For years as a nurse in the Backus Hospital Resource Center, Jennifer Smith, RN, MS, BSN, saw the positive impact that the Center for Healthcare Integration (CHI) had on patients across the hospital, from oncology to internal medicine. CHI offers a holistic approach to wellness with licensed staff trained in massage therapy, reflexology, energy therapy, meditation and other techniques.

When Smith took the position of nurse manager for the Backus D-1 inpatient unit, one of her first priorities was to bring the benefits of CHI to behavioral health patients.

“I really think that meditation and spirituality and body work are such driving forces in our lives, and I just saw it as a gap in services that were provided for our D-1 patients,” Smith said. Previously, leadership and staff were concerned about the histories of trauma in patients they treat, along with the safety of both staff and patients. With changes in viewpoints on behavioral health, Smith saw an opportunity to transform perceptions about CHI and mental health.

“There is a new opening, a new realization as we start to look at the patient as a whole and looking at how we can best serve that individual,” Smith said. “Treatment isn’t just medication; it’s teaching skills and coping mechanisms. The changes in healthcare have allowed us to really look at different modalities of treatment for behavioral health patients.”

Smith and the D-1 unit staff began
meeting regularly with the CHI team to discuss a roll-out plan. Through their collaborative efforts, a referral sheet was created to collect important patient information along with a pre- and post-CHI survey to gauge the effectiveness of the pilot program. Staff from D-1 were also given the opportunity to try some of the treatments, so they better understood the benefits and can convey them to new patients.

In November, Carol Wright from CHI began seeing patients twice a week for meditation and massage therapy. All patients are initially invited to the 30-minute group meditation session then up to five patients are seen for individual work. D-1 staff assists in selecting patients that would benefit from individualized treatment for each session.

“The patients are in control of these sessions and I think they feel safe knowing that,” Wright said. “When I first meet them, I take a couple minutes with them to get a feel for what they are comfortable with and give them choices. They can be on the table, on the massage chair or in a regular chair. If anything doesn’t feel right, they don’t have to suffer through it, they are welcome to get up and leave.”

For many patients that come through the program, this is their first experience with massage or healing touch treatment.

“Some people have never been touched kindly,” said Amy Dunjon, RN, LMT. “They’ll say, ‘No one has ever touched me unless it is to hurt me.'”

Since the CHI pilot program began, Smith has seen and heard the positive effects. Survey results have shown a consistent decrease in patient pain and anxiety after participating in massage or meditation. Coincidentally, the unit has also seen a decrease in both restraints and seclusions since the program began, though Smith attributes this not just to CHI, but also to the efforts of the staff and leadership to change the culture on the unit.

“It touches your heart because you can watch the patients come out of meditation and the energy is different,” Smith said. “It affects the culture of the unit.”

Eventually, the CHI team hopes to bring the benefits of massage and meditation to the partial hospital program. They are also working to collect references and resources for patients once they are discharged.

“I’ve gotten some amazing feedback from the patients [about CHI],” Smith said. “I had one patient sit in my office for half an hour. She wrote a note about how it was a life-changing event for her, and how she’ll take these skills with her. That is one of our hopes — that they’ll take it home.”
Mental Health Awareness Month comes in May

May is National Mental Health Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness about the importance of mental health, signs and symptoms and treatment. It’s also the perfect time for me to recognize everyone in the Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network and our partners for the extraordinary work you do year round, around-the-clock, holidays and weekends.

It takes a special kind of person to work in the behavioral health field, someone with compassion, patience and a wide range of expertise. But in order for you to continue your great work, you must remember to take care of yourself as well. As a nurse myself, I am fully aware that too many of us spend all our time caring for others and not ourselves.

Because it’s Mental Health Awareness Month and the goal is to stop mental illness before it starts, I thought I would share with you some tips to boost your mood from Mental Health America.

