



MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Updates and Information from the Atlantic County Office

National Family Caregivers Month

An Extra Side Serving of Gratitude Every day, not just for Thanksgiving

BY BETH WADE
Public Relations Specialist

Gratitude will get a "ticker tape parade" this month when we pause sometime during Thanksgiving to be grateful. Increasingly, though, people are embracing an attitude of gratitude year-round – and for good reasons.

Research shows that physical and emotional benefits of being thankful supports everything from fewer aches and pains to feeling happy, reducing anxiety, lowering blood pressure, and improvement in these areas: relationships, sleep, and quality of life. One study even found the participants benefited from a stronger immune system.

In short, the ancient philosophers and religious leaders were right – gratitude is good for your health. Making it a habit requires some intention and nurturing.

“It’s a skill. Cultivating gratitude takes practice,” says wellness consultant, yoga teacher, and community partner of MHA Atlantic, Naida Burgess. “If you build this idea of cultivating gratitude into your daily schedule – just like brushing your teeth or exercising – you would appreciate and realize the benefits.”

Naida suggested taking time to stop and notice something in the moment during your day such as putting on warm gloves after they’ve dried near a heater. Other options: start your day with one minute in the morning, waking and thinking about a few things to feel grateful for. Other options for the end of the day are writing in a journal or saying a prayer. *(continued on p. 2)*



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**IN THE SPOTLIGHT
Cape Atlantic Caregiver Coalition**

**Meet the new Director
of Intensive Family
Support Services
Page 3**

**Staff Promotions
Page 3**

**Wellness Bulletin Board
Page 4**

**Planned Giving:
A lasting way to recognize
MHA Atlantic
Page 9**

Randy Elfenbein is one of the leaders among MHANJ staff who is fostering gratitude among group members during a weekly online meeting, Gratitude Coffee Talk, Wednesday mornings at 10 am. Prompts (like “think of someone you are grateful for” or a “recall a memory that always makes you smile”) are often a part of the group.

Recently he said he noticed that regulars were quick to tap into gratitude while others were not in the same space. He said some members reached out privately to say they were actually feeling bad that they didn’t feel grateful. He realized those group members were not participating in the meeting because emphasis on gratitude was creating unnecessary stress and tension for them.

That led Randy to introduce the concept in a different way. He started to encourage participants to acknowledge something good in their lives whether or not it ignited feeling grateful -- and it’s working. Group members have responded positively, and participation has increased dramatically.

One unexpected area of gratitude that’s been explored is how a person can find gratitude in a negative experience, he said. (Wait, what?) Read that again...yes, it’s possible! Hardship can give you the opportunity to find inner strength, observe how you grew despite the difficulty, or realize your own resiliency.

COVID also has presented many people with the opportunity to cultivate gratitude.

“As people start to recover from their experiences with COVID, I see many of us are able to find gratitude in ‘small’ or everyday things, like not having to stockpile goods and being able to re-establish social relationships,” he said.

One observation that he notices universally is that people who come to group experience a boost in mood by the end of the hour. Randy shared a list of the common themes he’s seen emerge during the meetings, which is topped by children – sons, daughters, nieces and nephews. (See sidebar below for the complete list.)

Along with greater attention to mental health and mindfulness, Randy said he sees a growing happiness movement since the onset of the COVID pandemic.

“And it’s catching on,” he said. “I hear many people say they are grateful for smaller things that they might have overlooked in the past.”

That’s progress.

Gratitude Coffee Talk is offered through United By Wellness. For more information, email unitedbywellness@mhanj.org or call 609-652-3800.



More Ways to Cultivate Thankfulness

Keep a gratitude jar. When you think of something or experience something, write it down. Open up the papers and read them as often as you like.

Call, email, or write to a person and tell them why you’re grateful for them (a family member, friend, coworker, or neighbor)

Start a gratitude journal. Some journals provide prompts.

Collect change - for each coin you drop in the container, think of a reason you are grateful. When it’s full, use it to do something nice for yourself.

Gratitude meditation

Gratitude rock or another visual cue (Carry a small trinket or place a visual reminder somewhere you’ll see it often. When you see it, pause to remember a gratitude)

Take photos. You can reflect back on them or create a collage.

Exchange gratitude aloud with a loved one. Giving and receiving gratitude can benefit both of you!

Common Themes of Gratitude

Children

Pets

Nature, especially the beach

Special people – mothers, a teacher, a friend who’s a good listener

Basic needs such as housing, food

Health

Technology

“The Little Things”



EMPLOYEE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome
Back

Gail Christian



As a long-time, dedicated group facilitator over the years, Gail Christian isn't a new face around our office, but today we re-introduce her in a new, bigger role. She recently accepted a position as the Coordinator of Intensive Family Support Services program which encompasses Acute Care, staff oversight, case management, and documentation.

