



# MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Updates and Information from the Atlantic County Office

## National Depression and Mental Health Screening Month

### Terrific Turnout for Stigma Free Atlantic

BY BETH WADE  
Public Relations Specialist

A strong, inspirational show of interest was apparent at the recent launch of Stigma Free Atlantic which drew nearly 125 participants. Local educators, religious leaders, and businesspeople joined allies and professionals in the fields of mental health and substance use during the Tuesday, October 4 event at The Carriage House, Galloway.

Community members learned more about Atlantic County’s new initiative and heard about ways to get involved with the campaign. After several speakers spoke on the topic, participants received customized toolkits on thumb drives and picked up posters, pins, and lawn signs.

The day’s presenters included members of the Atlantic Stigma Free Collaborative, Maureen Kern, County Commissioner, and New Jersey Senator Vince Polistina.

The keynote speaker was a Stigma Free leader from Passaic County, Rebekah Leon, who illustrated stigma through a story about her brother Terry, a Vietnam veteran who lived with PTSD, anxiety, depression and addiction. He never spoke to his family about his mental health struggles but shared openly about multiple diagnoses of cancer.

“Everyone rallied around and offered their help and support. People brought food and offered rides to the many appointments,” she recalled. “Well, when someone is struggling with a mental illness or substance use disorder, no one brings a casserole. We don’t hold fundraisers, offer to help with care and many times we don’t even talk about it.” *(continued on p. 2)*



Pictured are members of the Stigma Free Atlantic Collaborative: Brian Wilson, Atlantic County Municipal Alliance Coordinator; Vicki Phillips, Executive Director of the Mental Health Association in Atlantic County; Gretchen Halfpenny, Facilitator for the Opioid Fatality Review Team; Kathy Quish, Atlantic County Mental Health Administrator; and Laurie Smith, Community Initiatives Coordinator for Atlantic Prevention Resources, Inc.



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“

“Stigma affects people while they are experiencing problems, while they are in treatment, while they are healing and even when their mental health problem is a distant memory.”

Rebekah Leon  
Stigma Free Passaic County

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About 115 people gathered at The Carriage House, Galloway for the launch of Stigma Free Atlantic



Interns and staff show a variety of signage designed for the campaign



Collectively, the speakers built a case for how stigma prevents people from seeking help – shame, embarrassment, pride, fear, cultural differences, perceived cost, and worry about losing their job. Stigma exists despite research that shows trauma, environmental, genetics and overwhelming stress can contribute to mental health and substance use disorders.

Rebekah noted the long list of musicians, athletes, actors, and politicians who have come forward to tell their story which works towards the goals of Stigma Free on a national level. On a local level, she described ongoing Stigma Free efforts in her region and gave concrete examples of ideas to inspire those in attendance.

She shared ideas about how to create partnerships to help with messaging and awareness. For example, her group made inroads with the schools by offering professional development training to teachers, which led to the development of classroom lessons given by members of Stigma Free Passaic. Reaching out to media is another way to help communicate messaging in broad strokes, she added.

Reducing stigma also comes in the form of simple gestures – wearing a Stigma Free t-shirt or using person-first language, for example saying “a person who has a substance use disorder” instead of “an addict.” Wording in signage at tabling events (she suggested “Wellness Resources”) also can make a difference in attracting attention as well as irresistible mascots, such as dogs, to welcome eventgoers.

Posting fliers and signage with the traditional Stigma Free colors – lime green, white, and black – is helpful to build a campaign, she suggested. Punctuating her point, Atlantic’s logo and multiple sample posters were displayed around the room.

Other ideas related to outreach included Public Service announcements, sponsoring a sports team, and hosting information and resource sessions for local groups, like clubs and service organizations.

See sidebar below for other Stigma Free strategies.

“We are very pleased with the response we had for the launch of our Stigma Free Atlantic breakfast,” said Vicki Phillips, Executive Director of the Mental Health Association in Atlantic County and member of the Stigma Free Collaborative. “The excitement generated by those in attendance confirm that our local communities are ready to help erase the stigma associated with mental health and substance use disorders.”

### More About How Stigma Free could look in Atlantic County

- Proclamations from municipal leaders for observances related to mental health and substance use
- Advocacy via legislators, policy makers who can make change in systems where discrimination, lack of access or lack of opportunity exists
- Mental Health First Aid Training, which is a course to learn how to recognize and intervene when someone is experiencing crisis
- Speakers, presentations, town hall meetings, forums, Lunch and Learn sessions in the workplace
- Certificates of appreciation for those who demonstrate support
- Sharing stories on social media to dispel stereotypes



# Online Mental Health Screening

October is National Screening Month, but the service is year round



Depression  
Anxiety  
Addiction  
PTSD

Youth Screening  
Bipolar  
Eating Disorder  
Psychosis

1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things

NOT AT ALL SEVERAL DAYS MORE THAN HALF THE DAYS NEARLY EVERY DAY

2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless

NOT AT ALL SEVERAL DAYS MORE THAN HALF THE DAYS NEARLY EVERY DAY

3. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much

NOT AT ALL SEVERAL DAYS MORE THAN HALF THE DAYS NEARLY EVERY DAY

**EXAMPLE**

Easy and  
confidential  
**NO COST**

[www.mhaac.info/screening](http://www.mhaac.info/screening)  
or use this QR code



Have you ever felt that you ought to cut down on your drinking or drug use?

