

Steppingstone, Inc.
466 North Main St.
Fall River, MA
508-674-2788



Steppingstone Today

Building a strong foundation for recovery

Inside this issue:

Mayor's Drug Summit	1
Filling the Void with Fun Activities	2
World AIDS Day	3
Medical Case Management Christmas Party	3
Staff Halloween Party	4
Changes I Never Imagined	5
Client Art	5
More Joy, Less Stress	6
Ways to Beat the Winter Blues	7
A Story of Hope	8
Celebrating Survivors	9
He Will Be Missed	9

Fall River Drug Summit



On November 2nd, Fall River hosted a drug abuse summit, which took place at the James Madison Morton Middle

School. The Drug Summit was sponsored by Mayor William Flanagan and U.S. Rep. William Keating.

Fall River's Mayor spoke at the event and the focus of the event was to provide a venue for the community to discuss concerns and problems related to substance abuse and continue to work on the issues.

The event was free and open to the public. The program focused on three talk sessions about treatment, prevention and enforcement.

"Events like these are essential in educating the community and searching out solutions from everyone involved," explains Kathleen Schedler-Clark, Steppingstone's Executive Director. "Last year in Fall River, we had over 3,500 admissions into DPH treatment programs. That clearly shows we have the need to continue this important work. We know that treatment is effective

and prevention does work. I applaud the efforts of our Mayor to set this issue to the forefront in our community."

At the Drug Summit, several substance abuse treatment and prevention agencies were in attendance.

Steppingstone Incorporated's team provided an informational booth. Brochures and booklets were provided regarding Steppingstone's treatment services as well as educational materials on substance abuse. Steppingstone staff were present to answer questions and provide treatment and referral information.



Filling the Void with Fun Activities

Substance abuse recovery begins by first addressing medical and psychological issues related to detoxification from substances, as well as other urgent needs such as shelter and food. But as individuals progress and stabilize in recovery, other more subtle, but important needs begin to emerge.

For those with active chronic substance use, much effort and time was centered around finding and obtaining substances. In 12-step programs, you'll hear the phrase "Used to Live and Lived to Use." So much time and effort was put into obtaining substances, that once in recovery, individuals are faced with huge voids of time to fill.

An important component of treatment at Steppingstone is helping clients learn how to have fun, how to build healthy social skills and how to participate in diverse activities and fill voids of time in a positive way.

With the upcoming holiday season, Steppingstone's Director of Finance and Administration, Debra DeCosta, searched within the Agency budget in order to find funds to purchase supplies for client activities. With the persistence and compassion we all recognize in Debra, she not only put together the funds, but did the purchasing of many supplies in order for clients to participate in holiday craft activities.

Clients were provided with various supplies and instructions to create holiday crafts. Men from Steppingstone's Men's Program were

provided wreaths and decorative supplies to create holiday wreaths for all the Steppingstone houses. It was reported, that while at first some men didn't seem keen on participating, all men ended up thoroughly enjoying themselves and the result was some beautiful holiday wreaths which will be hung on the front doors of the houses.

Women created some beautiful basket holiday centerpieces and also enjoyed the time socializing and igniting their creativity.

Centerpieces created by the women will be placed in Steppingstone clients' main dining hall on all dining tables.



Thanks to the men and women who created these beautiful holiday wreaths and centerpieces for our houses and dining hall!



World AIDS Day - Poster Contest Event

World AIDS Day Commemorates those lost to HIV/AIDS and reminds the world that this fight is not over until we have eradicated this disease. On November 21, the Medical Case Management Program held a World AIDS Day art activity. The event consisted of an opportunity to create posters featuring the theme of World AIDS Day 2013: "Getting to Zero" (Getting to Zero = No more new infections). Staff and clients worked to design individualized interpretations of what this theme means to them; *and* how to communicate the message to others. A wide range of unique poster designs resulted from this meaningful endeavor. We were joined in the project by Sharon Rust-Bottone, MSW, a local Art Therapist and Counselor, along with three of her student volunteers. Jim Coutinho, Chairman of A.I.D.S., Inc. also joined us in the project. In addition, all of the craft supplies, art materials and refreshments were graciously supplied by



by Sharon and Jim! Program participants enjoyed holiday music, refreshments; cookies and cupcakes, as well as lots of camaraderie and community spirit among participants and honored the memories of loved ones lost to HIV/AIDS.

