

ACHIEVING **RECOVERY**



Laurel House's Core Purpose: Social Inclusion, Early Intervention and Recovery

We are grateful that Laurel House is a touchstone for recovery for so many of our program participants. We reach out to past participants to ensure they continue to benefit from their education and their cognitive skills improvement, or that they have retained their employment, and that they are sustaining greater independence and health.

Many former Laurel House participants don't wait for our "Wellness Check." Instead, they call or email us to share their challenges and successes. We are eager to hear the results either way and to re-engage as needed. Below is a recent note from a successful former program participant who is now a volunteer as a contributing guest author for an rtor.org blog:



We plant the seeds of hope & recovery...

Subject: Volunteering

“ I am a grateful Laurel House Success Story.

Through your counseling, those brain games, and educational services, I was able to be an A+ student and get back to work. Even better, it took time and diligence, but after several temporary jobs, I'm finally back to my field in social services as a counselor. I'm a published writer and a performing poet (with a big collection of my performances on YouTube). And after helping other monthly community publications, I started my own monthly publication on social advocacy.

Enough! It's 'give back' time! You gave me a step-up during a very dark time that cost me everything. Knowing you continue to help people like me, I would love to contribute in any way I can. Please respond to my email or my publication email and, by all means, feel free to check my site.

It's 'Give Back Time' in whatever capacity. Grateful for your consideration.”

Jose

A Message from Our CEO and Our Chairman

Dear Friends of Laurel House,

We are deeply grateful for your support over the past year. Our continued progress and growth are possible through your generosity and encouragement. Only together can we achieve the mission and purpose of Laurel House: to help individuals and families achieve and sustain mental health to lead fulfilling lives.

Because of the financial support of our donors and our skilled and dedicated team, we were able to increase the number of individuals served to 981, assisting and guiding those in need as they follow their own distinct path to recovery. We met our program participants where and when they needed us – in a time of crisis, at periods of emotional or social instability, or when a longer period of support was required. We did so in-person, at our Resource Center, in the community and virtually.

Behind all the numbers are unique individuals. When program participants fear joining the workforce or going back to school, or want to quit or give up on their recovery, they are met with an infusion of hope from our counselors. That hope is realistic, based on practical, achievable goals that are part of the evidence-based practices we employ. Your support has enabled us to invest in our counselors' clinical training and education and reward their performance with merit increases and recognition.

We are pleased to report that our rehabilitative programs continue to result in successful outcomes:

- 70% of 160 participants in our Supported Employment program were competitively employed and 79% held their positions for two years or longer.
- Through our Mobile Employment Services program, an additional 69 participants with substance use disorders received onsite service at Recovery Houses.
- Through our Supported Education program, 140 clients reached major milestones over the past year, ranging from high school graduation or GED to Vocational Certification or Associate's, Bachelor's or Master's Degrees.
- Among the 131 participants in our innovative Thinking Well program for cognitive remediation, 50 found jobs and 42 enrolled in education programs. We served 98 clients through our Community Support Services and Housing program, and 851 clients participated in our Social Rehabilitation and Skill Building workshops.

We continued to extend our community outreach through rtor.org in 2026. Our Resource Specialists responded to 3,231 requests for help and there were 1.1 million engagements on our website, rtor.org. In each case, we offered compassionate, personalized answers, connection to expert mental health treatment and professional guidance.

At a time when so much uncertainty faces all of us today, Laurel House is steadfast in pursuing our mission and purpose and achieving meaningful outcomes. We hope you will continue to provide us with the critical support we need through your generosity and your encouragement.



Linda M. Autore
President and CEO



Kenneth A. DellaRocco, Esq.
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In Memoriam



Peter E. Ruhlin

May 10, 1961 – July 27, 2025

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 2007 – 2015

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 Zody's 19th Hole



The Cognitive Remediation program that we call Thinking Well (TW) was developed by Neuroscience and Psychiatric Rehabilitation thought leaders, including Dr. Alice Medalia of Columbia University and the Lieber Clinic in NYC. Laurel House is one of only three CT providers (and the only one in Fairfield County) certified in this therapeutic intervention.

