

resources to recover

improving mental health for a better life

Laurel House, Inc.
2017 ANNUAL REPORT

resources to recover

improving mental health for a better life

Core Purpose: Early Intervention,
Social Inclusion and Recovery

Our Family of Services
and Programs:

laurel  house
evidence-based solutions for mental health

 rtor.org
gateway to mental health services

thinking 
problem solving skills
for an independent life

treasure  hunters
thrift store



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO AND OUR CHAIRMAN



Thank you to the families who have entrusted their loved ones to the care of our *Resources to Recover* team. We are honored to work with them toward their recovery goals and to help improve the quality of their lives. Thank you also to the donors, volunteers and friends whose support allows us to assist the many program participants who aren't fortunate enough to have their own families to encourage them. We are grateful for your generosity and uplifted in our work.

If you noticed a change on our Annual Report cover in the prominence of the words *Resources to Recover*, as the brand for all services provided by Laurel House and www.rtor.org, you will appreciate that you have helped make possible the expanded reach of our programs, "improving mental health for a better life." Despite a cut to our budget from State funding in FY2017 and a second reduction in State funding implemented in the 1st Quarter of FY2018, private funding from individuals, grants and foundations has enabled us to protect the level and quality of our client services.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to our core purpose – early intervention, social inclusion and recovery. Thanks to several donors (see page 2, rtor.org), we are enhancing our young adult support with the hiring of a Young Adult Resource Specialist. Capitalizing on Laurel House's 28 years of experience in the successful use of the Supported Education evidence-based model, and our use of technology, an rtor.org Specialist will now be able to "follow" Fairfield County residents who attend college beyond the local eight town area that Laurel House has traditionally served. Our goal is to ensure a successful transition in the student's educational and vocational training, connect students with on-campus mental health counseling and treatment services, ensure appropriate disability accommodations, and "meet" weekly with the student via phone, Skype and FaceTime. We will give students dealing with mental health issues an affirming and safe start to greater independence, during a particularly vulnerable period.

The *Resources to Recover* family of services provides program participants with the skills and strategies they need to meet the challenges of living well in the community, while staying connected with a main source of ongoing support. We are the vital link among treatment, specialized services, and medical providers, and the local community, meeting our program participants where they live, work and go to school.

Thank you for helping us make this progress possible and for providing our participants with hope for the future, at every stage of their recovery.

Linda M. Autore
President and CEO

Kenneth A. DellaRocco, Esq.
Chairman, Board of Directors



www.rtor.org is a free online service that helps families and individuals affected by mental health concerns

connect with expert treatment and services. Through the website, individuals and families can contact a Resource Specialist for personalized help with a problem, obtain information about best practices, or consult the Directory of Family-Endorsed Providers for recommendations on vetted programs and practitioners. Every day, people from across the United States contact the Resource Specialist for free help and resource information.

Most requests for help are urgent and fall into one or more categories:

- how to identify the symptoms and signs of a mental health disorder;
- how to find the best mental health help for oneself or a loved one;
- where to turn for help when there are limited financial resources or no insurance;
- how to help a young person with mental illness transition to college, get a job, or find a place to live;
- how to transfer mental health services between states.

rtor.org Focus on Young Adults

“Failure To Launch: 9 Tips for Managing Anxiety in Dependent Adult Children” Among the most popular pages on the website is a blog written by rtor.org Editor in Chief, Jay Boll. It has prompted more families to contact rtor.org for help than any other page. Many of the parents who reached out were desperately seeking guidance on what to do about a young adult living at home and seemingly unable to move forward in life. As the article explains, and Resource Specialist Denise Vestuti reinforces, there are no failures when it comes to young adult mental health, only challenges that can be faced and overcome with the right treatment and support. **In FY2018, with the support of The Community Fund of Darien and an Anonymous Foundation, we are adding a Young Adult Resource Specialist to the team.**



Among the numerous comments of gratitude received by Denise:

“Thank you so much for your help and for directing me to resources. It brought peace of mind to know someone was with me while I was trying to find a doctor. Thank you.”

