



# Stigma Times

Warren County Stigma Free Newsletter



## WARREN COUNTY'S FIRST STIGMA FREE NEWSLETTER

The Warren County Stigma-Free Communities Initiative is a county-wide program which aims to eradicate the stigma associated with mental illness and substance use disorders. We are dedicated to bringing people together to be stigma-free in order to facilitate inclusive communities and individual healing by bringing awareness, building knowledge and fostering compassion through advocacy.



**WARREN COUNTY  
PROUD TO BE  
STIGMA FREE**

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*First Issue*



# Stigma Free



## WHAT IS STIGMA FREE?

**The stigma free initiative is a grassroots effort in which local advocates, through volunteerism, bring more awareness of the challenges faced by those with mental illness and addiction in getting the help they need, when they need it, and how as a community working together to face those challenges, we can break barriers and be stronger as one.**

## THE BEGINNING

Members of the community formed a committee to bring the Stigma Free Initiative to Warren County after seeing the positive impact these initiatives had on Bergen and Morris Counties.

The Board of Chosen Freeholders (now the Board of County Commissioners) adopted Proclamation 509-18 declaring Warren County Stigma Free at their November 14, 2018 meeting.

## CREATING A STIGMA FREE WARREN COUNTY

Committee members attended their local town council meetings to promote stigma free communities and were present at community events to share what stigma free communities can do. The committee hosted a viewing of The Ripple Effect, the story of Kevin Hines' attempt to die by suicide, followed by a panel discussion of speakers in February 2020; and a virtual conference in August 2020 on Mind/Body wellness. Members have participated in panel discussions on topics of suicide prevention, opioid addiction and mental health awareness, and participated in many more community events over the past four years.

## OUR COMMUNITY

Promoting stigma free communities takes time and careful consideration of the needs of each community involved. We would not be where we are today without the dedication and support of so many members, including NAMI volunteers who have had an integral role in helping us spread the word throughout the county; the Warren County Community College which also adopted a stigma free mission in November 2018 and generously hosted committee meetings and the Ripple Effect event; and the Hackettstown, Phillipsburg, Knowlton, Belvidere, Washington, Greenwich and Alpha Stigma Free task forces which have met independently of the County, collaborated with each other and continue to grow and change over the years.





# Stigma Free

## THE FIRST STIGMA FREE TOWN

**In a Resolution approved by The Hackettstown Town Council on September 27th 2018, Hackettstown became the first Town in Warren County to officially achieve a STIGMA-FREE Status.**

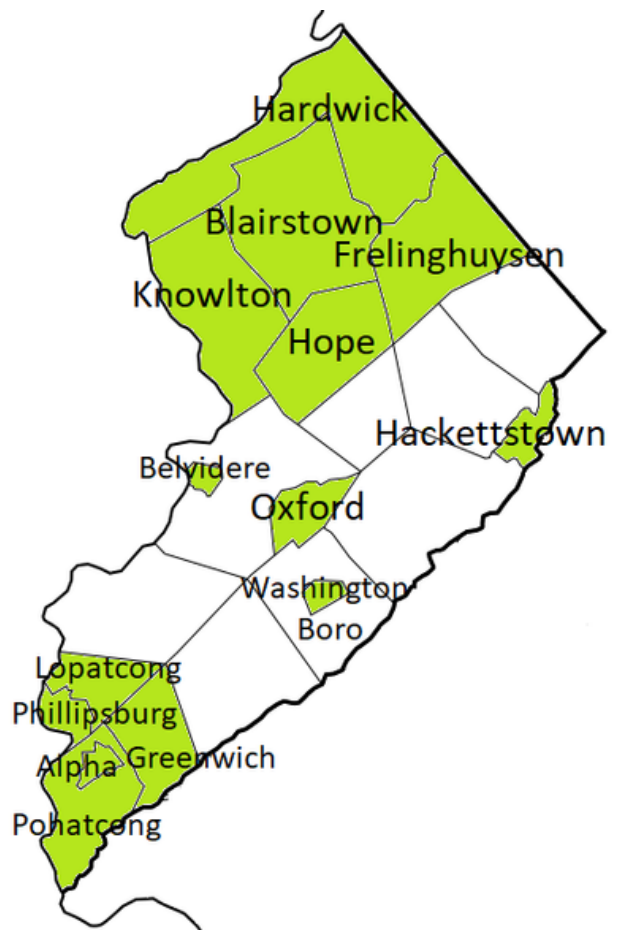
Subsequently a Task Force was created to raise awareness and fight the Stigma attached to Mental Illness, Suicide, Domestic Violence and Substance & Alcohol Addiction and Dependency. To disseminate information by creating Stigma-Free environments and enabling platforms in order to stimulate the start of conversations. To break down barriers so that no member of the community ever feels helpless or alone when dealing with Mental Health, Substance Use, Domestic Violence or thoughts of Suicide. By fostering such environments, this Task Force aims ultimately at bringing our communities to life by raising awareness and encouraging the public in general to participate in promotional initiatives as well as educational programs.



