

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2023 / VOLUME 22



Quarterly News & Updates

YOUTH SUCCESS STORY



Like many of the youth who receive CMO services, Jessie was dealt some difficult challenges at a young age. As a teenager, Jessie became the child of a single parent. Jessie struggled to use healthy ways of coping with life's hardships.

Jessie worked with an Intensive In-Community (IIC) therapist to address her reaction to life events and find better ways to process, cope with, and move past these things. Although she had been through a lot, Jessie was always motivated to be successful in school and looked forward to becoming independent as an adult.

FROM THE DESK OF... JAMES PARAUDA, CEO



Through the years, the Care Management Organizations (CMO) in NJ have recognized the power of advocating on behalf of our organizations and the families we serve. This has led to the development of an Advocacy Committee within our agency. Much of what happens in Trenton at the State House impacts our work, from receiving funding as part of the governor's annual budget allocation, to individual pieces of legislation that impact our service delivery. Our local legislators write and pass legislation on many issues from what mental health services are covered by insurance to how youth are screened for suicidal thoughts and depression in schools and doctor's offices. Therefore, getting to know our local legislators and having them understand the agency's priorities are very important. In the past we have reached out to them in support of programs like school-based youth services and continuing to allow non-legal advocates at school meetings.

Jessie had a goal of becoming a flight attendant. With therapy and the support of the Division of Child Protection & Permanency (DCP&P), Jessie worked hard and was able to accomplish graduating high school early. Jessie also found employment as soon as she could to save money and assist her father with the costs of their home. When Jessie turned 18, she arranged an interview for flight attendant school and was accepted. Jessie sold what she could for money, moved across the country, and found a place to live near the flight attendant school.

TCCMO was also happy to support Jessie through this transition. Jessie has been attending the school over the past six months while working multiple jobs to pay for school and her home. Jessie recently graduated from school and will begin training for an airway company in April!

Jessie is looking forward to full-time employment, doing the job that she loves, and traveling while doing it. Jessie's Care Manager Alisha is especially proud of Jessie for her determination and accomplishments. TCCMO wishes Jessie the best as she starts her new job and gets to travel the world!



To further our collaboration, and emphasize the growing concern over teen suicide prevention, Tri County CMO, as part of NJCMO (<https://njcmo.org>), partnered with three other CMOs to hold a legislator breakfast on March 24th to inform the legislators in attendance about the increasing number of youth with mental health challenges and suicidal ideation and attempts. At this event, Maureen Brogan, Statewide Program Manager, Traumatic Loss Coalition, spoke about her work in New Jersey related to suicide prevention and postvention. Assemblywoman Aura Dunn (R-D25) then spoke about legislation she is sponsoring requiring annual suicide prevention training for mental health practitioners (see photo). There was also a parent of one of the CMO youth who spoke about her journey through the NJ Children's System of Care. Tri County CMO will strive to develop and maintain the relationship with our legislators and continue to update the community on our efforts.

Our state legislators are public servants and are in their positions to serve their constituents' interests. In order for legislators to be the voice of the residents and businesses in their communities, they must hear from you about interests or concerns you may have as well as feedback on proposed legislation that impacts your community or the state at large. There are several ways to contact your legislators. Via the link below you can access individual contact information for any of the state legislators. They are listed by both name and district. In addition, many of the legislators have social media sites that you can connect to in order to get regular updates.

<https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/contact>



(l-r) Maureen A. Brogan, Statewide Program Manager, Traumatic Loss Coalition; Assemblywoman Aura Dunn (R-25); James Parauda, Tri County CMO CEO; Brett Peppe, LCSW, LCADC, Somerset County Coordinator, Traumatic Loss Coalition

GETTING TO KNOW TCCMO... The Training Department

Tri County CMO (TCCMO) is in the process of developing a new Training Department to aid our teams of Care Managers (CMs) and to spread awareness about TCCMO services and related needs in the community. The Training Department consists of four individuals who each bring their own unique experiences and valuable perspectives to the team.

- **Reginald Rosarion** is the Director of Training and has 16+ years of experience in training and teaching. Reginald is a passionate and strong leader for his team, and he has the skills to help this department bloom to its full potential.



- Wraparound Coordinator **Katie Lavinia** was a CM for seven years before she was promoted to the Lead Care Manager (LCM) role and remained in this role for two years. Katie has been in the Wraparound Coordinator role for a little over a year where she has supported the Program Manager with tasks and new CMs in their training.



