A year ago, Dennis Blake was in the throes of an addiction to opioid medications that was steadily destroying the life he had built for himself — his marriage, his job, his connection to his children and his future.

On Wednesday, Dennis found himself standing at a podium before a crowd of more than 100 Rushford supporters and staff members, sharing the remarkable journey that set him on a path to recovery that has given his life new meaning and hope.

"If you had told me a year ago that I would be doing something like this, standing in a room like this speaking about my addictions, there would have been no chance — and yet, here I am," said Dennis, who was one of three people to share their stories of recovery at the Rushford Foundation Annual Reception at St. Clements Castle in Portland. The speakers were there to express their thanks for the services Rushford provided to support their recovery, and as a reminder of why the organization’s work is so important.

“I don’t know what I would have done without Rushford,” said Michael Mitchell, a featured speaker who talked about how his dependency on alcohol and other substances cost him his job, his home and his ties with his family. Like Dennis, he sought treatment at Rushford and is now on a strong path of recovery that includes working closely with oth-
I don’t know about you, but I always look forward to the Thanksgiving holiday because of the opportunity it gives me to reflect on all the blessings in my life, and take a moment to give thanks. It’s kind of a peaceful moment before we all get consumed by the chaos of the December holidays.

Now that I’m just about to finish my first official year as the president of the Behavioral Health Network, I can readily see that there is much to be grateful for as we continue our work to serve those who need our care, our compassion and our expertise.

I am especially thankful for the incredible staff of caregivers, clinicians, social workers, administrators and support staff who so obviously embrace our mission every day. Instead of viewing their roles as simply their jobs, I routinely see staff at every level enthusiastically assuming tasks and responsibilities in the course of their daily work, recognizing and valuing the contributions they make.

I’m thankful also for the moments — which are becoming more and more frequent — when we see the work we are doing making a difference for those we serve. It seems like every day I hear of a story of a patient whose life is being transformed by the care we are providing, or receive updated data showing how we are reaching out to new populations and communities across the state, offering hope to those who need it most.

With that in mind, I’m also extremely thankful for the progress we are making in educating the public about the nature of behavioral health diseases and disorders, and overcoming timeworn misperceptions that have led to discrimination against those suffering from addiction or mental health issues. More and more, people are beginning to understand that this is a chronic clinical condition that can be treated medically — not a sign of some personal failing or inferior morality. That’s encouraging.

Lastly, I’m thankful for the opportunity to work with you all again in the year ahead, continuing with the progress we have been making and furthering our reputation as a center of excellence in behavioral health care. I’m proud to be part of your team.

I wish you all a very happy Thanksgiving surrounded by family and friends and, perhaps, a few moments alone to reflect on your blessings. Thank you!

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 Rushford Foundation Annual Reception featured stories of recovery from those who have benefited from Rushford services. Shown here, from left, are speakers Michael Mitchell, Daryl McGraw and Dennis Blake with David Director, Rushford Foundation Chair.

‘If we work together, there’s nothing we can’t do, we will be OK’
Nurses from Backus Hospital, the Hospital of Central Connecticut and Natchaug Hospital represented the Behavioral Health Network at the 30th annual American Psychiatric Nurses Association Conference in Hartford during October. Natchaug nurse manager Amanda Watkins and Backus nurse manager Jen Smith both presented posters on BHN initiatives. From left are Jessica Collins, HOCC; Susan Woodman, Natchaug; Gale Sullivan, East Region; Watkins and Smith.

Five nurses in the psychiatric inpatient unit at The Hospital of Central Connecticut have either recently become APRNs or are in the process of becoming APRNs — an example of a culture that encourages professional and educational advancement.

“There is a strong tradition here at HOCC/BHN in nurse techs becoming nurses and nurses becoming APRNs. This promotes an atmosphere of learning and growth and fosters compassionate care,” said Michael E. Balkunas, MD, chief of psychiatry and behavioral health at HOCC. “It is extremely gratifying to see the people that one works with grow into new roles and responsibilities.”

The two nurses who have completed their APRN certification are Lisa Stanley, APRN; and Shannon Havens, APRN. The three who are currently working toward certification are Joe Mascolo, RN; Morgan Madore, RN; and Pinky Gaba, RN.