YES NO

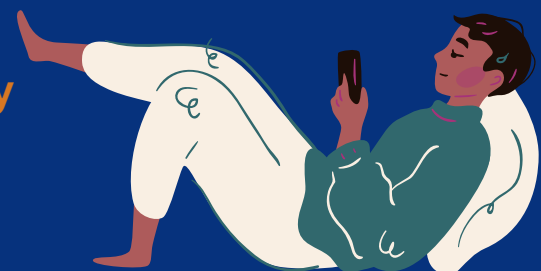
Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking or drug use?

YES NO

Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking or drug use?

YES NO

For assistance, please call  
The Mental Health Association in Atlantic County  
609-652-3800



# Wellness

## Bulletin Board

### Smithville in October

Corvette Show Sunday, Oct. 16 10 am - 4 pm

Costume Pet Parade  
Saturday, Oct. 15 at 1 pm



Witches Day Out  
Sunday, Oct. 23 12pm to 5 pm  
Costumes, parade, activities, scavenger hunt, raffles



Edwin B. Forsythe Wildlife  
Refuge

Saturday Bird Walks  
Stargazing Party

Friday, Oct. 21

Check Facebook for details

### AC Fall Bazaar

Noyes Arts Garage, AC  
Vendors, art activities, food  
Saturday, Oct. 15 12-5 pm

### PUMPKIN PICKING Hayride

R & J Farm, Galloway  
Sahl's Father and Son  
Farm, Galloway  
Walking Bird Farm,  
Galloway



### STOCKTON ART GALLERY

Two floors of exhibits  
Contemporary painting from Georgia,  
Romani and Eastern Europe AND  
"Do you hear me?" graphic art exhibit  
exploring themes of isolation and solitude  
in the city

Through fall until Nov. 13  
11:30 am to 7:30 pm M-SAT  
12-4 pm SUN

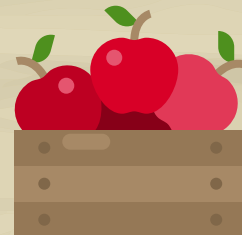
L-Wing, near Performing Arts Center  
Use parking lots 5-7

### Apple Picking

Stiles Farm, Cape May Courthouse 609-600-7939

Johnson's Corner Farm, Medford 609-654-8643

Russo's Farm, Tabernacle 609-268-0239





# NEWS BRIEFS

MHA Atlantic staff and interns attended the Trunk or Treat at Birchgrove Park in Northfield on Saturday, October 8. Their fun and colorful theme was Disney's popular movie Inside Out! Later this month, the "cast" will be at Atlantic City's Harvest Festival and Galloway's Trunk or Treat event.



Pictured as Bingbong, Kristen Reid-Ortiz, Rutgers University Master of Social Work intern; Fear, Krista Opoku- Ware, Stockton University Bachelor of Psychology intern; Joy, Keimely Rodriguez, Stockton University Bachelor of Psychology intern; Anger, Carolyn Quinn, Director of Community Engagement and Wellness Programs; Sadness, Ashleigh Zappala, Wellness Center Coordinator; and Disgust, Emily McCall, Support Service Coordinator.





# Temper, temper

## Managing anger is good for your mental and physical health

BY BETH WADE  
Public Relations Specialist

Politics, the economy, COVID -- the average person has a range of legitimate reasons to feel agitated. Anger has a place in our personal file cabinets of feelings, but opening that drawer too often isn't good for anyone's overall wellness.

Anger is normal, but anger that affects relationships at home, school or work is the kind that raises a red flag and deserves attention.

"There are more stressors that can trigger anger," says Dr. Azubike Aliche of Power Counseling and Treatment Services LLC. "Today's society is more complex."

Dr. Aliche says he helps people think about alternative ways to deal with their anger, which is individualized. In general, he said, it's helpful for people to think about things from the other person's perspective.

Social worker Amy Hassa has taught anger management classes for the general population and within the prison system, and has led support groups on the topic. She says identifying triggers is an important part of her instruction, as well as learning conflict resolution.

"I think some people tend to take a view that is too simplistic: mad and sad. There's also disappointed, abandoned, passed over, grief, shame," she says. "Naming the feeling and processing what has occurred -- by yourself or with someone else -- will help you cope with your emotions."

