Josh M. was an exceptionally shy child. A quiet and unassuming introvert who didn’t like playing with his classmates, Josh consistently isolated himself from other children.

In high school, Josh began experiencing severe migraines three or four days a week. Then came the onset of panic attacks, symptoms of agoraphobia, and a deep sadness that he just couldn’t seem to shake.

Although he repeatedly missed classes at school, Josh still managed to graduate with honors his senior year. He enrolled as a student at CCRI, and planned to major in English and minor in Education.

During those days, it was Josh’s dream to become a teacher. Unfortunately, that was also the period when his symptoms became too difficult to bear. He started losing track of time, finding himself in places without knowing how he had gotten there or what he had been doing during his blackout periods.

Due to the severity of his symptoms, he dropped out of college his sophomore year. He attempted holding down a job refinancing mortgages, and when that failed, telemarketing. Nothing lasted long. His symptoms kept holding him back.

Then Josh’s depression hit, and hit hard. He was admitted to Butler Hospital, where he was officially diagnosed with major depressive disorder. After stabilizing, Josh was referred to The Kent Center, where he has received mental health treatment for the past five and a half years.

The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that 11% of adolescents have a depressive disorder by the age of 18.

According to the World Health Organization, major depressive disorder is the leading cause of disability among Americans ages 15 to 44.
A Message from our CEO

If you’ve picked up a newspaper lately, you know that community mental health has become a hot topic. No matter what your viewpoint is on Rhode Island healthcare, one thing is clear: there needs to be a significant shift in our current mental health care system, and we are at a crossroads.

If you care about people suffering from mental illness, I encourage you to become versed in the issues at hand so you can join us in advocating for their rights. It’s easy to do; simply sign up for our electronic mailing list on our website or subscribe to our Facebook page to receive continued updates on the critical issues at hand.

In this edition of The Advocate, you will have the opportunity to read about a Kent Center client’s success story. Once a shy boy who refused to play with others, Josh M. is now a thriving young man who not only gives back to the community, he has become a leader and mentor within it.

I am pleased to announce our Moral Reconation Therapy Group is up and running at TK’s Providence office. We are currently the only organization in R.I. that provides MRT, which addresses the criminogenic risk of recidivism. Studies indicate MRT-treated offenders have 25% to 75% lower re-arrest and re-incarceration rates than expected.

In collaboration with Pretrial Services, we are providing MRT groups that are co-led by our MRT-trained clinicians and Scott Tirocchi, RI District Court’s Deputy Director of Pretrial Services.

TKC recently learned we will receive the Victims of Crime Act Grant for another year. This grant funds programs and services for people who have been victimized by crime and suffer from symptoms related to the incident. This critical grant helps survivors who otherwise would be unable to afford the services they require to improve their quality of life.

In other news, I am pleased to announce Nancy Haight has joined our Board of Directors. Nancy brings over 20 years of experience in the field of accounting, and we are delighted she’s coming aboard.

I hope you will stop by our Post Road location to see the beautiful works created by the Hillsgrove House Artists up for sale on Dec. 4. If you joined us for Swing into Spring earlier this year, you know the quality and craftsmanship of their work, which is created under the direction of vocational specialist Kate Paquin. All proceeds benefit the programs at Hillsgrove House, so stop by and get a jump start on your holiday gift shopping.

Do keep in mind that the holiday season can be particularly difficult for people suffering from mental illness. I encourage you to donate to our Annual Fund so we can continue providing people with the support they need. I wish you and your family and healthy and happy harvest season!

David S. Lauterbach
**CNOM Petition Update**

John Walker, whose brother Bob suffers from serous mental illness, recently posted a petition online calling upon Rhode Island State Legislators to do something about the cut of CNOM (Costs Not Otherwise Matchable) funding. This cut has resulted in 1,000 people with mental illness losing their case managers in Rhode Island.

For people who are suffering from mental illness, case managers are often their only lifeline to maintaining stability. Case managers ensure client’s daily needs are met. They transport clients to doctors appointments, monitor their medication, and make certain they are adequately clothed and fed.

To date, over 1,100 people have signed the petition. To add your name to this critical cause, visit www.thekentcenter.org. Stay tuned for information on when it will be delivered to Capitol Hill. You can keep updated by finding us on Facebook.

“The people suffering from mental illness are our mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers. To turn away and ignore abuse and neglect and discriminate is unhuman. I suffer every minute of every day. My family suffers in fear because of stigmas. I was a fully functioning person that has gone from caring about [things] to being one ‘of those people’ and it’s so bad at times that being non-existing is a thought in my mind because of these factors.”

**Ruth W.—Lincoln, RI**

“People dealing with the affects of mental illness are not just the individual with the diagnosis, they are also the parents, spouses, children, and friends of these people. A mental illness diagnosis is similar to a stone dropped in a pool of water, the ripples go far. All of these people struggle to find the help they need to care for themselves and their loved ones. Sadly, funding cuts make it harder for everyone affected.”