Backus D1 Activity Room Open House

Thursday, Dec. 1
2:30-4:30 pm
D1 Inpatient Unit, Second Floor
Backus Hospital Center for Mental Health

Join us to celebrate the opening of the new activity room on the Backus Hospital D1 inpatient unit. The room, which features therapeutic lighting, comfortable seating, and computers and a smart TV for client use, was planned and designed by Backus staff.

No RSVP necessary. Refreshments will be provided.

Questions? Contact Jen Smith at Jennifer.Smith2@hhchealth.org.

Our Moment
Elliot Joseph’s New Multimedia HHC Intranet Blog

His ideas, insights, life — and your stories

Coming Nov. 18

I want to start a conversation about Hartford HealthCare’s vision, and how we’re bringing it to life for people across Connecticut.

— Elliot Joseph
BrainDance Awards for Student Projects on Mental Illness

The Institute of Living at Hartford Hospital is sponsoring an academic and art competition designed to decrease the stigma of mental illness. The BrainDance Awards encourage high school students to gain knowledge about psychiatric diseases and develop a more tolerant and realistic perspective toward people with severe psychiatric problems. The competition also aims to promote students’ interest in careers in mental health care.

New this year: A panel discussion featuring different mental health disciplines.

To receive a BrainDance Award, a student must submit an academic project or an art project on themes related to severe mental illness. Projects must be submitted using a flash drive or dropbox format only (WLMF files or project files are not accepted). Acceptable video formats are WMV or MPEG 4. Awards up to $1,000 will be given to the best submissions.

The projects will be judged by expert clinicians and researchers in the field, based on:
- Relevance to the issue of stigma
- Creativity
- Accuracy of information
- Scientific rigor

Projects on any theme related to severe mental illness will be considered for an award.

The Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network is comprised of the Hartford Hospital Institute of Living, Natchaug Hospital, Rushford and the behavioral health departments of the Hospital of Central Connecticut, MidState Medical Center, and The William W. Backus Hospital. For more than a century, the members of the Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network have been connecting people with services including inpatient and outpatient services in a variety of settings for children, adolescents, and adults with mental health or substance abuse issues.

BrainDance Awards for Student Projects on Mental Illness

The categories are: Academic, Art, and Mixed Media.

All applicants, their teachers, families and classmates will be invited to an awards day celebration hosted by the Institute of Living on April 27, 2017. This day is designed to be an educational extension opportunity and will include a lecture by a national expert on mental illness, an awards presentation, a visit to our Myths, Minds & Medicine museum on the history of mental healthcare and a tour of our neuro-imaging research center and a panel of experts in the mental health field. Winners are encouraged to present a brief synopsis summarizing their projects. The student lecture and presentations are designed so all participants can cite their BrainDance projects on future school or job applications.

To apply for the awards: please log on to: www.nrc-iol.org and follow the link to BrainDance for application forms, information and procedures. Submission deadline is February 1, 2017.

The awards are coordinated by: Godfrey Pearlson, MD, Director, Olin Neuro-psychiatry Research Center and Nancy Hubbard, LCSW, Director, Psychiatric Rehabilitation.

For more information: contact Nancy Hubbard at 860.545.7665 or nancy.hubbard@hhchealth.org

Lend a helping hand to a family this holiday

Throughout the year, “Celebrations” — housed in the Child & Adolescent Outpatient Clinic at the Institute of Living — has provided a “shop” where families facing financial hardship can select gifts for holidays as well as for their children’s birthdays, graduations and special occasions. We do not charge the families for anything they select.

Through the past generosity of fellow colleagues and the community, we have received donations of new toys, books, arts and crafts supplies, winter coats and accessories, and other gift items for teens and children of all ages.

Your donation and annual support enable us to continually assist our families in celebrating the holidays, as well as other milestones and memorable moments in their child’s life.

Please consider supporting our families by donating a gift item or adopting a family this holiday season. Items can be donated on the IOL campus at the Braceland Building, Second floor, Child & Adolescent Outpatient Clinic, front desk ext. 5-7239. For more information, contact: Nelis Bido-Jimenez at ext. 5-7035 or Suzanne Femino at ext. 5-7717.

About BHNews

BHNews 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 BHNews is Tuesday, Nov. 29, at noon.
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.** Nov. 18, 25, Dec. 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).** Nov. 21, 28, Dec. 5, 12, 19 (Every Monday), noon – 1 p.m. in the Todd Building, Bunker Room and Nov. 23, 30, Dec. 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.** Nov. 22, 29, Dec. 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.