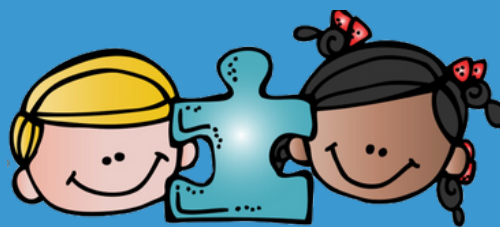
- Training Specialist **Kevin Dyches** was a CM for seven years primarily serving Warren County families. He also plays an important role in TCCMO's Race and Gender Equity Committee.



COMMUNITY CORNER - Page One Resource Center



Page One Resource Center, located in Phillipsburg, NJ, is quickly approaching their one-year anniversary and we at Tri County CMO were lucky enough to sit down with founder, Vickie Mendes-Branch, to learn about the exciting happenings that are taking place at the center. Vickie has many roles, including business owner and founder of the Branching Out Foundation (established in 2015), Phillipsburg School board member, co-chair of the Children's Interagency Coordinating Council's Division of Developmental Disabilities subcommittee, but most importantly, she is a parent. Vickie is the parent of a youth that has a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, and she felt that there were limited resources in Warren County for children like her son and for families like hers. All parents have hopes and dreams for their children, and Vickie's hope for her son is that he can become as independent as possible and become educated on life skills and social skills so that he is prepared for anything he may encounter while he is in the community. On Vickie's journey to create exactly what her family and community needed, she and her husband explored different locations in Warren County and when they stepped into their current location on Memorial Parkway, they knew that it was the perfect setting to provide a safe space for all.



- Training Specialist Nicole Del Duca was a CM for two years before she was promoted to LCM and remained in this role for about a year. Nicole is also a certified Nurtured Heart Approach® trainer and a Licensed Associate Counselor.



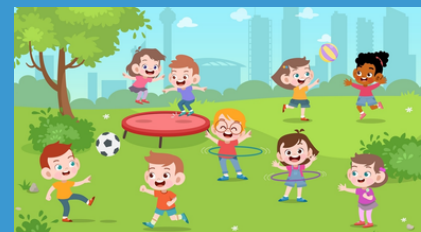
This team has a clear vision of what they are most looking forward to in the development of their department. They hope to help CMs find a well-rounded view of work-life balance so they can excel both at home and at work. The team also plans to guide CMs in finding the tools they need to support their families within the structure of the Wraparound Model. The team is also excited for opportunities to do trainings in the community to spread awareness about TCCMO's role and services and reduce the stigma on mental health. Overall, the Training Department has a lot of excitement and passion driving them to succeed in their vision for what the department will become.



In order to provide the best services possible, Vickie listened to the needs of others in the community. Vickie continued to hear that parents were worried that their child did not have any friends and that parents themselves needed overall support. Page One Resource Center has a variety of classes and groups for individuals of various ages and abilities. Through collaboration with a local educator, a social skills curriculum was created and has been implemented. The center is currently offering two social skills groups (one for ages 3-9 and one for ages 10+). Each social skills session has a different theme, and the participants are able to utilize a themed sensory bin, create a craft, and assist with making a themed snack! Vickie feels that raising and supporting children, specifically those that have unique needs, takes a village and a large part of that village are parents dealing with similar situations. Page One Resource Center also offers parent support groups (focused around stressors related to raising their children), Transition Tuesday (focused on youth that are approaching the transition into adulthood) and Parents' Night Out (focused on spending time with other caregivers that need a night out).



Many of us have heard the saying "you cannot pour from an empty cup" and Vickie has recognized this, which has led her to offering yoga classes where breathing and mindfulness skills are provided. As the center approaches their one-year anniversary, they are excited for a new ABA group and many trainings/workshops that will be provided through collaboration with other community providers. The center is also exploring various recreational opportunities and an open gym concept.



PRIDE IN PARTNERSHIP

Firth Youth Center – Autism event



On April 17th, Tri County CMO hosted an Autism Acceptance Event at Firth Youth Center in Phillipsburg, with guest motivational speaker, Ben Hartranft. Ben is a young man with autism who has overcome many challenges in his life, but he uses his strengths to promote autism awareness and acceptance. He and his supportive family share the message that “1 Kind Person can change someone’s life”. Check out Ben’s website, benergy1.com, to obtain autism resources, learn more about Ben and his family’s journey, as well as to purchase Ben’s mother Sandy Hartranft’s book *Swinging From the Chandelier: The Journey Through Autism*.