Gail brings with her 15 years of experience working in the Early Invention Support Services (AIS) at AtlantiCare. She's currently earning her master's degree in social work through Widener University.

The field of mental health is a second career for Gail, whose personal experience with mental health disorders changed her trajectory in new and unexpected ways. Following 2001 her diagnosis and a voluntary hospitalization, she worked for 7 years as an EMT. One day, one call, and one person with a psychiatric emergency led her to see her passion was in mental health.

In her personal life, she's had firsthand experience with substance use disorder, and the loss of a family member from suicide. Mental health concerns for herself and her family have shaped her. *(continued on page 7)*

Emily McCall recently accepted the position of Support Services Coordinator (formerly known as the POST program). In her new role, she oversees staff who work one-on-one with consumers. She also facilitates several support groups, including Coping Skills, Common Ground, Too Much Stuff, and Mental Wellness for individuals in recovery at the John Brooks Center. Emily began at MHA-Atlantic as an intern, then was hired as a member of the Consumer Advocates/POST team. Emily recently earned her Master's Degree in Social Work.



Congratulations
on your
promotions

Ashleigh Zappala
Emily McCall



Ashleigh Zappala is the new Wellness Center Coordinator, a role that comes naturally since she had been providing support to United By Wellness in recent months. As part of that position, she works closely with the interns at MHA-Atlantic. She is the facilitator of Better Together and Rediscovering You Through Vital Wellness as well as a co-facilitator of Show Your True Colours. Ashleigh started at our office as an intern, then was hired to work in the Community Advocates/POST program.

Wellness Bulletin Board

Theater

August Wilson's Fences at Stockton on Saturday, November 19 at 7:30 pm
Tickets are \$35 (seniors \$33) 609-652-9000



Clue, On Stage!
Saturday, November 19 at 7 pm
Sunday, November 20 at 2 pm
Holy Spirit High School
Tickets are \$10 (\$5 students, seniors)

Christmas Craft Shows

Grete Bay Country Club
Friday Nov. 18 10-8
Saturday, Nov. 19 10-4
Santa Photos, handmade items, vendors
and gently used treasures

Victory Bible Church,
Hammonton
Saturday, Nov. 26
9 am to 2 pm
50+ vendors,
basket raffle & more!
Benefits the Sunshine Foundation



Adult Craft

Creative Crafts with
Conversation
"A craft to be thankful for"
Thursday, Nov. 17 6 pm
Galloway Library
Registration required
609-652-2352
no cost to participate

Margate Shop Small Business Weekend

Friday, Nov. 25 - Sunday Nov. 27
Sales, discounts,
contests and Santa at the
Margate shopping district

info@margatehasmore.com

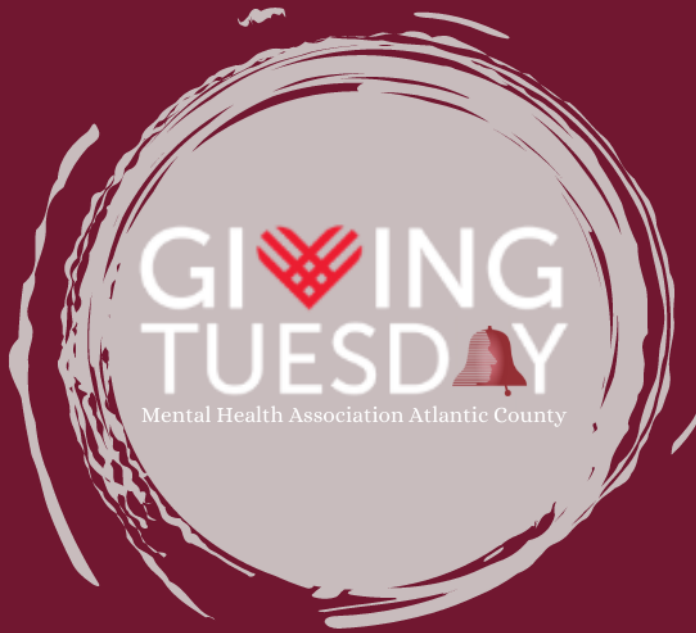


Free Carriage Rides in OC

Weekends thru Dec. 17/18
12 pm to 3 pm
Board at Sixth Street and Asbury Ave.



