Our Mission is to ensure that the residents of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties have access to high quality services, which promote healthy living and emotional well-being.
DID YOU KNOW… NCSS has served 4,279 clients during the past year. Our staff aims to make a difference in each of these peoples’ lives while embodying the Northwestern Counseling & Support Services, Inc. (NCSS) core values of Safety, Responsiveness, Compassion, and Integrity. As you review this issue of Building Bridges you’ll discover the diverse nature of the services and programs that NCSS offers. You’ll also gain a better understanding of organizations and initiatives where we collaborate to improve outcomes.

NCSS is proud of our role as the designated community mental health agency for Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. Although separate, we work with the state of Vermont to achieve positive outcomes. As a private, non-profit, human services agency, NCSS provides intervention and support to children, adolescents, and adults with emotional and behavioral problems, mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Since 1958, NCSS has continued to evolve as an organization and through our Behavioral Health; Children, Youth & Family; and Developmental Services divisions we strive to provide a full range of high quality services to meet the needs of individuals struggling with emotional and behavioral problems, mental health disorders, or intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout their life cycle.

Over the years as the needs of the community have changed so too have the programs and services that we make available to assist children, adolescents, adults, families and seniors. Vermont’s model of providing community mental health services continues to increase in an effort to treat people before their mental health problems become a crisis. As an example, NCSS has introduced Enhanced Crisis Stabilization Services with a mobile outreach team which includes nursing and liaison to police and probation and parole.

Our collaborative partnership to provide integrated primary care behavioral health services within the Northern Tier Center for Health (NOTCH) locations throughout Franklin and Grand Isle Counties, along with the continued implementation of the Blueprint for Health, through the Community Health Team, offers NCSS the opportunity to more closely align our services into Primary Care Providers (PCP) practices. Currently, we’re in 100% of the Patient Centered Medical Homes (PCPs) throughout the two-county area.

As you browse through the pages of this issue of Building Bridges my hope is that you’ll gain a better understanding of some of the services that NCSS offers, our dedication to community training, how we partner with others to improve outcomes plus, our involvement in local events to raise awareness.

We recognize that there is a social stigma associated with mental illness, and this stigma prevents the majority of people with mental illnesses from seeking help. NCSS prefers to view STIGMA as an acronym for…

**Striving To Increase Good Mental Health Awareness.**

We welcome the opportunity to continue providing high quality services to the residents of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties as we strive to create a stronger community one person at a time. At NCSS, we’re here for you!

Sincerely,

Ted J. Mable, Ed.D.
Executive Director

Ted J. Mable, Ed.D.
Executive Director
Gallagan and McClellan Assume New Directors’ Roles at NCSS

Ted Mable, Ed.D., Executive Director of Northwestern Counseling & Support Services, Inc. announced the appointments of Tim Gallagan as the Director of Finance / CFO and Kim McClellan as the Director of Operations / COO which took effect on April 1, 2016.

Mr. Gallagan comes to NCSS from Children’s Specialized Hospital located in Mountainside, NJ where he served as the Associate Director of Finance for the hospital that provides inpatient rehabilitation, long term care, outpatient therapy, early intervention, and pediatric day care services. Prior to Mr. Gallagan’s tenure at Children’s Specialized Hospital his entire career has been centered in healthcare including behavioral health services.

At NCSS, Mr. Gallagan, as the Director of Finance / CFO, will oversee all financial analysis, budgeting, and accounting functions for the organization for its three service divisions - Behavioral Health; Children, Youth & Families; and Developmental Services plus, Administration.

Mr. Gallagan earned his Master’s Degree in Business Administration specializing in Finance from Seton Hall University which is where he also received his BS, Accounting degree.

Since 2013, Ms. McClellan has served as NCSS’ Director of Quality & Risk Management, where she provided management and oversight to quality improvement processes, risk management assessment and on-going initiatives for the reduction of risk, risk management, national CARF accreditation, and health and safety administration.

