



THE INSIDE STORY

IT'S ALL ABOUT FRIENDS

The Friends of West Bergen –
What we do and Why we need you!

A good friend is someone who's got your back through good times and bad. Who reaches out to lend a helping hand. Who supports you on your journey.

Those qualities and more are what define the Friends of West Bergen. We are a dedicated group of individuals who understand the need for quality, accessible and affordable mental health services in our community. And we understand just how important the healing programs and services available through West Bergen are to the health, welfare and fabric of the towns where we live, work and raise our families.

Friends raise funds outside West Bergen's operating budget providing critical support for special projects and initiatives that support and enhance the Agency's mission of hope and healing. Through community advocacy, volunteering, and fundraising events we educate and raise awareness of the vital work done by the agency and why it should matter to all of us.

WE'D LIKE TO INVITE YOU TO JOIN US.

As a member of Friends of West Bergen, you can support mental wellness in our communities in the following ways:

- Make an annual membership contribution of \$25 or more.
- Attend monthly Friends meetings. Meetings are conveniently held via zoom on the second Tuesday of each month.
- Assist in planning, promoting and supporting volunteer and fundraising events.
- Volunteer at the Agency for special client events.
- Be an Ambassador for West Bergen in your community (and bring in new Friends).



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Ask one of our Partial Care consumers who is one of their favorite visitors and they will say "the Bingo Lady"! **Bonnie Waterman (aka the Bingo Lady)** is one of West Bergen's original Friends members and hosts a monthly game of competitive Bingo for our consumers. Bingo day, complete with a Bingo wheel and prizes (all of which Bonnie supplies) is a huge hit, and helps consumers master patience and concentration as well as providing them with a fun afternoon.

Bonnie's compassion for helping others with differing abilities stems from her own personal life. Her sister, who suffers from mental illness, lives in a halfway house near Radnor, PA, where Bonnie grew up. As a stay home Mom in Ramsey, Bonnie would regularly return to her hometown to visit her sister, and began playing Bingo with her as a way to keep her engaged and happy. Soon other residents asked if they could play, and Bonnie realized she was on to something! Back home in Ramsey, Bonnie looked for an organization where she could bring the same joy to those who struggle with mental illness, and she's now a much loved fixture at West Bergen.



Bonnie Waterman

BOARD SPOTLIGHT

MEET DANNY LANE

East Rutherford resident Danny Lane's interest in psychology started at a young age. His professor dad would bring home psychology text books and initiate dinner table discussions about the nuances of emotional development and how it affects how we process information.

Years later, as a finance student at Fordham University, Danny continued studying psychology with elective courses and felt that they were a beneficial complement to his business degree. He also credits Fordham and his family for instilling in him a sense of community service and philanthropy, particularly in areas that help individuals and families thrive.

Danny's desire to help others live their best life led him to West Bergen, where he has served on the Board of Trustees since 2018. Saying that his role on the Board aligns well with his values and desire to give back, Danny is particularly proud of West Bergen's response during COVID-19. "Even during this unprecedented pandemic, West Bergen continues to provide critical mental health treatment and innovative programs and services that support the overall wellness of individuals, families and the community. I look forward to serving the West Bergen community for many years to come."



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DANNY LANE, WEST BERGEN BOARD MEMBER



Lessons from an Olympian

Michael Phelps Speaks Out About Mental Health

Michael Phelps' struggles with mental health have been well documented. He's talked openly about his thoughts of suicide and his frequent bouts with depression.

After Simone Biles withdrew from Olympic events due to mental health issues, Phelps says "we can't brush it under the rug anymore". "This is an opportunity for all of us to really learn more about mental health, to all help each other out. For me, I want people to be able to have somebody that can support them, who's nonjudgmental and who's willing to hold space. There's a lot that we can do to help one another and we have to start".

Olympic athletes and other public figures are using their broad platform to courageously speak out about their mental health struggles, thrusting the issue into the brightest spotlight yet. But Phelps points out that there are a lot of people out there in the world who are suffering the exact same way. And sadly, suffering silently, afraid of being judged if they disclose that behind the veil of perfection – perfect family, job, kids, life – they are in pain.

We live in a culture of perfection, says Phelps, where being human with weaknesses isn't acceptable and the roles we feel we have to live up to become untenable. That has to change. Phelps says he now sees the "red flags popping up when I'm starting to go down that path" and knows when to reach out to his wife or therapist. "Communication is something I didn't really learn until I was 30. But I did. And it's better late than never".

