



restoring hopes and dreams

# hopes and dreams

find a job that is 9-5 so i can be home with my son ... improve social skills and get together socially with others ... finish my medical assistant certificate and begin learning spanish ... maintain my job and balance it with school ... work where i can talk to people ... become proficient in computers ... keep my job as a caregiver but also do things to take care of myself ... get appreciated for my work ... save or help as many people as i can as an emt ... find a job as a graphic designer while maintaining my health ... be more present and grounded in conversations to become a better listener ... pass my class ... contribute without being overwhelmed, possibly with senior services ... get financially stable and keep up with my medical appointments ... explore longer hours at work ... be considered for a raise or a promotion and have my own apartment one day ... hold a steady part-time job and have time for social activities ... improve my self-esteem to socialize ... focus on recovery while considering career options ... work on my memory while i prepare for servsafe exam ... get better with time management to do well at work and school ... work on my motivation ... push myself to get more involved in activities ... work hard enough to get a raise ... change my perspective to become more positive and feel less “stuck” ... keep working and stay drug-free ... be more outgoing and make some friends ... do well as a full-time student this semester ... start ged classes and begin to catch up on what i learned in high school ... pursue a certification and experience toward a recovery coach/peer mentor career

# A Message from our CEO and our Chairman

Thank you to everyone who has helped make our work in mental health recovery possible through your financial support, your work as volunteers, and your encouragement. You are an important part of achieving our program participants' hopes and dreams, and improving the quality of their lives.

Your generosity helped us to serve more than 900 individuals – the most ever in a single year. It also fueled the far-reaching impact of [www.rtor.org](http://www.rtor.org), a gateway website for families to access mental health treatment, which received one million unique visitors once again. Our two Resource Specialists responded to over 2,000 requests for personalized service. Additionally, a significant monthly sponsorship by Silver Hill Hospital helped us sustain [rtor.org](http://rtor.org)'s operation throughout FY2023 while their innovative treatment served as an inspiration to our clinicians.

Laurel House continues to innovate as well, with the goals to increase access to our therapeutic services and to assess the sustainability of our program participants' improved well-being. We began a virtual-only offering of our popular Thinking Well (Cognitive Remediation) program for those participants who reside far from our Stamford Resource Center. Thinking Well served 108 participants in person last year. We are tracking comparative effectiveness of the in-person sessions versus the new virtual offering. Supported Employment and Supported Education counselors also stay in contact with program participants after they have been discharged following job acceptance, degree completion, or achievement of a vocational certification. The counselors monitor their ongoing success or challenges in applying the new practical skills and offer alternate paths if needed.

We continued our successful outreach to underserved communities of color and to culturally relevant mental health treatment providers who better serve those communities. With the help of Hearst Media, we conducted effective social media, email and print marketing campaigns to connect Fairfield County individuals in need with accessible and affordable help. This initiative continues in the new fiscal year, as our Diversity Outreach Resource Specialist identifies more families and individuals in need and cultivates expert local providers to assist them.

Laurel House's second annual Social Work Racial Equity Scholarship drew many competitive Black and Latino candidates who attend social work graduate school programs in Connecticut and New York and are committed to providing services to local underserved communities. The winner of the \$10,000 scholarship and the winners of the two cash awards were announced in June and recognized at a luncheon in July.

In January, we will celebrate 40 years of helping individuals and families achieve and sustain mental health to lead fulfilling lives. So many of you have supported us along the way. Thank you for investing in recovery and for helping our participants restore their hopes and dreams!



Linda M. Autore  
President and CEO



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

# Supported Employment

In our most recent audit in February 2023 by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), Laurel House achieved the highest rating, Exemplary, for fidelity to the Supported Employment evidence-based model. That reflects both the achievement of outcomes and process quality by which the outcomes were accomplished.

Laurel House served 120 participants in the Supported Employment program in FY2023. This is the greatest number of clients served by the program in a single year. We competed for and won an award of additional annual contract funding from DMHAS for another two Supported Employment counselors so there is an expectation of a dramatically increased number of clients to be served in FY2024. One of the newly funded positions is a Recovery Support Employment Specialist, providing an additional level of support for clients in recovery from a substance use disorder.



*Elvin achieved his Associate's degree and is now applying for a job with the help of his Education and Employment Counselors*

The Supported Employment program utilizes the Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) practice developed at the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center to help individuals with a mental health disorder get and keep competitive employment (jobs not set aside for people with disabilities) focused on their strengths and talents. 64% of the program participants gained competitive employment and 68% remained employed over 12 months.