Ms. McClellan, as the Director of Operations / COO, will oversee quality & risk management, billing, data management, outcomes, IT, and facilities for the organization.

Ms. McClellan earned her Master’s Degree in Business Administration focusing on Sustainability and Leadership from Green Mountain College, which has helped to continue the success of NCSS’ Outcomes and Results Based Accountability. Prior to her master’s degree she earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology from Johnson State College.
Depression: Widespread, Complex, Treatable


This is the fourth in a series of articles that addresses the value of outpatient therapy in the treatment of a mental illness diagnosis. In this installment we’ll look at depression and how widespread, complex, and treatable the disorder is today.

Depression is Widespread

If you’re feeling depressed, you’re not alone. In the U.S. in any given year, 1 in 15 people will experience a major depressive episode. The chance of being depressed is somewhat higher for women, people ages 18-29, whites in general, and Native Americans/Alaskan Natives at a rate of 1 in 12-14 people. Biracial or multiracial people have the highest chance of being depressed at 1 in 9 in any given year. It is also believed that people in the LGBTQ community have higher rates of depression, although estimates are not easily found.

Race, gender and age are just part of the story. Many factors can contribute to depression, including living in poverty, heavy use of drugs or alcohol, and an overabundance of life stress. It is common for individuals to experience depression following the loss of a loved one. Losses or other big events, even ones that are positive overall, can trigger an episode of depression. Some medical conditions are associated with depression (endocrine disorders, brain injuries, acute and chronic infections, recent heart attack, and migraine headaches). Interestingly enough, depression can be an early sign of some serious medical conditions.

Depression is Complex

Depression can impact the way you feel, think, behave, and your physical well-being. You may have seen articles about depression in print or online. They list the symptoms of depression as having a low mood that doesn’t go away in a few weeks, being tired a lot and either not sleeping well or oversleeping, having little interest in doing fun things you have enjoyed before, trouble concentrating, irritability, feelings of guilt or worthlessness, change in appetite and suicidality. A person does not have to have all of these symptoms to be considered depressed, just most of them.

Beyond the standard collection of symptoms, the picture is often more complex. Depression can take on more subtle characteristics. When you are depressed you may feel overwhelmed by a list of everyday tasks and spend the whole day in bed instead, or withdraw from spending time with family and friends. Some think of depression as a big dark cloud hanging overhead or like you’re in a deep hole you don’t believe you’ll ever climb out of. The former talk show host Dick Cavett, who has suffered from depression, has said in interviews that if there were a magic wand eight feet away to cure someone’s depression, they may feel so awful that they could not travel the eight feet to use the magic wand.

Yes, even famous people get depressed. Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill suffered from it and called it “the black dog.” Writings of Abraham Lincoln point to many signs of depression. Other famous figures who have shared their stories of depression include Uma Thurman, Sheryl Crow, Princess Diana, Charles Shultz, Billy Joel, and Bruce Springsteen.

What makes the black dog appear in someone’s life? Like many illnesses, experts generally agree that the cause is a combination of biological, social and psychological factors. Some believe that a main cause is abnormalities in certain neurotransmitters, an essential part of the brain’s chemical message system, which is why
there has been such a big effort to develop antidepressant medications. Genetics may play a role since depression is sometimes found in multiple places on a family tree. It is generally believed that biological and genetic factors can make someone more prone to developing depression, and life circumstances can then bring it about.

Depression does not exist in just one form. Most people whose symptoms are severe enough to have a diagnosis are said to have Major Depressive Disorder, but experiences with depression may look different. Someone who has a chronic low mood for two years or more may have Persistent Depressive Disorder, which used to be known as Dysphoric Disorder. Some types of depression are very specific, such as in Postpartum Depression. Estimates for how many women get Postpartum Depression vary from 1 in 4 to 1 in 20. New fathers can get Postpartum Depression too! Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder is like Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) but worse and can be disruptive in the life of a woman. This happens to between 3% and 8% of women of reproductive age. If a person has both very low and overly high moods they may have Bipolar Disorder. This disorder (Bipolar Disorder) is often misdiagnosed so it is important to get an evaluation to understand what you are dealing with. Use of alcohol and other drugs can intensify or cause the experience of depression. In fact, depression often co-occurs with substance use and anxiety disorders.

