July 2018

Message from Maria

Maria Coutant Skinner, Executive Director

Dear friends;

One of my favorite groups at McCall is our Wisdom lunch. This is part of the Senior Outreach and Engagement program where folks over 55 come together once a week to share a meal and connect with one another. It's the brainchild of Glenn Ryan, Director of Special Services. Glenn noticed that many seniors he was working with were quite isolated in their day to day lives. Sometimes it was due to their ongoing struggles with addiction or depression, other times it was because their children

Aging in Place

It will come as no surprise that we are an aging population here in Connecticut, especially in Litchfield County. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2017 National Population Projections, by the year 2030, all baby boomers will be older than age 65. This will expand the size of the older population with the result that 1 in every 5 residents will be of retirement age. The Census Bureau also projects that for the first time in U.S. history the number of older adults will outnumber children by the year 2035. There are many challenges that accompany this shift in demographics, this month we're talking about those challenges, and discussing solutions.

One of the fastest growing health problems facing our country is alcohol and prescription drug dependence among older adults. Compounding this problem is our lack of awareness, understanding and response. In part, due to the increase in the number of aging individuals, the current healthcare system is over burdened and office visits are often hurried. Dependence on substances among seniors is often hidden or overlooked and often misdiagnosed. Substance misuse can look like other medical and behavioral disorders common among the aging population, such as diabetes, dementia, and depression. However, we can all be on the lookout for signs and symptoms. Follows is a brief list of some common behaviors associated with problematic substance use and/or mental health concerns:

- A loss of interest in hobbies or pleasurable activities.
- Solitary or secretive drinking.
- Drinking alcohol and taking prescription drugs despite the warning label.
- Change in personal appearance.
- Chronic and unsupported health complaints.
- Hostility or depression.
- Memory loss and confusion.
Another factor that is prevalent in all age groups but even more so with seniors is the stigma and shame often associated with substance use. Often times there is a reluctance to seek professional help for what many in this age group consider a private matter. Relatives of older individuals with alcoholism and drug dependence are also often ashamed of the problem and choose not to address it. Many of us were brought up to think of addiction and mental health issues as moral weaknesses rather than as diseases that can be treated. However, there is hope and there are a number of treatment options that can help older adults. For the past 20 years, the staff of the Special Services department at McCall have worked to help seniors who are struggling with mental illness and/or substance use disorder. Staff facilitate age appropriate, culturally and gender responsive person-centered services that best meet the unique needs of an older population. Substance misuse, and the trauma, loneliness and mental illnesses that often accompany it are overwhelming, and often people do not know where to turn. McCall provides the compassion, expertise and experience to help the individual, their families and other senior serving agencies in locating and accessing services for their clients.

Recently, McCall received a grant from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) to expand our senior outreach and engagement program to both the Waterbury and Danbury areas. This expansion now allows us to provide weekly social engagement groups, and ongoing personal outreach via phone, video conferencing and in-home visits in order to achieve our ultimate goal; ensuring that seniors have access to and receive the help and healing they need. If you know someone who might benefit – or if you have any questions, please call Larry Drapp, Senior Services Case Manager at 860-485-3593 for more information.

Make a difference in someone's life and support McCall today.

Our mission is to provide comprehensive integrated substance abuse and mental health treatment to help people lead healthier and more productive lives.

Your donation will directly support our prevention, recovery and community programs and help us provide clients with the support they need—regardless of their ability to pay.  Click here to donate today!