Because every moment matters
In 2015, Rushford enthusiastically celebrated its 40th anniversary, looking back proudly and fondly on its pioneering role in bringing substance abuse and mental health services to Connecticut.

But seemingly before the last celebratory balloon and piece of cake were cleared away, the organization boldly embarked on a new era of leadership and increased visibility. These efforts were all in the name of helping our clients, and every moment truly mattered along the way.

And speaking of moments, 2015 and 2016 would propel Rushford to one of its most important moments yet — a moment in the spotlight.

As people became aware of the horrendous toll that the opioid and heroin epidemic was taking at all levels of society, Rushford was looked to more for guidance, leadership and expertise. The devastation surrounding the issue has been felt in every corner of Connecticut and beyond (as of mid-2016, the state was on track to lose more than 800 of its citizens to accidental drug overdoses — a record).

The only bright side to this kind of public health crisis is the way it has helped begin to change longstanding beliefs about substance abuse and those who suffer from it, although discrimination remains a huge problem. If you know and love someone who has experienced an addiction issue, it’s harder to condemn them as weak or somehow flawed — you see firsthand that this is a disease every bit as chronic and symptomatic as cancer or heart disease, and needs accordingly with comprehensive, evidence-based care.

In the process, the public has come to see the value of behavioral health centers like Rushford, and the work we do to help our patients embark on a path of recovery, and stay there. As the epidemic began to dominate headlines in late 2015 and throughout 2016, Rushford experts took the lead in educating the public about the factors contributing to the epidemic — social, biological and otherwise — and the best way to prevent it or treat it.

Rushford leaders took part in countless community education forums large and small, from Greenwich to Willimantic. They appeared in local and national media, providing their insights and furthering our ability to both educate the public and help break down the fear and unwillingness that addiction sufferers often feel before deciding to seek help.

Rushford and its partner entities within the Behavioral Health Network continued to take the lead on the issue by launching MATCH™, or Medication Assisted Treatment Close to Home, a campaign meant to educate the public about the numerous locations across the state where people could go for effective treatment. Led by Rushford Vice President of Operations Steve Zuckerman, we opened a new MATCH facility in Cheshire and a program at Rushford in Meriden, showing that we were committed to fighting the opioid epidemic in urban and suburban areas.

The staff of highly accomplished addiction medicine specialists, led by Medical Director J. Craig Allen, MD, earned widespread accolades and praise for their work in explaining and treating the biological impact that substance abuse has on the brain.

The organization’s stature also continued to grow within Hartford HealthCare, as it dramatically turned around its financial fortunes and reversed several years of setbacks. Two years after reporting a loss of more than $2 million, the organization was on track to finish the end of Fiscal Year 2016 by reporting a net profit, with projections for substantial gains in the following year.

What’s more, over the past year Rushford has significantly expanded its range of programs for mental health and prevention services. Under the state Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Rushford’s Paddock Avenue location in Meriden is designated as a Local Mental Health Authority, making it the prime resource for therapeutic programs and crisis intervention services in the area. To uphold that designation, we have grown our Behavioral Health Home program to help those with mental health issues receive the care and support they need to maintain independent lifestyles. And our prevention programs are interwoven throughout the communities we serve, providing education to schools, youth organizations and other important community groups.

All of this is occurring in a healthcare landscape that grows more challenging by the day, which is why the success that Rushford is having is so gratifying, and so deserving of acknowledgement. There is still much work to do to continue expanding the programs we offer clients and enhancing our status as a center of excellence in behavioral health, but those moments will come, too. For now, we will enjoy our moment in the spotlight by keeping the focus where it belongs — on the people we serve.

Patricia Rehmer
President, Hartford HealthCare
Behavioral Health Network
Senior Vice President, Hartford HealthCare
Addiction has met its match

New marketing campaign generates results

The Behavioral Health Network took a bold step in the fight against the opioid and heroin epidemic in March 2016, when the organization expanded its services and launched an extensive campaign to advertise its wide range of services for the treatment of addiction-related issues.

The campaign, called MATCH™, or Medication Assisted Treatment Close to Home, featured print, radio and digital advertisements that appeared across the state, educating the public about the seven opioid and heroin treatment centers run by Rushford, Natchaug and The Hospital of Central Connecticut (Rushford is scheduled to open an eighth center in Avon in fall 2016.)

A key component of the campaign was to find a way to bring seven different locations with seven different phone numbers and seven different names under one umbrella, to make it easy for potential clients to find us. By branding it as MATCH, which has since been trademarked by Hartford HealthCare, and utilizing a single phone number and call center with staff that answers calls 24 hours per day, we were able to accomplish that.

Another crucial aspect of the campaign was our ability to measure success. From March-July the campaign generated more than 180 phone calls and we were able to track where people called from, where they heard about us and what facility they were referred to.

