# The CONTINUE TO

Summer 2023

Exchange

Pursue some path, however narrow and crooked, in which you can walk with love and reverence.

- Henry David Thoreau

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

June 30th brought another fiscal year to an end and an opportunity to reflect on how this year has changed us. But first, it is wonderful to no longer have to wear a mask! Thanks to all of our employees who diligently worked to keep our clients and fellow staff safe and healthy during the pandemic. We made it through, although Covid-19 certainly left us with some residual challenges.

Because of our stellar reputation, Continuum rapidly expanded for many years. During 2022-23, we decided to slow it down a bit and opted not to open two programs we were chosen to develop and focus instead on investing in our infrastructure and our staff. It was clearly the right decision to make as we have strengthened our foundation and identified the areas where we want to focus our future efforts.



This led to establishing our new Training Department. Training is an enormous factor in assuring that our clients are well cared for and able to reach their goals. And training is just as important for our staff as it helps all of us to reach our professional goals. This coming year there will be several opportunities made available for high level leadership training for Continuum staff members interested in developing the skills that create leaders who are dynamic and committed to the future growth of Continuum.

This Fall we will be opening two exciting new DMHAS (Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse) initiatives. The first has been in the planning and development period for almost two years. This program will provide a therapeutic home for an elderly patient diagnosed with highly complex medical and psychiatric concerns. The second initiative will be opening a program in the middle of the State specifically for women with mental illness.

Our COMPASS program continues to thrive and will expand to provide additional hours of service later into the evening. Our new HUB for this program is currently under construction, thanks to the generous funding and support of the City of New Haven. Ongoing expansion is expected for this critical and vital service to New Haven.

This was just a brief snapshot of a few of our accomplishments over the last fiscal year and plans for the coming year. These successes – and many more – are only possible through the commitment, hard work and dedication of every Continuum employee. I am so very grateful for all they do, and I deeply appreciate their dedication and for being a part of the Continuum family.

I wish you all healthy, fun and happy Summer 2023!

President & CEO

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## **COMPASS** Expands

Thanks to the City of New Haven, Continuum acquired a new property as an expansion of our COMPASS (Compassionate Allies Serving Our Streets) Mobile Crisis program. The new house will be used as a 24-hour stabilization, evaluation, and treatment center where the COMPASS mobile crisis team, first responders, and even families can bring individuals undergoing a non-acute substance use or mental health crisis. It is an important addition for the community, as it provides a much needed alternative to unnecessary visits to the emergency room or the police station.

A team consisting of licensed clinicians, nurses, certified peers, and case managers will be there to provide all the services needed to evaluate each client and help them get the appropriate treatment, resources, and services needed to move on to a pathway of solid recovery. They will also benefit from wholesome food, showers, laundry, and a living room setting sheltering them from the outside elements. So many of the clients



served by COMPASS are homeless. They have nothing. So, when needed, the Center will provide a new set of clean clothes. The Center is expected to officially open at the end of 2023.

# Susan's Journey to Rebuild



Susan was homeless when Continuum's COMPASS Mobile Crisis program first met her. She had been on a sober path of recovery for four years and then she recently relapsed, which turned into a sad sequence of events that left her homeless. Susan had a history of mental illness. She found a bed at a local shelter, but a shelter mate robbed her. He took everything from her —her money, identification cards, and personal effects. She expressed her frustration and an altercation ensued. Local police were called, who then called Continuum's COMPASS program.

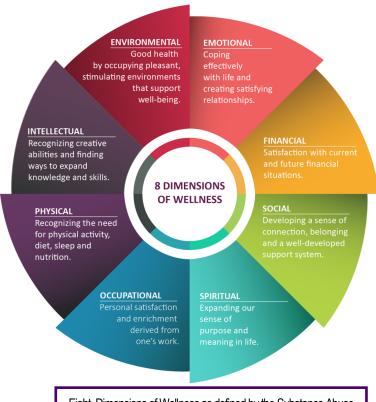
Susan was desperate, feeling paranoid, and had nowhere to turn and no one to trust. That's when COMPASS' licensed social workers and peers met her. Their patience and compassion gave Susan comfort and motivation. She expressed that she wanted to get clean again and get her life back. The team helped Susan to stabilize. They brought her to a safe home and found her a detox treatment program. They connected her to the resources and services she needed to begin anew. This is only the beginning of Susan's journey and COMPASS is right beside her, following up and helping her to rebuild her life.