Then there’s SAD, Seasonal Affective Disorder, which strikes people in most northern regions at an estimated rate of up to almost 1 in 10. Residents of even southern states can get it, but less often, and some people get it in summer and may feel agitated rather than depressed. SAD used to be considered a diagnosis of its own, but is now classified as a special type of Major Depressive Disorder.

Some children and teens get depressed as well. Irritability is a more common symptom identified among children. A more recently added type of disorder that is related to depression is called Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder (DMDD). A child or adolescent with DMDD would show extreme and frequent outbursts of anger and persistent irritability.

With all its complexities and pervasive reach into a person’s life, it is not surprising that the effects of depression can be devastating. On a personal level, it can be very difficult to work or even stay employed, take care of one’s health, and manage daily tasks and stresses. People who are depressed can be more apt to miss deadlines and appointments, become addicted to drugs or alcohol, and attempt or die by suicide. Depression can negatively affect how someone relates to their partner and cares for their children. Children and teens can lose friends and get poorer grades. Feelings of wanting to die to get away from the pain of major depression and having thoughts of suicide can be a symptom of depression and is a good reason to seek help.

It is important to know you are not alone and that others want to be there for you through this difficult time.

**Depression is Treatable**

It can be easy to forget but helpful to remember that this dark cloud is not you. While some people may be prone to depression or experience more than one episode in their life, it is not a set part of one’s personality, although it may feel that way to someone in the depths of a bout. Although some depressions subside on their own, one cannot just “snap out of it.” Depression is not due to a failure of will power or weak moral character. It takes time but depression can be overcome.

Some people don’t recognize that they’re depressed, especially if symptoms creep up slowly. If those close to you are telling you you’re not yourself, that you seem very down, it may be time to start asking questions. If you’re depressed or wonder if you’re depressed, a doctor or other provider in a doctor’s practice can be very helpful in screening for depression. They can also help to rule out other medical conditions that may be contributing to or masquerading as depression. It’s okay to speak up and they are there to help point you in the right direction.

Primary treatment methods are psychotherapy and medication. Your doctor may prescribe a medication and/or refer you for therapy. Research shows that just medication alone is not as effective as seeing a therapist while taking medication. Many people find that psychotherapy works well by itself. Best practice is to try psychotherapy initially, especially for mild to moderate depression, and then consider medication if symptoms are not improving or are interfering with sleep, appetite and other necessary daily functions.

Ultimately many choices you make will help you recover from depression. Even before therapy begins, or while waiting for medication to start to work, you can take other steps on your own. Exercise can really help depression for many. Start by getting input from your doctor or other health care provider. It doesn’t have to cost much or even anything! Besides walking, resources for movement can be found on the internet, even for people with mobility issues. Even moving 10 to 20 minutes a day can help chase away a low mood. Spending time with friends and family, having a routine and getting yourself to plan activities to look forward to, and trying to get a normal amount of sleep (at night) may help.

However you choose to treat your depression, things take time and the first steps can be the hardest, but help is out there! If you or someone you know is experiencing symptoms you think might be depression, you can call NCSS for an appointment. If you need to see someone right away, you can ask to speak with our crisis service which is available any time you need them. Our main number is 524-6554.

*The next installment in this series will focus on anxiety disorders.*

Robin Galbraith is a member of the NCSS Freelance Writer’s Group exploring programs and services offered by one of the NCSS direct services divisions to the residents of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties.
NCSS 2015 Annual Meeting & Recognition Night

The NCSS 2015 Annual Meeting & Recognition Night was held on November 4, 2015 at the St. Albans American Legion. The theme of the evening was Prevention • Wellness • Integration. Attendees were treated to the music of CHAMELEON from arrival throughout dinner. Over 180 attendees also enjoyed an evening of good food, camaraderie and information sharing, plus the recognition of community and staff members who have made extraordinary contributions in the lives of Franklin and Grand Isle County residents.

