



THE STIGMA FREE ZONE NEWS OF NJ School Mental Health Issue

Bringing the Mental Health Conversation to New Jersey

We report on a volunteer initiative of organizations, nonprofits, schools, libraries, hospitals, First Responders, and houses of worship working independently or with local government to make NJ free from the stigma of mental illness and related issues. Anyone can form a local SFZ Task Force to educate. Just pledge to "do something about mental illness. No permission is required. "



Codey Fund Helping School Staff Recognize Mental Health Issues in Students

The Codey Fund is breaking ground with free "Start The Conversation" workshops for all NJ K-12 schools which support school staff on identifying students most at risk for suicide and mental health issues. Educating support staff on recognizing signs and symptoms of mental health issues and/or potential suicidal behavior in students validates the importance of all school staff and allows them to act as educated eyes and ears within the school system.

School secretaries, coaches, security officers, dietary and transportation workers, and custodians are often friendly with students, who may let their guard down around them. These may be the only adults students confide in about mental illness, bullying, or other problems. A coach or cafeteria aide may see a student show signs of distress in situations an administrator or teacher would never be privy to.

The Codey Fund workshops are facilitated by clinically- licensed mental health professionals with an understanding of childhood mental health disorders. Workshops promote public awareness of mental illness, identify problems early in students, open the door to healing and informative

conversations, and help the school community move towards overcoming stigmas, stereotyping, discrimination and removing potential barriers to mental health recovery. All participants will receive a handout of the presentation which covers integration of physical and mental health, separating facts from fiction and understanding the devastating impact of mental health and teen suicide. There is generous time allotted to a question/answer period.

Contact Julie Bannon
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juliegbannon@gmail.com



NJ SPOTLIGHT: Murphy Signs Law Ensuring Parity for Mental Health Insurance Coverage

By Lilo H. Stainton

**Federal law already
requires equal insurance
coverage for mental and
physical healthcare, but
advocates say that
promise falls short at**

times.

Credit: Edwin J. Torres/Governor's Office

April 12, 2019 - Gov. Phil Murphy signs mental health parity legislation. Health insurers in New Jersey will now have to prove that their behavioral health coverage is on par with what they offer for physical ailments, thanks to a new state law designed to improve access to mental-health and addiction treatment.

[READ THE ENTIRE ARTICLE HERE](#)

**CHESTER BOROUGH
PROUD TO BE
STIGMA-FREE**

Chester School District Joins Morris County Stigma-Free Initiative

**JOINS COUNTYWIDE EFFORT TO END STIGMA
RELATED
TO MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUBSTANCE USE
DISORDERS**

The BOE of the Chester School District passed a Stigma-Free resolution, becoming the latest district to do so.... Both Chester Borough and Chester Township are members of the Stigma-Free initiative, as are 34 of Morris County's 39 towns. "We are extremely proud to be part of such a compassionate community and I think that is reflected in our desire to support all of our students, parents and community members by being a part of Stigma Free," said Chester School District Superintendent Christina Van Woert.

[READ MORE ON MORRIS COUNTY SFZ WEBSITE](#)

HOW TO BUILD POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH IN STUDENTS WHEN TEACHING

 @BELIEVEPHQ

01



Create a mental health friendly environment where students are not afraid to open up and talk about their feelings

02



Teach students about the importance of hard work and learning from failure or mistakes. Support them through this process.

03



Incorporate mental health sessions into your week. Why not have a block every day for some mindfulness or breathing?

04



Support students with challenging negative thoughts. Help them to be more aware of their thoughts and to realistically challenge them

05



Take time to educate yourself about symptoms and signs of different mental health disorders

06



Provide students with the right education about sleep habits, eating a well balanced diet and the importance of exercise. Provide opportunities for your students to be active

07



Be a mental health role model. Provide students with real life examples of how you deal with stress, pressure or anxiety

08



Help students to connect and build relationships with each other. Educate them on the importance of caring for each other

09



Teach coping skills to students. Promote autonomy and help them to effectively problem solve

10



Support, praise, encourage and listen to your students. Take time to get to know them



"IVY FEVER" IS THE REAL SCANDAL

By Cynthia Chazen
Editor, The SFZ News of NJ

Many parents dread the day their child is ready for college. 2 years of assemblies and guidance meetings await. Forms, loans, the language of admissions, due dates, visits, and so much worry! Noone at the assembly mentions the 4000 US colleges serving all levels of learners. The talk is all about "getting into the best school." The over-arching idea has shifted from: every child should strive to be his best to the notion that the only way to guarantee a successful life is to attend a top-tier college! Of course, it isn't true, but *the message is not being repeated loudly enough*, by any of us. But our kids are buying into this notion, and it is hurtful to their mental health.

