



Where People and Possibilities Come Together

Spring Newsletter | April, 2018

Lamoille County Mental Health

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LCMHS CEO Awarded 2018 Non-Profit Leader of the Year

LCMHS is thrilled to announce that our CEO Savi Van Sluytman has been awarded the Lamoille Chamber of Commerce's 2018 Non-Profit Leader of the Year.

Savi was nominated for this award by LCMHS directors Robyn Daley, Jennifer Stratton and Christina Glowac because of her determination to bring together cohesive systems to create quality and comprehensive care for all families. Her dedication to the people of the Lamoille Valley spans over a decade and as CEO of Lamoille County Mental Health Services (LCMHS) she leads 275 employees to make it possible for everyone in our region to live productive, self-directed lives.

In her tenure at LCMHS, Savi restructured the management team and brought forth a vision of all-agency unity, in the face of a difficult fiscal climate and structural resistance. When faced with a space that was too small for their needs that came with a staggering rent, Savi advocated to make a strategic capital investment by buying the property at 72 Harrel Street that now houses a majority of the staff and centralizes the services at LCMHS. When the estimates to renovate the new building came in way over budget, Savi decided to take matters into her own hands and became the general contractor of the project herself—still while maintaining her full time work as then-CFO at the agency.

Savi has grown the majority of her leadership team from within the agency, giving them the perspective of numerous positions and the populations they serve. Savi has consistently supported the professional development of her current senior leadership team and this vision of professional growth has an impact on all of the agency's staff. Despite the large and geographically diffuse staff, Savi is always seeking to ensure that everyone is considered when organizing events and worksite wellness initiatives. She knows that there is a huge benefit to cross-department conversations among staff and she seeks to bring folks together whenever possible to build community among staff.

Savi and Jennifer Stratton, Developmental Services Director pictured at the award celebration.

...cont. on p.7



Adult Services Team Completes Co-Occurring E-Learning Collaborative Project

Bryanne Castle, Intake Coordinator

A team from LCMHS that includes case managers in the Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) program, Emergency Services staff, Adult Outpatient (AOP) therapists, residential home managers from Copley House and Johnson Group Home and CRT Vocational Manager recently completed a Co-Occurring E-Learning Collaborative Project that was funded through the VCPI: Vermont Cooperative for Practice Improvement and Innovation.

The initiative is aimed at helping a program or agency to make further progress in the continuing improvement of co-occurring competent practices in order to provide better and more integrated services for individual and families in Vermont. VCPI has worked with its members and national partners to design a competency pilot that includes:

- a co-occurring orientation;
- an online learning curriculum;
- a supervisor's guide;
- a learning community for ongoing assistance and coaching to participating programs;
- staff and program supervisors to support application of the content provided and in the online training.



The team completed ten “Focus on Integrated Treatment Modules” developed by Hazelden and Dartmouth – which consisted of topics such as Motivational Interviewing, Introduction to Integrated Co-Occurring Disorder and Treatment and Staged Treatment. The modules are each 30 minutes long and can be accessed at any time by each team member. Each participating member received continuing education credit based on completion.

In addition to the FIT curriculum, the team participated in a Learning Community with a series of interactive live phone conferences with participating agencies led by Dr. Kenneth Minkoff, expert in dual diagnosis and public sector managed care. LCMHS started the project in mid-August and completed the program will 100% compliance of all team members in January. There was a wrap up event celebrating team success with other agencies on February 23, 2018 at the Waterbury State Complex. There will be an ongoing learning collaborative with WCMHS, NCSS, NEKHS, UCS, HRCS, Rutland-Evergreen and Howard Center.

Staff that completed the program include: Allison Hayes, AOP therapist; Anthony Jackson-Miller, CRT Case Manager; Mary Leikert, Copley House Manager; Mark Perry, CRT Case Manager; Anna Bergman, CRT Case Manager; Frederic Gluck, Emergency Services/AOP therapist; Furman Horton, CRT Case Manager; Brittany Rhoads, AOP/CRT therapist; Shirley Mason, Johnson Group Home Manager; Jim Poirier, CRT Vocational Manager; and Bryanne Castle, Intake Coordinator was the team leader. Go team!

