

# MHA The Mental Health Association of Westchester

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## Mission Statement

The Mental Health Association of Westchester County, Inc.'s mission is to promote mental health in Westchester County, New York, through advocacy, community education and direct services.

## Suicide Loss: Outreach, Support and Healing



Shari Applebaum, MHA's new Suicide Bereavement Support Specialist, with MHA friend and suicide survivor Gregg Loomis

For individuals or families who are navigating the complex grief and myriad of powerful emotions that accompany the death of a loved one to suicide, support can be invaluable in the way of peer-to-peer connections with another person who has also experienced this profound loss. Recognizing the need for this support, MHA recently developed and introduced a new, free service that offers the help of a trained specialist who has experienced suicide loss. Shari Applebaum, our Suicide Bereavement Support Specialist who lost her son Miles to suicide when he was a junior in college, provides compassion, comfort and open conversation in a safe and confidential space.

"People can survive their loss and find hope through healing and resources," said Shari. "No one needs to feel alone in their grief journey, and we hope this service will help to normalize the feelings they experience and gradually ease their pain."

### Meet our Suicide Bereavement Support Specialist: Shari Applebaum

When my son Miles took his life three years ago at the age of 21, MHA offered a lifeline of hope by inviting me to be part of a Community Conversation event. We discussed how there was a need in the community for a service such as this, since none existed. I was thrilled when the idea came to fruition, as there is a large population of people in our community who could benefit from this support.

The reality is that there are so many people like myself who have experienced suicide loss. With a strong desire to make a difference by helping others, I decided to turn my tragedy into something purposeful and meaningful.

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# news

Autumn  
2017

# A Letter from the CEO

Dear friends,



*Since June, I have had the pleasure—and exciting challenge—of being at the helm of MHA in my new role as Chief Executive Officer. In the past two and a half years that I've been part of the MHA team, it has been easy to see what sets our agency apart: innovation, deep personal commitment to care and some of the kindest staff I've ever had the chance to work with.*

*It has been thrilling to watch our agency's solutions to changes in the rapidly evolving field of behavioral healthcare. Our work has been fueled not only by questions like "what do these changes mean for our*

*existing work?" but "how can we use this challenge to our advantage by developing even more dynamic care to better serve our clients?"*

*As we create the behavioral healthcare agency of the future, many of our innovative solutions are built upon groundbreaking technology and exciting new ways to collect and analyze data. But through it all, our priority has always been focused on the people we serve.*

*One of the most important aspects of our work in recent years has been the role of peers: those with lived experiences of mental health issues and recovery. I am proud of the many ways we have continued to further integrate peers into our agency this year. Staff with lived experience can be found at all levels of MHA and throughout our programs and services.*

*In addition to our two mobile peer recovery networks, we now have Peer Specialists in our Home and Community Based Services and OnTrackNY @ MHA, which offers treatment for young adults experiencing their first episode of psychosis. This fall, we also developed a unique new service for those grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide. Highlighting the irreplaceable and unequivocally important role of a peer, this new support is offered by a bereavement specialist who lost her own son to suicide three years ago. You can read more about this service and meet our specialist on pages 1 and 2.*

*I am pleased to announce that soon, we will also offer Peer Specialists in a new children's service and a pilot program for individuals in immediate crisis. Stay tuned for updates about these two new exciting additions to our roster of programs and services!*

*This valuable work would not be possible without your support and commitment to our mission. On behalf of everyone at MHA, thank you for your steadfast belief in the work we do and your ongoing generosity. I look forward to continuing to update you on the innovative changes that are always taking place at MHA.*

Kindly,

Charlotte Östman, LCSW-R

## Meet our Suicide Bereavement Support Specialist: Shari Applebaum

*Continued from page 1*

When one loses a loved one to suicide, it is the most challenging loss anyone might endure. A person bereaved by suicide has a long and tedious road to navigate. There is no map to follow. Everyone grieves differently, and no one is immune to suicide. At some point in our life, we will meet someone who is affected by suicide. We need to join together as a community to empower others, to have our voices be heard about mental health issues and become prominent change makers.

