



# MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

## Updates and information from the Atlantic County Office

April is Stress Awareness Month, Volunteer Appreciation,  
and Therapy Dog Recognition

## *Volunteer "gold"* *MHAAC's helpers earn honors*

**BY Beth Wade**  
**Public Relations Specialist**

Awards season just passed with high-profile recognition going out to the likes of famous musicians and actors. If there were gold statues for volunteers, surely some of ours would be on a stage accepting applause, adoration, and accolades.

Though we lack that national spotlight, we can put volunteers on the front page of this newsletter because we are grateful for the standouts who lend their time and expertise to help us fulfill our mission and achieve our goals. Volunteer Appreciation Week is April 17-23, and this is one big way to say "thank you."

From multiple local Girl Scout Troops, an Atlantic City church, musicians, dog handlers, and knitters to individuals who facilitate some of our support groups, we are fortunate to have help from some great and generous volunteers.

"Volunteers have been the backbone of our organization from the beginning," said Executive Director Vicki Phillips. "It is thanks to the giving nature of our volunteers and their commitment to the services we offer that we are able to continue providing the best possible support to those we serve."

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## Volunteers continued

Most of the volunteers with the MHA Atlantic Office give more time than the national average of 52 hours a year, which is remarkable. As an agency that promotes wellness, the irony is not lost on any of our staff that volunteering benefits an individual's health by improving mood and reducing stress. (The reciprocity is a beautiful thing, isn't it?)

At our office, staff know some of your names and faces, others we do not because you are connected to a great nonprofit, like Linda's Hats for Hope, with knitters from Atlantic County as well as towns and cities across the country. Those volunteers ensure that about 150 residents of our boarding homes have hats, scarves, mittens/gloves during the holiday season.

Some make a difference year-round, and others give big on big days, like Christmas, when family members of Bern Trendler joined her to provide live music during an online group. It was a heartwarming experience that lifted spirits and connected people in a special way.

Other volunteers are among the youngest. They are members of five local Girl Scout Troops – and we met two leaders. One drove to our office during the pandemic to drop off candy, art projects, and homemade cards at Valentine's Day. Another leader who is a friend of the agency, Amy Hassa, made the delivery on her own time and added carnations for residents. They all supported a holiday boarding home outreach in a big way.

In a distinguished class all their own are the super group of dedicated facilitators who faithfully host support group and wellness programming. Some provide groups weekly -- with some running TWO groups a week. The hours, energy, and compassion of these regular volunteers cannot be measured.

"The passion they bring to the agency is contagious and is the spirit of MHA," said Carolyn Quinn, Community Engagement and Wellness Programs Director. "We are a small nonprofit, so having this wonderful large pool of individuals willing to give their time, especially during the pandemic, feels like an honor."

What our volunteers all have in common is a good, giving heart and a life of "other." What we mean by that is you may have a job, a spouse, an aging parent, classes, children. Still, you chose to devote time to our consumers and our collective goals.

And, so, with the same enthusiasm seen for the Hollywood elite, we raise up our voices and put together our hands for each of you today. You're GOLD to MHA Atlantic. Positively gold.



## MHA Atlantic Volunteers

Alliance Therapy Dogs - all dog/handler teams  
Brittany Arnold - "Coping Skills" group facilitator  
Courtney Haslett - "Color Me Happy" group facilitator  
Devon Dorso - "Unapologetically Me" group facilitator  
Girl Scout Troops #10128, #10137, #11068, #11140, #11057  
Kristen Woods - "Creative Collective" group facilitator  
Kris Auble - "Body and Balance" and "Life in Waves" group facilitator  
Linda's Hats for Hope and all the associated knitters  
Michele N. - "Expressions" group facilitator  
Ryan - "Money Talks" and "Bipolar Group" group facilitator  
Seth Edwards - "Rising Minds" group facilitator  
Tri-State Canine Response Team  
Women in Mission with St. Andrews By the Sea Lutheran Church, AC



Thank you



**Pictured: Kris Auble,  
Dena Tartaro,  
Linda Babcock, Ian Hoblitzel,  
Women in Mission,  
Devon Dorso, and Michele N.**



# **MHA Atlantic**

## **Volunteer Group Facilitators**

*Brittany Arnold - "Coping Skills" group facilitator*

*Courtney Haslett - "Color Me Happy" group facilitator*

*Devon Dorso - "Unapologetically Me" group facilitator*

*Dena Tartaro - "Adult Survivors of Child Abuse" group facilitator*

*Kristen Woods - "Creative Collective" group facilitator*

*Kris Auble - "Body and Balance" and "Life in Waves" group facilitator*

*Michele N. - "Expressions" group facilitator*

*Ryan - "Money Talks" and "Bipolar Group" group facilitator*

*Seth Edwards - "Rising Minds" group facilitator*

*Thank You*



# Community Outreach



Staff at MHA Atlantic presented a wellness workshop to Avanzar's Grow NJ Kids program on March 10.