**Mary-Jean G.—Warwick, RI**

“As a mental health ‘sufferer’, I know the value of the services that case managers provide and how important their services are valued by their clients. Services are at times the point between life and death for a lot of clients both figuratively and literally. The lack of CNOM is one of the worst things to happen. Depression and other illness symptoms will increase due to people not having access to meds, hospitalizations will increase, self medicating will most likely increase, which can only lead to more issues.”

**Jodie—Warwick, RI**
TKC Presents YMCA with $1,000 Donation

The Kent Center recently presented the YMCA with a $1,000 check that will sponsor memberships for TKC clients who are dedicated to improving their quality of life.

The funds were raised through generous donations made in memory of John Chiariello, father of Board Member Susan Chiariello. During their lives, John and his wife Gloria were instrumental supporters of our work. Their memory will live on in all TKC clients who will directly benefit from their kindness.

Pictured in the above group photo, from the left: Manuel C., TKC client and scholarship recipient; Rosemary Ferreira, PCP Office Manager; Paula Jacobson, District Executive Director at the YMCA of Greater Providence, Kent County and West Bay Family Branches; TKC’s CEO David S. Lauterbach; and R.I. State Senator and long time supporter of The Kent Center William Walaska.

Coming Soon—Hillsgrove House Art Sale!

Save the Date for Hillsgrove House Artists’ upcoming art sale, where members of the Creative Occupational Unit will showcase their talented designs including paintings, ink drawings, glass window mosaics, handmade clay jewelry, decorative paper and glass works, and much more! Items are reasonably priced and perfect for holiday gifts for your loved ones. All proceeds benefit Hillsgrove House.

Thursday, December 4
The Kent Center
2756 Post Road, Warwick, RI 02886
3:00-7:00 PM, Room 236
Reeve Lindbergh Speaks on Mental Wellness

On October 24, The Kent Center had the distinct honor of presenting Reeve Lindbergh, daughter of Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh, at the Warwick Public Library. During her hour-long presentation, Reeve shared her favorite quotes from her books “Under a Wing” and “Forward from Here: Leaving Middle Age—and Other Unexpected Adventures”.

Reeve also discussed intimate stories about how both she and her mother lost children at a very young age. She candidly talked about battling depression, and impressed upon the audience how we need to strive to combat the stigma of mental illness.

Reeve stated how much she appreciated the daily efforts of The Kent Center's staff, and how we should keep in mind how much of an impact our efforts make in our clients’ lives. Signed copies of Ms. Lindbergh's book “Forward from Here” and Ann Morrow Lindbergh’s book “Gift from the Sea” will be up for auction at Swing into Spring in 2015.

Pictured above is The Kent Center's CEO David Lauterbach and his wife Andree, Reeve Lindbergh, and her husband Nathaniel Tripp, author of “Father Soldier Son: Memoir of a Platoon Leader in Vietnam.”

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Are you current in Community Mental Health news?

A lot has been happening in our industry lately. The Kent Center’s CEO recently stood up for community mental health organizations at the Publick Occurrences Forum at Rhode Island College. And The Providence Journal provided extensive front-page coverage on the issues that are important to us: “The Tipping Point—As public system changes, many mentally ill residents pay the price” (Sunday, 26 October) and “Rhode Island’s community mental health system became a victim of its own success” (Monday, October 27).

To stay up to date, simply visit The Kent Center’s Facebook page at www.facebook.com/thekentcenter.org, and we will bring the news to you!
On Thursday, November 6, the Providence Journal, in partnership with Rhode Island College and College Leadership Rhode Island, sponsored a Public Occurrences forum, “Rhode Island’s Mental Health System: Condition Critical?”. David Lauterbach, The Kent Center’s President and CEO, and Chris Stephens, President and CEO of Horizon Healthcare Partners, served as forum panelists.

Lauterbach provided insight on how and why Rhode Island’s community mental health centers are losing traction, and Stephens discussed the history of state’s mental health system. Following are excerpts from that discussion. Visit TKC’s Facebook page for links to the Providence Journal’s articles on the forum.

From the 1970s when people with mental illness were institutionalized and Rhode Island had one of the weakest mental health systems, to a full-system reengineering over the next decade that introduced community mental health organizations and moved R.I. to the forefront, the system has experienced drastic changes.

Community mental health centers became successful when they implemented nationally recognized best practices such as supportive housing, supportive employment and peer-assistance programs, to their specific “catchment areas” around the state. Years following, the largest community mental health centers began moving to serve clients statewide and integrate with the larger hospital systems.

Today, the result of this movement has provided Rhode Islanders with choice over the smaller community-based mental health organizations and larger hospital-centric systems that now exist.

Community-based providers such as The Kent Center, Community Care Alliance, Riverwood Mental Health Services, and Newport County Community Mental Health Center, work to provide care for some of Rhode Island’s neediest residents, including the uninsured and underinsured.

By providing and coordinating care, addressing housing and employment needs, and providing peer-support, these organizations address the critical influences that impact the wellbeing of an individual.

