



## THE STIGMA FREE ZONE NEWS OF NJ

Bringing the Mental Health Conversation to New Jersey

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**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."**

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\*Client names have been changed to protect privacy

CEA, The Center for Educational Advancement in Flemington, NJ, runs 2 schools and provides "extended" (sheltered, in-house) and "community"(at an outside jobsite) employment for persons with all types of disabilities. According to Joanne Kunz, V.P. of Workplace Readiness in Employment Services, 55% of CEA clients struggle with a mental health diagnosis, although, "Because of stigma, it may be even higher than what has been reported," she said. "Even in this supported environment, many probably still hide mental health conditions due to stigma. You're always dealing with stigma," she added, sighing thoughtfully.

For 26 years, CEO Michael Skoczek has been helping people find a path to work. CEA stands out in its corporate park location: huge metal pole-barns house offices, a commercial kitchen, and a packaging plant which employs about 50 clients on the warehouse floor. About 110 others work at private businesses (aided by CEA job coaches), and 40 more are polishing resumes and interview skills as they seek the job of their dreams.

Having mainstreamed clients through schools and job programs, Mike has seen trends come and go. He compared changes in public policy and opinion on employment of people with disabilities to a pendulum. In the late 60's, people with disabilities mostly stayed home, but the 70's brought new opportunities. Society acknowledged people with disabilities might want to, *and actually were capable of, working*. CEA programs grew along with this trend.

When this population first went to work, open opportunities were "sheltered workshops" run by agencies like CEA. They offered safe, consistent, and coached environments. Mike related an unfortunate history in parts of the US where some workers were inappropriately paid or otherwise taken advantage of. After the growth of mainstreaming in public schools, the employment pendulum swung too. Now in NJ, both sheltered and community work options are available, with community work the widely-preferred model.

While he maintained "working with others out in the community and receiving the same pay and benefits is wonderful," Mike cautioned eliminating all sheltered work options may be swinging the pendulum too far. He pointed out an upside of wider acceptance and lessening stigma, but a downside where the most vulnerable people (with the most significant disabilities) seem to be forgotten by policy makers now pressuring agencies to close *all sheltered work opportunities*.

"NJ has a robust sheltered workshop program to provide opportunities for people who choose not to explore work in the public sector," he said. When these programs are eliminated, or lose funding, choices dwindle. In other words, just as there is no one-size-fits-all model for able-bodied persons, people with physical and mental disabilities deserve the same breadth of choices so they too may grow, develop new skills, or change career paths.

CEA's client roster reflects a need for both options. Joanne Kunz reflected on clients riddled by anxiety over upcoming medical tests or changes in schedule that might reduce them to daily tears. Sheltered work is their most supportive option. I think of Alan\*, whom I met at CEA, who suffers the loss of both his care-taking parents. It disrupts him consistently, causing such a constant heartache he can't move on, even at work. Such folks would be hard put to find a tolerant work environment, yet at CEA they shine. Mike reflected, "Alan is friendly, polite, and aware. He is an integral part of our warehouse and his work gets done." Joanne added given a supported environment as a stepping-stone, many clients move into community employment reaching complete independence, thanks to the more graduated pace. At CEA, it happens often!

It was a joy to behold the juice-packers in CEA's Commercial Packaging Division. Patrick Mahoney, Production Supervisor, operated the forklift, while his CEA team joked, creating variety packs for a long-time customer. Down the hall, another team sat silently, heads bowed over pharmaceutical product inspections. Others were capping tubes destined for the beauty counter. All were competitive and serious.

At lunchtime, "Hot Dog Friday" created a big stir. It's a fun perk, awarding clients for perfect attendance. A free bottled water and a dog went that day to *every employee on the plant floor*. I've worked as a job developer with such employees and can attest they are cooperative, and enthusiastic. They are the folks who show up uncomplaining on snow days, holidays, and are always happy to work, no matter how tedious the task may be. CEA's clients are a fun and productive group of people and they work hard.

Running such a diverse organization is a huge job. Add the necessary evils of writing grants and fundraising, and you have a major challenge. Happily, CEA hosts Hunterdon County's undisputed champ of fundraisers: a Thanksgiving morn 5K known fondly for 27 years as "The Turkey Trot." Close to 6,000 people come to Flemington to preemptively work off "The Feast" and support CEA clients in the balance. It's a bucket-list sight you have to see to believe!

Registration for this year's event is now open. C'mon down!

[Register for a Virtual Run,  
the 5K Trot, or the 2k Walk Today!](#)





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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Robin Reilly responded to the September issue of The SFZ News of NJ writing:

This is an e-mail to save!