**Social Support Group — LGBTQ Issues (Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Questioning).** Nov. 23, Dec. 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.

**Al-Anon Parent Group.** Nov. 24, Dec. 1, 8, 15, 22, 26 (Every Thursday), 7 - 8 p.m. One hour topic discussion.

**Yoga.** Nov. 29, Dec. 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 patriciac.graham@hhchealth.org

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

**Dementia Lecture: An Introduction.** Nov. 29, 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.

**Depression: An Introduction To The Disorder.** Dec. 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 in which family members might better cope with the illness.

**Dementia Support/Educational Group Meeting.** Dec. 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.

**Survivors Of Suicide Support Group.** Dec. 7 (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.

**Substance Use Educational And Support Group.** Dec. 8 (Second Thursday of each month), 4 – 5 p.m. For family members impacted by loved ones with substance abuse.
Rallying for the cause for 2016 Staff Campaign

Please consider supporting Natchaug Hospital and its programs by contributing to the 2016 staff campaign. All donations stay local to Natchaug programs and services.

Employees who donate $25 or more are eligible to win one of five remaining Amazon.com gift cards and other prizes in weekly drawings.

Donation and pledge forms are available on the Natchaug intranet. If you have questions, contact Sherry Smardon in Fund Development at sherry.smardon@hhchealth.org or ext. 65910.

Charter Oak will match donations

Charter Oak Federal Credit Union will match any donation to Natchaug Hospital up to $100 through Wednesday, Nov. 23 (donor must have a Charter Oak account). For more information on donations or matches, contact sherry.smardon@hhchealth.org.

Anything to share?

Are you interested in sharing your clinical experience or knowledge with 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.

Pies, non-perishables sought for adult unit food drive

The Adult unit will once again be running its annual food drive starting the Monday after Thanksgiving. Boxes will be put out on the Adult unit for non-perishable donations. In addition, employees are invited to donate any unwanted pies.

Fire safety day at JCTV

The Yantic Fire Department recently visited Joshua Center Thames Valley to give a presentation and speak with students about fire safety. Afterwards, students had the opportunity to explore the Department’s 1980s vintage Mack fire truck.
Health fair draws a crowd

More than 200 employees and other visitors turned out for Rushford’s Health and Wellness Fair in the cafeteria of the Paddock Avenue facility in Meriden on Nov. 8. In all, 18 vendors were on hand to offer information on services and resources for a wide range of health and wellness issues, making the event a rousing success.

United Way Campaign off and running at Rushford

The United Way Annual Campaign at Rushford has kicked off. Support for the campaign benefits our clients, many of whom are served in the community through United Way initiatives.

For a $1 per week ($52 per year) donation to the United Way, you can:

- Provide dinner for 30 residents at a homeless shelter.
- Provide five bus passes to someone starting a new job but who has no transportation to get there.
- Fund youth leadership programs for 10 middle school or high school students.

If you completed a pledge form last year, you will still need to fill out a form this year if you would like to continue your contribution. Last year’s forms do not carry over. Our campaign continues through Dec. 2.

Watch the BHNews for more information on other ways to donate to the United Way or contact Kate McNulty at katherine.mcnulty@hhchealth.org.

You are invited to an OPEN HOUSE at Rushford’s new adult outpatient center for addiction and mental health treatment

Tuesday, Dec. 6
7:30 – 9:30 am and 3:30 – 5:30 pm
35 Tower Lane, Avon

Refreshments • Tours • Information on Services Giveaways • Convenient Parking

Behavioral health problems impact all our communities. Come learn what we are doing to bring real hope to people.

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.Suortz@hhchealth.org.

Rushford
A Hartford HealthCare Partner

• 7 •
Partnering with the church to fight addiction

Representatives from Rushford’s Stonehaven location in Portland took part in a special forum to fight the ongoing epidemic in heroin and opioid abuse at Trinity Episcopal Church in Portland last weekend. Rushford was asked to take part in the event by the church’s pastor, Rev. Phil Bjornberg. Shown at Rushford’s display table at the event are, left, Mike Sienkiewicz, clinician at Stonehaven, and Greg Hogan, Stonehaven program coordinator.

Artwork tells story of recovery

Tonya Cutler, right, a client in the Medication Assisted Treatment program at Rushford’s Glastonbury location, has been supporting her recovery by creating artwork that tells the story of her journey. She recently donated the artwork to Michelle Voegtle, clinical supervisor at Glastonbury, left. Cutler and her husband were invited to the Rushford Foundation’s annual reception on Nov. 16 to display her artwork and share her story of hope.

