

The Charlotte JEWISH news

Vol. 42, No. 7

Elul 5780-Tishrei 5781

September 2020

The Pandemic's Second Wave: JFS Responds to Mental Health Crisis

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NAMI), 1 in 5 Americans has a mental health condition. That's more than 40 million Americans, or put another way, more than the population of New York and Florida combined.* *Those were pre-pandemic numbers.*

"Statewide data shows symptoms of depression and anxiety have tripled amid the pandemic..." reports North Carolina's Citizen Times in a recent article. It continues, "In a typical year, 1 in 9 (11%) people report symptoms of anxiety and depression disorders in a given week ... But, for every week since April, 1 in 3 (33%) North Carolinians have reported these types of symptoms."***

These numbers are all too familiar to Howard Olshansky, Executive Director of Jewish Family Services (JFS). Providing mental health services is a significant part of the work they do as part of their emotional health and well-being services. When the coronavirus pandemic first closed their doors last April, JFS had to quickly pivot and figure out how to become an "agency without walls" in order to avoid disruption of services to current clients. Olshansky credits JFS staff for their ability to adjust and creatively navigate in unknown

territory. At first, mental health counselors maintained continuity with clients by telephone, but quickly they worked out technological challenges and identified a HIPAA compliant platform and began offering telehealth services.

It wasn't long before JFS saw the demand for their services increase. Initially past clients, already vulnerable to extraordinary pressures, returned for services.

Before long, however, a second group began to emerge — individuals who had never received JFS services but found themselves struggling with the sudden fallout of having their lives turned upside down, seemingly overnight. With this increased need for mental health counseling services, JFS received an emergency allocation from the Jewish Charlotte Emergency Response Fund to hire additional counseling staff. The fund, which was created by Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, has raised close to \$500,000 from generous donors in our community. Twelve agencies, including JFS, have been recipients of funds to meet critical needs and stabilize their workforces.



JFS identified yet another need. Individuals with no previous mental health diagnosis were struggling to adapt to the new stressors. Uncertainty about the future, a sense of isolation, and disrupted routines combined with the loss of familiar coping mechanisms such as gyms or social gatherings, created an entirely new population in need of support. For these, JFS launched several initiatives, including a variety of workshops and online offerings.

A fourth group who found themselves in need is one that JFS has always considered a priority — seniors. Seniors are vulnerable to the same stressors as everyone else during this pandemic but are more likely

to suffer from the effects of isolation. Not only have we been protecting them from the risks of exposure to the coronavirus by distancing ourselves, but they also tend to be less technologically savvy or equipped to stay connected. Here, too, JFS quickly responded. Volunteers were trained to maintain home visits by telephone. With a grant from the United Way, they were able to partner with senior living facilities and purchase iPads for seniors and help train them in their use.

In addition to providing services that address emotional health and well-being, JFS exists to provide crisis response. With rampant job loss and economic fallout, they have seen more than a 50% rise in the need for their foodbank services. Here, again, JFS adapted to the situation and created touchless delivery and curbside pickup. Currently, JFS supplies more than 100 bags of groceries per week.

As we try to function and silence the incessant hum of anxiety that is al-

ways just below the surface, we all wish for a return to something that resembles normal. But not even the re-opening of businesses nor the end to wearing masks will signal that the pandemic is over. Olshansky noted that we haven't begun to see the full implications of the pandemic. So far, we have been in crisis mode, but the long-term recovery process from the impact on our economy and mental health will be ongoing for years to come. Each fall JFS launches its annual Family to Family campaign and is grateful for the past support of its donors. This year, the need will be greater than ever. To find out how you can donate, visit www.jfscharlotte.org.

*<https://naminc.org/the-state-of-mental-health-in-america/>

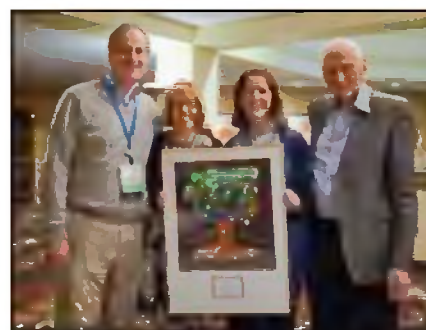
**www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2020/08/05/covid-anxiety-depression-tripled-substance-abuse-up-15-nc/5547156002/



FCJC Part of \$1 Billion National Legacy Initiative

Local Jewish organizations have secured in excess of \$26 million in legacy commitments.

Four hundred local donors have made 904 legacy commitments to support the Charlotte Jewish community. These commitments are part of a collaborative endowment building effort that includes 10 Jewish organizations and congregations, the Foundation for the Charlotte Jewish Community (FCJC), and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation's LIFE & LEGACY initiative, the goal of which is to



FCJC's Nancy Kipnis receiving the prestigious Littman Award in 2016.

provide future financial stability to Jewish organizations.

"We are very honored to be part of such an amazing initia-

tive that has helped to create a culture of philanthropy here in Charlotte and throughout the country," said Phil Warshauer, Executive Director of Foundation for the Charlotte Jewish Community. "The success of our local efforts is a reflection of the uniqueness of our Jewish community. Our community members show great passion for the long-term sustainability of Jewish Charlotte and its continued evolution. This initiative has successfully identified and connected those passions with our community's future needs." (Continued page 14)

PRRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT # 1208
CHARLOTTE, NC

5007 Providence Road, Suite #112
Charlotte, NC 28226
Change Service Requested