“How can I thank you enough!!! I am in tears because you have put out a hand when I felt I was drowning.”

“Your assistance was invaluable. You not only gave me very helpful information but you made me feel hope and validation.”

RTOR.ORG IN FY2017:
370,258
UNIQUE USERS OF THE WEBSITE
46.7%
OF USERS WERE 18 - 35



1.7 MILLION
SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS
665
REQUESTED CASES SERVED
76.8%
OF THE CASES WERE INITIATED
BY FEMALE FAMILY MEMBERS
AND INDIVIDUALS



Denise Vestuti, LCSW
rtor.org Resource Specialist

Thank you **Max J. and Winnie S. Rosenshein Foundation** and **Round Hill Community Church** for funding a portion of the Resource Specialist’s salary; **Oak Foundation** for its significant 2 year grant, allowing dedication of resource and expansion of services; an **Anonymous Foundation** for matching funds for rtor.org support; and **Google Ad Grants** for free advertising.



Thinking Well is a therapeutic evidence-based Cognitive Remediation program

created to address the long-term cognitive impairment that interferes with the daily lives of people with serious mental illness. Its goal is to help people living with mental illness build or improve the underlying cognitive skills that lead to better functioning and success in the workplace, school, the community and at home.



Thinking Well focuses on direct improvement of: attention; working memory; verbal learning; visual learning; reasoning and problem solving; and processing speed. The program uses instructor-led computer based drills and exercises followed by “bridging” discussion groups to practice and improve thinking skills and to make practical application of the exercises. It helps remove barriers to employment, education and greater independence in living.

The success of the program is measured in the participants’ improved thinking skills and confidence but also in functional outcomes such as getting a job, enrolling/succeeding in post-secondary education or a vocational certificate program, moving into independent or supported housing; engagement in the community.

With rare exception, there has been clinically observed improvement in functional skills in nearly all of the program participants in the Thinking Well program. These visible improvements range from getting a job, volunteering, going back to school or taking on more hours at work, to living independently or engaging better socially. Participants remark on their increased self-confidence and their ability to accomplish the individualized recovery goal that each participant establishes at the beginning of the 30 session series.



Camilo Duque, Jr., Assistant Vice President (left) and Michael Yao, Vice President-Senior Commercial Banking Officer (right) present a check for \$7,500 to Linda Autore, CEO and Gregg Pauletti, Thinking Well Manager.

Thank you donors whose support has sustained Thinking Well, a privately funded program, and allowed us to dedicate skilled resources for this critical evidence-based therapy: **The Community Fund of Darien, The Dammann Fund, Inc., Fairfield County’s Community Foundation, First County Bank Foundation, Nancy E. Barton Foundation, New Canaan Artisans, New Canaan Community Foundation, St. Francis Episcopal Church.**

Laurel House's two long-standing, evidence-based programs in **Supported Employment** and **Supported Education** help program participants obtain and keep competitive jobs (not set aside for individuals with disabilities) and assist participants in the Education program in every step of the application, enrollment and course completion or degree/certification process. In both the Employment and Education programs, ongoing assistance is provided to ensure retention of the job and completion of courses and degrees. Both programs are funded by the State of Connecticut's Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. That funding is augmented by private donors and grants which allow Laurel House to: add resource to reduce client wait lists/increase caseloads; support the cost of clinical training and professional development for skilled staff; and help close the gap in market compensation for staff.

Supported Employment

Laurel House has consistently achieved high rankings in quarterly measurements of percentage of jobs achieved, retention on the job, and competitive pay. This is in great contrast to the 60 – 80% of people living with mental illness who are unemployed. The employment focuses on participants' strengths, promoting recovery and wellness. Laurel House Employment Specialists maintain regular contact in the community with participants and employers to ensure job placements are successful by resolving issues or concerns as they arise and by assisting with employer accommodations if needed. They also develop new job opportunities.