TCCMO staff celebrate autism acceptance at the Firth Youth Center.

Through Vickie’s work within her community, she has been able to educate and advocate for others, while providing an accepting space where everyone feels comfortable and understood. Vickie expressed that from a young age, she had always wanted to open her own daycare; her exact plan may have changed over time, but she has made a tremendous impact on her community and on the lives of the many young people (and their caregivers) that attend the center. As a caregiver, it can be frustrating to not have the supports and resources in your area to better support your child; Vickie did not take “no” for an answer and she created what she felt was needed. Vickie’s dedication and passion is clear the moment that she begins speaking about Page One Resource Center.

Tri County CMO is proud of Vickie and the work she is doing to support many of the youth in our community and we look forward to our continued collaboration.



**Location: 529 Memorial Parkway,
Phillipsburg, NJ 08865**

For more information regarding
Page One Resource Center
please contact

**Vickie Mendes-Branch at
pageonecenter@gmail.com.**

GROWING GREATNESS -

How many times have we heard aphorisms like “You have to make sure your own cup is full before you fill another’s,” or the infamous airline safety guidance, “Put on your own mask before helping anyone else with theirs”. These might be overused, but they provide sage advice about the importance of self-care as an aspect of providing trauma-informed services to youth and families in our system of care.

You’ve read in past articles about The Nurtured Heart Approach® and the key pieces of recognition and reset when needed. For adults (caregivers and professionals), the importance of resetting and self-regulating is paramount, just as important for our own children or the youth we serve. The COVID-19 pandemic and increasing mental health needs for our kids have deeply emphasized the need to attend to our own mental health and self-care and understand our own responses and reactions to trauma.



One key point is the importance of being intentional at maintaining work-life balance and self-care, as working from home has tended to blur when work ends and home life begins. Sometimes you have to disconnect to stay connected. As a parent or a professional, make sure you have boundaries around your work at home, and be sure to maintain essential self-care and home life routines, as well as create new routines that support your well-being.

If you’d like to learn more about The Nurtured Heart Approach®, please join us for one of our upcoming trainings!

Taking Care of Ourselves So We Can Better Care for Our Kids – For Parents and Providers!

Be aware of your triggers and what causes you to feel stressed or burnt out, because that stress will inevitably leak into your parenting. Conversely, be familiar with your self-care routine and what works best to diminish negative feelings. Practicing self-care routines with the supports in your life will further ensure that you are doing it. For example, going to the gym or socializing with others are strategies that may help to regulate you and hold you accountable for doing this. If childcare or other limitations exist, think creatively to get those same needs met; for instance, doing virtual group workouts or online support groups, of which there are many now. Start small – even setting aside 15 minutes with a cup of coffee or tea and some music or a book will provide some needed respite. There are also many apps now that offer guided meditations or other ways to decompress and reset.

We cannot expect our children to learn to regulate themselves if we cannot, and modeling to them appropriate self-care is a secondary benefit to practicing it. Let this quote resonate: “Your diet is not only what you eat. It is what you watch, what you listen to, what you read, the people you hang around. Be mindful of the things you put into your body emotionally, spiritually, and physically.” When you attend to your emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being with intention, you will be better equipped to parent and succeed with work and life in general!

Tri County CMO presents...

Nurtured Heart Approach

The Nurtured Heart Approach® (NHA) is a philosophy for creating healthy relationships with people in your life. NHA focuses on: self regulation, transforming the way children perceive themselves, their caregivers, and the world around them, teaching children that they will receive recognition through positive behavior, and seeing intensity to be a powerful quality that, if developed correctly, can drive children to amazing achievements.

May 11th, 2023, 10am-1pm
OR
July 8th, 2023 10am-1pm
Microsoft Teams

TO REGISTER PLEASE CONTACT
NICOLE DEL DUCA
VIA EMAIL
NDELDUCA@TRICOUNTYCMO.ORG
OR TEXT 908-256-0254

ADVOCACY CORNER -

Q&A with NJ Senator *Andrew Zwicker*



Members of the TCCMO Advocacy Committee were fortunate to have a meeting with Senator Andrew Zwicker (D-16), who was recently elected to the NJ Senate after six years as a NJ Assemblyman. He is a scientist and educator at Princeton University's Plasma Physics Laboratory. Senator Zwicker serves on the Budget and Appropriations, Higher Education, Labor, and Military and Veterans' Affairs committees. Additionally, he is a member of the Manufacturing Caucus, the NJ Legislative Disability Caucus, the NJ Commission on Science, Innovation, and Technology, and was Vice-Chair of the NJ Biotechnology Task Force. His district covers four counties (Somerset, Hunterdon, Mercer, and Middlesex) and 14 municipalities.

