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# CoPilot

ON THE COVER

## NEW SERVICES



Last year saw MFS launch a successful program called CoPilot. Funded by the State's Medicaid Transformation initiative, this service aims to help clients navigate the often stressful transition from hospitals like Cheshire Medical Center back to the community. With more careful planning for supports and resources, people with complex health needs might not need to return to costly services like New Hampshire Hospital. CoPilot is a partnership with the Monadnock Collaborative and CMC/DHK. It is the first of three projects MFS will start thanks to this new source of revenue.

*On the cover, members of the CoPilot team (front row) Jennifer Seher, Jena Rutter, and Lorraine Bellows from the Monadnock Collaborative; (back row) MFS staff Janet Lawrence, Glenn Lawrence and Sarah Goldsmith. On this page, new team member Rebecca Barishian (far right) joins a staff meeting.*



## Keeping People Connected



# A Neighbor-In-Deed

Sometimes a neighbor in need is a neighbor in deed. Eight years ago, 80 year old Felix called the Monadnock RSVP Volunteer Center looking for assistance. Like many older adults, Felix was the primary care giver for his wife Helen; having no family close by, he needed help looking after her while he went to his own doctors' appointments and to give her a fresh companion to talk to.

Even though volunteer Kathleen Kennedy Burke was already assisting another woman, she asked to be kept in mind should anyone else come along that she could also help. Soon she started visiting with Helen and Felix once a week, she would bring a meal and keep Helen company while Felix took some time for himself outside of the house. A few months later, when asked during our annual survey how things were going, Felix wrote, "They don't get any better than Kathleen. Things are going great!"

Four years of visits later, after much food and friendship shared, Helen passed away. Kathleen felt compelled to stay on in her role, now providing much needed companionship for Felix.

## Worries surface

As the years went by and their relationship became closer, Kathleen and Felix developed a bond exemplified by funny stories shared, bargain-hunting excursions and good natured teasing, particularly about her driving. Their connection and friendship was special to both of them, but clearly more vital to Felix.

Last February, Kathleen reached out to tell us that things seemed off with Felix -- he appeared to be losing weight and he wasn't keeping to his routine. The food she was bringing him was going untouched and she knew he was starting to go to more doctor's appointments. Kathleen expressed concern that he wasn't understanding what the doctors were telling him, and she hoped that he would allow her to come more often and accompany him to his doctor's appointments.

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## He passed away peacefully

As Felix's health continued to decline it was revealed that he had entered the end stages of cancer. Kathleen reached out to his daughter and son and they were able to become more of a presence in their father's life. Kathleen started calling Felix daily to check on him and then one day the phone went unanswered. Alarmed, Kathleen went and found that Felix had collapsed. Summoning the ambulance, Kathleen called Felix's family who were able to arrive at the hospital in time to be with him for his final days.

## A final ride

A month later Kathleen's service was once again requested. "I thought Felix and I were done" she reported with a smile, "but a late request from the family changed that. It seems they were reluctant to trust his remains to a delivery service so they asked me if I could possibly drive to the NH Cremation Society in Brattleboro to retrieve his ashes. It was the most peaceful ride we ever had together as he was unable to direct me or criticize my driving!"

Over the 8 years Kathleen spent with Helen and Felix through the Neighbors-In-Deed program, their relationship changed and grew, with short visits and a friendly meal and the occasional adventure lasting for hours, Kathleen became a critical part of Helen and Felix's world. She gave them companionship, assistance, and in the end a critical awareness; they gave her friendship, and a sense of fulfillment knowing she was making all the difference in somebody's life.

*We currently  
have a need for  
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## How you can help

Neighbors-In-Deed is an independent living program operated by Monadnock RSVP Volunteer Center, a program of Monadnock Family Services, a Monadnock United Way agency. The relationships formed and the help rendered can be small and immediate or develop over time, but each interaction is vital in its own way. Through the simple act of sharing a cup of coffee or helping with a grocery run you can help to change a person's life.

