Thanks for Go the Distance

Lorna Mattern, Executive Director of UCS

United Counseling Service has hosted the Go the Distance 5K road race in the month of June for the past 9 years. The proceeds from the race have benefitted UCS peer groups and client wellness initiatives. Although we have thoroughly enjoyed offering Go the Distance 5K, we have decided that due to the increased volume of 5K events being held at this time of the year, we would focus our efforts and energy on our UCS Superhero 5K road race which occurs in November.

I would like to thank the Bennington community for supporting Go the Distance for so many years. The volunteers, staff, clients, and sponsors made the event possible and the walkers and runners who came together annually made this fun filled family event such a great success. We have a great appreciation for all that went into making this race possible.

We hope you will join us for the UCS Superhero 5k road race through downtown Bennington on Saturday, November 2nd. Please find more information on our website at www.ucsvt.org.
Experts discuss the stigma of addiction

By Patricia LeBoeuf, Bennington Banner

BENNINGTON — At a panel discussion at Bennington College Thursday, seven local experts considered stigma against opioid and substance use disorders and how to mitigate it.

The panel was part of a conference on Addressing Stigma and the Social Determinants of Opioid Substance Use Disorder held at the college's Center for the Advancement of Public Action.

Panelists were: Leitha Cipriano, executive director of the Center for Restorative Justice; Paula Johnson, director of quality, safety and value at Dartmouth/Southwestern Vermont Medical Center; Nels Kloster of Hawthorn Recovery Center; Jill Maynard, director of nursing emergency services in the SVMC emergency department; Chad Schmidt, Bennington County sheriff; Elizabeth Tanzman, executive director of the Vermont Blueprint for Health and Paul Dilonno, division director of outpatient mental health and substance use treatment services at United Counseling Service.

Moderator Jennifer Fels, a registered nurse, opened the discussion by summarizing conclusions from a report released earlier this year, which identified stigma as a "major barrier" that must be addressed in the country’s opioid crisis.

"As far as the definition [of stigma] — people are stigmatized when they are labeled, they're set apart, they're linked to undesirable characteristics," she said.....Read more.

UCS Presents: Rachel Lindsay

Rachel Lindsay, creator of the graphic memoir "RX" and the Seven Days cartoon,"Rachel Lives Here Now," discusses her personal journey with bipolar illness, the treatment of mental illness, the role of art and expression in the healing process, and the often unavoidable choice between sanity and happiness. The event is Wednesday, May 29th at 7:00 pm at the Manchester Community Library.

UCS Presents Rachel Lindsay along with the Manchester Community Library and the Northshire Bookstore. Books will be available for purchase and 10% of sales will be donated to United Counseling Service by the Northshire Bookstore.

Thank you for supporting our Mentoring at UCS Bowlathon

This year’s Mentoring at UCS Bowlathon was held on Saturday, April 6th at Bennington Lanes and Babbling Brooke’s Indoor Golf. The theme was sports and bowlers and volunteers wore their favorite team’s attire. Special thanks to our Title Sponsor, the Bank of Bennington and to our media partners the Bennington Banner and WEQX.
Hundreds of people attended the day long event. There was a silent auction, prizes for highest fundraiser, and special Pin awards presented for best team spirit during every wave. This event is the primary fundraiser for Mentoring at UCS, which provides an opportunity for mentors and mentees to have a supported one-on-one relationship where children develop self-confidence and assurance. Benefits of having a mentor include positive thinking, increased self-confidence, reduction in anxiety, forging strong relationships with others, learning methods to cope with stress and so much more.

If you are interested in learning more about our Mentoring Program and learning how you can make a positive difference in the life of a child, please give us a call at 802.442.5491.

UCS recipient of the Stewarts Matching Grant

Andrea Mook, MA and Sandy Matteson, Community Support Coordinator at UCS

Last year, the Youth and Family Services Division of United Counseling Service was the recipient of The Stewarts Shops Holiday Match. The Holiday Match has donated millions to help children under the age of 18. The funds UCS received last year were utilized to purchase tools to build a sensory room at Youth and Family Services. The design of the room was inspired by Elizabeth Warner’s, PsyD, JRI, Sensory Motor Arousal Regulation Therapy (SMART). This is a mental health treatment approach for children and adolescents who experience complex trauma and whose primary problem in functioning revolves around behavioral and emotional challenges.

The goal of the space is to help clients increase the ability to regulate themselves, which will help facilitate trauma processing and allow caregivers to experience healing with their child. This approach focuses on utilizing tools such as weighted blankets, balance beams, fitness balls, dolphin pillows, body socks, trampolines and more. This alternative model for treatment supports and creates curiosity of the mind and
body for those who have experienced complex and developmental trauma. We have been routinely using our new sensory space for regulation and building skills with clients and their families.

This year, we were once again granted The Stewarts Shops Holiday Match for $500. The funds will allow us to expand our sensory regulation model to a mobile scale, giving clients easier access to these tools. The “toolboxes” are based on the Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC) model. The goal of the mobile toolboxes is to help individuals access safe skills when coping with difficult internal experiences. We will incorporate and develop specific tools in these boxes based on client needs. Some examples of tools that will be included are stress balls, puzzles, a script to lead yourself through a guided imagery or relaxation activity, coloring books and more. Completed toolboxes will be placed in our waiting rooms throughout UCS. The hope is that clients will test out the many tools and find which ones work best for them and add them into their daily lives.

If you would like to learn more about our program, please contact Keili Trottier at (802) 442-5491.

Traditional approaches to working with adolescents doesn't always work.

United Counseling Service (UCS) is now providing The Seven Challenges Program for adolescents and young adults. The Seven Challenges is a comprehensive counseling program for young people that incorporates work on alcohol and other drug problems. The program provides comprehensive counseling that simultaneously addresses drug problems and co-occurring psychological problems and life skill deficits.

