



HELP FOR THOSE IN NEED

Expanded funding offers more services, options for recovering crime victims. • PAGE 4



FIT TO PRINT

HHC, BHN leaders to oversee 'opioid' magazine feature. • PAGE 4



MEET THE NEW BOSS

Rushford announces leadership changes. • PAGE 8

Hartford HealthCare 
Behavioral Health Network

BHINews

Saving 'MORR' lives

Rushford, Meriden earn \$2M in federal funds to combat opioid crisis

K.C. Conklin's song "Sober" debuted in January, reaching the Top 100 on the iTunes hip hop charts. The song and accompanying video have been viewed more than 1 million times online and through social media.

But that's not the amazing thing about this 31-year-old Wallingford resident. The real story is his comeback from the depths of opioid addiction with the help of Rushford and the Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network.

Conklin spoke Wednesday, Feb. 20, at MidState Medical Center where health and town officials announced the Meriden Opioid Referral for Recovery (MORR) program. Fueled by a \$2 million Department of Health and Human Services grant, it is a partnership between Rushford, MidState Medical Center, the Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network (BHN) and the town of Meriden, including fire, police and ambulance personnel.

The grant funds Narcan kits for first responders; makes Rushford clinicians



Rushford client K.C. Conklin spoke about his road to recovery from opioid addiction during an event Wednesday, Feb. 20, that unveiled a new partnership between the Behavioral Health Network and the town of Meriden.

and caseworkers available to first responders; provides training to police on mental health and addiction — all part of an overall approach to recovery that goes beyond the vicious cycle of treatment and relapse.

"Addiction can be a very, very dark and lonely place," said Conklin, who was born in Meriden. "I think a grant like this is so important, to help people that are struggling, on their terms.... this can re-

ally help change and save lives."

In his early 20s, Conklin was introduced to painkillers, first using pills like Percocet recreationally and then every day. He eventually progressed to heroin, ending up jobless and stealing to support his habit.

By the age of 25, he was living in an apartment without electricity in Middletown, running an extension cord to his

••••• See **HELP** on page 2

HELP, *from page 1*

neighbor's residence just to power a small space heater. Later, he found himself living out of his car in Florida. He remembers saying to himself "this can't be it; I have to be capable of more than this." Finally he got serious about making changes in his life and with the help of Rushford, Conklin has been sober since June 19, 2016. He has his own business, KC Makes Music, which is beginning to pay dividends. Most importantly, he is enjoying life again.

BHN Physician-in-Chief John Santopietro said the opioid crisis continues to claim 70,000 lives per year, almost twice the toll of breast cancer, and the MORR grant is a way for the community to work together to solve the problem. He hopes the comprehensive approach becomes a national model.

"I truly believe we can solve this," he said. "But we can't do it alone. We must do it together."

James O'Dea, PhD, MBA, Vice President of the BHN, agreed. He praised Rushford staffers Jessica Matyka and Krystle Blake for their work on the MORR program and community outreach, then told a story about an overdose patient who ended up at the Backus Hospital Emergency Department about a decade ago. He and others were able to save the patient's life, but unable to coax him into longer term recovery.

"I don't know what happened to him...I truly don't know," O'Dea said. "But that story has stayed with me for a decade. I knew then we needed better tools."

The MORR grant offers these tools. Police Chief Jeff Cosette said the opioid epidemic is ravaging Meriden, and that arming police with Narcan and training that will help them better understand the minds of those with mental health and substance abuse issues will have a huge impact. He believes the end result will be more people getting treatment and less locked up for petty crimes.

"This is a win-win for the communi-



Fueled by a \$2 million Department of Health and Human Services grant, Hartford Health-Care Behavioral Health Network (BHN) and Meriden town officials announced the Meriden Opioid Referral for Recovery (MORR) program — a partnership between Rushford, MidState Medical Center, the BHN and the town of Meriden, including fire, police and ambulance personnel. Many community members and staff were on hand to help with the announcement including, top photo from left, Physician-in-Chief John Santopietro, MD; Medical Director of Rushford and Vice President of Addiction Services for the BHN J. Craig Allen, MD; Rushford client K.C. Conklin; BHN Vice President James O'Dea, PhD, MBA; Meriden Fire Chief Ken Morgan; Meriden Police Chief Jeff Cosette; bottom photo from left, Jacqueline Rodriguez; Robert Koenemund; Jessica Matyka, LCSW; Conklin; Krystle Blake; Megan Fitzimons and John Potter, MSW.

ty and I look forward to the partnership," he said.

