart of how effective we can be in helping the people we serve live meaningful and fulfilling lives. The recovery period is difficult to define, as it varies on an individual basis. But I like to say that if you consider yourself in recovery, then you are in recovery, and we need to treat you as such.

As a network, we must continue to put our collective focus on recovery every bit as much as we do on the clinical front-line treatment we provide to patients who come through our doors. In fact, I would say that recovery is the most critical stage of a patient’s long-term ability to cope with, and even overcome, the symptoms of their disease. That’s what being recovery-oriented is all about.

With that in mind, I am making it a large part of my agenda to make sure the voices of those in recovery are increasingly heard and included across the organization.

I have been heartened to see efforts like this already taking place, especially the family and client advisory boards that have been established at the Institute of Living, Natchaug and Rushford as well as the acute care hospitals where behavioral health services are offered.

I hope to see this trend continue by having those in recovery invited to take part in strategic and operational efforts at all of our entities.

Simply put, people in recovery are the people we serve. So it makes sense to give them a seat at the table. It will only help us do our jobs better.

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 BHNews.
The behavioral health unit at The Hospital of Central Connecticut (HOCC) has announced the appointment of two people to fill key leadership positions. Susan E. D’Ambrosio, Psy.D, MSEd, has been named Clinical Program Coordinator for the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health; and Joseph Scalercio, MBA, CMPE, has been named Practice Administrator.

D’Ambrosio was a Pre-Doctoral and Post-Doctoral fellow at the Institute of Living and is a two-time scholarship recipient of the National Health Service Corp Loan Repayment Program — a program she pioneered at HOCC. In her new role, she supervises the clinical outpatient program in conjunction with regional management, maintains an active case load, provides first line on-site management, oversees grants and supervises clinicians. She is a third generation of psychologists in her family — a heritage that emphasizes the importance of helping others.

Scalercio, who has 10 years of physician practice management experience, joins HOCC after spending two years with the Hartford HealthCare Medical Group, where he helped with the transition to EPIC and the development of integration of primary care and behavioral health programs. In his new role, he will be focused on the operational oversight of outpatient psychiatry, a regional leadership position that is expected to evolve. A Pittsburgh native, he also spent 10 years with the Navy Medical Department, and he devotes special attention to behavioral health issues affecting veterans.

Change in mileage rate
Starting on Jan. 1, 2016, the mileage rate for all Hartford HealthCare employees was adjusted to 54 cents per mile from 57.5 cents. The change matches the Internal Revenue Service’s 2016 standard mileage rates, which is based on an annual study of the fixed and variable costs of operating an automobile. All Hartford HealthCare reimbursement forms have been updated to reflect the change.

Watch for fraudulent invoices
Departments and programs within the Behavioral Health Network have received fake invoices, along with follow up calls and emails, from companies requesting payment. If you receive an invoice from a company that you do not recognize or remember doing business with, be sure to check in with your organization’s finance department.
A weekly roundup of kudos from staff and patients. Please email your submissions to matt.burgard@hhhealth.org. Editors reserve the right to edit submission for length and grammar.

Postal prowess

Thanks to Laura Warner at Natchaug Hospital for all the help she gave the Development Department with our many, many mailings these past two months. We couldn’t have done it without her and we really appreciate her good humor and overall positive attitude.

— Kate McNulty, MA, CHC, CHRC, Regional Director of Development and Philanthropy

BHN experts speak before pediatric group

Hoping to provide further insight on the issue of substance abuse among young people, two experts with the Behavioral Health Network provided presentations on the topic to the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics last month.

Kim C. Brownell, MD, Adult and Child Psychiatrist at the Institute of Living and Medical Director for Access Mental Health Connecticut at the IOL, provided a presentation on the use of SBIRT — an effective tool meant to help pediatricians and primary care physicians identify patients who may be struggling with addiction and make sure they get the care they need. SBIRT is an acronym for “Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral for Treatment.”