A top priority item for the BHN, medication-assisted treatment helps people struggling with addiction into recovery by using medications such as Suboxone® or Naltrexone in combination with relapse-prevention therapy and group and individual counseling. The MATCH campaign marked the first full-scale advertising campaign for the BHN, and it has been so successful that it is being used as a model for other marketing efforts. Above is an example of some of the advertising materials used in the campaign.
The crisis surrounding overdose-related deaths from opioid and heroin addiction reached new heights in 2015-16, as Connecticut and the rest of the nation saw skyrocketing numbers of people falling victim to addiction. The epidemic touched on all corners of society — young and old, urban and suburban, rich and poor. Many of those who died were the victim of a swift and shocking pattern in which they were prescribed opioid pain medications for a health condition and then became addicted. When they were no longer able to obtain prescription medications, many turned to heroin, which can be readily purchased at much lower cost. Over the past year, heroin purchased “on the street” was commonly “cut,” or mixed, with fentanyl, a powerfully addictive pharmaceutical normally used to treat cancer patients. The combination of heroin and fentanyl left a tragic wake across Connecticut, where emergency rooms saw waves of addicted people coming in after overdosing and dying. Rushford and other entities across the Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network (BHN) responded to the crisis with great urgency, expanding resources and access to care through the MATCH™ (Medication Assisted Treatment Close to Home) program and adding new outpatient facilities in Cheshire and other communities.

Rushford experts and leaders took every opportunity to educate our communities about the crisis, appearing frequently in the news media and at community forums across the state while working closely with state and national legislators to draft and support legislation meant to address the problem.

With support from Rushford and its Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network partners, the state approved new laws that would make it harder for those addicted to prescription pain medication to “doctor shop” as a way to obtain opioids, while another new law expanded access to Naloxone, or Narcan, the drug that can help reverse the symptoms of an overdose. Despite the comprehensive response to the crisis, Connecticut was projected to see the epidemic escalate in 2016 and beyond, with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner projecting that a record-setting 832 people would die of an accidental overdose by the end of 2016 — up from 729 in 2015 and more than double the number who died in 2012.

But there is reason to hope, and Rushford is among the leaders in the effort to guide and care for people on the path to recovery. Through the latest in evidence-based clinical care and a philosophy built around compassion and respect, Rushford has helped thousands of patients overcome their diseases and return to happy and fulfilling lives. One such patient, Ben Roche, a college student who was profiled in the Hartford HealthCare News Service television special on the addiction issue, “Hope After Heroin,” credited Rushford with giving him a new lease on life. “When I finally decided to reach out for help,” he said. “There were so many hands reaching back out to me.” In this annual report, you will learn about many ways that Rushford has played a leading role in taking on the crisis.
Rushford opens new outpatient center in Cheshire

Rushford publicly unveiled its new outpatient addiction treatment center in Cheshire at a press conference in March that was meant to call attention to the need for substance abuse services in Cheshire and surrounding communities.

With the rate of overdoses related to heroin and opioid painkillers continuing to rise throughout the state and the rest of the country, Rushford officials told a gathering of broadcast and print news reporters that they are working to bring evidence-based care to those suffering from addiction, not only in Cheshire but across the state.

The new treatment center, located in a suite of exam and group therapy rooms at 680 S. Main St., offers services including Medication-Assisted Treatment, a model of care that helps people recover from addiction through a combination of medication (including suboxone), group therapy and counseling. Other services at the new center include programs for relapse prevention, intensive outpatient services, individualized therapy, ambulatory detox and family education.

Speaking at the press event were Patricia Rehmer, MSN, ACHE, President of the Behavioral Health Network; J. Craig Allen, MD, Rushford Medical Director; and Michael Mitchell, a Cheshire resident and former Rushford client who is in recovery from substance abuse issues.

Mitchell, who has been in recovery for close to two years, said the new location will go far in helping those struggling to get the help they need before their addiction progresses.

“They changed my life and turned my life around,” said Mitchell, who was joined at the event by his mother, Barbara, whose husband died after a prolonged battle with addiction issues. She said she was proud of her son for seeking help and not allowing himself to follow the same path as her husband.

Rehmer said the goal behind the location in Cheshire was to make it easy and convenient for those in the community who are struggling with addiction to access care, and stay on a path of recovery. She said the BHN would continue to expand services for addiction treatment throughout the state, including planned locations in Avon, Meriden, West Hartford and other areas.
Members of the Rushford leadership team were recognized by the Hartford HealthCare Board of Directors in February for the organization’s work addressing the opioid and heroin addiction epidemic, particularly for educating providers on the life-saving benefits of naloxone (the opioid overdose reversal medication) and the ease with which laypersons can be trained to administer naloxone in an emergency. In addition, the team was recognized for its role in providing education in proper pain medication prescribing and expanding access to medication-assisted treatment. Shown here are, from left: Brian W. MacLean, Chairman of the HHG Board; J. Craig Allen, MD, Rushford Medical Director; Patricia Rehmer, President of the Behavioral Health Network and Senior Vice President of Hartford HealthCare; and Elliot Joseph, President and CEO of Hartford HealthCare.

On the frontlines and beyond

Rushford medical staff takes a leading role in fighting addiction

Members of the Rushford medical staff continued to take the lead in advancing research into the biology of addiction and furthering the emerging understanding of addiction as a chronic and treatable disease.

Throughout the course of the year Rushford clinical leaders were recognized frequently for their contributions to the field of addiction medicine, and their efforts to educate a wide range of audiences, including the public, government officials and fellow medical providers.

Some highlights of the year for the Rushford medical staff:

• J. Craig Allen, MD, Rushford Medical Director, was named the Governor’s appointee to the Advisory Board for the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. He was also named to the state’s Alcohol and Drug Policy Committee and, nationally, was appointed to the Medical Advisory Council for the National Council of Behavioral Health.

• Samuel Silverman, MD, Rushford Director of Medical Education, was named President of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine.

