S
heryl Sprague, Prevention Manager at Rushford, spent the past several weeks training public school bus drivers on how to identify and prevent an age-old problem that has long made it difficult for children to feel safe on their way to and from school — bullying.

“You are in control of your bus, you can set the tone,” Sprague recently told a gathering of school bus drivers in Coventry. “If you have suspicions that any of the children on your routes are being bullied, you can report it to the authorities at the school. Don’t put yourself in a situation where you are tolerating or overlooking these behaviors.”

The presentation in Coventry was one of several that Sprague provided this month as part of an effort to educate and empower drivers with M&J Bus Inc. of Old Saybrook, which provides school bus services for districts in Coventry, Farmington, Old Saybrook and other Connecticut communities.

“I was bullied as a kid myself, so I really appreciate that they are doing this so I can help the kids who may be experiencing the same thing on my bus,” said Jeff Whalen, who drives a special education bus for the Town of Farmington.

Sprague told drivers that the State of Connecticut has clearly defined laws on what constitutes bullying and what steps that bus drivers and others who are entrusted with the care of children must take to report instances of “mean-spirited behaviors.” Bullying, she said, has been shown to be a contributing factor in substance abuse and mental health issues among young people, both victims and perpetrators.

Sprague told drivers that she appreciated the difficult job they have in properly navigating their routes every day while also maintaining a safe en-
Creating a culture of safety en route to school

continued from page 1

vironment in their buses. She said that bullying has long been something that has disrupted the ability of bus drivers to do their jobs, while also leading to lasting trauma on the part of those who are victimized.

“I have great respect for the job that you do every day,” Sprague told drivers. “I want to help make your job easier by giving you some tools that will help you create a culture of safety on your bus.”

Some of the steps that Sprague said drivers can take include:

■ Separate children who are exhibiting mean-spirited behavior from their peers by requiring them to sit in a seat next to the driver.

■ Recognize and emphasize good behaviors on the part of children who treat others with kindness or consideration. “Children want attention, and if they get attention for doing something nice, they will not resort to bullying,” she said.

■ Encourage other children to feel free to talk to drivers if they see bullying behavior on the bus. “It’s not tattling if it’s done to help another child who is being victimized,” she said.

Funding to support the training sessions was provided through the Community Foundation of Middlesex County, which has made bullying prevention a priority this year through its Campaign for Bully-Free Communities initiative. The Foundation worked to arrange the presentations with M&J and Sprague, who as Rushford’s Prevention Manager works to identify and prevent a wide range of behaviors that have a negative impact on young people.

Weight Watchers offers free one-year memberships to staff

Starting on Jan. 1, all Hartford HealthCare employees are eligible for a free one-year membership with Weight Watchers, regardless of whether they have HHC health insurance. Spouses who are covered by an HHC health plan are also eligible for the free one-year membership.

HHC employees who enroll will be able to attend meetings at work, online or in the community and have access to Weight Watchers resources. Weight Watchers is the world’s leading commercial provider of weight management services, with more than 36,000 meetings each week and a wide variety of weight management products, subscriptions and programs.

Employees may enroll on the HHC Connect intranet starting in January.

HOCC receives tech grant to help victims

The psychiatric services unit at The Hospital of Central Connecticut has been awarded a grant from the Connecticut Office of Victim Services to acquire educational technology to help victims of sexual or physical abuse.

The grant, which totals $2,866, will be used to purchase smart television monitors for PowerPoint, video, DVD and other presentations providing education and support for those who have been traumatized by domestic violence or abuse, either as adults or as children. The presentations will be used to foster discussions in group or individual settings. Grant funding was made available through state and federal programs.
Talking to kids about tragedy: BHN experts discuss Calif. shootings

Experts with the Behavioral Health Network have been offering tips and guidance on how to talk to children about tragic events in the news in the wake of the recent mass shootings in California in which 14 people were killed — the deadliest incident in the United States since the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut three years ago.