These tips can are good for clients — and ourselves:

- **Set up a getaway.** Just planning a vacation and having something to look forward to can bring happiness.
- **Work your strengths.** This builds self-confidence.
- **Get a good night’s sleep.** For the record, the optimal temperature for sleep is between 60-70 degrees.
- **Laugh.** Studies show it reduces anxiety.
- **Get off the grid.** Disconnect for a day from your smartphone, emails, tablets and other devices.
- **Go ahead and yawn.** Studies suggest it helps cool the brain and improve mental efficiency.
- **Practice forgiveness.** It’s hard to do, but does wonders for the mind.
- **Get outdoors — and exercise if you can.** Just being outside helps, and if you can work in a little exercise all the better.
- **Spend some time with furry friends.** Pets can help lower stress.

- **Love your job!** Believe it or not, less than one third of Americans are happy with their work. That can’t be good for one’s mental health.

I can’t say that I always practice what I preach, but I know that the more I try, the better off I will be. Again, thank you to each and every one of you for the work you do throughout the year, and together let’s try to instill some work/life balance into our daily lives. This will ultimately benefit our patients, our loved ones and ourselves.

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.

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**Are you planning for your retirement?**

Do you know how much money you will need in retirement? Are you taking too much or too little risk with your investments? Do you know Hartford HealthCare provides retirement education and planning resources at no cost to you?

Find out how your account is performing. Learn about planning tools and educational resources. Ask questions about long term strategies and feel more confident about your potential retirement income.

To get started, contact Dan Dionne, your Prudential Retirement Counselor. Schedule a personalized, one-on-one session, at your work location or by telephone.

Email: daniel.dionne@prudential.com
Phone: 860.424.7621.
Visit: prudential.com/hartford-healthcare

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**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 to walk in the event. We are hoping for a strong BHN representation at the event. Contact Laura Durst at laura.durst@hhchealth.org to register or learn more.
More than 70 Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network (HHC BHN) supporters attended a special fundraising reception and then watched a sold out “Next to Normal” show Wednesday, April 19, at TheaterWorks in Hartford.

The Tony and Pulitzer Prize winning rock musical, including the special reception to benefit the HHC BHN, centers on a mother struggling with worsening bipolar disorder — and the impacts it has on her family.

The show continues through May 14, including a special BHN National Dialogue on Mental Health/TheaterWorks forum on Sunday, April 23, at 6:30 p.m. before the show. The panel discussion will focus on:

- The uses and abuses of psychiatric and recreational drugs with a focus on how the line between the two may not be as clear as we’d like to think.
- Mental health parity and legislation.
- The impacts of drug abuse and mental health issues on the family.

The panelists are Brett A. Maddux, a poet living in Hartford who recently published his first collection of poetry, Regent, a book written in the two years after his mother’s suicide; Patricia Rehmer, Hartford HealthCare senior vice president for Behavioral Health and BHN President; and Hank Schwartz, MD, psychiatrist-in-chief at The Institute of Living (IOL) and vice president of behavioral health for Hartford HealthCare.

In addition, following the April 25 show, the final TalkBack Tuesday will be “There Will Be Light: Journey to Wellness and Recovery,” featuring Dr. Schwartz and Karen Kangas, Director of Recovery and Family Affairs, HHC BHN.

HHC employees receive a 15% discount on tickets. For more information on “Next to Normal,” visit www.theaterworkshartford.org. Tickets can be purchased by calling the TheaterWorks box office at 860.527.7838, Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Have you heard the news?

Introducing Hartford HealthCare’s news hub
Hartford HealthCare’s new online health news site delivers lively, informative and useful health news in a whole new way. Look for print, video and audio stories produced by HHC’s News Service, as well as timely tips on nutrition, fitness, health and wellness, and medical innovations.

Don’t miss a single story! Read the latest health news or sign up for our e-newsletter at: healthnewshub.org

Financial help for patients

Do you know a patient who is in need of financial assistance? Hartford HealthCare can provide help to patients in need. Learn more about the program at https://intranet.hartfordhealthcare.org/inside-hhc/patient-support.
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.** April 21, 28, May 5, 12, 19, 26, June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 (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).** April 24, May 1, 8, 15, 22, June 5, 12, 19, 26, May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, June 7, 14, 21, 28 (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.** April 25, May 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, June 6, 13, 20, 27 (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.

- **Yoga.** 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.

