

# Message from the CEO

*Bridging the Social Distance and the changing landscape of behavioral healthcare in the face of a public health crisis.*

Wellmore, like nonprofit organizations everywhere, wakes up to new phenomenal challenges daily, as the COVID-19 pandemic impacts life as we know it. From the early days in March until now we have been on an unrelenting roller coaster of change. There is no playbook on how to manage your way through a pandemic!

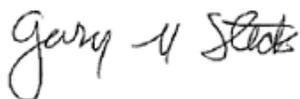
Guided by our Board of Directors, Wellmore quickly developed a plan to maintain its Mission by altering service delivery to increase safety for our clients and staff. Our planning was based on the best available information, albeit data that continues to be updated daily. This included implementing remote work arrangements, deploying new technologies to communicate with clients, developing infection control strategies for all our essential programs (that simply can not under any circumstances close or cease operations), supporting our incredible staff with a sensitivity to the realities of how COVID-19 effected them and their families, and coming up with a financial approach to sustainability.

First and foremost, our managers did not panic. Our Board committed to keeping our staff in tact, no one was laid off at Wellmore. They knew we had a large existing and high risk clientele that deserved nothing but our best efforts. Once it was necessary to reduce non-essential face to face services, the staff did a marvelous job maintaining contact with clients through telehealth until such a time as adjustments could be made with our buildings and service delivery models so that face to face care could be offered to all those who wished to be seen. Now novel new approaches such as drive-up tents, drive-by home visits, and outdoor visits are now offered along with more traditional office and home visits to provide families, parents and clients the ability to choice how they wanted to receive care.

Core to our plan remains choice. It is our belief the best way we can help people back on their feet, back to school and work is by offering flexible service choices so that families can pick how they want to be seen. Clients have told us how much they appreciate this flexibility and willingness to adjust our approach so they can best 'connect' with us. Already in some of our programs more than half of the visits are face to face in some format, whereas just a few months ago the only option was via the phone or computer. We expect this to increase as it gets closer to the re-start of school, in whatever format your school district selects.

Many of our programs are seen as 'essential', such as the Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Service and our 4 residential treatment sites. What a blessing our committed and talented staff kept these services in tact and safe during the 'stay at home' emergency order period. We all owe a debt of gratitude for our essential staff, as well as the essential employees across CT!

While no one can predict the future, our intention is to continue to support and serve the community through this period of crisis. Please stay tuned to our website for periodic updates on our progress!



GARY M. STECK, LMFT  
Chief Executive Officer



## COVID-19 Testing Day

StayWell Health Center, in partnership with the State of CT Health Department, Greater Waterbury Health Partnership, City of Waterbury, Wellmore Behavioral Health, and Mount Olive Church, provided Walk-In COVID-19 testing open to staff, clients & the public.

Wellmore & StayWell are committed to providing high quality, community health care and social services, including preventive medical, dental, and mental health services to the underserved population of the Greater Waterbury community.

# *What do we know about the effects of the Pandemic on mental health?*

If past pandemics and natural disasters give any clue we should be increasing our efforts in education, support and access to mental health services.

After natural disasters like hurricanes, floods and earthquakes; stress, anxiety, PTSD, substance abuse, child abuse and domestic violence notably increase. Pandemics, unlike natural disasters, have no real safe spaces or seemingly concise beginning or end. Invisible, they often come in ebbs and flows over months to years. The psychological effects will likely long outlast the COVID-19 pandemic itself. The SARS pandemic in 2003 left 40% of those afflicted with PTSD or depression.

Specific populations can be affected differently. Children, whom seem largely spared by the coronavirus may in fact be more vulnerable to long term emotional disturbances from the loss of school structure and socialization. After hurricane Katrina, for example, many negative emotional effects endured over time, particularly in children living in poverty and children of color. While past disasters typically have a lag time in the presentation of mental illness early data regarding COVID-19 are ominous.

