

BERGEN COUNTY PROUD TO BE STIGMA-FREE

Bringing the Mental Health Conversation to New Jersey

ASSEMBLYMAN TIM EUSTACE- CLIFTON FIREFIGHTERS - PAUL NICKELS & HRG - QUICKLINKS- HOLY NAME FAIR- LGBTQ YOUTH CONFERENCE- J. TEDESCO LETTER -AAH OPEN HOUSE

Assemblyman Dr. Tim Eustace Knows Stigma

Dr. Tim Eustace, DC (D), NJ 38th District Assemblyman and Vice Chair, Health & Senior Services Committee is a man who understands stigma. A Bergen native, Tim graduated from Ramapo College with a B.S. in psychology and began his career in mental healthcare at a partial hospitalization program out of college.

Like many, Tim was drawn to mental health due to family experience. He is one of 7 children, and is most proud to tell about brother, Terry, who suffers from schizophrenia. "There's no one without an affected family," Tim said. Terry, a hardworking hotel cook has held that job for 2 decades and has his own apartment. Terry keeps in shape by riding his bike from Hackensack to Saddle Brook for work every day.

We had quite an interesting chat about mental health and addiction running in families, and agreed that there is more than one to live a successful life; it's not all about riches or possessions or careers.

In true SFZ fashion, Tim talks openly about addiction, alcoholism, LGBT rights and mental illness with the same sincere energy he directs towards politics. He is happy to see his native Maywood (he was once Mayor) now joining the SFZ. Tim has supported many SFZ events.

When Paramus native, Mary Ann Uzzi began the SFZ, she was smart to seek him out for support. Along with Assemblywoman Valerie Huttie, Tim took SFZ requests to the Office of Legislative Services without pause, to vet and refine the language of what became NJ Assembly Resolution AR236. It passed in 2015 and urges all NJ municipalities to adopt the SFZ model and educate about the stigma of mental illness.



"I was most interested in assuring that mental illness not be disparaged", Tim said, "There's no reason to treat any mentally ill citizen any differently. I'd like a more accepting society".

Tim has seen changes down in Trenton since AR236 passed, and has been happy to do his part educating fellow policymakers who come to him to learn more about mental illness and stigma. On a local level, he sees schoolchildren taking on a more thoughtful attitude towards disabled peers, and finds it most heartening. Tim is excited that other NJ counties have followed AR236 and are establishing SFZs.

"I will try to help build a state that is stigma free", he vowed. Because Dr. Tim Eustace, like our beloved state of NJ, knows stigma.

[Read NJ AR236 Here](#)

[Visit Assemblyman Eustace's Page](#)



Clifton Now a Stigma Free Zone, First Responders Key Players

Joanne Green of the Mental Health Association attended SFZ events in Bergen and wanted Passaic County to follow suit. She tried to ask the entire county to adopt a resolution, but found it was asking too much, too soon. So she assembled a powerful task force in Clifton, sure once it got going, other towns would also join (and she was correct).

She left no stone unturned, recruiting police, fire and health departments, schools, clergy, and MHA employees. Her agency has conducted CIT- Crisis Intervention Training- for 6 years, so she knew turning to first responders would have a good outcome, with solid role models.

The Clifton task force held a yard sale in Nov., 2016 to raise funds for their SFZ. On November 19 at Barbour Pond, they held a walk featuring David Matos, a man who walked across America in 2016. Local dance instructor and Zumba teacher Yudy Bechara kept the event lively.

But the Clifton SFZ found its biggest advocate (besides Green) in Deputy Fire Chief, Mike Allora. Mike is active with CIT, and got all 120 Clifton firemen trained in Mental Health First Aid. He became a MHFA Trainer and it was this effort that laid the groundwork he needed to get the firefighters on board with the SFZ idea.

"It really only takes one person to light a fire under everyone else", said Ms. Green.

The firemen serve as EMTs in Clifton, and Ms. Green reported she has gotten positive feedback from the firemen that all the training has made



their jobs easier, especially after emergency mental health calls or when they have to comfort a person who has suffered trauma; an almost daily occurrence in firefighting.

The police were also actively involved, especially Sergeant Lynette Butler, from William Paterson University. "Not a lot of law enforcement personnel were enthusiastic [about the SFZ] at first" Green said, but events snowballed and now the town boasts 50+ CIT trainers; focused on deescalation techniques. CIT is given not just to Clifton police, but to jail personnel as well.