Medical Case Management Client Christmas Party



other that makes this season special. The staff at Steppingstone Inc. Medical Case Management Program and A.I.D.S. Inc. showed their giving spirit on December 4th with a holiday party for clients. Clients were treated to a festive party in the programs group education room. The clients enjoyed lunch prepared by Texas Roadhouse which consisted of barbecue chicken & pulled pork, corn, salad and dinner rolls. There were plenty of tasty desserts for the sweet tooth. Clients and staff appreciat-

ed music and conversation amongst each other. A highlight for many was a visit from Santa Claus. Each client came up and sat with Santa to receive their special gift and additional gift bags, which brought laughter and smiles into the room. "It really is the most wonderful time of the year: check your guest list twice, deck your halls and prepare to celebrate straight through to the New Year." Whatever your holiday traditions - Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Las Posadas, or Festivus. The Medical Case Management program would like to take this opportunity to thank Jim Catino and all the volunteer staff of A.I.D.S. Inc. for the gifts, food, personal care items and for their support over the past year.



Staff Halloween Party



Mike O'Brien, our Food Service Manager, and kitchen staff created a nice autumn luncheon and the dining room was festively decorated for Halloween.

Staff dressed in great costumes. The Fall River Women's program staff had really great spirit and dressed as the group the Village People and performed the song YMCA. Betty Schneider won first prize dressed as a nun, Jen Furtado dressed as Willie from Duck Dynasty and won second prize and the Village People

won third prize.

We had a candy corn counting contest, which Chris Marceau won for knowing the correct number in the bowl (apparently she and her kids love them so she has a real idea of how many come in bag).

We distributed prizes for the United Way 2014 campaign contributions and celebrated our beating last year's total. We raised \$8435 this year.



Winter is an exciting time here at Steppingstone's Outpatient Program with some great groups running!

Parenting Group with Maureen Roy, Thursdays noon to 1:30 pm

Grief and Loss with Karen Dunford, Tuesdays 3 to 4:30 pm

Stress Management with Marina Raye, Fridays 1 to 2:30 pm

Seeking Safety with Rosa Medeiros, Mondays 5:30 to 7 pm

These groups are currently accepting referrals. Please call 508-679-0033 if you are interested in participating in these groups.

If you have ideas for new groups, please let us know!

Insurances accepted:

MBHP, BMC, NHP, Cenpatico, Fallon, Tufts, BCBS, Medicare & Medicaid, Network Health.

If you have a primary substance use disorder and no insurance, we can provide you free services through a MDPH contract.

Changes I never Imagined by a Welcome Home client

I was born in 1990 to a single mother. She worked very hard to make sure my older brother and I had everything we needed. My mother worked two jobs at some points. But she would always have a break in between and make sure to come home to make dinner for us. My mother was my best friend and my father was rarely around. I also looked to my brother as a role model.

When I was 16 years old, I lost my mother. I was in shock and didn't know what to do. It made me feel terrible that I didn't have the chance to say good bye and that I wouldn't ever see her again. That was the day I had to grow up and become an adult. I ended up living with my brother. But the way he dealt with my mother's death was by constantly working. I'd barely see him and always be at the apartment alone. A year after, my brother moved in with his girlfriend and I then had to move in my sister-in-law's home. I stayed there for a while, but then my sister-in-law became pregnant. At that point, I had no choice but to move in with my estranged father. It was an awful experience. While I had hoped that in this situation I would get to know him, that never happened.

During that time, my girlfriend of two years became pregnant. My father didn't want a baby in the house, so I again had to find a place to live. I then ended up in her grandmothers home, but moved again to her mothers home shortly after to have more space. Our daughter was born and we lived there at her mothers for the next

two years. But then her mother gave up the apartment and we were left with no place to live. Out of options for a place to live, my family had to split up to survive. I ended up staying in a local homeless shelter and my girlfriend and baby situated wherever they could find a place to stay each night. This went on for a long time until I heard about Steppingstone's Welcome Home Program.

Welcome Home was able to help me get out of the shelter and help my family become reunited. We now live in a nice apartment through the Welcome Home program and receive a lot of services. I'm beginning to change my way of thinking and make positive change in my life I never thought would be possible.

What I am doing now is staying positive, despite all the hard times I experienced, and setting goals for myself. I have a career goal, which I never dreamed of. It is to become a law enforcement officer. I've taken the exam for the Massachusetts State Police, which could lead to employment in the State or City of New Bedford police system. I am currently working full-time and my girlfriend is employed part-time. My daughter is now enrolled in pre-school.

