

Making
MINDS
Matter

Spring 2024



Communities
EMBRACING THE CAUSE

UPMC.com/MakingMindsMatter

UPMC
WESTERN
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
FOUNDATION

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Dear
FRIENDS,



I am so pleased to share our 2024 *Making Minds Matter* magazine in conjunction with news of the recently established UPMC Western Behavioral Health Foundation. The birth of the foundation marks a milestone in our efforts to raise awareness and funds in support of enhanced experiences for patients pursuing treatment across our behavioral health network.

“All of us, at some time or other, need help. Whether we’re giving or receiving help, each one of us has something valuable to bring to this world. That’s one of the things that connects us as neighbors — in our own way, each one of us is a giver and a receiver.”

– Fred Rogers

So much of this is made possible by people and communities throughout our region who show courage in allying themselves with the cause of mental health. Often, the personal experiences of those who have struggled or who have been impacted inspire this courage.

Within our magazine, you will meet a yoga therapist, an author, a painter, a family, a group of high school students, a boutique owner, musicians, bikers, and even a 10-year-old boy. People of all ages from many different communities are reaching out to us, putting their own stamp on how to support Making Minds Matter.

We feel their collective embrace in the experiences it creates for our patients, like holiday gifts, performance opportunities, and scholarships. Benefactor support is also improving the spaces in which we provide care, as is the case at UPMC Western Behavioral Health sites in Somerset and Altoona.

So many who continue to come forward express the desire to reduce the stigma connected with mental health so that it ceases to be a barrier to getting help. We are fortunate to count those who can speak to successful treatment and recovery among our growing number of benefactors and advocates. The givers and the receivers, as Mr. Rogers says, are invaluable to our purpose and to our world.

Deborah S. Brodine, MBA, MHA
President, UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital
President, UPMC Western Behavioral Health

Introducing the UPMC Western Behavioral Health Foundation

Fueled by the growth of grassroots fundraising and awareness efforts via Making Minds Matter, the UPMC Western Behavioral Health Foundation has been established to:

- Increase awareness of mental health initiatives
- Reduce the stigma associated with mental health
- Solicit donors to improve the patient experience
- Educate the public and providers
- Help advance public policy

The options for **giving** are **endless**.

Whether you're a former patient, family member, friend, or community partner, your gift will have a profound impact on today's care and tomorrow's challenges. Your generosity keeps us vigilant and innovative, able to take on urgent needs and promising opportunities.

Gifting Options

VOLUNTEER

Please consider the invaluable gift of your time and talent in support of our awareness and fundraising efforts, whether individually or as part of a group.

BEQUESTS

Gifts by will or by revocable "living" trust are the most common form of deferred gifts. A bequest is naming a person or recipient of a gift and is contained in a person's will or revocable (living) trust. Gifts of life insurance may name UPMC Western Behavioral Health Foundation as a primary or contingent beneficiary of your policy.

"FUN" RAISE

If you have the time and enthusiasm but not the money, consider organizing a drive to gather donations. Plan and organize an event at work, at school, or in the community and donate the proceeds. By sharing on social media with a network of caring people and some hustle, you can raise a hefty donation.

GIFTS-IN-KIND

Non-cash donations are a valuable way to give. Tangible items such as products or services are tax deductible based on their fair-market value.

GIFTS OF RETIREMENT PLANS

Gifts of retirement plans name UPMC Western Behavioral Health Foundation as a primary or contingent beneficiary of a retirement account (e.g. IRA, 401(k), 403(b), etc.).

LIFE INCOME GIFT

A life income gift, such as a charitable gift annuity or a charitable remainder unitrust, can provide you and/or your loved ones with an income for the duration of your lives or for a specific number of years. You receive a current income tax deduction as well.

MATCHING GIFTS

Many companies and foundations will match the value of charitable gifts made by employees and their spouses, board members, and retirees. Check to see if your employer offers this policy and potentially double your donation.

OUTRIGHT GIFTS

A cash gift is the most common form of giving and a thoughtful way to memorialize or honor family and friends. Payments are accepted in the form of cash, check, or credit card.

STOCKS, BONDS AND MUTUAL FUNDS

Contribute appreciated securities to provide support and avoid or reduce capital gains taxes. Notify us of your plan to donate securities.

UNITED WAY GIFTS

Designate your donation through United Way for Making Minds Matter at UPMC Western Behavioral Health using 18208819 as your selection.



For information on volunteering, giving, or donations, email MakingMindsMatter@upmc.edu, call 412-246-6614, or scan the QR code.

Michael E. Ward Family Foundation

Enhances Residential Settings



MIKE WARD

Thursday morning breakfasts are a tradition for Mike Ward and his daughters, Andrea and Kristen. The Ward family has a long history of philanthropy in the Altoona area, and these breakfasts are often an opportunity to brainstorm about how to extend their legacy of generosity to different charitable organizations via the Michael E. Ward Family Foundation.

The Making Minds Matter campaign has the good fortune of being a recent recipient of the Ward Family Foundation's benevolence. The foundation has elected to support renovations for the Blair and Juniata Houses of UPMC Western Behavioral Health of the Alleghenies. This gift allows for improvements to the lodging environment for residents who are navigating mental health challenges and face uncertain housing.

"As a family, we see an ongoing need to care for those who might otherwise wind up on the street," says Mike. "We want to offer comfort and protection."

Jennifer Preusser, housing coordinator for the Project Assisting Transition from Homelessness (PATH) Program, UPMC Western Behavioral Health of the Alleghenies, confirms that residents at the Blair and Juniata Houses are homeless or at imminent risk for homelessness, have a mental health diagnosis, and have little-to-no income. The houses serve as safe

havens for these individuals while they work toward reintegration into the general community.

Expert staff assist in this process by helping residents pursue goals like permanent housing, vocational training that positions them for employment, and connecting them with resources to support their well-being. Says Katie Clauss, program director, Community-based Behavioral Health Services, UPMC Western Behavioral Health of the Alleghenies, "For each resident, we consider why have they not been successful in the past and what we can do differently in the future. This often includes basic life skills, like how to pay rent on time, so that they can be successful."



Roger Bradley, residential coordinator for the Blair and Juniata Houses, notes that while many residents are referred from within UPMC or by other social service agencies, he and Jennifer do a lot of work among homeless coalitions throughout the community to lead those in need to a safe space under their roof. "Sometimes there's a knock at the door, and we are the very first step for someone hoping for a better life," says Roger.

