

Insights

FALL 2022

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

When it comes to creating beautiful spaces, no one does it better than Jacqueline Romano. Her Mahwah based company Realign Design (realignanddesign.com) is a professional, certified home staging and design company that partners with home owners, realtors and investors to create beautiful spaces designed with purpose. This spring as West Bergen began planning for the reopening of its Adult Day Treatment Program, it was clear that welcoming consumers back with a bright, clean and cheerful space at 120 Chestnut was a priority. Jackie, a member of the Ridgewood Chamber of Commerce eagerly stepped in to volunteer her color consulting services to help the West Bergen team choose a color scheme that would soothe, nurture and inspire. The soft light shades she chose now adorn the walls of West Bergen's day room and other public spaces at 120 Chestnut creating a warm and welcoming environment for all.

Jacqueline Romano



THE INSIDE STORY

Back to School Mental Health Tips for Parents and Caregivers

The unpredictability of the past several years has taken a toll on both children and parents, particularly when it comes returning to the classroom. But there are some concrete steps parents can take to ease the transition, and provide a solid source of support and reassurance to kids.

PRIORITIZE CONNECTION

Kids who feel connected to their caregivers are at much less risk for mental health issues, so make time to spend one on one time with your kids.

Be Curious and Know When to Reach Out for Help

Take walks. Play catch. Work on a puzzle. The more time quality time you spend together, the safer they'll feel about sharing what's going well and what's

not. For parents of older kids, encourage them to establish real time connections with friends, not just on their phone.

STICK TO A SCHEDULE

Routine makes the world seem less scary for all of us. So try to stick to a schedule (even on the weekends or days off). That

includes regular bed times, meal times, homework times whenever possible. When kids understand how the family structure and expectations work, it eliminates unpredictability.

VALIDATE THEN EVALUATE CONCERNS

Allow time for kids to vent about what may not be going well. Let them know you hear them, validate their feelings, then evaluate concerns together so they can feel more comfortable and in control. Try not to feel the pressure to have an answer to every problem. Sometimes kids just need to be heard.

BE CURIOUS AND KNOW WHEN TO REACH OUT FOR HELP.

If your child seems unusually anxious, sad or irritable for an extended period of time, begins withdrawing from their usual activities and friends or experiences changes in their eating habits, or sleep patterns, ask questions. If the answers you get aren't alleviating your concerns, it may be time to reach out for help. School counselors and others are available if you think your child may benefit from professional help.



WEST BERGEN IN THE NEWS

The Color of Feelings

EXPRESSIVE ARTS TREATMENT FOR SCHIZOPHRENIA

Recent trends in psychiatry have been focusing on a more holistic approach to treatment for chronic schizophrenia. Studies have shown that the use of art as a therapeutic tool can vastly improve outcomes in symptom management and reduction in stress for patients.

West Bergen serves over 200 patients with schizophrenia, many of whom participate in the Agency's Residential program and Adult Day Treatment Program. During the past two plus years, the stress and mental challenges the disease poses for our clients has been magnified by the prolonged Covid isolation necessary for their safety. So when it came time to return to a more normal gathering schedule and reopen our in-person Day Treatment Program, West Bergen Chief Operating Officer Lee Schaeffer and Adult Day Treatment Program Director Fran Piccone felt very strongly that the therapeutic treatment focus for 2022 needed to be on healing and helping clients return to their baseline of functioning.

Thus began the genesis for West Bergen's Expressive Arts Treatment Program.

Thanks to grants from the Emil Buehler Foundation and the Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson, clients in the Day Treatment Program have been receiving art lessons from artist and consultant Jessica Bush, who has been instructing them to paint how they feel. The results have been miraculous, and have resulted in beautiful, expressive works of art that will be displayed



during the month of September at The Stable in Ridgewood. But the most important outcome is the sense of self-esteem clients are feeling. "I feel proud", "It makes me feel good inside", "It inspires me to draw more", "I feel a sense of achievement".

"Adding an expressive arts program to our other treatment interventions is giving our clients additional opportunities to express their feelings, manage their stress and bring more pleasure back into their life" says COO Schaeffer. "Schizophrenia can often diminish a person's ability to feel enjoyment. Art is something that breaks through that cycle and gives them an opportunity to feel more positively engaged in both their internal and external experiences".

“Art is something that breaks through that cycle and gives them an opportunity to feel more positively engaged in both their internal and external experiences”

—LEE SCHAEFFER



"The Color of Feelings" will be exhibited at The Stable, 259 North Ridgewood Avenue during the month of September, with a reception on Thursday, September 8th from 5-7:00pm

COMMUNITY CORNER

The Ridgewood Chamber of Commerce

With over 300 members and a 90-year history of serving Bergen County businesses, The Ridgewood Chamber of Commerce is one of the oldest Chambers in the United States. In addition to advancing the commercial interests of the community, the Chamber and its members also invest their time and talent to support the many social service agencies that call the Ridgewood area home. West Bergen Mental Healthcare has been a grateful recipient of the Chamber's philanthropic spirit, with many members serving as regular volunteers and participating in fundraising activities (like our recent "Move for Mental Health 5K shown below). West Bergen salutes Executive Director Joan Groome and Chamber members for their ongoing support and compassion for the welfare of others.



BOARD SPOTLIGHT

MEET KEVIN GIANGRASSO

West Bergen's newest Board member, Dr. Kevin Giangrasso, is a child and adolescent psychologist with a private practice in Midland Park. With extensive and impressive credentials, Kevin's practice, Bergen CBT, specializes in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy where his work is focused on children and youth struggling with anxiety related difficulties such as panic disorder, specific phobias, generalized anxiety, social anxiety and stress.

Prior to founding his practice, Dr. Giangrasso served as Director of Supervision and Training in a large clinical practice in Manhattan, and as an Associate psychologist in

Englewood, New Jersey. He was also voted as one of New Jersey's favorite Kids Docs in New Jersey Magazine!

Dr. Kevin lives in Ridgewood with his wife, 5-year old son and two year old puppy, and is thrilled to be joining the West Bergen Board.



Message from our CEO

Thanks to generous donors and community supporters, West Bergen has embarked upon a complete renovation of our Center for Children & Youth (CCY), located in Ramsey. CCY is where much of our outpatient work with children and families takes place, and has always been a special place of hope and healing. While COVID forced us to close the CCY for two years, the closure provided us with an opportunity to reflect on how we might reimagine the space to make it even more warm and welcoming (and safe) once it reopened. That reimagined space is in the final stages of completion right now, and we can't wait to share it with all of you in the months ahead!

MICHAEL J. TOZZOLI,

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MSW, LCSW



West Bergen Mental Healthcare

THE WEST BERGEN ADULT DAY TREATMENT PROGRAM PRESENTS...

Join us as we kick-off our month long Art Display at The Stable, 259 Maple Avenue, Ridgewood

Thursday September 8th
5:00-7:00pm

Refreshments will be served



West Bergen Warmline

West Bergen has launched a free, "Warmline" support service for anyone in the community who is struggling with stress and anxiety. Available Monday through Friday from 9am – 5pm, calls will be received by a West Bergen Access Clinician and a trained West Bergen licensed therapist will return your call within 30 minutes. 201-688-7098