TCCMO: Who or what influenced your decision to go into politics?

Senator Zwicker: The easy answer is my mother, who was involved in local town politics. Up until the moment she died a few years ago she would still read the newspaper every day. One thing I remember distinctly was there was a teacher strike in Englewood and my mom refused to cross a picket line as she was in several different unions. She organized a home school while the teacher strike was going on. I didn't know at the time, but that was the beginning of a political awareness. And that sort of stayed dormant as I went through my own schooling and, and my own life. But then I'm at Princeton, at the Plasma Physics Laboratory, and the person who hired me right out of graduate school, he leaves to become the second physicist ever elected to the United States Congress – and his name is Rush Holt. So he spent 16 years in Congress, and during that time, we would chat, but it never occurred to me that this would be something I wanted to do. But when he decided to retire, the person who replaced him came to me and said, "Aren't you going to run for Congress?" And that was the second seed.

TCCMO: We know in the past you've supported mental health legislation, promoting treatment for mental health conditions, substance use disorders, a diversion program to divert people away from criminal justice and into treatment. Do you feel like there are any contributions in your career that you can point to in these areas that you're proud of?

Senator Zwicker: So my introduction into mental health and substance abuse issues comes from a parent that I met early, early on in my career. He explained to me many of the challenges that parents have. And for me, that was the moment when I knew that, whether it was through legislation or joining the Disability Caucus, when former Senate President Sweeney created the, Bipartisan Bicameral Disability, Caucus that I wanted to be a part of making people's, young people's and adults with a variety of different issues, lives better.

TCCMO: What are your goals over the next term?

Senator Zwicker: I have a pretty unique background as a scientist and a legislator. And so what are some of the things I'd like to accomplish? One is the right for every person, regardless of zip code or anything else, to have access to clean air, clean water, clean land. It's not just about access to clean air or clean water or clean land, but also about what happens when those aren't provided. Asthma rates go up, for example. When you're under enormous stress based upon environmental concerns, it's a stressor on your emotional and physical well-being. And so it becomes a mental health challenge. I want to continue to use my scientific background that way. And I am very concerned about the fragile nature of the grand experiment that is the United States of America.

And what I can do as a state legislator when it comes to making sure that people have access to vote. I am very proud of the fact that I've been one of the leading legislators to ensure New Jerseyans have access to voting. And then, as a son of a public school English teacher and the husband of an elementary school educator, I want to make sure that public education in New Jersey is strong and has the resources it needs.

TCCMO: How, if at all, do you see being in the Senate as different from your role as an assemblyman?

Senator Zwicker: The biggest difference is the most obvious, which is half the number of people. And as a smaller body, it is in principle one that moves a little bit slower than the Assembly. When you have a smaller number of people, it's easier to have conversations.

TCCMO: How would you define your leadership governing style?

Senator Zwicker: Two things – one is fact-based, and one is listening-based. Fact-Based is probably obvious given my background that I do a scientific process, meaning, I try to bring to the legislature all the evidence regardless of the conclusion, and then eventually come to a conclusion, I think the other one though, is listening. It was something when I went from science into politics - different worlds. Having meetings with people who disagreed with me and listening to them and trying to understand where our commonalities are, has been an amazing experience. So I would say that's my two sides - scientist and legislator.

TCCMO: What advice would you give to youth, like the youth that we serve, who might want to become involved in their communities?

Senator Zwicker: Make your voices heard. Write an email, make a phone call, have a meeting put up a social media post - get involved because if you don't advocate for yourself, then who will? And you know, talking to people who have dealt with enormous challenges in their life, about their lives, about their stories, about their lived experiences is better for me as a legislator than anything I could read.

TCCMO: What do you do in your free time to have fun? If you read, what is your favorite book or favorite books?

