

A CLOSER LOOK

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

The mission of Greenwood Counseling & Referrals, Inc. is to provide access to high-quality and affordable mental healthcare and related social services for individuals and families living or working in Litchfield County.

The Director's Desk

JOHN SIMONCELLI,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,
As we head into winter and COVID-19 cases continue to rise, it's easy to feel frustrated, sad and emotionally exhausted. 2020 has truly tested everyone's endurance. This edition provides some helpful strategies to preserve your health and also includes some positive stories revealing that good works can still shine through the darkness. I'm honored to be part of an organization comprised of employees and trustees that are passionate about this work. What brings me a sense of hope for the future, is consistently witnessing the lengths these individuals will go to help others. In these pages, a Greenwood's trustee shares his story of loss. His willingness to share his story helps reduce the stigma that keeps so many of us from having difficult conversations. His vulnerability gives me hope that we can be honest with one another about how we're feeling, get the support we need from our community, and eventually heal our emotional wounds.



Let's Talk About Mental Health

BY DICK SEARS

My son Christopher was a fun-loving, spirited and tender-hearted child. He was frequently in the center of things - surrounded by raucous friends, sports and colleagues. In other moments, he enjoyed being alone in nature, travel and silence. Following college, he explored Thailand and then spent two years discovering himself in New Zealand, meanwhile earning a graduate degree in social work. As a beloved counselor at Martha's Vineyard Community Services, Chris guided many children and parents in their internal darkness. From the inside out, he knew the pain in his clients' lives. Since late adolescence he battled mental illness, struggling to find his way out of the shadows of depression and anxiety. For more than a decade, he sought relief through caring professionals and medications. But this was not enough. Chris' death by suicide seven years ago at age thirty-three, rent the hearts of his sister, mother, father and all who loved him. We dearly miss this beautiful young man and the light and joy he brought to the world. I wanted you to meet Chris because perhaps you can help those struggling with mental health or in the darkness of addiction. It's important to talk about the loneliness and stigma of mental illness. Greenwood's counselors bring hope to those who are struggling.



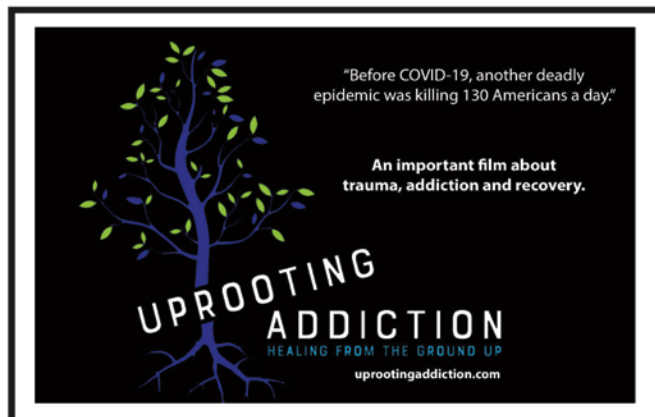
Dick Sears serves on the Greenwood's Board of Trustees. Prior to retiring two years ago, he served as Pastor of the First Congregational Church of Washington, First Selectman for the Town of Washington and Development Director of the Housatonic Valley Association. Dick lives with his wife, Brenda Singer, in Cornwall Bridge.

GREENWOODS AT WORK

Out & About

Sarah Toomey,
Community Outreach & Recovery Navigator

In mid-October, the Watertown Police Department referred a young lady to me for an overdose follow up. They provided me the father's contact information along with the individual involved in the overdose. My first attempt to reach both by phone was not successful, however, a couple hours later, I received a text message from the father asking if we can set a time to talk. Working with the father, I was able to engage him with support and counseling services through Greenwood's. He spoke with his daughter, encouraging her to talk to me, and also encouraged her boyfriend to talk to me. Although the daughter is not yet ready for substance use disorder treatment, she is ready to start the conversation about other ways we can help. We are starting to build the trust and relationship with all family members. The father sent me a message saying, "this is what we have been looking for, for years." He was very thankful that we connected and feels he finally has some help when he was otherwise feeling hopeless.



Youth Mental Health Program

The coronavirus pandemic has been hard on kids and teens everywhere, especially those who were already dealing with mental health challenges. Greenwood's has partnered with local public schools to connect students to services to help improve mental and emotional wellbeing. Currently, we are doing assessments in Litchfield Public Schools and at Wamogo Regional High School. We offer a school-based mental health program with a clinician available to students two days per week. No child will be turned away. With schools turning to remote learning, these services continue to be available through Greenwood's Telehealth.



According to a report from the Child Mind Institute in September 2020, Telehealth has emerged as a promising treatment option for children's mental health. In a representative sample of 351 American parents, findings include:

- Anxiety and depression are the most common mental health challenges.
- Declining well-being: More than two thirds of parents who sought help since the start of the pandemic said they had witnessed a decline in their child's emotional well-being.
- Parents in the survey who have used Telehealth services for children report strongly positive responses.

* 2020 Children's Mental Health Report: Telehealth in an Increasingly Virtual World | Child Mind Institute

Covid & The Holidays

What happens when the stress of the holidays outweighs the joy? Over 60% of people report having feelings of anxiety and depression this time of year, even without a pandemic.

This holiday season, give yourself a head start to a more joyful, and perhaps more peaceful, holiday with the following practices:

- **Connect with others.** Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships, build a strong support system.
- **Take breaks.** Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Try taking in deep breaths. Try to do activities you usually enjoy.
- **Stay informed.** When you feel that you are missing information, you may become more stressed or nervous.

- **Acknowledge your feelings.** Be kind to yourself and your needs at this time. The holidays can be difficult for a myriad of reasons, and during this time of isolation this is especially true.
- **Avoid setting the standard of perfection.** It has been correlated to stress, anger and other mental health issues. People usually don't remember the details – they remember the mood.
- **The Gift of Giving.** The most meaningful gift is often your time or attention. Reach out with a phone call, Facetime or a socially safe visit. Send holiday cards. Connecting with others is not only beneficial to them but it will lift your spirits as well.
- **Schedule downtime.** Take time for yourself. It's the quality, not quantity, of social experiences that leads to a sense of connection with others.
- **Seek help.** If you're feeling sad, depressed or helpless, reach out to your doctor or to Greenwoods. You are not alone.



*At this special time of year,
we give thanks for our
supporters and best wishes
for the holiday season.*



Left to Right: Back Row: Brendan Stack, LPC, Youth Mental Health Program Clinician; Cynthia Vail, LPC, Clinician; Elizabeth Griswold, LCSW, Program Manager; Michele Sonnat, Executive Assistant; Michael Pisco, LMFT, MATS, Clinical Coordinator; Joseph Holbrooks, LPC, Clinician; Michael Connell, LPC, Intake Clinician; Davena Howell, Clinical Administrative Assistant; Middle Row: Sarah Toomey, Community Outreach Recovery Navigator; Lois Silver, Billing Specialist; Front Row: John Simoncelli, LCSW, LADC, MPA, Executive Director; Norman the Dog, Director of Culture. Absent: Liz Tanner-Horn, LCSW, Youth Mental Health Program Clinician; Ashley Salazar, Clinical Administrative Assistant; Marisa Johnson, Grants Manager; Barbara Herbst, Bookkeeper.



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Don't know where to turn?



Greenwoods Counseling & Referrals is here for you.



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