# Health and Wellness is Contagious

In the last Newsletter, we introduced the Eight Dimensions of Wellness that are paramount to the Health and Wellness Department's purpose. The combined dimensions provide focus of helping our clients work toward living their best life and thriving in the community.

Since then, the department is happy to report that our clients, who were reluctant to participate in activities, almost rebellious at first, now look forward to a variety of stimulating and healthy activities.

At first, when the Wellness Team visited Dan (not his real name), he complained constantly about not wanting to move off the couch. They incorporated certain breathing techniques to calm him down enough that he was more cooperative about exercising. They also realized that he has a love for music. So, if it was music that motivated him, then music it was. Now, when he sees a member of the Wellness Team arrive, he is eager to grab his sneakers and go!



Eight Dimensions of Wellness as defined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)



They play his favorite music and he walks and sings all the while lighting up with his happy smile. What a difference it has made for his overall health.

He wasn't the only client who was reluctant. Another gentleman was not motivated to do much of anything. When he first started working with the Wellness Team, he would MAYBE walk halfway down the driveway before giving up. Fast forward and he is now walking at least four laps each week, and he challenges himself to do one more if he can. On days that he can't walk outside, he takes the initiative to ride the bicycle in the workout room. He is energized and feels great.

Focusing on other dimensions of wellness, John (not his real name) had been working for Amazon since June of 2022. He was on third shift so he had to sleep during the day. This was tough on him physically, emotionally and socially. The Wellness Team formed a resume-building group that provided expertise to clients who wanted to look for gainful employment. This particular individual did not realize all that he had been accomplishing with his work at Amazon. By the end of these group sessions, he had a stellar looking resume with impressive content. Right away, he got a new job, during daylight hours. He loves his new job and has a more healthy daily routine. What an impact the team has made!

## **Hearing Voices**

Have you ever heard a voice inside your head that wasn't your own? You may have experienced an auditory hallucination. The voice might have sounded like someone you know, making you do a double-take to check they hadn't come from behind you. Or maybe it sounded like a stranger, striking up a conversation or commenting on your choice of clothing.

Despite being relatively common, many people who hear voices, see visions, or have similar experiences feel alone. Fear of prejudice, discrimination, and being dismissed as 'crazy' can keep people silent. At a time when we are told that it is 'time to talk', it is important that anyone courageous enough to speak out is met with respect and empathy.

Hearing voices is keenly associated with certain psychiatric disorders or medical conditions such as bipolar disorder, psychotic depression, schizoid and schizotypal personality disorders, and schizophrenia.

People with these psychiatric conditions, like some of our clients, may hear a variety of noises and voices, which often get louder, meaner, and more persuasive over time. They may hear voices that are negative and upsetting. The voices can be threatening or say hurtful things. This can be frightening. Occasionally, however, the voices are pleasant or reciprocal.

People with schizophrenia often find it difficult to go to work or care for themselves and might depend on others for their daily living needs.

Our Training Department hosts "Hearing Voices" training for all staff to help them really get "in the mind" of our clients challenged with a serious mental illness. During the simulated experience, participants undertake a series of tasks, including social interaction in the community, a psychiatric

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interview, cognitive testing, and an activities group in a mock treatment program. The simulation experience is followed by a debriefing and discussion.



Staff experiencing "Hearing Voices" during training

Some common themes that some of our staff experience are physical symptoms such as raised blood pressure, shallow breathing and increased anxiety throughout the training experience.

One participant confessed that she never understood why people living with these voices couldn't just get and hold down a simple job, or why they ended up on the street. This experience, however, opened her mind. She realized the difficulties of filling out an application, let alone what it must be like to hold down a job while hallucinations speak obscenities and threats.

