

BERGEN COUNTY PROUD TO BE STIGMA-FREE

THE STIGMA FREE ZONE NEWS of NEW JERSEY

Bringing the mental health conversation to Bergen
County

**Register Here: Free 2nd Annual County-Wide Stigma
Free Symposium December 2 , 2016**

**NJ MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ARE
AT RISK: ADVOCATES GATHER AT
LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST.** *October
19, 2016*

Bergen County Executive Jim Tedesco addressed an overflow crowd of 300 advocates, senators and assemblymen with a plea to increase, and not cut, mental health funding via the switch to fee for service reimbursements.

Moderator and Care Plus Trustee, John Mitchell, opened by reminding all that providing good mental healthcare *always* saves the taxpayer money.

All listened attentively as Bob Sheehan from the Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards drew a scary picture of his state's errors in funding mental health. He spoke to years of assault on funding M.I. mental health services and the major chaos and



service gaps that ensued.

Service careproviders from Essex, Atlantic, Monmouth and Ocean County also spoke, mirroring the concerns expressed by local experts. The heroin epidemic was credited for increasing pressure on mental healthcare, ERs, emergency services and law enforcement state-wide.



Tom Rosamilia, V.P. of Behavioral Health at BRMC, the state hospital for the uninsured located here in Bergen County, reported people sleeping in waiting room chairs for days this summer, hoping for beds to open.



Stigma Free Zone member Cynthia Chazen advocated for funding early intervention through new first episode psychosis programs as a way to lessen the tax burden and most importantly, stop lost human potential due to illness. She stated building a regional psychiatric ER for insured residents might be a productive use of funding.



Irene Maury from the Paramus Department of Human Services, related chilling real-life stories of people with mental illness and addiction falling through the current existing gaps in Bergen's Safety Net.

[Watch Video 23:56](#)

The Stigma Free News asked Ms. Maury what message legislators need to hear. She stated, "They need to understand that community treatment for the mentally ill is 2-3 times less expensive than hospitalizing someone after crisis. The goal of mental healthcare is to keep people *out of the hospital*. Funding community mental health centers is extremely cost effective."



6000 or more Bergen County clients doing well in recovery and currently receiving services may lose out, according to Vantage Health System CEO, Vicki Sidrow. Medication management, the cornerstone of mental health recovery, is feared most at risk.

John Mitchell summed up the general consensus stating “When the mental health system fails, the community is left to pick up the pieces”.

[Email Your Senator Now](#)



QUICKLINKS TO MENTAL HEALTH NEWS

[MHA: Time is running out for Mental Health Reform S2680](#)

Call Your Senator at 202-224-3121, Press 1 and enter zip code. Tell them to pass S2680.

[PBS NewsHour Video 6:45 :](#)

Why insured Americans struggle to get mental healthcare.

[NJ Star Ledger Editorial: Christie plan could endanger the seriously mentally ill.](#)

[Partnership for a Drug-Free NJ: Opiate Prevention Breakfast](#)

Register here for November 18, 2016 in Sayerville.

[2017 Training Sessions and Groups now forming at Care Plus.](#)

The Bergen County Mental Health Board Schedule of Open Public Meetings for 2017 is set for the 3rd Monday of month, from 6-8 p.m. at One Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack, NJ.



[NJ SpotLight: How Garden State can achieve integrated physical and mental healthcare.](#)



Bogota celebrates their new Stigma Free Zone on Saturday, Nov. 19 with a public walk. Scroll down for information!

[Register for Walk With The Mayor 10-12 in Olsen Park.](#)

INTERFAITHROUND TABLE TALKS ISSUES, CONCLUDE CLERGY ARE COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH FIRST RESPONDERS. *October 5, 2016*

At Central Unitarian Church in Paramus, over 100 members of local mosques, temples and churches spent the day defining their role in mental health and leading by example in the fight against stigma.

They were joined by representatives from all of Bergen County's major hospitals and private mental healthcare providers and organizations from across the state. The interfaith panel, below, focused on two key questions about how clergy and lay leaders can inspire openness and create change.

"What's the biggest mental illness issue your congregation faces right now?"

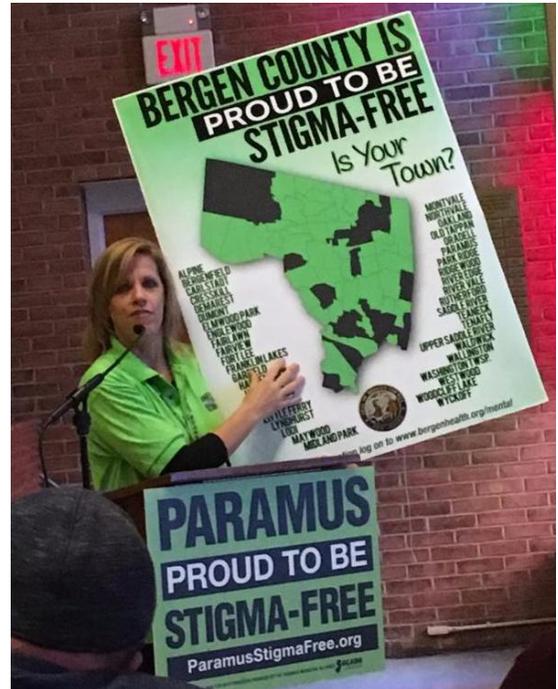
"What steps are you taking to educate about mental illness?"