*Join the global generosity movement and
celebrate all acts of giving*



*Every little bit helps our mission
to improve the lives of
individuals and family members.
Please consider showing your support
of our work with a donation.*

Thank You



#givingtuesday #unselfie

IN THE SPOTLIGHT Cape Atlantic Caregiver Coalition

Caregivers can find support, information, and resources as well as training and wellness opportunities through a group of volunteers from a variety of specialized fields related to caregiving. All are professionals working toward improving the quality of life for residents serving in this important role.

The Cape Atlantic Caregiver Coalition is made up of more than 90 agencies, nonprofits, businesses, and organizations. Because of the wide-ranging backgrounds of so many people, the members can reach caregivers supporting a loved one across the lifespan -- from infants to seniors.

They are active in the community through events, fairs, and support groups that raise awareness about local services and provide opportunities for self-care. The events have included lunch (free and for sale), screening opportunities, clinics, and 15-minute presentations on topics related to caregivers. Residents who are in need of help but have a transportation barrier or time conflict can call or email the executive committee.

*Atlantic is one of 13
counties in New Jersey
with a designated group of
volunteers that provide a
variety of supports,
resources, and referrals to
caregivers.*



The Cape Atlantic Caregiver Coalition was formed in 2014 by a former longtime MHA Atlantic employee, Christine Miller. The membership and activities of the coalition have expanded and evolved over time. New members are always welcome.

Caregivers can reach the coalition at community events or by calling 609-652-3800 or CapeAtlanticCaregivers@gmail.com.

NEWS

BRIEFS



MHA Atlantic and community partners recently held a class in Crisis Intervention Training at the Church By the Bay in Galloway. During a 5-day training, participants learn how to respond to individuals in crisis and connect them with services. In this class, local & state police, NJ Transit Officers, casino security personnel and staff from AtlantiCare, Hope One, and Jewish Family Services were trained. Pictured is Atlantic County CIT-NJ Class #243 that graduated on Friday, Nov. 4. Congratulations!



Members of Assumption Regional Catholic School donated a generous gift card to support the Holiday Boarding Home Outreach program which ensures that 173 residents of boarding homes will receive gifts of winter accessories and toiletries.

The school has been a longtime community partner on this particular program. Special thanks to teacher Susan Picardi.

Pictured here with MHA Atlantic Public Relations Specialist Beth Wade are Vaughn Amalfitano, President of Student Council, Melissa Napoli, Secretary of Student Council, Brandon Landicini, Treasurer of Student Council, and Isabella Normane and Ava Vandenberg, 8th grade representatives.

(continued from Gail page 3)

Gail speaks about her current stage of life – as a professional, a fiancé, and mother – with an abundance of gratitude. She says she is in a good space that she hopes to fill with some theater again when time permits. She’s a big proponent of incorporating the arts into wellness. In fact, Gail’s first profession is related to the arts. She had studied theater at Rowan and had enjoyed success while employed with Stage Works, a non-profit theater.

Her professional and personal experiences led the MHA Atlantic leadership to seek out Gail for the IFSS Coordinator position. Gail agrees the job is a good fit. She’s got solid understanding of the system and knowledge of resources from her previous positions. She’s also empathetic, which is one of her biggest strengths.



*Pictured left:
At this Rowan
University
production of
Hair!, Gail sang
the opening song,
Aquarius. Theater
has been one of
her passions from
a very young age.*

Gail said it’s a privilege and deeply meaningful to be working in the IFSS program where family members are supported through crisis and hard decision making. The resiliency and hope she sees in the people of the IFSS program is inspiring, she added.

“I see myself on both sides,” she explained. “It is heartbreaking to see the powerlessness because of situations where the system is failing or a loved one is failing.”

The IFSS program has been provided to the community through MHA Atlantic for more than 30 years. We are pleased and proud to add Gail’s name to that long legacy.

Outside of work, Gail enjoys local high school musicals, her flower gardens, singing, music, art (especially Vincent van Gogh) and the beach. She grew up in Little Egg Harbor, and now resides in Egg Harbor Township. Gail has two daughters, Emily and Lyndsey, and a fabulous fiancé, Bob Brock.

A warm welcome back, Gail!



Intensive Family
Support Services
program hosts
online family
support group
meetings on
several Thursdays
of each month,
both
daytime and
evening hours.

Call 609-652-3800
or email
gchristian@mhanj.org
for details and to
receive a link

**YOU ARE
NOT ALONE**

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.

Acute Care Family Program
7 days per week
Available 8 am to 8 pm
609 517-8614

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

Call: 609-652-3800 Email: wellnesscenter@mhanj.org



WWW.MHAAC.INFO/UBW


UNITEDBYWELLNESS@MHANJ.ORG

[609-652-3800](tel: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



*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.

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!