Laurel House operates a thrift store, Treasure Hunters, at 501 Summer Street. It provides a welcoming venue for program participants to learn pre-vocational skills such as social engagement, customer service orientation, and daily store operations, to assist in a search for competitive employment. The store also provides low-cost goods and furnishings for clients and housing residents.

Supported Education

We go onsite to the post-secondary schools selected by the students to acquaint them with the facility and resources and advocate for disability accommodations. We have close working relationships with disability coordinators at 20 area schools that current and past students have attended. Laurel House counselors intervene as early as possible and work with a number of area high schools to ensure a smooth transition to post-secondary education.

The U.S. Department of Education reports that over 50% of students with a mental health disorder age 14 and older drop out of high school – the highest dropout rate of any disability group. According to the American Journal of Psychiatry, individuals with the least amount of education have the highest rate of unemployment. Individuals who have not completed their high school education are impacted at nearly twice the rate (14.6%) of the general population (7.9%). In FY2017, the Supported Education program served 84 participants, with 68 enrolled in college (4 Master's; 8 Bachelor's; 46 Associate's; 10 Vocational Certificates), plus 1 GED program.



Thank you **Greenwich Department of Human Services** for designating Laurel House as a Community Partner and providing sustained support to expand Supported Education in Greenwich; **Near and Far Aid** for Supported Employment support, allowing increased resource and minimizing a wait list for participants; **St. John's Community Foundation** for funding client assistance in Employment and Education.

Engaging in the Community

The Laurel House team spends significant time in the eight communities we serve, meeting program participants where they live, go to school, work and socialize. We facilitate access to mental health services and stimulate conversations with local organizations, Houses of Worship and collaborative agencies, giving visibility to available services and advocating for the cause of mental health recovery.

Free NO LETTING GO community screenings and discussions

- The Ferguson Library, Stamford
- Greenwich Library
- New Canaan Library
- Westport Woman's Club
- Wilton Library

The Inn Notes of New Canaan Musical Performance

Presentation to Union Memorial Church, Stamford

Norwalk Community College

- Fresh Check
- Wellness Pit Stop

Gordon Family Foundation Nature Trip

Presentations to The Community Fund of Darien Youth Group and Investors Forum

Presentation to St. Paul's on the Green, Norwalk

Participation/booth at NAMI Events in:

- Connecticut
- New Jersey
- New York

Laurel House Staff Mindfulness Retreat

The Grace Notes of Greenwich Musical Performance

Participation in:

- Loft Artists Association Holiday Show
- National Conference for Cognitive Remediation, Columbia University
- Round Hill Community Church Outreach Fair
- Stamford Vigil for the Homeless
- The Woman's Club of Greenwich Holiday Boutique



Workshops

Laurel House counselors provide curriculum-based skill building workshops to increase program participants' self-sufficiency, communication and coping skills, and independent living skills.



Peer Support Groups enhance the services by bringing empathy and lived experience to client discussions and problem solving. “There is a lot of pain that you deal with when you have a mental health condition. Dealing with all kinds of problems, everything from financial, employment, education... not having any friends, not having any sense of community, feeling isolated. I can draw on all of those experiences to understand what the participants are experiencing.”
– Recovery Coordinator and Peer Support Mentor



Wellness Workshop Learning to live healthy and staying well is the focus of a variety of topics addressed in ongoing Wellness Workshops. Laurel House counselors and Peer Support assist participants in coping strategies, self-management alternatives, problem solving skills, and stress reduction.



The workshops promote and build greater self-sufficiency and engagement in the community. Laurel House support providers tap into qualified community resources to find practical solutions for people who need help. At the Resource Center, Laurel House conducts workshops to help individuals prepare for interviews and develop in job skills.

“As a volunteer, I am performing a job that is both **challenging and gratifying**. I am proud to be a member of the Laurel House team helping participants discover their inner-strengths and **learn new coping skills**.”