Laura Saunders, PsyD, a psychologist at the Institute of Living, appeared on local TV news stations on Thursday, a day after two armed people opened fire at a public social services agency building in San Bernardino, Calif. Saunders spoke on both the mid-day newscast on NBC30 and the afternoon newscast on Fox 61 about how to discuss the incident with children. A link to Saunders’ appearance on NBC30 can be found at http://www.nbcconnecticut.com/on-air/as-seen-on/Tips-on-Talking-to-Children-About-Tragedy_Hartford-36049811.html

Along with the media appearances by Dr. Saunders, the BHN is also offering a special video for employees, clinical staff and other audiences across Hartford HealthCare featuring James O’Dea, PhD, MBA, BHN Vice President of Operations. The video focuses on how to discuss the shootings with children, family members and others. The video can be found on websites across the BHN as well as Hartford HealthCare social media sites. A link can be found at rushford.org, natchaug.org or backushospital.org

In their discussions, both Saunders and O’Dea urge parents to carefully consider the age of their children when deciding if a discussion is necessary and, if so, what should be said. Young children, they said, should be shielded as much as possible while older children may have more opportunities to learn, and answering questions about their well-being can lessen their worry.
Here’s to you! A new way to say thanks to your co-workers

Thanks to input we have received from our recent employee survey and BHNews readership survey, we are adding a page to BHNews solely dedicated to staff recognition.

“Here’s To You” is your page for saying thank you to a colleague for a job well done, acknowledging a personal accomplishment by one of our staff members, saluting a department for their contribution to healthcare, and for patients grateful for superior care.

If you know of a staff member who deserves this kind of recognition at the Institute of Living, Natchaug, Rushford or the psychiatric services units at Backus Hospital or The Hospital of Central Connecticut, please send an email to Matt Burgard at matt.burgard@hhchealth.org. Thank you for your input and suggestions.

Always willing to help

My co-worker Alan Lanz deserves recognition. He always goes the extra mile by switching his schedule around, picking up extra shifts, playing sports with the children on our unit and drawing with them. He works on D1s at the IOL and he goes above and beyond.

— Kathy Rudzki

Nice work, Sherry!

I’d like to thank Sherry Smardon at Natchaug for all the wonderful work she did organizing and implementing plans for the Nov. 12 retirement party for BHN President Stephen Larcen, while we were still submitting multiple grants and planning two year-end campaigns. Sherry’s devotion to the BHN and Natchaug Hospital is commendable and her drive to accomplish her goals and support the BHN is remarkable. She’s a hard worker and a pleasure to work with.

— Kate McNulty, BHN Director of Philanthropy and Development

A group effort

I work on Donnelly One North at the Institute of Living. My staff and co-workers should get some recognition for all their hard work. We work with Alzheimer’s patients, and our staff, which includes psych technicians, social workers, physicians, RNs and managers, do everything to care for them in sometimes difficult situations. I have been at the Institute of Living for 39 years and have seen how important a good team is. Our staff is highly qualified in working with schizophrenia, depression, suicidal, mania and Alzheimer’s disease.

— Susan J. Koloski, CNA, Psych Tech

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, Dec. 15, at noon.
National substance abuse leader visits IOL campus

Nora D. Volkow, MD, who has helped shape the world’s understanding of substance abuse and addiction as a groundbreaking clinical researcher and as Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) at the National Institutes of Health, gave a special presentation on her work at the Institute of Living on Nov. 19.

Dr. Volkow has played an instrumental and pioneering role in demonstrating that drug addiction is a disease of the brain, furthering the public understanding of addiction as a medical condition requiring clinical and psychiatric treatment. As a research psychiatrist and scientist, Dr. Volkow pioneered the use of brain imaging to investigate the toxic effects and addictive properties of abusable drugs.

Dr. Volkow discussed her research at a special meeting of Institute of Living clinicians, educators and researchers, which was followed by a luncheon in her honor. Her visit came after she was named recipient of the IOL’s prestigious C. Charles Burlingame Award in 2013, but was unable to attend to receive her award due to developments in Washington, D.C., at the time. She was again scheduled to visit the IOL the following year, but a snowstorm forced a cancellation. She said she was grateful she was finally able to follow up on her interest in touring the IOL and interacting with its staff.