What motivates me and drives me to do better each day, is my daughter. I want to offer her a better life than I had. I don't want her to experience all the hard times that I did. I want to improve the future for my family.



Richard, a client of Steppingstone's Welcome Home program, wished to share some engraving art that he recently completed of a shark. Richard shared that working on the art project helped him to relax and he also felt a sense of satisfaction and achievement upon completing it.

Other clients of Steppingstone report that art is a form of therapy for them. Clients have completed artwork including paintings, sketches and 3-D puzzles.



Most of us have mixed feelings when it comes to the holidays. We often look forward to connecting with family and friends, but dread the extra work holidays often add to our already busy lives. So what can we do to have less stress and more joy? Here's a few tips that will reduce stress and help you enjoy the holidays more:

Be realistic and don't add pressure by expecting things to go perfectly.

Family problems usually won't be put on hold and family events almost always have unwanted surprises! But concentrate on one or two traditions that are special to you and focus on what went well with them.

Stick to your budget! While most of us begin with a realistic budget, many of us end up going over budget buying gifts. Remember that people often appreciate the thought put into a gift more than the value. Consider giving something handmade or more personal than costly.

Ask for help. Have other family members bring a food dish or have the family decorate together. And don't be afraid to say no if you're getting overwhelmed or just don't wish to participate. Be gentle with yourself and remember you don't need to over-explain when you are unable to participate in something.

Take time for yourself. Take time during busy days to breathe and take some time for yourself. It's often a struggle with so many things to do, but if you take 30 minutes for yourself, you'll be calmer throughout the rest of the day. Listen to music, walk the dog, watch television, meditate or do something else relaxing.

Enjoy the moments! Each moment adds up to great future memories. A smile on your grandparents face, your nephews cute dance, the cat's funny holiday outfit; be present in the moment and it will provide you with lots of joy in future memories of the day.

May your holidays be happy days filled with love and laughter,

And may each day bring joy your way in the year that follows after!



Ways to Beat the Winter Blues

As the days grow shorter and colder, many of us struggle with the winter blues, clinically known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

While we can't control the weather, there are things we can do to help beat the winter blues.

Exercise is great for so many reasons. It helps your mind release "feel good" chemicals, helps to reduce stress, gives you more energy and helps you stay fit!

Eating healthy can greatly affect your mood and energy. Avoid processed food (white bread, rice, sugar, etc.) and try incorporating more complex carbohydrate foods into your diet (whole wheat bread, brown rice, veggies, fruit). Also drink plenty of water; 8 cups daily is recommended. Healthy foods provide your body and mind with nutrients and stabilize energy and blood sugar.

Sunlight provides us with Vitamin D and releases neurotransmitters in the brain that affect mood. With shorter days and less outdoor activity, many people get less sunlight and sometimes become depressed without knowing why. Try sitting near windows more and you can also change the light bulbs in your house with "full spectrum" bulbs, which mimic natural light. Also try spending a little more time outdoors.

Treat yourself to something special. Having something to look forward to is exciting and motivating, such as a day at the spa, a weekend trip or a special night out. Consider starting a savings account and start saving for a bigger trip to warmer climate areas for next winter!



Embrace the season and look for opportunities to enjoy the outdoors! Try winter sports such as skiing, ice skating, snowboarding and sledding. Staying active boosts your energy and helps you to see the winter in a positive light.

Get social support from friends, family and co-workers. It is also recommended to seek professional help if you're feeling more than minor depression or if your attempts at feeling better aren't working. Steppingstone's Outpatient Clinic has clinicians qualified to treat SAD and can be reached at 508-679-0033.

Rest up! People naturally want to sleep more. While oversleeping (over 9 hours) isn't good for you, consistent 7-9 hour night's sleep helps you to feel rested and 10-30 minute afternoon naps also help to re-energize you mid-day!

A Story of Hope



For the purpose of helping others, a staff member of this Agency shared her journey through a life of trauma, tribulation, perseverance, strength, hope and achievement. This individual's willingness to share personal experiences was drawn from the desire to help others, and encourage hope. Her story demonstrates that no matter where you've been or what you've been through; with help, support, perseverance and hope, things can turn around. For the purpose of this article, this individual's name is Hope.