Another said that while he may have had the knowledge of hearing voices, now he has the wisdom and empathy; and empathy is essential for understanding and serving our clients.

# **Good Times Together**



#### The Health and Wellness Team Hosts Game Days



The Diversity Awareness Team Presents Culture Days



Follow us on Facebook for more pictures & videos: <u>www.Facebook.com/ContinuumConnecticut</u>

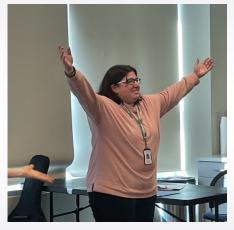
## Continuum's Got Talent!

Our clients love Talent Shows. The amount of time and effort they put into practicing their talent and preparing to present for the show is truly remarkable and it's a wonderful time for all to enjoy!

















## Torrie's Story

When Latoria, better known as "Torrie," came to Continuum's residential program from another agency 17 years ago, she had very little verbal ability. Her inability to use her voice caused her much frustration, which she often displayed with self-injurious behavior. The previous agency used food to calm her, and as a result, "Torrie" became severely overweight. At that time, it took up to four people to restrain her from her self-harm episodes.

Her developmental delays were first noted in early childhood. At age three Torrie began head banging which increased in frequency and severity over time. She didn't speak until she was five, and by then, her gross motor skills and attention span were noticeably delayed. It was also at age five that she began complaining about eye pain, caused by a blocked tear duct. Surgery was performed to correct the duct, but it also sparked a long process of maladaptive preoccupation with her eyes that continues to this day. Due to self-injurious behaviors directed at her face and eyes, she had a detached retina repaired which was followed by the removal of her right eye just one year later. With a history of multiple surgeries to correct her eyes, Torrie now wears protective goggles to protect her eyes and retain what vision she still has left.

Soon after Torrie entered Continuum's program, the staff became familiar with her triggers and could proactively deescalate her frustrations. The consistent support and skill helped Torrie to learn new coping skills she needed to control her aggressions and maintain a calm environment. Episodes of self-harm went from up to 15 times a day to now up to a maximum of only twice a month. She knows she is surrounded by people who are empathetic to her and sincerely care about her. They have also taught her the skills to self-advocate. Torrie is much more verbal and proactively initiates conversations with her housemates and staff. She lets staff know if she is feeling upset or overwhelmed and asks for help when she needs it, which is a great advancement.



Latoria and A'isha at "The Prom." Torrie wearing a new dress and "fancy hair"

Her current Program Manager, A'isha Frank, had just started her first year with Continuum 17 years ago when Torrie entered her program. They have been together all these years.

That consistency and dedication has helped Torrie grow tremendously along her journey. A'isha reports that Torrie loves to listen to music and her favorite artist is Mary J. Blige. "She also enjoys girly things and loves to get pampered with nail polish and 'fancy hair.' That's something we enjoy together," said A'isha.

Over the years, Torrie has evolved and flourished, and she is proud of her accomplishments. She has lost a lot of weight, exercises twice a day, and enjoys maintaining a healthy diet. Torrie even has a garden of her own that she cultivates each year producing vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, eggplant, and broccoli. She enthusiastically enjoys going on day trips to various places such as parks, beaches, miniature golfing, bowling etc. She was even on a bowling league for Special Olympics and still treasures the medal she won. She helps with the weekly cooking and takes pride in helping to maintain a clean house. She loves her home and her daily routines, as well as her social outlets. Torrie has transformed her life because the people around her have been transformational. She is surrounded by compassionate and committed staff who are determined that Torrie lives a fulfilled life of possibilities that would not have seemed possible those 17 years ago.

## **Pet Therapy**

The relationships between humans and dogs predates written history. Through the millennia, both species have developed a symbiotic relationship that has made canines highly dependent on humans for survival and to an extent, has made humans dependent on them. It's all about the relationship. Therapy dogs have been wonderful additions to our Continuum family. They help provide the sensory experience that produces changes in the human brain to protect us from the effects of adrenaline, while in a relationship that provides kindness and compassion to the person they are helping.