“I was determined to make this happen,” Dr. Volkow said before beginning her presentation to a crowd of over 100 clinicians, researchers and caregivers. In her lecture, Dr. Volkow talked about how the groundbreaking use of imaging technology has allowed researchers such as herself to gain evidence-based scientific data to support the idea that addiction is a physiological disease requiring proper treatment.

Leader in mental health reform speaks at IOL

Kevin Ann Huckshorn, a national leader and innovator in mental health reforms, provided a series of presentations and group discussions on the use of restraints and seclusion over a two-day visit to the Institute of Living on Nov. 19 and 20.

Huckshorn provided an overview of how the psychiatric field – as well as government leaders and the public – have evolved in their views on the use of seclusion and restraints over the past several decades, while emphasizing that this evolution is still continuing.

“There is still much work to be done in furthering our awareness of how we contribute to these issues,” said Huckshorn, who credited the IOL and other major psychiatric centers across the country for playing a leading role in reforms.

Huckshorn is credited with overhauling and reforming practices within psychiatric facilities in Delaware as head of the state’s Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health before retiring last year. She spoke about her approach to minimizing the use of seclusion and restraints though her Six Core Strategies in a series of presentations and panel discussions that were open to all staff across the Behavioral Health Network.

BHN leadership, including Harold I. Schwartz, MD, IOL Psychiatrist-in-Chief and Vice President for Behavioral Health at Hartford HealthCare, and Ellen Blair, APRN, Nursing Director at IOL, thanked Huckshorn for her visit, pointing out that her work continues to influence caregivers and clinicians who provide treatment for IOL patients.
BrainDance Awards highlight student projects on mental illness

The Institute of Living/Hartford Hospital is sponsoring an academic and art competition designed to decrease the stigma of mental illness. The 13th annual 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.

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 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 21. 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 Feb. 1.

For more information: contact Nancy Hubbard at 860-545-7665 or nancy.hubbard@hhchealth.org

Jeremy De Valle, left, Bristol Eastern High School; McKenzie Clark, center, Bristol Eastern High School and Marissa Fuller, Norwich Technical High School were all first-place winners in last year’s BrainDance Awards competition.

THE SEASON OF GIVING

Let us know about your charitable efforts

The holidays are a season of giving. We’d like to know what you or other staff members are doing to help those who are less fortunate this year. Send us information about your charitable endeavor and we’ll make sure the Behavioral Health Network families know how to contribute to a great cause. Send information about your event or charitable giving drive to matt.burgard@hhchealth.org. Please include name of the charity, date of the event or collection times, location of the event or drop-off, items requested and contact information.

Celebrations campaign seeks holiday donations

Throughout the year, “Celebrations”— housed in the Child & Adolescent Outpatient Clinic — has provided a “shop” where families facing financial hardship can select gifts for the 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.

Donations 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.

The drop-off location is in the Braceland Building on the IOL campus, second floor, Child & Adolescent Outpatient Clinic, front desk ext. 5-7239. Contact Nelis Bido-Jimenez at ext. 5-7035 or Suzanne Femino at ext. 5-7717 for more information.

Thank you and we look forward, with your help, to seeing more kids smile this holiday season.
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:

- **Alcoholics Anonymous.** Dec. 8, 15, 22, 29 (Every Tuesday), 2-3 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).** Dec. 9, Dec. 23 (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.** Dec. 10 (Second Thursday of each month), 4 – 5 p.m. For family members impacted by loved ones with substance abuse.

- **Bipolar: An Introduction To The Disorder.** Dec. 15, 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.

- **The Truth About Electroconvulsive Therapy and Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation.** Dec. 15, 6 – 7 p.m. in the Commons Building, 2nd Floor, Hartford Room. Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) isn’t like it’s portrayed in the movies. It’s a safe and commonly used procedure that effectively treats depression, mania, catatonia and some types of psychosis. Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) is a non-invasive treatment for patients who have not benefited from the use of anti-depressant medications.

- **Youth Psychosis Family Support Group.** Dec. 16 (First and third Wednesday of each month), 4:15 – 5:15 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.

