WELCOME BACK TO OUR NEWSLETTER!

Welcome to the 13th edition of “Care for the Caregivers” — a monthly newsletter designed to help Yale New Haven Health System staff deal with the stresses, challenges, and opportunities of this COVID-19 moment. The newsletter is produced by the YNHHS Social Work Department. We hope you enjoy this ongoing series.

November is the month of Thanksgiving. Beyond Turkeys, Sweet Potato Pie, and Stuffing, Thanksgiving is truly about giving thanks. Thanksgiving can mark the start of an extremely busy time of year and for many people a very difficult time of year. With 2020 slowly closing in, and I am sure many of us are pretty eager to close the door on the past year, it may seem more challenging than ever to find anything to be grateful for. But studies show a Gratitude practice is not only a quick way to boost mood but an important aspect in combating burnout. Training your mind to look for the positive and reframe the way you look at things allows you to see the things in our lives we may have taken for granted.

We invite you all to spend some time practicing gratitude this season. While there may have been a lot of adversity, there are also often some beautiful things to be grateful for. We invite you to tell a loved one, a colleague, even the clerk at the checkout counter why you are grateful for them. Hold a space in your heart for the people you encounter and value having in your life. And give thanks for the small things like if you woke up today, if you can see, if the sun is shining, or if you got a parking spot right in front of the shuttle just as it was pulling in this morning…

And THANK YOU ALL for all the hard work you do every day in making a difference in the lives of all of our patients. And to our leadership who has supported us in navigating these unprecedented times.
Hi Everyone,

Thank you for your hard work and commitment to supporting patients and being a support to each other. I recently shadowed two oncology social workers, Gena Lennon-Gomez, LCSW, and Elin Hardenberg, LCSW, and was incredibly impressed by their professionalism and collaborative efforts with clinical partners in their service areas. Most of all, I was moved by their kindness and gentle approach with patients. I have to admit; I felt a bit emotional while meeting with one of Gena’s patients and listening to the many psychosocial struggles that were presented, in addition to a new leukemia diagnosis. Every day we are witness to aspiring and hopeful stories. But within our clinical role, we also are confronted with stories of significant trauma, pain, and sadness. This recent experience helped me to reflect on the gratitude I feel towards the people and experiences in my life.

This issue of Care for The Caregivers is about gratitude and I want to take a moment and share some things on my gratitude list and express my gratitude. I am grateful and very proud to be part of the Yale New Haven Health Social Work Department. I am grateful for my beautiful grandbaby boys (pictures available upon request). I am grateful for my family my friends and my health (not so much my younger brother Danny – we have different political views – just kidding – I love my brother). I am grateful for the many mistakes that have become life-long lessons. I am grateful to the men and women in our armed forces. I am grateful to all of you – my mentors and teachers since arriving at Yale. I am grateful for the opportunities that are given to each of you every day to make a difference in someone’s life – and in a very small way, I can be a part of that.

The kindness and thoughtfulness that I observed by my colleagues last week were one of those inspiring moments and I am grateful. I look forward to getting to know all of you in the year ahead.

~Javi

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.

~John Fitzgerald Kennedy
Benefits of Gratitude That Will Motivate You To Give Thanks Year-Round
Shared By CFTC Team Member: Maria Raffia, LCSW in the Pediatric and Women’s Cluster covering Pediatric Specialty Center WP2 and Maternity/Pediatrics

Check out these 7 scientific facts on how gratitude can improve your daily functioning. Click here to read this article in Forbes.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE: “LEAD”ING AND LEANING ON YOUR TEAM
By Kat Watts, LCSW III, Lead for Social Work Parenting Support

Whew!! These last seven months have been a whirlwind of emotions and uncertainty, to say the least. Who would've thought that we would be in the midst of a pandemic and having to adapt to a new way of working, supporting ourselves, and the patients/families that we serve?

I have the privilege to lead a great group of highly skilled educators, the Home Visiting Cluster (woo hoo!) who went into action the minute we got word that we would be working remotely. I'll admit that it was chaos in the beginning as we all were trying to wrap our heads around what this meant and what in the world was COVID-19. The team went into action and began to prepare documents, activities and any other educational materials needed. It was a SEAMLESS transition!! Everyone brought their A-game and was ready to work. We continued to brainstorm and "think outside the box" on how we were going to provide services to our families as we are traditionally an in-home program. We were able to successfully provide services without missing a beat.

As we all know, finding toilet paper, paper towels, and disinfectants was a huge problem during this pandemic. Accessing diapers and wipes was an issue for our families. Thankfully we received donations and I was able to create a mini diaper bank in my garage so that we were able to provide to our families that had the need.