Since 1994 Neighbors-In-Deed has been providing ongoing one-to-one companionship and support by visiting, helping with grocery shopping and errands, driving to medical appointments, giving caregivers a break, and completing light handyman repairs. We provide these services at no cost to veterans and military family members to help them remain in their homes as long as possible. In the past year alone, Neighbors-In-Deed Volunteers have provided over 2,400 hours of care to 60 care recipients throughout the Monadnock Region.

We currently have a need for volunteers all over Cheshire and western Hillsborough counties and would love to talk with you about the next steps involved in becoming a Neighbors-In-Deed volunteer. To learn more about our program visit [www.monadnockvolunteercenter.org](http://www.monadnockvolunteercenter.org) or check us out on Facebook by searching Monadnock RSVP Volunteer Center.

# Art Walk

2018

By Mary Delisle

## A Life Changing Experience for Two Artists



Friday evening, June 1<sup>st</sup>, was bustling on Main Street in Keene as art enthusiasts and curiosity seekers strolled up and down, stopping at window after window to view the immense variety of local artists whose work would be on display for the next 10 days.

For MFS clients **Thomas Parisi** and **Mary Goodell**, this was an especially exciting time because they were among the many other artists participating in **Art Walk** and viewed their art on display for the first time in a structured art show.

Tom identifies himself as an artist. In the past he had done street art using chalk and charcoal. **Art Walk** was the first time he participated in a mainstream art festival in NH.

He said that seeing his pieces on display made a difference in how he views his art and our staff continues to witness how many areas of his life have greatly improved since the display. He initiates action rather than waiting for suggestions, and has become better organized. These changes culminated in Tom getting a job, thus achieving his first goal! He is now working on college applications. Tom sits and stands taller, his posture noticeably improved causing one staff member to comment “you could say he is taking ownership of his space”.

When Mary saw her art on view for the first time, she got teary eyed at the thought of her work being shown among the many other talented local artists.

Mary has a history with art, having once had an online craft business. Unfortunately that business has been hindered due to her mental illness. Since seeing her work on display, Mary has a newfound energy for her recovery. She is returning to crochet, doing more arts and craft activities and is better able to concentrate on complex and intricate art projects.

Mary more readily smiles and laughs. She has become more open with her therapist and is approaching her mental health healing plan differently.

Both Tom and Mary shared “I realized that I could do something most people couldn’t”. They have a new view of themselves and the confidence that comes with it.

An avid quilter, Mary donated this work to MFS for our offices in Keene.



# When Death looks better than Life

by Phil Wyzik MA

*When it comes to bowling, a high score is good. In golf on the other hand, a high score is bad. Turning to health, the Monadnock area is getting a score and, compared to other public health regions in New Hampshire, young people here are leading the state; it's not a game and it's not good.*

The 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS) shows information about a variety of health and safety issues facing our kids in grades 9 through 12. This national opinion-gathering exercise gives a glimpse into the status of important things like substance abuse, smoking, nutrition, relationships and sexual behavior. From 1991 through 2017, the YRBSS has collected data from more than 4.4 million high school students in more than 1,900 separate surveys. It was developed in 1990 to monitor health behaviors that significantly contribute to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States and is organized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Kids in the Greater Monadnock Public Health Network in every school in the region responded to survey questions last year. We are the highest of the nine regions when it comes to students who revealed they “attempted suicide one or more times during the last 12 months.” In our homes and neighborhoods, 7.8 kids endorsed this question, while elsewhere in the Granite State, only 5.9 did so. This means that kids in our area are slightly higher than the national average. We are also the highest when students share that they “purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die one or more times in the last 12 months” and “felt sad or hopeless (almost every day for 2 or more weeks in a row so that they stopped doing some usual activities)” during the last year.

## Too many for Fenway

Suicide is a national health problem not many people talk about. Each year, about 44,000 people die from suicide. If you wanted to get that many people in one place, you might rent Fenway Park but 7000 people would be waiting outside. From 1999 to 2016, there has been a 48.3% increase in deaths by suicide in our State, according to the CDC, about the same jump as Vermont. Our rate of increase makes us one of the highest in the nation.

