



# MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Updates and information from the Atlantic County Office

## National Mental Wellness and Mentoring Month

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(they're short, but packed with good information!)

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## Any Day Can Be January First Replace resolutions with goals

By Beth Wade  
Public Relations Specialist

Hear that? (Cue the sound of a hissing balloon losing air) Abandoned New Years resolutions.

They start out lofty and ambitious – launched by hope and tradition around the dinner table or the workplace water cooler – but most deflate only to be forgotten or abandoned.

Or do they?

Polls say most people quit by the end of the month. There's even an official "Quitters Day" which is January 12.

I say phooey!

Many of our readers are people who, with genuine intention, are working on goals right now. Every person receiving services – as an individual or family member – is working on a goal. Though we don't call them "resolutions," that's essentially what they are.

If you're receiving support in a group, you're working on your wellness. If you have a Family Advocate, you might be developing better self-care habits or communications skills. If you're working with a peer specialist, you set specific, measurable goals.

Well-done, you and you and you and you...all of you!

If a person taking a poll ever asks you about your resolutions, please remember your successes and answer, "Yes, I made a resolution and I kept it."

The pollsters would be thrilled to hear positivity from you. I can see their pens checking gleefully in a column that indicates you kept your resolution. If they ask you, the average Joe or Jane on the street, tell them the good work you put into yourself or your relationship with your family member. You are a "poster child" for people reaching goals.

And, now, cue the closing sound. It's clapping and cheering. It's a celebration for the people connected to supports and services, for the people evolving, for the people seeking self-improvement. Happy New Year's to all our readers!

Wishing you wellness and a wonderful 2024.



# Mindfulness Activity with a warm drink

Drink the cup in a different room  
Slow down and savor the taste  
Warm your hands on the cup  
Notice the aroma  
Play music, not the news  
Put down the phone  
Notice any memories that pop up



# SHHHH!

## What quiet can do for you

- Boost creativity
- Relieve stress
- Stimulate your brain
- Process information
- Helps a person settle into the present moment
- Quiet racing thoughts
- Improve concentration and focus
- Feel a greater sense of peace
- Become more self-aware

# A little mo' mindfulness



Go bird-watching or  
watch from a window.  
Slow down and let your attention  
focus on one thing only.

Listen to music mindfully.  
You may be drawn to the pace of  
the music one moment and the  
sounds of the different  
instruments in the next. You may  
notice shifts in volume. Notice if  
you're more aware of certain  
parts of your body as you listen.



Go for a winter walk.  
Take time to tune in to  
your five senses (or just  
enjoy the quiet)  
Sit in the sunshine and  
notice how it feels



# Intern Mentoring: An Old Tradition With New, Unexpected Benefits

BY BETH WADE

*During National Mentorship Month, we are spotlighting our long-running internship program and the meaningful, reciprocal relationship that provides experience for so many students – and supplements programming for our consumers and families.*

Hundreds of student interns (too many to count) have benefited from pairing with staff to practice skills with community members we serve. In return, community members we serve are exposed to their abilities, unique perspectives, varied ethnic backgrounds, and the latest research taught in New Jersey universities.

Truly, the program is a two-way street. That intersection, for at least one member of our staff, is perhaps most strongly felt by Carolyn Quinn, Director of Community Engagement and Wellness Programs, who is passionate about continuing the tradition in our small office of building a work-family atmosphere.

“About 40 percent of our former interns have stayed on to volunteer,” said Carolyn. “I think that says a lot about us and the work we do.”

It also speaks to the office environment that includes group celebrations of intern birthdays, baby showers, “thank you” breakfasts, and, recently, a road trip to a Stockton rally to support a beloved Jewish intern. On any given day, students enjoy a relaxing interaction with one or more dogs. Interns can calm jittery nerves and allow their creative gifts and natural talents to come forward. (Read to the end to learn about some student standouts!)

In addition to following the intern checklist, which includes being exposed to five programs, Carolyn says important aspects are modeling, teaching, and exposing interns to self-care. That’s because of a well-documented higher risk of burnout in the mental health field.

“I think about the ripple effect. What we teach here and what they learn in groups, especially about self-care, they carry to their future jobs, and that can impact the people they work with,” she said.



During the pandemic when many job sectors experienced staffing shortages nationwide, our office was fortunate to have had an intern pipeline. Starting in 2021, many interns have joined our staff. Currently about half of our workforce is former interns.



One newer component she integrated into the intern experience is in place to build compassion, awareness, and understanding. She pairs interns in a simulated client/consumer relationship. Through this project, interns learn the intake process and how to write a service plan. Each intern takes a turn setting a goal and helping another person meet the goal. One of the unique aspects about this experience, she says, is that interns learn firsthand that there are barriers to keeping their weekly goals – for themselves and clients they’ll serve in the future.

The more traditional, “expected” elements of the internship are that students attend and ultimately co-facilitate a group as well as shadow staff in the Consumer Advocates/Peer Outreach Support Team to help a consumer identify and work on a goal. Staff say it’s rewarding to be surprised with outcomes that are better than expected. That happened recently when an intern who lives with autism shined while assisting a person who was working on decluttering and letting go of belongings. He had developed a special camaraderie with the client that enabled her to not only meet but exceed that day’s goal.