Clifton, you are on fire!

[Visit Clifton SFZ Website](#)

[FMBA Local 21: Clifton Firefighters Wear Green to Fight Stigma](#)

Sponsored By
Power of One

LACE UP AGAINST "Stigma"



NOVEMBER 19 OF 2016 | 9:30AM
IT'S OK TO TALK ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS - GET INVOLVED!
GARRET MOUNTAIN (BARBOUR POND) | WOODLAND PARK, NJ
(Rain Date 11/20/2016 | WEAR YOUR BEST GREEN)



Walk with David Matos
Walked Across America (2016)



Support MHAPassaic.org
Clifton Stigma Free Task Force
cliftonstigmafree.org



Dance with Yudy Bechara
Zumba Instructor

JOIN THE WALK | SPEAK UP | HELP END MENTAL ILLNESS STIGMA
*For FREE registration & details, visit: www.powerofoneccom.org

Paul Nickels: Bergen County's Resource for Homeless Services

Bergen County's best homelessness advocate and formerly homeless resident, Paul Nickels, knows stigma. Paul has been dealing with it, in many forms, since he was bullied at his Mahwah middle school over his ADHD and dyslexia. Paul also battled alcohol at an early age, which he chalked up to peer pressure. Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 step philosophy helped him so much, he hardly identifies any longer with having had an addiction. Paul has not relapsed in 25 years, and has since sponsored countless others through AA.

Just meeting Paul, you'd never suspect his hardscrabble past experience. Now, housed, stabilized on meds he can tolerate and in recovery, he's made a huge turnaround that would amaze even the most hardcore doubter. He is one of the sweetest and most thoughtful people you will ever meet. A real gentle giant.

"I was homeless because I was mentally ill", he says. In fact, Paul estimates 99.99% of Bergen's homeless are fighting either mental illness, or addiction. Like many with lived experience, mental illness just crept into his life somewhere and he can't say for sure when his struggles began. But he still ruffles when he recalls the stigma of being labeled "Special Ed" and put in special classes in school.

When Paul was growing up, his dad took him to Tai Kwon Do so he could fight his bullies, and that training came in handy when he found himself an adult living in a Hackensack storage unit in an industrial area, in trouble



with the authorities, his business diminished following the death of both beloved parents after 9/11.

Paul inherited an oil truck company and says he grew up wealthy. But the business fell away to chain store competition while Paul was learning the ropes. Attempts to reestablish out of NJ were not successful, and led to a breakdown in his mental health. He started to bounce checks, then lost his home. He had run-ins at the local shelter that cost him admission. His treatment at BRMC was a struggle too; Paul said doctors wrote him off as being on drugs, but he was not. He compares the chances of stabilizing mental illness or addiction while homeless to an "impossible dream."

"Services only last 90 days, and that is not enough time to stabilize mental health, find the right meds or break an addiction", Paul says. He was helped at his lowest by friends and the leadership at PATH, but it took 2 years to overcome. It was through attending The Hackensack River Mission; a church-sponsored group that offers weekly prayer, food and services to the homeless, that Paul credits for his lasting recovery.

Sick with pneumonia, and sleeping behind Pep Boys, Paul had halfheartedly tried to kill himself one freezing winter night. He also prayed his heart out. He had been praying at The River Mission earlier that night. When he awoke he described an exciting feeling of relief washing over him. His prayers had been answered, and he then knew what his purpose in life was to be!

Thus, our most faithful advocate was born.

Paul writes a website and sister publication called HRG; Housing and Resource Guide. It's a thorough insider's guide to navigating social services in 3 NJ counties, including Bergen.

He has a wall of citations at home for community service, and is trained in Mental Health First Aid and Paul can dispense Narcan to anyone in overdose. You'll see him at every event related to mental health, addiction, and homelessness with his ever present smile and his camera around his neck. He also serves on the Bergen Mental Health Board.

Paul pays it forward for the mentally ill, homeless and addicted who can't speak for themselves. He loves the SFZ, "It really speaks to me", he says. He embraces the freedom that came after being encouraged by the SFZ to speak out about his illness. "Admit to yourself, God and another human being the exact nature of your wrongs," he says, citing AA. "It sets you free."