J. Craig Allen, MD, Medical Director at Rushford, provided a presentation on the use of marijuana among adolescents and how the drug contributes to biological and development processes in the brain that can lead to addiction. He pointed to statistics showing that experimentation with marijuana during the adolescent years greatly increases the chances for someone having addiction issues later in life.

The presentations were meant to help pediatricians identify possible signs of addiction among their patients and give them tools to help refer them to treatment.
IOL staff gets its ‘wings’

Melissa Deasy, Program Manager for the Child and Adolescent Day Program and Extended Day Treatment at the Institute of Living, recently provided her annual “Year in Review” for staff and then handed out “wings” to symbolically encourage them to soar to new heights in the year ahead. Staff member Michael DeCarlo won the Arne Well Haven Award for his leadership, while therapist Anna Terryn was recognized for starting garden therapy in the children’s program.

Clinical Corner submissions welcomed

Are you interested in sharing your clinical experience or knowledge with your co-workers throughout the HHC Behavioral Health Network? Consider submitting an article to the Clinical Corner. For more information, e-mail amanda.nappi@hhchealth.org or matt.burgard@hhchealth.org.

SAVE THE DATE

The Fourth Annual Hartford HealthCare Patient Experience Showcase

Connecting Patients to Healthier

Friday, April 8, 2016 | 7:30 AM to 12:15 PM

Heublein Hall, Education & Resource Center (ERC), Hartford Hospital, 560 Hudson Street, Hartford

Learn, network and collaborate with colleagues and patients to advance the HHC patient experience.
Family Resource Center Support Groups

The IOL Family Resource Center (FRC) holds regular support groups. 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. For additional information on these support groups, please contact the FRC at 860-545-7665 or 860-545-1888. The upcoming IOL FRC Support Group schedule is as follows:

- **Bipolar: An Introduction To The Disorder.** Feb. 9, April 26, June 14, 6:30 – 7:45 p.m. This program is 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 family members and friends better cope with the illness.

- **Peer Support Group.** Feb. 10, 17, 24 (Every Wednesday of each month), 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. in the Carolina Cottage, Lower Level Conference Room. A peer run support group for those who have a mental illness.

- **Social Support Group — LGBTQ Issues (Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Questioning).** Feb. 10, Feb. 24, March 9, March 23, April 13, April 27, May 11, May 25, June 8, June 22 (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.

- **Substance Use Educational And Support Group.** Feb. 11, March 10, April 14, May 12, June 9 (Second Thursday of each month), 4 – 5 p.m. For family members impacted by loved ones with substance abuse.

- **Support Group For Families Dealing With Major Mental Illness.** Feb. 18, March 3, March 17, April 7, April 21, May 5, May 19, June 2, June 16 (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 you are caring for others.

- **Youth Psychosis Family Support Group.** Feb. 18, March 3, March 17, April 7, April 21, May 5, May 19, June 2, June 16 (First and third Thursday of each month), 5:15 - 6:30 p.m. For parents with youth up to age 18 who have psychotic symptoms such as: hallucinations, delusions, paranoia, disorganized thoughts and behavior or are diagnosed with schizophrenia and other related disorders. Join us to receive support, guidance and education on how to cope with and help your young person.

- **Anxiety Disorders: An Introduction.** Feb. 23, April 19, 6:30 – 7:45 p.m. This lecture is for families and friends of individuals who have an anxiety disorder or a related disorder. Participants will acquire a basic understanding of anxiety disorders, their treatments and suggestions to help them better cope with the illness.

- **Yoga.** Feb. 23, March 22, April 19, May 24, June 21, 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 patriciac.graham@hhchealth.org

- **Dementia Support/Educational Group Meeting.** March 1, April 5, May 3, June 7 (First Tuesday of each month), 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Donnelly Conference Room, First Floor. Please join us as we bring together experts and those who want guidance, direction, and support. Space is limited — reservations are required by calling 860-545-7665.