### Are you using a "primitive" or an evolved brain more often?

The primitive brain is automatic and impulsive. If you function out of the primitive part of the brain, you tend to want to punish, hurt, get back at, teach a lesson or do something destructive to the person triggering your anger, according to the National Anger Management Association.

By comparison, the evolved brain has the capacity to be reasonable, rational and logical. The evolved brain can "kick in" when we slow down and manage our reactions to anger.



Talking, yes, *talking* is key and preferred over posting online or texting, she says. Amy reminded that it is difficult to interpret tone of voice through a post because expression and gestures cannot be seen/heard.

Keeping anger at a manageable level benefits physical health and relationships. Research links anger to health problems including a weakened immune system, digestive problems, insomnia and headaches, to name a few.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports approximately 85 percent of all diseases appear to have a strong link to an individual's emotional state.

Developing and practicing new skills is a key component for those who are working on improving their ability to cope with anger. Skills related to coping strategies, de-escalation and self-awareness are some of the tools taught by peers, counselors and other professionals in the field of mental health. Call lines and resources known to HR Departments can help, too.



The 24-hour NJ Mental Health Cares Helpline is available by calling 866-202-HELP.

To find more information about anger management for yourself or a loved one, call MHA Atlantic at 609-652-3800.

*This article is a condensed version of one that originally appeared in Health Connection, which is published by The Daily Journal.*



# AUTUMN SELF-CARE

Make chili, soup, or a casserole

Attend a fall festival

Go to a farmer's market

Roast pumpkin seeds

Take a nature walk

Make s'mores

Attend a bonfire (or enjoy sounds of a crackling fire online)

Go on a hayride

Crack open windows for fresh air

Decorate for fall

Drink apple cider

Reminisce about fall

Warm up a bath towel or your pajamas in the dryer

Treat yourself to apple cider donuts

Collect leaves

Paint or carve a pumpkin

Go apple picking

Pumpkin  
Field



## ***Does someone in your family live with a mental health disorder?***

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

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### **Acute Care Family Program**

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

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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*



## **United by Wellness**

**United by Wellness (UBW) is a statewide virtual wellness center, sponsored by the Mental Health Association in New Jersey (MHANJ), where peers offer skills and tools for recovery to people living with mental health and/or substance use disorder(s).**

- **Discover a sense of community in a virtual atmosphere**
- **Find support**
- **Peer-led groups for anyone and everyone**
- **80+ FREE groups, M-F and weekends**

### **How to Become a UBW Member:**

Register at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/8VXP2K8](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8VXP2K8)

Call: 609-652-3800 Email: [wellnesscenter@mhanj.org](mailto:wellnesscenter@mhanj.org)



[WWW.MHAAC.INFO/UBW](http://WWW.MHAAC.INFO/UBW)

 [UNITEDBYWELLNESS@MHANJ.ORG](mailto:UNITEDBYWELLNESS@MHANJ.ORG)

 609-652-3800

Individuals Concerned in Effort  
MHANJ- Atlantic County Office  
4 East Jimmie Leeds Road Suite 8  
Galloway NJ 08205  
Phone: 609-652-3800  
Fax: 609-652-3801

Journey to Wellness  
MHANJ- Ocean County Office  
25 South Shore Drive  
Toms River, NJ 08753  
Phone: 732-244-0940  
Fax: 732-244-0948

Esperanza  
MHANJ- Union County Office  
673 Morris Ave. Ste. 100  
Springfield, NJ 07081  
Phone: 908-810-1001  
Fax: 973-218-0636



# CAREGIVER

# Resource Fair

## Tuesday Nov. 1st 10am-2pm

**Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church  
7004 Ridge Ave, Egg Harbor Township**



### Information and Resources

Caregiving is a demanding role. Find out what additional resources can help you and your loved one. Meet with agencies and service providers who offer an array of options that can help caregivers from all stages of life.

On Site screening will be available.



### Education & Enrichment

Guest speakers will present on topics such as:

- Mind & Body Connection
- 5 Important Estate Planning Documents
- Sound Healing
- Veterans Benefits
- Too Much Stuff - Hoarding Disorder



### Nourishment

During the fair we will offer nourishment for the mind and body. Lunch will be available for purchase. The first 50 registered attendees will receive a complimentary lunch.

Activities to nourish your soul and offer you self-care.

Attendees should register at

<https://CACCCaregiverFair.eventbrite.com>




**CONTACT US**

**Cape Atlantic  
Caregivers Coalition**

**609-652-3800 EXT . 307**

**CapeAtlanticCaregivers@gmail.com**



*For seventy plus years the Mental Health Association -Atlantic County has continued to provide no cost support, education, and advocacy service to our 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.

#### 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.

#### 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!