*Megan Habakangas, Mobile Employment Specialist*

## Mobile Employment Services

An additional 53 individuals were served by the Mobile Employment Service program, funded by SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration). The program is dedicated to providing onsite services to individuals in recovery from opioid and substance use disorders, living in recovery housing. Laurel House is one of only five organizations in Connecticut providing this service. The Mobile Employment Specialist must work quickly to secure employment for her clients since clients are located at the transitional housing for a stay of just 90 – 120 days.

Thank you to People with Disabilities Foundation for your support of our Supported Employment Program.



# Supported Education

In FY23 Laurel House served 117 program participants in the Supported Education program, the largest number of clients served in a single year. An evidence-based program, Supported Education helps participants choose a post-secondary school or vocational certification program, or work toward a GED or Adult High School diploma. Counselors assist students in every step of the process from application, financial aid, enrollment, selection of courses to accessing on-campus disability accommodations and support services, to ongoing support for learning strategies, coping skills, time management, and academic, social and emotional challenges.



*Johane is completing her Associate's degree at Housatonic Community College*

Laurel House is 1 of only 5 organizations in Connecticut contracted by DMHAS that provides these in-demand services. Private funding allowed Supported Education counselors to serve twice the number of clients that public funding alone would have provided.

Counselors also work with high school students to ensure successful transition of vulnerable students to a path to a vocation and greater self-sufficiency. The goal is to intervene as early as possible to minimize the most debilitating effects of mental health disorders. Donations make possible wraparound services for families of students as needed, provided by rtor.org Resource Specialists. The Specialists provide psychoeducation to the families, help find new treatment providers, or connect them to a family therapist — all toward the goal of ensuring the support the student needs to remain in the program and succeed.

The counselors can assist Fairfield County students who go out of town to complete their undergraduate degree, or pursue a Bachelor's after achieving their Associate's degree. They identify all relevant on-campus disability support services and help the student make a smooth transition to the use of on-campus support.



*Krista Biello, LMSW, Supported Education & Thinking Well Manager; Danielle Leblanc, LMSW, rtor.org Resource Specialist; Monica McNally, Darien First Selectman and Janet King, Executive Director, The Community Fund of Darien*

## FY23 Supported Education Enrollment

- 24% Associate's
- 34% Bachelor's
- 19% Vocational Certification
- 6% GED
- 1% Master's
- 16% were in High School



*Chris is completing his Adult High School diploma, a program based on credits earned vs. GED tests*

Thank you to the organizations who provided grants to the Supported Education program: The Dammann Fund; The Goodnow Fund; Greenwich Department of Human Services; John H. and Ethel G. Noble Charitable Trust; People with Disabilities Foundation; Savings Bank of Danbury; Stanley Family Foundation; and the Tudor Foundation, Inc. Thank you to The Community Fund of Darien and First County Bank Foundation for providing grants to Supported Education with wraparound rtor Resource Specialist services for families of the students. Thank you New Canaan Artisans and Rotary Club of New Canaan for providing client assistance for Supported Education participants.

# rtor.org

## Resources to Recover

[www.rtor.org](http://www.rtor.org) (short for Resources to Recover) is a free online service that helps families and individuals with mental health concerns connect with expert treatment and support. rtor.org promotes positive lifetime outcomes for people living with mental health conditions by supporting and building on the strength of families.

Through the website, users of the service can contact a **Resource Specialist** for free personalized help with a problem, obtain information about best practices in mental health, or consult our **Directory of Family-Endorsed Providers** for recommendations on vetted programs and practitioners. With more than 1 million visits to the site last year, rtor.org reaches across the United States, with a primary focus on serving families and individuals in Fairfield County.

### A Family Touch

At our spring fundraiser, we premiered a video featuring the mental health journeys of two families. Their stories illustrate how rtor.org supports and strengthens families in crisis seeking help for loved ones with mental health and/or substance use challenges. Per parent Mary Beth Young, *"This happens to everyone, and you shouldn't judge because the judgment . . . and the hiding and the shame all just make it worse."*

Watch Video



Mary Beth Young, family member who used rtor.org services

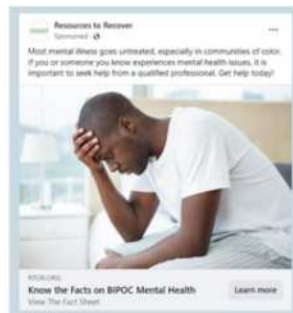


Danielle Leblanc, LMSW, Laurel House rtor Diversity Outreach Resource Specialist

### Diversity Outreach

Finding help to address a mental health problem is often challenging, but the barriers are even greater for people of color. In 2021, Laurel House recruited Danielle Leblanc, LMSW, as our first Diversity Outreach Resource Specialist. Her primary role is to help communities of color and other underserved groups connect with mental health providers with the sensitivity and knowledge to treat and assist them. *"Often when I speak to clients trying to engage in therapy, they want to see someone who looks like them and understands their experiences,"* said Danielle in an April 2023 CT Post article.

