Get your team together as we go UNDER THE SEA.

This year we are holding our 33rd Bowlathon to support mentoring in Bennington County. The event will take place on Saturday, April 4th at Bennington Lanes. The theme is UNDER THE SEA and participants are encouraged to use their imagination and dress up as magical mermaids, vibrant fish, or adventurous scuba divers. There will be prizes for the highest overall fundraiser, a silent auction, team spirit awards and more.

This is a fun, interactive way to make a difference and support Mentoring at UCS, a program that plays a vital role in the lives of the youth in our community.

The Bank of Bennington is our Title Sponsor once again this year. Funds raised allow Mentoring at UCS to continue to support mentoring matches and provide ongoing assistance to mentors, mentees and families. Local businesses can support the event by becoming event lane sponsors, donating prizes for the silent auction and encouraging employees to create teams and participate. Friendly competition is encouraged...

Many youths who are in a behavioral or mental crisis end up in Hospital Emergency Departments - UCS is working to change that.

Emergency Departments across the state of Vermont face a challenge. This past year, more than 10,000 Vermonter, including children, accessed the Hospital Emergency Departments...
EDs during mental health crises. This kind of overutilization leads to backups that can last for days, creating stressful conditions for patients, family and the hospital staff who have limited resources to treat psychiatric conditions. EDs struggle as they too often become the first response in mental health. Perhaps most concerning is the rising number of children who present in the ED. Some children, removed by law enforcement from classrooms due to disruptive behavior, have been taken to EDs for evaluation. This experience is traumatizing and often unnecessary.

In reviewing available data, United Counseling Service (UCS), the state’s designated agency for Bennington County, and the Southwestern Vermont Medical Center (SVMC) discovered that in the fourth quarter of 2018, 294 child and adolescent crisis assessments were completed in the SVMC Emergency Department. Tragically, 82% of all children and adolescents who presented in the ED in a crisis were discharged home without a treatment plan with the average length of stay being 20 hours...

UCS Announces New Director of Mental Health and Substance Use Services

United Counseling Service is pleased to welcome Lori Vadakin as Director of Mental Health and Substance Use Services. Lori will be responsible for the clinical and administrative oversight of the agency’s system of care for Mental Health, Substance Use Treatment and Community Rehabilitation and Treatment programs.

Vadakin was the past Director of Trauma Integration Services at VPI South Residential Treatment Centers for Girls, and she is a Certified Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapist and Consultant. She received her BA in History/Pre-Law at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and her master’s degree in Counseling Psychology from Antioch New England Graduate School. Vadakin was one of the first clinicians trained in Attachment, Self-Regulation and Competency (ARC) in Vermont and provides trauma-informed care trainings. She is certified as a Child Specialist and an EMDR Equilateral Therapist.

“We are excited to welcome Lori to our team,” says Lorna Mattern, Executive Director of UCS. “She brings a wealth of clinical and training experience and we look forward to the leadership she will provide to the agency.”

“I am so excited to be returning to United Counseling Service,” said Lori, who previously worked for UCS as an Outpatient Clinician in the early 2000’s. “This agency plays a vital role in the community and the staff truly care. The relationships they build with clients and the high quality of care provided is amazing.”

Anxiety presentation draws huge crowd

By Anne Archer, Manchester Journal

Hunter Community Room at the Manchester Community Library went beyond capacity as residents spilled out through the back barn door to watch the film “Angst: Raising Awareness Around Anxiety” recently.
The film, sponsored by United Counseling Service, discusses anxiety, the causes and the symptoms and offers advice on how to better understand and manage the disorder.

It is expected to reach more than 3 million people in 25,000 schools, community centers and theaters around the world.

Through a series of interviews with kids, teens, parents, experts, and Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, the documentary tries to help break the stigma of anxiety.

At the end of the evening, a panelist of three mental health professionals and a local student discussed the film and answered questions from the audience. According to the World Health Organization, anxiety disorders are the most common mental health challenge in the U.S., with the median age of onset being 7 years old...READ MORE.

Reducing suicide deaths takes a community
by Joseph Halko for Northwestern Counseling & Support Services

On Nov. 30, 2018, AJ Holzscheiter took his own life. He was just 18 years old.

AJ wasn’t alone. While we don’t yet know the exact number of Vermonters who died by suicide in 2018, 112 Vermonters took their own lives in 2017. Those deaths occurred across all ages and incomes.

