

# Growing Strong



May 2019

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Township of Ocean  
 Department of Human Services  
 601 Deal Road  
 Ocean, NJ 07712  
 732-531-2600



The **Human Services Council** serves as an advisory board to the Department of Human Services, Township Manager and Township Council on matters concerning the human service needs of residents. Guests are welcome.

The next meeting will take place on **Wednesday, June 5, 2019 at 7 pm** in the Don & Marie Curtis Senior Center, 615 West Park Ave., behind the West Park Recreation Center. Please note: meeting dates are subject to change. Please call 732-531-2600 to confirm.

## MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

This year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> celebration of Mental Health Month in the United States, predating by more than 40 years, the World Mental Health Month of October that was established in 1992. Our community joins with groups throughout the country to pay special attention to mental health. Health is not just the absence of disease but the condition of balance that occurs when the body is flourishing. Likewise, mental health is not only the absence of mental and emotional problems, but also a condition of balance when the mind and spirit are flourishing.

Here are some guiding thoughts from Mental Health America:

- Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being.
- For those dealing with a chronic health condition and the people who care for them, it can be especially important to focus on mental health.
- Humor, spirituality, recreation, animal companionship, and work-life balance are important for everyone.
- Finding a reason to laugh, going for a walk, meditating, playing with a pet or engaging in a hobby, can go a long way in making you both physically and mentally healthy.

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## EARLY TREATMENT CAN BENEFIT CHILDREN AND TEENS

Mental health is an important part of overall health for children as well as adults. For many adults who have mental disorders, symptoms were present—but often not recognized or addressed—in childhood and youth. For a young person with symptoms of a mental disorder, the earlier treatment is started, the more effective it can be. Early treatment can help prevent more severe, lasting problems as a child grows up.

### WARNING SIGNS

It can be tough to tell if troubling behavior in a child is just part of growing up or a problem that should be discussed with a health professional. However, if there are signs and symptoms that last weeks or months, and if these issues interfere with the child's daily life, not only at home but at school and with friends, you should contact a health professional.

Your child or teen might need help if he or she:

- Often feels anxious or worried
- Has very frequent tantrums or is intensely irritable much of the time

- Has frequent stomachaches or headaches with no physical explanation
- Is in constant motion, can't sit quietly for any length of time
- Has trouble sleeping, including frequent nightmares
- Loses interest in things he or she used to enjoy
- Avoids spending time with friends
- Has trouble doing well in school, or grades decline
- Fears gaining weight; exercises, diets obsessively
- Has low or no energy
- Has spells of intense,

One in five children between the ages of 13-18 live with a mental health condition

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness

- inexhaustible activity
- Harms herself/himself, such as cutting or burning her/his skin
- Engages in risky, destructive behavior
- Harms self or others
- Smokes, drinks, or uses drugs
- Has thoughts of suicide. Thinks his or her mind is controlled or out of control, hears voices

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## OCEAN POLICE L.E.A.D. THE WAY IN PREVENTING SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN KIDS

Detective Michael Melody stood in the front of a classroom of intermediate school students and pulled slips of paper out of a box. The written questions from students ran the gamut from professional to personal, such as “What was the most

dangerous thing you had to do?” and “Do you want to have kids?”

Detective Melody answers all of their questions. He believes it’s one way to connect with the students and develop trust between young people and law enforcement.

As the Township Police Department’s L.E.A.D. officer, Detective Melody meets with students once a week for 10 weeks to teach about healthy decision making, effective communication and more.

L.E.A.D (Law Enforcement Against Drugs), is a non-profit organization committed to reinforcing the mutual respect, goodwill and relations between law enforcement and their communities. L.E.A.D’s goal is to create safer, healthier communities free of drugs, bullying, and violence. Det. Melody is one of 1,700 L.E.A.D instructors across the country.

The organization provides proven, effective programs and learning materials for all the instructors. The middle school program helps students develop social and emotional skills, promotes character education, and addresses bullying to influence teens to make healthy choices. Lesson topics include: goal setting, decision making, effective communication, anger management, media literacy, conflict resolution, pro-social bonding and bullying.

During a recent lesson about decision making, Detective Melody discussed strategies for resisting peer pressure. Those strategies included steering clear of situations that could cause trouble, suggesting better alternatives to negative behavior, and making excuses to get out of harmful situations. Students stayed engaged in the process by participating in games and lively discussions.



Detective Michael Melody teaches healthy decision making at the Intermediate School.