I believe that every word matters and that we should choose our words with kindness. I speak on behalf of the moms, dads, wives, husbands, aunts, uncles, sisters and brothers, nieces and nephews who I've met along my three year grief journey. What would it take to weave our words in a different way, to be sensitive about the language and approach we use with a person who is bereaved by suicide?

My call for action is to take a moment and look at what we need for positive engagement. Below are some suggestions on how to begin to erase the stigma that surrounds suicide, as simply as reframing the way you talk about it:

✦ The person who we lost did not *commit* suicide. A better choice of words is *suicided*, *died by suicide* or *took their life*. The word *commit* only adds to the stigma surrounding suicide.

✦ Avoid referring to suicide as *successful*, *unsuccessful* or a *failed attempt*. Preferable language describes this loss as *died by suicide*, *completed*, or *suicided*.

✦ When talking to a person who has experienced this loss, don't be afraid to say the name of their loved one! It shows you remember, and that you care.

✦ We are not suicide survivors. We did not survive breast cancer, prostate cancer, a heart attack, etc. Please know that we are bereaved by our loved one's death by suicide.

✦ Initiate a conversation with someone who lost a family member or friend to suicide. No matter how far out in their grief they may be, a person wants you to remember their loved one.

I am one of thousands of parents who has lost a child to suicide, and through my grief journey, I know this loss does not discriminate among ethnic or class backgrounds. We are in a club that no one wants to belong to, yet we find each other so that we can find some relief, comfort and solace. Not only have we endured a heavy heart due to the shock of sudden loss, we have experienced stigma that weighs on us. At MHA, we often say "the more we talk, the easier it is." Thank you for taking the first step in joining me to help start these conversations.

*"The first duty of love is to listen." —Paul Tillich*

### Support is provided in a variety of ways and may include:

- A safe place to share their story to someone who understands firsthand
- Sharing resources such as books, videos and connections to support groups in the community
- Managing tasks at hand
- Discussing expectable reactions to a loss to suicide
- How and what to share with friends, coworkers or the community at large
- Supporting family members—especially children

Suicide Loss: Outreach, Support and Healing services are provided at no cost. To learn more about this service, please contact Shari Applebaum, Suicide Bereavement Support Specialist, at **914-345-5900, ext. 7705** or [applebas@mhawestchester.org](mailto:applebas@mhawestchester.org)

# An Evening of Conversation with Clint Malarchuk

## Highlights from MHA's fall benefit

On Thursday, October 26th, The Mental Health Association of Westchester sparked a vital dialogue about mental health during its annual fall fundraiser, An Evening of Conversation with Clint Malarchuk. A former NHL All-Star Goalie, suicide survivor and mental health advocate, Clint was joined by his wife Joanie, who offered the unique perspective of a family member supporting a loved one with mental health concerns.

Together, the couple shared the deeply personal story of Clint's survival following the harrowing on-ice accident that nearly killed him and the subsequent spiral that led him to attempt suicide. Now, with a bullet still lodged inches from his brain, he is making the greatest saves of his life: sharing his story so that others may see that there is, indeed, a light.

"People who are experiencing mental health issues often ask themselves 'Why am I alive?' But I know the answer to my question: I was spared—twice—to help others," said Clint. "Each day, I hear from other athletes who thought they were the only ones struggling. I am grateful for having played in the NHL, which gives me a platform from which to speak. I'm also grateful for having struggled, and survived, and to be able to be here tonight to talk about it."

After Clint and Joanie's talk, guests enjoyed the chance to meet the couple and talk one-on-one during a book signing and VIP reception. The inspiring evening shined a spotlight on the importance of speaking up and seeking help, while raising awareness and support for MHA's vital programs and services.

We are grateful for the support of our sponsors and partners who helped make the evening a success: Meryl A. Allison and Elisa E. Burns, MD; Clarfeld Financial Advisors; Jennifer L. and Steven H. Kasoff; Kate S. and Michael Lombardi; Victoria Penino and Fred Campion; Donna Renella; Gerald Stern and Carla Pasquali; Westchester Medical Center Health Network; Arthur J. Gallagher & Co.; Nora and Jonathan Contract; Greg Frisoli; Charlotte and Ulf Östman; PUX.life; Regeneron; Yvonne D. Tropp and Alan Epstein; Westchester County Business Journal; and WVOX.