The success of these efforts can be measured in several ways. Since 2020, Katie reports, 93% of the individuals who left Blair House were housed in either subsidized housing, permanent apartments, or with family. Of these residents, 23% chose permanent housing options at Blair House or Juniata House apartments.

Katie shares an example of an individual who was living in a tent when he was referred to the PATH program as another measure of success. "He was motivated to work but was having trouble finding a job because he couldn't shower or properly prepare for interviews," she explains. "He moved into a room at Blair House and quickly obtained employment. Once he had a steady income, he decided to go back to school and moved into Juniata House. He stayed there for another 10 months and then successfully moved on to student housing to complete his educational pursuits."

"As a family, we see an ongoing need to care for those who might otherwise wind up on the street. We want to offer comfort and protection."

- Mike Ward

Mike applauds the efforts of the staff and values the opportunity for collaboration. "The staff are very helpful, very hands-on, and are very committed to doing a fantastic job for the residents of Altoona, whatever it takes. It is a pleasure dealing with them on a one-to-one basis as we share thoughts about improvements," he says.

With a schedule of projects laid out over time, early progress shows great promise. Fresh paint and flooring are already brightening spaces. "Our interests have a lot to with improving the look of the homes so that residents can take pride in their surroundings. This can be transformative," says Mike. "Building self-esteem can help a person to feel good about their life going forward."



ROGER BRADLEY, KATIE CLAUSS, MIKE WARD

Oakmont Boutique

Champions Cause of Mental Health

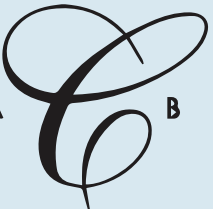
Driving past the eye-catching windows of Carabella, a long-established cornerstone of the Oakmont shopping district, is always uplifting. The vibrant and imaginative feel is true to the experience of those who visit the shop. But Carabella is about more than just window dressing.



CAROL KINKELA

Shop owner Carol Kinkela is the definition of “where style meets substance.” Over the years, Carol has lent her space to the support of many philanthropic efforts. One such effort is “Carabella Cares,” a speaker series that shines a light on worthwhile causes.

The Making Minds Matter campaign at UPMC Western Behavioral Health has been a beneficiary of Carol’s outreach. An evening event committed to discussion of mental health initiatives brought a packed house of shop patrons to the boutique. Attendees partook of the hospitality extended by Carol and her gracious staff while learning about the scope of services at UPMC Western Behavioral Health.

C A R A  B E L L A

Among the speakers were Maria and Will Aikins, mother and son, who shared their personal experiences along the path of Bipolar 1 Disorder, a diagnosis Will received as a college freshman. The transformative journey from illness to diagnosis to recovery included inpatient care at Western Psychiatric Hospital. Both Maria and Will spoke with impactful candor to the rapt audience.

Will now co-chairs “Holidays from the Heart,” the holiday gift-giving program which provides presents for more than 400 Western patients and is a peer specialist with UPMC Western Behavioral Health. “As somebody who deals with this on a daily basis, it is so humbling to be a part of the team eradicating stigma and redefining what mental illness looks like,” said Will. “Western is reaching people on a human level in treatment, facilities, and patient dignity. I can attest that we are seeing changes thanks to the incredible staff at UPMC Western and Making Minds Matter.”



WILL AND MARIA AIKINS

Contributing to Quality of Life in the Communities We Serve

A recently completed \$16 million expansion project at UPMC Western Behavioral Health at Twin Lakes in Somerset includes the addition of a 19,300-square-foot building and renovation of the existing facility, increasing the number of beds by 60% and adding 15 new jobs.

Twin Lakes has long been engaged in the pursuit of drug-free communities in the Somerset region, operating non-hospital withdrawal management and drug and alcohol treatment programs for adults at the Somerset main campus as well as via four outpatient drug and alcohol treatment clinics in Somerset, Cambria, and Bedford Counties.

“This project is the achievement of a shared commitment to enhance the quality of health and life in the communities we serve,” said Deborah Brodine, president, UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital and UPMC Western Behavioral Health. “In the face of an escalating need and a service area that now reaches into southwestern Pennsylvania, more than ever, Twin Lakes is an

important pillar and collaborator in the vitality of this region.”

Andy Rush, president, UPMC Somerset, was a driving force in discussions related to facility and service expansion even before Twin Lakes became fully integrated into the UPMC Western Behavioral Health Network in 2021. He spoke of a vision realized at the June 2023 ribbon cutting for the new

and refreshed spaces. “Through our affiliation with UPMC, patients in our community receive the excellence and expertise of UPMC Western Behavioral Health — a national leader in diagnosis, management, and treatment of mental health and addiction disorders — delivered locally by our teams.”

Staff are finding the spaces better suited to managing their work responsibilities. Three exam rooms allow for the physician and nursing staff to treat and complete intakes on multiple clients simultaneously. Additionally, technology incorporated into the new building allows for tighter controls and security around medication administration, reducing the likelihood of adverse events or errors.

The benefit to residents pursuing recovery is significant. Says Paul Cannon, director, Clinical Care Services, UPMC Western Behavioral Health at Twin Lakes, “The spacious accommodations and bright new client lounge have been well received by clients. Bright hallways, new art, and a homey atmosphere create an exceptional environment for healing.”

The project was funded through substantial support from the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), as well as generous contributions from the Richard King Mellon Foundation and the Wheeler Family Charitable Foundation.

Broken and Welcome

Though not one to seek the spotlight, Ben Naugle’s remarks at the June 2023 Twin Lakes Ribbon Cutting distinguish him by virtue of their impact. Ben, who works in the field of addiction and recovery, was the last speaker to address the crowd gathered for the occasion, a feat he says would have been unimaginable five years ago when he first came to Twin Lakes for help with his own recovery from addiction and underlying social anxiety.

“When I first came here, I was at one of the most broken, vulnerable, and desperate states that one can be in,” recalled Ben. “I have been through just about every level of care Twin Lakes has to offer, and each time I would return, I was welcomed with open arms and nothing but genuine support. I never felt judged even when I had to go back. No one ever asked what happened. The only question was, ‘What do you want to do differently this time?’”