I have learned many lessons and continue to learn. I have learned that it takes a village to support each other and the families that we serve. I wouldn't be able to do what I do without support from the staff. I am also very grateful for my colleagues and family, especially my husband. He was very patient with all the diapers that were in the garage, mostly on his side!

Pictured above is Kat Watts, LCSW III with her beautiful family who she is grateful for, John and Ava.
We all know social workers are resourceful, but the parenting support cluster really stepped up to provide their families with the necessities. We are sure their families are grateful for them this year.
Gratitude Practice Tips: Simple and Sweet ways to infuse gratitude into your day
By CFTC Team Member, Erika Cuffy, LCSW II in the Pediatric and Women’s Cluster with the Maternal Wellness Program

With so much going on around us in the world today, it is so easy to get wrapped up in the pandemic numbers and travel bans, politics and social justice issues and it’s just as easy to forget to appreciate what we have. Practicing gratitude is simple and often forgotten. Gratitude is a very powerful emotion. People who practice gratitude often experience more positive emotions, feel better connected to others, sleep better, and are able to better express compassion and kindness. Below are some tips and tricks to incorporating more gratitude into your daily lives.

- WRITE IT DOWN
  Set aside a few minutes every day and write a list of things you are grateful for or even write just one thing. Gratitude journaling works because it slowly changes your perception. On the days that you are feeling down or empty, go back and look at your list, it is a sure way to feel better or to put a smile on your face.

- THANK YOU
  Tell other people “Thank you” when they do something for you, no matter how small the gesture.

- NO NEGATIVITY
  Don’t let other’s negativity and bitterness bring you down. Find the best in people and believe in it.

- COMPLIMENT
  Tell your friends, family, co-workers, and even strangers, when they look good or do good. You never know who may need it that day.

- BE MINDFUL
  Practice mindfulness. Live in the present. Don’t worry about the past or the future.

- BE POSITIVE
  When you have a negative thought or feeling about yourself or someone else, try to see the positive in the situation. Don’t gossip or speak badly of others. Avoid negative social media, news or movies. Help others to be more positive.

- SURROUND YOURSELF
  Hang positive images or quotes in your office or home as a constant reminder. Share these images/quotes to social media.

- GIVE MORE
  Do something nice for someone else, not only will it brighten your mood to bring joy to someone else, it will make you feel grateful that you have the time, abilities or whatever else it is to offer. Sometimes just a listening ear or a smile to a stranger can go a long way.

Incorporating gratitude into your life is easy and can be fun. There are fun little games and activities you can do with your family, friends or co-workers. You can create a “gratitude jar.” Write things down and put it in the jar, at the end of the year (or month) read them together. It doesn’t always have to be an activity or game. You can simply start by telling the people you are closest to that you love them and appreciate them.

Erika Says: I show gratitude for my family and friends and for our health and well-being. These two are constant reminders of how lucky I am!
GRATITUDE FOR THE UNSUNG HERO’S OF OUR DEPARTMENT: The Ladies Who Keep Us Afloat
Q & A By Dayna DiBiasi, LCSW with Luanne Marsh: Senior Administrative Associate, Cheryl Augusta: Administrative Operations Coordinator and Andrea Esposito: Data Program Coordinator

In case you haven’t had the privilege of getting to meet or work with one of these fantastic ladies, let me tell you, they truly keep our Department running smoothly. From fielding calls, ordering the things we need to get our work done, tech liaison, organizing over 200 of us, and keeping the back end of things running smoothly. Without them, it would be hard to imagine how our Department would look. And that doesn’t even top list of things they do for us all every day. So while we all do our best to take care of our patients, they are always doing their best to take care of us.

If you haven’t been up to the East Pavilion 10th floor social work office in a while (or ever) their three faces are typically the first few you would see pre-pandemic. Luanne is the first friendly face to greet you. Straight ahead is Cheryl, who is always happy to see you and always asks how you are. And tucked around the corner is Andrea, whose laughter and sing-song voice can be heard even if you can’t see her. These three bring a sense of peace, calm, and kindness to the Social Work Offices amongst the busy, chaotic, and stressful work we all do. The social work office would be lost without the three of them keeping things together. Thank you all for all you do to help our Department be a success!

Read on to learn a little bit more about who they are and what they are most grateful for this year.

Q: As we continue to grow and expand, tell us in a few words how you would describe the role you play in keeping us all afloat and a well-oiled department for those who haven’t had the pleasure of working with you yet.