### Mental Health Month (continued from page 1)

- The company of animals – whether as pets or service animals – can have a profound impact on a person’s quality of life and ability to recover from illnesses. A pet can be a source of comfort and can help us to live mentally healthier lives.
- Sometimes life is far from funny, but finding humor in a situation can lift moods with laughter and help people to better deal with and overcome difficult experiences.
- Whether you go to church, meditate daily, or simply find time to enjoy that cup of tea each morning while checking in with yourself – it can be important to connect with your spiritual side in order to find that mind-body connection.
- Living a healthy lifestyle may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes.
- Engagement with others through social contact, volunteerism, community service, and simply warm neighborly interaction can promote mental health in people of all ages.

### Children & Teens (continued from page 1)

**Mental illnesses can be treated.** If you are a child or teen, talk to your parents, school counselor, or health care provider. If you are a parent and need help starting a conversation with your child or teen about mental health, visit <http://www.mentalhealth.gov/>. If you are unsure where to go for help, ask your pediatrician or family doctor or visit [NIMH’s Help for Mental Illnesses](#) webpage.

**It may be helpful for children and teens to save several emergency numbers to their cell phones.** The ability to get immediate help for themselves or for a friend can make a difference.

- The phone number for a trusted friend or relative
- The non-emergency number for the local police department
- The Crisis Text Line: 741741
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

**If you or your child is thinking about harming yourself get help immediately.** You can call 911 or the [National Suicide Prevention Line](#) at **1.800.273.TALK (8255)**.

National Institute of Mental Health:  
[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)



The Mayor and Council unveiled a sign designating that the Township Senior Center has been renamed the Don and Marie Curtis Senior Center, in honor of their many contributions to the people of Ocean.

## Counseling

**Positive Treatment for Positive Change**

The Department of Human Services provides counseling services for youth & adults. There is no charge for most services for Township of Ocean residents.

**Individual, couples & family counseling**

**Comprehensive assessments**

**Grief counseling**

**Parent education**

**Anger management**

**Substance abuse evaluations, counseling & referrals**

Call 732-531-2600 Monday-Friday  
Day and evening appointments available

601 Deal Rd. Ocean OceanTwp.org

## PREVENTING FALLS HELP SENIORS STAY HEALTHY AND INDEPENDENT

In just a split second, a fall can change the life of an older adult.

The statistics are alarming. Each year, one out of 4 adults over age 65 experiences a fall, according to the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and 1 out of 5 of those falls causes a serious injury, such as broken bones or a head injury. Even worse, the death rate due to falls increased by 30 percent since 2007.

According to the CDC,

- One in four Americans aged 65+ falls each year.
- Every 11 seconds, an older adult is treated in the emergency room for a fall; every 19 minutes, an older adult dies from a fall.
- Falls are the leading cause of fatal injury and the most common cause of non-fatal, trauma-related hospital admissions among older adults.
- Falls result in more than 2.8 million injuries treated in emergency departments annually, including over 800,000 hospitalizations and more than 27,000 deaths.

Health professionals are increasing their efforts to reduce the number of falls by focusing on two factors: eliminating hazards and improving the overall health of older adults.

Recently, seniors who meet weekly for the *Let's Talk* group at the Senior Center heard from Lynn Knight, a physical therapist for more than three decades and author of **Don't Fall**, a workbook that guides seniors through the process of making their homes safer.

In her work as a physical therapist, Lynn works with many older people to help them recover from injuries sustained from falls. She wants to prevent falls before they happen.

Her goal, she told the group, is to "keep people moving, healthy and in their homes as long as they're safe and comfortable." She recommends that seniors go through their homes and methodically find the hazards that can contribute to falls.

Common hazards include scatter rugs, clutter, uneven surfaces, poor lighting and bathtubs.

Once your home is free of falling and tripping hazards, Lynn recommends installing grab bars in the bathroom, making sure that hand rails on stairs are sturdy with proper lighting and installing night lights throughout the home.

Good health is also key to preventing falls, she says. Proper nutrition, sufficient hydration, exercise and balance work are vital to overall health and well-being for older adults.



Author and physical therapist Lynn Knight (4th from right) discussed fall prevention at a recent meeting of the *Let's Talk* group.