• Dr. Allen and Dr. Silverman served as addiction experts for the American Academy of Pediatrics Chapter Quality Network’s Practice Improvement to Address Adolescent Substance Use (PIAASU).

• Dr. Silverman presented “The Brain and Addiction” at the Foundation for Community Health Annual Meeting in Lakeville CT (along with Patrick O’Conner, MD, chairman of The Department of Internal Medicine at Yale-New Haven) and at the “Pain and Addiction” Conference.

• Dr. Silverman, Dr. Allen and Deborah Weidner, MD (medical director at Natchaug Hospital), established a third year medical student rotation in Psychiatry for the Frank H. Netter school of Medicine at Quinnipiac University.

• Vincent McClain, MD, Rushford assistant medical director for Residential Addiction Services, was named vice president of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine and continued as the Medical Review Officer (MRO) for Haven, an independent care and monitoring center for clinical care providers struggling with addiction issues.

• Drs. Allen, Silverman and McClain were named to the Hartford HealthCare task force charged with developing a curriculum for safe opioid prescribing.

• Dr. Hassan Dinakar, associate medical director of the Community Behavioral Health Center, began providing Medication Assisted Treatment for Medicaid clients in the Meriden Wallingford catchment area.

• For the fifth year, Drs. Silverman, McClain and Allen, in collaboration with the CSMS and the American Society of Addiction Medicine, held the “ASAM Educational.” For the third year, they took part in the Combined Fellowship Journal Club (Yale/Rushford).

• Rushford’s Addiction Medicine Fellowship Program was formally recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) and expanded to include Natchaug Hospital doubling in size by graduating two Fellows in 2016: Christopher Reveley, MD, and Mohammed Ahmer Siddiqui, MD.
Jessie close and fellow panelists speak at annual National Dialogue forum

Jessie Close, the younger sister of movie star Glenn Close, told a packed audience of more than 150 people that society has come a long way in accepting and understanding the realities of mental health and substance abuse disorders — but there is still a long way to go.

“The only way to get through hell is to keep going,” said Close, quoting Winston Churchill to convey the enormous struggles that people with mental health disorders live with every day. Jessie was the keynote speaker at a special National Dialogue on Mental Health forum in September 2015, sponsored by the Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network, at the University of Saint Joseph in West Hartford. The forum was moderated by Patricia Rehmer, Hartford HealthCare senior vice president for behavioral health, and featured three other panelists with first-hand experience with the issues of mental health and substance abuse.

Jessie Close spoke passionately about the decades she lived under the cloud of substance abuse and depression, never fully understanding what she was struggling with. Her frequent efforts to obtain a clearer understanding led to often vague or counterproductive diagnoses, she said, often setting her on a path of ineffective treatments that only deepened her despair.

Her struggle with alcoholism hit a low point in her late 40s, she said, recounting an incident in which she seriously considered using the gun in her husband’s truck to kill herself. A short while later, during a family get-together in Wyoming, she confided to her famous big sister that she was hearing voices repeatedly telling her to kill herself.

It was then that Glenn Close, who grew up with Jessie and two other siblings in Greenwich, Conn., made sure that Jessie got the proper medical care, including a diagnosis of bipolar disorder that finally connected Jessie with proper medication and treatment. Eleven years later, Jessie credits her newfound happiness to her medication and her passion for inspiring others with her story. More than that, she said, she credits her recovery to her three children, especially her grown son Calen, who also is successfully living with a diagnosed mental health disorder.

“When I sobered up I didn’t realize how big a favor I was doing for myself,” Jessie said. Since that time, Glenn Close has called public attention to the issue by creating a non-profit organization called Bring Change 2 Mind, and Jessie supports the organization’s goals by making numerous appearances each year to share her story and urge others struggling with similar issues to seek help.

After the presentations, Rehmer took written questions from the audience and directed them to the panelists, who included Jennifer Henry, who is successfully living with schizophrenia; Brooke Aker, whose young adult son has been diagnosed with mental illness; and Bridget Marien, a young woman recovering from alcoholism. All of the panelists said events like this were key to helping them cope.

“I think that’s the theme, that people in recovery can help people a lot,” Rehmer said.

The forum was part of the National Dialogue on Mental Health that was created in the aftermath of the tragedy at Sandy Hook and is meant to continue the conversation about mental health issues in local communities. The forum marked the 20th National Dialogue event that the Behavioral Health Network has hosted over the past three years.
As a Local Mental Health Authority, Rushford helps people find a path to independence

Having a mental health issue, even a serious one, does not necessarily mean you can’t maintain a meaningful and independent lifestyle. As the Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) for the Meriden/Wallingford region, Rushford works with the state Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) to provide comprehensive treatment and support programming to those suffering from serious mental health disorders such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression and others.

“It’s really about reaching out to those with severe mental illness disorders, and giving them the resources they need.”

The LMHA designation is given to select agencies across the state which receive state funding to meet the full range of needs for those suffering from severe and persistent mental illness — including clinical treatment, counseling and assistance with housing, food, employment and other basic needs.

“In our role as LMHA, we make sure each of our clients receives the level of personalized care they need to help treat their disorders and ultimately build an independent life for themselves,” said Monika Gunning, LCSW, Rushford’s director of adult services. “It’s really about reaching out to those with severe mental illness disorders, and giving them the resources they need.”