Equipped with her Master's Degree, Hope began dedicating her career to helping others. She began working in a group home with individuals with serious mental illness. In this position, Hope often faced challenging situations. One day, Hope was attacked by a client, which resulted in two spinal fractures. Hope began experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and made a change in her career to work in one-on-one situations with clients. This career also became very challenging for a variety of reasons beyond Hope's control. During the next three to four months as Hope strug-

gled to maintain her career, she experienced three separate major vehicle accidents, which resulted in five herniated discs, a torn rotator cuff and a significant increase in trauma symptoms. Despite Hope's best efforts, she became very depressed with significant PTSD symptoms and had extreme difficulty eating and caring for herself. Hope moved to a serene location to heal. Hope shared how people at this location, people she ordinarily would not have been drawn to, were so giving and compassionate. The people were kind and the environment was serene and beautiful and Hope began to heal. However, Hope again faced difficulties, when before she was well enough to once again move forward in a career, her finances became depleted.

Hope became destitute, living in her truck for a month. She learned of a local emergency shelter and applied and was accepted. Over the next year, Hope lived in the Shelter and received ongoing therapy. Hope describes her experience with the therapist as a major contributor to turning her life around. As Hope healed further and re-gained her confidence and health, she became ready to re-enter the workforce. She began working in a lower-wage paying job and after time, transitioned her career back to helping others in the social service system. Years later, Hope became a valuable member of the Steppingstone team and continues to dedicate her life to helping others. Hope aspires that no matter what your lived experience and struggles are, things can, and will, turn around.

Hope provided the following story (page 2) for our newsletter. Hope wrote the story during her healing process and at that time it was published as a story of inspiration in a local newspaper.

Celebrating Survivors by "Hope"

"When I was young and dreams were new, I loved a girl who looked like you."

..And the little girl was filled with joy and wonder, and every day she danced with life. But over time, those who gave her this life couldn't give her what she needed and too many times gave her what she didn't want, and slowly she began to whisper, "What's wrong with me?" This life became, not a joyous dance, but something to be feared. All of her choices, based on this fear, inexplicably, relentlessly, brought her to her knees. Crying out in abject sorrow and pain, she raised her hands, to what she knew not. And in that moment, life, which she had grown to hate, reached down in love and led her to shelter from the storm.

She felt she had reached the bottom of a dark abyss. This shelter was called "the Turning Point". With care and patience, they bore her up on arms of compassion. And every time she would ask "What's wrong with me?" they would gently, but firmly, over and over again, remind her of the girl she had once been. Slowly, tentatively, she began to take small steps back into this dance with life, where she discovered a partner. A strong, loving, sure woman had risen within her to lead her as she danced. The fear and pain dissolved and was replaced with peace and hope. And as she danced, she sang a new song.

"Although I am old and dreams are worn, I love you still, this girl reborn."

He Will be Missed



Steven Motta, a Charge Person of Steppingstone, passed way unexpectedly recently. Steve had a passion for working with clients and aspiration to help those in need. Here at Steppingstone, Steve dedicated his efforts to helping clients of the Transition House program. Clients in this Program enter homeless and possess chronic disabilities and Steve's responsibilities contributed to positive changes in many of the clients lives in this Program.

Steve will be greatly missed by many staff as well as clients.

PROGRAMS**Men's Treatment Program**

466 North Main Street
Fall River, MA 02720
508-674-2788 x 102

Women's Treatment Program

522 North Main Street
Fall River, MA 02720
508-674-2788 x 101

Women's Treatment Program

979 Pleasant Street
New Bedford, MA 02740
508-984-1880

Outpatient Treatment Program

279 and 179 North Main Street
Fall River, MA 02720
508-679-0033

Next Step Home

506 North Main Street
Fall River, MA 02720
508-674-2788 x 113

William B Webster Program

506 North Main Street
Fall River, MA 02720
508-674-2788 x 118

New Bedford Graduate Program

977 Pleasant Street
New Bedford, MA 02740
508-984-1880

Transition House

542 North Main Street
Fall River, MA 02720
508-674-2788 x 118

First Step Inn Emergency Shelter

175 North Main Street
Fall River, MA 02720
508-679-8001

Stone Residence

177 North Main Street
Fall River, MA 02720
508-675-4159

Welcome Home

5 Dover Street
New Bedford, MA 02740
508-984-1892

www.steppingstoneinc.org

Steppingstone is a United Way of Greater
Fall River Agency