Part of the internship includes planning an activity for boarding home residents. During that task, they are required to produce options to meet the needs of all participants -- those who are having a good day, hard day, or something in between. Giving interns practical, real experience in adapting and thinking on their feet is a big part of that lesson, she said.

Individuals in the Family Program also benefit from interns who develop and deliver psycho-educational presentations. For some students, it’s their first time speaking in front of a group who are not their peers. Among the topics that have been covered include self-care, communication skills, signs and symptoms of different mental health disorders and coping skills.

“The IFSS families and staff appreciate what the interns have to offer the team and family groups. It is a symbiotic experience. The (continued)

**At left: The staff who mentor interns include: Gail Christian, Carolyn Quinn, and Emily McCall**



(continued from Interns)

interns bring relevant information to help with the needs of our families and the families teach the interns about their unique experience having a mentally ill family member,” said Gail Christian, who also assists with mentoring the interns.

Each year, about 16 interns are active in the office from 3 months to a year. Those with longer terms are typically students pursuing their master’s degree.

Emily McCall is one of several interns who transitioned from a fall 2021 intern to staff. She began as a peer specialist then accepted the job of Support Service Coordinator. After three years of being an intern, she now assists with supporting interns. She says this full-circle experience is enjoyable and rewarding while they make new friendships and connections the same way she did.

“Watching their confidence grow in their abilities makes all the hard work worth it,” she said.

Interns have been instrumental in creating content on social media platforms geared toward younger audiences. In fact, that’s one of their regular projects. Their expertise and ease with technology proved beneficial when they assisted with transitioning service notes and forms from paper to online. Staff and leadership also benefit from hearing the point-of-view of the interns, especially in matters of mental health, but also music, pop culture, food, and trends!

Encouraging interns to capitalize on their strengths and personal passions has positively impacted programming in several ways. One non-traditional student, Adam Erskine, who is a member of law enforcement has made significant, ongoing contributions to Crisis Intervention Training. Another intern, Britt Huff, started the first LGBTQ group here that morphed into today’s popular group, Show Your True Colours, that draws participants from around the country. A third standout intern, Devon Dorso, established a group for those with borderline personality disorder, which began in 2021. The intern with the longest history here, Christine Miller, served for 24 years in various positions including program director.

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For all the ways you have contributed to programming, thank you to all the past and present interns who have shared and developed their gifts and talents here over the years. We also appreciate the colleges and universities who have an ongoing relationship with our office, including Stockton, Rowan, Rutgers, and Georgian Court University, Monmouth University, DeSales University, and University of Southern California.

**THANK YOU!**

# NEWS

## briefs



## New Workshops Set To Begin

The first in a series of workshops designed to help those interested in civic engagement will be held twice this month. “Communication - Let’s Talk About It!” will be offered online Tuesday, January 23 at 6 pm and Wednesday, January 24 at 2 pm.

The workshops are part of Atlantic Center for Independent Living and Mental Health Association In Atlantic County’s Civic Action and Engagement Initiative. Civic engagement is individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual volunteerism to organizational involvement to electoral participation.

To receive a link for any of the workshops in this series, register to become a member of United by Wellness [here](#). For more information/assistance, call 609-652-3800 ext. 0302 or email Ana Then at [athen@atlanticcil.org](mailto:athen@atlanticcil.org).

***Pictured at right: Ana Then, Grant Coordinator of the Civic Engagement Initiative***



## “Modern Self-Love” Campaign restarting in February



An annual project that puts a spotlight on self-love, an appreciation of self-worth, and wellbeing will start in a few weeks. Throughout the month of February, United By Wellness leadership collect compositions that are featured in their daily newsletter and online.

Participants write about their experience with self-love and submit their compositions, about 250 words, anonymously or by using their name. Writers have the option to share a photo of themselves or art that compliments their themes.

Called “Modern Self-Love,” the project was inspired by a New York Times Column.

At the end of the series, writers are invited to an online celebration and drawing for random prizes.

To participate, email [unitedbywellness@mhanj.org](mailto:unitedbywellness@mhanj.org).

# Wellness Bulletin Board

## AT THE LIBRARY



Yoga,  
Creative Rubberstamping,  
Crochet Club,  
Writer's Meet Up,  
Movie Matinee,  
Book Club, Chess Club, Family Game Night,  
Murder Mystery Game,  
DIY Snowy Mason Jar,  
Senior Crafts,  
Tech help by appointment

Call your local branch or check  
online for the full calendar of events

## EDWIN B. FORSYTHE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Trails and Wildlife Drive!  
723 Great Creek Road, Galloway  
Open 7 am to 5 pm daily

## REMINDER

Choose to work on a dimension of  
wellness that could use more attention

Physical  
Environmental  
Emotional  
Spiritual  
Financial  
Social  
Intellectual  
Occupational

## ART GALLERIES

Noyes Art Garage of Stockton University  
"Ducktown: An Atlantic City Immigration Story"  
2200 Fairmount Ave., AC  
609-626-3805