Luanne: The major things I do that support staff include answer/triage all incoming phone calls. Also, I am the keeper of the masks. I order all of the office supplies, business cards, brochures, PPE, computers, phones, etc.
I oversee construction projects, moving equipment, conservatorship applications, staff licensure, and CBISA documentation. I try to support the staff in any way needed and they can call me with questions and requests and I will help.

Cheryl: I work to keep payroll accurate, as well as balance various funds, cost centers, grants, FTE’s, and other programs, and troubleshoot when things don’t go right – All of these things help benefit the department.

Andrea: My role is pretty wide-ranging of late. I am always excited for opportunities to apply my skill set to a project. In terms of getting us through the pandemic, I have mostly had the role of getting us access to and gaining mastery of technology which can make our interactions with patients and each other more seamless.

Q: What is the best part of your job?

Luanne: I enjoy the variety this job offers (the above is not a complete list) and all of the interactions with staff and callers.

Cheryl: I enjoy making order out of chaos, accounting of funds, special projects (like combining the other hospitals with ours), and being able to work with people who will listen, understand and work with me.

Andrea: The best part of my job, are the people hands down. You know there are times when a crisis shows up and for a minute I really want to panic. Then I am reminded of all the awesome things we can accomplish when we work together as a team. And when that happens it truly is magic.

Q: What are you most grateful for in the Social Work Department?

Luanne: The staff and managers!! They are so supportive, encouraging and make me feel like an important part of the team. Many even appreciate my sense of humor. You are the reason I look forward to coming to work every day!
Cheryl: Leadership and staff that listen and care.

Andrea: I am grateful to have the opportunity to support such a wonderful group of caregivers who do really important work.

Q: With all the changes and stress that 2020 has had, how have you been using self-care and coping so that you can better take care of everyone else around you?

Luanne: Anyone who stops by the office at lunchtime sees me playing Sudoku. At home, I read and watch TV but at stressful times I go for long drives. I have also had the opportunity to take 2 long weekend road trips this fall.

Cheryl: I’ve continued to exercise – first at home with live Facebook – then to a small socially distanced studio. I also try not to let working from home extend into my personal time too much.

Andrea: If COVID brought any positive changes for me it was the necessity of making self-care a habit. I was forced to live a life of intention; always keeping my decisions of expenditures of time, energy, and effort in alignment with my values.

Q: Despite the challenges and unprecedented difficulties of the past year, what have you been most grateful for through it all?

Luanne: My strong faith and the peace it provides me.

Cheryl: I’m grateful for the opportunity to be able to work from home and that my family is healthy.

Andrea: I am most grateful for my grandkids, my kids (and their spouses), and my husband.

Q: What is the single most important thing you are most grateful for this year?

Luanne: There are so many things that I am grateful for I can’t pick just one. Life, faith, family, friends, job, the beauty that surrounds us, so many blessings that I am thankful for.

Cheryl: I’m grateful for a wonderful husband who can put up with me – not easy.

Andrea: Faith & Hope
FINDING WAYS TO “IMPROVE” OUR GRATITUDE
Submitted by Suzanne W. Janczewski, LCSW covering St. Raphael Campus (SRC) primarily SLA 3 (med/surge)

My mentor once told me “be in control of your mind, rather than letting your mind be in control of you.” Our thoughts carry immense power and can influence our emotions and behavior. Being aware of our thoughts and being deliberate in what we do with them can be an empowering exercise.

One DBT skill highlighted below helps us **IMPROVE** the Moment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>Imagery</th>
<th>Imagine very relaxing scenes of a calming, safe place. Imagine things going well; imagine coping well. Imagine painful emotions draining out of you like water out of a pipe.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Find or create some purpose, meaning, or value out of pain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>Open your heart to your own wise mind, your greater wisdom, or a supreme being of your choice. Ask for strength to bear anything that is painful in this moment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td>Try to relax your muscles by tensing and relaxing each large muscle group, starting with the forehead and working down. Download a relaxation audio or video; stretch; take a bath or get a massage.</td>
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<td>O</td>
<td>One thing in the Moment</td>
<td>Focus your entire attention on what you are doing right now. Keep your mind in the present moment. Be aware of body movements or sensations while you’re walking, cleaning, eating, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Vacation</td>
<td>Give yourself a brief vacation. Get outside, take a short walk, go get your favorite coffee drink or smoothie, read a magazine or newspaper, or surf the web. Take a 1 hour break from hard work that must be done. Remember to unplug from all electronic devices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>Cheer for yourself! Repeat over and over “I can stand it,” “It won’t last forever,” “I will make it out of this,” “I’m doing the best I can.”</td>
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Give it a try! Your mind can do amazing things 😊