Blood Drive
 Tuesday, May 29 from 10am-3pm
 Schedule a time to give online
www.redcrossblood.org

LCMHS Honored by Worksite Wellness Award

LCMHS has been honored with the Worksite Wellness Rising Star Designation by the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. We have received this award for five years, and is very excited to be recognized by the continuous wellness initiatives and incentives offered to our staff.

"I believe that there is a direct correlation between employee mental and physical wellness and job satisfaction and longevity," said Savi Van Sluytman, CEO of LCMHS. "If we make it easier for staff to take care of themselves, they will be able to take care of those in our community who are in greatest need."



At LCMHS, we devote extensive time and resources to ensuring that staff are well cared for mentally, physically and emotionally. Staff can partake in twice-monthly offerings of free yoga classes, Reiki sessions, chair massages, chiropractor work, meditation and mindfulness, reflexology and book group. Additionally, biometric screenings are offered on-site annually so that staff can track their physical health, set goals and work toward them.

There is an on-campus fitness room stocked with exercise equipment, yoga mats, and exercise videos to motivate workouts. The Wellness Center, a cafeteria/kitchen area used as our clients socialization space, offers nutritiously balanced lunches Monday through Friday for consumers and staff, and operates a food shelf for community members in need.

The Wellness Team, a diverse group of staff from multiple departments, comes together regularly to brainstorm ways to support the health and well-being of staff. A few of the wellness initiatives include: eat your fruits and veggies challenge, floss your teeth challenge, walk to a healthy you challenge, a reading challenge.

In addition to these workplace offerings, our senior leadership team believes in supporting the basic underpinnings that maintain the health and well-being of staff, ensuring that staff health and dental care are the best possible. LCMHS health insurance underwrites deductibles and most co-pays, and the staff portion of the premiums are notably low. In looking to the future, there is a 3% match to 401K retirement savings plans. Staff are offered flexible spending plans to help alleviate expenses for dependent care, dental and medical expenses; life insurance; as well as short and long-term disability.

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LCMHS IN THE NEWS

News & Citizen: Tommy Gardner
February 22, 2018

Last year, the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness determined, based on a one-night census of Vermont's homeless population, that 64 people in Lamoille County, almost half of them children, didn't have a place to live.

That number was nearly triple the previous year, and this year's numbers are expected to be even higher. This year's count was done Jan. 31, one of the coldest days of the year; the numbers have not yet been released.

Eberle said his agency's housing solutions team "pores over a six-to-eight-page list of individuals and families who are, or are about to become, homeless, and tries to secure safe and stable housing for them.

"Anyone can become homeless at any time," Eberle said. "It is not a moral lapse or a shortcoming of character, but a crisis, a state of emergency that has more causes than we could list."

The awareness walkers included the people who make up the social safety net in the area: from community action agencies like Capstone, from the Vermont Agency of Human Services, and from agencies that deal with mental health, family services, housing, substance abuse treatment and recovery, law enforcement, restorative justice, health centers and hospitals, schools and churches.

Sherry Marcelino, a community support coordinator from Lamoille County Mental Health Services who organized the awareness walk, said numerous obstacles lie in the way of eradicating homelessness. Substance abuse, mental and physical problems, an aging population in one of the most expensive states to live in, and about six months of winter — all contribute to Vermont's growing homeless numbers.

Marcelino and other walkers wore bibs with the number 64 on them to remind people of the homeless count. She suspects it's on the conservative side.

One person had affixed a mirror to a sign with the words "Homeless looks like" above it, a reminder of how it can happen to anyone, depending on the circumstances.

"We're seeing more and more people on our list who are needing help securing housing, keeping housing, or are actually homeless," Marcelino said.

Greg Stefanski, director of Laraway Youth and Family Services in Johnson, acted as emcee for a rally at the end of the walk, in Morrisville's Oxbow Park.

"It's not a simple issue. It's complicated," he said. "And, you know what, it's gonna take more than just one generation."

And with that, he introduced his daughter, Cecilia, a Lamoille Union Middle School student who reached out to the young people in the rally — including the sixth-grade class from Johnson Elementary School, where Cecilia's younger brother attends. Said Cecilia, "I stand here today with doers. People making a difference. People raising awareness."

Help for homeless starts with recognition

Awareness for growing crisis, plus providing shelter from the cold

Kids Day Out!