Our clients are delighted when our resident dog trainer Rista Luna, brings "Rosie" and "Ruthie" to them. They love to learn about them, teach them tricks and receive their adoration.



Here are examples of how "Continuum's" dogs have helped our clients.



A 36 year old client entered our service with a history of chronic mental illness and homelessness. As we got to know him, we learned of Sophie, his beloved dog who had been placed in a shelter when he was placed with us for treatment. We partnered with a rescue organization to get Sophie into a foster home that will allow her to visit her person regularly. Sophie's visits are an important part of his treatment plan as she provides the motivation and encouragement he needs.

A 20 year old client came to us with a history of childhood trauma and a severe eating disorder. Enter Ruthie one of our therapy dogs. Our client took to Ruthie and they now enjoy a relationship that works for both of them. Ruthie enjoys her sleepovers together and helps her person by preventing her from engaging in self-harm behaviors, maintaining emotional regulation, and providing structure as our client learns to "adult."





A 19 year old client with a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder, chronic self-harm and behavioral problems entered our care. Rosie is a large six year old dog that usually does not approach anyone independently. But at the initial encounter, Rosie walked right up to this client and sat in front of him encouraging him to pet her. Now, Rosie tolerates his hugs and kisses and helps discourage and minimize his self-harm and attention-seeking behaviors. Truly, pet therapy can seem magical at times.

# 7 Segments of Self-love

What is this idea of self-love? Throughout our lives we are automatically programmed to focus on what's wrong with us. In school, at home, it seems like everywhere we are aware of where we fall short. No wonder so many of us are plagued with anxiety and depression. But what if we were to shift the focus to what's good about us? Think about what's good about you! Take a moment to consider where you believe you are in each of these categories. This is an exercise in self-love. Go ahead...write it down.

1. **Self-awareness:** Who are you? How do you influence the world?

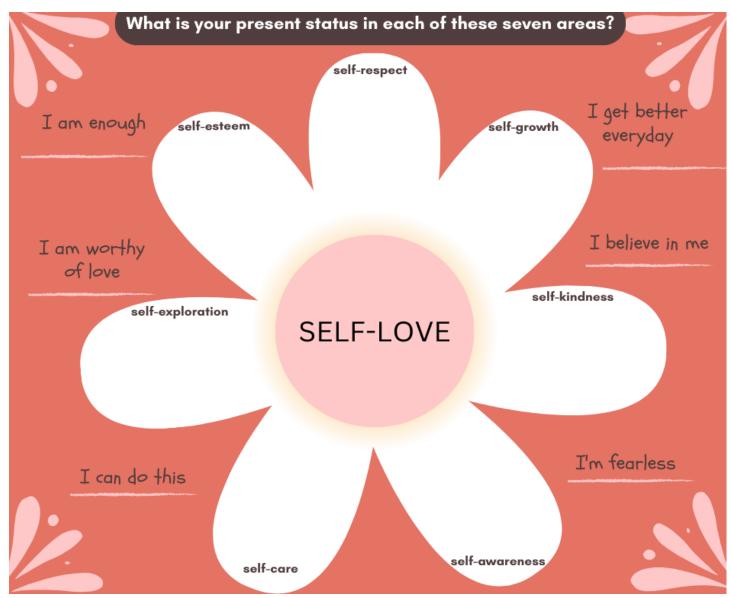
2. **Self-exploration:** What do you do to learn about yourself in order to improve who you are?

3. **Self-care:** How do you take care of your overall wellness?

4. Self-esteem: How do you view your overall self?
5. Self-kindness: How do you show yourself friendliness?
6. Self-respect: How do you to advocate for yourself?

7. **Self-growth:** How do you seek opportunities to learn, love, and thrive?

Shainna Ali, PhD - "the SELF LOVE WORKBOOK"



# A Great Morning for Lucien

Lucien starts his mornings watching the local news until it's time to head out each day. He listens to the

weather, the traffic, and smiles at the familiar faces on T.V. So does his Mom, Rose. For years Rose had hoped that Lucien could meet his favorite morning friend. That he could show Zany Scot Haney his "fancy suit." And one day it finally happened! The staff collectively pulled off a Christmas Adventure for Lucien.

