Don't let yesterday take up too much of today.

Wil Rogers

October 2019 Newsletter

Registration is now open! Superheroes will take to the streets of Bennington for the 2nd annual UCS Superhero 5K. The 3.1 mile route begins at the Bennington Recreation Center at 9am on Saturday, November 2nd. Prizes will be given to top finishers and for the best Superhero costume. A Kids’ Dash immediately follows the 5K. Costumes are encourage but not required.

Special thanks to our sponsors of this year’s event: Bennington Banner, Manchester Journal, Delta Dental, GVH Studio, Heritage Federal Credit Union, Hickok and Boardman, Janitronics, MSK Engineering, MVP Healthcare, Northeast Benefits Management, Southern Vermont Health Center and VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region.

REGISTER NOW
DOWNLOAD REGISTRATION

Photos from inaugural UCS Superhero 5K in November of 2018.
Rocking Horse Circle of Support Program Begins New Session October 11th

Provides Assistance to Pregnant & Parenting Women Seeking to Reduce the Effects of Substance Abuse.

United Counseling Service is pleased to announce that The Rocking Horse Circle of Support program, an educational support group for low-income mothers living in Bennington County, will be starting a new session on October 11, 2019 at 100 Ledge Hill Drive in Bennington.

Meeting from 9:00am to 11:30am every Friday from October 11th through December 20th. The program offers assistance to pregnant and parenting women who are seeking to reduce the effects of substance abuse in their lives, acquire improved life skills, and learn more about safe, nurturing parenting. There is no charge for participants. The Rocking Horse Program is funded through a grant from the Vermont Department of Health, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs (ADAP).

Any pregnant and/or parenting woman of childbearing age who may be questioning their own drinking and/or drug use behaviors or experiencing the effect of someone else’s substance use can benefit from the group. The program follows a dedicated ten session curriculum that frames substance use in four major domains: substance use and women’s health, substance use and relationships, the effects of substance use on the family, and substance use as it influences life management. A substance abuse counselor and mental health clinician facilitate sessions.

Studies conclude that Rocking Horse participants increase understanding of the risks of drinking, drug use, and smoking during pregnancy. Participants also report an increase in their confidence at handling stress and parenting their children.

For information on the program, or to discuss a referral, call 442-5491 and speak with Maria DeLeon or Hilary Lesniak.

Panelists discuss suicide prevention

By Patricia LeBouef, Bennington Banner.

Speakers expressed concern about access to care and mental health stigma and emphasized the importance of connection at a panel discussion on suicide prevention Tuesday.

The 90-minute discussion, held at United Counseling Service, was part of the governor’s Capitol for a Day...
"We continue to grapple with the impact of suicide in our state," said Sarah Squirrell, Mental Health Commissioner, who led the panel. "The loss of life by suicide has incredible ripple effects, which is why we need to double down in our commitment to suicide prevention here in Vermont."

The five-person panel included Carrie Goodwin, a Family Nurse Practitioner at Southwestern Vermont Medical Center; Alya Reeve, Medical Director and Director of Crisis Services at UCS; JoEllen Tarallo, Director of the Vermont Suicide Prevention Center; Alison Krompf, Department of Mental Health Director of Quality and Accountability and Kristi Cross, Community Health Team leader with the Vermont Blueprint for Health. Scott also attended the discussion.

Squirrell began by telling those in attendance that Vermont's suicide rate is about 35 percent higher than the national average. She asked the panelists about the current landscape of suicide prevention in Vermont, and where opportunities exist to build on.

Krompf discussed work in payment reform for health care. Any movement away from fee-for-service that ties funds to health outcomes provides room to focus on prevention, she said.....Read more.

WATCH SUICIDE PREVENTION ROUND TABLE (CAT TV)

Thanks to the Barn Sale Committee for building a stronger community!

Special thanks to The Barn Sale Committee. The "Best Tag Sale in Vermont" took place September 21st and 22nd at the Northshire Civic Center. The group of dedicated volunteers work all year to collect, transport and set up the sale.

