

WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES NEWSLETTER

Spring 2018 | Vol. I edition I

"Alone we can do so little, Together we can do so much." -Helen Keller

GRAND OPENING CEREMONY HIGHLIGHTS



Jon Burgwin from Minding Your Mind



Attendee Noemi Viveros from Human Services Inc. with Clinic Director Dr. Leanne Valentine



Mayor Dianne Herrin



Attendees



Dr. Jeffery Osgood, Dr. Lorraine Bernotsky, Dr. Vanessa Johnson, President Dr. Christopher Fiorentino, Dr. Leanne Valentine



Drum Circle



WCU Psy. D Students & Staff



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT- DR. JOHNSON

Dr. Vanessa Johnson, Assistant Department Chair of West Chester University's Psychology Department, is our Faculty Spotlight this month. Dr. Johnson was instrumental in creating the Psy.D program at West Chester University (WCU). Her interest in working with the community began during her student training at the University of California, Berkeley. While there she worked in a low fee community clinic and then interned at San Francisco General Hospital, which had a strong community focus.

The more time that she spent in Chester County the more Dr. Johnson realized that there was a need for affordable mental health care in the community. She also noted that while West Chester University had a Master's Program in Clinical Psychology there was not always enough time built into the program to provide ample clinical training experiences for the students. When the ban on offering doctoral programs at WCU (and other PASSHE schools) was lifted by the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education seven years ago, Dr. Johnson seized the opportunity to propose a new doctoral program in Psychology. Along with her colleagues in the Psychology Department at WCU, Dr. Johnson crafted the new Psy.D program in Clinical Psychology. The program was designed to provide more training and resources for the students and also to give faculty in the department more control over the clinical training experiences provided to students. As they were designing the program, it became apparent that the department would need space to conduct these services, so WCU Community Mental Health Services was developed. When asked what "community" means to her, Dr. Johnson said that it is integrating services into the community instead of expecting community members to fit themselves to the service. In her opinion our answer to the community should be "what do you need?"

When asked what she would like our partners to know about WCU Community Mental Health Services, Dr. Johnson spoke about the benefits of having a student therapist. Students are paying very close attention to their cases and they have an unblemished objectivity that allows them to really delve into the needs of their clients. Of course, there is also a licensed therapist supervising each student so the client benefits from a kind of "two for one" situation. She pointed out that conducting clinical work within a research department insures that the services provided are grounded in research; and the department's research benefits by identifying research needs through clinical practice.

On a personal note, Dr. Johnson is a married mother of two children. Her son, Sam, is sixteen years old and her daughter, Abby, is thirteen years old and has an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Dr. Johnson has an interest in providing support to families with children who have an ASD diagnosis.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT-ARIANA ZAHN

Our student spotlight is on Ariana Zahn. Ariana is a second-year Psy.D student in the child and adolescent track here at West Chester University (WCU). A Philadelphia native, Ariana enjoys spending time hiking outdoors and cooking. She is passionate about mindfulness, travelling, music, and spending time with her family including her two children.

She graduated from the University of Rhode Island with her Bachelor's degree in Psychology. Ariana came to West Chester University in 2007 to pursue her Master's degree and recently returned in 2016 to enter the Psy.D program. Ariana really enjoyed her time in the Master's program and she valued the well-rounded education that she received. When she heard about the Psy.D program starting at the University, she was excited to pursue her education here further. She saw parallels between her Master's education and the Psy.D curriculum. Specifically, Ariana appreciates that the Psy.D program has strong ethos; the program is grounded in theory and evidence-based practices. Moreover, she wants to graduate as a culturally-sensitive clinical psychologist, on which the program has a strong emphasis.

When asked what has been the best moment she has experienced in the program so far, Ariana responded that interacting with her peers and colleagues has been wonderful because they have such a wide-range of experiences themselves. She further explained that everyone is really supportive of one another in the program. It's the same with professors; they're super supportive and deeply knowledgeable. She feels she gets such a wide-breadth of experience from all facets within the program.

Ariana has enjoyed working in the community mental health setting. In the future, she wants to continue working with children and families who are underserved in the community. Ariana would like to develop and implement interventions that would help this population.



COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT-JIM MYERS

Our Community Spotlight is on Jim Meyers who is a senior studying Business at West Chester University. Here is an excerpt from his conversation with fellow student Kristina Rowshan.

My inspiration came from my own personal struggles. During my first semester of freshman year at West Chester University I was in a tremendously dark and lonely place. I was a shut-in. My anxiety and depression led me to believe that no one could understand my struggle. Even worse than that, I was led to believe that even if I wanted to share my feelings no one would care. That all changed, however, after my first visit with West Chester University Psychological and Counseling Services. My therapist gave me the guidance I needed to see the good in every day, and the tools necessary to conquer the moments where the anxiety and depression began to surface, which I once thought were stronger than me.