Grow New Jersey Kids is a program offered to early childhood educators. Staff provide technical assistance, coaching, and modeling to early childhood educators who enroll to improve their programs.

Carolyn Quinn, Director of Community Engagement and Wellness Programs, met with staff at their Pleasantville location. Avanzar is formerly known as The Women's Center.

During their "In This Together" regional networking meeting, she offered techniques and tools for participants to build up their self-care tool box.



## Crisis Intervention Training



The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program is a community partnership of law enforcement, mental health professionals, individuals who live with mental illness and/or substance use disorders, their families, and other advocates. This national evidence based first-responder model of crisis intervention trains community members to help persons with mental disorders and/or substance use disorders access medical treatment and divert from criminal justice system due to illness-related behaviors. CIT also promotes officer safety and the safety of the individual in crisis.



Atlantic County CIT-NJ Class #218 graduated March 18th from the 40 hour CIT-NJ program

We're starting to collect  
submissions for our  
upcoming online project



# Notes of Kindness

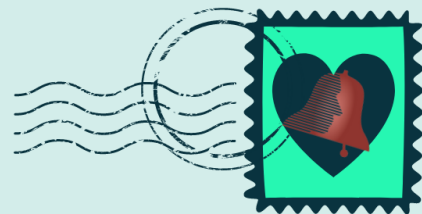
IN HONOR OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH WE ARE SPREADING THE MESSAGE THAT KINDNESS COUNTS BY ASKING FOR NOTES OF THANKS! SHARE A TIME THAT SOMEONE SHOWED YOU GREAT KINDNESS AND WHAT IT MEANT TO YOU!

- Finish the sentence starters below.
- Keep responses 1-2 sentences
- Use your name or remain anonymous
- Add an image if able
- Submissions will be shared online

I NEVER FORGOT WHEN...

IT HAS HELPED ME IN THE  
FOLLOWING WAYS...

IT IS MEANINGFUL TO ME  
BECAUSE...



Send your responses or questions to [mhaac@mhanj.org](mailto:mhaac@mhanj.org)

This is a Program of the Mental Health Association in Atlantic County  
[www.MHAAC.info](http://www.MHAAC.info) 609-652-3800



# Staff of Hope One Atlantic County

April's Featured Community Partner



The dedicated staff of this mobile team are immersed and highly visible at various locations in Atlantic County where they provide resources to individuals who are struggling with substance use disorders, mental health challenges, and co-existing disorders.

Through the help of both full- and part-time staff, they work tirelessly to reduce the number of opioid overdoses in our communities by supplying individuals with the lifesaving medication, Narcan.

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Since 2018, Hope One  
has made 2,853  
referrals to treatment

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They also respond to overdoses within the community to provide direct linkages to treatment services and supportive services to families.

“Hope One believes in harm reduction, which is critical to keeping people who use drugs alive and as healthy as possible,” said Lindsey Komar, Hope One/ACLEAD Coordinator.

She explained that harm reduction is a proactive and evidence-based approach to reduce the negative personal and public health impacts of behavior associated with substance use at both the individual and community levels.

Sheriff Eric Scheffler of Atlantic County piloted the Hope One program in 2018, with the vision of serving the entire community, one individual at a time. Since the program started, they’ve made a staggering 2,853 referrals to treatment, with 396 in 2022.

Under Sheriff Scheffler’s guidance, the program expanded services to develop a more comprehensive approach.

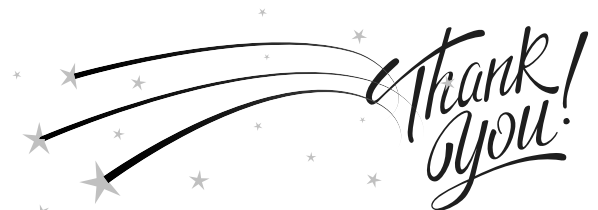
Hope One currently offers an ID Program to those who do not have identification, which is required for admission to a treatment facility. Through a partnership with Ocean Inc, the program also can provide transportation for clients seeking admission to a treatment facility.

