



# A CLOSER LOOK

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

*The mission of Greenwoods 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

On June 19th Greenwoods will hold our annual Spring benefit, The Un-Masquerade Ball, and this year's theme is "Removing the Stigma Around Mental Health." This is an issue close to my heart as stigma is one of the most significant barriers to people getting the help they need. As a practicing mental health therapist, I have heard time and time again from clients that they waited to get help because they felt ashamed or embarrassed. In many ways, our society's focus on personal responsibility still tells us that if we are experiencing emotional or psychological pain, it is in some way our fault. Many folks in our community still feel like their pain isn't legitimate or not worthy of treatment. Over the years I have heard various versions of, "I don't need counseling... I'm not crazy!" People are afraid to be labeled and worried they will be judged. This type of stigma keeps us from being honest with ourselves and our loved ones. It prevents us from having meaningful conversations and, unfortunately, keeps us from asking for help. We see this manifest in our national and local statistics. On average, only 41% of people with a mental health diagnosis access treatment in any given year. Stigma keeps us silent, and the consequences can be dire. Education, empathy and honest dialogue is the path that will turn a stigmatized topic into one of strength, resilience and pride. Thank you for reading and, as always, for your continued support.

## Let's talk about mental health: REMOVING THE STIGMA

*Contributed By: Victoria Sahadevan Fossland*

As with many long-haul challenges, academics in medical school start off with a sprint before settling into a marathon pace. Study groups form quickly and friendships grow from there. This occurred with my friend Leslie, who accompanied my family and I on vacation during the spring of our first year. While the rest of us played on a beach, Leslie noticeably kept to herself. Once we returned to school, she spent more weekends at home with her parents rather than on campus. Admittedly caught up with our own lives, our study group reached out, but perhaps not enough.

Fast forward to that summer, when a friend from our study group called to tell me Leslie had committed suicide. It's hard to convey the confusion and sense of helplessness that ensues after this kind of loss. You ask yourself, what could I have done to prevent this? If I had drawn her out more, or asked more about her personal



*Victoria's Family with Leslie (pictured left)*

life, her struggles—anything—would she still be with us? That Leslie took her life while we were learning to save the lives of others haunted our class. In the wake of her death, we formed a mental health and wellness committee and established an annual lecture inviting speakers to address the inherent challenges confronting medical professionals. The lectures became our class gift, continuing to pack the largest lecture hall each year.

Until a mental health challenge affects you or someone you love, you may think it's not your problem.

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But consider that often, we don't know who needs help. The depth of Leslie's struggle certainly wasn't apparent. She appeared to have everything going for her—she was smart, engaging, and on the path to a bright future. Perhaps we see what we want to see in other people and we present ourselves as what we think people want, leading all of us to miss warning signs when our friends and loved ones are in trouble. Let's take off the blinders, remove our masks, and address mental health needs. The strength of our community ultimately depends on our collective ability to do so. If you or someone you know may benefit from counseling services, please contact the Greenwoods office. I hope to see you at the Greenwoods Un-Masquerade Ball on June 19th.

*The Leslie G. Bluman Memorial Lecture Series continues to raise awareness about the importance of health and wellness at Albany Medical College. Victoria is a medical writer and former general surgeon who serves on the Board of Trustees at Greenwoods and is Co-Chair of this year's annual benefit, The Un-Masquerade Ball. She lives with her family in Warren.*

## OUT & ABOUT

The number of unintentional drug overdoses continues to rise both nationally and locally. In just the last month (4/5/21-5/5/21) Litchfield County has experienced 28 overdoses, 1 of those being fatal.



Sarah Toomey  
Community Outreach  
& Recovery Navigator

Over the last year Greenwoods has established a relationship with the Winsted Police Department so that we can better follow up with individuals who have experienced an unintentional drug overdose. This month, I received a call from someone that got my

contact information directly from a Winsted police officer. The officer encouraged she and her husband to call me. Because the officer responded with empathy and provided a connection to me, I was able to help this individual access services. She is now in treatment and

receiving the care she needs. This person is safer because of the relationships we have been able to establish with local police departments and first responders. There is still much work to be done! However, collaboration will be the key to our success and, hopefully, allow members of our community who are currently suffering in silence to get help.

If you, or anyone you know is struggling with addiction and wants help, please contact us. We are also able to train individuals and groups to administer Narcan, a medication that reverses an opioid overdose.