Our community knows Paul is not wrong. He is more right, in so many ways, than most people you will ever meet. Godspeed, Paul!

Paul posts the SFZ News every month at HRG.





COUNTY OF BERGEN
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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James J. Tedesco III
County Executive

February 23, 2017

Re: Mental Health Funding for Fiscal Year 2017/2018

Dear Senator Gordon:

I am writing to request that you take action to address a major issue with devastating and widespread impacts on the citizens of Bergen County.

Effective July 1, 2017, the State of New Jersey will eliminate deficit grant funding of \$6,900,000 for vital mental health services for many Bergen County residents. As a result, an estimated 7,750 of our most vulnerable residents will lose outpatient mental health services that allow them to function as productive citizens in our communities. Those 7,750 residents are divided in two groups: (1) 4,250 residents who will lose essential care such as medication monitoring; and (2) 3,500 residents who would normally be enrolled in the coming year will but will now be forced to forego mental health assessment and treatment.

The State's assurance that the shift to fee for service funding is revenue neutral is not accurate. The County has documented this by applying the fee for services model to fiscal year 2015-16 data compiled by the County's four comprehensive mental health agencies. The application of the fee for services model's rates to the providers' common data set reveals and substantiates a collective net loss of \$6,000,000. This loss will cause unacceptable and unnecessary hardship and distress. It occurs in the following manner:

- In fiscal year 2015/16, the expense of providing outpatient mental health services for 13,155 Bergen County residents was \$12,900,000;
- Approximately \$6,000,000 of the \$12,900,000 was reimbursed by a variety of sources: Medicaid funding of \$2,000,000 and an additional \$4,000,000 from collective payments by Medicare, private insurance, self pay, and County grants;
- The \$6,900,000 shortfall in revenue was covered by State reimbursement;
- The new approach – fee for service – increases Medicaid funding by \$900,000 (from \$2,000,000 to \$2,900,000), but eliminates the grant funding of \$6,900,000. Note: even with an additional \$900,000 allotted to Medicaid fees, the sum total of Medicaid payments is less than 23% of the actual cost of providing those services;
- The loss of State funding of \$6,900,000 and the increase in Medicaid funding by \$900,000 results in a net loss of \$6,000,000 in services to Bergen County residents.

The State's drastic reduction in funding will adversely affect outpatient medication monitoring and psychiatric therapy that are essential for stabilizing residents so that they can live independent, productive lives. The loss of medication monitoring for approximately 7,750 residents will have the following consequences:

- Increase in emergency room use
- Increase in homelessness
- Increase in incarceration rates at the Jail (40% of this population on average has been diagnosed as needing mental health services). Note: the daily cost of housing an inmate far exceeds the daily cost of medication monitoring.
- Increase in inpatient psychiatric admissions at a time when Bergen Regional Medical Center is running at near capacity and mental health agencies are experiencing significant operating deficits.

As County Executive, I am expressing my support for your proposed legislation deferring implementation of the proposed changes in State reimbursement to fee for services – a change that will deprive as many as 7,750 Bergen County residents of essential mental health services.

I also request, on behalf of the County of Bergen, that Legislative action be taken to develop an alternative to the proposed fee for services approach or, if the fee for services model remains in effect then it that event to provide safety net funding at the current levels so that vital, mental health services can continue without catastrophic disruption.

A spread sheet summary detailing the impact of the State's reduction in funding is attached. The raw, underlying data, collaboratively developed by the County's major mental health providers, is available in electronic form upon request.

In closing, the data demonstrates beyond a doubt the unfortunate and ill-conceived consequences of the State's shift to a fee for service model and serves as a call to action for all of us.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,



James J. Tedesco, III
County Executive

Alliance Against Homelessness Hold Open Houses, Plans April Afternoon of Wine, Food & Music

Homeless people in Bergen County? Honestly, unless you live near certain areas, you may never see someone identifiable as homeless. It's not in the news often, and neighbors don't often worry about such things. Or do they?

AAH; Alliance Against Homelessness of Washington Township does. Last Thursday, they held an open house at 1 of 5 homes they operate that provide real, homelike housing for



people with addictions and/or mental illness. The Teaneck house was immaculate, comfortable and is completely maintained by the 5 men who call it home. We met the board and learned more about their mission aiding our most under served and bringing them dignity and true independence.