But what they thought would be a simple Meet-And-Greet in the lobby between two friends; turned out to be a welcome into the studio and a chance to stand behind the WFSB Weather Desk.





Scot welcomed Lucien and his entourage like they were all old friends. Other familiar faces from the news crew greeted him, watched, and smiled. Lucien high-fived his morning friend! They chatted about the weather. They waved and said "Hi Mom!" It was a very good morning.

A special thanks goes to the Continuum Staff who helped make his wish come true.

## Live Longer with Kindness

The world needs kindness now, more than ever.

Kindness is the art of holding a spirit of being considerate, helpful, and generous without any expectation in return. It is a way of being. A way that benefits both the recipient and the giver. According to research conducted by the Mayo Clinic and Scientific American, kindness can change your brain and your physical health. It may lower cortisol and blood pressure, reduce pain, anxiety, depression, and boost your immune system, according to Dr. Harding of the Mayo Clinic. Research also indicates that individuals with diabetes who practice compassion for self and others helped to decrease A1C scores.

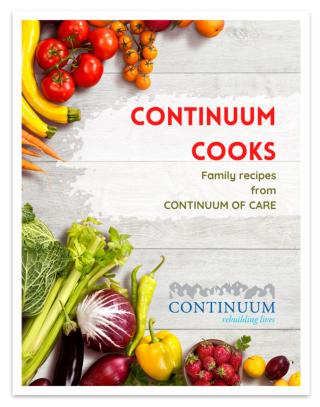
A study published in the 2019 Psychoneuroendocrinology Journal showed that just a six-week workshop on cultivating kindness through loving-kindness meditation helped protect telomeres — and that may slow the biological aging process.

Kindness helps create a sense of positive social connection, which all humans need. It can foster a sense of purpose; and people with a sense of purpose are more likely to live longer, according to one study of 13,000 adults.

Each day, when you wake up, think about how you will show your spirit of kindness.



### **Continuum Cooks**



Preparing and eating healthy food is paramount to our programs. So many of our clients love to be involved in cooking healthy meals and most of our programs enjoy planting fresh vegetable gardens in the Spring.

So we thought...why not create a cookbook of our favorite recipes for all to share and enjoy.

In our Continuum Cooks, you will find recipes from some of our best chefs including CEO Patti Walker who is the queen of cooking! With approximately 150 recipes from artichoke fritters to angel pie, we've got something yummy for everyone!

When you purchase our cookbook, all the proceeds go back into our programs for our clients.

Go to: www.continuumct.org/cooks to purchase your copy today!

## Summer Never Tasted So Good

Please enjoy these Summer recipes taken from our Continuum Cooks Book.

#### Pulled Pork

1 large pork shoulder 1 bottle bold barbeque sauce Lots of dehydrated onion flakes 1 cup apple cider vinegar Water or apple juice (use judgement) Lots of fresh garlic or garlic powder

Put pork in slow cooker or Dutch oven. Cook at 300 degrees until pork is falling off the bone (at least 4 hours). Shred with a fork. Great on sliders.



Yield: Serves up to 20

#### Bean and Pea Salad

2-3 stalks celery-chopped 6-8 green onions chopped or 1 med. onion-chopped

1 can green beans

1 can kidney beans

1 can bean sprouts

1 can water chestnuts

1 green pepper-chopped

1 can tiny peas

1 can artichoke hearts

1 can mushrooms

#### Marinade

3/4 cup sugar

2/3 cup white vinegar

1/4 Tablespoon celery seed

1/3 cup salad oil



- Mix marinade and pour over vegetables
- Let stand at least 24 hours—it's better the longer it stands
- You can vary the number of cans and vegetable to suit your own taste

Yield: Serves 6-8

## **Saving Lives**

He was watching TV in the living room that evening and drifted off to sleep on the couch. He looked so comfortable, snoring away peacefully. The staff on duty, John Quiroz and Faride (Mercedes) Nur, didn't want to disturb Joe (not his real name) until just before their shift change. They kept watch over him, while also performing their continuous half-hour rounds, checking in in on each of the other clients sleeping in their own bedrooms.

