

PARAMUS NEW JERSEY PROUD TO BE STIGMA-FREE

THE STIGMA FREE ZONE NEWS OF NJ Bringing the Mental Health Conversation to New Jersey

We report on a volunteer initiative of organizations, nonprofits, schools, hospitals and houses of worship working with local government to make NJ free from the stigma of mental illness.
Anyone can form a SFZ Task Force to educate. Just pledge to "do something about mental illness."



Following Crash Horror, Paramus Stigma Free Community Responding to Trauma in Children.

By Cynthia Chazen

The annual field trip to the Lenape Indian site that follows an intensive curriculum on Native Americans is almost a NJ rite of passage. On May 17, the 5th grade class of East Brook Middle School merrily loaded itself onto 3 busses headed to Stanhope. In

a bad decision to (allegedly) execute an illegal U-turn over a Route 80 median after missing his exit, a 77 year old bus driver with a long record of driving offences threw the day into chaos, colliding with a dump truck and killing 11 year old Miranda Vargas and beloved social studies teacher, Jennifer Williamson-Kennedy. He has since been charged with the two deaths.

The national news was immediately on scene, along with ambulances, police with cadaver dogs searching woods off of the highway shoulder and motorists who jumped out to help comfort and aid the traumatized children escaping a bus torn in two. Theo Anceviski, age 11, described his classmates and teachers hanging upside - down from their seat belts, screaming. The passengers escaped through windows and roof hatches. 43 were hospitalized, some still remain in critical condition.

[IBT: Read About Miranda](#)
[ABC News Coverage of Crash](#)
[Fox News Coverage of Driver](#)
[NJ.Com Speaks to Kevin Kennedy](#)

Jackie O' Callaghan, a social worker in the Ramsey schools and mom to darling Brendan (who won hearts when visited by sports heroes on the news while recovering), spoke to The SFZ News of NJ about her family's experience.

Every community loves its children, and Paramus is no different. Immediate response to the crash included fundraisers to pay for funerals, food and flowers coming in, memorial services, prayers, hugs and tears. But the city that launched the NJ Stigma-Free movement also saw the fruits of years of coordinating and integrating mental health services, training first responders in mental health techniques, and integrating services between schools and local mental health organizations. The mental health of kids here is a priority.

Crisis counselors at East Brook launched an immediate and extended plan to aid the children in grieving and recovery. According to Bergen County CIT Trainer, Amie Del Sordo, Tri- State Canine Crisis Team sent therapy dogs. She also noted that the county's collaborative approach to crisis response linking mental health providers and first responders has resulted in Bergen police, fire and EMS being much better trained to respond with empathy and compassion during crisis. A school safe space is available and an open door policy is in place, and according to Mrs. O'Callaghan, students know help is there. Guidance counselors and the administration are all heavily involved with these efforts. Parents are being educated and given therapy treatment choices for their kids.

Jackie, who is trained as a **[Crisis Team Member](#)** and is well-acquainted with the difficulties mental illness brings to a family, found much to praise. She said she found the amount of response to emotional issues to be "just right." Her son Brendan visits a therapist at school, a fact he unashamedly shares with classmates. Brendan is just home from the hospital and is not ready to attend school or resume hockey, but is making small steps. Multiple injuries are apparent on the outside; skull fracture, punctured lung, and a broken nose are among the many wounds for which he will require extended treatment. But mom worries too about his mental health. He was very close to his teacher, who died in the crash. He also has ADHD and suffers from anxiety.

She described Brendan's most recent visit to his pediatrician, where he described his condition as "depressed." Jackie shared that after a period of numbness, little Brendan has expressed some very adult "Why Me?" thoughts, alongside grief, anger, confusion and pain. "Brendan is in shock mode now, he really hasn't processed the death of his teacher," she said. He is starting to talk about the incident, but recalls nothing of the event. His doctor, by the way, gently explained what depression is.

Jackie remains concerned not just about her son, but about the other accident victims. She wants to share a message with the SFZ community, because she sees a

real difference in her community's attitude these days. "I grew up in Paramus... back then I couldn't share openly about my father's mental health, and we had no support. To talk openly now and have our needs met is so wonderful. I couldn't be prouder to be a member of this community," she told me, "We are grateful."

[Prevention.org Guide to Child Trauma](#)

[Web Md: Impact of Car Accidents Can Be Long-Lasting](#)



 **Nick Matahen** shared a link.
Admin · Friday at 9:11 PM
Asher needs your prayers & support as he is still in the pediatric ICU.
#ParamusStrong #AsherStrong #EastBrook



Englewood First Private Hospital in Bergen to Become a Stigma Free Zone

By Cynthia Chazen

Englewood Hospital, Englewood, NJ designated itself a stigma-free zone on May 1, 2018, at a meeting of the Englewood Municipal Alliance and the Englewood Stigma Free Zone Task Force. This is the first private, not for profit hospital in Bergen County to pass a stigma-free resolution. New Bridge Medical Center, the county's safety net hospital, has been an active supporter of the initiative for several years. An event announcing the resolution was also held at the hospital.