Thinking Well was designed to address executive functioning issues and cognitive impairment associated with mental health disorders. Reduced executive-level functioning places people with mental health challenges, despite how intelligent they may be, at a significant disadvantage in succeeding in education, vocational skill building, or employment. A pre- and a post-Assessment identify the cognitive domains that can benefit from improvement and the level of improvement achieved in: attention; working memory; verbal learning; reasoning and problem solving; and processing speed. To ensure progress, meetings are held with Thinking Well instructors after 10, 20, and 30 one-hour sessions (held twice per week for each participant).

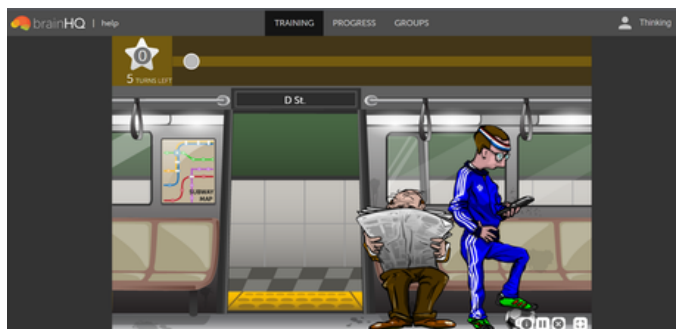


Thinking Well and Supported Education Counselor, Hannah Daddario, MSW, assists a program participant

Sessions are provided at the *Harrison Hoffman Thinking Well Center*, at other agencies, and on high school and alternative school campuses. Some participants who can't travel can participate virtually in hybrid sessions with participants at the Resource Center in Stamford.

131 clients participated this past year in Thinking Well sessions, including instructor-led "bridging" groups to make practical application of the computer exercises. 100% of FY26 participants who completed sessions and took the post-Assessment achieved improvement in at least 1 of 5 cognitive domains; 88% in 2 domains; 64% in 3; 36% in 4; and 16% improved in all 5 domains.

In addition to the documented improvements in targeted cognitive areas, Thinking Well Counselors record functional outcomes that are clinically observed during the sessions and the discussion groups such as showing greater self-sufficiency and engaging socially.



"True North" computer exercise created by Brain HQ, one of hundreds of games from 3 platforms used by Thinking Well counselors.

Participants are encouraged to capitalize on their newfound confidence and skills by joining Laurel House's Supported Employment or Supported Education programs. 50 of the 131 TW participants found a job and 42 enrolled in an education program due to ready access to these programs.

By staying in touch with our past program participants, we are able to learn about sustained and ongoing functional improvements due to participation in Thinking Well, such as employment retention, earning a pay raise, receiving employee benefits, progressing to a greater level of independent living, and advocating for themselves.

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

Supported Education

Private funding for Supported Education (SEd) allowed counselors to serve over three times the number of clients that public funding from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) alone supports. SEd improved the lives of 140 program participants in FY26. Counselors helped students with a mental health condition or with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders achieve an Associate's, Bachelor's or Master's Degree, complete high school or gain a GED, and complete vocational certifications.

Where other educational assistance offerings focus solely on academic improvement, SEd ensures students receive the learning strategies and coping skills that promote emotional and social stability, vocational progress and increased self-sufficiency. They provide skills transfer—modeling self-advocacy and demonstrating how to seek on-campus disability support services and accommodations.



Supported Education Counselor Jen Piro (l) offers her client Laura support where and when it's needed

SEd counselors provide integrated services to meet each participant's unique needs, collaborating with our Thinking Well and Supported Employment Specialists to achieve the best results and engage clients in a timely manner. They also offer the understanding and validation needed to address participants' fears and desire to quit. Jen Piro, Supported Education and Employment Specialist, tells clients that, *"facing dread is important; naming it, saying it out loud can give you a sense of power over it. Saying I'm scared to go back to school is a completely normal and reasonable way for someone to feel."*



Samia Malik (l), SEd & TW Counselor and Stephanie Guza (r), Supported Employment Specialist, help client Michelle (c) achieve her education and employment goals

We try to intervene as early as possible to minimize the most debilitating effects of mental health disorders. Counselors identify all available on-campus disability support and facilitate connection to help students transitioning to out-of-state post-secondary schools. Counselors provide services on college, high school and alternative school campuses, as well as at the Resource Center and in the community at libraries, both in-person and virtually to remove barriers to access. The high school seniors with whom we work are recommended by school social workers or therapists, and approved by a parent, to ensure successful transition of vulnerable students to post-secondary education or vocational certification and greater self-sufficiency.