Fire Chief Ken Morgan said the grant offers a new path for first responders.

"This will take our band aid fix in the field and lead to a global approach to getting them better and reducing the epidemic in this city," Morgan said.

J. Craig Allen, MD, medical director of Rushford and Vice President of Addiction Services for the BHN, said resources, training and partnerships — combined with medication assisted treatment and recovery coaches in hospital emergency departments and outpatient locations

••••• See **MORR** on page 3

MORR, *from page 2*

— is an evidence-based approach to tackling such a major health issue.

“It’s important that people with opioid use disorder be given options once the Narcan saves them from death by overdose. Through MORR, Meriden’s first responders can seamlessly connect people with the services of Rushford Crisis Team,” said Dr. Allen. “That provides direct access to a clinician who can assess the client’s physical and emotional condition and make appropriate referrals for treatment.”

MORR expands the programs Rushford and Hartford HealthCare already offer in the area, including the presence of recovery coaches in the emergency department at MidState Medical Center. Rushford has also hired a team of skilled professionals to work with individuals referred through MORR. These include peer support specialists who play an integral part in supporting people in recovery, and their families.

“When someone with opioid use disorder arrives in our emergency department, they are approached by a peer recovery coach, someone who has been in their shoes and knows the struggles of addiction,” Dr. Allen said. “We know that peer-to-peer approach works, but we need to make that connection. Someone with OUD who overdoses in the field deserves the same opportunity for recovery.”

The city will use MORR grant monies to purchase up to 400 doses of Narcan in each of the grant’s four years, saving excess for future use. In addition, Meriden — the police, fire, school, Health and Human Services departments — will collaborate with Rushford and the community-based Hunter’s Ambulance on educational programs outlining the dangers of opioids for local healthcare providers while providing them with materials on treatment and recovery for their patients and families.

Rushford and the Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network offer Medication Assisted Treatment Close to Home (MATCH) programs for treatment of addiction to drugs or alcohol. For more information, go to www.matchrecovery.org



Join us for a luncheon and presentation **E-Cigarettes, Vapes, & Juuls** in the **Playground of Good and Evil**

Hosted by

Elsa M. Núñez

President of Eastern Connecticut State University

Pat Rehmer

President of the Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network

Guest Speaker

J. Craig Allen, MD

Medical Director, Rushford

Chief of Psychiatry, Midstate Medical Center

Vice President of Addiction Services, Behavioral Health Network

E-Cigarettes, Vapes, and Juuls in the Playground of Good and Evil

E-cigarettes, vapes and JUULS have been touted as tools to treat cigarette addiction in adults. Although this may be true, the rapid increase in teen and young adult use of these products compels us to examine the consequences of nicotine exposure on the developing nervous system. This presentation will review the evidence base and discuss potential strategies for parents and providers concerned that we may be witnessing the birth of a new generation of tobacco addiction.

Tuesday, March 12, 2019

Noon - 1:30 PM

Betty R. Tipton Room

Student Center

Eastern Connecticut State University

Willimantic, Connecticut

Minimum donation \$100 per guest

Sponsored tables of ten available

RSVP by March 1 to Sherry Smardon

860.465.5910 or sherry.smardon@hhchealth.org

Luncheon sponsored by The ECSU Foundation, Inc.

All proceeds from this luncheon will benefit Natchaug Hospital educational programs.

www.hhcbehavioralhealth.org



Funding fuels expansion of aid for crime victims

A recent increase in federal funding through the Office of Victims Services has fueled an expansion of the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) program at The Hospital of Central Connecticut (HOCC).

VOCA, overseen by the Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network, has expanded services to Southington. In addition, services in New Britain have been expanded, according to Kim Hughey, LCSW, clinical manager of the HOCC outpatient clinic.

VOCA is an outpatient program helping individuals who have or continue to experience the following types of abuse:

- Domestic violence
- Childhood abuse or neglect
- Adult physical or sexual assault
- Elder abuse
- Stalking or harassment.

“We are confidential and focused on protecting and helping the victims of abuse. We don’t ask for evidence or police reports to qualify people for our services, all of which are free,” Hughey said.