- **Support Group For Families Dealing With Major Mental Illness.** Dec. 17 (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.

- **Sibling Support Group.** Dec. 17 (First and third Thursday of each month), 5:15 - 6:30 p.m. in the Center Building, First Floor Conference Room. This group will provide support for siblings of those struggling with mental illness, create a safe place to discuss and process feelings, and connect with others who have similar circumstances.

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Butler Hospital staff shares methods

A team of nurses, mental health workers and security from Butler Hospital in Rhode Island visited the Institute of Living on Nov. 13 to share their experience developing a psychiatric de-escalation team. The team was named DEAT, for “De-escalation Emergency Assist Team,” and was created to better manage psychiatric emergencies. The team is immediately available to staff requiring assistance with a sudden patient escalation or other emergency situation. The Butler team gave two presentations about how to establish and implement a de-escalation team in a healthcare setting. The presentation was well attended by staff members across the Behavioral Health Network, which this year has undertaken a quality initiative aimed at reducing seclusion and restraint.
Construction under way on new entry near ambulance bay

On Monday, Nov. 30, construction began at the main hospital on a new external door adjacent to the ambulance entrance. The new door will serve as an entry and exit point for staff and will be separated from the hallway by a locked door to help prevent elopements.

After construction is completed, staff will no longer use the ambulance entrance to enter or exit the building except in an emergency. The Kronos clock will also be moved to a location closer to the new door for the convenience of staff.

During the six-week construction phase, all staff are asked to utilize a different entrance and Kronos time clock (i.e. the main lobby). Additionally, up to eight parking spots may be unavailable. Construction workers will park at the 165 Storrs Road building. If you have questions, contact Natchaug Hospital Facilities Manager Scott Crawford at scott.crawford@hhchealth.org or ext. 65940.

Cake, celebration for Larcen retirement Dec. 16

Join staff and leadership to celebrate President Steve Larcen’s retirement after 25 years at Natchaug Hospital on Wednesday, Dec. 16, from 1 - 3 p.m. in the Community Room at the main hospital. Cake and light refreshments will be served. No RSVP is required.

Thanksgiving cards from JCNE

Joshua Center Northeast staff and all age groups collaborated to create Thanksgiving cards for the elderly. The cards were delivered to David Place in Danielson on the day before Thanksgiving and were very well received by the residents.

Cake, celebration for Larcen retirement Dec. 16

Please consider supporting Natchaug Hospital and its programs by contributing to the 2015 staff campaign. All donations stay local to Natchaug programs and services. All those who donate $25 or more are eligible to win one of five remaining Amazon.com gift cards and other gifts in weekly drawings. Donation and pledge forms are available on the Natchaug intranet. If you have questions, contact Kate McNulty in Fund Development at katherine.mcnulty@hhchealth.org or ext. 65909.
With strong support from members of the public who spoke of the urgent need for addiction services in their community, the Cheshire Planning and Zoning Commission recently approved an application from Rushford to open a comprehensive substance abuse and mental health outpatient treatment center for adults.

The unanimous vote by Cheshire planning commission members came after emotional and heartfelt testimony in support of the proposal from several residents, including one who fought back tears discussing the impact that substance abuse has had on her daughter.

“She is no longer capable of taking care of our granddaughter, so we are raising her instead,” she said. “This is an issue that impacts families like ours everywhere in our state, in all of our communities. A center like this will go a long way in helping meet this urgent need.”

Commission Chairman Earl Kurtz, III, said he welcomed Rushford’s plan to open the new treatment center in a professional medical building at 680 S. Main St., where Rushford will provide services in a suite of exam and group therapy rooms as well as other professional space. Rushford plans to begin offering services in the new location shortly after the new year.

“We are glad to have you here,” said Kurtz after hearing testimony from residents, Rushford employees and Patricia Rehmer, MSN, ACHE, Senior Vice President for Behavioral Health at Hartford HealthCare, at the Nov. 23 public hearing. Rehmer told commission members that there were over 480 overdoses from opioids alone in Connecticut over the past year.

“This is happening everywhere in our state, including Cheshire,” she said.