Stockton Art Gallery  
"Dwell & Dusk: The Incredible Mundane"  
Galloway Campus - L Wing  
Use parking lot 5, 6, 7  
609-652-4214

Hammonton Arts Center  
30 Front Street  
"Magical World" Artist Gary Erbe exhibition  
609-626-3840



# 2024 CIT-ATLANTIC CLASSES

REGISTER NOW TO GET A SEAT

**MARCH 11-15**

**Stockton-Galloway**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CITMarch2024>

**APRIL 15-19**

**Caesars-AC**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CITApril24>

**NOV. 18-22**

**Site TBD**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CITNov24>

MHA Atlantic is a proud community partner working to ensure CIT training is offered to all law enforcement and mental health workers with the goal of providing a safer and more effective response to people with mental illnesses who are in crisis.

Interested participants are required to complete a registration form for the class they plan on attending.  
For more information email: [CITAtlantic@MHANJ.org](mailto:CITAtlantic@MHANJ.org)

**ATLANTIC COUNTY  
PROUD TO BE  
STIGMA FREE**

Members of the community can help promote acceptance and actively challenge social stereotypes for people living with mental health and substance use disorders. Together we can shift the social and systemic barriers for people -- and here's how you can be a part of the solution.

Toolkits for business, faith-based organizations, college/universities, municipalities, and schools provide a guide with relevant information in a user-friendly way. [Click here](#) to register for a Stigma Free presentation for your group.

**Acute Care Family  
Program serves  
families in crisis  
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*

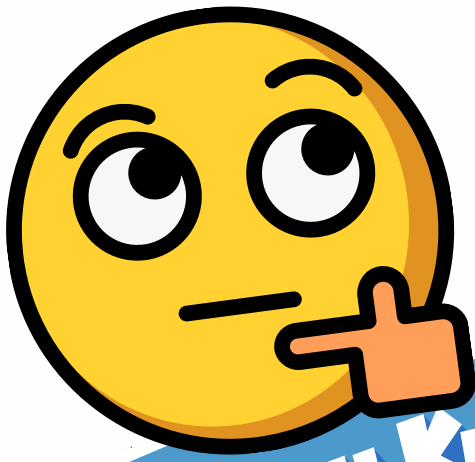


## A SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Thank you to all  
the United By Wellness  
group facilitators  
statewide  
who worked on  
Christmas Eve,  
Christmas Day,  
New Year's Eve and  
New Year's Day.

More than 60 groups  
were provided  
Dec. 23 - Jan. 2,





**Did You Know**

**We provide these great,  
in-person groups!**



**LIVING IN THE MOMENT SUPPORT GROUP  
EVERY WEDNESDAY FROM 10:30-11:30 AM**

Join us at the Mental Health Association  
4 E Jimmie Leeds Rd #8, Galloway, NJ 08205

This support group is focused on topics for self-love and self-esteem, gratitude, and sharing memories that we feel in the moment.

**BETTER TOGETHER**

EVERY THURSDAY 4:00PM BEGINNING JULY 6TH  
AT OCEANSIDE II FAMILY SUCCESS CENTER  
3201 ATLANTIC AVENUE, ATLANTIC CITY, NJ 08401



**A SUPPORT GROUP FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO STRUGGLE WITH A COMBINATION OF PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES. TOGETHER WE WILL DISCUSS A TOPIC AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER IN OUR JOURNEYS TO WELLNESS!**

A GROUP HOSTED BY THE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF ATLANTIC COUNTY

To Register:  
Call 609-594-4990  
Email  
atlanticoceanside2@gmail.com  
Or Complete an online form  
<https://forms.office.com/r/153JaUck5x>



**Expressions**

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

1ST AND 3RD TUESDAYS OF EACH MONTH,  
IN PERSON AND VIRTUALLY,  
11AM - 12PM

A SUPPORT GROUP FOCUSING ON ARTISTIC  
EXPRESSION, SO BRING YOUR PAINT,  
SKETCHPAD, OR DRAWING TABLET!

*See you there!*

**In-person:**  
MHAAC Office  
4 East Jimmie Leeds  
Rd. Suite #8,  
Galloway NJ, 08205

Scan here!



**Virtual:**  
Become a  
member of  
United By  
Wellness



# GUESS

## Who?

### BABY

#### PICTURE GAME

Cutie Pie



JANUARY

Which Atlantic staff member do you think this is? The link to submit your guess is [surveymonkey.com/r/R8BZJN](https://surveymonkey.com/r/R8BZJN)

Match staff to their baby pictures correctly for a chance to be entered in a drawing! Monthly t-shirt giveaways!

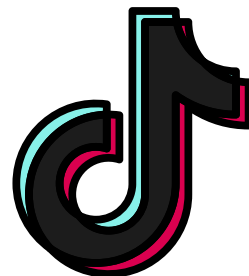


# ?

Who was Baby December?  
That's Seth Edwards,  
Coordinator of United By  
Wellness



LIKE   
SHARE  
& FOLLOW



Click on any of the above