The NH Suicide Prevention Council, the State chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and the Youth Suicide Prevention Assembly recently published 2016 results about Granite Staters, using data from the National Center for Health Statistics. It reveals that suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for teens and young adults between the ages of 10 and 34, and the 9th leading cause for all age groups.

w a n t i n g   t h e   p a i n   t o   s t o p

"The pain that brings someone to this choice eclipses the reason to live," says Jude Grophear, Program Director at Monadnock Area Peer Support Agency. From a rich fund of personal and professional experience, as well as a suicide attempt survivor, she contends that before anyone can effectively help a person cope with such powerful desires to terminate consciousness, you first have to validate the person's suffering. "A message of hope – that life may still have plenty of happiness in store – comes after a genuine sense of connection and the authenticity that comes from honesty and respect."

## More than cheerleading

Grophear knows that coming through powerful internal pain is possible, but demands much more than optimistic platitudes, exhortations to 'think positive', or well-intended but easily rejected suggestions for a quick fix to the hardships, traumas or persistent bleak and big emotions that make death seem attractive. People thinking about suicide desperately "want the pain to stop," she says, and that might happen when they find a new connection to themselves and to others. "Feeling connected to yourself is really important. I think for me it was coming back to a space where I felt like people cared and then coming to a space where I cared and felt I had a sense of agency in my life and I could tolerate the pain and distress that I was experiencing. People talk about making friends with the darkness, people talk about pain being a dark passenger. When people are in the darkness with you--that's connection, and that lets you sit with the discomfort of the pain in your life."

Connections to nature and to others are, for some, a way to befriend something positive. "We have to be realistic too," she says, because "the pain might never go away."

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It may be there for a long time. I think that healing is not linear, but cyclical – with its ups and downs. That’s where making friends with the light comes in. You embrace the idea that the future could be better and that you could be happy.”

## The CDC would agree

The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, an arm of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, recently issued a technical package of policy, programs and practices that can help prevent self-directed injury. “Promoting connectedness among individuals and within communities may protect against suicide,” it states, among other distinct efforts. Community engagement can prove vital.

The 2017 report describes a community project in Philadelphia that was undertaken between 1999 and 2008. Residents and others mounted a large scale green-up initiative that cleaned and re-landscaped 4,436 lots in four sections of the city. In the process of restoring 7.8 million square feet, researchers studying these volunteers found significant reductions in self-reported levels of stress, a factor implicated in suicide, and increase in physical exercise, something considered to be a protective factor in comparison to people not engaged in this work.

So if connections count, how can our community make them happen for everyone, but especially for people who might be at risk for suicide?

## Connections Count

First, we might make a plan. In the next Community Health Improvement plan, the priority section on behavioral health needs to include a strong call to action about the negative health aspects of loneliness, isolation and alienation as they influence not only suicide but a host of other problems.

Second, we might look at all our social institutions – schools, businesses, municipal governments, churches and neighborhoods – through a new lens of connections. Are they welcoming enough, friendly enough, safe enough to make all of our citizens feel like they have a place?

Third, we might support our social safety net programs like Monadnock Area Peer Support Agency and others who are on the forefront of creating welcoming experiences and opportunities for connection for people, like all of us, making friends with the light.



Phil Wyzik has been the CEO of Monadnock Family Services for the last five years. He has worked in the community mental health field in three states since 1986.

# Another TAG Summer

Every year, Therapeutic Activity Group (TAG) is a summer camp experience offered by our children's team. We operate in Keene and Winchester, in facilities donated by local churches. At each location, we have nine or more children supervised by three staff members. We meet for two three-week sessions, Monday through Thursday, from 10:00-2:00. The children's activities include arts and crafts, hiking, storytelling, swimming, and trips to the museum and playground. Through these activities, we teach skills necessary to address symptoms, participate in teamwork, distress tolerance, and pro-social behavior. In summer 2017, the participating children came from Keene, Swanzey, Richmond, Winchester, Hinsdale, Troy, Marlborough, Gilsum, and Walpole.



*TAG campers enjoying Robin Hood Park in Keene*

Thinking about your health?