Services include individual and

group therapy, and help with medication management, although medication itself is not covered. HOCC also offers various services that are funded by OVS, including:

- Emergency gift cards for food or clothing
- Bus passes
- Emergency transitional housing
- Information on connecting with OVS for additional services such as additional compensation and legal assistance.

Hughey said many people who experience violence of some sort struggle with the resulting shame as well as mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. VOCA team members support clients as they help them rebuild their own strength and the confidence needed to move into recovery.

“If people experience routine triggers like having to come into contact with their abuser, they may experience high anxiety, hypervigilance, hopelessness and difficulty creating new goals for their future because they feel very stuck

in the past, almost as though what happened has the potential to reoccur or is happening all over again,” said Bethany Michaud, LCSW, psychiatric clinician at the HOCC outpatient clinic who runs VOCA’s group therapy for survivors of sexual assault, molestation or domestic abuse.

“Support groups can offer a safe space where people can tell their personal story and feel heard, but not blamed,” she added. “Survivors also have the opportunity to see other people with similar histories of abuse or assault taking positive steps forward in life and this creates a sense of empowerment.”

Through therapy, clients learn grounding skills such as meditation, mantras, positive self-talk or yoga. They also identify support systems they can tap for help when needed and safety plans.

For more information on the VOCA program, call the HOCC Counseling Center at **860.224.5267**.

HHC, BHN leaders to help produce ‘opioid’ magazine feature

Rocco Orlando, MD, chief medical officer of Hartford HealthCare (HHC), and J. Craig Allen, MD, medical director of Rushford and vice president of addiction services for the HHC Behavioral Health Network, were tapped by the Connecticut State Medical Society to co-edit a special issue of its magazine Connecticut Medicine.

The issue, which will come out in May, will focus on opioids.

The pair was chosen for the assignment because of their involvement as clinicians and representatives of the system in the fight against opioid abuse.

With Dr. Orlando as CMO, HHC has implemented a variety of initiatives to address the opioid crisis including professional education (videos, lunch and learns, a conference entitled “Strengthening your Practice...Caring for Patients in the Midst of an Opioid Overdose Crisis”), the creation of patient education brochures, and the introduction of electronic decision support in the system’s electronic health record.

HHC has also expanded its ability to treat people with

opioid use disorder (OUD) through its MATCH (Medication Assisted Treatment Close to Home) program with locations across the state, the ability to start medication treatment in the emergency departments with referrals to outpatient care once discharged, and by piloting specialized treatment paths for patients admitted to HHC’s acute care hospitals with co-occurring OUD.

Dr. Allen is an active member of the Medical Society’s Addictions Committee and Opioid Task Force and the state Alcohol and Drug Policy Committee, where he chairs the Addictions Subcommittee. In addition, he is on the board for the state Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and, with HHC, is co-chair of the Opioid Management Council.



Orlando



Allen



■ The Record-Journal published a story on Feb. 21 about the announcement that Rushford, the BHN, MidState Medical Center and the Town of Meriden partnering to receive the MORR grant providing enhanced services for people with opioid addictions. <http://www.my-recordjournal.com/News/Meriden/Meriden-News/Meriden-Rushford-MidState-partner-to-battle-opioid-crisis.html>

For more behavioral health news updates, subscribe to the BHN's e-newsletter on www.healthnewshub.org.

BHN looking to boost social media presence

Are you interested in joining the BHN Social Media Squad? You can help the BHN improve its social media content and engagement as a member of the Social Media Squad. Participants will:

- Write Health News Hub stories from your professional perspective (i.e. thought leadership pieces, consumer friendly clinical pieces, highlights of published research).
 - Take photos/videos at employee and public events for posting to social media sites.
 - Lead and monitor support for private Facebook support groups across all institutes and service lines.
- For more information or to join, contact socialmedia@hhchealth.org.

How can you help HHC save up to \$1 million a year?

It's easy. Think before you print!

Here are some ways to save:

- View agendas, emails and presentations on a screen
- Print double-sided
- Print in black and white

For more information about the Hartford HealthCare's print policy, visit the Managed Print Services page of HHC Connect.

Every dollar we save helps make care more affordable.



Bonus cash on select vehicle purchases

Did you know that Hartford HealthCare employees are eligible to receive up to \$500 cash back when they purchase or lease certain vehicles?

Eligible manufacturers include Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, Ram, Fiat and Hyundai.

For more information, visit www.bonusdrive.com, choose Hartford HealthCare as your organization, and complete the application.