- **Survivors Of Suicide Support Group.** March 2, April 6, May 4, June 1 (First Wednesday of the month), 7 – 8:15 p.m. For those who have lost someone close to them by suicide. Please call the RSVP numbers with questions or concerns. 860-545-7716 or 860-545-7665.

- **Managing Schizophrenia.** March 8, May 10, 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.

- **Schizophrenia: An Introduction To The Disorder.** April 5, 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.

- **An Introduction To Mental Health Benefits and Services.** May 24, 6:30 – 7:45 p.m. This presentation will provide an overview of benefit programs available for individuals with mental health disabilities.
Suboxone at Care Plus in Groton

Starting in January, Natchaug Hospital’s Care Plus adult treatment center in Groton expanded its medication-assisted treatment program to help more clients struggling with addiction to prescription opioids or heroin.

Natchaug’s medication-assisted treatment program, which is also offered at the hospital’s Dayville, Mansfield and Vernon locations, provides Suboxone® medication and relapse prevention groups to help people into recovery from opioid dependency.

Suboxone, also known as buprenorphine, is a partial opioid agonist that engages dopamine receptors in lieu of opioids. As a result, it prevents sickness from opioid withdrawal, blocks cravings and makes one feel normal without feeling high, thereby stopping the cycle of intoxication, withdrawal and drug-seeking behaviors.

Natchaug’s medication-assisted treatment programs offer flexible hours for those who are working, parenting or attending school, with both morning and evening groups.

To make a referral to Care Plus in Groton, call 860-449-9947.

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Client and Family Advisory Council meet next Feb. 25

Natchaug Hospital will host its next Client and Family Advisory Council meeting on Feb. 25, at 6 p.m. at the main hospital.

The purpose of this council is to give clients and their families the opportunity to provide feedback on our services and identify areas of improvement.

The group plans to meet on the last Thursday of every month from 6 - 7:15 p.m. and is still looking for members to join the council. Contact Amy Young for more information or to suggest a member at amy.young@hhchealth.org or ext. 69992.

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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

Dates: Feb. 17 - March 16
Time: 5:30 — 6:30 p.m.
Where: Natchaug Hospital, 189 Storrs Road, Mansfield Center 06250

Parent Support Group
Understand the nature of the disorder
View things differently
Poor social skills
Over stimulated
Have meltdowns

Client Support Group
Learn conversational skills, social skills and behaviors, 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:
Stanley Hospital
860-755-7644
Stanley.Hospital@hhchealth.org

Please register for these FREE support groups, so we will have enough PIZZA.
Bookshelf dedicated in honor of Rose Shaker

Paul Shaker, a longtime licensed counselor and social worker in Rushford’s Latino Services department, has always credited his family, especially his aunt, Rose Shaker, for instilling in him a love of helping others.

Last month, Shaker paid tribute to his beloved aunt by dedicating a new bookshelf and stacks of donated books in her memory. The bookshelf is located in the cafeteria of Rushford’s Paddock Avenue location in Meriden, where clients and staff are free to select any book they choose.

Shaker said helping others and reading were both passions of his Aunt Rose, whose portrait will also hang on the wall above the bookshelf. He said his aunt, who also helped run the family’s successful auto dealership, could always be found curled up with a good book.

“She only read books that had happy endings,” Paul said. “That was how she was, she always liked to see the best in people.”

The bookshelf dedication drew a crowd of Shaker’s co-workers who applauded as the bookshelf was unveiled. His supervisor, Monika Gunning, LCSW, Director of Adult Services, said Paul is widely admired for his dedication to clients and his easygoing and friendly personality.

“You can see how important family is to him,” she said. “He brings that sense of family to his clients and his co-workers, which is why we are so happy to help him celebrate this wonderful new resource.”

Rushford staff are encouraged to donate any books they would like to the bookshelf. Staff are also asked to return the books once they are done reading them, so that they can be enjoyed by others.