One of Rushford’s primary focuses in its role as LMHA over the past year has been programming for young adults. The organization’s Young Adult Services Program works closely and comprehensively with young people 18 and over, most of whom have spent much of their childhoods raised under the supervision of the state Department of Children and Families. Once they turn 18, these young people are no longer under state supervision, and LMHAs such as Rushford are charged with helping them transition to a more independent lifestyle while making sure they continue to get the clinical care they need. The Rushford program received initial funding for the Young Adult Services Program in 2015, and it has continued to grow both in reach and impact.

Gunning said clients in the program receive help with everything from finding a place to live to getting a driver’s license to helping with their grocery shopping. At the same time, staff regularly check up with clients to make sure they do not miss appointments for clinical care and counseling.

Another prominent focus of Rushford’s LMHA designation is an effort to help reduce medical costs associated with caring for adults with severe mental illnesses, which averages about $10,000 a year per patient in Connecticut. A program at Rushford called Behavioral Health Home encourages clients to focus on taking part in wellness and prevention programs to help them avoid regular visits to hospital emergency rooms or other acute care centers. The program has already proven to be highly successful in helping patients take basic steps to prevent serious health issues from developing down the road, Gunning said.

Services provided by Rushford under its LMHA Designation

- Community Support Program which function as case management services for clients in need
- Mobile Crisis Services
- Respite Beds to prevent clients from being hospitalized
- Social clubs
- Supportive Housing
- Community-Based Initiative
- Shelter Plus Homeless Outreach Program
- Residential Housing – located at Camp Street and Parker North in Meriden
- Kuhn Employment Services
Because Every Moment Matters

NBC program, produced by Hartford HealthCare News Service, focuses on success stories

Recovering clients whose lives have been transformed by the care they received within the Behavioral Health Network were the focus of a special half-hour television special produced in partnership with the Hartford HealthCare News Service.

“Hope After Heroin: Stories of Recovery” aired on NBC-CT on Saturday, June 11 and Sunday, June 19. A link to the show as well as a listing of resources and information on addiction and treatment services can be found at www.hhchope.org.

“We are enormously proud of the work we are doing to lead the effort against this epidemic of opioid and heroin abuse,” said Patricia Rehmer, president of the Behavioral Health Network. “We believe these stories of recovery offer hope and will motivate people to seek the help they need to overcome their addictions and help them lead normal lives again.”

The program takes an in-depth look at four clients from Connecticut’s suburbs whose lives were devastated by the disease of addiction, and the transformative steps they took to seek treatment and embark on a path of recovery and hope. The show includes commentary from Rehmer, Dr. J. Craig Allen and Justin Mink, lead therapist for Natchaug Hospital’s suboxone program in Groton.

The stories included:

• **Shelbia Herbig** was in the throes of addiction when she became pregnant with her son, Mason. She knew that her life would have to change and feared her baby might have been taken from her. But she took steps to seek treatment and begin a path to recovery, and now she can’t imagine doing anything to harm her relationship with her son. She has goals for herself and her son and knows that without drugs, she can do anything.

• **Marilyn Clark** was in her mid-30s when she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. The mother of three was prescribed Vicodin to help her deal with the intense pain. It helped the pain, at first. But in just a few months, Marilyn — a woman who rarely drank and didn’t experiment with drugs — was addicted to prescription painkillers. Just one year in, she switched to heroin because it was cheaper and easier to find. She lost her home, her career and almost lost her children. It would take years, but Marilyn Clark found hope after heroin with medication-assisted treatment and therapy. Now she is an open advocate for medication-assisted treatment and helps others in their journey toward recovery.

• **Ben Roche** is back working toward his college degree. But just a few years ago, he had a very different story. Growing up, Ben Roche struggled with anxiety and depression. Over the years, he learned to mask his true feelings to his family and friends while excelling in school and sports. Ben began experimenting with drugs and alcohol. Within the year, it snowballed. When Ben started taking heroin, his life began to spiral out of control. Eventually, his family and friends held an intervention and he started treatment at Rushford. Today, Ben attends New York University and frequently speaks about addiction and recovery. He hopes one day to help others fighting this disease.

• **Michael Mitchell**’s life is back on track — and he is hopeful for his future. But his story of recovery is years in the making. Michael nearly lost everything — a high-paying job, his home and several relationships. One day, he looked in the mirror and didn’t recognize himself. He had hit rock bottom, even taking a knife to himself. That was when he checked himself into Rushford, a decision that he believes saved his life. He shares his story whenever he can to help others who may be in difficult circumstances. He will tell you that it takes hard work, focus and life-long dedication but recovery is possible.

The television special was a key part of Hartford HealthCare’s comprehensive approach to provide information and resources about the opioid crisis.
BHN clients find that yoga can be key to recovery

After decades of struggling with addiction, Tom Miles thought he would never be able to recover. But in April, after members of his family intervened and arranged for him to seek help at Rushford, the burly, sometimes gruff 60-year-old found himself in a setting he would never have thought possible.

Here he was, in a yoga studio, surrounded by candles and meditation music — Stretching muscles he hadn’t used in years, holding poses that looked like images from an Asian temple.

And sober. And loving it.

“If my drinking buddies could see me now,” the Middletown native said with a laugh as he worked through a series of stretches and poses with instructor Pamela Mirante and several other clients in recovery. “I never would have thought something like this would work for a guy like me, but it’s made all the difference.”