The Census bureau recently reported that 1/3 of Americans are feeling severe anxiety. And, in April texts to a Federal emergency mental health line were up 1,000% from the same time the previous year. Considering COVID-19 is occurring in the midst of an opioid epidemic and suicide rates have been on the rise for the past two decades one study projects the pandemic could lead to an additional 75,000 deaths from drugs, alcohol and suicide. All the news, however, is not bad.

The internet and social media, the very tool, used by some to perpetuate misinformation stoking further fear and anxiety about the pandemic may also allow us to maintain and improve social connections and open more pathways to healing interventions. In a matter of days in March, Telehealth, though not a panacea, transformed mental health care, breaking down barriers to treatment, improving access to care for many including the home bound, transportation challenged and others typically reluctant to seek care. It is on us now to promote choice and facilitate telemedicine to bring forward vulnerable populations, and reduce uneven mental health recovery. Investment in improving everyone's ability to connect is critical.

Dr. Christopher Young, Medical Director  
Wellmore Behavioral Health

# Special Thanks!

Without the help of several incredibly generous organizations Wellmore would not have had our critical Telehealth infrastructure ready to go allowing for a seamless transition of our services throughout the quarantine and work from home orders.

The ability to offer services remotely offers uninterrupted critical support for the vulnerable populations that we serve.



## **BLACK LIVES MATTER** *STANDING TOGETHER AGAINST RACIAL INJUSTICE*

The killing of George Floyd is yet another call to action to address racial injustice. It is sickening, shocking, traumatic, and unacceptable. How can we as a people accept this, and the many other similar deaths as the result of disregard for the value of the life of Black and Brown citizens?

I want to acknowledge the full range of feelings and emotions you might be experiencing - from shock, worry, and fear to anger and even numbness. As someone who has dedicated his career to justice, equity, and health for all, I am shaken to my core by what continues to transpire in our country.

Please know you are not alone and try not to lose hope that together we can act to end racism, prejudice, and racial injustice. For almost 70 years the staff and Board of Wellmore have worked to confront injustice in its many forms.

We are here to help, we want to be a part of the solution, but much work lays ahead. I am praying for an end to violence and a peaceful outcome that leads to lasting change. We stand with the community during this trying time.

As always, I wish you peace, health and safety.

Gary Steck, Chief Executive Officer  
Wellmore Behavioral Health

# STAFF APPRECIATION

We sadly missed out on some of our AWESOME yearly staff events due to social distancing guidelines and the evolving health situation. While we couldn't celebrate the end of our fiscal year in our usual fashion, our Employee Community Relations Committee came up with some new ideas that also helped our staff to learn more about different offices and staff.

So while we didn't get to enjoy the Big Green Pizza Truck, staff chair massages or the Ice Cream Truck; we instead held a 3 week long series of challenges, contests and trivia with the potential to earn some cool prizes!

It has always been important for Wellmore to connect with its staff in a meaningful way, but especially now with most of our staff working from home until recently.

## Staff Mask Fashion Show *Congratulations!*



**TYLICE MACDONALD**

Child First/IICAPS | Sports



**NIKKI BORUSIEWICZ**

Adult Outpatient | Entertainment



**MARIE WADE**

EMPS | Unique/Creative



**LINDSEY SULLIVAN**

Child Outpatient | Patriotic

**A HUGE THANK YOU TO ALL OUR PARTICIPANTS!**

## Are you open to exploring new job opportunities?

If so, Wellmore is currently hiring! Do you want to provide support to others during the most challenging moments in their life? You can help to provide hope, and teach others the necessary skills required to overcome their current circumstances.

Any one interested can apply through our career site at [www.wellmore.org/careers](http://www.wellmore.org/careers). Interested applicants can reach out via email at [hr@wellmore.org](mailto:hr@wellmore.org).

## TEA BASKETS & TREATS - FEBRUARY



## MUNCHKINS - MARCH



## KIND BARS - JUNE



## ICE CREAM DAY - JUNE



## CUPCAKE TRUCK - JUNE



---

## Marcy Kane



After almost 15 years of service we had to say goodbye and send well-wishes to a Wellmore staple, Dr. Marcy Kane Director of our Child Services Division.