Supported Education counselors and participants recognize graduations at an "Education Celebration"

Success is measured in degrees, certifications and course completion, but also in skill building in organization and time management, interpersonal and coping skills, and in functional outcomes such as getting a job. DMHAS' annual audit again recognized the quality of our work and successful outcomes with the highest rating: *Exemplary*.

This program is made possible in part through funding from Greenwich Department of Human Services (GDHS), which helps expand services on-site at Greenwich High School and Windrose campuses.



The Supported Education program received grant funding from: The Dammann Fund; First County Bank Foundation; The Goodnow Fund; Greenwich Department of Human Services; Near & Far Aid Association, Inc.; People with Disabilities Foundation; Savings Bank of Danbury Foundation; The TJX Foundation, Inc. and the Tudor Foundation. Thank you, Rotary Club of New Canaan and New Canaan Artisans for continued client assistance to Supported Education participants.

Community Support Services and Supportive Housing

Laurel House continues to provide affordable and safe apartment living for individuals with mental health disorders. Our Supportive Housing apartment building at 6 Washington Court, Stamford, offers apartment living well below market rate, though we receive no subsidies for the building or property maintenance. We recognize that such a supportive environment in the community helps sustain the mental health and substance use recovery of vulnerable individuals. Tenants also receive critical support services such as case management and counseling in recovery planning, as do other Community Support clients who live in apartments in the community that are not owned by Laurel House.



CSP client receiving a personal care package from Roxanne Vanderbilt, Development Manager; First Congregational Church of Greenwich Women's Fellowship and St. Francis Episcopal Church funded the program

In addition to one-to-one personalized support, tenants and Community Support program participants are engaged in skill-building workshops led by counselors and volunteers to improve coping skills and interpersonal communication and to increase self-sufficiency. Monthly Community Hours are hosted at the Resource Center and include free lunches, social activities and entertainment. All vocational programs such as Supported Employment, Supported Education and Thinking Well are available to tenants and Community Support clients.

During FY 2026, a total of 98 program participants received coaching on Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and budgeting, and access to community support services critical to sustaining recovery and fostering greater independence. Our counselors also connected them with benefits and with disability accommodations. Laurel House Supportive Housing tenants and clients in scattered-site apartments elsewhere in the community received regular outreach from our counselors who monitored and addressed nutrition and physical and mental health to prevent relapses and hospitalizations.



Community Hour at Laurel House's Resource Center



Artist Jean Benoit leading Artists' Workshop at Laurel House's 6 Washington Court Supportive Housing apartments

Damon Ragin, LMSW, Supportive Housing and Community Support Services Manager, leads the team and is also responsible for his own caseload of clients. He and his team focus on building stability and resilience in program participants, with the goal of helping clients become as autonomous and independent as possible by practicing life skills.



Supportive Housing and Community Support Services Manager Damon Ragin, LMSW

Thank you Diddel & Diddel, LLC, Dolphin Cove Community and St. Leo's Parish of Stamford for your support of clients' food and basic needs. Thank you to First Congregational Church of Greenwich Women's Fellowship and to St. Francis Episcopal Church for grant funding in support of our Community Support and Supportive Housing clients' needs.

Supported Employment and Mobile Employment Services



Chase Bellini, RCP, CPSRP, Recovery Support Employment Specialist, develops job opportunities for his clients.

Our Supported Employment (SE) team served 160 program participants, once again increasing the number of clients served by the program in a single year. We continue to capitalize on the additional contract funding awarded by DMHAS in 2023, which allowed us to add a Recovery Support Employment Specialist, providing an additional level of support to clients with substance use disorders.

Supported Employment Specialists spend time in the community identifying job opportunities and developing relationships with prospective employers. This gives them a head start on placing candidates once the program participant has identified his/her/their preference for employment and the type of work setting. Repeat placements often occur because of the successful relationship built between Specialist and employer and the dependability and dedication of the program participants.



SE Specialist Stephanie Guza meets her clients in the community

During the fiscal year, 70% of our program participants gained competitive employment (jobs not set aside for people with disabilities), and 79% of Supported Employment participants sustained employment over 24 months in a review of prior-year participation.