Tom’s story is typical for those who are struggling with addiction but willing to give yoga a chance, said Mirante, a licensed clinical social worker at Rushford in Glastonbury who offers a yoga program that is integrated into the overall course of treatment that each client receives.

“It’s a great way to reintroduce them to things that have been missing from their lives for a long time,” she said. “Physical wellness, spiritual and mental focus and a willingness to inquire about the trauma that they’ve endured.”

Research shows that yoga can play a significant role in helping people both in the early stages of recovery, and over the long-term. As a registered yoga instructor with a background in social work, Mirante said the physical demands of yoga are meant to serve the larger goal of helping clients find a sense of peace and focus that can clear their minds of thoughts or habits that often lead to relapse.

The classes also offer clients a sense of solidarity and friendship with the other participants, which gives them a sense of support and encourages them to stay with the program. Yoga classes such as Mirante’s are offered throughout the Behavioral Health Network, including Rushford classes in Meriden and Durham as well as the Institute of Living.

The type of yoga that Mirante teaches is known as Baptiste Yoga, which emphasizes discipline and a willingness to eventually master the practice enough to teach it to others.

“What I’ve discovered is that yoga is for anyone,” said Steve D., who has been a participant in Mirante’s class for over seven months after decades of struggling with addiction to alcohol and drugs such as heroin and cocaine. Steve said his “addict mind” was always racing, searching for the next high, but with yoga, his thoughts slow down so that he can focus on the moment at hand, and be grateful for it.

A motorcycle enthusiast with tattoos across his arms, Steve may not fit the stereotypical image of a yoga practitioner, but he said yoga has become indispensable to his life.

“If it wasn’t for yoga, I would probably be in jail right now, or dead,” he said.

Kristy, another client in Mirante’s class, said she became addicted to opioid pain medication after undergoing numerous surgeries during young adulthood.

For decades, she felt disconnected to her husband and children as she withdrew to her bedroom to numb her pain with opioids.

But when she had grandchildren, she decided to seek help, leading her to Mirante’s class.

“It’s like I’m reawakened,” she said. “I can’t believe the things I am able to do in this class.”

Pamela Mirante, a Rushford licensed clinical social worker and certified yoga instructor, leads clients through a series of stretches and exercises.
A story of recovery: Stephen Guild

Stephen Guild remembers one of his lowest moments about 10 years ago when he was a patient at the Whiting Forensic Institute in Middletown, where he was sent after assaulting his father in the late 1990s in an incident that was due in large part to mental illness. Believing that he would never be released, Stephen sought comfort in music and craftsmanship, designing and building an electric guitar in the institution wood shop.

“I really came close to losing all hope that I could ever build a life for myself,” said Stephen. “I didn’t think I would ever be able to do what I’m doing now.”

Thanks to his commitment to overcoming his illness — and thanks to a dedicated team of caregivers at Rushford — Stephen is now living on his own in a transitional apartment in Meriden where he receives the support and treatment he needs. In the process, he has become a success story in overcoming the misconception that mentally ill people cannot live meaningful, independent lives.

“Stephen is remarkable in that he has persisted in realizing his dreams,” said Jessica Matyka, a Rushford coordinator who is Stephen’s supervisor with the Psychiatric Security Review Board, the state board which oversees patients found not guilty by reason of mental health issues. “He has embraced the course of treatment and recovery that we have offered him and as a result, he is truly thriving.”

Stephen credits the Rushford staff members assigned to his care for supporting his transition. But he also credits his love of music and electronics, which sustained him through the course of his time at Whiting until he was able to transition to another facility in 2010. In 2013, the supervisory board concluded that Stephen had progressed so much that he could return to society, and Rushford was assigned to oversee his transition.

Stephen, who found refuge in the guitar and tinkering with electronics as a child, built his guitar with a distinctive layout for electronic wiring and construction of the neck and body. He played the instrument at a recent meeting of leaders at Rushford and the Behavioral Health Network, performing a song by Rihanna that left many in the room deeply moved by his story.

Stephen is now looking for a full-time work in the electronics field, and also has taken up golf as a way to continue his re-integration into everyday life.

Another crucial source of support, he said, has been his family members, who have supported his recovery and his treatment, including his parents and his brother. He said the entire family looks at the experiences of their past as a learning opportunity to understand how mental illness can ultimately be overcome.

“I’ve been really fortunate in that I have a family that has not chosen to let these things destroy us,” he said. “Instead we are strong because we are moving forward together.”
Going the extra mile for a distressed patient

In her four years as a nurse in the detoxification unit at Rushford's Silver Street location in Middletown, Jeannie Cardona, RN, has seen her share of challenging clients who have come to her for treatment in moments of great distress — only to relapse once their condition is stabilized.

“It can be kind of hard to remain optimistic sometimes, especially when you see how much this disease has a hold on some people,” she said, referring to the clients she cares for who struggle with addiction issues. “But when you get a client who really responds to what we’re trying to do, it makes it all worthwhile.”

For Jeannie, such a moment came last year when she went to a local supermarket and was greeted enthusiastically by an employee who recognized her right away. The man had gone to the detox unit earlier in the year suffering from acute alcoholism, and Jeannie had made sure he kept up with his treatment even after he repeatedly told her he wanted to leave the building.

“I remember he was getting ready to get up and leave, and I told him I would stay and make sure he got the care he needed so he could remain overnight,” said Jeannie, who is one of the nursing team leaders on the unit. “I stayed four hours past my shift, but he was still there when I came back the next day. Of course, he wanted to leave again, but I made sure he stayed with us. I could see he was at a critical point.”

