



AIRPORT MARINA COUNSELING SERVICE

SEPTEMBER 2023

GOOD VIBRATIONS

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TEEN CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

AMCS, YMCA Partnership Helps Teens Dealing With Suicide Ideation, Stress



Alex, a quiet and introverted teenager, felt lost and overwhelmed by the pressures of daily life as a teenager. Navigating school stress, social media and the daily battle to make and keep friends had been pushing her towards a desperate decision. One day, while visiting the Westchester Family YMCA, a place she had heard about through a friend, little did Alex know that the visit would change her life forever.

At the YMCA, Alex discovered the Teen Connections Program, a therapy group created through a partnership between AMCS and the Y that aims to create a safe and supportive space for teenagers struggling with their mental health. During weeks of participation, Alex slowly opened up to the group. She shared her fears, doubts, and darkest moments. The group listened without judgment, offering empathy and encouragement, and with the guidance of an AMCS therapist, Alex was able to recognize that as daunting and overwhelming as life may seem at times, there's always something beautiful waiting to be discovered if you give it a chance. The Teen Connections Program had given her a lifeline, a support system, and a reason to keep fighting. As Alex continued to attend the program, she found strength in her newfound friendships, and her dark thoughts of suicide were replaced by hope and resilience. She learned to cope with her struggles and to cherish life's small joys.



To learn more about the next Teen Connections group, which begins October 2, please visit the Westchester YMCA or email Jimi-Leetomboc@YMCALA.org

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Eden's Message

Suicidal thoughts, much like many mental health conditions, can affect anyone regardless of age, gender or background. In fact, suicide is often the result of an untreated mental health condition. Suicidal thoughts, although common, should not be considered normal and often indicate more serious issues.

September is Suicide Prevention Month — a time to raise awareness and discuss this highly stigmatized topic – but this is an issue of which we should be aware year-round. It is important to ensure that individuals, friends and families have access to the resources they need to discuss suicide prevention and to seek help. I am always astonished by the statistics surrounding suicide. For example:

- 79% of all people who die by suicide are male
- Although more women than men attempt suicide, men are four times more likely to die by suicide
- Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among people aged 10-14, the third-leading cause of death among those aged 15-24 and the 12th-leading cause of death overall in the United States
- 46% of people who die by suicide had a diagnosed mental health condition — but research suggests that 90% may have experienced symptoms of a mental health condition
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than straight youth (Transgender adults are nearly nine times more likely to attempt suicide)

It is critical that we all learn to recognize the warning signs and lift the stigma about discussing suicide so that we can get help to those in need.

- Increased alcohol and drug use
- Aggressive behavior
- Withdrawal from friends, family and community
- Dramatic mood swings
- Impulsive or reckless behavior
- Collecting and saving pills or buying a weapon
- Giving away possessions
- Tying up loose ends, like organizing personal papers or paying off debts
- Saying goodbye to friends and family

From the Teen Connections Program the clinic runs in partnership with the Westchester Family YMCA and the William H. Hannon Immediate Intervention Program to our LGBTQ+ Affirmative Therapy Center, I am proud of the many ways AMCS is helping to address this critical issue for youth and adults in our community.

Wishing you nothing but Good Vibrations,

Eden



Eden Garcia-Balis, LMFT
*Chief Executive Officer,
Airport Marina Counseling Service*

AMCS MISSION

Airport Marina Counseling Service (AMCS) provides accessible community based mental health services; and provides quality training to therapists.

Meet MFT Trainee Rachael Reiss

FROM PUBLICIST TO PR TO THERAPIST, RACHAEL IS FOLLOWING HER PASSIONS

AMCS associate therapist Rachael Reiss, MFT, hails from Manhattan Beach, where she grew up in a close-knit family of five. Her journey into the mental health field began during her undergraduate studies, but she initially hesitated to pursue it fully. Instead, she spent 18 years working as a publicist in the entertainment business, representing filmmakers, screenwriters, and producers. Rachael, who earned a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of Arizona and a master's degree in clinical psychology from Antioch University, started her own PR company approximately two years ago, where she still works full-time as a publicist and company owner. Interestingly, her dual roles have allowed her to apply skills from both fields, enhancing her proficiency in both public relations and counseling.



Rachael Reiss
Airport Marina Counseling Service
MFT Trainee

"The two jobs actually require a lot of the same skills, and I have become better at both thanks to the training I have had in therapy," she said.

Rachael is a testament to the power of following one's passions, even if it means transitioning from one successful career to another. Her diverse experiences and commitment to helping individuals unlock their potential will serve her well as she moves into private practice next year. Until then, she said she has benefited from the training she has received at AMCS.

"I have had a wonderful experience at AMCS," she said. "My supervisors have been incredibly encouraging in a way that has fostered experiential learning and supported me in finding my own therapeutic style."

Dine Out for A Great Cause at Cantalini's

THE WESTCHESTER MENTAL HEALTH GUILD WILL HOLD A FUNDRAISER AT CANTALINI'S ON OCTOBER 9-10

Dine-in or take out your favorite menu items from Cantalini's Salerno Beach restaurant and know that you are supporting the Westchester Mental Health Guild and AMCS at the same time! Take out or dine-in on Monday and Tuesday, October 9 and 10 from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and from 4 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., and Cantalini's will donate 20% of your order to the Guild.

You must present a printed copy of this coupon in order to benefit The Guild, so please feel free to cut it out and bring it with you. You can also print the coupon directly from the Guild's website: www.westchestermhg.org

**ENJOY Cantalini's Salerno Beach, Playa del Rey
DINING FUNDRAISER**

DINE-IN OR TAKEOUT



CANTALINI'S
SALERNO BEACH

supporting 
Westchester Mental Health Guild

**Monday and Tuesday
October 9 & 10, 2023**
11:30am - 9:30pm

193 Culver Blvd., Playa del Rey 90293
menu: salernobeach.com
310.821.0018

20% will be donated to WMHG
excludes tax and tip

A local landmark for more than 52 years, Cantalini's proudly presents the best in traditional Italian cuisine.



Airport Marina Counseling Service (AMCS)
7891 La Tijera Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA, 90045

Jesse Bernal is Working to Make A Difference

NEW SUPERVISOR DISCUSSES WHY AMCS'S LGBTQ AFFIRMATIVE THERAPY CENTER MATTERS

Jesse Bernal, MA, LMFT, said AMCS's LGBTQ+ Affirmative Therapy Center plays a critical role in not only delivering mental health services to a population that often avoids seeking help but is also training a new generation of clinicians who will ultimately help gay, queer and transgender individuals feel more comfortable addressing their mental health.

“If a clinician is not properly trained to look through this diverse lens, that could be enough for someone not to come back (to therapy),” he said. “It can be as simple as a male client being asked, ‘Do you have a wife or girlfriend?’ by their therapist. This simple act of assuming heterosexuality could be considered a micro-aggression, and it only happens because the clinician is unaware.”

Bernal said he hopes the training clinicians receive at AMCS will ultimately create a safe space for clients to open up and talk about their mental health struggles without having their therapist focus on their gender identity or sexual orientation.

“We obviously have a long way to go,” said Bernal, who actually specializes in infant and childhood mental health. “But the progress we are making makes me really happy. I take huge amounts of pride in being here and supporting the LGBT community.”



Jesse Bernal, MA, LMFT
*Supervisor,
AMCS's Affirmative Therapy Center*