**Photos from top to bottom:**

**Clint Malarchuk shares his story**

**Nyna and Peter Giles**

**MHA Board Member Jen Kasoff with friends Meredith Keltz and Sarah LeBuhn**

**MHA Board Members Peter Sloane and Nick Pirrotta**

**Clint Malarchuk signs a copy of his book for MHA Board Member Sean Mayer**

**MHA CEO Charlotte Östman, LCSW-R with Clint and Joanie Malarchuk**



*All photos courtesy of Susan Woog Wagner Photography*



Visit us at [www.mhawestchester.org](http://www.mhawestchester.org)

## MHA Debuts Telehealth Service

This summer, we proudly introduced **Telehealth**, a groundbreaking behavioral health service that improves access to care for clients throughout Westchester.

Located in our Mount Kisco, White Plains and Yonkers clinics, Telehealth enables clients to meet with our psychiatrists via two-way, real-time interactive audio and video equipment. Featuring HIPAA-compliant computer and web cam configurations, Telehealth is also beneficial for individuals who are in crisis situations and those who engage in clinical walk-in services.

“In addition to its immediate benefits for our clients and staff, this exciting initiative will be of assistance to our community partners who may call on us for a consult,” explained MHA CEO Charlotte Östman, LCSW-R. “We foresee Telehealth to be a real game-changer for individuals who live in rural parts of our state and do not have quick access to behavioral health support.

We look forward to being able to better serve not only those right here in Westchester, but our neighbors in surrounding counties—and beyond!”

MHA is the first Office of Mental Health-licensed agency in Westchester County to introduce a non-hospital, community-based Telehealth program. The service will also be available as part of *Nuestro Futuro*, MHA’s bilingual and bicultural support.



## New Program Offering Crisis Response from Peers Comes to MHA

We are proud to announce the debut of a pilot program developed with the New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services. Project INSET (Intensive and Sustained Engagement and Treatment) will help individuals who are in acute states of distress and may have not responded to past efforts to engage in support and care. This exciting model will include a team of peer specialists trained to provide an immediate response to individuals who are in crisis, while fostering trust and empathy through their shared lived experiences. We are currently developing our strategic plans for this one-year program, and we look forward to providing support and person-centered care through this unique service model!



## Doris Schwartz Receives State-Wide Leadership Award

This October, MHA’s Chief Experience Officer Doris Schwartz, LCSW was awarded with the Beth Jenkins Staff Leadership Award at the annual Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS) conference. This well-deserved honor celebrated her extraordinary leadership, which has contributed to many innovative changes over the years at MHA.

For her entire 35+ year career, Doris has been a passionate and compassionate advocate, believing in the possibility and power of recovery. She has consistently demonstrated that unwavering belief—from early years of direct service to later years of program development and oversight, as well as staff mentoring and supervision. Always a strong role



model, Doris embodies humanity, compassion, kindness and respect for others’ experiences and preferences.

From spearheading person-centered and Trauma-Informed Care transformations to promoting the contributions of those with lived experience of mental health issues, Doris has truly created a safe space for everyone at MHA—especially our clients.

This winter, Doris will retire following nearly a decade of work with MHA, and it goes without saying that she will be greatly missed!

**Back Row:**  
*Charlotte Östman, Jim Coyle, Cindy Peterson-Dana;*  
**Front Row:** *Stacey Roberts and Doris Schwartz*

# Spread the Cheer! Support MHA this Holiday Season!

## Operation Holiday Joy

Each year, MHA makes the holidays brighter for families in Westchester through our annual gift drive, Operation Holiday Joy. Join us this year and help make the holidays magical for someone in need! To be part of our very special group of gift-givers, please call us at 914-265-7511 or email [development@mhawestchester.org](mailto:development@mhawestchester.org).



## Share your support on

# #GIVING TUESDAY™

Join a global day of giving and kick off the charitable season on Tuesday, November 28th with #GivingTuesday, which focuses on the true meaning of this time of year: kindness, generosity and giving back. There are many ways for you to give – visit [mhawestchester.org/get-involved](http://mhawestchester.org/get-involved) to see how you can make a difference!