For a second year, we worked with Hearst Media to conduct targeted outreach to communities of color and LGBTQ+ individuals in Connecticut. Through a combination of digital, print, email, and social media, last year we reached more than 1.2 million residents of the most diverse communities in the state.



### rtor.org FY23

- 1 million unique visitors to rtor.org
- 2,004 individuals requested and received free personalized help from a Resource Specialist
- 62% of website users and 75% of those requesting help are female
- 54% of website users and 56% of those receiving help are young adults 18-35
- 1.2 million Hearst Diversity Outreach ad impressions and 38,526 ad engagements

Thank you to Silver Hill Hospital for its significant sponsorship throughout FY23.  
Thank you to Near & Far Aid Association, Inc., New Canaan Community Foundation, and Max J. and Winnie S. Rosenshein Foundation, Inc. for your support of rtor.org Diversity Outreach.



# Thinking Well — Removing Barriers to Success at Work, in School, and Independent Living

## In FY23:

- 108 participants served
- 100% who completed sessions and took post-assessment achieved improvement in at least 1 of 5 domains; 94% in 2 domains; 64% in 3; 36% in 4 of 5; and 6% improved in all domains.
- There has been clinically observed improvement in functional skills in nearly all of the program participants. 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.

Thinking Well is Laurel House's name for a Cognitive Remediation program that was created to address executive functioning issues and cognitive impairment associated with mental health disorders. It improves the participants' underlying skills to function better in the workplace, at school and in the community. The program was developed by Neuroscience and Psychiatric Rehabilitation thought leader, Dr. Alice Medalia, of Columbia University and Director of the Lieber Clinic in Manhattan.

Laurel House is one of only three certified providers of Cognitive Remediation in Connecticut and the only one in Fairfield County. A baseline is established for each participant with a pre-assessment that identifies targeted areas for improvement. A post-assessment (using the same tool) shows areas of improvement in specific cognitive areas that were identified for improvement (e.g., processing speed, attention, verbal memory).

Thinking Well program participants are expected to complete 10 – 30 sessions, each an hour in length, with two sessions per week, to fully experience the value of the therapeutic model. Progress is evaluated at 10, 20 and 30 sessions so that there can still be a post-assessment even if the participant chooses not to commit to 20 or 30 sessions.

Participants remark on their increased self-confidence and their ability to accomplish the individualized recovery goal that each participant sets at the beginning of the program. We try to stay connected with past Thinking Well session participants to document and build an understanding of the lasting effect of the therapy and learn which life functions have sustained improvement because of participation.

To meet the demand for this innovative program that isn't available elsewhere, we train and certify all of our Supported Education Counselors so they can devote a percentage of their time to the Thinking Well program and can adjust to spikes in demand as they may occur. We are able to deliver the program virtually, in addition to in-person, or hybrid – with most participants at our Resource Center in the Harrison Hoffman Thinking Well Center, or in our open workshop area equipped with large screens and audio, and including remote participants on screen.



*Jennifer Sagastume, LMSW, Thinking Well Coordinator and Supported Education Counselor, and Denise Vestuti, LCSW, Laurel House Clinical Director with Greenwich United Way CEO, David Rabin, who presented grant funding*

Thank you to Greenwich United Way Community Investment Program and The Oaklawn Foundation for your support of Thinking Well.

# Living Well in the Community

Laurel House provides safe, affordable housing and critical support services to sustain the mental health and substance use recovery of individuals living in the community. Services occur at Laurel House's apartments and in scattered site apartment settings throughout the community where Laurel House is not the landlord.

78 program participants received community support services and housing last year, along with case management and counseling in recovery planning, Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and budgeting. Counselors also fill voids in community services for their clients such as providing access to food and medication, getting clients to medical and psychiatric appointments, filling out applications and renewals for subsidies and vouchers, and accessing other disability accommodations as needed.

Participants in the Community Support Services program benefit from a variety of wellness workshops and social rehabilitation support groups to develop skills in: problem solving and stress reduction; self-management alternatives; interpersonal communications; and recovery planning.