– Betsy Varian, MSW, MA English, MA Special Education and Volunteer Leader of the Writers' Workshop



Mindfulness Workshop Thanks to a generous donor, Laurel House program participants were able to practice mindfulness in a “Cultivating Wellness through Mindfulness” Workshop offered by the Copper Beech Institute.

Sandrine Harris, an Institute instructor, focused on why mindfulness is important for mental health and overall well-being and led participants through yoga and relaxation exercises. The workshop examined how mindfulness can provide a valuable set of tools for improved self-awareness, less reactivity and reduction of chronic pain.



Artists' Workshop In her weekly workshop, Chitra Ramcharandas, Laurel House volunteer and accomplished artist, promotes a positive attitude towards art. She empowers her students to create freely without worrying about judgement or appraisal. Creating art isn't just an enjoyable pastime. It has been shown to help people with various conditions feel more confident in themselves and happier in their daily lives.



Safe, Affordable Housing and Community Support

The Community Support program provides workshops for the families and other natural supports of the clients, to assist in client recovery.

94 residents received housing and community support services: coaching for Activities of Daily Living (ADLs); case management; goal planning; and budgeting assistance.

Safe, stable and affordable housing is critical to sustain the mental health recovery of those living with serious mental illness. The price of Fairfield County's rental market is among the highest nationally and the cost of living is the highest in the state. Despite this challenge, Laurel House provides affordable and safe housing, supported with critical services that make independent living and mental health recovery possible.



“The same way Laurel House has picked me up and turned me around, they've done the same for others. I thank God every day for all the help that I've gotten from Laurel House. Out of all the resources that Laurel House has given me, the most important thing is hope.”

– Residential Community Support Client

Thank you **First Congregational Church of Greenwich** and the **Rotary Club of New Canaan** for funding client assistance requests by participants in the Housing, Employment and Education programs.

Volunteers

Power of One Award Winner, Diane Cohen Schneider Food Service Volunteer

Each year Laurel House recognizes a volunteer who has given selflessly to assist and encourage its program participants. This year the Power of One Award was presented to Diane Cohen Schneider. Diane was honored at a recognition dinner in her honor.

Diane began volunteering in the Resource Center café two years ago, cooking delicious meals for program participants. Every Tuesday since then, participants look forward to the aroma and taste of Diane's excellent culinary creations.

"I'm not a professional chef but I have always loved to cook. In my family, cooking was always a celebration; it would bring us together. The wonderful thing about volunteering here at Laurel House is that I get to work directly with the participants. That is definitely the best part of the job."

– Diane Cohen Schneider



Treasure Hunters thrift store

Proceeds from the sale of the Treasure Hunters Thrift Store goods support the store operation and Laurel House programs. The Thrift Store is located at 501 Summer Street in downtown Stamford; its truck picks up donated goods during scheduled appointments.



Program participants learn store operations and customer service skills from staff and community volunteers. In some cases furniture donated to the store is delivered directly to housing residents who do not have adequate furnishings and household items.



Thank you **Dolphin Cove Community's** Thanksgiving food drive for Shop Rite certificates providing five holiday meals for Laurel House program participants; and **St. Leo Parish of Stamford** for purchasing and wrapping holiday gifts for program participants.

Annual Dinner Dance

On Saturday, April 29th Laurel House held its annual Champions for Recovery Dinner Dance at The Delamar, Greenwich Harbor where more than 200 friends and supporters watched a beautiful sunset on the patio and enjoyed bidding on silent auction items. After dinner the guests danced late into the evening!

Town Champions were honored for their advocacy and outreach to make their communities better places in which to live and work.

Champion for Recovery, Randi Silverman, CEO and co-founder of The Youth Mental Health Project, addressed the guests, advocating for children's mental health.

Proceeds from the evening will support the growth of www.rtor.org and support services provide by the Resource Specialist.



