



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

We report on an initiative of volunteers, 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. Anyone can form a local SFZ Task Force, no permission required. Just pledge to "do something about mental illness."



Bergen County Is Declared A National Teen Mental Health First Aid Training Pilot Site

Program Sponsored by Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation & the National Council for Behavioral Health

Hackensack, N.J. – Bergen County Executive Jim Tedesco and the Board of Chosen Freeholders recently congratulated the county's Division of Mental Health Services (DMHS) for working to make Bergen County a national pilot site for teen Mental Health First Aid training. Bergen County is the only location in NJ and one of 35 sites across the country to be selected to participate in this pilot project.

The year-long in-person training teaches h.s. students about common mental health challenges and will equip them with knowledge and skills necessary to foster their own wellness and to support and help others. This initiative comes at a pivotal time given NJ Governor Phil Murphy's new law requiring schools to incorporate mental health education into the state's standard curriculum. Teen MHFA is an evidence-based model which schools may use to fulfill the Governor's mandate. The Teen MHFA pilot project has been launched in Fort Lee High School.

The County Executive and Freeholders extended their sincere thanks to the Superintendent of Fort Lee Schools, Ken Rota, and the Fort Lee High School staff who worked collaboratively with the DMHS to make this project possible. To be eligible for the pilot, 10 percent of school staff must have been certified in youth mental health first aid – Fort Lee far exceeds that number.

"Congratulations to Fort Lee High School for recognizing the importance of mental health and taking the initiative to help children in need," said County Executive Tedesco. "Now that all 70 municipalities have taken steps to address mental health awareness, it is important that we start teaching our children about mental health first aid so they can lead happier, healthier lives. I want to thank Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation and the National Council for this funding and their willingness to work with Fort Lee H.S. on this important teen mental health first aid initiative."

Teen MHFA is an in-person training for students grades 10 to 12 to learn about mental illnesses, including how to identify and respond to a developing mental health or substance use problem among peers. Students learn a 5-step action plan to help friends who may be facing a mental health problem or crisis, such as suicide, and highlights the importance of involving a responsible and trusted adult.

Addressing the mental health needs of teens is critically important. Half of all mental illnesses begin by age 14 and three-quarters by the mid-20s. Left unaddressed, mental health issues can lead to serious consequences for a young person, including increased risk of dropping out of school or

experiencing homelessness. Tragically, suicide is the second leading cause of death for 15 to 24-year-olds.

[Visit The Born This Way Foundation](#)

[Visit The Teen MHFA Website](#)



Governor Codey Brings Stigma Free Signs to Newton

By Jennifer Dericks

The Town of Newton recently passed a resolution designating the town Stigma Free. Last week Governor Richard Codey and Julie Bannon of the Codey Fund for Mental Health met with Newton Mayor, council members, and township officials, along with Newton Superintendent, Kennedy Greene, and Newton Police Lt., Robert Osborn, to present the lime green... Stigma Free signs.

[Read the entire story on Tap Into Newton](#)



The New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies is proud to be **STIGMA FREE** and to be working with the Stigma Free Zone to get the entire state on board.



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Impacting Holiday Season Loneliness

By NJPRA Board Member, Dave D'Antonio

It is the time of year to remind ourselves to reach out to those around us.

The Holiday Season means joy, happiness and celebration for most. Yet, there are many around us who experience deepened feelings of loneliness and isolation during this time of year. There is no greater pain for a human being than that of being alone. Loneliness and isolation pose a greater health risk than smoking, poor nutrition, lack of exercise and the side effects of medication. For these reasons that we want to be sure to reach out to those around us who may be lonely or isolated.

Loneliness is not reserved only to the people we serve but also our friends, neighbors, family and community. Anyone can be a victim of loneliness and isolation. Please check in with your persons served, elderly family members, the person you see in the hospital who never seems to have visitors, neighbors and be sure they are OK. A brief five minute conversation can make a world of difference to a person experiencing loneliness.

And remember it is not always the quiet person who is lonely. Many people, including our coworkers or neighbors who may appear to be social can experience feeling of loneliness and isolation. So if you have thought about calling someone to say "hi", thinking a person served needs a little extra attention, or your coworkers seems a little down, don't walk on by, do something. You and the person you reach out to will be rewarded by your action.