Marcy came to Wellmore, then the Child Guidance Clinic of Greater Waterbury, on March 29, 2006. She has served in several different leadership roles over her 14 year tenure at Child Guidance, Wellpath and now Wellmore.

Marcy didn't 'apply' to work here in the traditional sense, she literally sought out our CEO Gary Steck and told him that she wanted to join our team to serve the community of her birth.

At the time Gary didn't know her well, but he says it was one of the best decisions he has ever made to take her up on her offer and support her desire to help the children and families of greater Waterbury.

The organization doubled in size several times over during Marcy's time here, and her legacy will continue for generations to come.

---

## Kristin Pracitto



Growing up locally in Wallingford, CT, Kristin got her BA from Dickinson College and an MSW from Washington University in St. Louis. Her career started providing clinical and family support to families with pediatric HIV/AIDS, spending 17 years at the Yale Child Study Center as Coordinator for the IICAPS Network, leading the training, consultation and evaluation processes for IICAPS sites across CT. In 2016, she joined Wellmore to work for Dr. Marcy Kane as Director of Community Support Services until taking over as Vice President of Child Services earlier this year. She lives in Bethany, CT with her husband and two loud hounds, Molly and Maggie. We took a moment to sit down with Kristin regarding her new role as Wellmore's Vice President of Child Services.

### **What kind of services does Wellmore's Child Division provide?**

The Child Division is special because of the range of services that we offer to children and families – from work with prenatal moms around their pregnancy and support in their newborns' development (Parents as Teachers), to helping children to regulate their emotions and cope with past trauma (Child Outpatient) to the most intensive home based interventions that help to keep the most behaviorally/psychiatrically challenged kids safe (Mobile Crisis, IICAPS, etc), to those programs that help families create meaningful connections with community supports (Care Coordination, Community Support for Families). I am proud of the work of each program type and the commitment that staff show in their partnership with families.

### **With so many organizations to choose, why should others choose Wellmore?**

I had long worked in collaboration with Wellmore as a partner in the IICAPS Network and knew the leadership team well (particularly Marcy and Gary). Over many years, I had watched their leadership style, their authentic way of partnering with families and the continual respect that they demonstrated for staff, family and community members. This perspective shows at all levels of the Wellmore organization; it feels different and real. In addition, there is true commitment to the communities we serve.

### **How did it feel when taking the reins at the onset of a national health crisis?**

It certainly has been a time of great and swift change for all of us. The metaphor in my life has been "I do better when I'm thrown off the end of the dock", but I'm not sure anyone could have predicted that the world would look like this! Luckily, life's experiences have taught me the importance of adjusting quickly and given me some skills to help with that. I try every day to keep our clients and their families in mind – and make the best decisions that help our staff to do their best with them. We work as a team at Wellmore on lots of levels; I try hard to do my part well, so that others can do theirs.

### **How do you manage your own stress? Any tips?**

Self-care is so important for all of us, but it is often lost in chaos and crisis. It looks so different for each of us. Spending time on the water/near the water is always restorative for me; I grew up kayaking on Bantam Lake & would choose to do this every day if I could. I love to lose myself in books or musicals, but I've recently learned how to play golf. I am NOT good, but I think it challenges me to focus my brain in a very different way.

### **What do you think other people should know about this organization?**

I am so proud of the work that we all have done together during the Covid-19 pandemic. We have worked to keep the clients' care foremost in our mind and used a great deal of creativity to see clients safely as we moved through the crisis.

# Wellmore Adapts to the Pandemic

Effective leadership is synonymous with Wellmore. Our agency has been a part of making history in our region day in and day out by simply having our doors open and access available, willing to receive and support all who have needed and sought our services. We have weathered many social and behavioral health challenges for decades, and have been ready to respond in both the best and worst of times in our State, but mostly being a grounded and a consistent safe space for the community to access day to day. We have once again been faced with a challenge that has been unprecedented and historic in nature, and we have once again responded as leaders and essential workers during a time that many could not- that of the COVID-19 pandemic. We were faced with significant decision making challenges beginning in March, from the leadership level to our facilities needs to our own personal decision making related to safety and security for ourselves and our families.

