



MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Updates and information from the Atlantic County Office

Random Acts of Kindness Week and Valentine's Day

New Collaboration to Help Veterans in Crisis

This statewide initiative kicked off at a local event

By **Beth Wade**

Atlantic County Crisis Intervention Training, or CIT, is expanding with an important new initiative for veterans in crisis. The steering committee collaborated with CIT-NJ and CIT Cape May in this effort, which will put New Jersey in line to become the third state to launch this program.



Ed Dobleman, CIT-NJ Director

The local response to veterans in crisis will improve as a result of a new initiative that brings together community partners, Veterans Administration, and specially trained law enforcement who have experience in the military. Their collaboration will ensure better outcomes for this vulnerable population.

Called the Veterans Response Team, or VRT, the program is still in its early stages, but the long-term goal is to train at least one military police officer in every local municipality by 2024. By doing so, a peer system will be established between veterans and law enforcement veterans which capitalizes on the natural rapport and respect shared among those who have served.

“Peer to peer and face to face interaction between law enforcement who have military experience with veterans will improve outcomes, improve our response, and connect more individuals to services and support,” said Det. Chris Southard of the Atlantic County Prosecutor’s Office and member of the VRT.

Veterans experience challenges associated with military life, such as deployments that may or may not include combat, intensive training, a high-paced work tempo, stresses related to moving, and associated family or relationship stresses, he explained.

Substance use disorder and PTSD are also concerns for those who have served in the military. Another particularly alarming fact, he added, is that veterans are at higher risk for suicide. That makes this program more than necessary – it’s critical.

“All of our veterans have volunteered to protect the United States against all enemies. Our program is designed to aid those who may come in contact with law enforcement and help them get back on track to experience a productive and fulfilling life.” said Detective Southard.

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“It’s important that we take care of the people taking care of the country.”
-Ed Dobleman
CIT-NJ Director”

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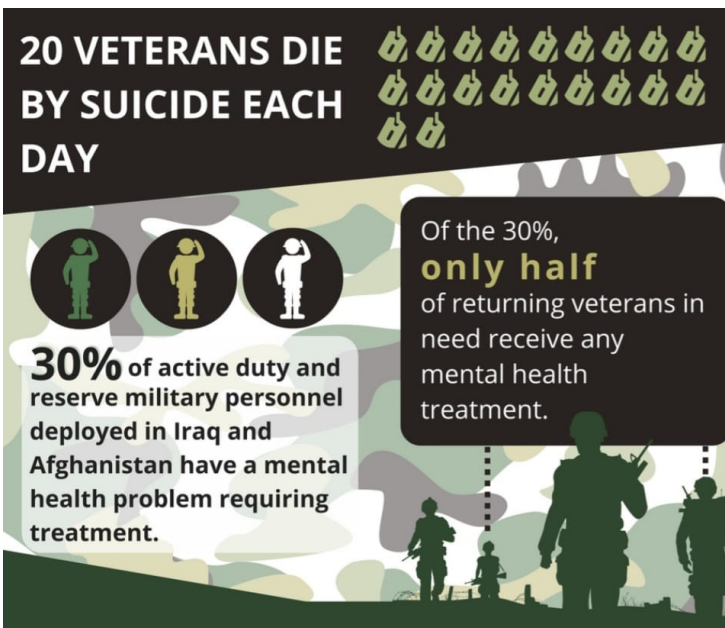
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Special thanks to the CIT leaders who sought out this program to replicate here in Atlantic County and across the state. MHA Atlantic's Executive Director, Vicki Phillips, and Sgt. Brian Shapiro, Atlantic City Police Department, serve as Co-Chair of the Atlantic CIT steering committee.



The two-part training is already having a community impact, said Detective Southard.

“I have gotten a phone call from one of the participants who said they’ve already used what they learned,” he said.

The next steps for Atlantic CIT are to seek members from other municipal police departments around the county.

Members of CIT who were instrumental in bringing VRT to New Jersey include: The Mental Health Association in Atlantic County, CIT- NJ, Legacy Treatment Services, Atlantic City Police Department, Atlantic & Cape May Prosecutors Office, Atlantic County Sherriff’s Department, and local Veterans Administration. Caesar’s Casino provided meeting space for the training.



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In the coming years, members of the VRT will be police officers who are called upon to respond in matters related to veterans. Once trained, they will have contacts with social workers and knowledge of programs that can help with health, well-being, housing, and counseling support, for example. They also will receive training in techniques specific to de-escalation.

“A CIT trained officer who is a peer with military experience in common gives the person validity in the eyes of the individual in crisis,” said Vicki. “That’s a model that’s worked in Delaware. It’s what we’re bringing here.”

VRT was first developed in 2016 in Delaware by the Wilmington Veterans Administration.

Currently Atlantic County has 7 law enforcement officers as members of the VRT from the Atlantic City Police Department, Atlantic County Sheriff’s Office, Galloway Township Police Department, Atlantic County Prosecutor’s Office, and NJ State Police.

At a recent event, CIT trained officers and CIT Coordinators from across the New Jersey met at Caesar’s to participate in the VRT training presented by Delaware VA representatives. To date, 14 of 21 New Jersey counties now have trained VRT members who can establish teams in their respective locations.