If you would like to help older loved ones stay safe and prevent falls, the National Council on Aging suggests some steps you can take:

- If an older loved one is concerned about falling, suggest that they discuss those concerns with a health professional who can assess their risk and refer them to a fall prevention program
- Find out if your older loved one is experiencing problems with managing their own health

### DON'T BE A STATISTIC! KNOW THE RISKS!

#### What conditions contribute to falls?

- Lower body weakness
- Vitamin D deficiency
- Vision problems
- Home hazards
- Foot pain/poor footwear
- Medicines such as tranquilizers & sedatives
- Difficulties with walking and balance



Source: CDC

- Find out if your loved one is experiencing vision problems. Make sure that the eyeglass prescription is up to date

- Notice if they're holding onto walls, furniture, or someone else when walking or if they appear to have difficulty walking or rising from a chair. These are signs that they may need to see a physical therapist or participate in a fall prevention program

- Talk about their medications. Suggest that they have their medications reviewed each time they add a new prescription. Be aware of over-the-counter medications which may also cause light-

headedness or dizziness

- Do a walk-through safety assessment of their home. Be sure that lighting is adequate, that handrails are sturdy and bathrooms have grab bars near the shower and toilet.

*Don't Fall* by Lynn Knight is available on Amazon.com.

*Let's Talk* meets every Wednesday at the Senior Center. For more information about the program, call 732-531-2600.

## LAUGH A LITTLE - YOU'LL FEEL BETTER!

Finding humor in the circumstances of life can lift moods with laughter and help people to better deal with and overcome difficult experiences.

### WHAT HAPPENS TO OUR BODIES WHEN WE LAUGH?

- Levels of stress hormones decrease.
- Your heart, lungs, and muscles are stimulated.
- There is increased activity in parts of the brain's reward system.
- Endorphins, the body's natural pain blockers are released.

### INCORPORATING HUMOR INTO YOUR DAILY LIFE HAS MANY POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- A stronger immune system
- Improved mood and anxiety relief
- Better interactions with others.
- Less burnout on the job.

### HUMOR AND LAUGHTER REDUCE THE RISK OF DEVELOPING CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

Stress and the hormones it produces can do a lot of damage to the mind and body over time. Since humor and laughter reduce the amounts of these hormones, it has also been shown that they can help reduce the risk of blood clots, heart conditions, and other stress-related diseases.



### 10 TIPS FOR INCORPORATING HUMOR INTO YOUR LIFE

- List three funny things that happened to you each day.
- Find a TV show or movie that tickles your funny bone.
- Watch stand-up comedy. There are lots of options to watch online or on television and if you can get to live show – even better!
- Reach out to someone who gets your sense of humor. Share the funny things that have happened to you recently or reminisce.
- Get online. Comic, meme, YouTube videos, blogs – if it gets you to laugh or smile, spend 15 minutes or so to check it out.
- Have a game night. Charades is a classic, and there are also plenty of newer card and board games that are designed with humor in mind.
- Try laughter yoga.
- Read a funny book.
- Spend time with an animal or a child. Their antics are almost always good for a laugh.
- Incorporate funny things into your environment. It could be a goofy photo; a page-a-day calendar; or a mug with a witty saying or cartoon.

source: [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)

## IMPROVE YOUR MOOD WITH SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND RECREATION

Finding other people to relate to and doing things that bring you enjoyment are great ways to improve your mood and overall mental health.

### LONELINESS IS BAD FOR HEALTH

Being lonely can cause the same amount of damage to your life-span as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and is more dangerous to health than obesity.

Loneliness is associated with a higher risk of high blood pressure in older people.

Poor social supports make it harder to recover from mental illnesses, while a strong social support system improves overall outcomes and the ability to bounce back from stress.

Women with breast cancer who have weak support systems before treatment have more pain and symptoms of depression over time.

### SOCIAL INTERACTION AND RECREATION ARE GOOD FOR YOU

People with strong social relationships are 50 percent more likely to live longer.

People who do things in nature have better perceptions of their own emotional well-being.

Taking a vacation can help you to feel happier and less stressed for a while. Even short vacations help!

Adolescents who participate in sports have lower odds of suffering from depression or

thinking about suicide, likely because sports increase self-esteem and social support.

Participating in outdoor recreation decreases symptoms of depression in people with disabilities.

### CONSIDERATION FOR CAREGIVERS

Feelings of loneliness and isolation are common among caregivers.

Adult day care and other respite programs can help reduce the demands on caregivers which may improve morale and allow more time for social and recreational activities.

### TIPS FOR FINDING FRIENDS AND THINGS TO DO

Look for recreation sports

leagues in your community. Soccer and basketball are common. You may be able to find other games like bocce ball or pickleball as well.

Check meetup.com. The website has groups all over the country that are based around specific activities or interest areas.

Volunteer! Volunteermatch.org has a database of opportunities across a variety of causes, all across the country.

Take a class. Check out your local parks and recreation department or look at national chain stores that offer how-to classes.

source: [mentalhealthamerica.net](http://mentalhealthamerica.net)