- **Bipolar: An Introduction To The Disorder.** April 25, 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.

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**Family Resource Center Support Groups**

**Trauma Support and Education Group**

**Second and fourth Wednesdays of every month 6:30-7:30 pm**

*Massachusetts Cottage, first floor group room*  
*Institute of Living, 200 Retreat Ave, Hartford, CT*

Peer-led group that offers a supportive environment for individuals with any type of trauma history. Attendees will discuss relevant topics and educational materials will be available.

To RSVP or make an inquiry, please contact Laura at 860.545.7324 or Laura.Durst@hhchealth.org.
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

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- 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?

Family Resource Center Support Groups (continued)

- **Social Support Group — LGBTQ Issues (Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Questioning).** April 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.

- **Hearing Voices Network (HVN).** April 27, May 4, 11, 18, 26, June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 (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.

- **Al-Anon Parent Group.** April 27, May 4, 11, 18, 25, June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 (Every Thursday), 7 - 8 p.m. One hour topic discussion.

- **Dementia Support/Educational Group Meeting.** May 2, June 6 (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.

- **Support Group For Families Dealing With Major Mental Illness.** 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.

- **Managing Schizophrenia.** May 9, 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.

- **Substance Use Educational And Support Group.** May 11, June 8 (Second Thursday of each month), 4 – 5 p.m. For family members impacted by loved ones with substance abuse.

- **Autism Spectrum Support/Educational Group Meeting For Parents.** 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 support groups interspersed with special guests and speakers to offer additional guidance and perspective.

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*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?*
Charity softball tournament set for June 24

Save the date for the inaugural Natchaug Hospital Charity Co-Ed Softball Tournament on Saturday, June 24, at Recreation Park in Willimantic.

For more information on participating or helping with the event, please contact Sherry Smardon at sherry.smardon@hhchealth.org or Ashley Laprade at ashley.laprade@hhchealth.org.

Virtual supply swap offers new life for unwanted items

Help Natchaug Hospital reduce supply waste and excess spending by participating in a virtual “supply swap.”

A current inventory of excess supplies will be posted on the Natchaug Intranet for staff to “swap” with each other as needed. The current list of items is posted on our Intranet under “Supply Log.”

If you have items you wish to repurpose, email paula.purvis@hhchealth.org with the details. If you see an item posted that you need, please contact the individual listed on the Supply Log to make arrangements.

This is a cost-savings project sponsored by the H3W Friends work group. Thank you for your participation.

Aetna helps with Apple Watch price

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. To learn more, including purchasing instructions, click on the Wellness Incentives page of HHC Connect.

Hartford HealthCare Bone & Joint Institute and Westfarms invite you to a special event.

Come learn more about Hartford HealthCare’s Bone & Joint Institute! Connecticut’s first and only orthopedic hospital.

Schedule of Events:

10-11 am
Complimentary ZUMBA® with Freddie! Wear your sneakers and get ready for some fun! All ages are welcome.

11 am-1 pm
Rob Dibble Appearance – “Mini Golf against Rob.”

11 am-2 pm
Hartford HealthCare Bone & Joint Institute experts will be on hand showcasing our services — including a golf swing analysis.

Refreshments, giveaways and complimentary services all in Center Court.
Human Resources provides valuable service to clients

Most of our clients come to us with an eye on the door. It is experiences like a visit from Julie Danetz and Jon Lutz from Human Resources that reinforces that we just don’t count days, we make the most of our moments.

For the last few years, Julie and Jon have kindly agreed to visit my classroom to talk to my students about techniques and skills regarding interviews, finding jobs, and finding ourselves. What they also touch upon is digging into the student’s past to find strengths and talents that have been so easily ignored or even squashed.

When Julie and Jon explain that their real-life career is with our company, and that they took the time to come see them to share their wisdom, I can almost see an, “I am important” look come over students’ faces. It truly is priceless.

Julie and Jon do a fabulous job with mock interviews, explaining how to connect and disconnect with a potential employer, how important manners are, and maybe most valuable, the importance of character.

I have an incredible amount of gratitude and respect for Julie and Jon.