Partnering with the Englewood Health Department, the hospital has brought needed mental health education to the community and offered resources to help combat discrimination and negative perceptions toward individuals with mental illness. In May, in honor of Mental Health Month, they made the SFZ designation official.

“With the number of cases of mental illness on the rise, it is imperative that patients feel safe and comfortable seeking care,” explained Dr. Hillary Cohen, Vice President of Medical Affairs at Englewood Hospital. “At Englewood Hospital, we have always and will always treat those with mental illness in the same way we would treat anyone, with any condition - and that’s with compassion, diligence, and a patient-first approach. Being designated as a stigma-free zone is a wonderful recognition of those efforts, and a signal to the community that we are doing all that we can to help break-down barriers and provide a judgement-free space to seek care.”

Congratulations on becoming the first stigma-free private not-for-profit hospital in Bergen County!

STIGMA FREE CANADA!

Andrea Paquette is a busy mental health advocate in Vancouver, British Columbia. She started her journey on a trip to South Korea, when she felt the need to travel and heal from bipolar disorder. She advocated as we did in NJ, starting with a tee shirt, which started conversations everywhere she went. She branded herself as "The Bipolar Babe", eventually founding The Bipolar Disorder Society, and has won awards for her advocacy. After a Google search led her to talk to Mary Ann Uzzi, founder of the Paramus SFZ, Paquette changed the name of her organization.

Now known as The Stigma Free Society, her organization has grown as a charity doing school programs that have reached 17000+ students across British Columbia, Canada. Andrea also holds awareness events and is still fighting stigma under her personal brand online.

Cheers to our northern cousin!



Visit Their Website



Mental Health Editor @cynchazen · 23h

People with mental illness can still

participate
dream
create
cooperate
innovate
work
plan
succeed

But only if they get treatment and support

You can't fix anything by denying it
End the stigma that holds so many back

[#StartYourImpossible](#) [#leadupchat](#)
[#MentalHealthMatters](#)



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Bergen Teens Advocating

“Coping with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder/Anxiety disorder,” a video by Dumont student, Courtney W., raises awareness of OCD and the support that teens living with the condition receive at West Bergen Mental Healthcare. Her video was created through Bergen's Promise *Connecting With Our Communities* service project.

Throughout May is Mental Health Month, teens raised awareness that students



also deal with mental health issues and they highlighted the local resources supporting them as they learn to manage their mental health.

The project was developed by the Awareness Subcommittee of the Children's Interagency Coordinating Council, (CIACC) of Bergen County.



The Anxiety &
Depression Initiative, Inc.
www.TheADI.org

The Anxiety & Depression Initiative, Inc. of Little Falls, NJ promotes the benefits of an active and healthy lifestyle while living with anxiety, depression and other disorders. They provide information about mental health resources and aim to help lessen the stigmas associated with anxiety, depression and related disorders.

Mission Principles

- Introduce an active lifestyle to individuals living with mental health disorders to aid in their treatment, and long-term quality of life.
- Raise awareness of the prevalence of anxiety, depression and related disorders to remove the stigma associated with these conditions.
- Provide general information about mental health resources for individuals living with anxiety, depression and related disorders.
- Support research on the impact of exercise on anxiety, depression and related disorders.
- Aid mental health practitioners in identifying and disseminating best practices for introducing physical activity into treatment plans.

Visit ADI Website

QUICKLINKS TO NEWS

**[The Mighty: Schizophrenia Changed My Path,
But I'm Still Working Towards My Goals](#)**

[NJ SpotLight: State Freezes Charity Care for Hospitals](#)

**[NJ SpotLight: Thorny Reform of Medicaid Payments
Gets State Oversight, One Year Later](#)**

**[NorthJersey.com: Former Gov. Richard Codey
Unveils Plan to Combat Teen Suicide 'Epidemic'](#)**



JOE MASCIANDARO HONORED

The CarePlus Foundation held its 20th Annual Courage Awards Gala on June 6, 2018 to benefit the clients and programs of CarePlus NJ. This year, CEO Joe Masciandaro was honored for his exemplary leadership at CarePlus for 40 years, raising the bar for excellence and compassion in behavioral healthcare. Masciandaro began as President and CEO of Mid-Bergen Community Mental Health Center in 1978, which merged into CarePlus in 1998 after absorbing Fair Lawn Mental Health Center.

Under Masciandaro's leadership, the organization has impacted countless lives. As an early provider of community-based services for the severely ill, Mid-Bergen eased the process of deinstitutionalization. Soon after Joe became Executive Director, the organization began serving those dually-diagnosed with mental health and substance abuse disorders. Everyone who knows Joe knows of his passion and love for persons who are struggling with mental illness.