# Think Meditation

by Dave Tenney, Ph.D

What happens when you find a quiet place, an object or thought to dwell on, a passive attitude, and a comfortable position? The answer is a lot more than you might appreciate.

Meditation is a practice that has been used for thousands of years for a variety of purposes. It has often been used by various spiritual, or philosophical traditions to cultivate a greater sense of God's presence, the oneness of life, or increased self-discipline, awareness, and inner peace. However, meditation does not have to be associated with any of this because it is increasingly being used in the everyday life of many people for many various purposes, including as a tool to promote health.

Developed over centuries, there are many different forms of meditation to help achieve a variety of goals. Those who regularly practice it share some common experiences such as feeling greater relaxation, less emotional reactivity, and a general sense of greater wellbeing or of "coming home" as the author and psychologist Lawrence LeShan characterized it in his classic book, *How to Meditate*.

## New Art and Science

In the last fifty years or so there has been a very significant increase in the amount of research on the art and science of meditation in its various forms that has identified numerous benefits. There is now an extensive body of solid research evidence that regularly practicing meditation can result in many benefits including greater autonomic nervous system balance, improved functioning of several regions of the brain and its neural pathways, brainwave activity, and the brain regions responsible for emotions. All of these can combine in ways that help increase levels of relaxation, lower heart rate and blood pressure, improve concentration, attention, and emotional stability, which in turn help people to more effectively deal with life stressors, anger, impulse control, addictions, pain, and sleep problems.

In addition, there are various specific kinds of meditation that can be employed to facilitate greater empathy, love and compassion for self and others, insight, problem solving, and self-acceptance. Research is increasingly showing that some specific meditations have been found helpful for specific mental health challenges. For example, Mindfulness meditation is regularly used to treat borderline personality disorder, Lovingkindness meditation for veterans with PTSD, and Transcendental meditation for overcoming substance abuse.

## 4 elements of Relaxation Response

a quiet environment

an object to dwell upon

a passive attitude

a comfortable position



## Simple steps

So, what is meditation and how do you do it? One of the earlier researchers and writers on meditation, Herbert Benson of Harvard Medical School, identified four elements for facilitating what he called the “Relaxation Response” that are generally applicable for an approach to meditation: A quiet environment, an object to dwell upon, (whether on a word like “one,” a brief prayer, a candle, a bodily process like the breath, or simply the flow of thoughts), a passive attitude, and a comfortable position.

In order to help you personally experience what meditation is, I would like to invite you to stop reading, follow those four factors, and allow yourself to be more fully in the present moment as it unfolds into the next. Then attentively but passively (without judging), simply observe, or notice, what comes into your awareness, whether it be a passing thought, a physical feeling, or an emotion. If you become distracted and lose your focus of attention, gently remind yourself to “begin again,” and continue on for a minimum of five to ten minutes or longer. I also encourage setting a time for you to continue practicing once or twice on a daily basis for a while to more fully appreciate the experience.



Dave Tenney, PH.D. is the Director of Acute Care / Emergency Services at MFS, has been practicing various forms of meditation for about 50 years, has received formal training by several meditation teachers, and applies various forms of meditation as an adjunct to psychotherapy for a variety of clinical problems.

# Celebration



## It takes a team

Our Annual Staff Wellness Day took place on June 8th at Pilgrim Pines Conference Center on Swanzey Lake. Like the last four years, people could experience workshops around nutrition, exercise, self-defense, yoga and even get a chair massage. For those who wanted recreation, there were bike rides, kayaks and games. We traditionally recognize three staff member for exemplary effort and so honored Christine Selmer, Jennifer Patek, and Ann Forester. We also celebrated anniversary milestones for 16 employees. Wellness Day would not be possible were it not for the generosity of the **Alice Circle**, who provides the funding for this event each year so that we can honor our hard-working and dedicated staff.

*Multi-colored t-shirts represent a visual blending of our MFS teams coming together.*

*Our Mission is to be a source of health and hope for people and the communities in which they live, particularly as it pertains to mental illness.*

*We create services that heal, education that transforms, and advocacy that brings a just society for everyone.*



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