Their presence and accessibility makes a difference to individuals and families, especially during this unprecedented time of opioid abuse. Staff in this program are available 5 days a week in areas identified as high-risk or concern. Hope One is on-call Friday nights and weekends.

“We believe in meeting our clients where they are at,” said Lindsey. “We will advocate, coordinate treatment services, educate and support, as well as provide after care services for them. That includes short term case management, for the sole purpose of the client to achieve a successful outcome.”



**Pictured are the Hope One staff. At left: Steve Murray, LSW, Lindsey Komar, CPRS, Maria Hankins, CPRS, Director Susan Long, MSW, LSW, CTP. Picture at right: Douglas Martin, CPRS and Vincent Kirkland**



**For more information, call 609 909-7200 and mention Hope One. Their outreach schedule is posted on their Facebook page called Hope One Atlantic County and their website [www.hopeoneac.com](http://www.hopeoneac.com).**

**BY THE NUMBERS...**

**Hope One has responded to 380 overdoses since the program started in 2018.**

**Staff have trained and provided Narcan to 2,358 individuals and family members.**

# INTERESTED IN FAMILY LEISURE?

Participate in our research study!

We are looking for participants who are an:

1. adult parent between the ages of 18 and 65
2. with a diagnosis of a schizophrenia-spectrum disorder, bipolar disorder or depression;
3. have a child who is between 7-15 years old and is interested in participating in family leisure with you;
4. have legal visitation rights, joint custody or full custody of your child, with at least weekly contact and;
5. have a desire to engage in more leisure activities with your child.

**You may be compensated up to  
\$60 in gift cards for your time**



Temple University  
**Collaborative**

On Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities

**If interested contact us at:**

**[TUCollab@temple.edu](mailto:TUCollab@temple.edu)**

# Doggone Special

From local communities to national tragedies, these teams provide support and healing



Above: Janice Campbell, founder of Tri-State Canine Response Team, known locally and nationally



## Tri-State Canine Response Team

By Beth Wade  
Public Relations Specialist

The distinguished, dedicated dog/handler teams of Tri-State Canine Response Team are a source of comfort and support locally and nationally—at schools, nursing homes, vaccination sites, boarding homes, fire houses, psychiatric units, group homes, and areas declared a disaster.

That's why this nonprofit deserves high praise and recognition for the day set aside to honor their work. Dog Therapy Appreciation Day is April 11.

More than 60 dog/handler teams are specially trained and equipped to offer crisis response and emotional support to communities for resiliency and recovery. Each dog is unique and special, with some dogs possessing the ability to seek out, sense, and connect with individuals who have experienced trauma, grief and loss, or who live with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD.

The founder of this group is Janice Campbell who received a Behavioral Healthcare Hero Award from MHANJ in July 2021 for their efforts and contributions.

“When people are in a time of crisis, we provide a chance for the person to decompress and breathe,” said Janice. “We make a difference in the quality of life using the human/canine bond and its power to heal.”

Janice's teams are deployed by invitation, which is why her local and national connections are integral to the process. One of those important connections involves law enforcement and First Responders. Some high-profile deployments of the team include mass shooting and loss of life in: El Paso, Texas; Las Vegas, Nevada; Orlando, Florida; Indianapolis, Indiana; Boulder, Colorado and others locations.

Locally, as “CIT-NJ K9 Ambassadors,” they provide services to 20 New Jersey counties on an as-needed basis. That includes crisis response support and comfort during funerals, tragedies, accidents, and disasters. The teams also participate in National Night Out, as well as other events and training, like Crisis Intervention Training, CIT. (Read about CIT in this newsletter. MHA Atlantic is a partner in this effort).

During the pandemic, dog/handler teams supported front-line workers at hospitals, nursing homes, and vaccination sites. They also provided workshops in mindfulness and self-care as well as virtual "visits" with the dogs to reduce stress.

Janice's team have provided online groups through “Pause for Paws,” which has been offered by our office and United By Wellness, the MHANJ online virtual wellness center. Those groups have drawn record numbers of people in attendance, which provided joy, stress relief, and social connection.

In addition to these community connections, Janice and Tri-State Canine Response have been great new partners in our annual walk fundraiser. Next one comes up in June!