## Information Technology Team

They jumped into action and ensured all staff working remotely had access to all electronic items needed to work remotely and virtually, including laptops and cell phones, and established triage email addresses and phone lines that were accessible at all hours to ensure we could respond to community needs in real time and as quickly as possible.

## Facilities Team

The team worked tirelessly and endlessly with local and national suppliers to secure all levels of personal protective equipment (PPE), often when none seemed available, to ensure our sites were supportive of safety practices necessary to return to work and to see clients in a variety of unique ways. Further, they kept the residential sites stocked with food and necessary items for clients who could not leave the programs to return home.

## Executive Leadership Team

Reported to work sites every day to ensure staff was ready to respond to any need expressed by all programs, and worked diligently with state funders to ensure staff were supported in all ways possible and at many levels.

## Medical Team

Ensured all clients needing refills for psychiatric medication and those who needed follow up with medication assisted treatment were responded to immediately.

## Adult Services Team

Our Adult division team stayed online for extended hours to meet clients where they were emotionally and physically, often shifting daytime response to evening and weekend check-ins, follow-ups and offered creative ways to continue to deliver individual and group therapy virtually and via telehealth.

## Case Management Team

Our Case Management team remained active by providing necessary resources to clients in correctional facilities, those who were caught in the midst of securing housing and were disrupted, and in supporting clients struggling in the community to attain needed resources not readily available, such as bus passes, and even food or household items, including direct delivery of these items by staff to families in greatest need who may have lost their jobs and/or were unable to leave their residences.

## Residential Services Team

Our Residential teams, who worked tirelessly and relentlessly to keep our doors open, continued to accept admissions even when the definition of risk seemed to change daily in the news, and reported to work every day with only the desire to support our clients and fulfill Wellmore's mission.

## Child & Adolescent Services Team

The Child Division team also pivoted quickly in response to the remote work settings. All staff immediately began doing outreach to clients to facilitate their transition to telehealth. Outpatient and Home-Based Clinicians often increased their service and creatively worked to engage children successfully on the video platform. Our Community Support programs were quickly and actively scouring their resource lists to learn what new services and supports were available to families in the pandemic; emails flew back and forth each day as new resources were shared across programs. Many began doing 'drop off' sessions in the community to ensure that clients received as much helpful information about resources as was possible.

In an effort to increase knowledge of our services and our referral flow, all child staff members participated in a creative outreach project that helped to identify 764 informal and natural supports in the communities we serve. These supports have regular contact with children and families in our communities (through activities like karate schools, coaching, dance programs, and science clubs); our outreach provided them with information about how to access Wellmore support. And quite impressively, our boys' residential program maintained stability despite complicated and disciplined health safety parameters; although they were more limited in their activities, the boys were amazing in the ways that they successfully used their coping skills to adjust. The staff within the boys' residential were consistently patient and supportive, which led to seamless management during the pandemic.

## A Special Thank You To Our Divisional Leadership Team

Our outstanding divisional leadership team includes: Our outstanding divisional leadership team includes : Regan Moriarty, Robert Haswell, Pamela Richburg, Veneek Linton, Chris Desroches, John Keane and Kelley Machado, on the adult side, Cathy Scheidel, Jamel Bonello, AJ Roy, Juliette Hodge and Digby Barrios on the child side & Bob Gugliotti our Facilities Director. These leaders worked daily to keep morale high, checking in constantly with staff, and offering immediate support wherever needed during these uncertain and rapidly-shifting times.

## Wellmore in the News

# In-“Tents”-ive Treatment

*Wellmore Behavioral Health has set up outdoor tents to allow for therapy sessions at both its children and adult clinics in Waterbury.*



BY MIKE PATRICK | REP-AM

Telehealth has been successful for Wellmore since the rise of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, officials there said, but noted some patients prefer, or need, face-to-face counseling — even if those faces are covered with masks.