*Wellness Workshops or activities accompany monthly Community Hour Luncheons*



*Daryl Mohammed, MSW, Community Support Counselor, leading outdoor activities for clients*

Counselors facilitate program participants' engagement in events and groups that provide opportunities for socialization such as Community Hours, and for cultivation of talents and strengths such as the Writers' and Artists' Workshops.



*New Canaan High School Seniors, Anila, Jenna and Elise, completed May - June internships in three Laurel House departments — Development, Supported Education and Thinking Well — and they helped at workshops.*

Thank you to donors who helped sustain the well-being of Community Support Services and Laurel House Supportive Housing program participants: Diddel & Diddel, LLC; Dolphin Cove Community; First Congregational Church of Greenwich; St. John's Community Foundation; St. Leo's Parish of Stamford.



# Engagement and Collaboration



*Counselors participate in onsite training and role play for motivational interviewing*

Laurel House counselors are committed to their profession and to continually enhancing their skills and knowledge to better serve program participants, engaging them at the greatest possible level.

Laurel House and rtor.org employees are committed to the advancement of racial equity and social justice, and to making mental health services accessible to all. We continue to increase the reach of our programs and services to underserved communities of color and have not only improved access to services for those individuals but have developed relationships with culturally relevant treatment providers, removing barriers for those who are hesitant to seek service for mental health conditions.

For the second year, Laurel House awarded a \$10,000 scholarship and two cash awards for \$1,000 and \$500 to Black and Latino social work graduate students in Connecticut who were selected among many qualified applicants for their academic excellence, work and volunteer experience and their career commitment to serving Connecticut communities of color.



*Award winners: Daniella Brown, \$10,000 scholarship; Natasha Holly, \$1,000 cash award; Thayrone Veloso, \$500 cash award*

We collaborate with organizations, other providers, houses of worship and volunteers to give visibility to services, provide advocacy for those in need and increase access to treatment.



*Capitol One volunteers serve participants at a Community Hour luncheon*



*Shoppers enjoyed a fundraising event hosted by The Pilates Advantage in Wilton*

We are grateful for the fundraisers that The Pilates Advantage and The Bar Method Darien conducted in support of Laurel House's work, and for the continued support on behalf of our program participants by Diddel & Diddel, LLC, the Dolphin Cove Community and St. Leo's Parish of Stamford.



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## In Honor Of

Linda Autore (6)  
Jay Boll  
Michael, Danielle and Matthew Brusco  
Lucy Cutting Butler  
Geoffrey Blunt Coughlin (5)  
Khan Garcia  
Ann Mandel and Robert Laitman, MDs  
Dave Hunt (2)  
Laurel House Staff  
Susan Marks  
Peter McGowan  
Roopa Mehta  
Demetria Nelson, LCSW (2)  
Michael R. Parker  
Jesse Robins  
Diana Samponaro (2)  
Diane Cohen Schneider  
Marianna Siderides  
Supported Education Program  
Christel Truglia  
Mary Beth Young

## In-Kind Donations

Catherine Andersen  
Jeff Autore  
Michael Autore  
Bacio Trattoria  
Bartlett Arboretum and Gardens  
Beadworks Norwalk  
Beal's Lobster Pier  
Bianca Restaurant  
Christine M. Biddle  
Sam Bridge Nursery and Greenhouses  
Caramoor Center for Music and Arts  
Joan Carra  
Connecticut River Museum  
The Cottage  
Curve of the Earth Design  
Delamar Greenwich Harbor  
Captain Michael Hart  
Hartford HealthCare Amphitheater  
Martha Robinson Heard  
Julie Hollenberg  
Kirk Huffard  
Images of Old Greenwich, Inc.  
Inspirato  
Karen Jordan  
Fred Landman, Sleepy Cat Farm  
l'escale Restaurant and Bar  
Darrell Lorentzen  
McArdle's Floral and Garden Design  
Peter and Margriet McGowan  
Meli-Melo  
Moffly Media  
Mystic Seaport and Museum  
Susan and Robert Nolan  
Pullman & Comley, LLC  
Richards Greenwich  
Raffaele Ronca  
Larry M. Rosenberg, PhD  
Caroline Samponaro  
Diana and Pete Samponaro  
The Griswold Inn  
The Mariner  
Twelve Percent Beer Project  
US Games Systems, Inc.  
R. Van Loan Custom Framing  
Betsy Varian  
Abigail Wall

## An Evening with Laurel House

On Saturday, April 29th a full ballroom of guests dined, danced, and enjoyed Laurel House, Inc.'s annual fundraiser, An Evening with Laurel House, held at the Delamar, Greenwich Harbor. Laurel House, Inc. Board Director, Susan Marks of Darien, past Board Director, Diana Samponaro of Greenwich and Christine M. Biddle, Resources to Recover Advisory Board Director, of Pound Ridge were Event Co-Chairs. Proceeds from the event support rtor.org and Laurel House programs and services that help individuals and families achieve and sustain mental health to lead fulfilling lives in the community.



