

BERGEN COUNTY PROUD TO BE STIGMA-FREE

THE STIGMA FREE ZONE NEWS OF NJ

Bringing the Mental Health Conversation to Bergen County

Stigma Free Honored- BVMI Adds Mental Healthcare - County SFZ Symposium -
Upcoming Events - Bogota Walk a Success - Quicklinks to News

SFZ Founder Honored

On November 2, 2016 the NJ Psychiatric Association awarded Paramus SFZ Founder, Mary Ann Uzzi, its "Citizen of The Year" award. MaryAnn graciously told the SFZ News she felt the honor really represented the work of all of our hundreds of volunteers. Congratulations!



Bergen Volunteer Medical Initiative (BVMI) Adds Mental Healthcare For Uninsured in Bergen.

Bergen County is home to approximately 40,000 uninsured adults who are ineligible for Medicaid or health subsidies. At BVMI in Hackensack, 1,000 hard-working people are provided comprehensive, integrated healthcare thanks to physicians, nurse practitioners, social workers and volunteers who donate professional services to the working poor.

BVMI services the population most hard-pressed when it comes to obtaining care.



Their "Average Patient" is 40-50, Hispanic, a single mom who also cares for a parent in their home, works and earns \$12,000 or less annually. Almost all rely on public transportation. 60% are undocumented, filling low-paying but necessary jobs we rely on to keep our homes and communities running.

40% of BVMI's patients are from Hackensack, but according to CEO Amanda Missey, "We service clients from almost every town in Bergen." 65% of their clients are female, but more working men have sought services as BVMI grows.

BVMI began administering a mental health screening to all patients in 2015. This year, a \$40,000 grant from the Aetna Foundation enabled them to hire a part-time, bilingual social worker, Kathy Acosta, LCSW. Her services were built into the Women's Health Initiative Program, run by volunteer Dr. Kay Fagan, PhD, RN, APN. Kathy provides the counseling and refers those in need to ongoing mental healthcare.

BVMI is staffed by physicians from many specialty areas, but they are still seeking the volunteer services of a psychiatrist to aid them in long-term prescribing and complex cases.

"There is no such thing as free outpatient mental healthcare," said Ms. Acosta, "so we can't just refer clients out. It is nearly impossible to find a psychiatrist for the uninsured patient."

BVMI is currently limited to providing a "PHQ9" - a standard depression screening - and several sessions of counseling per client. The integrated program has primary doctors prescribing medications, and BVMI makes sure clients get a thorough exam: physicians spend an hour with every new patient. For any who need long-term mental healthcare, BVMI struggles to find community partners, and patients must pay for mental health services that many see as dispensable. These women care for themselves last.

The SFZ News was astonished when Ms. Acosta noted that 80% of BVMI patients screened positive for depression. It's not surprising when you consider the daily struggle that poverty, menial work, exhaustion, single parenting, stigma and trauma create beyond expected stresses.

Ms. Acosta explained living hand to mouth causes depression via all those factors. She noted cultural barriers in the Hispanic community towards mental illness, and said initial counseling sessions with women testing positive for depression or anxiety are spent just explaining what depression is, a social worker and counseling are, and why a mental health referral may be needed.

"They usually just say, 'I'm not crazy!'," she sighed. "So many of our patients come in sick and they don't know why," added Ms. Missey, "it turns out to be their mental health, after you dig way down deep".



Learn More About BVMI, Click Video Above

Visit BVMI Website



“Providing someone who understands their language and culture gives people a comfort level [accepting mental health services],” said Ms. Acosta, “I wish we could do more. If we didn’t provide services, honestly I don’t feel our clients would get any mental healthcare.”

BVMI hopes to increase Kathy’s hours and institute on-site mental health support groups; making it easy for clients to get to a group and accept help. They have been blessed with social work interns from Ramapo College, but don’t currently have mental health counseling available every hour they are open.

If you are a prescribing psychiatrist, or a social worker, nurse or are Spanish-speaking and can help BVMI provide better mental healthcare for our working poor, contact Amanda Missey at [BVMI HERE](#) and volunteer.