Joe had been sleeping for a while, still snoring. But then something changed. John and Mercedes noticed the snoring wasn't the same. Something was wrong. They tried to wake him, but he was unresponsive and he stopped breathing. Quickly, both staff started to

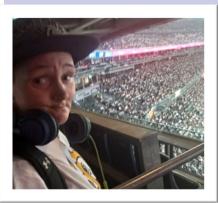


move him to the floor. Joe was a big guy, and another client in the house jumped to help get him to the ground. John started chest compressions, and Mercedes pressed the panic button in the office and called 911. Mercedes performed rescue breaths, and the client who had assisted continued to stay on the phone with 911 dispatcher until EMS arrived. The staff kept at it, determined to revive him. Approximately 10 minutes into the CPR, the ambulance arrived and the EMS team took over with mechanical CPR equipment to do the compressions. They got a pulse and carried Joe off to the hospital. He arrived in critical condition, but alive!

At this point, a blood clot is the suspected culprit. It could have been anything, and it could have been anyone. We have countless stories of employees saving our client's lives. But that night, it was Joe with a possible blood clot, and it was John and Mercedes who were tuned in to their client, recognizing what was normal and not normal. They paid attention and acted with urgency and skill.

John and Mercedes were heroes that night. Other nights, other staff have been tuned in and quickly jumped to save their client's life. Continuum's clients are often fragile and medically compromised, and that's one reason why CPR training and continuous tuning into their clients are required by all program staff. Continuum staff are heroes trained to not only help rebuild lives, but also be prepared to save them when they are presented with the opportunity. We are grateful and proud of our very special heroes at Continuum of Care.

## Responding to Simple Needs



Becky is a beloved client. Staff rally around her to keep her motivated, especially because now Becky is battling Stage IV cancer. She has always dreamed of going to a Yankees game. There was no way that Becky could afford tickets, so staff made an urgent plea for help. They were enthusiastically answered by generous employees, families of employees, and a vendor. It was awestriking! As a result, Becky, her good friend, and staff traveled to Yankee stadium, sat in a private corporate box stocked with all you can eat (thanks to WB Mason), and watched the Yankees beat the Red Sox! All the while, she was adorned with donated swag and a huge smile. What an incredible gift! It's an amazing sight when kind-hearted people respond to a simple need.

## Young Adult Entrepreneurs

Our Young Adult Services (YAS) clients have been in the entrepreneurial spirit with many individual and group projects. From making guitar pics, t-shirts, magnets, jewelry, baked goods, cotton candy and popcorn for sale, they have created a variety of entrepreneurial opportunities. Did you know that as a group they formed a business called "So Jelly" where they sell a variety of homemade jams? I highly recommend the peach! These young adults are motivated and always looking for new ideas. According to Beth Hughes, Program Director

for YAS, "If they have an idea, then we fully support them. We get the funding to purchase the materials they need to get started and we give it a go

and see how it does."

The YAS group is responsible for a snack cart business where they all take part in keeping inventory, restocking, budget sheets, deposits, and earning some money while learning. YAS also designs t-shirts that they supply to

Continuum's cleaning and grounds crews.



Some of our young adults selling handmade wooden Christmas signs, candle holders and of course the jams at our Holiday Bazaar

The real excitement happens when they get to take their wares to market. "YASBIZ Marketplace" is an opportunity not just for Continuum's YAS programs but all YAS programs throughout the state to come together in one location as vendors. The Marketplace takes place every three months. Here they can buy and sell. It gives them a real experience to learn how to make products and money, as well as how to communicate and socialize in different ways. The Marketplace also provides them with speaking opportunities where they can pick a topic to prepare and present. For example, one client recently presented on How to Make a Dream Catcher. That type of experience and exposure is so important for our Young Adults and they are enthused to keep learning more.