Senator Zwicker: I taught myself to surf and I'm very good at falling! I'm not so good at surfing, but being out there behind the waves, sometimes a dolphin going by, is just so incredibly beautiful. Favorite book? I have two that pop into my head - Jonathan Livingston Seagull is one of my favorite books about a seagull trying to learn how to fly faster and faster. And it's really a story about not accepting the limitations that others put on you and being free to be yourself. And the second one is The Old Man in the Sea [JPI] by Ernest Hemingway. That one's again about challenges.

TCCMO: What do you do for your own self-care and wellness?

Senator Zwicker: I've learned that if I don't care for my physical self, it's very difficult to take care of my mental, spiritual, emotional self. It's sometimes simple things, like going for a walk, calling my sister just to check in, or my kids who are scattered all over the country. My latest is animal therapy - a few minutes with animals (on the farm) like that relieves all the stressors of the day.

TCCMO: What is your favorite food or snacks?

Senator Zwicker: I have been a vegetarian for 30 years. So my favorite food would be my wife's tofu parmigiana.



JUNETEENTH

Honoring the Legacy of Freedom

One of the darkest periods in American history was that of slavery, the ramifications of which we are still seeing today. One of the many things that has come from this period in history is Juneteenth, a holiday once honored by African American citizens that has become more widely celebrated by diverse communities across the country.

On January 1, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was federally passed. This document declared that every enslaved person in the Confederacy was freed. However, Confederate states would not recognize the authority of the Union or the President. The Emancipation Proclamation could not be implemented in Confederate controlled states; therefore, not every enslaved person was freed.

Slaves in the Confederate controlled states would not be freed until 1865, when the Thirteenth Amendment was passed by Congress. One of these states was Texas, and on June 19, 1865, about 2,000 Union troops arrived in Galveston Bay, Texas, under the leadership of General Gordon Granger. The army announced that every enslaved person in the rebelling states, over 250,000 people in Galveston, were free by executive order. June 19th became known as "Juneteenth" and continues to be celebrated today.

As we observe Juneteenth, let us remember that "this is a time for reflection. It is a moment to think about freedom being conditional and viewing freedom as something to continually fighting for." – Angela Tate, Curator of African American Women's History



Each year millions of Americans face the reality of living with a mental illness. During May, there is a national movement to raise awareness about mental health. Each year in May, mental health organizations strive to fight stigma, provide support, educate the public and advocate for policies that support people with mental illness and their families. During May, there are special events to bring awareness to mental health and break the stigma.

Somerset County is hosting a Stigma Free event on Friday, May 19th, 10-2, at Raritan Valley Community College to raise awareness on mental health and substance use disorders and end stigma through workshops and networking with local providers.

For more information and to register for this free event, click on this link:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/stigma-free-somerset-county-mental-health-conference-tickets-604026729207>

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) has events and support groups throughout the year, but special events are being held at local chapters throughout the central NJ area:

<https://www.naminj.org/events/community/>



JUNE IS PRIDE MONTH



This month celebrates the accomplishments and visibility of the LGBTQ+ community and marks the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. The riots were a major turning point in LGBTQ+ history and were a response to ongoing police raids on well-known gay bars. Bars like the Stonewall Inn that served as a space for members of the LGBTQ+ community to gather and exist authentically were few and far between. Monthly police raids compromised these precious spaces, spaces that many in the community considered home, and on June 28th, 1969, the patrons of Stonewall Inn had finally had enough. That night's raid was the straw that broke the camel's back, unleashing the fury of the patrons for six days and nights. News of the riots spread across the country, leading to increased activism within the community. On the one-year anniversary of the riots, there were Gay Pride marches in New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago. By the following year, Gay Pride marches were taking place across the globe. The community was out of the shadows, they were proud, and they were not going anywhere.

Pride Month celebrates the community's unwillingness to continue taking literal and figurative beatings from their oppressors just for being true to themselves. The patrons of Stonewall Inn paved the way for future gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals to feel more comfortable publicly embracing their identities. Although some could argue that a lot has changed for the community in the last fifty years, and that people are more accepting today than they were when the riots first took place, there is still a lot of work to be done. There are plenty of ways to get involved and show allyship locally, and for LGBTQ+ youth, there are some new opportunities to gather with your peers and express yourself safely. Also keep an eye out for the Pride events around our state this summer!