HHC is company of the month at Inn at Middletown

Hartford HealthCare has been named Company of the Month for February 2019 by the Inn at Middletown. Overnight guests will receive complimentary breakfast, valet parking and a discount on food in the Tavern at the Armory, plus 50 percent of meeting room rental.

For more information, contact Sherry Smardon at sherry.smardon@hhchealth.org.

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. The upcoming IOL FRC Support Group schedule is as follows:

- **Support Group For Those Coping With A New Or Chronic Medical Condition.** Feb. 22, March 8, 15, 22, 29. (Every Friday except the first of the month), 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 email marissa.sicley-rogers@hhchealth.org.
- **Depression Bipolar Support Alliance Group (DBSA).** Feb. 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25. (Every Monday), noon – 1 p.m. in the Todd Building, Bunker Room, Feb. 27, March 6, 13, 20, 27. (Every Wednesday), 7 – 8 p.m. in the Staunton Williams Building, Clark Social Room. Peer-run support group for those who have been diagnosed with depression or bipolar disorder.
- **Social Support Group — LGBTQ Issues (Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Questioning).** Feb. 27, March 13, 27. (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 in their lives. The goal is to discuss support strategies to manage life challenges.
- **Hearing Voices Network (HVN).** Feb. 28, March 7, 14, 21, 28. (Every Thursday), 5 - 6:30 p.m. in the Todd Building, Bunker Room. Peer-run support group based firmly on a belief of self-help, mutual respect and understanding where people can safely share their experiences of voices, visions, unusual sensory perceptions. The groups offer an opportunity for people to accept and find meaning in their experiences that help them regain power over their lives.
- **Al-Anon Parent Group.** Feb. 28, March 7, 14, 21, 28. (Every Thursday), 7 - 8 p.m. One-hour topic discussion.
- **Our Stories: Raising The Volume On Mental Health In The Black Community.** March 4, 18, April 1, 15, May 6, 20, June 3, 17. (First and third Monday of each month), 4 – 5:15 p.m. This group offers a safe space for discussion and support for black families and individuals with their own connection to mental illness and mental health challenges as well as an opportunity to foster community and encourage healing through shared experiences. Meetings will incorporate psycho-education in an effort to stop mental health stigma in the black community. Snacks and refreshments will be provided. To attend, please RSVP to Kimesha at **860.545.7127**.
- **Anxiety Disorders: An Introduction.** March 5, June 4, 6:30 – 7:45 p.m. This lecture is for families and friends of individuals who have an anxiety disorder or a related disorder. Participants will acquire a basic understanding of anxiety disorders, their treatments and suggestions to help them better cope with the illness. To attend, please RSVP to Laura at **860.545.7324**.
- **It's Hard To Be A Mom.** March 7, 21 (First and third Thursday of each month), 10 - 11:30 a.m. Peer-led group that acknowledges the inherent challenges with modern-day mothering and offers an opportunity for mothers to come together, share experiences, and support each other. This group welcomes expecting mothers and mothers with babies to discuss any and all challenges associated with motherhood. Babies welcome! Please RSVP to Laura at **860.545.7324**.
- **Support Group For Families Dealing With Major Mental Illness.** March 7, 21. (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. Learn to care for yourself while you are caring for others.
- **Substance Use Educational And Support Group.** March 14, April 11, May 9, June 13. (Second Thursday of each month), 4 – 5 p.m. For family members impacted by loved ones with substance abuse.
- **Dementia Lecture: An Introduction.** March 19, May 21, 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. To attend, please RSVP to Laura at **860.545.7324**.

JC-Enfield busy in February

February was a very busy month for Joshua Center Enfield CDT School. Activities for the month included a performance by the Looking In Theatre troupe, made up of students from the Performing Arts Academy in Hartford who perform skits relating to modern teen issues; a field trip to the Springfield Science Museum; and a presentation by a representative from the AIDS project in Hartford.

The Enfield CDT Leaders Club has been busy as well, making cat blankets for a local animal shelter and also preparing Valentine's Day bags for students in a local domestic abuse shelter.



Town Hall Meetings

Connect with your Senior Leadership Team at the upcoming Town Hall Meeting.