The Supported Employment program utilizes the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) evidence-based practice developed at the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center. Laurel House implements the model to help individuals with a mental health disorder get and keep competitive employment, focused on their strengths and talents. The use of the model ensures increased job entry, retention rates,

better earnings and reduced hospitalizations versus other educational assistance methods that don't address additional challenges of mental health and substance use disorders. In the most recent DMHAS audit, Laurel House received the highest level rating of fidelity to the model – *Exemplary* – reflecting quality in performance and beneficial outcomes for program participants.

The Mobile Employment Services (MES) program served an additional 69 individuals onsite at Recovery Houses. The program is funded by SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) and serves individuals in recovery from opioid and substance use disorders living in transitional settings from Bridgeport to Greenwich.

Megan Habakangas, our Mobile Employment Services Specialist, meets her clients in the community and focuses on rapid employment placement because most of her clients are living in transitional housing for only 90 – 120 days. Laurel House is one of only five organizations in Connecticut providing this service.



Megan Habakangas, Mobile Employment Specialist, "on the go"



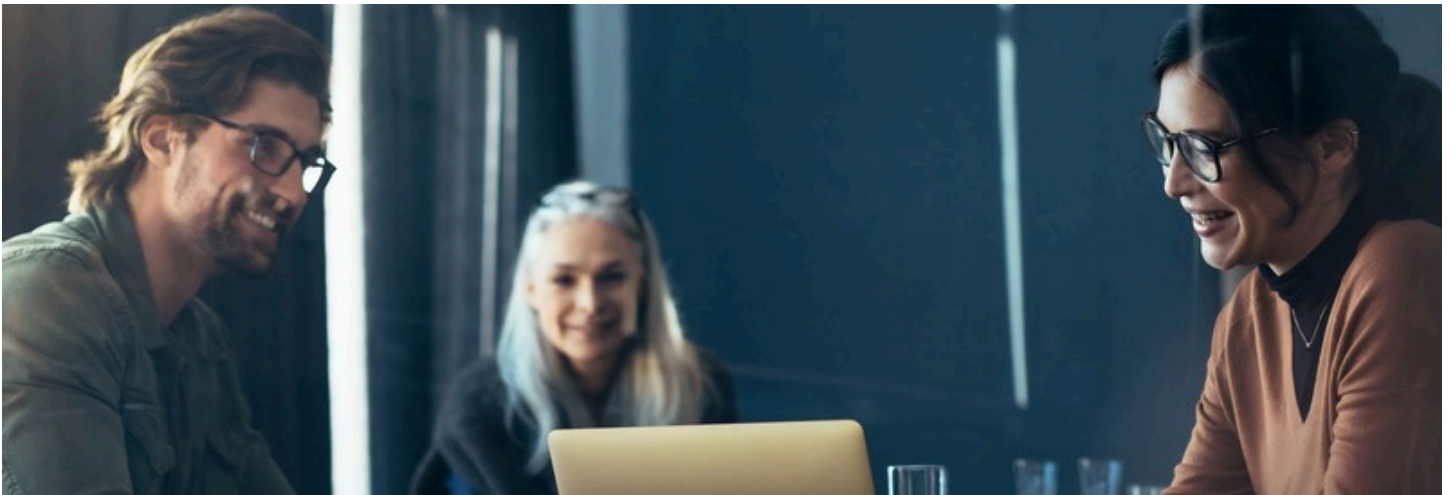
The Behavioral Health Collaborative (BHC) is a systems-change initiative, funded by the Community Behavioral Health Fund of New Canaan Community Foundation. It is intended to improve behavioral health care coordination and access to quality treatment across ten towns in lower Fairfield County. 57 treatment providers have completed a needs assessment survey and joined the Collaborative as of September 2026. rtor.org Resource Specialists' 11 years of experience in identifying quality providers and building a network of relationships has informed the development of the Collaborative.



Initial focus for Collaborative members was on treatment providers who accept Medicaid, Medicare or private insurance. The next phase underway includes other specialty providers as well as behavioral health service providers, such as Laurel House's rehabilitative programs. The survey identifies where gaps exist in access to treatment across the the region and focuses on behavioral health treatment providers' specialties, unique programs and capacity. Providers identified gaps in the referral network, especially for access to higher levels of care and transition between levels of treatment.

As the lead organization guiding BHC's early growth, Laurel House launched a microsite, bhlfc.org, in February 2026 and assembled an outreach team of five Laurel House staff to

contact potential Collaborative members and conduct surveys. Profiles for each of the Collaborative members will be published shortly on the site and referrals among the initial Collaborative members have already begun.