Ben continued, “Every time I was involved with Twin Lakes, a seed was planted, and I learned something new about myself, even on the days when I didn’t want to attend group or participate in my treatment plan. I came to learn that knowledge on its own would not help me, but the application of that knowledge would change my life in ways I couldn’t imagine.”

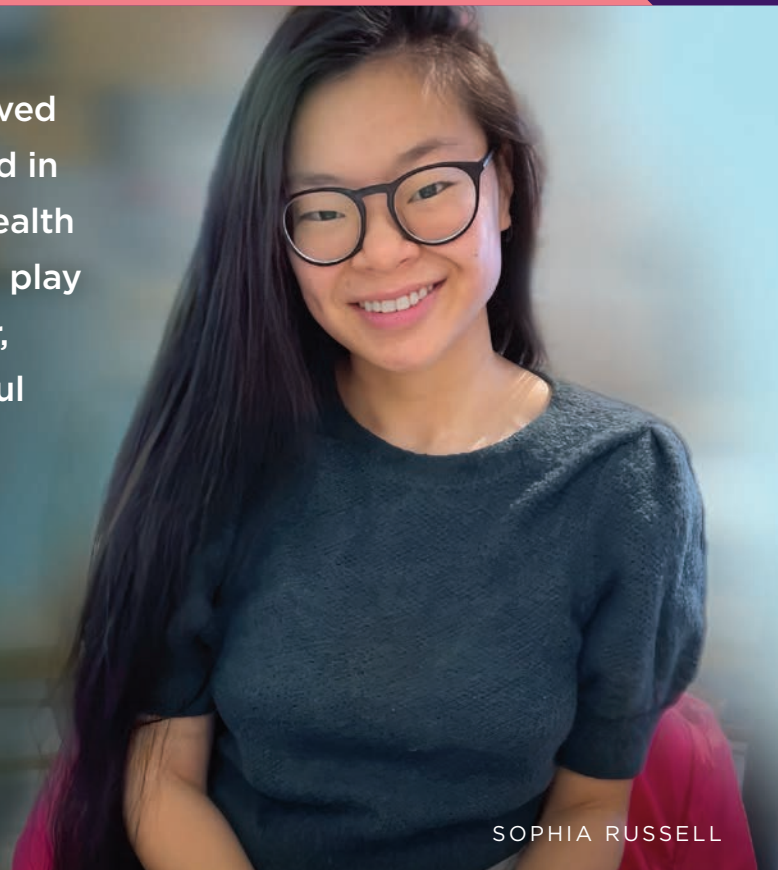
While that has proven true, Ben is no less amazed and honored to now have a role in advancing recovery on behalf of others. “Today, I have the privilege of collaborating with Twin Lakes on a regular basis,” says Ben. “I’m grateful to be able to work with individuals and families who are in situations like my own, and I’m excited to see the continued efforts, inspiration, and support that is offered here at UPMC Western Behavioral Health at Twin Lakes.”



Peer Specialists Aid Recovery

Across UPMC Western Behavioral Health

Peer specialists, individuals with “lived experiences” who have progressed in their own recovery from mental health and sometimes substance use disorders, play a vital role in recovery. Based on a larger, nationally recognized model of successful treatment, UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital (WPH) and UPMC Western Behavioral Health (WBH) are building a robust peer specialist program together.



SOPHIA RUSSELL

Currently, there are more than 60 peer support staff embedded across inpatient and outpatient environments throughout the Western Behavioral Health network of services including crisis services, Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES), hospital inpatient, and two ambulatory programs; one ambulatory program is specific to addiction medicine. Their impact is profound.

“Peer support staff are not just employees. Their presence in the UPMC system serves as a powerful reminder that recovery is not only possible, but within reach,” explains Lindsay Smith, program director, Comprehensive Recovery Services, WBH. “Patients are more likely to open up and seek advice from individuals who have faced similar struggles. This fosters trust and authenticity which results in more effective, personalized support.”

As a peer specialist with the general adult inpatient population at UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital, Sophia Russell applies her lived experiences with mental health challenges and her successful recovery when supporting and guiding patients and staff, providing presence and perspective as requested. She collaborates with patients both individually and in groups and appreciates the mentorship that her treatment team extends to her.

Sophia believes the most important things she can offer patients are hope and connection. “The will to recover is at least 50% hope,” says Sophia. “Where there is life, there is hope. Where there is hope, there is a better tomorrow. I have survived that path, I can offer that, and it’s priceless.”

She continues, “Connection is the second piece that is so valuable. I know the stigma, the isolation, and the feeling that no one understands. To make a human connection and to know that you are not alone is empowering.”

For Cory Meutz, becoming a peer specialist in an outpatient environment was a natural fit. Once he reached a better place in his recovery journey, he felt a calling to help others progress as well. Cory went through training to become a certified recovery specialist and started working at the Center of Excellence (COE), part of UPMC Western Behavioral Health, about six months ago.

At COE, patients receive therapy and meet with physicians, outpatient care coordinators, and peer specialists in support of whole-person care.

Cory explains, “There are needs beyond medical help such as finding housing, or helping our outpatients find a primary care physician, or assisting with necessities. We help people tackle their current problems. Every person’s recovery journey is different. I want to work with people to figure out the best path for them.”

Dennis Haynes, senior peer specialist, works in outpatient settings, including the Center for Psychiatric Chemical Dependency Services (CPCDS) and the Center for Excellence. He is in contact with roughly 70 individuals who are in recovery from alcohol and substance use disorders. “My overall goal is to support individuals with empathy and compassion to achieve a complete change of lifestyle that secures their recovery,” says Dennis.

Dennis is engaged in many aspects of recovery, including speaking with first year medical students about addiction. Jody Glance, MD, associate director, Medical Student Education, Psychiatry, University of Pittsburgh, says, “There’s still a huge amount of stigma around addiction and substance use, including within the medical community. Medical training tends

to emphasize the acute disease state rather than what recovery looks like. Students aren’t seeing that people can and do enter full recovery. Hearing directly from Dennis about his lived experience provides students with a unique and powerful perspective on addiction and recovery that can’t be found in a textbook or lecture.”

Dennis appreciates his daily collaboration with other team members and the empowerment of contributing in this way. “Before my own recovery, I was hopeless and isolated,” recalls Dennis. “Now, here I am in a place where physicians and therapists value my opinion and my experience. I think about this every day.”