- Share feedback on your work environment
- Celebrate wins and recognitions
- Hear updates on our external environment
- Meet the new BHN East Region Vice President Roy Sasenaraine, MBA

**Tuesday, March 5,
2:30-3:30 pm**

Community Room, Mansfield Campus

Can't make it? Join by VMR:

Video: meet.natchaugexec@video.hhchealth.org
Call in: 860-972-6338 Access code: 30007

If you have questions, contact
Laurie Clinton at 203.238.6894 or
laurie.clinton@hhchealth.org



Please join us for a night of music!



Journey House Rocks!!
Featuring *Music By The 3rd Degree*

Saturday, February 23, 2019
6:30—Doors Open 7:00—Concert

At the
Capitol Theater
896 Main Street, Willimantic, CT

Tickets:
General Admission \$25
Seniors/Students: \$15 Staff and Clients \$20/person
All funds go to support the Journey House Program at Natchaug Hospital

To purchase tickets visit
www.journeyhouserocks.eventbrite.com

Questions: Katherine.McNulty@hhchealth.org or Sherry.Smardon@hhchealth.org

About BHNews

BHNews is published every other Friday. Story ideas or submissions may be sent to amanda.nappi@hhchealth.org or susan.mcdonald@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.

The deadline for the next edition of BHNews is Tuesday, March 11, at noon

Rushford announces leadership changes

We are pleased to announce a number of positive changes in the Rushford organization. As organizations grow and change, it is important that our governance and organizational structures also change to keep up with events and new opportunities.

Effective March 1, Justin Sleeper, RN, MSN will be our new vice president of operations for Rushford. Justin has been a key member of the Rushford leadership team since 2015. Prior to joining Rushford, Justin held senior leadership positions in other parts of the Behavioral Health Network — Natchaug and Backus hospitals — as well as senior positions working for the state of Connecticut’s Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Justin is exceedingly well-prepared for this responsibility. Justin will report directly to Jim O’Dea, PhD, MBA, regional vice president of the Behavioral Health Network.

In support of Justin, Monika Gunning, LCSW, will assume the role of executive director for the local mental health authority components of Rushford Center. Our LMHA offerings provide an extensive array of clinical and supportive services in support of our clients and community, including a full range of ambulatory clinical services, extensive case management services, vocational supports, housing, and an abundance of outreach programs. Monika has provided superior administrative and clinical direction of this broad range of services throughout her tenure with the organization.

As Monika transitions to her new role, Jessica Matyka, LCSW, will be promoted to director of community support services. Jessica has provided superior clinical and administrative leadership to our LMHA residential and crisis services and has

played a key role in Rushford’s award of a multi-million dollar grant from the federal government in support of addressing the opioid crisis affecting the country and our local communities.

We sincerely wish Jill Bertolini, LMFT, success in her new leadership role in the Central Region and thank her for her contributions to Rushford. Jill has been a key leader in further growth and development of our range of adult residential services. We are currently recruiting for a replacement for Jill to head up our adult residential services division.

We would like to take this time to thank Dr. O’Dea for his stewardship and leadership at Rushford over the last two years. He fully embraced this role at Rushford, while maintaining his system-level responsibilities for the overall Behavioral Health Network. As noted at the top of this letter, our organization continues to grow and mature, and Dr. O’Dea’s abilities will be put to good use in other BHN endeavors!

Please join us in supporting your colleagues in these new roles, and as always, thank you for your continued pursuit of excellence in your care of our clients and communities.

Patricia Rehmer, MSN, ACHE
President, Behavioral Health Network
Senior Vice President, Hartford HealthCare

J. Craig Allen, MD
Medical Director, Rushford
Chief of Psychiatry, MidState Medical Center
Vice President, Behavioral Health Network



Joey, the amazing therapy dog

■ Submitted by a client at Rushford at Avon

I came to Rushford Center in Avon about five weeks ago to commence treatment for addiction. As with most people in the program, I was not feeling well on my first day due to withdrawal symptoms and I had trepidations about what was in store for me in the program.

As I entered the Yoga room and found an available mat, everyone was polite and introduced themselves. I sat on an available mat toward the back of the softly-lit room and was feeling

very anxious. Suddenly, a fluffy tan dog came scampering into the room and he excitedly greeted everyone. Some people said “Hi, Joey!” and gave him a pat on the head. Others who knew him well scratched him under his collar and pet him lovingly all over his head, shoulders, and back.

Joey is a cross between a Miniature Poodle, which makes him hypoallergenic, and a Coton de Tulear, which gives him long, incredibly soft, fluffy fur. I have

••••• See **JOEY** on page 9