Collaborative members will attend an initial Networking Event October 20th, co-hosted by The Shores Mental Health/Hartford HealthCare, strengthening connections among providers and identifying other barriers to coordinated care and referrals across the region. BHC will bring together clinical providers, specialized service organizations, and wraparound services to ensure individuals and families receive comprehensive coordinated care.



The Behavioral Health Collaborative of Lower Fairfield County was made possible by a significant grant from the Community Behavioral Health Fund of the New Canaan Community Foundation.

www.rtor.org (stands for Resources to Recover) is a free service of Laurel House that connects families and individuals to mental health services through a robust website with extensive expert content and through personalized response by knowledgeable and compassionate clinicians to requests for help. It does not exist elsewhere. Our goal is to shorten the cycle of discovery associated with mental health and substance use issues and treatment, and to reduce the most debilitating effects of mental health disorders by early intervention.

rtor has served millions of users for over a decade with comprehensive self-help content, a Directory of 181 Family-Endorsed Providers, weekly blogs and response to requests for help by phone, email and LiveChat. 107 blogs were published in FY 2026, half of which were written by clinicians and half by family members, advocates, wellness experts and people with lived experience. There were 1.1 million engagements on the site and the rtor team responded to 3,231 requests for help.



Erin Haggerty (l), Counselor, and Denise Vestuti (r) meet community members at Greater Norwalk/Stamford Provider Fair at Child Guidance Center, Stamford

- 78% of requests for help are initiated by women
- 64% of cases concern a family member or other close relation
- 57% of those helped are young adults; 12% under 18
- 49% of those served are Black, Latino and people of color, with significant growth among Hispanics and Asians of Indian and Middle Eastern origin

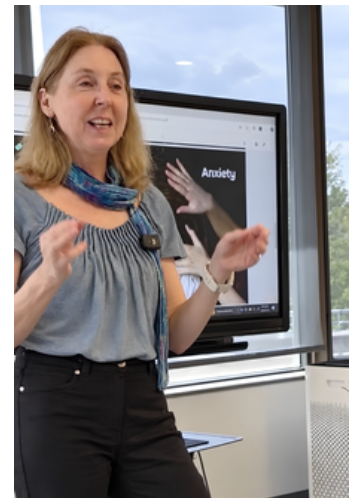
We receive customer surveys validating the quality and timeliness of our personalized response to requests for help. (See our Impact Page at <https://www.rtor.org/our-impact/>.) Some of the many unsolicited testimonials we continually receive, serve to renew our Resource Specialists' motivation:

“My mother reached out to Laurel House through their free rtor service for guidance on local programs for my son who suffers from severe OCD. We were immediately contacted by Denise who spent an hour on the phone listening attentively to our situation and then provided several resources and programs.

Throughout the days and weeks that followed, Denise continued to provide additional resources to find the best fit for my son. Where the many doctors and facilities had failed to provide meaningful direction to us, Denise stepped in and was able to not only provide viable options, but most importantly, hope, kindness and compassion.”

Repeat visits and inquiries continue around mental health challenges and transitions for emerging adults. We have created a survey tool for families to assess whether their child is demonstrating issues associated with “failure to launch” or a “guidance gap” and we offer proven parenting approaches that have worked with other families in the same situation.

Call **203-724-9070** to speak with a Resource Specialist



Denise Vestuti, LCSW, Clinical Director and Resource Specialist

Thank you to New Canaan Community Foundation, Odyssey Group Foundation, Max J. & Winnie S. Rosenshein Foundation, Inc., The Nancy E. Barton Foundation, The Community Fund of Darien, The Edouard Foundation, Inc., The Resource Foundation, Inc., Town Fair Tire Foundation, Inc. and Worden Family Fund for grant funding in support of the rtor.org Resource Specialists. Thank you to an Anonymous donor for significant support of rtor.org operations.

Outreach and Advocacy



Erin Haggerty, Client Intake/Provider Outreach Counselor, promotes Laurel House services at "Hope Day," April 19, 2026 at Greenwich YMCA

Laurel House Counselors and rtor Resource Specialists present programs in local communities and participate in other organizations' events to ensure treatment providers learn about our rehabilitative services that provide complementary care to their patients and clients. We engage in numerous community health care fairs, with houses of worship, and in events on college and high school campuses, so students and their families can easily connect with us. We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in community-wide events such as New Canaan's Annual Community Addiction Awareness Vigil.