7 Ways to Create a Peaceful Space

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Tip #1 Clutter-Free	Start out by decluttering your space. Less is more.	661
Tip #2 Memories	Do you have any fond memories of places that felt calm when you were	
	growing up? Try to infuse that into your current space.	
Tip #3 Life	Plants can add a calming feeling to a room. Aloe, Snake and Jade plants are all	7
	relatively easy to take care of.	- 5
Tip #4 Scent	Adding some calming scents to your space is a great idea when you need to	
	relax.	
Tip #5 Color	Think about the types of colors that make you feel good and add more of	
	them into your space.	
Tip#6Sound	Music is one of the most comforting things out there. Find a great playlist and	
-T	use that as a tool to unwind.	BO A
Tip #7 Warmth	Think about ways to add warmth to your space. Enjoy a cup of hot tea or hot	
-	chocolate or simply don cozy socks at the end of the day.	A COL

## FENTANYL – Nothing Good Ever Comes of It!

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) states that fentanyl is the single deadliest drug threat our nation has ever encountered. In 2022, the DEA seized enough fentanyl to kill everyone in the U.S. Just two milligrams of fentanyl (that amount fits on the tip of a pencil) is considered a potentially deadly dose. Illegal fentanyl (not prescribed by a physician) is now the leading cause of death for people in the U.S. ages 18-49. Further, the overdose death rate nearly quadrupled from 2016-2021, and it continues to be on the rise.

Illicit fentanyl is used to make fake prescription pills and is also found in common street drugs. Often individuals consume it unknowingly.

Sadly, we have witnessed clients and family members overdose, sometimes fatally, on fentanyl. The drug's usage has gained significant popularity to the point of Congress calling it a crisis. Nothing ever good comes of it.

There is something that can help in the unfortunate scenario of an overdose — a medicine called Naloxone, also known as Narcan. It is available through your pharmacist without a prescription, and can be given to a person to reverse a fentanyl overdose. It is wise to keep it on hand if you live with someone who is taking opioids.

Educate yourselves and your family on what fentanyl is, how to avoid it, how to potentially reverse an overdose, and available treatments should an addiction arise. Here are some online resources to start with:

cdc.gov/stopoverdose/fentanyl/index.html
cdc.gov/stopoverdose/naloxone/index.html
https://www.axios.com/2022/12/20/fentanyl-drug-dea-seizures-2022www.naturalhigh.org/

## **Family Education Webinars**

Rista Luna, MA, Family Services Liaison for Continuum Recovery Services, hosted several helpful webinars geared toward helping families navigate their current circumstances with a loved one diagnosed with mental illness. The webinars provide valuable resources for families looking for answers on a variety of topics including:

- The Diagnosis
- Depression
- Anxiety/Obsessive Compulsive Disorders
- Psychosis/Psychotic Disorders
- Co-occurring Disorders
- Medication Management
- Individual and Group Therapy Modalities
- Making Healthcare Affordable
- Patient-Centered Care and Community Integration



As a Family Member, it's difficult to navigate your way through understanding and helping a loved one who is diagnosed with a mental illness

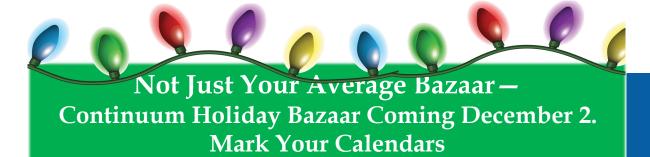
The webinars were recorded and are now available on our website at:

www.continuumct.org/events



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www.ContinuumCT.org/Donate



#### Newsletter **Committee**

Deborah Cox Claudine Elliot

#### Contributors

Susan Kelly—Seven Elements of Self-Love Yichu Xu—Susan's Journey to Rebuild A'isha Frank, Lauren Goldberg—Torrie's Story Rista Luna—Pet Therapy Beth Hughes—Young Adult Entrepreneurs

So many individuals we see in crisis are homeless. We connect them to appropriate living environments, therapy, insurance, healthcare, and financial benefits so that they can finally move forward in rebuilding a new way of living healthy, safe, and hopeful.

> Won't you consider a gift today?

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