Adapted from *DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets, Second Edition*. Copyright 2015 by Marsha M. Linehan.
A GRATEFUL PUMPKIN
By CFTC Team Member: Allison Barker-Ford, LCSW Pediatric and Women’s Cluster Covering Gastroenterology

Fall is fresh crisp leaves, pumpkin spice lattes, a warm sweater, apple picking and hayrides. As the seasons change and autumn quickly approaches, the holidays will be here before we know it. The hustle and bustle take over and it is easy to forget the whole purpose or meaning behind the holidays. As a mother of two small children, my kids can be easily engrossed in watching television commercials that advertise the latest toys and gadgets especially around Christmas and holiday time. They soon became fixated on material objects and what Santa and other family members could bring them! As a pediatric social worker and someone who greatly believes in kindness, I knew I needed to teach them the concept of gratitude and thankfulness even at a young age. Taken from a popular author Amy Latta, who came up with this concept almost a decade ago; last year my family started the Thanksgiving tradition of a *thankful pumpkin*. All you need for this activity is an uncarved pumpkin (any size will do), a permeant marker and some gratitude. Each day you write a few things you are grateful for on the pumpkin until it slowly gets filled up! You don’t need a family or other people to even do this activity. My family starts on November 1st and will end the day of thanksgiving. Each day up until Thanksgiving, we write down several things we are thankful for and have a fun time acknowledging the small and big things. As my children get older, it’s really interesting to see their take on what they are grateful for! Last year's pumpkin included being thankful for airplanes, the mailman, and gummy worms. This is a great concrete exercise to do to continue to be mindful and have a physical reminder of the many blessings we have, especially during this world-wide pandemic and current political climate where we feel hopeless and powerless as to what we have control over. I encourage you to create a grateful pumpkin!

THE BRIDGEPORT HOSPITAL SOCIAL WORKERS MAY BE MASKED UP, BUT THEY ARE ALL SMILES

Here are some of our amazing social workers colleagues from at Bridgeport Hospital. Although we can’t see their smiles, they are happy to show their support to one another. Pictured above:
Back row left to right: Karen Baker, Ebonee Little, Kathy Ferrantelli (Lead of BH), Rachel Blake, Adam Paquin, Tammy Coppola, Stephanie Leblanc, Abigail Alvarez-Quiles
Front row: Steven Diaz, Michelle Martinez, Cassandra Simister
I AM GRATEFUL FOR...What Bridgeport Hospital Staff is Grateful For This Year
Submitted By Kathy Ferrantelli, LCSW Clinical Lead in the Bridgeport Deliver Network

Dr. Crina Boeras, OB/GYN:
“A loving and supportive family whose unconditional help in caring for my son allows me to be able to do my job and in turn care for our patients.”

Dr. Wesley Nilsson OB/GYN:
“Even in the midst of a pandemic, I am extremely grateful how supportive everyone has been towards one another. We are all going through a tough time and I know I could not do it without the people that surround me every day.”

Sandy Shipkowicz, APRN Pedi Clinic & Polly Cromwell, APRN Pedi Clinic:
“We are thankful for each other!!”

Isabel Rivera - Patient Financial Access Specialist Clinic Scheduler:
"I'm thankful for everything, my job that put's a roof over my head for myself and my children, that I even have a job.I'm thankful I am able to provide for myself and for the ability to help my community. I'm thankful; for my children.

Denise Barnett, Patient Financial Access Specialist Clinic Scheduler:
“I am thankful for my beautiful, caring, empathetic, compassionate children. I am very blessed.”

Dr. Robert O'Sullivan OB/GYN:
“I am thankful for our Team members, our family at work. I am thankful for my family and our children!”

Lisa Kosinski, LPN in the Pedi Clinic:
“I am grateful for my grandchildren. They love you unconditionally, when you get home, they come running to you. I am grateful Mia is ok, she is now six years old. We have a brand new grand baby. We are experiencing the Circle of Life!!”
Halloween may be over, but our pediatric patients sure are grateful that these Pedi social workers gave them something to smile about despite changes to the Halloween parade and trick or treating. They did their best to put a smile on their patients’ face and made the best of changed plans. Pictured left to right is: Marisol Lassalle, LCSW and Katie Henry, LCSW covering Pedi Hematology/Oncology and Transplant; Maura Satti, LMSW covering Pediatric Bleeding/Clotting Disorders and Amanda Garbatini, LMSW covering the Adolescent Young Adult Oncology.
SELF-CARE CORNER:

FALL DIY LIP SRUB
By CFTC Team Member: Abigail Alvarez-Quiles, LCSW II at Bridgeport Hospital, Primary Care Clinic

Adds moisture and prevents future peeling and dry skin!