Paul Reinhardt, Founder of Vigil and Parent Support Group, with Denise Vestuti



New Canaan's 9th Annual Community Addiction Awareness Vigil, Aug. 27, 2025



To increase access to services, we regularly meet with program participants and their families in the community — where they live, work and go to school. We have also expanded our programs' reach in underserved communities of color by cultivating additional, deeper relationships with culturally responsive treatment providers.

2026 Social Work Racial Equity Scholarship Winners



*Liberty Brown
Quinnipiac University, 2nd Year Master of Social Work
\$10,000 Scholarship Winner*



*Isabella Colucci
University of Connecticut Stamford, 2nd Year Master of Social Work
\$5,000 Scholarship Winner*

For the 5th year, Laurel House organized and funded a competitive scholarship program to cultivate more Black and Hispanic social workers committed to social change and to increasing access to culturally relevant mental health care treatment providers. Of the many graduate school students who applied, two met the highest standards for academic excellence, work and volunteer experience and commitment to future careers as social workers serving Connecticut communities of color.



Thank you to The Pilates Advantage of Wilton for your continued generosity in hosting fundraisers and giving visibility to rtor.org and Laurel House's work in the community.

Skill Building

Program participants benefit from numerous social rehabilitation skill-building workshops and groups. They can take advantage of the sessions to augment the skills learned in the Supported Education, Supported Employment and Supportive Housing and Community Support Services programs, or simply to learn or refresh skills and engage with others.

All participants receive monthly notifications of the workshop and group schedule, as do over 300 mental health treatment and social service providers in local communities, so they can refer patients or clients for specific services. All Laurel House counselors lead a group or workshop, rotating their leadership of the curriculum every six months so the topics stay fresh and the participants have a chance to work with different counselors.

Following are some of the offerings and samples of continually refreshed session topics:

Emotional Intelligence

Reading Nonverbal Cues
Coping Skills
Change and Growth Mindset

Forward Together: The Road to Recovery

Repairing Relationships
Managing Free Time
Being Clean vs. Well

Wellness Group

Building Distress Tolerance
Healthy Home Environment
Navigating Conflict

Men's Group

Loneliness & the Importance of Connection
When the Past Affects the Present
Managing Anger

Family Dynamics (for Families)

Rebuilding Trust
Seeing Strengths, Not Symptoms
Handling Disagreement



Hannah Daddario, MSW, Thinking Well and SEd Counselor leads an Emotional Intelligence workshop

Thinking Well

10, 20 or 30 One-Hour Sessions
for Executive Functioning Improvement

Writers' Workshop

Practice Creative Writing
Discuss Work Produced

Artists' Workshop

Led by an Artist Who Coaches Artists
in Their Preferred Medium

Games Group

Group Setting Activities to Stimulate
the Brain and Socially Engage Participants

Walking Group

In the Community
Promote Outdoor Physical Activity
and Social Engagement



Steven Torres, Supportive Housing and Community Support Services Counselor, leads men's group

An Evening with Laurel House

April 25, 2026

On Saturday, April 25th, nearly 200 guests braved wind and rain to celebrate our annual fundraiser at the Delamar, Greenwich Harbor. We celebrated our Champion for Recovery, Dr. Uri Berger and our Town Champions, Amy Daniels (Darien), Suzanne and Scott Diddel (Greenwich), and Fran Pastore (Stamford). Event Co-Chairs, Laurel House, Inc. Board Directors, Susan Marks and Graham Goodrich, and Julia Goodrich led an evening of fine dining, dancing, raffles, and enthusiastic fundraising in an auction, a pledge to benefit our Supported Education program, and a paddle raise for the replacement of our elevator.