So, the agency put up a series of tents at both its Adult Services and Child and Adolescent Services locations, designed to provide safe, in-person counseling and other health care services, while maintaining both privacy and social distancing measures. oth the client and the staff.” With kids, what it comes down to is engaging in a way that feels real to them,” she said.

Telehealth — health care services delivered over the phone or live video exchange — is not always a viable solution for some people who don't have the ability to log on to a computer or cell phone,

“It's all about the relationship, the ability to sit down and make eye contact and to be able to read each other's body movements and motions and effects.”

**Kristin Pracitto, LCSW - Wellmore's Vice President of Child Services**

At both facilities, the tents have walls and are arranged in such a way that other clients and passers-by cannot see who is receiving services.

the goal is to offer space where clients who have been socially isolated in the community, who may not have been able to connect with community resources, individual care, or family support feel connected to the community and providers that they need to recover

Wellmore is finding more and more families excited for a way to engage in face-to-face treatment while protecting the health and safety of our Clients, staff and their families.

## Featured Article



*Despite the "perfect storm" for suicide risk, Wellmore's own Dr. Young says there is hope. Read the full article on our website.*

**Did you know you can support Wellmore for FREE when you shop with amazon smile?**

WHEN YOU USE AMAZON SMILE, AMAZON DONATES A PORTION OF YOUR PURCHASE TO A CHARITY OR NON-PROFIT OF YOUR CHOICE!

[SMILE.AMAZON.COM](https://www.smile.amazon.com)

The future of Care is already here...

**Primary Integrated Care**  
Healthcare Simplified

- Primary Health Care
- Dental Hygiene
- Mental Health Counseling
- Suboxone™ Treatment
- Prevention & Wellness
- Addiction Care

**Walk In Hours: 9:00 - 5:00**  
**For Appointments Call: 203-755-1143**

A Wellmore/Staywell Partnership

# Community Donations

## LUNCH FOR STAFF

*Wing It On  
Waterbury, CT*

*Wing It On* in Waterbury donated a delicious lunch featuring their FAMOUS wings to our essential hard working staff in our residential programs/facilities. These 24/7 locations remained in operation despite the Covid-19 health crisis and remained committed to providing support and treatment to our clients.



## FACE MASKS

*Laurie Yelding, Ann Fowler,  
StayWell Health Center, OKAY  
Industries & HVCC (Advanced  
Manufacturing Technology  
Center - George Scobie)*

Thank you to the various community members and organizations for their generous donations of Personal Protective Equipment (masks and face shields) for our staff!



## SENSORY RUG

*Bill Wildman Floor  
Covering Inc*

Thank You for the donation of a custom sensory rug for our mild autism treatment space at our Naugatuck Office.



## BLANKETS

*Blessed Sacrament  
Ladies Group*

Once again the Blessed Sacrament Ladies Group brings joy and light to the clients through the donation of beautiful and warm hand made blankets!



## WATER

*Waterbury Walmart*

The Waterbury Walmart donated a pallet of Essentia water bottles charged with electrolytes to help our staff maintain proper health and hydration as they tended to our clients.



## GIVE LOCAL

*Connecticut  
Community Foundation*

Wellmore was once again the organization with the most overall donors for yet another year in a row. Thank you to all our staff, friends and family for your generous support.

410 Donors  
\$ 17,167.56 Raised  
\$ 3,500 Won In Cash Prizes  
\$ 1,898.86 in Bonus Funds  
.....  
Total Donations  
\$ 22,566.42



## *The Changing Face of Community Outreach*

We are still here providing much needed behavioral health and substance use treatment services & resources to our community.

To connect with our program managers, to schedule a virtual presentation or to request informational materials email:

*[rmerrill@wellmore.org](mailto:rmerrill@wellmore.org)*



**"I'VE TRIED EVERYTHING,  
BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH..."**

**Intensive Behavioral Health Services  
offered safely:**

***Virtual | Curbside | Home Based***

***Schedule an Appointment Today!***

**203-575-0466 ext. 1101**



For More Information  
Visit [www.wellmore.org](http://www.wellmore.org)

1-855-WELLMORE

When in Crisis call: 211