80% of any Bergen County population suffering from poor mental health is simply unacceptable. BVMI aims to change that.



2nd Stigma Free Zone Symposium Solidifies Support for Mental Health Education in Bergen.

The morning of Dec. 2, 2016 was launched by sponsor Michele Hart Loughlin, of the Bergen County Division of Mental Health, with a plea for every town in the county to join the SFZ.

County Executive, James Tedesco III met that plea with a promise to personally reach out to every Mayor of every town still not adopting the SFZ resolution to educate about mental illness. He vowed to work until the entire county map "goes lime green". He also signed up to take Mental Health First Aid Training, urged on by Instructor, Lauren Salvodon.

Recently the Freeholders have set aside generous funding for the SFZ. The Paramus SFZ Group manages the funds for all chapters.

County Prosecutor, Gurbir S. Grewal spoke next on initiatives like CIT (Crisis Intervention Training) that provide preventative action,

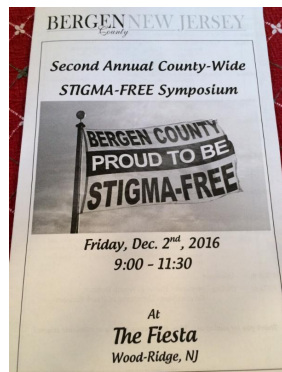


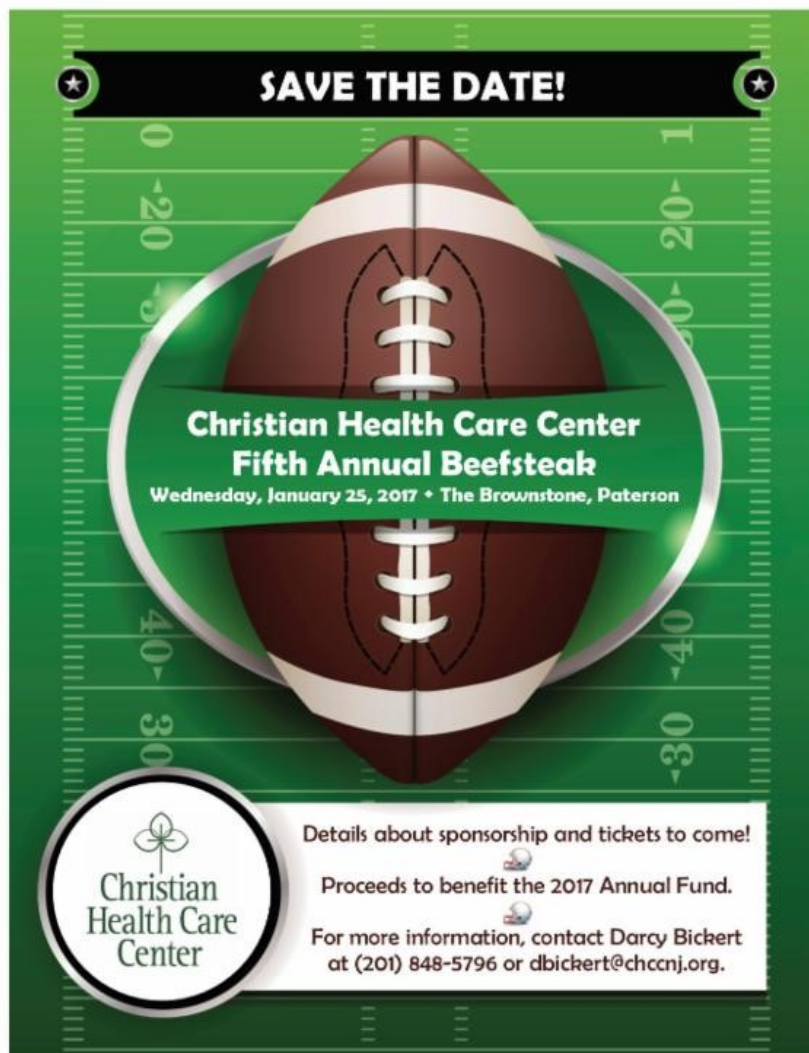
interventions and connection to mental health & addiction treatments and are crucial parts of our county response efforts. Grewal also pledged to take MHFA Training.

