

Published Quarterly for Friends and Supporters of CONTACT We Care, Inc.

CONTACT Honors its Volunteers

On Thursday, March 10, CONTACT We Care recognized its volunteers for their service and achievements at a lovely reception and award ceremony. More than 70 CONTACT Listeners, board members, staff and spouses braved a dark and stormy night. They were welcomed into the lavish and eclectic James Ward Mansion at 169 E. Broad Street in Westfield. Occupying the top two floors of the building, the Mansion is a unique catering facility designed as a residence where guests are welcome to roam throughout and appreciate the period furniture, artwork and architectural details. The Mansion's sizeable dining table was laid with a delicious spread of appetizers—from

Volunteer Recognition (continued on page 5)



CONTACT Listeners Jim Stewart (standing) and Jim Lenox were recognized for their service at CONTACT's Volunteer Recognition Reception on March 10. Stewart has achieved 1000 hours of service and Lenox 500 hours. Their names go on plaques in the CONTACT phone room. They are shown here with their wives, Eileen Lenox (center) and Mary Stewart (right).

Board Transitions

At the 36th Annual Meeting of CONTACT We Care on March 10, the board bade farewell to three departing directors and welcomed three new ones. Board members Maureen Kehoe, Jim McKnight, and Sharon Stockwell rotated off the board at the completion of their service. Replacing them are:

Nancy Birkenstock, a Vice President at Chubb & Son Inc. Nancy holds a NJ Property and Casualty Insurance Producer License and is a member of the Association of Professional Insurance Women. She earned her B.A. from the University of Scranton. Nancy and her husband

reside in Martinsville with their two daughters.

Kim DeFronzo, R.Ph., is a registered pharmacist with an MBA in marketing as well. She is currently a project leader for inVentiv Health. She and her husband Carl reside in Mountainside with their four children.

Geoff McCarthy is an attorney with Nichols, Thomson, Peek & Phelan in Westfield. He joined CONTACT in 2008 as a volunteer listener and has subsequently served on several Board Committees. Geoff lives in Westfield with his wife Leslie, where they are members of St. Helen's Church. ☎

Welcome Class 79

As of December 2010, a dynamic new group of CONTACT Listeners has joined the ranks of CONTACT We Care volunteers. CONTACT training coordinator Sue Fasano describes Class 79, which graduated 23 trainees, as very enthusiastic and committed. In fact, nearly all Class 79 volunteers have already completed the first phase of their internship, with several highly motivated individuals also having completed the second phase.

An intern transition team, consisting of volunteers Terry Tuthill, Fran McTernan, Debra McCardle and Megan Accardi, was established to facilitate the scheduling of interns and TAs and get new volunteers through phase one of their internships as expediently as possible. In the second phase, CONTACT scheduling coordinator Barbara Kreder helps interns navigate CONTACT's data management system, iCarol, and find other volunteers to work alongside. This new system has clearly proved to work better than the old one of having new volunteers schedule themselves, yet all agree that the success rate seen would not be possible without the core dedication of the new listeners themselves.

Members of Class 79 are: Tynesha Adams, Punit Arora, Jessica Batinjane, Jane Berlant, Jennifer Carrino, Linda Ferguson, Sandra Goodman, Allison Hagan, Aizza Hassan, Andrea Jestin,

Class 79 (continued on page 5)

CONTACT We Care, Inc.
P.O. Box 2376
Westfield, NJ 07091
908/301-1899

Hotline number:
908/232-2880 or 1-800-SUICIDE

Board of Trustees and Staff

President

Karen Yutsus
Novartis

Vice President

Jeffrey M. Feldman
*Retired Telecommunications
Executive*

Secretary

Geoff McCarthy
Nichols, Thomson, Peek & Phelan

Treasurer

Susan Sperling
Dimensional Management
Nancy Birkenstock
Chubb & Son

Kim DeFronzo, RPh, MS, MBA
Merck

Howard Frisch
uReach Technologies

Joan G. Morgan, Psy.D.
Psychologist

Leesa Nash, MBA
*Johnson & Johnson Group of
Consumer Companies*

Joseph Swingle
Grubb & Ellis

David Owens
Executive Director

Susan Fasano
Training Director

Wendi Rothstein
Clinical Director

Dana Potts
Operations Manager

From the Executive Director:

The Polaroid Connection

When we received an “over the transom” donation earlier this year from a new donor — a donor we had never heard of — we had to find out more. What prompted Rosenblatt Securities to give us \$1,000? Their gift was accompanied by a letter from the Chief Operating Officer, Joseph Gawronski, explaining that the company had decided to make donations to charity in lieu of holiday gifts and that we were one of the organizations they had chosen to benefit. The gift represented individual donations from a group of employees listed by name in the letter. The balance came from the company and was given in memory of Kenneth Jordan, someone probably a suicide who may have been a colleague of those who donated.