## MYTH BUSTING MENTAL HEALTH MISCONCEPTIONS

**MYTH:** *I am too strong to have a mental health issue.*

**BUSTED:** Mental health issues can affect anyone. They are not your fault and are not caused by weakness. Psychological and emotional issues have many causes; genetics and other biological factors, environmental factors, cultural and societal factors and can affect people of all ages, races, socio-economic levels whether there is a family history or not.

**MYTH:** *If I have mental and emotional well-being concerns, I will never get better.*

**BUSTED:** For some people mental illness may be a lifelong condition, but with proper and consistent treatment many people will lead productive, fulfilling and joyful lives.

**MYTH:** *Psychological and emotional well-being concerns do not affect children.*

**BUSTED:** Sadly, millions of children are affected by mental health issues like anxiety and depression. This past year has been even more challenging for children. Getting quality treatment fast and consistently can significantly aid in their emotional development.

**MYTH:** *People will judge me if I have mental health issues.*

**BUSTED:** Here at Greenwoods, we are doing everything we can to remove the stigma around getting help for mental health issues. Remember, this is not your fault. There are so many factors as to why you might be struggling. The best thing you can do for yourself is to get treatment and talk about it with someone who you trust.

## GIVE LOCAL UPDATE

We wish to give a heartfelt thanks to the Connecticut Community Foundation and all who participated in this year's Give Local campaign. Together, we surpassed our goal of \$20,000 in support of our *School Based Mental Health Programs*. Thank you, CCF, for your ongoing support of our entire community, and thank you to our donors for helping us fulfill our mission of providing high-quality and affordable mental healthcare to everyone in our community.

## REMEMBRANCE

### *Jane Havemeyer, 1941–2021*

By Edwina Millington and Kate Vick  
Long-time Board members, supporters and current members of the Advisory Council



The world is a richer place because of Jane Havemeyer. Jane brought her exuberant spirit, far-reaching interests, ability to make everyone feel special and energy to a wide range of social and political causes. Luckily for Greenwoods, Jane chose to share those with us, joining the Board in 2002 and serving as our President

from 2003-2006. During her long tenure, Jane laid the groundwork for Greenwoods' transformation from a small referral agency to the expansive mental health provider it is today. Through her superb powers of persuasion, she recruited committed Board members and inspired them with her enthusiasm and knack for mixing her many interests to Greenwoods' benefit.

Jane was unwaveringly committed to Greenwoods' financial health. She shepherded some of our most successful fund-raising efforts. Jane transformed the Litchfield County Antiques Show into a go-to event. When it was time for something new, Jane worked her magic, combining her knowledge and love of gardening to create our Annual Garden Party Gala.

Jane's genius in all of this was her ability to inspire others. She enlisted so many talented volunteers and, though Jane was herself a private person, she made each of us feel like her best friend. Jane's financial generosity inspired other donors to step up as well.

And, through it all, Jane, and Greenwoods, had Bill - her husband of almost 50 years and her secret weapon. Bill has always shared his light-heartedness, wit and wisdom with Jane and those of us lucky enough to be around the two of them.

Jane was inspiring and generous in all ways. We will all miss her.

*If you would like to honor Jane's memory, you may make a gift to The Jane L. Havemeyer Fund for Financial Assistance at our website.*



**JOIN US**

GREENWOODS COUNSELING & REFERRALS  
2021 ANNUAL GALA

**The Un-Masquerade Ball**  
REMOVING THE STIGMA AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

SPRING HILL FARM  
292 BEE BROOK ROAD, WASHINGTON, CT

COCKTAILS, HORS D'OEUVRES & MUSIC  
SATURDAY, JUNE 19, 2021  
6-8:30 PM

**For tickets visit  
greenwoodsreferrals.org**



GREENWOODS  
COUNSELING & REFERRALS, INC.

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**COMMON  
GROUND**  
WITH JANE WHITNEY

PRESENTED BY

**COG**  
CONVERSATIONS  
ON THE GREEN

**CONGRATULATIONS** to our long-time supporter and friends at Conversations On the Green for producing a new national program, Common Ground with Jane Whitney. Thank you for your on-going support. To learn more about this national broadcast, please visit [conversationsonthegreen.com](http://conversationsonthegreen.com).



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