To learn more about peer specialists, contact Lindsay at smithlm12@upmc.edu or Keirston Parham at parhamks@upmc.edu.



DENNIS HAYNES, CORY MEUTZ

Book Signing Event Supports Mental Health

A former patient and peer specialist at UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital has written and published a book she hopes will inspire and support others in their recovery from mental health challenges.

After 20 years of treatment and eight years as a peer specialist, author Jennifer Silbaugh considers UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital an extension of her home. “In some ways, I grew up there. I lived and worked there,” says Jen. “Western has been a part of my life for so long.”

Now a newly published author, Jen characterizes her book, *A Dove in the Shadows*, as a “gesture of recovery.” The book describes Jen’s journey from 12-year-old patient to present day adulthood, living a happy, purposeful, stable life.

Jen expresses profound gratitude for the staff at Western. Two people in particular stand out in her experience. Jen met Boris Birmaher, MD, as an adolescent in outpatient treatment. She describes Dr. Birmaher as a patient, caring, and dedicated psychiatrist.

Likewise, Jen first met Jeff Magill, manager, Clinical Services, Emergency Preparedness, and Critical Incident Stress Management ASAP Staff Support Team, years ago when he worked with resolve Crisis Services, a program sponsored by Allegheny County and UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital. Jen credits this program with providing an alternative to the emergency room when she needed timely support in the community setting.

Jen has reconnected with both Dr. Birmaher and Jeff in her adult life. Dr. Birmaher is her psychiatrist, and Jen and Jeff became colleagues when she worked as a peer specialist in the emergency department at Western, now known as Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES).

“One of my proudest moments was working alongside Jeff as part of the ASAP team,” recalls Jen. “My transition from patient to peer is a great way to show the staff that their support really makes a difference.”

Jen generously chose to donate a portion of the proceeds from a September book signing event to the Making Minds Matter Fund at UPMC Western Behavioral. The event was an opportunity for Jen to show that “people are so much more than their diagnosis. For those who are suffering, I am here to say that pain can meet purpose.”



Ali Popivchak, C-IAYT, E-RYT, is a yoga therapist at UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital. She applies her years of experience and training to support overall well-being and improved quality of life for Western patients.

As part of the Creative and Expressive Arts Therapy (CEAT) department, Ali helps patients build self-awareness and self-acceptance so that they can feel inspired to develop positive routines. “It’s important to get people to a place where they can reconnect and feel more like themselves. Mental illness can become pervasive,” says Ali. “We are working to shift from feeling defeated to feeling gratitude.”

At the same time, Ali sees yoga as a conduit to building community, and she is deploying that principle with great result.

Ali recently launched a yoga class at UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital in which both adult patients and hospital staff can participate. “It’s the first time we are bringing everybody together this way,” says Ali. “We all benefit from breaking down walls between patients and staff who don’t know each other or interact otherwise.”

Additionally, Ali is teaching yoga intermittently at Zynka Gallery in Sharpsburg, and through ticket sales, she is raising money for the Making Minds Matter Fund.

“I wanted to do something that would directly impact the people I work with at Western,” Ali explains. “I see the inequity in health care day to day; individuals who seek treatment for mental

health still don’t receive the support they need. Raising money for the fund is an easy match.”

Inspiration for the community class stuck Ali when she attended an exhibit at the ZYNKA Gallery at the beginning of 2023. Ali has been friends for many years with gallery owner Jeffrey Jarzynka, who shares her interest in community building. Jeff is graciously donating use of his gallery space for this purpose.

With tall ceilings and wonderful natural light, the space has an inviting openness. “The gallery is art-focused and forward, but I want to activate it in other ways,” says Jeff. “Ali was inspired by an exhibit which featured water and flow and evoked cool and calm throughout. She approached me about the yoga class, and I was all for it.”

The chance to raise awareness is part of Ali’s interest in community outreach. “This is an opportunity to talk about mental health in the community and address the stigma around the hospital itself and what it is like to seek treatment there.”

Ali continues, “I hope I can encourage somebody to seek help. There is no ‘type’ of person who struggles with mental health. We are all in this together.”

Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation Leading by Example in Support of Mental Health

The Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation understands the impact of investing in the youth of the community to achieve a better future. Rooted in established pillars that include wellness, youth hockey, education, and community, the foundation is applying its guiding principles to addressing the mental health needs of youth across the region.

Currently, the foundation is partnering with the UPMC Western Behavioral Health network on four initiatives, including a spring 2024 symposium on mental health and student-athletes. Says **Yvonne J. Maher, executive director, Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation**, “**Healthy minds and healthy bodies are vital to the prosperity of all youth, and this symposium allows us the occasion to bring awareness to the needs of student athletes. We are grateful for this collaboration and for the opportunity to advance the foundation’s mission.**”

This free educational symposium is for middle school, high school, and college level coaches as well as athletic trainers of all sports, athletic directors, administrators, and physical education instructors. The event also benefits from the support of UPMC Sports Medicine and the Citrone 33 Foundation. See the ad on page 15 for more information and to register.

Additional collaborations with the Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation include COOL Zones, MindHacks, and “Holidays from the Heart.”

COOL Zones

A distinctive igloo-shaped play area within a child-friendly classroom creates a safe space for this early intervention program for kids ages 3 through 12. Known as COOL (Children Overcoming Obstacles and Limits) Zones, this program was

developed by the Matilda Theiss Early Childhood Behavioral Health and Trauma Treatment Center, part of UPMC Western Behavioral Health.

This resource increases accessibility to high-quality mental health services by partnering with existing schools and child-oriented settings. Since 2015, the foundation has supported eight COOL Zones, with another in progress, tending to more than 650 children experiencing a range of behavioral and emotional disruptions such as aggression, anxiety, depression, withdrawal, family disruption, emotional difficulties, traumatic responses, and more.



MindHacks

Using dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) principles to build mindful practices in middle school students, MindHacks is a curriculum created in partnership with UPMC Western Behavioral Health, Allegheny Intermediate Unit and the Citrone 33 Foundation. The goal is to develop skills and a healthy mindset in students to enhance interpersonal relationships and connectedness, develop positive coping strategies, and improve overall wellness.



A video series, produced by PensTV and funded by the Citrone 33 Foundation consists of short-form “MindHacks” videos that highlight coping skills through the eyes of professional athletes from Pittsburgh’s sports teams and beyond. These ambassadors and role models discuss emotional conditions, practical tips to address them, and their favorite coping methods. Additionally, a toolkit includes materials for hands-on learning.