Weight Watchers program launched at Rushford

Dozens of Rushford employees signed up to take part in free Weight Watchers memberships being offered across Hartford HealthCare — an impressive turnout that will allow Rushford employees to hold regular meetings at their respective locations instead of going to Weight Watchers centers offsite.

“You can see there is a lot of enthusiasm among employees here,” said Chrissy Pancira, a Weight Watchers representative who took part in a special launch event in the cafeteria at the Rushford location on Paddock Avenue in Meriden on Jan. 27. A similar launch event took place on Jan. 28 in the cafeteria of Rushford’s Silver Street location in Middletown.

Both launch events drew dozens of employees who were able to sign up for free and will now work together as teams to follow Weight Watchers guidelines and support each other as they try to meet their goals.

Employees who were not able to attend the launch events can still sign up by registering online on a special portal at https://wellness.weightwatchers.com. Employees should then enter Employee ID: 11256026 and Employer Passcode: WW11256026 and follow the prompts.
The Treasure Trove is a free classified ad section for the benefit of Behavioral Health Network employees, retirees, medical staff and volunteers.

We welcome your submissions, which you can submit by emailing matt.burgard@hhchealth.org or amanda.nappi@hhchealth.org. The deadline for submissions to be included in each Friday’s BHNews is Tuesday at noon. BHNews will include community events for not-for-profit organizations that are open to the public and free of charge. We do not accept ads for real estate, firearms or personal ads.

FOR SALE
2002 SEBRING CONVERTIBLE — 150,000 miles, clean title, $1,500 or best offer. Call 860-865-8115.
2002 NISSAN SENTRA — 125,500 miles, reliable, runs well, $1,800. Call 860-423-8724.


FREE
PIANO — Clinton upright piano made by Boston Piano Company, built early 1900s, free to good home. Call 860-336-1314.

WANTED
BOOKCASE — For a pediatrician’s office. We have a basketful of books and we are looking to expand and provide a book swap for our young patients. Call 860-599-9961.

EVENTS
LENTEN FISH & CHIPS — Friday, Feb. 5 through Friday, March 25, 4:30-6:30 p.m. at Saint Joseph Church, 120 Cliff St., Norwich. $9 for a full meal, $7 for a one-piece meal, Chowder is $4.

GRISWOLD RECREATIONAL PROGRAM — Every Tuesday and Thursday from 6-7 p.m. Exercise class, low impact aerobics, weights, Pilates, bring mats and weights, open to surrounding towns. Call for more information 860-376-4741.

ANGEL RIDE FUNDRAISER — Thursday, Feb. 11, bake sale in Backus Hospital cafeteria. The bake sale is to raise money for a charity two day bike ride, 135 miles. Proceeds to benefit the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp’s Hospital Outreach Program. The program provides activities to seriously ill children in the hospital setting that are too ill to attend the camp.

NFA VALENTINE’S DAY FUNDRAISER — The NFA Class of 2019 is sponsoring the ninth annual “Love Bite” event. Two chocolate chip cookies along with your message will be delivered the morning of Friday, Feb. 12. Each “Love Bite” is $1. To purchase, email Melissa Cassidy at cassidym@nfaschool.org. Include the recipient’s first and last name, a message and arrangements for payment. All requests must be received by Friday, Feb. 5.

FISH & CHIPS — Friday, Feb. 12 through Friday, Mar. 18, 3:30-7 p.m. at St. James Episcopal Church, Preston. Baked and fried fish, gift certificates available, cole slaw, fresh bread, desserts, call ahead take out 860-889-0150.

THE ART HOUSE PAINT PARTY FUNDRAISER — Friday, Feb. 12, 7-9 p.m. at 88 Sherman St., Norwich. Tickets are $30. All proceeds benefit the Bully Busters. Email thearthouse88@gmail.com. 

FLEA MARKET — Saturday, March 12, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Divine Providence Church, Silver/Golden Sts. Norwich. Indoor and outdoor, Polish breakfast and lunch, golabki, pierogi, kielbasa, baked goods. Vendors welcome. Call 860-887-4265.