

# Insights

## THE INSIDE STORY

## West Bergen Clinical Training & Education Institute Continues to Shape the Future of Care

The mental health field faces unprecedented challenges, from rising rates of anxiety and depression to the difficulties in treating more complex psychiatric disorders. There is a surging demand for care, and the reality is there are simply not enough qualified, well trained professionals to address this growing need.

Psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners (APN's) are increasingly bridging the provider gap, and can play a vital role in providing clinical expertise, leadership and advocacy. Not only do they possess an advanced base of knowledge and skills, they can provide improved healthcare delivery because they can practice in various settings, increasing access to services.

The challenge is creating adequate and diverse learning opportunities and skilled training that will comprehensively provide the next generation with the tools to become competent, compassionate psychiatric care providers.

Enter the West Bergen Clinical Training & Education Institute, the Agency's training and education center. Created in 2024 to provide qualified internship opportunities to graduate level counseling students, the Institute has recently expanded to provide mental health preceptorships for psychiatric APN's in training.

A mental health preceptorship is a structured period where a student training to become a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) gains practical experience under the guidance of an experienced professional. It provides a student with hands-on experience, mentorship and a bridge between theoretical knowledge and real-world practice. West Bergen is uniquely qualified to provide a

comprehensive training environment because of the wide range of patients, diagnoses and treatment modalities PMHNP's in training will be exposed during their preceptorship.

Under the leadership of a group of highly qualified experts including the Agency's psychiatrists and current PMHNP's, the program provides psychiatric APN's in training with cutting edge supervision and training that will prepare them for diverse clinical settings.

West Bergen CEO Michael Tozzoli believes that this extension of the Institute's bandwidth is yet another example of the Agency's solution-focused approach to mental health treatment. "Our thought process in creating the Institute is to be proactive, identifying ways we can get more qualified and trained providers into communities. We view this as part of our core mission. Utilizing the strength of our resources and team, we are positioning West Bergen as a sought after training ground for a wide variety of mental health professionals, and effectively working towards overcoming the provider shortage."

(APN's) are increasingly bridging the provider gap, and can play a vital role in providing clinical expertise, leadership and advocacy.

## MarbleJam Honors CEO Michael Tozzoli

**MarbleJam Center for Arts & Enrichment** in Hackensack, New Jersey is dedicated to improving the lives of children, adolescents, and adults by creating a safe, creative space for individuals with special needs to be seen, heard and celebrated. Utilizing creative arts modalities, MarbleJam provides an avenue for individuals with differing abilities to express themselves and overcome their personal challenges. In May, at their 18th Annual Gala West Bergen CEO Michael Tozzoli was honored with **MarbleJam's Community Impact Award**. MarbleJam's President, Anna Villa-Bager said "Michael has led West Bergen with compassion and vision, expanding access to critical mental health services for children, teens and adults across our region. His advocacy for early intervention and whole-person care has made a lasting impact on the lives of thousands."

**Congratulations Michael!**



## VOLUNTEER CORNER

Did you know that volunteers can positively impact our client's journey to recovery?

For most of the clients in our Adult Day Treatment and Residential programs, West Bergen is their family.

These programs provide our clients with structure and continuity and help them develop and improve lifestyle skills such as shopping, cooking, money management, and self-care as well as build vocational skills and awareness. These programs benefit greatly from the West Bergen Volunteer Program.



When volunteers visit West Bergen, it gives our clients a chance to meet members of the community. During Career day, clients learn about different professions and career paths. Such exposure can be instrumental in

helping them set and achieve personal and professional goals.

Every month, a group of volunteers come in to prepare and serve a themed lunch for our clients. This event is more than just a meal - It offers a safe space to express feelings, share experiences, and receive encouragement. These interactions serve as building blocks of confidence for our clients.

Connection, Inspiration and Confidence are all beneficial for recovery. Each plays a crucial role in fostering resilience and promoting healing. Our robust volunteer program is an integral part of the recovery process. We are extremely grateful to those who donate their time and talent. Their contributions are immeasurable and their impact goes way beyond the time they spend at the center. To learn more about volunteering, please contact **Chrissie Lijoi at clijoi@westbergen.org**

## COMMUNITY CORNER

## The Junior League of Bergen County Creates "Melinda's Garden"

The Junior League of Bergen County has been a devoted partner and friend to West Bergen over the years and members are responsible for beautifying our Campus at 120 Chestnut as well as the Center for Children & Youth in Ramsey. But perhaps the project that has been the most meaningful for our clients and team is the creation of Melinda's Garden at our group home, The Homestead in Ramsey. Melinda Haft Sohval, our beloved APN passed away in September 2024, and Junior League members have helped us memorialize her by lovingly creating a beautiful garden that our group home clients, cared for with such compassion by Melinda can enjoy.



## MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Over the past year (including in this issue) you've heard about our groundbreaking training and education center, the West Bergen Institute for Clinical Training & Education. We're clearly expanding our mission from treatment to training, all with the goal of getting more skilled practitioners into our communities. We're also looking at ways we can grow our Community Outreach program to deliver an easily accessible menu of education opportunities for the general public we serve.

All of these initiatives are currently unfunded, but are being developed and cultivated by us because we walk the talk when it comes to mental health. We're actively engaged in being part of the solution, and that's where your support of our mission and our work is critical. Your donations will directly support the work we're doing at the Institute as well as the treatment programs and services we continue to provide throughout the community.

If you'd like more information on the work we are doing at the West Bergen Institute, or on any of the other programs and services we offer, please reach out. Talking about the hope and healing work our team does every day is part of the job we most appreciate.

## Young Adult Integrated Wellness Group

West Bergen is launching a Virtual Skills Based Program for ages 17 and older. The program's goal is to support young adults in strengthening coping skills, processing emotions, connecting with others and engaging in creative practices that promote mindfulness and personal growth.

### INTRODUCTION TO INTERVENTIONS INCLUDE:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Foundations
- Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) Foundations
- Emotional Processing
- Creative Self Expression
- Community Connection

The program will meet virtually, one day a week for approximately 1 hour (day/time will be based on the availability of group members).

**INTERESTED PEOPLE SHOULD CONTACT WEST BERGEN'S ACCESS DEPARTMENT AT 201-688-7098.**



**West Bergen's free "Warmline"** provides support to anyone in the community who is experiencing 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**