“Holidays from the Heart”

The Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation has provided grants for the past two years in support of the annual holiday gift drive benefiting patients of all ages at UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital and across UPMC Western residential programs including Mon Yough, Pathways, Next Chapter, and Mini Safe Haven in Pittsburgh as well as Twin Lakes in Somerset, Safe Harbor in Erie, and Tartaglia in Altoona. More than 400 gift bags with age-appropriate gifts were distributed in December 2023. The foundation’s participation sends a message to those who struggle with mental health that they are not forgotten during a potentially difficult season.



Mental Health and Student-Athletes: Signs, Interventions, and Resources



Wednesday, April 17, 2024

Registration/Breakfast: 7:30 a.m.

Program: 8:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Lunch (optional): 12:15 p.m.

PPG Paints Arena, Lexus Club

1001 5th Avenue

Pittsburgh, PA 15219

This symposium for professionals is offered at no cost. 3.5 CEUs are available for certified athletic trainers.

Featuring Special Guest Speaker



Kevin Wildenhaus, PhD
Clinical Psychologist
Team Psychologist for the
Pittsburgh Penguins and
Pittsburgh Steelers

Register here



UPMC | WESTERN
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

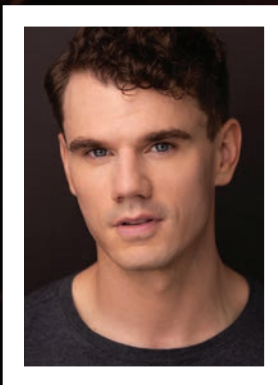
CITRONE
thirty / three

UPMC | SPORTS
MEDICINE



Concert Expands to Include Art Show and Auction

Mark your calendars for Sunday, June 9 at 3 p.m. at the Carnegie Music Hall in Oakland for “Marianne Cornetti and Friends Concert and Art Auction” benefiting the Making Minds Matter fund. Now in its third year, this year’s gathering adds a new element, an art show and auction featuring works from professional artists. Mirroring the performance opportunity afforded Western peers who use music as part of their recovery, peers dedicated to art will also feature their work.



2024 Featured Guest Performer **Jay Armstrong Johnson**

Jay has performed widely on and off Broadway as well as in film and television.

Tickets for our Broadway-themed concert are on sale now! To purchase tickets, visit <https://2024MMM.givesmart.com>, call 412-246-6614, or text 2024MMM to 76278.

Between performers and patrons, anticipation was high leading up to the 2023 concert which drew more than 500 eager concert goers, and no one left disappointed. Led by Marianne Cornetti, an internationally renowned mezzo soprano, the professional and peer performers carried the audience through a wide range of emotions and experiences with each song.

The loudest applause was bestowed upon the peer musicians and vocalists whose courage in taking to the stage moved the audience profoundly. The sustained ovation at the close of the concert was a resounding “you did it!” as well as a genuine appreciation of all the exceptionally talented performers who graced the hall that afternoon.

While the musical theme was Broadway-inspired, everyone’s thoughts were on the importance of supporting recovery from mental health challenges and reducing the associated stigma, the goals of the Making Minds Matter campaign. 2023 featured guest artist, Meghan Picerno, dazzled from her silver sparkly sneakers to her vocal contributions, but she was equally unforgettable in her passionate and candid remarks about her own experiences with bipolar disorder.

Performer Jamie Kunning, a peer specialist for the Integrated Health and Aging Program at UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital, said, “During the pandemic, I decided that mental health settings were the

Continued on next page



2023 FEATURED
GUEST PERFORMER
MEGHAN PICERNO



JUSTIN MALESKY

“Art and music are keys to communication and healing. The world would be a very sad place without these means of expression.”

- Maria DeSimone Prascak

most fulfilling place for me to share my music, and I had hoped for more opportunities to do this. The concert felt like an answer to a prayer for me. The crew of colleagues and musical professionals was extremely supportive, and they helped me grow musically in ways that I have been longing for.”

The addition of the art show and auction to our 2024 event is intended to provide a similarly meaningful experience for peers engaged in the visual arts whose pieces will appear alongside those of professional artists on display both virtually and in-person at the event. “It’s a wonderful pairing,” says Pittsburgh-based artist Maria

DeSimone Prascak, who is chairing the art show and auction. “Art and music are keys to communication and healing. The world would be a very sad place without these means of expression.”

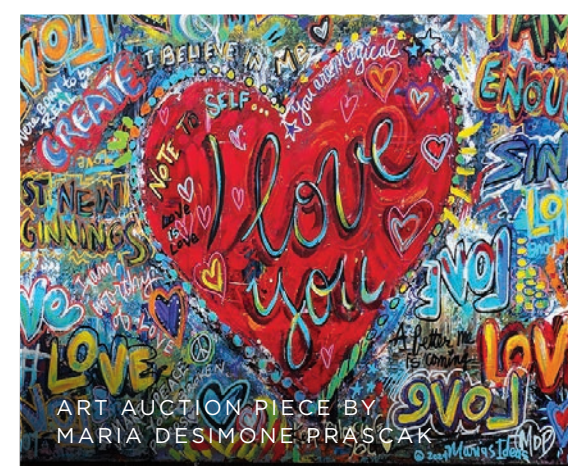
Maria and her husband, Johno Prascak, are both native to Pittsburgh and well known in the

local artistic and philanthropic communities for their valued contributions and engagement. A prolific, self-taught artist, Maria’s excitement for this new venture is infectious. “I am so inspired to be a part of this. My hope is that we continue to reduce stigma and to convey that whatever an individual’s challenges may be, it does not preclude participation. Everyone has an artist within them, and everyone deserves our respect and love.”

Maria looks forward to the ways in which Western performers and artists may surprise others and even themselves. But she’s got a surprise up her sleeve, too; she plans to take to the stage herself to create a live painting during the concert. This one-of-a-kind piece will be included in the art auction.