On March 2nd the Children, Youth and Family Services Program hosted a Kids Day Out. This event provided a full day of activities for our young consumers at the tail end of their school vacation week. Approximately 17 children attended with 1:1 support from LCMHS staff. In the morning participants were able to enjoy breakfast and teambuilding exercises at the Morrisville VFW before heading out into the community for the day. All activities were challenge-by-choice, including a private movie screening of "Up" at Stowe Cinema, followed by bagged lunches at Stowe Mountain Resort. In the afternoon the children had an opportunity to ride the Stowe gondolas, ice skate at the outdoor rink in the resort village, as well as swimming at Golden Eagle Resort.

The day flew by, and staff are looking forward to planning another Kids Day Out in the future. Thank you to our community partners who helped make the LCMHS Kids Day Out such a success!



Community skills worker and a young constituent enjoy a gondola ride at Stowe Mountain Resort.



The Homelessness Awareness Walk through Morrisville on Feb. 6 was organized to call attention to the 64 individuals in Lamoille County who are living without adequate housing.

Photo courtesy of the Stowe Reporter



In the **School Based Mental Health team** we continue to have full caseloads and waitlists of students being seen at school. With the recent school shooting in Florida there has been an increase in anxiety among students, staff, and parents. The challenge is in working with the school system, not just being a “referral to fix” kids. The successes are the schools reaching out for support around these issues and the opportunity for increased collaboration between education and mental health moving forward.

On March 23rd LCMHS Children, Youth & Family Services Clinical Coordinator Katina Idol co-lead a professional development training with Special Educator Jeremy Scannell on “Trauma and Youth in School Settings” for Lamoille Union High School direct care staff. This training was originally David Bennett, MSW project, and we are very sorry to say good-bye to him as he leaves to take care of his health.

Tax Season Help for Low Income Vermonters

VT Digger, March 23

Congressman Peter Welch (D-Vermont) was in Burlington Friday to highlight free services to help Vermonters with their tax returns. Several services are available, the largest being the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program.

“You really have an option to get a very qualified person, who is a volunteer, to help you get your tax form filled out,” Welch said.

There are as many as 300 volunteers at about 120 sites around the state who are ready to help people file their taxes, said Grant Peterson, a senior tax consultant for the IRS. The VITA program serves anyone who has an income of \$54,000 or less.

Residents can call or text 211 to access the service. Peterson also said that people with incomes of \$66,000 or less can use the IRS’ “Free File” software, available on the [IRS website](#).

Tim Heffernan is a junior studying economics and history at the University of Vermont, who also works about 10 hours a week as a VITA volunteer.

“The consultation services and knowledge of tax law is often least available to people who need it the most,” Heffernan said.

Lack of volunteers is often a “bottleneck” for getting people access to services, Peterson said. Jan Demers, executive director of the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity, said that language barriers are another impediment for people accessing services.

Demers said CVOEO has interpreters standing by to help new Americans and others with a language barrier file their taxes.

“Finding a safe place, and CVOEO is a safe place for new Americans to come and have their taxes done, is essential,” Demers said.



Consumers enjoy the music group on a beautiful spring day.

What we do :

Valley ABA
applied • behavior • analysis

Paula Reynolds, BCBA & Program Manager; Jacob Young, Registered Behavior Technician;
and Katie Nielson, Registered Behavior Technician

What do we do? We offer Applied Behavioral Analysis Therapy through early intervention (18 months - 5 years old) and in adaptive daily living skills for adults (up to the age of 22) with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

How is the program funded? The program is funded through Medicaid, private insurance or private pay.

Who do we serve? The population we serve are individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. We started with 2 children and are currently servicing 10 clients with a waitlist of 2.

How is the program staffed? We have two staff members who are Registered Behavior Technicians. Both of our staff have gone through an intensive 40-hour training and are receiving weekly supervision to ensure the practices utilized are current and that they are implemented correctly. These two individuals are providing a direct service, working between 1-3 hours each session per client. They also work on implementing each client's treatment plan, preparing any needed materials, assisting with conducting assessments and building relationships with the families.

What are the biggest challenges in the program? The biggest challenge right now is scheduling. The demand for the program is increasing and we are limited to the number of hours a day we have to offer services.