### 2023 Champions for Recovery

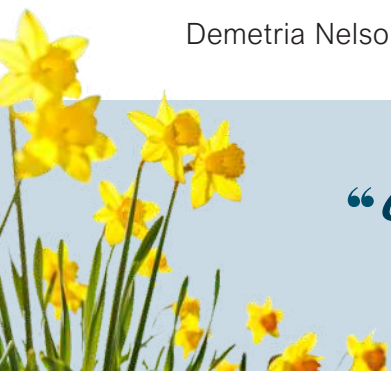
Robert S. Laitman, MD, Ann Mandel Laitman, MD and Daniel Laitman



### 2023 Laurel House Town Champions

Demetria Nelson, LCSW (Greenwich), David Hunt (New Canaan) and Mary Beth Young (Wilton)

*“Where flowers bloom, so does hope.”*





# An Evening with Laurel House





# Laurel House, Inc. and Friends of Laurel House, Inc.

## Summary Income & Expense For Years Ended June 30

	FY 2023	FY 2022	FY 2021
Revenues:			
Public Funding (State of CT; HUD)	\$1,827,737	\$1,652,062	\$1,553,896
Private & Other Revenue Sources:			
Rent, Thrift Store, Services, Cafeteria	246,733	192,203	228,942
Private Funding	1,114,871	1,082,034	827,154
Total Revenues	3,189,341	2,926,299 <sup>1</sup>	2,609,992 <sup>2</sup>
Expenses:			
Salaries and Benefits	2,088,993	1,923,226	1,824,502
Operating Expenses	715,951	661,192	622,666
Development & Marketing	91,664	98,600	27,354
Interest	14,765	20,738	35,657
Total Expenses	2,911,373	2,703,756	2,510,179
Change in Net Assets	\$277,968	\$222,543	\$99,813
	% of Revenues	% of Revenues	% of Revenues
Public Funding:	57.3%	56.5%	59.5%
Private & Other Revenue Sources:	42.7%	43.5%	40.5%
Sources of Private Funding:			
Individuals	47%	52%	40%
Corporations	10%	5%	6%
Foundations & Organizations	43%	43%	54%

<sup>1</sup> Total Revenue does not include \$511,842 gain from the sale of 4 Washington Ct. duplex.

<sup>2</sup> Total Revenue does not include \$313,700 in Paycheck Protection Program forgiven loan.

### FY 2023 Services

**Laurel House** provided services to **903 individuals**.  
**rtor.org** had 1 million unique visitors and **2,004 engagements** with two Resource Specialists.

**Social Rehabilitation:** **769** individuals received services in: recovery planning, outreach, advocacy, peer support; participated in Writers', Artists', and skill-building workshops; received meals; and participated in Laurel House wellness programs.

**Thinking Well (Cognitive Remediation):** **108** participants; 100% who completed sessions and took post-assessment achieved improvement in at least 1 of 5 cognitive domains, 94% in 2 domains, 64% in 3 domains, 36% improved in 4 of 5 domains and 6% improved in all domains.

**Supported Education:** **117** participants; 24% enrolled in Associate's; 34% in Bachelor's; 19% in Vocational Certification; 6% in GED; 1% in Master's; 16% in High School.

**Supported Employment:** **120** participants with 64% competitively employed (68% remained employed over 12 months); **Mobile Employment Services (MES)** provided onsite services to an additional **53** individuals with substance use disorders at Recovery Houses.

**Community Support Services and Supportive Housing:** **78** individuals received case management; coaching for activities of daily living, budgeting and goal planning; and access to safe, affordable housing.

## Mission

Help individuals and families  
achieve and sustain mental health  
to lead fulfilling lives



### Laurel House, Inc. and Friends of Laurel House, Inc. FY2023 Board of Directors

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*Chairman*

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Vincent E. O'Banner  
Larry M. Rosenberg, PhD  
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Patricia R. Swasey  
Michael R. Parker, *Director Emeritus*

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Christine M. Biddle  
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