Jeannie said the man’s alcoholism was so severe that he would likely have died if he went back out and relapsed. Instead, the man checked himself in for 30 days of treatment followed up with a stay at Rushford Stonehaven, where he embarked on a path to sobriety that still continues, Jeannie said.

The man was so grateful to Jeannie that he repeatedly checked in with her during the course of his recovery, and wrote commendations recommending her for a WOW Award, which is how employees are recognized for exemplary work.

“I thank God Jeannie talked to me,” he wrote. “If she had not I would have gone back out and drank.”

Jeannie was thrilled that he was on the right track, but lost track of him until she went to the supermarket that day. He was continuing with his treatment program and had begun working at the supermarket while moving into his own apartment.

“At first I didn’t recognize him because he looked so much healthier,” she said. “He had good color back in his face, he was positive and energetic. It was amazing.”

Jeannie said the man’s story reminds her of why she chose nursing for a profession.

“My mother and my aunt were both nurses, so I knew it was what I wanted to do,” she said. “They used to always talk about the clients who they helped; you could see it meant a lot to them. It means a lot to me, too.”

NOTE: For her dedicated work on behalf of clients, Jeannie was recognized in 2016 as a recipient of the Nightingale Nursing Award, which is handed out every year to nurses across the state who go above and beyond. They are nominated by their peers in the field.
Rushford turns the corner financially

Through a disciplined and carefully thought-out approach to care, Rushford reported a fiscal year 2016 positive margin of several hundred thousand dollars — the first time the organization was in the black in at least several years.

Led by Steven Zuckerman, Rushford’s vice president of operations said the organization — from frontline staff to senior leadership — was able to dramatically reverse its financial fortunes by refocusing on its core services and creating a culture that emphasizes data and demonstrated need to guide decision-making.

When Zuckerman arrived in late 2013, Rushford had just recorded a fiscal year loss of more than $2.5 million. He and other members of the HHC BHN senior leadership team immediately went to work on the organization’s financial health and securing its long-term future. They engaged frontline staff in the process and even more opportunities were identified.

The turnaround essentially focused on:

- Returning the focus of the organization to its core services: residential substance abuse treatment, detoxification services, and ambulatory programs such as partial hospital, intensive outpatient, and outpatient programs.

- Creating a culture in which decisions are carefully made based on data, efficacy-based models, and other objective measures to show how it will fill a need or bring a benefit.

- Expanding outpatient locations and resources to other communities beyond the main service areas surrounding Middletown and Meriden to help attract a more diverse payer mix.

- Resource management, particularly in the area of staffing, built upon a standardized model of productivity, that captures when a clinical staff person is necessary, rather than just because it’s in someone’s budget.

- Understanding Rushford’s reputation for substance abuse treatment, and rebranding it to become the standard bearer not only within HHC, but building the organization up as a center of excellence within the state for such care and treatment. This was done through community forums, media outreach (TV, radio, newspapers) and a targeted marketing campaign for MATCH (Medication Assisted Treatment Close to Home).

- Holding everyone accountable, while also creating a culture that rewards those who produce results, by giving them the opportunity to advance. Among current leadership, 67% are the result of internal promotions.

The changes in focus and culture have played a key role in transforming Rushford, and improved its ability to continue meeting the needs of clients and patients. The change has also captured the attention of others within Hartford HealthCare (HHC) — Rushford leaders have been asked to create a list of principles that helped guide the turnaround to be shared with other HHC entities.

“In the span of just a couple years, Rushford has gone from uncertainty to a model for success, and ultimately its customers and patients will benefit.”

Jeannie Cardona, RN, Rushford detoxification nurse and 2016 Nightingale Nursing Award winner.
Advisory councils allow clients to be advocates

On a winter evening at Rushford’s Paddock Avenue location in Meriden, Ed Skiffington sat at a table as co-chair of the Rushford Client Advisory Council and got ready to call the group’s monthly meeting to order.

“I’m just trying to give back what was so freely given to me,” said Skiffington, a former Rushford client who now serves on the council as a way to advocate for clients now receiving care, and to offer support for Rushford caregivers and staff.

With that, Skiffington launched into a busy agenda that included discussions on ways to further enhance the level of care and empowerment that Rushford clients receive. Attending the meeting were eight active and former Rushford clients — including two newcomers — as well as Rushford counselors and clinicians. Among the agenda’s topics: the placement of additional suggestion boxes on Rushford sites as ways for clients to provide feedback on their care; and the development of a survey card for clients to fill upon discharge.

Scenes such as this will be increasingly more common across the Behavioral Health Network, as client advisory councils continue to evolve into their roles as unique sources of feedback and insight on the needs of clients.

“It’s a wonderful way to make sure we are hearing the voices of those we serve,” said Patricia Rehmer, MSN, ACHE, President, Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network and Senior Vice President, Hartford HealthCare. “It’s also a great experience for the former clients because they get to serve as a mouthpiece for those who are going through the same thing they went through.”

HELP RUSHFORD HELP OTHERS!

We are currently interviewing for membership on the Rushford Client Advisory Council.

The Rushford Client Advisory Council is a volunteer collaborative partnership between Rushford staff and our clients and their families, helping to make Rushford’s great client service even better.

We are seeking members from across Rushford’s programs, services and locations. The council meets once a month for 1.5 hours.