These days, instead of attaching a label to himself as "Olympian", "Swimmer", "CEO", he tries to simply think of himself as a human. And that's a good way to live.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

OCTOBER 10, 2021
The World Federation for Mental Health will celebrate World Mental Health Day on Sunday, October 10th.
The theme, "Mental Health in an Unequal World" highlights that access to treatment services remains unequal, with over 75% of people with mental health

disorders unable to access services.
West Bergen's mission is predicated on ensuring that income limitations are not a barrier to treatment. Our Sliding Scale Fee Payment system ensures that those who come to us for help are able to receive it, regardless of their financial situation.

COMMUNITY CORNER

Friends of West Bergen Spring 5K Raises \$41,000 for Center for Children & Youth

Reopening the doors to West Bergen's Center for Children and Youth (CCY) in Ramsey, closed due to the pandemic, has been a top priority for the Agency. Welcoming families back meant reevaluating the space and taking necessary and costly precautions to ensure that it's a socially distant, safe and nurturing environment for clients.

Enter the Friends of West Bergen and their "Move for Mental Health" Virtual 5K. Orchestrated to coincide with Mental Health Awareness Month in May, a goal was set to raise \$30,000 to refurbish and re-imagine the treatment spaces for CCY.

Thanks to many individuals, community groups, local businesses, West Bergen's Board members, and several generous donors who gifted the agency with matching donations, the Friends raised over \$41,000, with 100% of the dollars raised supporting this critical project!



CHANGING LIVES

THE FRIENDS OF WEST BERGEN BUILD A THERAPEUTIC PLAYGROUND AT THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

In 2018, COO Lee Schaefer had a vision to create a therapeutic playground on the grounds of the Center for Children and Youth in Ramsey. Because play matters for everyone, including kids on the Autism Spectrum or those struggling with other mental health challenges, a playground designed to meet these children's special therapeutic needs can mean the difference between including or excluding them from meaningful play.

The Friends of West Bergen, led by Founding Chair Eileen Wagner set out to make West Bergen's vision a reality. Working side by side with current Friends Chair Susan Tozzoli and a dedicated committee, Eileen and the Friends spent the next 18 months raising over \$70,000. The result is a thoughtfully designed play area that offers children a sensory rich environment where they can use their tactility, auditory and visual sensory systems. For children who might get overwhelmed in a busy playground, the grounds will eventually include gently landscaped spaces away from the busy play area, giving children a place to regroup and reflect.

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Message from our CEO

As a 501(c)(3), West Bergen Mental Healthcare is grateful for the generosity of our supporters and individuals who help us continue our mission of hope and healing. Thanks to you, we've grown from a Child Guidance Clinic, whose doors opened in 1963, to a full service mental health agency with three locations offering a wide spectrum of critical psycho-therapeutic treatments for children and adolescents as well as adults and families.

The Friends of West Bergen is a dynamic grassroots, philanthropic group dedicated to helping West Bergen continue to expand and meet the growing demand for quality, accessible and affordable mental health services. If you're interested in making a difference, we need you.

Your energy, passion, commitment and creativity will help us change lives.

MICHAEL J. TOZZOLI, LCSW, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

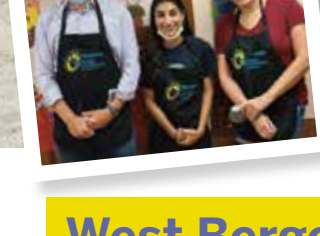


A VIEW FROM THE FRONTLINES

A Day of Sun and Fun at Graydon Pool

A very big Thank You to Ridgewood Parks and Recreation Director Nancy Bigos and Ridgewood Village Manager Heather Mailander for hosting West Bergen residential consumers to a wonderful afternoon at Ridgewood's Graydon Pool!

On a hot August day, when temperatures soared above 90°, consumers enjoyed a fun picnic lunch (prepared and served by West Bergen Trustees Nicole Oehler, and Louis Gerber and student volunteer Sargi) followed by swimming supervised by Pool Manager Daniel Burzinski and his team. Proclaiming that it was "the best day ever", West Bergen consumers were able to experience the joy of toes in the sand, a soft summer breeze and a refreshing swim in the shallow end. For staff, seeing the smiles on their faces was priceless.



Louis Gerber, student volunteer Sargi and Nicole Vane Oehler

West Bergen Confidential Warmline

Experiencing anxiety? These feelings of stress and anxiety about work and unexpected changes are real and can be overwhelming. West Bergen Mental Healthcare is here to help. Call our warmline at **201-688-7098** for free and confidential support. Initial calls are received by a West Bergen Access Clinician Monday through Friday, 9a.m. – 5 p.m., then a trained, West Bergen licensed therapist will return your call at a time that is convenient for you.