MARIA DESIMONE PRASCAC AND JOHN PRASCAC



ART AUCTION PIECE BY MARIA DESIMONE PRASCAC



2023 PERFORMERS

Campaign Sponsors and Special Donors



Michelle and Pat Adkins
James R. and Electra P. Agras
Bob Blumling
David and Janette Bobrzynski
Deborah and Don Brodine
Nanci Case and Michael Augustine

Rob and Christina Cochran
Noelle Conover
Marianne Cornetti
Jon Ebel
Noreen Frederick
Jessica Gannon
Robert and Kerry Bron Levin

Kathy Logan
Tamara Marsico
Jason Rosenstock
Mary Tesch
James H. Trout
Tatyana Vishneski



A Bountiful BUNNY RUN



The Second Annual Bunny Run did not lack for sunshine, bunnies, or bikers! More than twenty motorcycles from local clubs, the Steel City Vulcans and the Protectors of the Phoenix, rolled up to UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital to celebrate the spring holiday season.

2024 Bunny Run • March 30

The bikers were greeted enthusiastically by cheering hospital staff and their families, not to mention a six-foot inflatable bunny on a motorcycle, on this special occasion. When bikers began unloading more than 150 stuffed animals in front of the hospital, it made for a memorable sight, and passers-by took notice! Staff distributed these gifts to child and adolescent patients throughout the hospital subsequently, which proved to be equally memorable.

One of the enthusiastic staff in attendance was Jeremy Wanless, director of nursing, UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital. Jeremy said, "Not only does this Bunny Run support our patients' recovery, but it also means a lot to our staff. We appreciate that Steel City Vulcans and the Protectors of the Phoenix continue to remember our patients and share our commitment to overcoming the stigma attached to mental illness."



JUSTIN FITZ



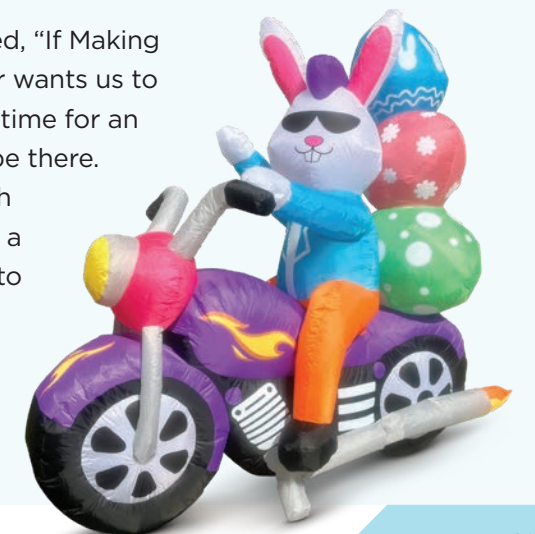
JUSTIN FITZ, MIKE JOHNSON, LEW THOMAS

For Kayla Tupper, milieu therapist, UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital, this event was a wonderful surprise during her workday when she is typically running group therapy sessions for children and adolescents. Kayla recalled, "It is difficult around the holidays because everyone wants to be with loved ones. Coming back onto the unit with some bunny ears for staff and a large bag full of stuffed bunnies was a morale booster for all."

Back for a second year, Justin "Red" Fitz, president, Protectors of the Phoenix, and Lew "Papa Bear" Thomas, president of the Steel City Vulcans, remain dedicated to mental health awareness. Justin said, "It's great to be at UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital, reassuring patients that they aren't alone this holiday and that we are thinking of them."

Speaking to the impact, Kayla reported, "Handing out the bunnies to the patients made an immediate difference. Visiting parents were grateful for this kind act. The kids expressed how uplifting it felt to receive support from the community."

Lew promised, "If Making Minds Matter wants us to show up anytime for an event, we'll be there. Mental health awareness is a great cause to get behind."



Groceries, Gas, or Cash!

Raffle Raises Awareness and Funds

The Groceries, Gas, or Cash! raffle continues to benefit from the backing of enthusiastic campaign sponsors and ticket purchasers. The 2023 raffle winner, Stephen Winowich, president, UPMC Procirca, has supported Making Minds Matter initiatives from day one and is donating back a portion of his winnings to the fund. “I have witnessed throughout my clinical experience, and in society as a whole, that behavioral health does not receive the attention it truly warrants,” says Stephen. “This fund provides for the needs of patients who have mental health challenges and clinical staff who care for this population. It is a privilege for me to help sustain these programs.”

Net proceeds from the 2023 raffle exceeded \$59,000. Sponsorship of the campaign remains a mainstay of support in advancing the cause.

“Giant Eagle Pharmacy is proud to be your neighborhood wellness destination, supporting our customers physical and mental health goals,” says Michael Chappell, Senior Vice President, Giant Eagle Pharmacy. “We are excited to support the Groceries, Gas, or Cash! campaign for another year as we work together to raise funds in support of mental health and wellness across our communities.”



STEPHEN WINOWICH

The 2024 Groceries, Gas, or Cash! raffle launches in June. Raffle participants will be entered in a drawing to win \$17,000 in Giant Eagle groceries or \$14,000 cash (before taxes). Only 700 tickets will be sold at \$100 each, and the winner will be chosen on Monday, January 27, 2025.

To participate in the 2024 campaign, email MakingMindsMatter@UPMC.edu, visit website, or call the Making Minds Matter Ticket Line at 412-246-6614.

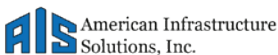
Campaign Partners and Sponsors



UPMC HEALTH PLAN



FORBES PHARMACY
Part of UPMC Community Pharmacies



Holiday Gift Campaign

Raises Awareness and Spirits

The halls leading to the auditorium at UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital were transformed into a celebration of the holiday spirit for the fourth annual “Holidays from the Heart” gift presentation.

This campaign has grown in scale each year through the support of individual donors and sponsors, most notably the Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation and UPMC Health Plan/Community Care Behavioral Health Organization. With the help of media sponsors including WPXI-TV Pittsburgh and iHeart Radio, gifts have been arriving throughout the year to help fill bags with presents for patients of all ages.

Deborah Brodine, president, UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital and UPMC Western Behavioral Health, expressed her admiration for “Holidays from the Heart” campaign co-chairs Marianne Cornetti and Will Aikins. Will, a former

patient, is now a peer specialist with UPMC Western Behavioral Health and a recent college graduate. “Marianne and Will are wonderful ambassadors for the cause of improving the experience of those in our care,” said Deborah.

World-renowned opera singer Marianne delighted the crowd by singing holiday classics. She was joined on stage by Micayla Reynolds, music therapist, Creative and Expressive Arts Therapy, UPMC Western Psychiatric; Jamie Kunning, senior peer specialist, Integrated Health and Aging Program, UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital; and professional performers Danielle Pastin and Rob Frankenberry.