## Stigma Free Towns

14 out of 22 municipalities have declared themselves Stigma Free. Are you a part of the movement?

If you are interested in participating, please call 908-475-6331 for more information







# Spotlight



## BELVIDERE WELLNESS ALLIANCE FOOD PANTRY GARDEN

The Belvidere Wellness Alliance was founded in 2019 with a mission to facilitate and promote awareness and provide education to strengthen community wellness. In 2021, the BWA created its premiere wellness program that is a vegetable garden to provide fresh produce to the Belvidere Food Pantry clients at the Belvidere United Methodist Church. The Food Pantry Garden began with four raised garden boxes designed and built by local volunteers led by Robin and Wes Stokes and was so well received and appreciated that this year's garden has more than doubled in size and will provide an even more robust bounty of fresh and nutritious vegetables to those in need in and around the Belvidere Community.

Additionally, and in keeping in line with its mission to promote awareness and provide education, over the past four years the BWA has presented important "conversations" where the public has been invited to come together to listen, learn and discuss. The timely topics have included: "Opioid Crisis Panel Discussion", "Hope & Resilience: Life After Covid", "Did You Know?" a conversation for Seniors & Caregivers and "Scam Alert!" how to protect yourself from Scams, Schemes & Fraud. These gatherings, hosted by both the Community Center @ Belvidere and the Belvidere United Methodist Church, have been well attended, wonderfully received and supported.

The Belvidere Wellness Alliance is proud of the work for and on behalf of the citizens of Belvidere and the surrounding Communities and the support we have received from the Warren County Department of Human Services, its Mental Health and Addiction Services Office, as well as the Warren County Prosecutors Office and Sheriff's Office. As its mission states, the BWA strives to continue to promote awareness and provide education to strengthen community wellness whenever possible to our friends and neighbors in Warren County, NJ.



*"The Belvidere Food Pantry Garden is a great way to provide home grown vegetables for our Food Pantry clients and Community Luncheon guests. We look forward to expanding the garden even more next year"*

-Nancy Brown, BWA Original Member





# Warren County Services



## THE WARREN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

**The Division of Administration** is responsible for overseeing community-based services in the areas of human and social services, mental health, addiction, juvenile services and paratransit services. Staff work with provider agencies and community volunteers serving on advisory committees to identify gaps and needs for Warren County residents, develop plans and allocate county, state and federal funding through a competitive bid process annually. Every year the Department allocates over \$3 million to a variety of community-based programs serving those Warren County residents most in need.

**The County Adjuster** is given charge and supervision of the preparation of papers relating to the involuntary commitment of persons with mental illness in the county. The Adjuster is responsible for scheduling court hearings and insuring legal representation for anyone committed to a Federal, State, County, Private or Special Psychiatric Hospital. The Adjuster investigates resident status and the resident's ability to pay. Sometimes assigning the payment responsibility to the county when the client is unable to pay.

**The Division on Aging & Disability Services** provides information and assistance to older persons, adults with physical disabilities, caregivers and professionals looking for services or programs. The Division's aim is to assist older adults and their caregivers in maintaining and promoting their wellness in order to live independent, healthy lives with the freedom and dignity they deserve.