For wealthier students, college is preceded by *years* of enrichment classes, summer internships and volunteering. No 21rst c. kid hangs out anymore, or works after school - unless they have to support a family. Anxious families push-push-push for years in hopes of padding kid's college resumes with extracurriculars worthy of an adult CEO. Ambitious students also drive the fury, developing perfectionism, anxiety, and other mental health problems along the way, as they sign up for as many AP college-level classes as they can, or maybe can't, handle. The crucial downtime to rest, socialize, dream, and the interactions necessary to socially and emotionally develop have been exchanged for the poor substitute of social media interaction screened in during endless hours of studying.

Have kid's freedoms been replaced by organized sports and chaperoned playdates? When I was a kid (by cracky) we had a ton of free time! We biked in a pack, and played field games where we learned to negotiate and interact. It wasn't always fun or fair, but neither is life. In HS, one sport or club after school was seen as enough. A grade of B+ was still acceptable. So, we had time for friends. In the 80s, there was a social event sponsored by my high school *every Saturday night*.

Years ago, during an anti-drug brainstorming session, I suggested my district provide weekend socializing as a way to keep teens out of trouble. I learned administrators and teachers don't want to be liable, or give up their free time to chaperone weekend events, which given their pay and the demands on their time, is reasonable. But parents also chimed in that they didn't want to organize chaperones/security personnel for events. I thought back to my town's feuds over who (out of many volunteers) would coach the little league games, or chair the PTO on behalf of the younger kids. Without safe, fun weekend social activities, teens end up in basement parties, often with drugs, or they are home alone! And they are bored. Social media steps in.

We give little kids waaaay too much oversight, then - poof! - offer teens nothing! If we as parents and as community can afford to provide sports and after-school enrichment, then we can subsidize/staff social events at schools for our older children! The prom alone is not enough.

This simple idea may still be seen as unrealistic, wishful thinking. People here in NJ seem wedded to the notion that high school kids don't need weekend social time, they need *to get down to work*. This sets kids up for social awkwardness and for mental burnout. We all have bought into unrealistic academic expectations, and over time these ideals have become realities! Should we stay silent on the homework debate, the grade inflation debate, and the college admissions debate, while sacrificing what teens need most to become well-adjusted: time to be together, safely, and time to just "be" before having to uphold adult standards? I'm glad I'm not a teen today. It's miserable and they're so unhappy. They are speaking out at events and online.

HS teens are not adults or college students and they shouldn't be worked as such!

I see the pressure every day in my work as an SAT/ACT tutor. When I started tutoring the AP US History exam I recognized that kids were being expected by The College Board to think and write like adult historians! These tests are excruciatingly hard! The recent celebrity admissions scandal exposed the levels to which some will go to have average learners join the elite. But, believe me, the lust for top-notch admissions isn't just in Hollywood. It's filtered down and it is *everywhere*. *Average students are being driven to study more/harder at the expense of their development and their mental health.*

When is it enough?