Innovation under Joe's service continues with new grants continually being pursued and awarded, allowing for the creation of programs to fill gaps within the system. Proceeds from the Courage Awards go to consumers and include scholarships, housing and medication assistance, substance abuse treatment, outpatient services and therapy for children and adults, as well as advocacy and community education.

Joe, NJ thanks you for all you have done during your illustrious career !

READY, SET, SERVE ! TEACHES TEENS TO STEP UP TO LEADERSHIP

- Do you know student leaders in your school and community?
- Do your students need service hours to meet school or religious requirements?
- Do you want to help your students add a great activity to their college resumes?

Yes? Please tell your students about

**The 2018 Program goes for 3 days
June 25-27, from 9-3 at the Bergen
Volunteer Center, 64 Passaic Street,
Hackensack, NJ
Cost is \$350/pupil**





Mental Health Association in Passaic County



Annual

Luau Night w/



PRIZES

Friday, June 15th, 2018

6:30pm-10:30pm

**The Mountainside Inn
509 Hazel St., Clifton, NJ**

RAFFLES

\$50 per person

Dinner Served Family Style—Beer, Wine, Soda included

Sponsored by



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FUN

Great Prizes to be raffled off:

Subway Series Tickets, NY Giants Tickets,

NY Red Bulls Tickets, Elements Massage,

Make Wine with Us, Boston Jewelers,

Gift Cards/Certificates, &

much, much more still to come

LAUGHTER

Tickets may be purchased online at www.mhapassaic.org

For more information contact Lourdes Rivera at 973-478-4444 or email
lrivera@mhpassaic.org MHAPC, 404 Clifton Ave. Clifton, NJ 07011



Central Unitarian Church supports Stigma-Free / Mental Health

In June 2015, Members of Central Unitarian Church in Paramus voted to become a designated Stigma-Free Zone, the first house of worship in Bergen County to do so, through the advocacy and educational efforts of the Pastoral Care Team. In April 2016 Central Unitarian received an Ambassador Award from the N.J. Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma, one of 10 individuals and faith-based or religious institutions recognized for their effective support services or programs that reduce the ways in which society stigmatizes people with mental illness. The church organized and hosted a county-wide Interfaith Roundtable on Mental Health Awareness in October 2016 in cooperation with Paramus Stigma-Free and hosted a one-day Mental Health First Aid Training with the Bergen County Division of Mental Health Services in April 2017. Another Interfaith Roundtable is scheduled for October 2018.

Central Unitarian supports the Bergen County Stigma-Free initiative and the local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). The Pastoral Care Committee provides information and community resources and pastoral support for parents of young, adolescent, and adult children with mental illness or addiction are available.

Email CUC

SAMHAJ is a south Asian initiative of NAMI NJ to support South Asian families and peers affected by mental illness.



SAMHAJ has served the South Asian community for the last seventeen years, with hope, reform and health.

SAMHJA PICNIC
Saturday, August
18, 2018
Time: 10:45 am -

4:00 pm

At: Thompson Park, Picnic Grove 3B
Forsgate Drive,
Monroe, NJ 08831

REGISTER BY AUG 5

REFLECTIONS AT GRADUATION TIME

By John Reilly, MSW, LCSW, PsyA.

As graduation is approaching, we are reminded of the end to the school year and the beginning of summer. For some students it is an end of their time at Sage Day School and for others it's a break from their time at Sage. Clinicians now have the opportunity to do some very meaningful work as endings or breaks typically provide feelings and reactions that can help us to help our students better understand themselves.

About 18 years ago, when I was clinical director at Rochelle Park, a soon to be graduating senior came literally limping into my office. I asked her if she hurt herself and she said "no" and couldn't describe why the limp developed. I started to think about her and all that she had been through during her time at Sage and wondered if the limp had anything to do with that. I said to her, "Do you know another word that is used to describe participating in graduation?" She didn't know, but I told her "it's walking." I noticed she was having trouble walking and just wondered out loud if her spontaneous limp, could possibly have anything to do with her feelings about graduating. She had made a lot of gains and now she was going to leave and move on to the next part of her life. She was taken aback by the connection I made, it probably even got her anxious, but what was interesting is that when she got up and walked out of my office the limp was gone.

When a student is suffering in some way through an overt symptom, intrusive thoughts, or unexplainable feelings, it is important for us to interpret the meaning behind it to help give some insight and relief. Students can't always come up with the reason on their own, we have to help them. For many the "what this might be about" is the impending end of the year and graduation.

So be on the lookout for these developments and think about how your students are dealing with the end of the year or leaving. The students who are putting their feelings into words are aware of their feelings, the ones who are not talking about it but are having a lot of symptoms are the ones with whom we need to be more active.

ALL OF OUR LINKS ARE LIVE !

STAY CONNECTED



Visit our website