The new center will offer a range of services designed to meet the needs of adult professionals who require flexible schedules and discretion. Services include intensive outpatient, relapse prevention, wellness programs, individualized therapy, ambulatory detox, medication-assisted treatment and family education.

Rushford doctor adds new certification

Hassan Dinakar, MD, an associate medical director at Rushford, was recently certified in addiction medicine by the American Board of Addiction Medicine. Dr. Dinakar, who supervises physicians, fellows, APRNs and physician assistants in the Rushford Community Mental Health Center in Meriden, is now Board-certified in addiction medicine, adult psychiatry and addiction psychiatry.

Got something 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.
Dr. Allen joins Rushford

This year marks Rushford’s 40th anniversary as a leading provider of substance abuse and addiction services in Connecticut. BHNews is celebrating by taking a look back at the organization’s beginnings and early years in the Middletown and Meriden area, where it began making a profound impact in addressing the needs of the community.

Shown here is a photo of J. Craig Allen, MD, who became Rushford’s first Medical Director in 2005, giving the organization a broader and deeper capacity to provide a full range of addiction medicine services through treatment and research. Under Dr. Allen’s leadership, Rushford developed medical and psychiatric services to more effectively treat complex co-occurring conditions experienced by many of the organization’s clients. Rushford became a training site for psychiatric residents from Hartford Hospital/Institute of Living, physician assistant students from several area colleges, and medical technician students. Dr. Allen’s vision has given the organization a national reputation as a leader in addiction medicine. In 2011, Dr. Vincent McClain began a year-long post-graduate fellowship in addiction medicine at Rushford. In 2013, under the leadership of Dr. Allen, Dr. McClain and Rushford’s Addictions Medical Director, Dr. Samuel Silverman, Rushford received accreditation for a national post-doctoral fellowship by the American Board of Addiction Medicine, becoming the first community-based treatment provider in the country to be so recognized.

To read Rushford’s 40th anniversary annual report, visit www.rushford.org.

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. Please do not list hospital phone numbers or hospital e-mail addresses for responses.

You must submit your item weekly if you want it to appear more than one week.

FOR SALE

1998 LEXUS ES300 — Grey exterior. 210,000 miles. Asking $1,500 or best offer. Motivated to sell. Email Ambercd035@gmail.com

WII ROCK BAND — Drums, guitar, microphone, two Rock Band Games, $50. Call 860-848-0195.


MISC. ITEMS — This End Up furniture, Honey Pine, indestructible, two dressers, mirror, desk, two chairs, hutch with bookshelf, two couches, two end tables, two twin bunk beds, $50 each. Oakworks portable massage table, wood frame, five years old, like new, face rest, bolster, carrying case, $350 or best offer. Call 860-642-4286 or 860-336-1942.

DONATIONS FOR THE HOMELESS — The Comunidad Sanadora ICP Healing Community is collecting items for the homeless. Socks for homeless men and women, Band-Aids, water, gallon Ziploc bags, packets of nuts, crackers, dried fruit, trail mix, granola bars, breakfast bars, instant noodles, other lightweight quick snacks, travel size antibacterial lotion, soap, shampoo, lip balm, toothpaste, toothbrush, dental floss, washcloth, comb, brush, razor, shaving cream, deodorant. Please avoid items such as mouthwash or hand sanitizer that contain alcohol. All donations will be distributed to the homeless in our community on Saturday, Dec. 12. Drop off times are Wednesdays and Fridays, 7 p.m. or Sundays, 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. at Comunidad Sanadora ICP Healing Community, 20 Hope St., Willimantic, 06226.

DIGITAL TV — With a HDMI hookup. Call 860-546-9928.

WANTED

KILLINGLY HOLIDAY SHOPPING NIGHT — Friday, Dec. 4 from 5-8 p.m. at Killingly High School cafeteria. Sponsored by Killingly FFA Parents and Alumni. All proceeds benefit the school. Shopping for adults, activities for children with food vendors, Scentsy, Thirty-One, pickles, soaps, baked goods, crafts, ornaments, more.

EVENTS