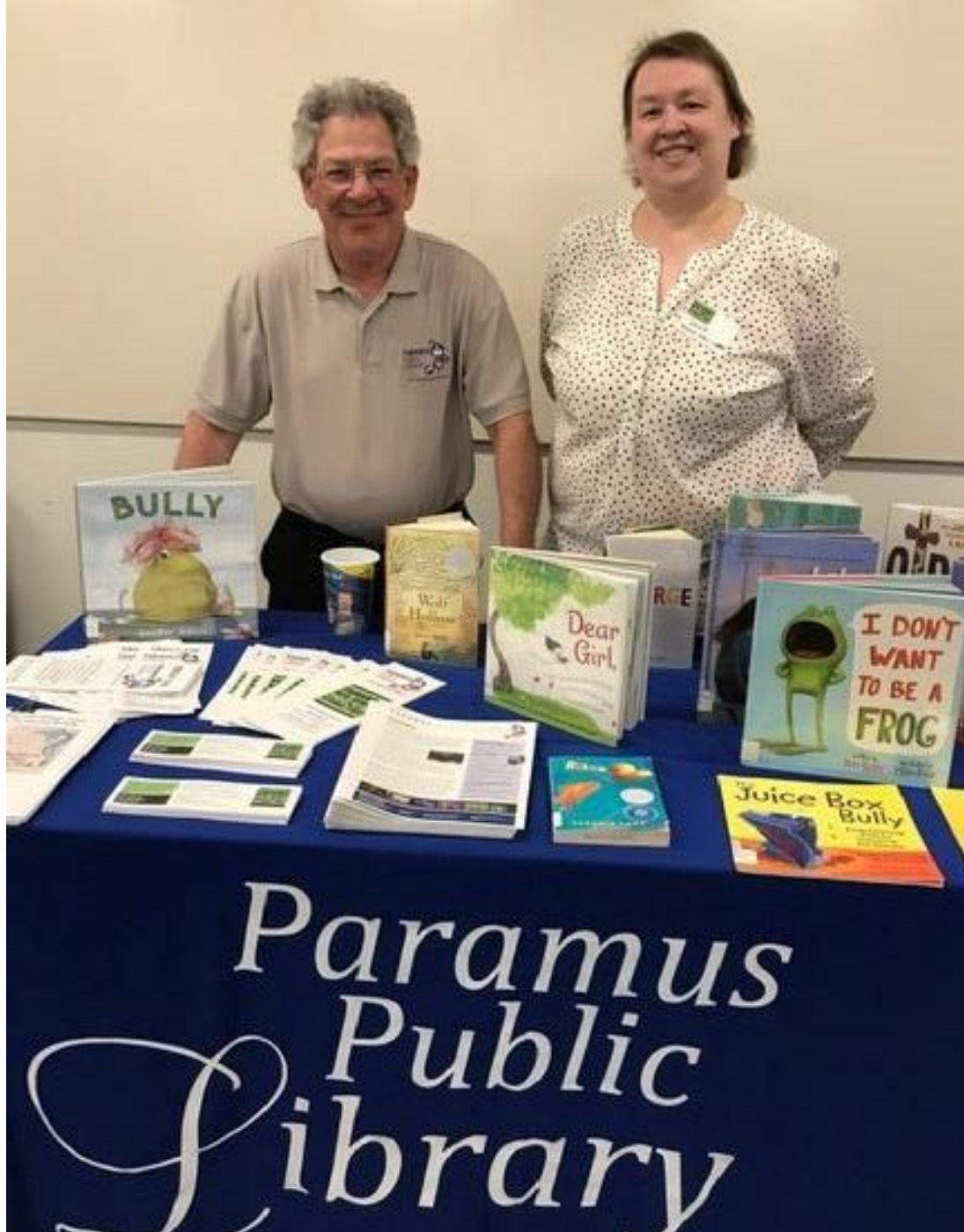
Do 16 year olds ever say on their own, "Hey! I'm dying to do medical research" ? Are 15 year olds really interested, unprompted, in starting a non-profit? Should their bodies withstand athletic demands that would injure an adult professional? No. *They are being pushed*. I have seen teens in my town held to these exact extremes and I have witnessed resultant mental health issues in many young people in college or their early 20s through The Stigma Free. They are not happy, they are burned out and anxious. And the sad truth is we are creating the expectations. *We are the ones perpetuating the myth about needing to join the academic 1%.*

What was wrong with asking 99% of our HS kids to do their best and just be well-rounded ?

At every SFZ youth mental health event I have attended, this no-holds barred frenzy is recognized as having a huge effect on the mental health of young people. It needs to stop. But who will make the change? The answer is, of course, *we all can*.

College admissions professionals must set a more reasonable level of student achievement, and refuse to consider credentials submitted beyond that bar in admissions decisions. They also could refuse to be training grounds for professional athletes, but this is unlikely.

But is it not the duty of HS administrators to communicate children's needs to college admissions policy-makers? Schools must reinstate a less stressful childhood with personal time provided, as *a right*, and insist that *the strict work and study standards applied to adults aren't forced on youth*. Every parent, teacher, or school official can help set the standard in his district. Every guidance counselor can educate parents on the cost of erasing a child's developing years. We can all recognize and praise the wide availability of very decent college educations for all levels of learners, and halt the current "Ivy Fever." The mental health of our children cries out for this.



PARAMUS LIBRARY HOLDS SFZ FRIENDRAISER

Every organization must refresh its ranks every so often, and in March, the Paramus Library hosted a volunteer recruitment night for the Paramus SFZ, hosted by Stigma-Free Librarians Len LoPinto and Donna Perkosky. Although turnout was modest, it was energetic and focused. Attendees shared concerns and ideas and new members were recruited to brainstorm and chair future group-sponsored events. Debbie Cibelli was announced as the new Paramus SFZ Task Force Chair. Eastbrook School 7th grader, Estelle Stagman taught attendees how to make yarn friendship bracelets, and new buttons for the group were made and donated by Bergen Special Services Adult Program members. A number of local healthcare providers, hospitals, and mental health advocacy organizations attended and provided resources. A special Thank You to BCCLS!

What a great way to swell the ranks of NJ stigma fighters!



- **May 10, 2019 | 9:00 am - 5:30 pm**
- **Youth Mental Health First Aid**
- **Trainers: Sue Heguy, LCSW & Jaime Arlia, LPC, ACS**
- **Price: \$150 New Jersey social workers will receive seven (7) clinical continuing education hours for participating. Youth Mental Health First Aid is designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health and human services workers, and other caring citizens.**

[READ MORE & REGISTER](#)

QUICKLINKS TO NEWS & EVENTS

[Westwood SFZ: May 19 Mayor's Mental Health Event](#)

[NY Red Bulls June 1 Stigma-Free Night at The Stadium](#)

[Atlantic County May 2 Hoarding Task Force Event](#)

[Pew: Mental Health Trails Metal Detectors in School Safety Dollars](#)



Mental Health Editor @cynchazen · 3/16/19

They say depression and anxiety are not real.