The Harvest Family Success Center has teamed up with Flemington Q-Ts to start hosting Trans and Nonbinary Socials on the first Thursday of each month for individuals 18 and under (Flemington, NJ)

Flemington QTs &
Harvest Family
Success Center

**TRANS &
NONBINARY
SOCIAL**

Thursdays
7-8:30PM

1st
Thursday/month -
Youth Social
(up to 18)

2nd
Thursday/month -
Adult Social (18+)

3rd
Thursday/month -
All Ages Social

5 East Main Street
Flemington, NJ 08822

June 4th –

Jersey Pride 2023 LGBTQ+ Pride Festival (Asbury Park, NJ)
<https://jerseypride.org/>

June 10th –

Out Montclair Pride (Montclair, NJ)
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1364204964417766>

June 11th –

North Jersey Pride Festival (Maplewood, NJ)
<https://www.northjerseypride.org/events22>

June 23rd –

Somerville Family Pride Night (Somerville, NJ)
<https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/about/inclusivity/lgbtq>

June 24th –

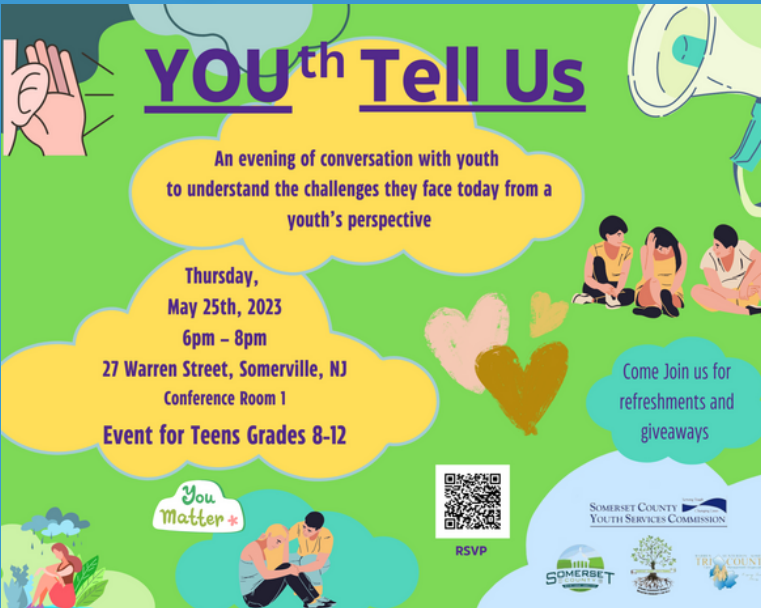
Morris County Pride Festival (Randolph, NJ)
<https://edgenj.org/mcpride>

June 28th –

Day of Pride BBQ (Bridgewater, NJ)
<https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/about/inclusivity/lgbtq>

UPCOMING events

May



YOUth Tell Us

An evening of conversation with youth to understand the challenges they face today from a youth's perspective

Thursday,
May 25th, 2023
6pm – 8pm
27 Warren Street, Somerville, NJ
Conference Room 1
Event for Teens Grades 8-12

Come Join us for refreshments and giveaways

You Matter*

RSVP

SOMERSET COUNTY YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION

WARREN TRI COUNTY

YOU matter



June



WARREN TRI COUNTY HUNTERDON SOMERSET
Care Management Organization
Keeping Families Strong

Family Support Organization
HUNTERDON • SOMERSET • WARREN

JOIN US AT OUR
**FAMILY & COMMUNITY
PICNIC**

FRIDAY, JUNE 23RD, 2023
11 AM TO 4 PM

LOCATION:
FOREST LODGE
11 REINMAN ROAD
WARREN, NJ, 07059

RSVP

TCCMO is excited to announce that the annual family and community picnic will be taking place on Friday, June 23rd at the Forest Lodge. As always, there will be plenty of food, activities, prizes, and hopefully sunshine to go around! Take the day to enjoy yourself and your family in a fun environment while connecting with others in your community.



Tri County CMO Board Members

Leslie Brusser-Board Chair
Don Atkinson-Treasurer
Erin Karl-Secretary
Pam Jacobs
Dan Kerr
Lynne Eaton



Lesley Schwarzman
Melissa Fowler
David Yazujian
Sakina Ladha
Avril Okeke
Daphney Rene

How to Get Referred to Tri County CMO

PerformCare can help a parent or guardian connect their child to Children's System of Care services. PerformCare staff are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide assessment and guidance to families facing challenges to their functioning and well-being.

PerformCare / Contracted Systems Administrator (CSA)

1-877-652-7624

<http://www.performcarenj.org/>

<http://www.performcarenj.org/families/index.aspx> (video guide)

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Scan the code



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