## Shop with AmazonSmile

Shopping online takes the hassle out of gift-buying, and using your purchases to benefit MHA couldn't be easier! If you shop on Amazon, be sure to sign up for AmazonSmile, which donates a percentage of your eligible purchase to the charitable organization of your choice. To get started, visit [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), select The Mental Health Association of Westchester and get ready to shop!



## Meet Our New Board President, Meryl A. Allison



MHA is pleased to announce the recent appointment of Meryl A. Allison, a strategic and management consultant with more than 30 years of experience, to the role of President of its Board of Directors.

“As is true for most of us, I have personally been close to many people affected by mental health issues,” said Meryl, who has been a member of the Board for six years. “I sought out MHA because of its tremendous impact in the community. Unfortunately, mental health care is given short shrift in our society, in that benefits are limited and there is stigma associated with treatment. We must continue to raise awareness of the impact mental health issues can have on an individual and society, so that we can bring greater resources to bear. MHA has exceptional leadership, with the right mix of market, clinical and management skills, and I am honored to take on the role of President of our Board.”

Meryl currently splits her time between consulting engagements and serving on not-for-profit boards. Previously, she had been a Partner at both Accenture and Deloitte Consulting, where she focused on the health care and life sciences industries. An expert in strategic planning and operations improvement, Meryl has helped clients address C-suite and Board-level issues. She received her Bachelor of Applied Science from the University of Pennsylvania and her MBA from The Wharton School. Meryl lives in Bedford with her wife, son and Jack Russell terrier. She enjoys yoga and playing the cello.

Meryl takes over the role from Mike Lombardi, who served as President for more than four years and who continues to offer his expertise as a committed member of our Board of Directors.

## Board of Directors

### *President*

Meryl A. Allison

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Sean A. Mayer

Bobbi Rebisz

Donna M. Renella

Peter S. Sloane

Yvonne D. Tropp

### *CEO*

Charlotte Östman, LCSW-R

*MHA is a member of CBHS:  
Coordinated Behavioral Health Services,  
a partnership of 9 not-for-profit agencies  
that together provide behavioral health  
and developmental disability services.  
We provide care management services  
for both of Westchester County's New  
York State Department of Health  
approved Health Homes.*

## Save the Date!

# Living Proof: A multi-art, eye-opening evening of energizing performances

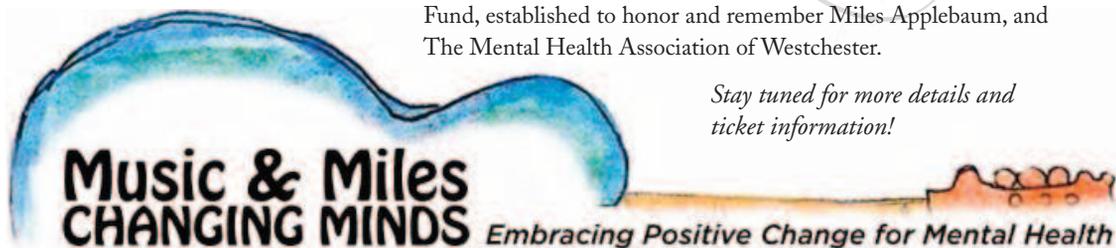
**Saturday, March 10, 2018**  
**Chappaqua Performing Arts Center**

The Mental Health Association of Westchester is proud to announce a partnership with Music and Miles: Changing Minds and The Lagond Music School for an exciting evening of expressive arts.

Featuring individuals sharing their own personal and inspiring stories of resilience, recovery and mental health issues, Living Proof will showcase authentic slices of life from people who are finding ways to rise above their darkest moments and live a full life with confidence, meaning and purpose

Proceeds from the event benefit the Miles Applebaum Music Scholarship Fund, established to honor and remember Miles Applebaum, and The Mental Health Association of Westchester.

*Stay tuned for more details and ticket information!*



Visit us at [www.mhawestchester.org](http://www.mhawestchester.org)