1 in 4 suffer, worldwide. End stigma.

#AbledsAreWeird



3

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Chicago Tribune: How College Pressures Are Causing Serious Anxiety Problems in Students

By Katherine Rosenberg-Douglas

March 16, 2019 - For high school students with dreams of reaching top colleges, the pressure to prove they can handle a punishing academic schedule can have devastating effects: Some are hospitalized for academic anxiety and others don't graduate at all after failing an AP class they weren't required to take, a suburban high school guidance counselor says.

Students today are acutely aware of how hard it is to get into the best universities, so they're preparing themselves earlier, many as early as junior high and some even in elementary school.

[READ ENTIRE STORY HERE](#)

Bergen County



SAVE *the* DATE

FOR THE
BERGEN COUNTY
CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM (CIT)



UNITY *in the* COMMUNITY EVENT

Law Enforcement, Mental Health Services and YOU...Working Together!

SUN | JUNE 30

11AM - 4PM

OVERPECK COUNTY PARK

*Self
Defense*

Music

Food

Yoga

...and more!

Inflatables

*Face
Painting*

*Wellness
Activities*

**Help us fill a truck with items for our community food banks.
Bring your donations to help others!**

For more info contact

Amie Del Sordo, Bergen County CIT Mental Health Coordinator at amied@careplusnj.org

To learn more about Bergen County CIT visit our Facebook page: facebook.com/CITBergenCountyNJ/

Eighth Annual
Todd Ouida Children's Foundation Conference
Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health at MSU
Creating Safety For and Within Infants and Children

Thursday, May 9, 2019

8:30 am – 4:00 pm

Montclair State University - University Hall Conference Center

*Honoring Mary Ann Uzzi and Cynthia Chazen of the Stigma Free Initiative with the
Todd Ouida Children's Hero Award
and Charles Matteis with the CAECMH Roots and Wings Award*

Opening Remarks:

**Christine Norbut Beyer,
M.S.W.**

Commissioner, New Jersey Department
of Children and Families



Keynote:

Joy Osofsky, Ph.D.

Paul J Ramsay Chair and Professor of
Pediatrics and Psychiatry,
Louisiana State University Health
Sciences Center, Former President,
ZERO TO THREE



**Sheila M. Marcus,
M.D.**

University of Michigan
Center for Human Growth and
Development, Director,
Women's and Perinatal Depression
Program, Department of Psychiatry



**Kaitlin Mulcahy,
Ph.D.**

Montclair State University
Center for Autism and Early
Childhood Mental Health



David Armstrong

NJ Early Childhood Comprehensive
Systems Collaborative
Improvement and Innovation
Network (ECCS CoIIN), ICHC
Member

Special Presentation on Census 2020! #CountAllKids by



General registration fee - \$50.00 (\$55 at the door)

Includes breakfast, lunch, parking and take-home resources

For more information, please call 973-655-6685 or email caecmh@montclair.edu

Attendees eligible for Social Work CEUs in accordance with #N.J.A.C. 13:44G-6.4(b)4 & professional development hours for NJ teachers

To register, click on: <https://8thtofcconference.eventbrite.com>

Co-sponsored by:

Children's Aid and Family Services - Interdisciplinary Council on Development and Learning
New Jersey Association for Infant Mental Health - Northeast Regional Terrorism and Disaster Coalition
West Bergen Mental Healthcare - Youth Consultation Service





First Aid for Mental Health

A Symposium for Interfaith Leaders

Come learn ways to support members of your congregation who may be struggling with mental health challenges.

Leaders of all faiths are invited to attend.

Community organization representatives will be in attendance, including the Bergen County Division of Mental Health.

Wednesday, May 29th | 6 pm to 8 pm

840 Soldier Hill Road
Emerson, NJ 07630

The interfaith tree used in this flyer is the visual mark of the Tri-City Interfaith Council of Fremont, California. Designed by Alan Lee, used with permission.

Keynote Speaker:

Dr. Sidney H. Hankerson, Assistant Professor
Clinical Psychiatry, Columbia University

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



#endthestigma



STIGMA-FREE WALK & TALK a THON

Wednesday, May 1 — 6:30 p.m.

Ramsey High School Track *(In case of rain: RHS Gym)*

www.ramseystigmafree.org

  @RNJstigmafree

ALL OF OUR LINKS ARE LIVE . WATCH RAMSEY HS VIDEO HERE !

STAY CONNECTED