2 tablespoons coconut oil
1 tablespoon honey
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice

Combine ingredients in a small bowl then transfer to a small covered container. Apply to Lips with your finger and gently rub back and forth. Remove with warm water and a wash cloth. Store in a cool place. The scrub will stay good for 1-2 months. That's if it lasts. Enjoy!

LOOKING FOR A FUN FALL FREE OR LOW COST FUN ACTIVITIES? TRY SOME OF THESE IDEAS BELOW

North Face is offering a 50 percent discount to healthcare workers & first responders. Get something for yourself or pick up a few gifts while you are at it!

Free for all: The Best 30 Free Things to Do in Connecticut. Click here to get inspired for fun activities from Connecticut Magazine.

You Can’t Afford To Miss These 11 Free Outdoor Activities In Connecticut. Click Here for tips on fun and free outdoor activities from Only in our state.

Looking for Knockout Fall Views? Check out 5 great spots here for great spots to check out from www.ctvisit.com

Find Fall Faster with Connecticut’s Top Fall Foliage Drives. Looking for some of the best scenic fall leaf peeping routes? Find Top Fall Foliage Drives here.

Our state APPRECIATES all our HARD and dedicated work through the COVID-19 pandemic. Learn More here about what local business have been doing to promote solitary for front line workers

31 things to do in November in CT. Want more ideas of what to check out this month? Click Here

Visit Connecticut’s Hidden Gems this Fall. Click Here for a list of ideas to try this fall.

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING CHECK-INS

The Employee Wellbeing Check-ins are still going on. They have been really meaningful for not only those who sign up for the screenings as they are for the screeners. Screeners must have an LMSW or LCSW. As a screener, you may elect to conduct either in-person or phone sessions. Please go to the following link to schedule yourselves: Sign up and find out more HERE! The link also contains all the documents and information you will need to conduct the check-ins. I have attached a couple of these documents to this email for quick reference.
DON’T FORGET YOUR BUDDY!!!
While the future of COVID-19 is still relatively unknown, take some time during this reprieve in COVID + patients to connect with your Buddy! Don’t have one yet, give us a call and we will help connect you with one. **Have a great Buddy Story you want to share in a future edition?** Send us your story to dayna.dibiawi@ynhh.org.

**Not Sure What To Say To Your Buddy??** Here is a great article from the NY Times on ways to check in with your buddy. [Click Here](#) for an interesting and helpful read.

TELL US YOUR STORY FOR OUR NEXT EDITION!!!
Have an inspiring story to share about you and your buddy? Think you’re buddy is the best buddy? Send us an email letting us know what you value most about the buddy program or why you’re buddy deserves a shout out!

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION EVENTS
Make sure to keep your eyes on your inbox for the November D&I calendar and to check out some powerful events coming up this month.

CONTACT US!
**We would LOVE to have your contributions!!!** Please send us an email with content you would like to contribute, themes or ideas you would like to see, tips, free things, pictures or anything else you may want to see featured. Let us know what you have been doing to cope with the past year, managing your self-care or providing support to your colleagues.

If you would like to join our team send Dayna DiBiasi, LCSW II an email at [Dayna.DiBiasi@ynhh.org](mailto:Dayna.DiBiasi@ynhh.org).

Are you more ready for 2021 then ever? **Next month we will be reflecting on Lessons Learned in 2020.** Tell us what you are doing to celebrate the season, end of year, or what you learned, how you were challenged or how you grew throughout the adversity of the past year. **It was a rough year to say the least, but tell us how you learned, grew and became stronger through the challenges the year brought.**

**Spotlight Shout Out:** Want to recognize one of your colleagues who has been going above and beyond doing amazing things? Send us an email and with their permission we would love to feature them in an upcoming newsletter.

Or have an amazing coping idea you think the Department would benefit from for our **Coping Corner?** Send us an email!

Reach our department here:
To sign up to receive Social Work support please contact Andrea Esposito at **203-688-1855.**

This message originates from the Yale New Haven Health System. The information contained in this message may be privileged and confidential. If you are the intended recipient you must maintain this message in a secure and confidential manner. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender immediately and destroy this message. Thank you.