Holiday Outreach Grows Among Stigma Free Groups

The Power of a Card or a Casserole

By Cynthia Chazen

Meeting the needs of persons with mental illness at the holidays is still a newer idea among the greater NJ community. While pediatric wards and cancer centers buzz with well-wishers, and people have been lugging casseroles to the families of ill or hospitalized people for decades, those who suffer from mental illness have historically been forgotten at the holidays.

I myself still ponder a really sad period in my life when my brother was suffering greatly, and later died, and no one reached out to me to offer solace or consolation I might have received had his death been from causes other than mental illness and addiction. Had I felt more of a community embrace, I might have felt freer at the time to express and process my grief, which instead festered, creating a depression and an anger that just added hopelessness to the situation. I couldn't help but reflect on the many dinners I had put in a neighbor's frig when her husband was dying, and wondered why, when she knew my plight, the kindness was not returned. I urge all SFZ readers to create or contribute to outreach programs at Christmas and Easter, Mother's and Father's Day, or just on a regular basis, to patients and their families, when time permits.

This month, the Ridgewood SFZ, supported by the folks at Bergen Regional Medical Center, created a "Cards of Joy" program, collecting hand written holiday cards for distribution to long term residents in the hospital. The willingness to reach out to hospitalized residents, many of whom are forgotten or shunned by families and never receive a visitor, shows how far we in NJ have come when fighting the stigma of mental illness. This outreach is priceless, well done!

AIR, Attitudes in Reverse, a non-profit in NJ whose therapy dog program continually brings joy to the mental illness and addiction community also ran a collection of small, practical gifts to be distributed at psychiatric hospitals in central NJ.

Folks, The SFZ News salutes you and your efforts! May God Bless your outreach, and next holiday season may we see many other hospitals, organizations, school groups, and individuals reaching out in similar fashion to remind the most ill and vulnerable that they are not forgotten!

Kindness is never wasted! Bring them a card or a casserole!

QUICKLINKS TO NEWS

[NJ Children's System of Care and Bergen Resource Net Collaboration With Schools Programs](#)

[Middlesex County Directory of Mental Health Services](#)

[Politico: Lawmakers Tackle Youth Mental Health Crisis](#)

A Few Smiles From The Twitter

↳ You Retweeted



mental illness memes @itsedmemes · Oct 4



13

↳ 3.8K

♥ 7.7K





Sami Sorad of Mt. Laurel, NJ
Raised \$6,000 for SW NJ Mental Health Association
Through the Move for Mental Health Fundraiser
You go, gurl !



George Washington School, Mahwah NJ @MahwahGW · 1d

@MahwahGW students are at it again! The team worked together on spirit day to create cornucopia centerpieces for Western Bergen Mental Health group homes. GW kids made sure the dinner tables are ready for a Happy Thanksgiving! #mahwahconnects #GWHappy 😊



🗨️ 2 ❤️ 11 ↗️

🔄 Mental Health Editor Retweeted



mental illness memes @itsedmemes · Nov 2

don't talk with us we angy



🗨️ 79 🔄 9.4K ❤️ 32.1K ↗️



Mental Health Editor @TheMHEditor · Jan 4

2019. It's time.

End stigma.

- In medicine
- In law
- In policing
- In incarceration
- In hospitals
- In medschools
- In media
- In societies
- In families and
- In ourselves

The time to fear is past. Onward!



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A Stigma Free Shout Out to all of 2019's Amazing Donors:

- The Strong and the Brave Wendy Sefcik - Remembering TJ
- Lisa Gladwell, Godwinker - NJ Recovery Advocates
- Nancy Labov, The Wind Beneath AIR: Alumni In Recovery
- Paula Tedesco, Generous SFZ Ambassador
- Jay Yudof, Steadfast Mental Health Educator
- Rebekha Leon, Dedicated Stigma Free Supporter
- CarePlus NJ - Best Care in Town
- NJAMHAA - Fearless Advocates, All
- The Tireless and Passionate Heart of Debbie Wentz
- The Remarkable Codey Fund for Mental Health
- The Hard-Working Bergen County Mental Health Board Peeps
- Kindly Andrea & Herb Ouida - The Todd Ouida Foundation
- Stigma Free Force, Joanne Green- MHA in Passaic County

