

Newslink

Bringing you closer to the lives you help change

Fall 2015 · www.communityhealthlink.org

Innovative, integrated health care – made possible because of you.

Your generosity provides critically-needed primary care for clients in need.

For people experiencing serious mental illness (SMI), maintaining good physical health can be a struggle.

Fortunately, clients at CHL's Leominster Counseling Center have a new option to help them get healthy and stay healthy. Thanks to a federal grant and the generosity of supporters like you, we've opened the Spruce Street Clinic, a primary care clinic embedded within our Leominster Counseling Center.

The Spruce Street Clinic offers clients an integrated approach to health care – where primary care providers work side by side with behavioral health providers to offer a wraparound approach to client health.

Led by Hugh Silk, MD, the Spruce Street Clinic is supported by a grant from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and by donors like you.

People experiencing SMI may take certain medications that cause the health-threatening side effect metabolic syndrome. Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of conditions — increased blood pressure, high blood sugar level, excess body fat around the waist, and abnormal cholesterol levels — that occur together, increasing a patient's risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, thereby reducing their life span.

Not only are people experiencing SMI generally at risk for this unhealthy condition, many of them also do not regularly see a primary care provider. The nature of SMI can make it incredibly hard for people to both find appropriate care and maintain that care once it's located. By offering primary care in a location where our clients already have safe, stable relationships with behavioral



Some of the members of the Spruce Street Clinic team, from L to R: Daniel Dompheh, Health Data Specialist; Justine Rovezzi, RN; Hugh Silk, MD; and Jessica Camas, Medical Assistant.

health providers, we create the conditions necessary for clients to easily add primary care into their “routine.”

The Spruce Street Clinic offers a wide variety of critical primary care procedures, including preventive services such as colon and cervical cancer screenings, immunizations and flu vaccinations, and the close monitoring of patients' weight, blood pressure, and blood sugar to both prevent and treat chronic disease. The Clinic also focuses on wellness – a suite of activities meant to accompany the more traditional delivery of primary care. At the Clinic, clients can join mindfulness meditation groups, receive instruction in nutrition and exercise, find support to stop smoking, and more.

We invite you to come see this innovative approach to health care that your generosity has supported. An open house will be held on Monday, October 5, from 4 pm to 6 pm, at 40 Spruce Street, Leominster. ■

You gave Eric the skills he needs to live happily and securely.

Because of you, Eric experienced life-changing mentoring through CHL's "Support for Success" program.

For Eric, much of his young life was a series of missed connections and misunderstandings that left him feeling friendless and depressed. All of that has changed, thanks to you. Eric's close work with Marc Labb, a Therapeutic Mentor at CHL, has turned his life around and prepared him for big things to come.

After experiencing significant trauma in his early childhood, Eric struggled with the symptoms of Asperger's Syndrome and bipolar disorder as he entered adolescence. "I was afraid of meeting new people," says Eric.

Eric, 17, attends a private special education school that educates youth whose needs cannot be met in a traditional school setting. Even in this specialized setting, Eric's difficulty relating to others posed risks to his ability to stay in school. In addition to his trouble making connections, Eric needed help learning about the appropriate way to interact with girls. At one point, Eric felt so depressed and alone that he attempted suicide.

It was then that CHL became involved in Eric's life. Marc is a Therapeutic Mentor in CHL's Support for Success program, which provides both in-home therapy and therapeutic mentoring to children with significant behavioral, emotional, and mental health needs. Marc's role as Eric's Therapeutic Mentor was to offer structured, one-to-one, strength-based support to Eric for the purpose of addressing his daily living, social, and communication needs.

For nearly three years, Marc visited Eric every week and took him into the community with a twofold goal of creating a fun and bonding experience while interacting with all sorts of different people and learning about the appropriate boundaries for different types of relationships. The trust between Eric and Marc grew quickly, and Eric was able to open up to Marc about his deepest problems.

Rich, Eric's uncle and guardian, explains, "Marc was honest and open about what they were going to work on



From L to R: Marc (Eric's mentor from CHL), Eric, Michele, and Rich.

and how they were going to work on it, but he left options open and gave Eric the opportunity to decide what he wanted to talk about and when. It made it very easy for Eric to feel comfortable with Marc."

"Within a few months of their time working together, we noticed a huge change in how Eric interacted with people. He's grown so much since that time," says Michele, Eric's aunt and guardian.

Eric is now in his senior year of high school, and says that his time with Marc changed his life. "Other times the only people I ever talked to were in class, but now even outside of class, everyone at school knows me and talks to me. It's nice to know a lot of people know you and enjoy hanging out with you."

Now, Eric is surrounded with healthy relationships that enable him to feel successful and give him hope for his future. He has dreams of attending college in the future and perhaps becoming an archaeologist. Michele says that Eric has developed a number of friendships with other teenagers in the neighborhood, and has learned how to sustain those friendships in a healthy way, thanks to Marc's close mentoring.

Rich also says that Eric is more resilient than ever before. "No matter what happens, he knows that tomorrow is another day." ■

Opportunities for all— courtesy of you!

This summer was filled with opportunities for our clients - thanks to generous support from you, our loyal donors and funders. Without that support, none of these great events or programs could exist.



Above left and right: In June, 14 clients from CHL's Developmental Disabilities Unit graduated from MyPlate, an 8-week nutrition class generously supported by a grant from Unum. Participants were thrilled to receive their diplomas.



Above left and right: Our annual Family Fun Fest to celebrate Independence Day was a blast. Over 300 adults and kids attended to enjoy a cookout, crafts, and a great view of the Worcester fireworks. The event couldn't have happened without the generous support of our sponsors: UMass Memorial Health Care, Toshiba Business Solutions, Sysco Boston, Maines Paper, Thomsen Food Service, Polar Beverages, Price Chopper, and Big Y. Thank you!

Earlier this year, the Emerald Club awarded a generous \$5,000 grant to CHL's Together For Kids (TFK) program. TFK services are designed to promote social-emotional wellness in preschool children, assist educators/families to understand and appropriately respond to challenging behaviors, strengthen home-school partnerships, and reduce suspensions and expulsions from early education and care settings. From left to right: Tricia Iandoli, Emerald Club Board Member; Lynn Hennigan, CHL's Director of Services for Young Children; and William Sex, Emerald Club President.



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Newslink, CHL's newsletter,
is published four times each year.

Questions and comments can
be directed to:

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Fall 2015
Vol. IX, No. 1

Help make the holiday season a little brighter!

The winter holidays can be hard for our clients, especially those who are living in a residential program or those who are experiencing homelessness. Each year, CHL is fortunate to receive donations of goods (warm mittens and gloves, socks, presents for children and teens in residential care) from generous donors like you. Some donors gather together with friends, family, or coworkers to "adopt" an entire CHL program; others give individually. No matter how it's done, your giving makes a big difference in the lives of our clients. If you can help this holiday season, email Sarah Loy at sloy@communityhealthlink.org or call (508) 860-1217. Thank you!



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