Seven Challenges has a clearly defined structure for group sessions and the content of the session is driven by the relevancy of the youth. A unique feature of the program is that counselors teach youth how to “work” in counseling sessions; that is to identify and address the issues that are most pressing to them.

“We are excited to be offering this program at UCS,” says Monica Bolio, Seven Challenges Leader at UCS. “We help young people make their own informed decisions and then succeed in implementing the changes they desire.”

The program is easily adaptable and allows for a high level of counselor skill and creativity. The Seven Challenges program strives for youth to see their counselors as problem solving partners. To learn more about this nationally recognized program visit sevenchallenges.com.

To learn more about Seven Challenges please call Monica Bolio (802) 442-5491 or visit ucsvt.org.

UCS Shares Dynamic Worksite Wellness Program at Head Start Conference
UCS, Director of Operations, Amy Fela, Head Start, Director of Early Childhood Services, Betsy Rathbun-Gunn and RiseVT Bennington County Program Manager, Andrea Malinowski were invited to present at the New England Head Start Association Conference in Burlington, Vermont on April 10.

The theme of this year’s conference was, “Reaching The Highest Peaks: Building Our Dynamic Workforce”. The three team members presented on the UCS Worksite Wellness program during a “Strategies to Support Organizational Staff Wellness” Workshop.

The group shared the core strategies of the program including nutrition, physical activity and self-care, as well as the benefits of working with community partners to expand the scope and the reach of the program.

Bennington County Head Start and Early Head Start goes to "Head of the Class"

By Betsy Rathbun-Gunn, Director of Early Childhood Services

Bennington County Head Start and Early Head Start (EHS) gives children and their families the right building blocks for learning, parenting, and life. Early Head Start serves infants and toddlers from 6 months to age 3. The program provides intensive comprehensive child development and family support services. Head Start serves 3-4 year olds, providing early education classes and family opportunities to Bennington County residents to promote school readiness and strengthen families.

This past year has been a year of success and planning for the future. In the fall of 2018, the program had a full federal monitoring visit. This monitoring consists of five federal review representatives that spend five days assessing the quality of the specific program measures associated with the federal regulations. These areas included:

- Program management, governance and quality improvement
- Education and child development services
- Health program services
- Family and community engagement services
- Fiscal infrastructure and integrity
- Eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance

We were pleased that our Head Start / EHS program was found to be in 100% compliance and, in addition, we were recognized for exceptional programming that included our:

- Commitment to hiring past / current Head Start parents, as well as our wellness and I CARE program for staff.
- Our Farm to School program that is providing direct access to local farm food, as well as our involvement of our children’s gardening program with Hiland Hall Gardens, Mighty Food Farm, and True Love Farm.

This positive review is reflective of the excellent staff who work hard every day to make sure our students are ready for school, our parents are engaged in their learning process, and that we are providing the highest quality programming.

This was also reflected in the second review that observed every pre-school classroom and evaluated the following areas:
- Emotional Support: Assessing how teachers promote positive interactions: Score = 6.7083 out of a possible 6.89
- Classroom Organization: Assessing classroom routines and management of children’s behaviors, time and attention to the whole class: Score = 6.3704 out of a possible 6.83

Excellence brings new opportunities! United Children’s Services is also excited about receiving a $3 million federal grant to build a new facility in partnership with the Town of Bennington at the Bennington Recreation Center. This program will work in conjunction with the Rec Center, YMCA, and the local community to expand our services to increase Head Start and EHS, as well as provide an additional child care and after school care program.

This new facility will also provide additional space for community activities and a new entry for the Rec Center. We are pleased that this partnership will provide comprehensive Early Childhood services and the funding will be provided through Health and Human Services. We anticipate completion of the new facility by September 2020.

For more information or to enroll, contact:
Head Start/Early Head Start
2 Park Street
North Bennington, VT 05257
Phone: 802-442-3686
Fax: 802-447-3423

Save the Date

**UCS Presents: Rachel Lindsay**
Wednesday, May 29, 2019
at 7PM
138 Cemetery Avenue
Manchester Center, VT
For more information visit [here](#).

**Adult Mental Health First Aid**
June 12-13, 2019
Bennington, VT
[Visit UCS MHFA](#)

**The Barn Sale**
September 21-22, 2019
Northshire Civic Center, Manchester, VT
[Visit The Barn Sale](#)

**UCS Superhero 5K and Kids’ Dash**
November 2, 2019
Bennington, VT
More info coming soon.
Do you have a story to tell?

We would love to hear from you. Has UCS impacted your life? If you have a story you would like to share please contact Heidi French at hfrench@ucsvt.org or call (802) 442-5491 ext. 281.

Support from donors is vital

![Image]

This year support from our donors is vital in ensuring that we continue to meet the growing needs of our community. Please consider making a donation. Your donation makes a difference and with your help we can build a stronger community.

Donations can be mailed to:
United Counseling Service
PO Box 588
Bennington, VT 05201

DONATE NOW

Proud to be a Center of Excellence

United Counseling Service (UCS) has been designated a Center of Excellence by Vermont Care Partners. UCS is a private, non-profit community mental health center serving Bennington County since 1958. UCS promotes healthy lifestyles through all its programs and offers care at 16 different facilities, including two primary outpatient facilities in Bennington and Manchester. UCS provides comprehensive, community-based behavioral and developmental services for children, adults, families, and seniors. UCS employs 300 people and annually serves nearly 3,000 Bennington County residents.

Are you interested in a career with a great organization?

Check out current openings with United Counseling Service at UCS CAREERS.