United Counseling Service has been the beneficiary of this charitable fundraiser since 2012. This year's sale set a record and raised a total of nearly $58,000. All proceeds benefit United Counseling Service.

Head Start Photo Session with the Vermont Art Exchange now on display

Special thanks to Mathew Perry of the Vermont Arts Exchange for curating an exhibit in the waiting room at UCS.

In the spring of 2019, VAE teaching artist Kristen Blaker handed out 20 digital cameras to approximately 79 students in our Head Start program. They were shown how to use them and were turned loose around the school, Hiland Hall Gardens and Park McCullough House grounds. They were asked to take pictures of the landscape and to find interesting subjects and, they did just that. These photos were selected from over 3000 taken. Some kids took 20, some took 250. Some focused on bright colors, textures in bark and tires, friends enjoying the project and more. The pictures are filled with energy and thought.
Please stop by our office at 100 Ledge Hill Drive to view this wonderful exhibit.

Stephanie Eames Leads Policy Council

Stephanie Eames has been appointed liaison to the Board and member through her tenure as Policy Council President of United Children’s Services which oversees Bennington County Head Start/Early Head Start. This program provides children and their families with the building blocks necessary to succeed in learning, parenting and life.

Stephanie chairs the Policy Council which oversees all aspects of the Head Start/Early Head Start program including selection of staff, development of new policies, grant budget approval and curriculum development. The Council is comprised of parents and community members.

“I am pleased to have Stephanie Eames chair the United Children’s Services Policy Council,” said Lorna Mattern, Executive Director of UCS. “She is experienced, focused, and understands the need in our community for preparing children and their families for school through high quality education, health and social services.”

Stephanie is a Postpartum Specialist at Catamount Connections and owns Pond Consulting, which provides knowledge management, corporate research, strategic planning, project management and professional development services to non-profits. She also serves as Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the John G. McCullough Free Library.

“I was driven to serve on the Policy Council to be more directly involved with my own children’s education. Becoming Chair of the Policy Council has allowed me to contribute to such a crucial time of development for many local children,” said Stephanie. “I am part of the UCH Board and represent the parent voice in the governance of a program that I so strongly believe in, and to give back to a community that so openly embraces me and my family.”

Stephanie is a graduate of SUNY New Paltz and holds a Master of Science in Information Science from the University of Albany. She resides in North Bennington with her two children.

Camp Ondawa was a huge success!

Camp Ondawa was held this year the week of September 9th in Sunderland, Vermont. The camp offers individuals with intellectual disabilities a camping experience that’s close to home, with people they know and trust.

Camp Ondawa is a place where everyone can participate in special events and have a camping experience at the same
time. Camp Ondawa brings great joy to all who partake and attend camp. Clients and staff are in their element and it truly shows how much joy being at camp brings to all involved.

“This was my first year as the camp director and with a great team/support from Community Support Staff, it was very successful,” said Courtney Randall, Camp Director. “Thanks to all who volunteered their time and brought special activities for campers to enjoy. I look forward to next year for another great week at Camp Ondawa.”

This year 120 campers attended Camp Ondawa. Activities included painting, zumba, yoga, movie night, morning walks, sports, live bands and more.

Rec Center Project Moves Forward

By Jim Therrien, Bennington Banner

The first phase of an ambitious, multi-million dollar plan to expand and transform the Bennington Recreation Center is expected to reach the construction stage by late fall. The Select Board heard an update Monday on the proposal, which the town is involved in through a partnership with the Early Childhood Services Division at United Counseling Service and the local Head Start program it manages.

Betsy Rathbun-Gunn, director of the UCS division, and Jeff Goldstone and Jack Byer of Goldstone Architecture, gave a presentation that included images of the proposed center and floor plans showing one and both phases completed.

“This is very exciting,” Rathbun-Gunn said Tuesday. “I hope that in October we can have a groundbreaking ceremony.”

Phase one includes an addition along one side of the existing Rec Center to house early childhood classrooms and related services, as well as multi-use community spaces, plus a new building main entrance and lobby and an elevator. Twenty-five new parking spaces also will be created.