AAH provides *permanent* housing for over 75 people at an incredibly low cost annually per person, compared with what hospitals or government can provide. I wasn't expecting to hear so much good can be done by just economically managing agency funds.

I also wasn't expecting to be brought to tears.

The AAH Board is comprised of the warmest, kindest people you could ever meet. Few work for mental health causes unless they have been touched in some way, and the stories they shared were so heartwarming, and their attitude so optimistic, I wished I had a million to give them right on the spot. It was sad to hear them report that homelessness in our county is now rising fastest among vulnerable children and seniors age 65+.

The SFZ News will be profiling some of these amazing folks from AAH in future issues.

Their next event is an afternoon of Wine, Food and Music from 2-5 pm April 23. Call Executive Director, David Moore: 201-664-1700 by April 14 to reserve your place. Tickets are \$125 each or \$200 for a couple.

It is sure to be a wonderful afternoon.



[AAH WEBSITE](#)



Reducing the Stigma Behavioral Health Resource Fair

In partnership with the Bergen County (NJ) Chapter, The Links, Incorporated

Mental illness is defined as changes in thinking, mood or behavior that cause distress or impaired function. Depression is the most common type of mental illness, affecting more than 26% of the U.S. adult population. Most people know someone who has been affected, but the stigma associated with mental illness prevents many from talking about it. Tonight we will present information from our experts and an opportunity to learn about the different services and resources offered throughout Bergen County.

Event information:

- Resources for outpatient services
- Presentations by expert mental health professionals
- Light refreshments

Date: Thursday, March 23, 2017

Time: 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Location: Holy Name Medical Center Marian Hall

Fee: Free

Call: 201-833-3336 for more information
and to register.



HOLY NAME MEDICAL CENTER
718 TEANECK ROAD, TEANECK, NJ 07666
(201) 833-3000
WWW.HOLYNAME.ORG



Quicklinks to News

[NJ Friendship House 3/30 Fundraiser for Autism](#)

[CarePlus LGBTQ 3/20 Conference at BCC](#)

[BRMC Congratulates Michael Padello](#)

[More Local Events at Resource Net](#)

[Sandy Hook Website: Fighting Social Isolation](#)

[Vantage Website: Free Suicide and Caregiver Support Groups](#)



BRINGS YOU

The NAMI Family-to-Family Education Program

Starting in March!

Family-to-Family is a 12-week program designed for individuals who are dealing with a family member diagnosed with a serious mental illness.

The program fosters learning, healing and empowerment among family caregivers, and has been described by some as "a journey of hope" and by many others as a "life changing experience".

REGISTER NOW!

Location:

**Bergen's Promise
3 University Plaza
Hackensack, NJ 07601**

Schedule:

**Every Friday
March 3 thru May 19, 2017
7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.**

To register, please call Ann Marie Lazarus – 201-935-NAMI (6264)

**This program is FREE OF CHARGE
Available on a first come, first served basis**

******REGISTER EARLY**

******SPACE IS LIMITED**



**304 Valley Boulevard, Wood-Ridge, NJ 07075
201-935-NAMI (6264)**



Meet The Professional
Presents

OPIOID ABUSE IN BERGEN COUNTY

The U.S is facing an opioid crisis and Bergen County is no exception. Despite prevention efforts, heroin and opioid use continues unabated. NJ residents of all ages and all walks of life are affected. Is there a road to recovery? We need to become informed! An urgent message we all need to hear!

Tuesday March 21, 2017
7pm

[Bergen Regional Medical Center Auditorium](#)
[230 E. Ridgewood Ave. Paramus, NJ](#)

(Enter at Main Entrance, proceed to the right, the auditorium is at the end of the corridor)

Featuring
Michael Paoello, MA, LCADC, CSW
Executive Director,
Evergreen Treatment Center and Addiction
Treatment Unit, BRMC.

He is also the **Chairperson of the Bergen County Freeholders Local Advisory Committee on Alcohol and Drug Abuse**

Which provides citizen's advice to the County in the planning, development and funding of alcoholism and drug abuse treatment services. It provides the public with a forum to foster communication, education and advocacy concerning alcoholism and drug abuse.



ALL OF OUR LINKS ARE LIVE !

STAY CONNECTED



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

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