When I was still struggling, I found myself drawing a plus sign on my finger to remind me to “stay positive.” I took to drawing this logo whenever I needed a reminder to “stay positive” and eventually called it “StayPlus.” When I participated in therapy at Psychological and Counseling Services for that semester I was afraid of what the next step was. I knew that I would be referred to an off-campus therapist, and that would mean that I would need to pay for the sessions. I experienced some stress and anxiety associated with this, which eventually led to the idea to create StayPlus as a way to help other students afford off-campus counseling. It is StayPlus’ mission to provide free initial counseling sessions to any WCU student who needs it; we do this by selling shirts and stickers with the StayPlus logo. My inspiration is to bring that same positive aura that I learned at Psychological and Counseling Services and also work to break the stigma associated with mental health concerns that causes people to avoid seeking help. This logo is not only a reminder to those who wear it to be more conscious of their mindset, but also for those who recognize the symbol to know that they have an ally, a listening ear, and a friend.

I have seen it radiate brighter and brighter with each semester. The people who support StayPlus do it with such conviction and truly believe in the cause. With that being said, I am motivated now more than ever to help develop StayPlus into a self-sustaining community of individuals who whole-heartedly care about one another’s well-being.

Jim has partnered with WCU Community Health Services and is allowing us to continue selling his t-shirts to help off-set the cost of initial therapy sessions for WCU students. You can contact WCU Community Mental Health Services for more information about purchasing t-shirts at cmhs@wcupa.edu or at 610-436-2510.



WRITE YOUR WAY TO A HEALTHY MIND



Improving mental health can be easier and simpler than you think. One of the most cost and time-effective ways to do this is to practice creative writing. The famous writer William Faulkner once stated, “If a story is in you, it has got to come out.” Creative writing enables individuals to write about their thoughts and feelings in an expressive manner when it may be difficult to find the words to speak about it. By externalizing our feelings, both positive and negative, it enables us to think critically about our thoughts and see them in a new perspective. Looking at our ideas and feelings from a different perspective can give us new insights to our thoughts and stressors. With writing, the possibilities are endless. Moreover, writing can facilitate a sense of exploration internally.

Writing can lessen the burden of our day-to-day struggles. Thinking about an experience by rationalizing it, putting it into perspective, and then understanding how it connects to other aspects of your life can be key to processing a stressful or traumatic event. Creative writing can help an individual find meaning in a stressful event, better manage emotions, stop obsessing or dwelling over a difficult experience, make it easier to talk about difficult experiences, and make it easier to reach out to others for support. Moreover, it can help us to process unpredictable emotional and mentally draining events, such as a layoff, a cancer diagnosis, or ongoing school stress.

In addition to helping rationalize our internal thoughts, creative writing also promotes deep concentration, awareness of others, and the development of self-esteem. To write, individuals must find a sense of quietness in order to put their thoughts into words. By promoting concentration, writing can help us hone our thoughts into the present moment by practicing mindfulness. Mindfulness can help us to appreciate what occurs in the present moment, including our day-to-day struggles. Further, practicing writing requires the use of our imagination as well as observing our surroundings. Lastly, producing even a single piece of writing can yield a sense of pride within ourselves. Increasing our self-esteem will empower us to appreciate our own worth in addition to taking pride in our individuality.

How to incorporate creative writing into your life:

1. Set a length of time to write, for example, 15 or 30 minutes
2. Set a schedule as to when you will write
3. Focus on a stressful experience
4. Write nonstop and freely— put down whatever comes to mind
5. Don't concern yourself with grammar, punctuation, or writing style
6. Don't hold back your thoughts and feelings
7. Keep it to yourself or share with others—it's up to you!

References

1 Miller, M. C. (2014). The mental health benefits of expressive writing. In Harvard Health Publications (Ed.), Harvard Medical School commentaries on health. Boston, MA: Harvard Health Publications. Retrieved from http://proxy-wcupa.klnpa.org/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/hhphoh/the_mental_health_benefits_of_expressive_writing/0?institutionId=649

2 Philips, D., Linington, L., & Penman, D. (1999). Writing well: Creative writing and mental health. London: Jessica Kingsley.

UPCOMING CMHS EVENTS

REMEMBER THE SUMMER, THE EASE ...
INVITING YOU TO **FREE** WORKSHOP SERIES ON
"CREATING EASE IN DAILY LIFE FOR MENTAL HEALTH"



Thursdays:

April 12, 19, and 26

Come to one or all... your choice!

Sign up at front desk, call 610-436-2510 or email cmhs@wcupa.edu
by April 10, 2018

Meeting time: 3:30-4:30 pm

WCU Community Mental Health Services

Wayne Hall, 8th Floor

Topics ... Stress Reduction/Sleep

Nutrition

Medication and Mental Health

Sponsored by Psychology and Nursing departments



Healthy Body Image Group

**THURSDAYS
STARTING MAY 3
3-4 PM**

- Learn skills to promote more positive body image
- Identify and challenge negative beliefs related to body image and self-esteem
- Get support from facilitators and group members

Ages 18 and up

**\$10 per session
(\$5 for WCU
students)**

**Please call to
schedule a brief
intake
(610) 436-2510**

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Wayne Hall
8th Floor
125 W. Rosedale
Avenue
West Chester, PA
19383
(610)436-2510

West Chester Community Mental Health Services

125 W. Rosedale Avenue
Wayne Hall, 8th Floor
West Chester PA, 19383

Phone: 610-436-2510

Fax: 610-436-2929

cmhs@wcupa.edu

www.wcupa.edu/CommunityMentalHealth