Thank you, Robin. We thought it was a good one.  
If you missed an issue they are always available  
on the [Paramus SFZ website !](#)

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Hi, I would like to have all of my students subscribe to the  
Stigma Free Zone News. How can I do this?

Thanks,  
Ann Guillory  
CareplusNJ, Paradigm School

Thanks, Ann, we are delighted to have students reading us! Just send  
[cynchazen@gmail.com](mailto:cynchazen@gmail.com) a list of emails. We never share them. Town, school, and  
graduation date for the class is also appreciated! Have them send us their  
news!

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## GOOD NEWS FROM THE TWEET DECK

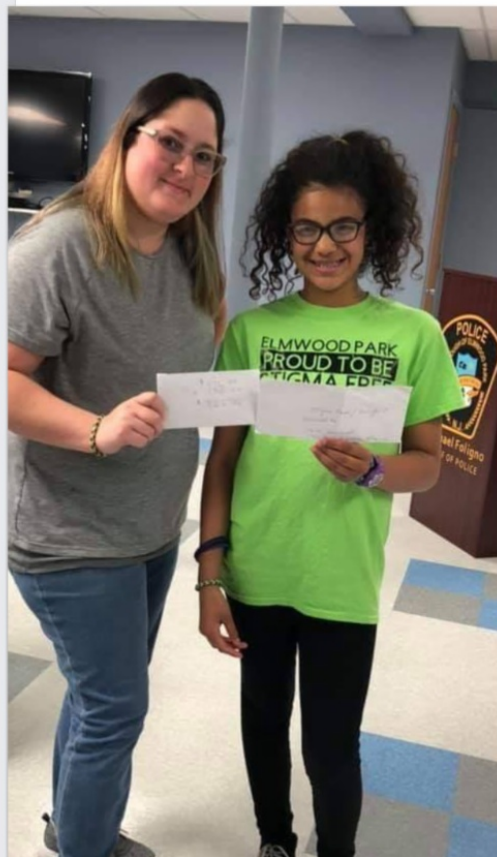
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## Elmwood Park Takes Action

April 17 · 🌐

I would like to take a minute to thank one of our younger stigma free members, Isabella Balistrieri for her donation of \$326. She is still making and selling Stigma Free Bracelets to raise awareness for Mental Health. Bracelets are \$3 each. If you are interested in buying a bracelet or donating to the fundraiser, you may contact **Sandy Sebastian-Balistrieri**. Thank you again Isabella. Keep up the good work!





**Mark Sparta** @MarkSpartaFACHE · Jun 27

Light Up The Night was an evening of compassion and hope! The @HackensackUMC Foundation received a generous donation of \$1.25M from the Caryl and Jim Kourgelis Fund for the future Center for Integrative Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse @HMHNewJersey



4 retweets 15 likes



**António Guterres** @antonioguterres · 22h

Mental health is a much overlooked and essential aspect of people's well-being. At the UN we are doing our part by building a supportive and stigma-free workplace culture for our global staff: [un.org/en/healthy-wor...](https://un.org/en/healthy-wor...)



155 replies 127 retweets 312 likes



## QUICKLINKS TO NEWS & EVENTS

[Preferred Behavioral Health Group: PBHG Awarded Million Dollar Grant to Benefit Ocean County Families](#)

[NJ SpotLight: At East Orange Hospital, Questions Abound](#)

[Oct 20th AFSP Walk in Bergen County](#)

[Morris County SFZ Website: A Successful Stigma Squash](#)

[Morris County SFZ Event: Oct 18th Legislative Breakfast](#)



### Stigma Free Eagle Scout Distributes Mental Health Resources

By Cynthia Chazen

A great event in September called "Empower Our Community" was sponsored by the Oradell SFZ Task Force and featured Clinical Psychologists Dr. Max Banlivy (key speaker) and Dr. Joel Ingersol educating about suicide. Wendy Sefcik of AFSP Bergen County, was also present and spoke about a county-wide suicide prevention effort she is spearheading.

Two student Stigma Free ambassadors from the local high school and Eagle Scout, Owen Hagmaier, announced they will be distributing small cards printed with mental health resources to all 2500 households in Oradell by the end of September. Owen remarked he was inspired to do a mental health project because, "Mental health isn't really recognized as much as it should be. Often times people are too afraid of being labled to reach out for help. Many don't have access to mental health resources." The cards are full of phone numbers and local providers.

What a great choice of project, Owen! Congratulations on your fine achievement!

[What are some of the signs we should look for in people who may be at risk for suicide?](#)

- Are there changes in their behavior?
- Is there a lack of connectedness or loss of interest?
- Do they appear lonely?