Thank you to Janice and all the dog/handler teams at Tri-State Canine Response for your service to the community and across the country.

## April is Dog Therapy Appreciation



Photos courtesy of Tri-State Canine Response Team



# STRESS AWARENESS

Stress can be debilitating; affecting our physical and mental health. April is stress awareness month. Let's look closer on how to "chill out" and stay well.



## Got Stress?

We all have stress. To a certain extent anxiety helps us pay our bills on time or study for a big test. However, stress can become chronic. Too much stress can affect our physical, mental and behavioral wellbeing. The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare calculated stress can reduce your life expectancy by 2.8 years.

[LEARN MORE](#)

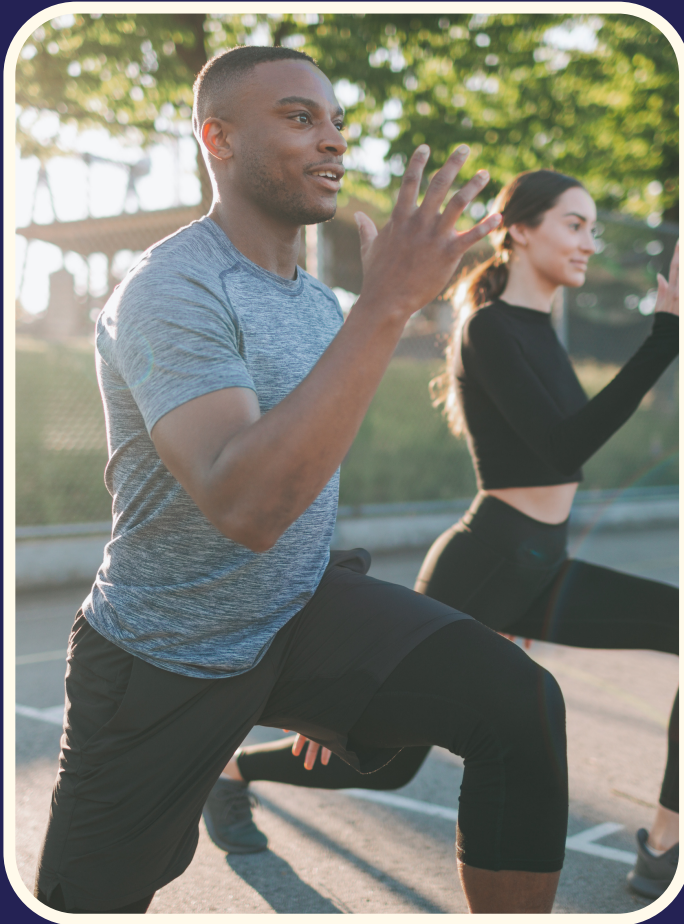
## Minding Stress

One way to combat stress is staying present in the moment. This method often called mindfulness can be practiced many ways. Meditation, yoga, and progressive muscle relaxation are just a few ways to be mindful.

[LEARN MORE](#)



# STRESS AWARENESS



## Stress Management

Managing stress can help you lead a more balanced, healthier life. Stress is an automatic physical, mental and emotional response to a challenging event. It's a normal part of everyone's

life.<https://www.mhaac.info/index.html>

## Say "NO" to Stress

LENGTHY EXPOSURE TO STRESS MAY LEAD TO MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES (FOR EXAMPLE, ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION) OR INCREASED PHYSICAL HEALTH PROBLEMS.

[READ MORE](#)



# Acute Care Family Program serves

**7 days per week  
Available 8 am to 8 pm  
609 517-8614**

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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*



# Community Bulletin Board

ACUA is excited to partner with the Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Atlantic County to offer the community monthly Garden Talk meetings in 2022.  
**THURSDAY, APRIL 21st**  
5:30 PM – 7 PM  
ACUA Community Garden

**Colonial Easter Bunny at Historic Smithville**  
615 East Moss Mill Rd.  
April 13 & 14 and  
April 20th & 21st  
12pm-5pm



**HAPPY Earth Day**

ACUA's 30th Annual Earth Day Festival on Sunday, April 24th from 10am – 4pm at ACUA's Environmental Park.  
A fun day for all ages!