Over the last 18 months, advocating for community mental health services has become increasingly important. The recent elimination of state support for community mental health services has put an incredible amount of pressure on community-based organizations.

It is critical that Rhode Island maintain a small number of regional, community-governed and consumer-shaped “safety net” mental health organizations to serve Rhode Island residents in need, regardless of a person’s insurance status.

It’s these very organizations that are relied on every day by state departments such as DCYF and the Department of Corrections, as well as local schools, police departments, non-profits, health centers and hospital emergency departments.

Without funds for these community mental health services, including 24/7 emergency services, too many men and women are put at risk.

Under new state leadership, we must address the growing need for a new state mental health plan – one that incorporates new models of care, integrated with the services and processes proven to be successful.

The needs of Rhode Islanders and the state’s communities vary greatly. By recognizing the important and unique roles of the organizations that exist, both in size and in services, we can properly address the different needs of individuals.

Rhode Island must work together – with consumers, providers, advocates and state leadership – to diverge from the downward path of the state’s mental health system, and ensure that all Rhode Islanders can access and receive the care and support they need.
The Good Fight, Continued

When Josh became client of The Kent Center, his case managers encouraged him to join Hillsgrove House, Rhode Island’s first Clubhouse. Hillsgrove provides a healthy and restorative environment for adults with mental illnesses who seek a fulfilling community lifestyle.

Based on a work-ordered day, it promotes the right to self-determination among its members. Members and staff work side-by-side in all areas of the clubhouse, and members are empowered to tap into their unique talents, abilities, and strengths while learning valuable pre-vocational skills.

When asked what motivated him to join Hillsgrove, Josh thought for a moment. “I guess my case managers saw a lot of potential in me,” he said. “I wasn’t thrilled with my initial orientation, but I kept coming and soon began to enjoy spending my time here.”

Josh soon began working in Hillsgrove’s Educational and Orientation Unit, where he helps produce its monthly newsletter, distributes club mail, and acts as an ambassador to new members. He provides tutoring and encouragement to members seeking to improve their academic skills or obtain their GED, and serves as an advocate of mental health.

Josh eventually enrolled in the transitional employment program, which offers members an opportunity to enter the job market with the support of a job coach. He first served as an administrative assistant at Eleanor Slater Hospital. Now, Josh works 12 hours a week at Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, where he assists with Preadmission Screening and Resident Review to ensure individuals are not inappropriately placed in nursing homes for long term care.

“Since first meeting him three years ago, Josh has made incredible progress in his recovery process,” said Hillsgrove House Program Manager Jeff Legg. “He has become a leader at the Clubhouse, and a role model and mentor to his peers.”

Since joining Hillsgrove, Josh has lost 100 pounds. “Since Josh lost the weight, he has made a huge turnaround,” said his case manager Pip Almeida. “He has a much more positive attitude, he’s more assertive, and he’s worked through many of his self-confidence concerns. He is successfully maintaining his transitional employment job, and he’s focusing on what he needs to do in recovery.”

Josh’s increased confidence has enabled him to cultivate friendships outside of the Clubhouse. He enjoys playing basketball and baseball with his friends in Coventry, but he doesn’t feel as if they can relate to his struggles.

“My friends outside of Hillsgrove don’t know about my situation. They lead lives that people their ages lead. I don’t feel comfortable talking to them about my symptoms. When I’m at Hillsgrove, I feel as if I can be myself. I’m here every day when I’m not at work. Hillsgrove has helped me develop my self-confidence. I am an overall happier and healthier person by coming here.”

Now 29 years old, Josh still struggles with symptoms of mental illness occasionally, especially in social situations, but he knows from experience that he’ll get through it when they hit. “I think of what my therapists from The Kent Center have taught me. I try to be in the moment and relax. I practice mindfulness, and I know that in twenty minutes, my symptoms will pass. I remind myself that people here have confidence in me. And that’s what keeps me going.”

These days, Josh is considering returning to college, and he is in the process of obtaining his own apartment. His case manager is assisting him with completing housing applications. When asked what advice Josh would give someone who suffers from symptoms of mental illness, he contemplates for a moment.

“Seek help, and don’t be ashamed. It will increase your chances of getting better. Some days you will really struggle, but just keep fighting, and it will improve. It doesn’t have to be a hopeless battle.”

by Sarah Channing
Did you know that the holidays can be the toughest time of the year for people who suffer from mental illness? Our case workers and clinicians provide our clients with the skills they need to get through the season—but we’d love to be able to give them (and their families!) more this season. Here are a few ways you can help:

- **Drop off gently used or new art supplies** so Briggs Kids can continue to express themselves through creativity.
- **Post a Giving Tree at your office** so the children in our Youth and Family program have something to unwrap.
- **Adopt a Family** so people in need will be able to look forward to celebrating the holidays together.
- **Contribute to our Annual Fund** so we can continue to provide programs to people with mental illness.

All donations are tax-deductible. Please call Sarah at 401.738.1338 x335 if you can help.