**The Division of Temporary Assistance and Social Services (TASS)** is responsible for administrating a variety of programs that provide assistance and social services to County residents. These include programs for housing assistance, child support, WorkFirst NJ, Medicaid, financial assistance for families and single adults, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Applications can be completed online or dropped off at a mailbox located conveniently outside the office door.



**Opportunities to volunteer and join advisory councils are always available!**

**more information on all Warren County Services can be found at [www.warrencountynj.gov](http://www.warrencountynj.gov)**





# Events



## HEALTH AND WELLNESS FIELD DAY MAY 13 2022

Warren County Health & Wellness Field Day Committee held its 3rd Annual event on May 13th at the Warren Hills Regional High School. Through the Bolstering Police-Youth Trust Program grant provided by the NJ Office of the Attorney General, the Committee was able to engage students from all Warren County middle and high schools in this community event that included special guest appearance by Emmy-nominated rapper artist T.O.N.E.-z, a basketball tournament between county youth and local law enforcement, food, transportation, a DJ, photo booth, painting, pottery, archery and many more fun activities provided by local agencies. The goal of the event was to provide a stress-free night for the youth, along with sharing coping skills they can take home with them to use when feeling emotionally overwhelmed. Over 200 youth and community members attended this event for a fun-filled evening!



"Warren County recognizes the impact the pandemic had on the mental health of our children. The Health & Wellness Field Day event was an opportunity for law enforcement to build trust in our relationships with youth. In addition, the event was a collaborative effort between, the county, law enforcement, and private mental health providers to make our community aware of the mental health services that are available. The youth who attended the event had fun participating in or watching the police-youth basketball tournament (which was won by Hackettstown) to trying all the different coping skills. The county, law enforcement and private mental health providers are committed to helping our community address their mental health needs, especially our youth. It was an excellent opportunity for our youth to interact with the police in a positive manner and for the youth throughout the county to come together for fun in a healthy atmosphere!" stated Prosecutor James Pfeiffer.



**"The Health and Wellness Field Day highlighted the importance of making sound decisions and aided in fostering positive alliances between police officers, students within our local high schools, and our local communities. I look forward to future health and wellness events and building upon the success of this past years for reinforcing these integral relationships."**

- Chief Jones  
Washington Township Police Department



# Events



**UPCOMING:**

**DASACC**

domestic abuse & sexual assault crisis center of warren county

**1st Annual**  
Washington Borough

 **PRIDE DAY!**

CELEBRATING  
*Diversity in Families*

**SATURDAY**  
**JUNE 25, 2022**  
**2PM-5PM**

Washington Borough Veteran's Park  
44 E. Washington Avenue  
Washington, NJ

*Join us for a day of  
Vendors, Education,  
Entertainment  
& Family Fun!*

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
[PRIDEINFO@DASACC.ORG](mailto:PRIDEINFO@DASACC.ORG)



**DID YOU KNOW?**

LGBTQ+ youth are at greater risk for depression (28%-40%), suicidal thoughts (42%), and substance use (2x-4x higher)  
-Trevor Project 2019 Study



# Did You Know?

1 in 5 families are affected by mental illness

Mental illness affects 20% of all Americans and is more common than cancer, diabetes, or heart disease.

More than 9 million adults have co-occurring mental illness and addiction disorders.

People experiencing mental health conditions often face rejection, bullying and discrimination. This can make their journey to recovery longer and more difficult.

Mental health conditions are the leading cause of disability across the United States.

Even though most people can be successfully treated, less than half of the adults in the U.S. who need services and treatment get the help they need.

The average delay between the onset of symptoms and intervention is 8-10 years.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death of youth ages 15-24 and the tenth leading cause of death for all Americans.

-National Alliance on Mental Illness

## 988

On July 16, 2022, 988 will become the nationwide 3-digit dialing code for crisis and suicide prevention.

It will replace the 1-800-273-8255 number currently used by the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

This will allow anyone in the U.S. to call 988 and get help designed specifically for someone dealing with a mental health crisis.