Continued on next page





KELLEY AND SAL ROMESBURG

More than 400 patients across UPMC Western locations received a bag of presents as part of the campaign. Children through adults received an array of age-appropriate gifts such as stuffed animals, activity books, puzzles, journals, socks, and blankets.

Additionally, 115 gifts purchased from the established Amazon Wish List were distributed among the recipient bags, and Sarris Candies donated chocolate bars to sweeten the experience.

Ten-year-old Sal Romesburg became the youngest known benefactor in Western's history. Sal, with help from his mom, Kelley, raised funds to purchase gifts that filled their family truck in support of the campaign. Sal was inspired to do so following his own experience at Western.

Sal's mom, Kelley, notes, "Sal has intervened when there was bullying on the playground. He has a natural desire to help others." With a kind heart and a thoughtful mind, Sal is a mental

health role model. His message for anyone struggling is, "It's okay to ask for help so you don't end up in a worse situation."

Putting a bow on the annual gifting effort was a group of volunteers, many who have been impacted by mental illness, who gathered to stuff and wrap the gift bags. Among the volunteers was Noelle Conover of Matt's Maker Space, who was inspired by last year's event to take on a more active role. Said Noelle, "It was moving to hear from former patients and from Marianne. They are changing the stigma around mental health."



JAMIE KUNNING, MICAYLA REYNOLDS, MARIANNE CORNETTI, DANIELLE PASTIN

High School Students Lead Gift Drive

Students from Thomas Jefferson High School organized a gift drive in support of "Holidays from the Heart" and presented more than \$900 in specially selected items for young patients across the UPMC Western Behavioral Health network. Senior Gabrielle Breisinger proposed the drive based upon an experience she had as a hospital patient pursuing mental health treatment. The idea was quickly embraced by her peers.

Participating students are members of the TJHS Chick-fil-A Leader Academy. Ray DeVitto owns the local Chick-fil-A franchise. This is a first experience with the leader academy for both Ray and TJHS. Says Ray, "I am beyond amazed by the program and by these kids. This truly reflects the heart and culture of Chick-fil-A."

The club is facilitated by Jennifer McHugh, health and physical education teacher at Thomas Jefferson. "Mrs. McHugh was

extremely supportive and gave me full control of picking out what we would be gifting these children," said Gabrielle. "I thought of things I wished I had in the hospital. We were able to buy the children stuffed animals, fidget toys, coloring books, crayons, shampoo, conditioner, body and face wash, and books."

Fellow senior Aaron DeNardo was part of the effort. "Because of my classmate's experience, I felt passionate about this cause," said Aaron. "I learned that little gifts, even as simple as a good shampoo, can be the biggest gift to someone in need."

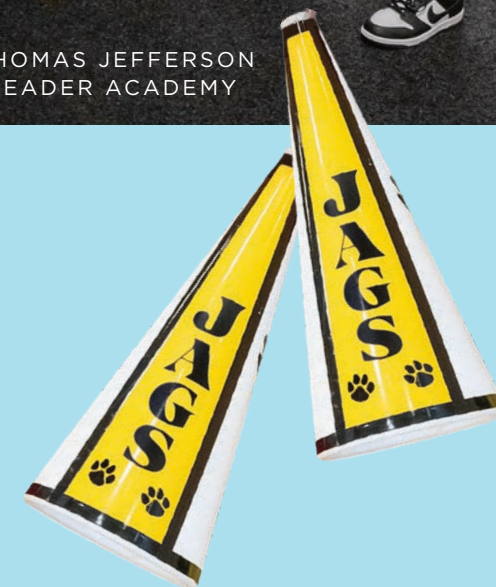
Students also learned how to move past adversity during the drive. When their original vision for gathering support did not go as planned, the students rallied two weeks out from their gift delivery date and brainstormed about how they could still be successful. Senior Zoe Krizan explained, "We decided to do a huge bake sale at our basketball games. In just two days, we raised more than \$800. Overall, we were so successful, but we had to learn how to work through obstacles."

The students all expressed deep gratitude to family, friends, and the community for the success of the drive. But Gabrielle has a



SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE THOMAS JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL CHICK-FIL-A LEADER ACADEMY

larger goal in mind. "My main goal was not only to give these patients some extra joy, but it was also to encourage other people to donate," says Gabrielle. "As sad as it is, many people hear the words 'mental hospital' and immediately feel uncomfortable. I hope that by donating these gifts people will feel more comfortable with the topic of mental health."



Campaign Partners and Sponsors



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SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS GROW



The Lorraine Williams Peer Scholarship is reaching new heights with four recipients named in 2023. Additionally, this past year, three categories were added to the scholarship: Advocate, Scholar, and Lifetime Achievement.

The scholarship supports the education and training of patients who are involved with the Comprehensive Recovery Services (CRS) of UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital. The awardees serve as role models to others with mental illness who are going to school or pursuing vocational training either to gain employment or advance in their employment.

The scholarship honors former CRS outpatient administrative assistant, Lorraine Williams, who served as mentor and advocate to many during her time with Western. Sponsors of the scholarship include UPMC Health Plan, UPMC Community Care Behavioral Health Organization, and Equitable Advisors.

Meet the 2023 scholarship recipients.

ADVOCATE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD WINNER

Advocate: an individual who shares their recovery story to reduce stigma, raise awareness, and inspire and directly advocate for peers. This person will often be involved in mental health support groups, provide direct peer support, be an ally to individuals who struggle, participate in mental health awareness events, or actively promote self-care. Advocacy work may focus on improving mental health policies, funding, or access to care.

Dawn Miller

It came as a wonderful surprise to Dawn Miller when she was told that she'd won the Advocate portion of the scholarship. Dawn has been connected with UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital since 2000.

Described as a passionate advocate for others when it comes to mental health, Dawn professes, "I open my mouth, and I can't keep it shut!" A friend, Vetta Murphy, introduced Dawn into advocacy. Now, she is involved in advocating on a state level and has developed a close relationship with the staff at the offices of Senators Jay Costa and Wayne Fontana, volunteering for their offices in support of local initiatives.

"Dawn is a wonderful example of the Advocate awardee. She uses her voice for the betterment of the community," says Jessica Gannon, MD, Ambulatory Medical Director of WPH CRS Ambulatory Clinics.