**Absecon Lighthouse Spring Festival**  
Sat., May 7th 12pm-6pm  
Live Music, Yoga, 40+ Vendors, Meditation etc.

Free Admission  
609-449-1360

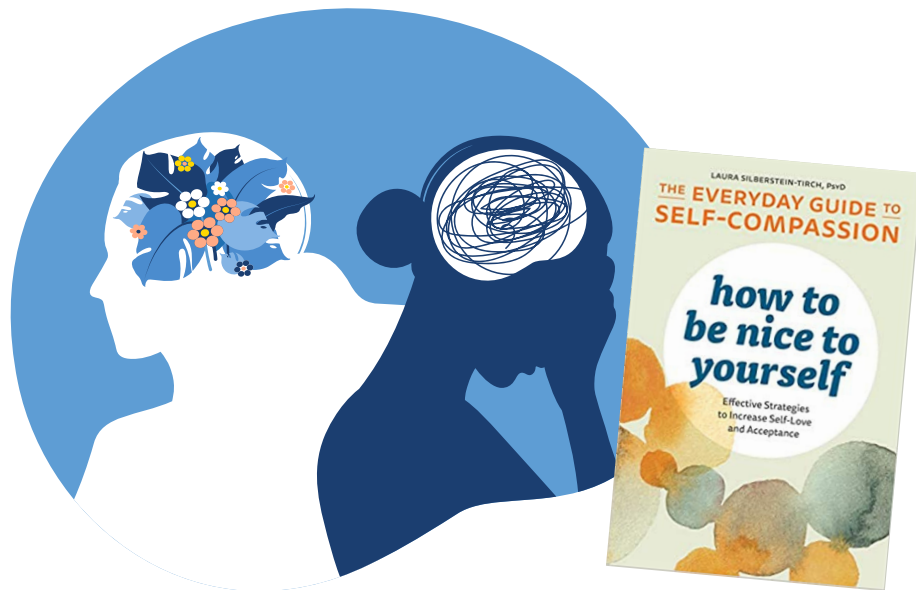


*Virtual Webinar Training*

# Breaking Mental Health & Substance Use Disorder Stigma And Taking Care of Self

## **MAY 10TH, 10AM-1PM**

**REGISTER HERE TO RECEIVE ZOOM MEETING ID**



**PARTICIPANTS WILL BE PROVIDED THE  
EVERYDAY GUIDE TO SELF-COMPASSION**

**Presented by the Mental Health Association  
Sponsored by the Atlantic County Alliance  
for the prevention of Drug & Alcohol Abuse**



Questions email Carolyn Quinn  
[cquinn@mhanj.org](mailto:cquinn@mhanj.org) or Brian Wilson  
[Wilson\\_Brian@aclink.org](mailto:Wilson_Brian@aclink.org)



Atlantic County Executive  
Dennis Levinson

Atlantic County Board of Commissioners  
Maureen Kern, Chairwoman

# APRIL IS STRESS AWARENESS MONTH

## Stress Less

### 24 Tips and Ideas



NAME MY FEELINGS



DEEP BREATHING



WRITE A LETTER



IMAGINE A QUIET PLACE



CHILD POSE



DRINK WATER



WARM BATH



EXERCISE



5-4-3-2-1  
GROUNDING  
TECHNIQUE



HUG



ENJOY A HOBBY



WATCH A FUNNY VIDEO



ENJOY MY FAVOURITE SCENT



SQUEEZE SOMETHING



LISTEN TO MUSIC



TECH-FREE DAY



EXPLORE NATURE



PRESS AND RELEASE PALMS TOGETHER



WATCH FISH



NOISE CANCELLING HEADPHONES



SIT IN THE SUN



DONATE SOMETHING



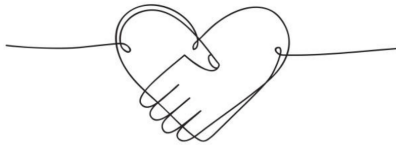
WRAP UP IN A BLANKET



COUNT HEARTBEATS

# Got Stress?

Join us for an in-person peer-led support group to talk about any stress you may be feeling and receive support from your peers. Open to all and offered at no cost!



**1st & 3rd Friday of the month  
11am-12pm**

### **Location:**

**Oceanside II Family Success Center  
3201 Atlantic Ave, Atlantic City, NJ 08401**

**\*Masks Required \*Free parking on street, limited parking behind building**

**For questions, call 609-652-3800**



# HELLO SPRING

## **GOT STRESS?**

**MONDAYS 4pm-5pm**



Join us to talk about any stress you may be feeling and receive support from your peers.

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's Virtual Wellness Center

*April is  
Stress Awareness  
Month*

