



A CLOSER LOOK

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

The mission of Greenwood's 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

The holiday season and start of the new year is often a time of reflection. As I think about the last year, I'm filled with gratitude for the team we have at Greenwood's and the support we get from our community. We literally could not do our work without passionate, caring people that support our mission in a variety of ways.



As I think about my connection to our employees, clients and supporters, I'm also reminded of the many folks in our community that are not as fortunate as me. The kids, adults and families that do not have the strong connections that are often the foundation of our mental and emotional wellbeing. In this newsletter, you'll hear about the unfortunate increase in unintentional drug overdoses striking our small communities, which is a constant reminder of the work left undone. This is just one indicator of the mental health crisis we're experiencing. Unfortunately, given the ongoing pandemic and social unrest in today's world, I predict the need for our services will only increase in the coming years.

Every month we do more assessments, complete more counseling sessions, and do more community outreach than the month before. As our services grow, our connections to our communities get stronger. This connection is our greatest resource in addressing the mental health crisis we face. We face it together and thank you for staying connected to us.

Experts have declared COVID-19 a psychological crisis and warn that "isolation, stress, and disruption brew a toxic environment for people with mental health issues" (Weir & Santhanam, 2020).

Our clients illustrate these trends.

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Van Used in Crisis

If half of the overdoses in Litchfield County occur in its rural towns that have limited services, how do those residents get help when it is needed? Thanks to a generous donation from the Town of Winchester, Greenwoods received a van that was transformed from a transport bus to an outreach tool, mobile office, and provider station. The conversion started with the reallocation of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services' funding, but due to supply chain issues, the van has not been fully outfitted. Even so, it may have already saved the life of a northwest corner resident.



A Greenwoods' outreach coordinator was already seeing a young woman who was trying to get into recovery from opioid addiction. She had been drug free for a couple of days. When the symptoms of withdrawal started making her sick and cravings were getting overwhelming, she reached out to say she might not make it the next couple of hours. Opioid withdrawal can include nausea, sweating, agitation or restlessness, headaches, tremors, or gastro-intestinal upset. She had them all and desperately needed medication assisted treatment, which is the most effective treatment for opioid use disorder and can only come from a healthcare professional.



Photo Left: GCR Community Outreach workers prepare to go out into the community.

Above: Jamie, therapist and member of the outreach team, makes the van a space for telehealth as described in this story.

The woman had no transportation or the technology to manage a telehealth appointment and the situation was becoming a crisis.

With some quick thinking, Greenwoods was able to take the van to the woman, use a laptop computer and a wireless hot spot, and coordinate a telehealth appointment with a medical prescriber, so medication could be prescribed and delivered immediately.

The idea of using the van as a mobile office may very well have saved this woman's life. The good news is that she is continuing her journey of recovery by receiving longer-term mental health treatment and she can now see that there is hope for her.

In rural communities, clients can be served with telehealth services, but may also have difficulty accessing the necessary technology.

Greenwoods pursues local grants and financial aid funds from individual donors to help with the hardware and data necessary for continued treatment.



THE NUMBER OF LITCHFIELD COUNTY OVERDOSES IN NOVEMBER

30

TWICE as many as this time last year

It Took Our All

If you think that addiction is mostly a problem of urban areas, you are wrong. Per capita, Litchfield County has a comparable addiction and overdose rate to the more populated, urban counties. In Connecticut the number of overdoses in this area in November was double what it was this time last year. At least half occur in small, rural areas where there are limited, if any, services.

Here is a story of how one family benefitted from the full complement of services offered through Greenwoods.

Fortunately, The police in a Litchfield County suburb have a good working relationship with Greenwoods and they contact us when services are needed. A young man in town with an opioid addiction survived an accidental overdose and his mother was frantic. A Greenwoods' outreach clinician was immediately available to meet with her and discuss treatment options and support for both the young man and his family. There were several meetings, the first of which involved how to get Narcan, an intranasal drug which reverses overdoses, and be trained in its use. Then there was the need to match both the patient and his mother with therapists. Finding the right therapist is

challenging under normal circumstances, but when you are in a crisis, it is critical. The mother and son's counseling needs were different, though they shared the same situation, and now they are benefitting from individual and family therapy to process the trauma and move forward.

In this case, almost every service Greenwoods offers was used by this family:

- **assessment**, where we match the client with a clinician who best meets the client's need;
- **mental health counseling** for both the person with the addiction and the family suffering the trauma;
- **access to high quality addiction treatment**, medication assisted treatment and frequently same day appointments;
- **recovery navigation** where clients and families are guided to resources like treatment centers, outpatient services and support groups.

The family involved in this story is so grateful for the help they received. The fact that they got them all from one resource meant it was a quick and highly coordinated response. The services in this case were at no cost to the family, thanks to a grant from the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and funding from donors and supporters.

You are part of offering individuals and families hope with every gift you make.

Thank You.



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2020-21 Annual Gratitude Report

available on our website
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