Vermont has one of the highest per capita rates of suicide in the country. As of 2017, it was 18.5 per 100,000 people. The national average was 14.

Suicide deaths in Vermont show no sign of slowing. Vermont is second in the country for increasing rates of suicide deaths, behind North Dakota.

In 2017, suicide was the eighth leading cause of death in the state, according the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For context, 134 Vermonters died that year as the result of a drug overdose and 70 in car accidents...READ MORE.

The Importance of Work/Life balance

On Wednesday, February 12, Dan Merges, an Outpatient Clinician with United Counseling Service teamed up with the Lightening Jar to facilitate a round table discussion around Adam Grant’s podcast, “When Work Takes Over your Life.”

Strategies and setting boundaries were discussed with participants sharing their own struggles with work life balance and strategies to manage them.
Bennington County Head Start participated in Farm to School Awareness Day

Farm to School Awareness day was held on Wednesday, February 12th this year at the State Capitol in Montpelier. Advocates from schools and early care and learning centers from around the state attended, showing support for continued funding and support this year.

Vermont Farm to School is a nationally recognized initiative that supports Vermont's economy, communities, and healthy development and learning for Vermont's children. School staff, children, and local producers testified to the joint Agriculture committees in the morning, followed by a Farm to School lunch in the cafeteria.

Our own Bennington County Head Start / Early Head Start staff were recognized on the House floor. Staff shared information about its programing with attendees at its display table, as well as spoke in the opening remarks in the ceremony due to having received one of these highly competitive two-year grants last year. Current Vermont Farm to School funding includes $231,000 in appropriations, while this year's request is to increase to $500,000 so that all schools and early care and education providers in Vermont may participate.

Pictured is Rebecca Bishop, Assistant Director of Head Start/Early Head Start of Bennington County.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Developmental Services Parent and Family Information Night

United Counseling Service Developmental Services Division is hosting a parent and family information night from 5:00pm to 7:00pm on Tuesday, March 10th at 335 Dewey Street in Bennington. Come join us and learn what UCS Developmental Services does and the services we offer.

- Get tips on helping your child transition from school into adult services
- Discuss DS eligibility and how to begin services
- Learn about our Supported Employment and Community Supports Services
- Get answers to your transition questions

Light refreshments will be served and all attendees will be entered to win a gift basket.
Adult and Youth Mental Health First Aid Offered

Youth Mental Health First Aid
March 24th and 25th

For more information or to register visit ucsvt.org or contact Maria DeLeon at 802.442.5491 or email mdeleon@ucsvt.org.

Stepping Forward Together 2020: Creating Solutions that Promote Health Equity

Vermont Care Partners' annual conference will be held on March 13th 2020. Continue the discussion with national, regional, and local speakers about health disparities, cultural competence and ways we can improve our service delivery to all Vermonters. Join hundreds of other committed professionals interested in solutions that address racism, sexism, stigma, classism, ableism, and cultural blindness.

Register now at VCP Conference Registration.
More than Meets the Eye
A series of thematic exhibitions meant to inspire connections and conversations.

Opening Reception
January 11 from 2-4 p.m.

Exhibition on view January 11 - March 15, 2020
Southern Vermont Arts Center
Yester House Galleries

Featuring:
The Yellow Tulip Project’s I Am More: Facing Stigma
Gisela Gamper • Carl Austin Hyatt • Terry Boddie
Burr & Burton Academy • Long Trail School
The Forty-Seven Main Street Artists Group
United Counseling Service

950 SVAC Drive, Manchester, VT 05254
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JOIN US FOR A
MENTORING BOWLATHON

SATURDAY, APRIL 4
BENNINGTON LANES • 219 NORTHSIDE DRIVE
All proceeds benefit Mentoring at UCS.

This year's theme is
Under the Sea!

Highest overall fundraiser will win a cruise for two to the Bahamas!

- Fundraise a minimum of $50 per bowler
- 4 Bowlers per team suggested
- Prizes for highest fundraisers at each wave
- Team spirit awards and more

REGISTER YOUR TEAM ONLINE NOW at ucsvt.org/events or call 802.442.5491 ext. 511.

United Counseling Service of Bennington County • ucsvt.org
United Counseling Service is an established leader and provider of health and human services in Southern Vermont. UCS 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 in 16 facilities operating throughout Bennington County since 1958.

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.

For a list of current job opening visit UCS CAREERS.