2017 Laurel House Town Champions (L to R) New Canaan/Wilton: Tom O'Dea
Stamford: Sharon and Jack Feighery; Darien: Kate Larson
Champion for Recovery: Randi Silverman
Westport: Dan Woog; Southport/Norwalk: Nancy von Euler



Guests picked tags from the "Giving Tower" to support an array of Laurel House Programs & Services

Champion for Recovery Honoree, Randi Silverman



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Chitra Ramcharandas

Christopher Russo
Sail to Sable
Sharkninja Company
Sign of the Whale
Randi Silverman
Splash Car Wash
Patricia Swasey
Teddy's Transportation System
Total Wine & More
Turner Broadcasting
Vermont Good Wood
Viacom
Vineyard Vines
Wasserman Sports
The White Horse Country Pub &
Restaurant
Wüsthof-Trident of America, Inc.
Z Hospitality Group

PROGRAM AND OPERATING EXPENSE GRANTS

Anonymous
www.rtor.org

Community Fund of Darien
Thinking Well Program Costs

Dammann Fund, Inc.
Thinking Well Program Costs

Fairfield County's Community Foundation
Thinking Well Program Costs

First Congregational Church of Greenwich
Client Assistance- Housing

First County Bank Foundation
Thinking Well Program Costs

Google Ads
www.rtor.org

**Greenwich Community
Development Block Grant**
Thrift Store Truck

**Greenwich Department
of Human Services**
Supported Education

Nancy E. Barton Foundation
Thinking Well Program Costs

Near and Far Aid
Supported Employment

New Canaan Artisans
Thinking Well Software

New Canaan Community Foundation
Thinking Well Program Costs

Oak Foundation
rtor.org

**Max J. and Winnie S.
Rosenshein Foundation**
rtor.org

Rotary Club of New Canaan
Client Assistance-Employment,
Education, Housing

Round Hill Community Church
rtor.org

St. Francis Episcopal Church
Thinking Well Software

St. John's Community Foundation
Client Assistance-Employment, Education

Laurel House, Inc. & Friends of Laurel House, Inc.
Summary Income & Expense For Years Ended June 30,

	FY 2017	FY 2016	FY 2015
Revenues:			
Public Funding (State of CT; HUD)	1,673,723	1,723,981	1,690,662
Private & Other Revenue Sources:			
Rent, Thrift Shop, Services, Cafeteria	333,774	314,979	342,916
Private Funding	828,792	772,667	597,828
Total Revenues	2,836,289	2,811,627	2,631,406
Expenses:			
Salaries and Benefits	1,857,169	1,799,828	1,648,354
Operating Expenses	595,960	562,872	607,671
Development & Marketing	106,777	93,361	117,080
Interest	37,551	38,840	39,714
Total Expenses	2,597,457	2,494,901	2,412,819
 Change in Net Assets	 \$238,832	 \$316,726	 \$218,587
	% of Revenues	% of Revenues	% of Revenues
Public Funding	59.0%	61.3%	64.2%
Private & Other Revenue Sources:	41.0%	38.7%	35.8%

Sources of Private Funding

Individuals	56%
Corporations	7%
Foundations	37%

FY 2017 Services

Laurel House provided services to **818 individuals**.

Psychosocial Services: 527 individuals received services in: recovery planning, skill building, advocacy, peer support and outreach; participated in community workshops; dined in the Resource Center Café; and participated in Laurel House social programs and events

Thinking Well (Cognitive Remediation): 101 participants; 98% had positive functional outcomes (e.g., job, school); 89% who completed sessions and took post assessment achieved improvement in 4 or more cognitive domains; 64% achieved statistically significant improvement in 2 or more domains

Supported Employment: 90 participants; 50% competitively employed (jobs not set aside for disabilities); 78% retained jobs at 3 months; 60% at 12 months

Supported Education: 84 participants; 68 enrolled in college (4 Master's, 8 Bachelor's, 46 Associate's) and 10 vocational certification

Housing and Residential Services: 94 individuals received housing and support services

LAUREL HOUSE INC.

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