I sent a formal thank you letter and then followed that a few days later with a call to Mr. Gawronski, explaining my curiosity and a desire to know more about their generosity. He revealed that he and his family live in Westfield. His wife, he said, could fill me in a bit more on the story and he would have her get in touch with me. That night, I participated in an orientation and screening for potential volunteers at our customary venue in Westfield, the First Baptist Church. While waiting for the event to begin I stood in the hallway outside the lounge where we were meeting. A display of recent photos of congregation activities caught my eye.



David Owens

A name jumped out from the board: Joseph Gawronski and his wife Jennifer were pictured with their two children.

The next day, Jennifer Gawronski left a message for me at CONTACT. When I returned the call, I got her voicemail. “This is Jennifer Jordan,” the message began. Like a Polaroid photo, a picture was emerging of our benefactor.

When Jennifer and I spoke later, I mentioned having seen the photo of her family on the wall at the church. They have been members for a few years and had first heard of CONTACT when Dee Dee Turlington had invited them to the

CONTACT Gala in 2008 where we honored Dee Dee for her contributions to CONTACT and our community. Jennifer is still struggling with her grief over the suicide of her father, she said, but now she knows of a new resource she can call on.

That picture is now complete. Edwin Land’s photographic technology may now be obsolete, but I think we can all appreciate the power of its metaphor. All of us at CONTACT carry around cameras full of undeveloped pictures. Our very presence helps bring new snapshots into full living color. The pictures that emerge may be of donors, callers or new listeners. They are out there for us to discover, and like the display at the church, just waiting to join our CONTACT gallery.

David Owens

Mission Statement

CONTACT We Care believes that every human being has intrinsic value. We provide hope, offer compassion, and save lives through our caring & crisis line and community outreach programming. We devote ourselves to preventing suicide and other self-destructive behavior by listening actively and empathetically to people in distress, offering them emotional support without judgment. Since volunteers make our service possible, we are committed to providing an enriched, rewarding volunteer experience. ☎

Allison Wise—Turning Listening Skills into Career Success

In the summer of 2009, 28-year-old Allison Wise found herself biking through France with her father and contemplating a career change. She had recently given up a lucrative, yet unfulfilling job in finance and challenged herself to find a career that would make an impact. In her head and in her heart, Allison was fairly sure she was headed into the field of social work. In fact, before she left home, she had applied to the graduate social work program at Fordham University.

As luck would have it, Debra Clark, a listener at CONTACT We Care, was taking the same bike tour. Finding common ground in foreign terrain, Deb and Allison soon discovered they were both New Jersey residents and both interested in doing meaningful work. For Deb, that had always meant volunteering with CONTACT. Deb suggested to Allison that signing on with CONTACT would give her both an opportunity to make a difference in people's lives and at the same time complement any work she might do toward a degree in social work.

That fall, while taking the CONTACT 12-week active listening training program, Allison was accepted to Fordham. She enrolled in the spring as an MSW degree candidate and, along with her eight hours a month of volunteering on the CONTACT hotline, Allison took on an internship



Allison Wise

at a social service agency dedicated to providing services for the homeless. The social work career Allison sought was well in hand and Allison was on her way—that is, until things got even better.

The social service agency was in transition. The director, Allison's supervisor, was casting about for a Case Management Supervisor and interviewing licensed clinical social workers for the job. After several weeks of interviewing, the director called Allison into her office and questioned her extensively about the agency, its mission, the services it provided and its specific clients—clients she knew were increasingly relying on, relating to and requesting to work directly with Allison.

Within a week, the director had made her choice. More than any other candidate, Allison demonstrated that she had the right touch with the clients and the wherewithal to carry out the agency's work. Allison credits her work with CONTACT for her success. "It is my CONTACT training in active listening," she asserts, "that gives me the sensitivity to work with clients and make them feel heard and respected." Allison won't get the title until she gets her degree, but she's already gotten the job. She still can't believe her good fortune. ☎

PSEG Celebrates the Volunteer Work of CONTACT's Michelle Brady

For her outstanding work on our hotline, CONTACT Listener Michelle Brady of Hillside was recently honored with a \$1000 grant to CONTACT We Care courtesy of her employer, PSEG. In all, 16 employees and the New Jersey nonprofits they support were awarded grants in recognition of their volunteer efforts.