What do you want people to remember about this program? We love what we do. Our goal is for each of our client's to be successful in every way possible. Success is different for everyone and our job is to motivate and celebrate those successes.

2018 Non-Profit Leader of the Year, continued from p. 1...

Another project Savi has been championing is the Tiny House Project, which would build four, roughly 500 square foot "tiny houses" that would support a one-year transition to independent living for people with mental health and developmental disabilities. Seeing the potential of a vacant lot that is adjacent to the Oasis House, a residential crisis stabilization program in Hyde Park, Savi is tenaciously working toward making independence a reality for people who need just a little help to get there.

Several employees who are parents of autistic children approached Savi with the idea of creating an "imagination center"—a community-accessible sensory room and gathering space for children with autism and their families. Savi has identified space on LCMHS property that can be dedicated to the imagination center, and is working with the parent group to secure grant funding for the project.

Savi also knows that a healthy and emotionally-nurtured employee has more longevity in their job. When they take good care of themselves, they are able to better support the people in their care. It is noteworthy to mention how dedicated the staff at LCMHS is in doing incredibly difficult work in often stressful crisis situations. The staff is family centric, so while an eight year old child might be the one who came to us for care, we often wrap the entire family in support to ensure better outcomes not only for the eight year old, but for his parents and siblings as well.

The Homelessness Awareness Walk through Morrisville on Feb. 6 was organized to call attention to the 64 individuals in Lamoille County who are living without adequate housing.

Photo courtesy of the Stowe Reporter.



Lamoille Chamber Legislative Breakfast

LCMHS hosted the Lamoille Chamber of Commerce’s Legislative Breakfast on March 29, with guests Lt. Governor David Zuckerman, Representatives Dan Noyes and Gary Nolan, Senator Richard Westman and 40 members of the local business community.

Community members came with topics in mind, ready to ask policy makers to state their positions and offer advice. Some topics were hotly discussed, including cuts to the developmental disabilities budget, the striking a balance between hunters and non-hunters, questions about the whether it is good policy to continually expand occupational licensing as it impacts a necessary churn in employment, proposals about putting short-term rentals on par with regulations to bed and breakfasts and the size of state government.

Mental Health First Aid Training

LCMHS will be offering a free Mental Health First Aid Training on Saturday May 5th, from 8am-4pm.

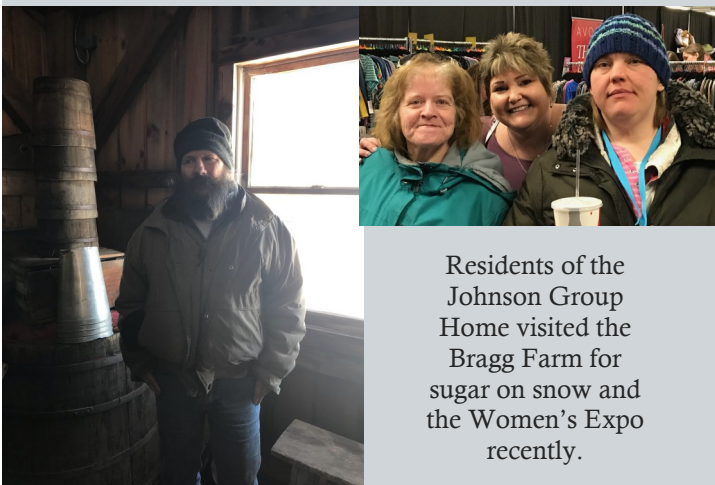
This is an 8-hour training that will teach participants how to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The training helps participants identify, understand, and respond to signs of addictions and mental illnesses.

The training will be offered in the Large conference room located at LCMHS main office at 72 Harrel Street in Morrisville. To sign up, please contact 888-5026, provide your email address and phone number, or email Luciana.Swenson@lamoille.org Space is limited, so please call to save your spot.

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

May Wednesdays on WLVB with Roland LaJoie

Tune into WLVB radio, 93.9, every Wednesday morning in May to hear updates from LCMHS.



Residents of the Johnson Group Home visited the Bragg Farm for sugar on snow and the Women’s Expo recently.

**We are not grateful
because we are happy. We
are happy because we are
grateful.**

Brother Steindl-Rast