SCHOLAR SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Scholar: An individual who is enrolled in a vocational or educational program and demonstrates active pursuit of further training/certification with the specific purpose of achieving vocational goals.

Juwan Denson

Juwan Denson says the Scholar award is the first thing he has ever won, making the experience all the more special.

Juwan says, "Winning this scholarship is a beacon of hope. I feel like this is a sign to continue to pursue my goals."

What's next for Juwan? He plans to take the TESOL (Teaching English to Students of Other Languages) and pursue a job in education teaching ESL (English as a Second Language). Juwan is also looking into a certificate program at the University of Pittsburgh linguistics.

Rehema Muhina

Already an accomplished student with plans for the future, Reheema Muhina is thrilled to be the recipient of the Scholar portion of the Lorraine Williams Scholarship.

Rehema recently graduated from Southern New Hampshire University with a focus in Business Administration. She plans to use the scholarship money to reduce some of her student debt. Additionally, Rehema plans to continue her schooling, studying accounting. Her future professional goals include becoming an accountant.

"Rehema is a much-deserved recipient of this award and has a bright future," says Dr. Gannon.



JUWAN
DENSON



VERNA
JOHNSON

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

Lifetime Achievement: this individual demonstrates consistent success in occupational, volunteer, or other community-oriented activities and is "living proof" of recovery. This person has often worked in our community for years and is highly visible to CRS patients and staff.

Verna Johnson

Earning the Lifetime Achievement award holds a special meaning to Verna Johnson, who knew Lorraine Williams. "She had a heart of gold. Lorraine was always helping others; it was part of who she was," Verna recalls.

Like Lorraine, Verna has functioned as an advocate for most of her life as it pertains to housing, transportation, and mental health. As a person with lived experience in mental health, she knows those with mental health struggles can still live a fulfilling life.

"It means a lot to me to win this scholarship. I have accomplished a lot so far, and there are so many more chapters in my life," Verna says. She plans to earn a graduate degree in social work.

Campaign Partners

UPMC HEALTH PLAN



To donate to the Lorraine Williams Peer Scholarship, or for more information, call Making Minds Matter at **412-246-6614**, email **MakingMindsMatter@upmc.edu**, or visit **UPMC.com/MakingMindsMatter**.

Suicide Prevention Campaign Continues to Grow

“It takes a community to prevent suicide, and UPMC is a community,” said Jeff Magill, manager, Clinical Services, Emergency Preparedness, UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital. Since 2019, a National Suicide Prevention Month work group of UPMC Western Behavioral Health team members has been building a coalition of awareness and activity for individuals, families, and staff related to the epidemic of deaths by suicide.



Over the past four years, the suicide prevention initiative has grown steadily. “I attribute the success and response to people coming together and working toward the same end goals: help people understand suicide, help those who are struggling with suicide, and bring awareness in general,” said Donna Pandullo, executive assistant, UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital. This initiative continues to prove close to many hearts, including Donna’s; Donna lost her son, Edward, to suicide three years ago.

“I visit many hospitals in my job, and I love when I see someone wearing a suicide prevention shirt, especially knowing that all the proceeds go to Making Minds Matter, which is such a good and worthy cause to support,” Donna expressed.

More than 2,400 t-shirts were sold in 2023, raising \$15,844 for the Making Minds Matter Fund in support of enhanced



WESTERN TEAM AT THE 2023 “OUT OF THE DARKNESS” WALK

patient experience and employee education. What began as an initiative at UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital has grown into a UPMC systemwide effort.

“When I think about a person having suicidal thoughts and feeling alone in this world, I believe we are creating that safe space for them. It can be as simple as a person seeing one of our shirts or our bag with the messages ‘stay,’ ‘tomorrow needs you,’ and ‘you matter,’” Donna said.

Additionally, Donna is the driving force behind Western’s participation in annual “Out of the Darkness” walks sponsored

by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. This past year, countless Western teams participated in multiple walks, a giant leap from where Donna started with a small team at one walk a few short years ago.

To participate in the 2024 “Out of the Darkness” Walk on September 7, contact Donna Pandullo at pandullod@upmc.edu or call 412-973-0151.

The 2024 Suicide Prevention merchandise sale runs through July 1. Details are on the back cover.

“Celebrating Champions” Honors Addiction Medicine Innovator

The October 2023 “Celebrating Champions” Dinner and Silent Auction garnered record support in excess of \$200,000 from nearly 600 ticket purchasers and generous sponsors. Among the 2023 honorees was Grand Champion, Antoine Douaihy, MD, senior academic director, Addiction Medicine Services, UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital.

Dr. Douaihy, regarded as a masterful clinician, educator, mentor, and academician in the field of addiction medicine, has elevated motivational interviewing to the height of standard practice in successful, life-saving treatment locally, nationally, and internationally.

Proceeds from the event benefit the Making Minds Matter Fund at UPMC Western Behavioral Health and the UPMC Senior Communities Benevolent Care Fund.



16th Annual Celebrating CHAMPIONS

SAVE THE DATE

Thursday, October 17, 2024
The Westin Hotel

5:30 P.M.
Registration and Reception
Silent Auction

7 P.M.
Program and Dinner

To sponsor or reserve a table or tickets, contact paneid@upmc.edu.



DEBORAH BRODINE, KEN NASH, MD, ANTOINE DOUAIHY, MD, DAVID LEWIS, MD, JAMIE TEW, MD

If you wish to have your name removed from the mailing lists related to future newsletters or fundraising materials supporting the Making Minds Matter Fund at UPMC Western Behavioral Health, please send a request to MakingMindsMatter@upmc.edu, write to Making Minds Matter at UPMC Western Behavioral Health, 200 Lothrop St., Forbes Tower, Suite 10055, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, or call 412-246-6614.

Support Suicide Prevention Awareness

Clothing available in small through 3XL



Sweatshirts \$30

Short-sleeved T-shirt \$15

Long-sleeved T-shirt \$19



Pin \$8



Journal \$7



Key Chain \$8



These items are available for purchase through July 1.

To purchase, visit upmc3bnr.sppone.corpmerchandise.com or just scan the QR code. Click on **"Order Now."**

Questions? Call Making Minds Matter at **412-246-6614** or email MakingMindsMatter@upmc.edu.