"We take great pride in our award winners who give generously of their time and individual talents to benefit local causes," said Vaughn McKoy, PSEG Foundation president. "They truly define what it means to be a corporate citizen and have become heroes in their community. PSEG recognizes the value and importance of encouraging, rewarding and financially supporting their volunteer efforts."

Michelle Brady is a senior administrative assistant in Human Resources at PSEG. Through her listening skills and compassion for people, Brady is a source of comfort and helps to save lives by making a significant, positive, life-changing difference in the lives of distressed callers on CONTACT We Care's crisis hotline. As a volunteer and training facilitator, she brings hope in a time of need to callers suffering from loneliness, depression or mental illness.

Brady recently completed CONTACT's two-day "Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training" (ASIST) workshop in suicide first aid. Her work with CONTACT has motivated her to pursue a degree in psychology. ☎

"You may have a fresh start any moment you choose, for this thing we call 'failure' is not the falling down, but the staying down."

— Mary Pickford

The Caller's Voice—Who Do We Serve?

(All CONTACT calls are confidential; names and details have been changed to safeguard caller confidentiality.)

Renee

"Hi, this is Renee, who is this?"

On mornings when Renee can't bring herself to eat breakfast, a listener on the early shift might pick up the phone and hear this familiar question. Before calling CONTACT, Renee will prepare her food and set it out. Hearing a friendly voice on the other end of the line can help her to relax and finally eat. Because of her illness and medications, she seldom feels motivated to eat and sometimes jokes that she wishes she could just live on "air and chocolate."

A good-hearted woman now in middle age, Renee has worked for years redefining her life after being diagnosed in her 20s with schizophrenia. For many of those years, Renee has relied on daily conversations with CONTACT listeners. Some days

she is in terrible pain, always trying to come to terms with a life compromised by illness. Despite the setbacks she has suffered and fears that plague her, Renee never gives up. She once said of her daily walk, "I think it brings out the best in me or whatever is left of the best of me." At CONTACT, we've have the privilege of sharing Renee's triumphs, listening to her struggles and when she needs it, reminding her of her own incredible strength and perseverance.

Renee will frequently conclude her calls saying, "You people are always there for me. I don't know what I would have done over the years without you. God bless you people." Most listeners at CONTACT will agree that whatever peace we have given Renee over the years merely by listening to her, Renee has returned in spades by sharing her life and her remarkable example with us. ☎

Play Ball!

What's more fun than a summer night at the ballpark? An affordable night at a baseball game where your ticket purchases support a great cause, that's what! Join us at TD Bank Ball Park in Bridgewater on Wednesday June 29th for CONTACT We Care's Suicide Prevention Night with the Somerset Patriots.

CONTACT and its volunteers will be recognized during pre-game activities and on the scoreboard throughout the game. We'll also have

an information table on the concourse and we'll be selling 50/50 raffle tickets to raise additional funds. You might even get a chance to participate in between-inning games, all while raising awareness about CONTACT and our mission to prevent suicide.

The game against the Camden Riversharks starts at 7:05, but come early to enjoy the pregame fun! Bring the kids. Tickets are \$10 each. Contact the office to purchase tickets! ☎

"Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

— *Leo Buscaglia*

Major Donors to CONTACT since July 1, 2010

Annis, Jane
Arnold A. Schwartz Foundation
Brady-Cashill Foundation
C R Bard Inc.
Celgene Corporation
Darla Dee Turlington Charitable Foundation
Dimensional Management Corp.
E.J. Grassmann Trust
Elizabethtown Healthcare Foundation
Fanwood Presbyterian Church
Fred C. Rummel Foundation
General Plumbing Supply
Groves, Laurie
Grubb & Ellis
Hamstra Charitable Foundation
Hartman, Bruce
Instinet
J. Fletcher Creamer Foundation
Jacob & Eugenie Bucky Foundation
Jann, Eric
John Ben Snow Memorial Trust
Johnson & Johnson
Lena Willis Mission Fund, Central Presbyterian Church, Summit
Merck & Co. (Organon USA Inc. division)
Merck Partnership for Giving
Miles Hodsdon Vernon Foundation
Morrison, Peter B.
NAMI New Jersey
Palisades Educational Foundation
Phillips Van Heusen Corporation
PSE&G
Rosenblatt Securities
Sperling, Susan
Standish Foundation
The Calais Foundation
The Thomas Glasser Foundation
The Westfield Foundation
Trinitas Hospital
United Way of Greater Union County, Summit branch
Ward & O'Donnell Westfield LLC
Westfield United Fund
Wilson Memorial Union Church
Yutsus, Karen