Jose Ortiz, Chair of the Bergen Mental Health Board revisited funding issues and talked about inspiring more support for the SFZ.

The Park Ridge SFZ, one of our most active chapters, was featured. Park Ridge School Counselor Andy Yeager and SFZ volunteer Lisa Bernardo spoke about efforts to educate students and community members. Volunteer Tammy Smith, a vital advocate for the SFZ, delivered a moving story of the devastating impact of mental illness and eventual recovery.

A wonderful video prepared by the students at Bergen Community College further drove home the message that so many lives around us are altered by mental illness every day.





Bogota is Beautiful & Stigma Free

About 100 people, mostly high school students, ushered in Bogota's Stigma Free Zone with a Walk With The Mayor, Christopher Kelemen, on November 19.

[Read More Here](#)



[Major Mental Health Reform Now Law :
21st Century Cures Act Passes Senate, 94-5.](#)

[In-depth look at 21st Century Cures Act.](#)

[Assembly Panel approves Lagana-Huttie sponsored
legislation on opioid dangers.](#)

[Marshall Project Survey: 375,000 Leave Prison
Without Mental Healthcare.](#)

[NAMI News & Blogs.](#)

[Vitale-Weinberg Opiate Education Bill Clears Senate](#)

[NJ Editorial : Postpone Mental Health Funding Reform.](#)

[NJ SpotLight: NJ Poised to Benefit from HealthCare Funding.](#)

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Christian Health Care Center Communicating with Someone Living with Dementia

Presented by Teepa Snow, OT/L, Leading Educator on Dementia



Tuesday, December 13, 2016

6:30 to 8 p.m.

Christian Health Care Center Auditorium

Communication is more than just talking and listening – it's also about sending and receiving messages through attitude, tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language. As people with dementia progress in their journey and the ability to use words is lost, families need new ways to connect.



Teepa Snow, OT/L, a nationally recognized educator on dementia, will teach you how to effectively connect and communicate with someone who has dementia at every stage of the disease. Her **enlightening, witty, entertaining, and energetic** style will educate, inspire, and motivate.



- Seating is limited.
- To register, call (201) 897-5039 or email mbraen@chccnj.org.
- Please use the 700 Mountain Ave., Wyckoff, entrance.

Refreshments will be served.

301 Sicomac Ave., Wyckoff, NJ 07481 (201) 848-5200 ChristianHealthCare.org

SENIOR LIFE

SHORT-TERM REHAB

MENTAL HEALTH

THE VISTA

Bergen County Mental Health Board's CIACC Children's Inter-agency Coordinating Council 2017 Schedule:

Jan. 10 - Feb. 14 - March 14 - April 11 - May 9 - June 13 - July 11 -
August 8 - September 12 - October 10 - November 14 - December 12

Meetings at 9 a.m. at Bergen Sheriff & Community Services Building,
327 East Ridgewood Avenue, Paramus, in the Auditorium.

Meetings are open to any Bergen residents who wish to learn about available resources benefiting youth and families. Park in fenced lot under solar panels.

Contact [Michele Hart-Loughlin](#) at Division of Mental Health with any questions.

SAVE THE DATE!

Countywide Transition Fair
Assisting families and students in planning for the future.

Admission **FREE** and open to the public (parents and students)!
No registration required.

Date: Thursday, March 16, 2017, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Paramus High School, 145 Spring Valley Road

70 Vendors offering post-secondary options will be available to help students with all levels of disabilities prepare for transition to adult life.

For questions or assistance with accommodations, contact your District Transition Counselor or Case Manager or Region V at 201-599-0585 x 11.

ALL OF OUR LINKS ARE LIVE

STAY CONNECTED



Bergen County Stigma Free Zone | 25 Maple Ave, Demarest, NJ 07627

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