If you are a client or client family member who might be interested in providing ongoing constructive feedback about your experience at Rushford, we welcome you! For more information, please contact Caitlin.Swartz@hhchealth.org.
Rushford staff member sets “Gold” standard

Monika Gunning, LCSW, finds her job as Clinical Director of Adult Services at Rushford rewarding for many reasons — the interaction with her staff and colleagues, the opportunities to learn and grow. But most of all, it’s because of her connections to clients.

“Many of our clients have been coming to Rushford for years,” said Gunning, who has been at Rushford for eight years. “For them, it’s the closest thing they have to a family. I try to respect and honor that.”

Gunning’s dedication to clients, and Rushford’s mission of care, is why she has been selected as one of three managers across Hartford HealthCare to receive the Gold Medal Manager Award for outstanding managerial leadership. The award was created last year as a way to recognize managers who consistently exceed expectations and provide an outstanding example to staff and peers.

Gunning is someone who certainly meets that criteria, said Steven Zuckerman, who supervises Gunning as Rushford’s Vice President of Clinical Operations.

“I think if you went to the dictionary to look up what a Gold Medal Manager should be, you would see a picture of Monika, followed by the words, ‘Embodies H3W Leadership Behaviors and leads by example in all aspects of her daily work,’” Zuckerman said.

“Hartford HealthCare has now recognized what we at Rushford have known for years,” he added.

Gunning said she was proud to receive the award, but emphasized that she is fortunate to work with an excellent staff that is every bit as dedicated to clients. She also expressed thanks to Zuckerman and leadership at Rushford and across the BHN for fostering an environment in which clients come first.

Gunning said she was initially drawn to the field of behavioral health as an undergraduate in college. After considering a career in teaching, she chose instead to help those suffering from mental health and substance abuse issues, and it’s a decision she is proud of, she said.

“I started doing volunteer work in the field while I was still in college, and I realized I was drawn to it,” she said.

As a manager, she said she still most enjoys her encounters and interactions with clients, following them as they progress through treatment.

“Sometimes they may be here for a very long time, and then you see they have that ‘ah-ha’ moment when something clicks and they begin to do better,” she said. “That’s the most rewarding thing to me.”

“Many of our clients have been coming to Rushford for years. For them, it’s the closest thing they have to a family. I try to respect and honor that.”
Prevention team making an **impact throughout the region**

Prevention is a critically important component of Rushford’s mission, and members of the organization’s prevention team continued to make an impact over the past year by leading and taking part in numerous community education events and activities.

**Mental Health First Aid** - Prevention staff served provided Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training to 188 members of the community, including two of trainings provided for Department of Veterans Affairs staff members. Several internal MHFA trainings were also arranged for members of the Behavioral Health Network staff at The Hospital of Central Connecticut.

**Bus Driver trainings** - Prevention staff conducted 13 trainings across the state providing Positive Climate, or bully prevention training covering a wide range of behaviors that can have a negative impact on youth. Training sessions were offered over the course of two months for 500 school bus drivers employed by M&J Bus Company. Funding to support the training sessions was provided through the Community Foundation of Middlesex County, which works closely with Rushford to identify and prevent a wide range of behaviors that have a negative impact on young people.

**Unity Day** - Rushford Prevention professionals participated in the Community Foundation of Middlesex County Council of Business Partner’s Campaign for Bully Free Communities Unity Day Rally on Oct. 21 to celebrate diversity and promote a culture of respect. Over 350 youth participants from across Middlesex County gathered at EMPOWER in Middletown to participate in team building activities. The theme was Make it orange and make it end! Unite against bullying!

**Stutman Group** - Rushford and the Meriden Healthy Youth Coalition (MHYC) sponsored a program in which The Stutman Group, a team of nationally recognized experts in teen substance abuse, were invited to speak to more than 900 Meriden High School students. Bob Stutman and Judge Jodi Debbrecht Switalski provided a full-day program in October 2015 that included interactive sessions with students, administration, faculty, follow-up committee and parents. The program began with Bob speaking to the students in an assembly setting. Bob spoke about the “real” world of substance abuse and the many misconceptions. The students were then invited to participate in voluntary focus sessions. This presentation resulted in the continuation of the efforts by creating an Education and Advocacy Committee of the MHYC.

In a major public display of hope, members of the Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network, including Natchaug Hospital Associate Medical Director Paul Weigle, MD, took the ultimate leap on behalf of clients on July 27 rappelling from the top of the Hartford Hilton in support of Shatterproof, a national advocacy group for young people struggling to overcome addiction and substance abuse.