If you are a member of law enforcement interested in VRT, please contact Ed Dobleman, CIT-NJ edobleman@legacytreatment.org



Above: Members of the new the Veterans Response Team are pictured at the training that took place at Caesars Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City.



SELF
LOVE



BEYOND
Valentine's
Day

Ideas for how to treat
yourself a little better
today than you did
yesterday!
Self-love is sometimes
misunderstood. Find out
how to practice it and
improve your
day-to-day
wellness with these tips...

Ask for help

Let go of anger

Recognize strengths

Make healthy choices (most of the
time)

Pursue interests and goals

Accept flaws and imperfections
Forgive your past mistakes

Meet your own needs

Do not let others take advantage of
you

Spend quality time with those who
support you

Challenge yourself

Take time to notice effort and
progress

Listen to what your body needs

Allow yourself rest when
you need it

Treat yourself with
kindness - in thought and action

Wellness Bulletin Board

Virtual Stretching and Exercises

Class for flexibility and strength.
Relieve stress & boost energy
Wednesdays 10 am

All ages and levels.
Mix of standing and sitting

Call to register 609-463-6350
or find link online
cmclibrary.org/events page

Year-round gardening programming is offered
SUNDAY once a month by Rutgers Cooperative
Extension of Atlantic County. Meets at Noyes
Arts Garage of Stockton University in AC.
Educational or creative programming tailored
to home or community gardeners.

All levels of gardening experience welcome.
email sarah.lacy@stockton.edu for details

AT THE LIBRARY

Yoga at the EHT Branch
First Thursday of each month at 9:30 am
register 609-927-8664

Galloway Writing Group
(fiction, non-fiction, prose, poetry)
Discussion and feedback
Tuesday, Feb. 14 at 6:30 pm

Recycled Magazine Bowl Project
Thurs., Feb. 16 at 6 pm - Galloway Branch
register 609-652-3800

DIY Painted Mug
Wed., Feb. 15 at 6:30 - Hammonton Branch
register

Each library branch offers special events, classes, and other activities. Check the full online calendar for a complete list through atlanticlibrary.org. Click on "Calendar of events"

Performing Arts at Stockton

World-Famous Harlem Gospel Choir
Friday, Feb. 17 at 7:30 pm Tix around \$30

Stockton Chamber Players
Saturday, Feb. 26 at 2 pm \$12

QiGong/Tai Chi

classes are offered online for free through the
Oceanside Family Success Center
Usually 3rd Saturday of each month.

Call to register
609-236-8800



February is designated to promote confidence and boost self-esteem. Here are a few United By Wellness groups that can help...

Join United by Wellness for access to more than 60 groups, both weekdays and weekends



Scan the QR Code to register for United By Wellness

DOING WELLNESS TOGETHER
Discussions about mental health wellness
Every Monday
2:00 P.M- 3:00 P.M.
On Zoom
Call/email for Zoom meeting information or join the virtual wellness center at no cost using this link:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8VXP2K8>
www.MHAAC.INFO/UBW
UnitedByWellness@Mhanj.org
609-652-3800
THIS IS A GROUP OF UNITED BY WELLNESS: MHANJ VIRTUAL WELLNESS CENTER:

A GROUP BY UNITED BY WELLNESS: MHANJ'S VIRTUAL WELLNESS CENTER
REDUCING RELAPSES
Open Discussion group focused around Coping Skills
Every Sunday
1pm to 2pm
"Call/email for Zoom meeting information or join the virtual wellness center at no cost using this link:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8VXP2K8>"
609-652-3800
unitedbywellness@mhanj.org
mhaac.info/ubw

This is a group of United by Wellness: MHANJ Virtual Wellness Center
Sundays 6:30pm-7:30pm
STRONG MIND
a topic focused group where we ask, "what color is your life?"
Call/email for Zoom meeting information or join the virtual wellness center at no cost using this link:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8VXP2K8>
609-652-3800
unitedbywellness@mhanj.org
mhaac.info/ubw

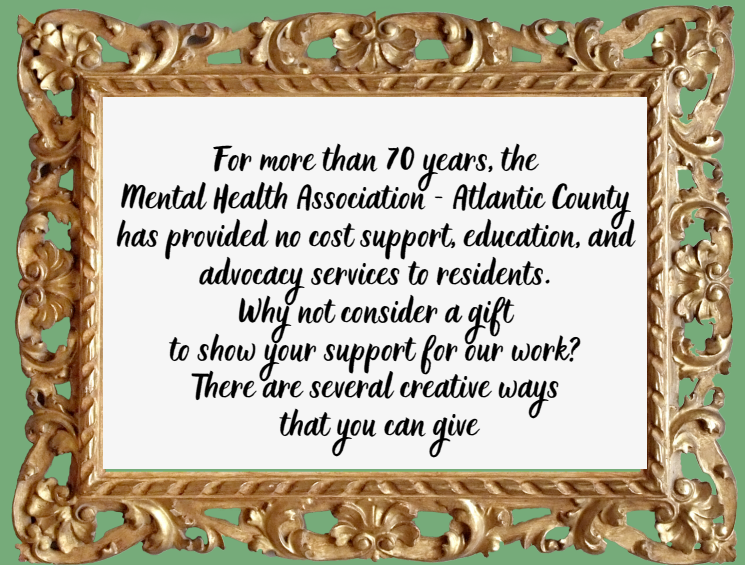
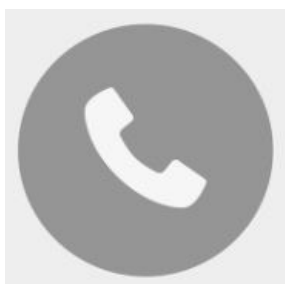
**Acute Care Family
Program serves
families in crisis
7 days per week
Available 8 am to 8 pm
609 517-8614**