2026 Champion for Recovery

Uri Berger, PhD, MA

Founder and Clinical Director

The Lighthouse Psychological Services PLLC

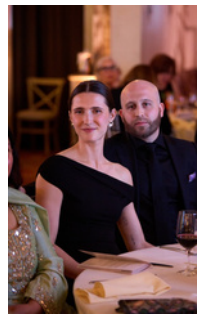
2026 Laurel House Town Champions (l to r)

Amy Daniels (Darien)

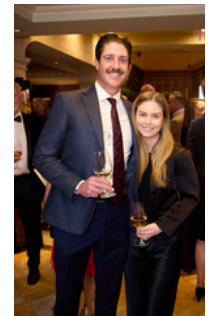
Scott Diddel (Greenwich)

Suzanne Diddel (Greenwich)

Fran Pastore (Stamford)



An Evening with Laurel House
April 25, 2026



Sound Steps for Mental Health Recovery 5K Walk/Run

October 18, 2025



Thank You to Our Race Sponsors

PLATINUM

The Autore Family

Sharon and Jack Feighery



GOLD

Sheila McCaffrey



SILVER



The Nolan Family



RELEASE



BRONZE



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

	FY 2026	FY 2025	FY 2024
Revenues:			
Public Funding (State of CT; HUD)	\$1,817,822	\$1,807,198	\$1,823,355
Private & Other Revenue Sources:			
Rent, Services	262,101	281,836	385,711
Private Funding	1,144,864	1,031,816	1,053,609
Total Revenues	3,224,787	3,120,850	3,262,675
Expenses:			
Salaries & Benefits	2,013,584	2,209,717	2,299,287
Operating Expenses	775,129	715,857	663,519
Development & Marketing	93,711	107,258	105,673
Interest	9,943	11,752	13,137
Total Expenses	2,892,367	3,044,584	3,081,616
Change in Net Assets	\$332,420	\$76,266	\$181,059
	% of Revenues	% of Revenues	% of Revenues
Public Funding:	56.4%	57.9%	55.9%
Private & Other Revenue Sources:	43.6%	42.1%	44.1%
Sources of Private Funding:			
Individuals	57%	54%	53%
Corporations	9%	11%	10%
Foundations & Organizations	34%	35%	37%

FY 2026 Services

Laurel House provided services to **981** individuals.

Social Rehabilitation: 851 individuals received services in: recovery planning, outreach, advocacy, and peer support; participated in Writers', Artists', and skill-building workshops; received meals; and attended Laurel House Community Hours.

Thinking Well (Cognitive Remediation): 131 participants; 100% who completed sessions and took post-assessment achieved improvement in at least 1 of 5 cognitive domains, 88% in 2 domains, 64% in 3 domains, 36% improved in 4 of 5 domains and 16% improved in all domains; 50 participants found a job and 42 enrolled in an education program.

Supported Education: 140 participants; 20% enrolled in Associate's; 16% in Bachelor's; 16% in Vocational Certification; 13% in GED; 2% in Master's; 33% in High School.

Supported Employment: 160 participants with 70% competitively employed; 79% with sustained employment over 24 months.

Mobile Employment Services (MES): provided onsite services to an additional 69 individuals with substance use disorders living at Recovery Houses.

Community Support Services and Supportive Housing: 98 individuals received case management, coaching for Activities of Daily Living, budgeting and goal planning; and access to safe, affordable housing.

rtor.org: 3,321 requests for help received personalized service; there were 1.1 million engagements on the site.

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

Laurel House, Inc. and Friends of Laurel House, Inc. FY 2026 Board of Directors

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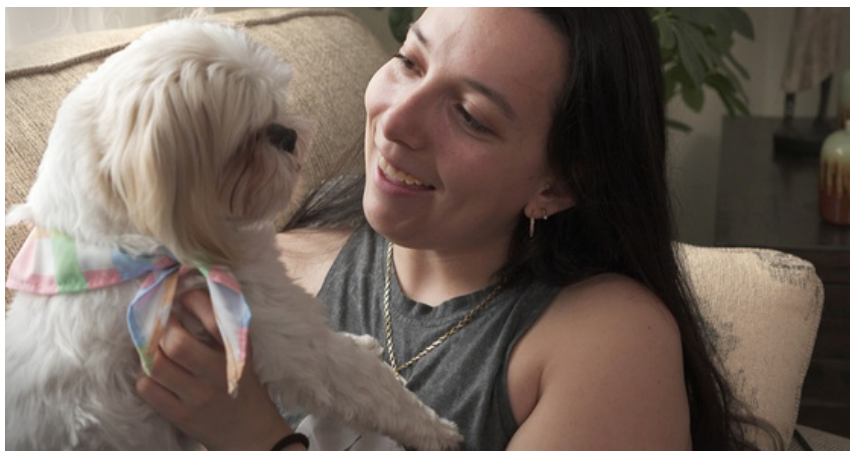
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