The construction work could be completed by October 2020, Rathbun-Gunn said. She added that, along with the Putnam Block redevelopment project now underway downtown, “we hope this will be a jumpstart [for the local economy].”
Rathbun-Gunn said the $3.5 million required for phase one would come from federal grant programs designed to develop facilities for early childhood educational and other services for children and families.

Having been approved at the regional level for the funding, the grant is “in the late stages” of the application process, she said, adding, “I don’t have a check in hand from Washington, D.C., but it looks good.”

A key reason the grant applications have been viewed favorably, Rathbun-Gunn said, is because this has been a cooperative effort with the town and the Rec Center, not a standalone facility only benefiting Head Start programs.

“It is because of this partnership that we are getting this funding,” she said. Read more.

Pulse meetings are held every third Wednesday of the month from 5:30 pm - 6:30pm at the Bennington Senior Center at 124 Pleasant Street in Bennington. Please join us for these open meetings about programming and construction updates for the Bennington Recreation Center/Senior Center/Early Childhood Center addition. All community members are encouraged to attend.

**Upcoming Meetings**
- October 16, 2019
- December 18, 2019
- February 19, 2020
- April 15, 2020
- June 17, 2020

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Head Start/Early Head Start
2 Park Street
North Bennington, VT 05257
Phone: 802-442-3686
Locations in Bennington, North Bennington, Manchester and Pownal

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Save the Date
Mental Health First Aid
For a complete list of times and locations, visit our website at ucsvt.org.

September 18 and 19, 2019
9:00am - 1:00pm
Manchester, VT

October 23 and 24, 2019
12:30pm - 4:30pm
Bennington, VT

November 13 and 14, 2019
9:00am - 1:00pm
Bennington, VT

This training is free and open to the public but seating is limited. To sign up contact Jennifer Parizo at jparizo@ucsvt.org or call 802.442.5491.

GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY
Join UCS as we break ground on an addition to the Bennington Recreation Center. With the expansion we will build community capacity and continue creating meaningful, measurable change.

Wednesday, October 16, 2019
1:30PM
Bennington Rec. Center
655 Gage Street, Bennington, VT

For more information contact Beth Wadsworth at 802.442.3608 or bwadsworth@ucsvt.org.
DOWNSTREAM is an hour-long documentary film featuring the compelling stories of those left behind when a parent goes to prison. Vermont children and caregivers share their experiences, revealing the complex and emotional terrain they navigate. Additional voices in the film offer insights from a variety of perspectives to increase understanding of this too often invisible social and public health issue.

Friday, October 25th, 2019
6:00pm to 8:00pm
Oldcastle Theatre
331 Main Street, Bennington
The screening will be followed by a panel discussion with people in the film.

Co-sponsored by:
United Counseling Service
Bennington Center for Restorative Justice
MVP Health Care

This event is free and open to the public. Registration suggested at ucsvt.org

A Film by Lamoille Restoration Center - Downstreamfilm.com

Do you have a story to tell?

REGISTER NOW FOR UCS SUPERHERO 5K

For a full list of upcoming trainings and events please visit ucsvt.org.
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

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.

For more information about giving, please click here to email Heidi French, Director of Community Relations and Development, or call at 802-442-5491.

DONATE NOW

or

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

Are you interested in a career with a great organization?

We are proud to announce that UCS has been selected as the Best Place to Work and the Best Community Service Organization for the 2019 Readers Choice award!

An established leader and provider of health and human services in Southern Vermont, United Counseling Service provides nearly 3,000 people each year with a broad range of mental health, developmental and children’s services along with early childhood education. Approximately 300 employees are making a positive difference at 16 facilities operating throughout Bennington County.

Our employees are creative, thoughtful, energetic, forward thinking and empowered. UCS is living its mission: Building a stronger community by empowering individuals to live healthy and meaningful lives. If you want to make a difference and help those who need it most, consider joining our team. UCS is a great place to work and a great place to get care.

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