Support and assistance for families with a loved one in crisis and in need of linkage to treatment and other services.

Our team engages families who are often navigating the mental health system for the first time.

Staff educate families about mental illness and offer resources and referrals that can help their loved one

*Help is a phone
call away*



*For more than 70 years, the
Mental Health Association - Atlantic County
has provided no cost support, education, and
advocacy services to residents.
Why not consider a gift
to show your support for our work?
There are several creative ways
that you can give*

How You Benefit from Planned Giving
Planned gifts are charitable contributions that are part of your financial or estate plans.
Including a gift to the
Mental Health Association -Atlantic County
in your will or trust allows you to create a legacy which provides families like you with the education, support, empathy and options to provide the best care for your family.
It only takes 20 minutes or less.

**You Get to
Leave a Legacy**

Making a bequest in your will is a powerful way to leave a lasting impact.
Another way to leave a large gift is through establishing your legacy by making a bequest, showing your support for years to come.

**You Get a
Tax Break**

Did you know that bequests can reduce federal estate taxes for heirs? And these deductions are not limited to cash — they can include assets like real estate, IRAs, and stock as well!

**Decide How Your
Gift is Used**

When you leave a bequest in your will to Mental Health Association in Atlantic County, you can allocate a program where you would like to make an impact.



Eating Disorders Awareness Week is February 27 to March 5



"I just really want to be there for anyone who needs help like I did and wants to feel less alone while dealing with something that makes you think you'll never be good enough. People who need someone to say, 'I've been there...I understand, and there's hope for the future.'"

**~Kris Auble
Facilitator of the
Balance & Body Image Group**

Balance & Body Image

Every 1st & 3rd Tuesday at 7pm

A peer-led support group for adults living with or recovering from disordered eating

Join us as we find support from others who have experienced disordered eating, learn about healthy coping skills to aid recovery, and work together to improve self-worth and self-esteem.

Call/email for Zoom meeting information or join the virtual wellness center at no cost using this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8VXP2K8>



609-652-3800



Unitedbywellness@mhanj.org



mhaac.info/ubw



THIS IS A GROUP OF UNITED BY WELLNESS: MHAAC'S VIRTUAL WELLNESS CENTER

SPECIAL PROGRAMMING OFFERED BY MHANJ'S COMMUNITY EDUCATION TEAM FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH

MHANJ COMMUNITY EDUCATION TEAM PRESENTS

A VIRTUAL WEBINAR SERIES


Feb 2
Good Grief a New Me in '23

Feb 9
Taking off the Mask- Breaking the Stigma of Mental Illness?


Feb 16
Compassion Satisfaction in 2023- How to Keep Going for the Long Haul

Feb 23
Minding our Matter- Psychological Safety in the Workplace

Your paragraph text

Eventbrite  FREE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED

EACH SESSION OFFERED TWICE 12-1 PM & 6-7PM



Laverne Williams, CSW,
Director of PEWS
(Promoting Emotional
Wellness and Spirituality
Program)



Lynette Sheard, Director of
NJ Mental Health Players
and Community Education
Coordinator



Clarissa Wheat, Diversity
Educator and Outreach
Coordinator



Cathy Salomon, Manager of
the Call Center for The Mental
Health Association in New
Jersey.

Modern Self-Love

What's your story?!

Share your stories and experiences with self-love, which is important to wellness. Readers can learn a lot by discovering how each person meets their own personal needs and treats themselves with kindness, both in thought and action.

Our inspirational online project

Modern SELF-Love ...is BACK!



We're collecting stories about how you found an appreciation of your worth, well-being, and happiness.

Share your "spin" on self-love.

Submissions will be shared online throughout February.

(Concept adapted from the wildly popular NY Times column)

Suggested length is about 250 words or less

Use your name OR remain anonymous

Include a photo or clip art that will appear with your story (or we'll choose one that complements your submission)

Optional: a photo of the author

.....

Send your story or questions to unitedbywellness@mhanj.org

This is a program of the Mental Health Association in Atlantic County in collaboration with United by Wellness Center

This is the third year of the Modern SELF-Love campaign! We look forward to reading your submissions and sharing online.

By writing about self-love, a person can see their own healthy habits and qualities. We hope you discover your hidden strengths, what you've overcome & accomplished, and deepen your commitment to self-love. The responses from the past two years has been amazing. Try it and find out why it's so popular!

See flier for details