Rushford/Natchaug Holiday Party

Saturday, Jan. 7 • 6-11 p.m.
Saint Clements Castle • 1931 Portland-Cobalt Road • Portland, CT 06480

Get ready for a great night of dancing and capturing beautiful memories. Includes photo booth, DJ and cash bar.

Choices of Entrees include:
• Southern Crusted Salmon in an orange marmalade reduction (may contain nuts)
• Vegetarian Lasagna
• Chicken Francaise with Romano Locatelli, lemon and capers
• Grilled Angus Sirloin with Barolo and caramelized shallots

Please have your entrée choices ready when purchasing tickets.

Tickets on sale now
$10 per person. Staff plus one (18 or older) “cash only”
See Annie Cruz or Sheila Gosselin for tickets

You are cordially invited to attend our: Peer Recovery Group!

Every Tuesday! Beginning: November 1, 2016
Time: 10:00am-11:00am.
Rushford MediQuick, Room #1, Paddock Avenue, Meriden.

*Featuring Topics such as…
• Mindfulness
• “Pick a stick”
• Dealing with stress...

And many more topics that together as a Peer group we will come up with!
*For more information, or any questions, contact:
Sarah LaBarre-Recovery Specialist: (203)634-7037
Rae White-Recovery Specialist: (203)630-5391
Leslie Fort-Recovery Specialist: (203) 630-5224
John Oyola-Recovery Specialist: (203)634-7048

“Together we will guide our recovery!”
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.

WANTED

MAGAZINES/CHILDREN’S BOOKS — Used children’s hardcover books and used magazines in good condition for the Backus Hospital waiting rooms and Backus offsite locations. Please drop off the items at the Backus Gift Shop through the end of the year. Please contact Ginny in Communications at 860.889.8331, ext. 4211 for additional information.

EVENTS

BATTLE OF THE PANS — Friday, Nov. 18, 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Blaustein Humanities Center Conn College. Culinary student cook-off, NFA versus New London, judging by Grasso Tech students, $50 per person features hors d’oeuvres, cash bar, raffle ticket for dinner prepared by Chef Dan Giuisti for six to eight people at your home within New London County. For more information contact Three Rivers Family Program at 860.887.3288.

BAKE SALE, COUNTRY STORE & CHILI LUNCHEON — Saturday, Nov. 19, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 30 Connecticut Ave., in the Industrial Park, Norwich. Baked goods, face painting, crafters and more.

GRAND ORGAN RECITAL — Sunday, Nov. 20, 4 p.m. at Central Baptist Church. Matthew Provost, Organist, German and French organ music, free admission, free will offerings accepted.

SINGING GROUP — Every Tuesday from 7-8:30 p.m. at Christ Episcopal Church, 78 Washington St., Norwich. No fee, voluntary donation only. Call 860.237.1887.

FOOD FOR BOOKS — Saturday, Nov. 26, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Norwich Grange Hall, 172 West Town St., Norwich. Swap or exchange one non-perishable food item for one book which will be donated to the Soup Kitchen.

MATCH™ adolescent locations include:

DURHAM
Rushford
459 Wallingford Rd.

GLASTONBURY
Rushford
110 National Dr.

MERIDEN
Rushford
883 Paddock Ave.

MATCH™ Treatment Close to Home (MATCH™) for people as young as 16 years old who are struggling with opioids or other addictions. MATCH™ utilizes Suboxone® or other medications, along with relapse prevention support, and offers convenient, flexible schedules for working professionals or students. Teens seeking help for addiction also have access to a multitude of other resources including residential treatment and the evidence-based Seven Challenges® Program for adolescent substance use.

Have you heard the news?

Introducing 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

Addiction does not care about age.

That’s why Hartford HealthCare’s Behavioral Health Network now offers Medication Assisted Treatment Close to Home (MATCH™) for people as young as 16 years old who are struggling with opioids or other addictions. MATCH™ utilizes Suboxone® or other medications, along with relapse prevention support, and offers convenient, flexible schedules for working professionals or students. Teens seeking help for addiction also have access to a multitude of other resources including residential treatment and the evidence-based Seven Challenges® Program for adolescent substance use.

Call 1.855.825.4026
hhcbehavioralhealth.org

Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network Connect to healthier™