Susan Greenbaum, Executive Director of Jewish Family Services, Teaneck, responded "Fear. JFS aims to empower people so they know they have control over mental illness." She pointed out the need for society to define the spectrum of mental illness; from mild and treatable to chronic and disabling.

Greenbaum said "At JFS, mental health services are available for all faiths" and she described available therapies and self-help groups sponsored by the organization.

Imam M. Charaf of the El Zahr Islamic Center, Midland Park, noted Muslims' mental health problems are the same as any other community, but in Islam, many believe it's their fault or even a divine punishment, so they work hard to hide it. He finds it difficult to convince people to seek treatment, and said folks come to him before they seek medical help. He responds by knowing the local health resources so he can make appropriate referrals. He spoke passionately of wanting to do more.

Peg Whelahan, Mental Health Ministry, Church of the Presentation, Upper Saddle River, expressed concern over lack of housing, indicating families of the severely mentally ill fear where their adult children will live when they are gone. Her ministry has fought the isolation of mental illness and provided years of family education through a long-standing partnership with NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness). They also provide support groups for parishioners and the public.



Louis Knaub, Board President, Christ Church, Hackensack, also defined housing for the severely ill as a big issue. He sees people with hoarding issues lose homes and stay homeless because they don't want to give up their belongings. His church, winner of the 2016 Governor's Award for Fighting Stigma, is working on mental health policy issues on both the parish and diocesan levels to create safe, *non-judgmental* spaces for worship and fellowship and to give clergy the tools they need to minister in this area.

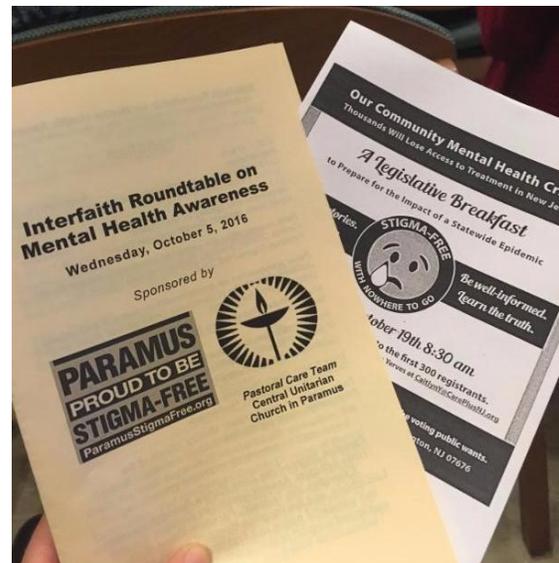


Reverend Jim Bushoven, Pastor at Hawthorne Gospel Church, Wyckoff, cited anxiety fueled by social and economic pressures as "through the roof." His parishioners experience a high cost of living, college debt and a lack of belief that the future will be as bright as they once hoped. "People are over-expectant, overwhelmed and overinvolved, even within the church," he said, adding that when it comes to mental illness, most clergy aren't properly trained to respond.



HGC hosts 12-step recovery programs, raises funds for suicide programs and offers MHFA (Mental Health First Aid Training) for church members. He is reaching out to other clergy to encourage them to do the same.

Reverend David Horst, Central Unitarian Church, Paramus, summed up the day stating "Clergy and ... lay leaders are often the first responders for mental health issues in their community." CUC, also a 2016 Governor's Award winner, passed a resolution to join the Stigma Free Zone.



CUC founded a mental health education task force, trained a MHFA Ambassador for the church, hosted a NAMI group, created support groups for families and delivered a sermon and events like the Interfaith Round Table to educate the wider community.

Reverend Horst concluded the panel saying "People still seem to need permission to talk about mental illness."

Round Tables reaffirmed that housing, isolation and lack of services are the big issues affecting Bergen County. Attendees spun big dreams for better services and earlier intervention and agreed everyone with faith must work toward the life-affirming goal of better mental health for everyone.



Imam Charaf concluded, "We must start by educating ourselves, so we can better educate others."

Dr. Bharati Palkhiwala of BRMC and the Jain Society, Mahwah, closed the day with an impassioned call to action to fight stigma.





Saturday, November 19, 2016
10:00 a.m.
Olsen Park, Bogota, NJ

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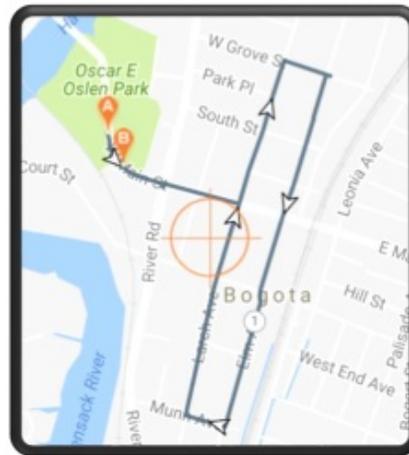
EVENT IS FREE AND OPEN TO EVERYONE!

ONLINE REGISTRATION AND EVENT DETAILS AVAILABLE AT:
<http://www.bogotabeautiful.com>

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT STIGMA-FREE INITIATIVES:
<https://www.nami.org/stigmafree#whatistigmafree> or
<http://www.co.bergen.nj.us/index.aspx?NID=1242>

EVENT QUESTIONS? CONTACT:
AMARU BUSTAMANTE
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Walk with the Mayor
Route (1.75 miles)



Event sponsored by:

Bogota Beautiful

Special thanks to our contributors:
Bergen County Stigma-Free Zone Program &
Bogota Advisory Committee on Substance Abuse (BACSA)

All of our social media links are live. Take a look.



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