- Has there been a life event—loss of a friend or family member, job, divorce—that may have them feeling differently about themselves?
- Have they experienced a stressful or traumatic incident?
- Do they exhibit lack of sleep or loss of appetite?
- Have they been neglecting themselves in any way?
- Are they taking excessive risks?
- Are they giving away their possessions?
- Is there abuse of drugs or alcohol or other substances?
- Have they talked to anyone about it expressing despair or the wish not to be here?

If you are concerned about a loved one, just be aware of any changes in their behavior or their stated feelings, as well as what you may sense or learn about their circumstances. Talking about suicide will not cause a suicide, in fact, it is a good preventative measure. If a loved one reveals that they are suicidal, seek immediate professional help, do not wait. It is an emergency.



## Mental Health America's 2019 Back To School Toolkit Is Now Available For Download!

This year's toolkit provides information and resources about the issues of stress and loneliness, which may lead to mental health conditions if not addressed early, or before Stage Four. The toolkit includes:

- Fact sheets on stress and loneliness for parents and children/teens;
- Sample social media post language, cover images, profile images, and shareable images;
- Drop-In article for school newsletters;
- Key messages;
- Posters for use in schools and other places where children and teens spend time; and
- Radio PSA Scripts.

[Down Load Here](#)

The YCS Institute is offering 3 unique interactive parenting  
‘Baby Steps’ programs  
to support new moms/caregivers and their babies this fall

YCS Baby Steps Programs give parents a safe place to address all their concerns with specially-trained infant and early childhood mental health therapists as they build nurturing relationships with their babies and children under 3.

All programs will be held at the YCS Institute  
60 Evergreen Place, 10th floor, East Orange NJ

Choose the program that is right for you



**Parenting Support Group:** This hour-and-a-half weekly group provides a place for caregivers to gather with their babies and toddlers to build their community of parent friends. A therapist is on hand to answer general questions and facilitate the group discussion. You are welcome to join at any time. Beginning Tuesday, September 24th from 3:30-5 pm.

**Parenting 101 Program:** Learn hands-on parenting skills that include soothing your baby, bonding, development, safety, and more through fun activities like music, movement and crafts. Moms are encouraged to build their own support networks with other class members. You can receive a letter of acknowledgment for group participation. The 6 month program, for moms with babies 12 months and younger, runs weekly for 90 minutes. You can join at the start of each new topic. Beginning Wednesday, October 16th from 2:15—3:45.



**Baby Steps Groups:** This weekly hour-and-a-half parenting group provides a space for caregivers and children to bond with their children (under the age of 3) through music, movement and art projects. The group leaders support caregivers in reflecting on their own parenting practices and their child’s development through group discussion that are mixed in with engaging group activities. You are welcome to join at any time. Beginning Monday, November 4th from 3:30-5 pm.



Cost: Medicaid accepted; please contact us if you have private insurance  
Please sign-up early - program availability is based on community interest

Before joining a group, a brief intake appointment is required to ensure we provide you the best group experience.



Youth  
Consultation  
Service

For more information and to sign-up, please contact  
Dr. Leslie Lester [lester@ycs.org](mailto:lester@ycs.org)  
973-395-5500, x462

Para hablar con alguien en español llame al: Jose Nieves 973-395-5500, x310

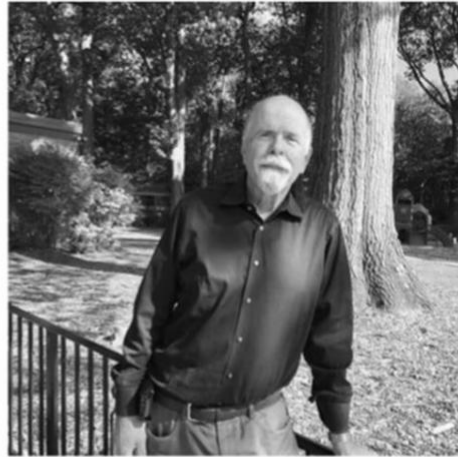
RIVER EDGE STIGMA-FREE INITIATIVE PRESENTS

# BEYOND CLUTTER: THE PROBLEMS OF HOARDING

**ROBERT KORNHABER, Ph.D.**

*Licensed Psychologist*

Dr. Kornhaber has been practicing in NJ since 1975 and has worked with many patients who have been hoarders and is familiar with the psychological, personal, and sometimes legal consequences of this mental illness.



RIVER EDGE  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

THURS, 10/24  
7:00 PM

Large Meeting Room

River Edge Public Library 685 Elm Ave River Edge, NJ 201-261-1663 [www.riveredgepubliclibrary.org](http://www.riveredgepubliclibrary.org)

A Special Shout Out  
to  
Our Readers

Mark Williams  
Lisa Gladwell  
Lois Hallock

and to