— Rebecca Blake, Special Education Teacher, Rushford Academy

About BHNews

BHNews is published every other Friday. Story ideas or submissions may be sent to 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.

Deadline for the next edition of BHNews is Tuesday, May 2, at noon.

Baskets needed for Golf Classic drawing

Part of the fundraising for the Rushford Golf Classic involves raffling off staff-created gift baskets. The Fund Development department is hoping staff will be inspired again this year to create baskets to help raise money for programs to support clients.

Suggested gift basket ideas include gift card, animal lovers, relaxation, coffee/tea, movie lovers, sports, readers, home and garden, gourmet food, beverages and chocolate lovers.

The group whose basket ends up with the highest number of tickets submitted, will win a pizza party! Please contact Kate McNulty (katherine.mcnulty@hhchealth.org) or Melissa Monroe (melissa.monroe@hhchealth.org) to sign up. Baskets are due by May 17.
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 RED TOYOTA SOLARA SLE — 136,000 miles. $2,500 or best offer. Please call Joni at 860-416-4705.

WANTED

BACK2SCHOOL COLLECTION EVENT — Starting now until July 29. BEU Explore God Youth Ministry, Willimantic is starting early to help those in the community. Collecting backpacks for boys and girls: binders, notebooks, paper, pencil pouches, scissors, pens, pencils, calculators, rulers, crayons, erasers and more. Drop off location is Comunidad Sanadora I.H.P. Healing Community, 20 Hope St., Willimantic, 06226. Drop-off times are Wednesdays 7-9 p.m., Fridays 7-9 p.m., Sundays 10 a.m. to noon or 7-9 p.m. Call 860.462.5204 with questions.

EVENTS

SHEPHERD PIE DINNER — Saturday, April 22, 4:30-6:30 p.m. at Christ Episcopal Church, 78 Washington St., Norwich. $10 adults/seniors. For more information call 860.887.4249.

OPEN MIC — Saturday, April 22, 7-9 p.m. at Christ Episcopal Church, 78 Washington St., Norwich. Donation is $5 or three to four canned goods for the food pantry.

PAINT FOR BABIES — Saturday, April 22, 6-8 p.m. at Artique, 135 Main St., Putnam. Fundraiser to benefit the March of Dimes/Team Joshua, no experience required. $35 per person and $10 from each reservation gets donated directly to our team. Contact Artique by email artiqueputnam@gmail.com or call 860.315.9019 or email Dianna at dianna@snet.net.

TEA PARTY/RAFFLE — Sunday, April 23, 3 p.m. at Christ Episcopal Church, 78 Washington St., Norwich. Adults/seniors, $10; children under 12 years old, $5; photos available at $5. Proceeds benefit the food pantry. For more information call 860.887.4249.

KRIPALU YOGA — Thursdays, April 27 through May 25 from 5:30-6:30 p.m. at Norwich Recreation, 75 Mohegan Road, Norwich. Sponsored by Norwich Recreation. All levels welcome, bring mat and water bottle to learn yoga postures, flexibility on your way into calmness, strength and renewed energy. Instructor is Cheryl Hughes, 200 E-RYT and YACEP. $75 for residents, $85 for non-residents. Call to register at 860.823.3791.

EVENING OF WELLNESS — Saturday, May 6, 5-8 p.m. to benefit the March of Dimes/Team Joshua at Hands of Wisdom and Ancient Wisdom for the New World, 5 Mechanic St., Hope Valley, R.I. Reflexology, Energy Therapy and Angel Drawing/Mini Reading, $50 per person. RSVP to dianna@snet.net.

THAMES RIVER COMMUNITY SERVICE — Sunday, May 7, 11:30 a.m. at the Mystic Marriott Hotel and Spa, Groton. The 24th annual luncheon and auction to benefit Martin House and Thames River Community Service in Norwich will take place from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. with silent and live auction items including a South African Photo Safari for two, Overnight Getaways, Passage to Block Island, sports memorabilia, artwork and more. Tickets are $45 per person. Please call 860.887.3288 to reserve your seat or visit our website at www.trfp.org to purchase tickets.