Donny Marshall, the CFMC Campaign for Bully-Free Communities spokesperson, shares his story with students who pledge to become Agents of Change.
Thank you to the following organizations for their generosity and support of Rushford services from January 1, 2015 through August 2, 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHEFA</td>
<td></td>
<td>$68,048.00 Vans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Meriden - Community Development</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,000.00 Narcan/Prevention Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Foundation of Middlesex County</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,448.00 Prevention - Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Foundation of Middlesex County</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,000.00 Girl Talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Foundation of Middlesex County</td>
<td></td>
<td>$7,490.00 Anti-Bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut Health Foundation</td>
<td></td>
<td>$100,000.00 Behavioral Health &amp; Primary Care Integration</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSC initiative DMHAS Middletown</td>
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<td>$100,000.00 Marijuana prevention-Middletown</td>
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<td>CSSD</td>
<td></td>
<td>$14,623.00 Youth prevention activities in Meriden</td>
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<td>CUNO grant</td>
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<td>$2,000.00 Mother and Daughter Evenings Out-Meriden</td>
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<td>Calbanese Foundation Green and white fund</td>
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<td>$1,377.00 Southington Family Fun Fest</td>
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<td>Meriden Healthy Youth Coalition</td>
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<td>$1,000.00 Community Resources</td>
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<td>Meriden Wallingford United Way</td>
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<td>$2,500.00 Mental Health First Aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meriden Wallingford United Way</td>
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<td>$3,500.00 MHFA for Meriden and Wallingford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middlesex United Way</td>
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<td>$31,000.00 Early Intervention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middlesex United Way</td>
<td></td>
<td>$29,518.00 Early Intervention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middlesex United Way</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,000.00 Youth Mental health first Aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middlesex United Way</td>
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<td>$7,450.00 Mental Health First Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middlesex United Way</td>
<td></td>
<td>$6,000.00 Mental Health First Aid for Middlesex County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middlesex United Way - Women’s Initiative</td>
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<td>$1,000.00 Youth Mental health first Aid</td>
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<td>Middletown BOE contract SSHS</td>
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<td>$10,400.00 After School Prevention</td>
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<td>Middletown Educational Incentive Challenge</td>
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<td>$500.00 Mothers &amp; Daughters in Middletown</td>
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<td>Middletown YSB</td>
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<td>$2,500.00 After School Challenge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Napier Foundation</td>
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<td>$3,500.00 Educational Empowerment forums</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAMHSA</td>
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<td>$500.00 Town Hall Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAMHSA Drug Free Communities Grant</td>
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<td>$125,000.00 Underage drinking prevention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sestero</td>
<td></td>
<td>$50,000.00 Yoga/Acupuncture/Art</td>
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</table>
### FINANCIAL STATEMENT

#### Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current assets:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
<td>$1,448,922</td>
<td>$2,166,681</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accounts receivable, less allowance</td>
<td>4,156,973</td>
<td>3,687,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other receivables</td>
<td>648,335</td>
<td>368,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to - from affiliates</td>
<td>(927,693)</td>
<td>(1,298,259)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepaid expenses and other assets</td>
<td>475,498</td>
<td>498,766</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current portion of assets whose use is limited</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total current assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,802,097</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,423,048</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other assets</strong></td>
<td>31,328</td>
<td>28,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property, plant, and equipment, net</td>
<td>6,099,756</td>
<td>6,074,184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,933,181</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,525,309</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Liabilities and net assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current liabilities:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts payable</td>
<td>399,799</td>
<td>542,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries, wages, payroll taxes, and amounts withheld from employees</td>
<td>591,147</td>
<td>815,968</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accrued expenses</td>
<td>2,015,910</td>
<td>1,953,642</td>
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<tr>
<td>Estimated third-party settlements</td>
<td>191,798</td>
<td>191,798</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current portion of long-term debt and capital leases</td>
<td>1,006,235</td>
<td>88,522</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total current liabilities</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,204,890</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,592,432</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-term debt, less current portion</td>
<td>44,803</td>
<td>35,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total liabilities</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,249,693</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,627,860</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net assets:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
<td>7,530,323</td>
<td>6,373,602</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temporarily restricted</td>
<td>153,165</td>
<td>1,523,848</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total net assets:</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,683,488</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,897,450</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>$ 11,933,181</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 11,525,309</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net patient service revenue less provision for bad debts</td>
<td>$18,941,848</td>
<td>$21,494,205</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other operating revenue</td>
<td>11,046,515</td>
<td>10,005,435</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net assets released from restriction</td>
<td>143,178</td>
<td>100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total revenues</strong></td>
<td><strong>30,131,540</strong></td>
<td><strong>31,599,640</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Operating expenses:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and wages</td>
<td>17,754,955</td>
<td>18,793,653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee benefits</td>
<td>4,512,022</td>
<td>4,276,933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies and other</td>
<td>1,599,692</td>
<td>1,553,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchased services</td>
<td>6,187,092</td>
<td>6,173,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depreciation and amortization</td>
<td>436,931</td>
<td>655,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision for non-patient bad debts</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>25,613</td>
<td>45,600</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total operating expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>30,516,304</strong></td>
<td><strong>31,498,052</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Operating income (loss)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operating income (loss)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(384,764)</strong></td>
<td><strong>101,588</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Non-operating income (loss)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income from investments</td>
<td>11,624</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-operating income (loss)</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,690</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expense**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expense</strong></td>
<td><strong>(373,074)</strong></td>
<td><strong>101,588</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recovery Never Stops. Neither Do We.

883 Paddock Avenue
Meriden, CT 06450

110 National Drive
Glastonbury, CT 06033

1250 Silver Street
Middletown, CT 06457

459 Wallingford Road
Durham, CT 06422

325 Main Street
Portland, CT 06480

680 South Main St.
Cheshire, CT 06410

35 Tower Lane
Avon, CT 06001

Toll free help for all ages
1.877.577.3233

On the cover: Jeannie Cardona, RN, is a nurse on the detoxification unit at Rushford's location at Silver Street in Middletown, and a recipient of the 2016 Nightingale Nursing Award for nurses who go above and beyond for those in their care. You can read about Jeannie and the work she does on behalf of Rushford clients on page 12.