Check out CONTACT We Care on FACEBOOK

An easy way to keep yourself up to date with CONTACT news, advanced training opportunities and social events to is “LIKE” our FACEBOOK page (www.facebook.com/pages/CONTACT-We-Care/289726681645). Besides news, CONTACT We Care on Facebook features articles on pertinent issues like depression, mental illness and grief. You can also find useful links to other organizations doing similar or complementary work to that of CONTACT. How do you “LIKE” us now? ☎

Class 79 (continued from page 1)

Kristen Koprowski, Linden Lalley-Chareczko, Jessica Lynch, Jane Maged, Stacy Nitabach, Nicholas Paolino, Jane Paress, Sarah Patankar, Wilhelmenia Ross, Tennia Tuck, Joadine Venescar, Kenisha Windham and Jacob Winkler. ☎

Listener’s Corner

One day last fall, I drove to the call center tired from a bout with insomnia the night before. My only thought as I pulled up was, ‘please, let this be an uneventful shift!’ So, of course, the minute I sat down the NSPL line lit up. For a split second I considered letting it go—after all, I rationalized, I was in no shape to handle an emergency. But a voice inside me said, ‘get over yourself’ and I picked up the phone.

My caller was distraught, in tears and there was little holding her back from taking the pills she’d been stockpiling. She refused to flush them, she refused to contract for safety, but she agreed to let me send help. I stayed with her there in that dark place until help arrived. I believe I saved a life that day.

As I thought about the call over the next few days, I came to the realization that in return for our gift of listening, we listeners receive a gift, too. We learn what it means to transcend the everyday problems of life and look at the bigger picture. Every time we take a call from a person in pain or difficult circumstances, we get an invaluable lesson in perspective that can carry over into our own lives. It isn’t just as simple as, ‘hey, at least I don’t have those problems,’ although that is a part of it. But when we enter our own dark corners, we go there more prepared and with, perhaps, a little less fear of the dark than most people.

— Megan Accardi

“People love others not for who they are but for how they make them feel.”
— Irwin Federman

Volunteer Recognition (continued from page 1)

shrimp to antipasto to cheeses and fruit. Guests enjoyed an open bar and later on, a variety of desserts and coffee. Guests and staff spent a leisurely time socializing, reuniting with class members, enjoying the buffet and touring the Mansion. Then it was time to move on to the award ceremony.

CONTACT Executive Director, David Owens, hosted the awards, assisted by staff members Sue Fasano, Wendi Rothstein, Dana Potts and Allison Hagan. The family of the late Ellen Anthony was on hand to dedicate a new CONTACT Listener award established by her family in her name. This year’s recipient of that award, the first to receive it, was Gene Bloomwell. Nineteen volunteers from classes 77 and 78 were commissioned and recognized with roses and special



Volunteers Terry Tutbill, Fran McTernan and Megan Accardi earned several different distinctions at this year’s Volunteer Recognition Reception. All three are members of the Intern Transition Team.

CONTACT pins. Service hour milestones beginning at 100 hours were recognized next. Volunteers Annamarie Kossler, Barbara Kreder and Jim Stewart each received a plaque for 1000 hours on the lines. Training Assistants and Facilitators were honored for volunteering above and beyond their initial commitment. Twenty-one volunteers who put in 100 hours or more during the past year were cited as well, as were the members of the newest graduating class, Class 79. Throughout the ceremony, many attendees also won door prizes of donated gifts and services from local businesses.

The Volunteer Recognition Event, always a bright spot in the CONTACT We Care event calendar, lit up an otherwise gloomy March evening. ☎

Upcoming CONTACT Events

**Suicide Prevention Night with
CONTACT We Care**

At TD Bank Ballpark, June 29

National Suicide Prevention Week

September 4-10

CONTACT We Care Gala

November 10, Echo Lake Country Club



CONTACT We Care, Inc.
P.O. Box 2376
Westfield, NJ 07091
908/301-1899

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Rahway, NJ
Permit No. 606