The evening included the election of new board member Carl Rosenquist. Officers that were reappointed for another year include Jesse Bugbee, President; Jim McMillan, Vice President; Dan Thompson, Treasurer; Jeff Moreau, Secretary; and Sandy Robinson, Member at Large.

Sara Kittell was recognized for six years of service to the board. Jesse Bugbee, Betty Charron, David Hutchinson, and David MacCallum were recognized for completing their three year terms while being reconfirmed for an additional three year term.

Executive Director, Ted Mable, presented the 2015 Annual Report to the Community and presided over the awards ceremony. The 2015 award recipients were Warren and Barbara Hamm, Lifetime Achievement Award; Gary and Lisa Tatro of Tatro’s Gourmet Soup & Sandwich, Marcheta Townsend Community Partner Award; and, Lance Metayer, Partner in Excellence Award.

### Lifetime Achievement Award
Honoring individuals from within the community who have made significant contributions to advance mental health or developmental disability services in Vermont.

**Warren & Barbara Hamm**

### Marcheta Townsend Community Partner Award
Honoring individuals from outside the organization who collaborate with NCSS to ensure success.

**Gary & Lisa Tatro**
*Tatro’s Gourmet Soup & Sandwich*

### Partner in Excellence Award
This award is intended to be the highest honor the organization can give to one of its employees, for it recognizes those staff who are in the top 1% in the organization. These employees exemplify the NCSS values of Safety, Responsiveness, Compassion and Integrity. In addition, they have made a major contribution to a client, to the organization or to the community at large.

**Lance Metayer**
*School-Based Clinician & YMHFA Training Specialist*
*Children, Youth & Family Services*
Dr. Ted J. Mable, NCSS Executive Director

NCSS Executive Director, Dr. Ted Mable, answers questions about mental health conditions. The importance of addressing mental health concerns is no different than seeking medical assistance for physical ailments. The quality of life improves when there’s a balance of physical and mental health.

What can I do if I feel someone may be at risk for suicide?

If you suspect someone may be a risk for suicide, it is important to ask directly about suicidal thoughts. Do not avoid using the word “suicide.” It is important to ask the question without dread and without expressing negative judgment. The question must be direct and to the point. For example, you could ask:

- Are you having thoughts of suicide?
- Are you thinking about killing yourself?

If you appear confident in the face of a suicide crisis, this can be reassuring for the suicidal person.

Although some people think talking about suicide can plant the idea in the person’s mind, this is not true. Another myth is that someone who talks about suicide isn’t really serious. Remember that talking about suicide may be a way to indicate just how badly the person is feeling.

What is bipolar disorder?

People with bipolar disorder (previously called manic depressive disorder) have extreme mood swings. They can experience periods of depression, periods of mania, and long periods of normal mood in between. The time between these different episodes varies greatly from person to person. Approximately 2.6 percent of U.S. adults experience bipolar disorder. The median age of onset is 25 years old, which means that half the people with bipolar disorder will have had their first episode by this age. Bipolar disorder is equally common in males and females.

What is the difference between a panic attack and a panic disorder?

It is important to distinguish between a panic attack and a panic disorder. A panic attack is a sudden onset of intense apprehension, fear, or terror. These attacks begin suddenly and develop rapidly. Other symptoms, any of which can appear similar to a heart attack, can include racing heart, sweating, shortness of breath, chest pain, dizziness, feeling detached from oneself, and fears of losing control.

Having a panic attack does not necessarily mean that a person will develop a panic disorder. A person with a panic disorder experiences recurring panic attacks and, for a least 1 month, is persistently worried about possible future panic attacks and possible consequences of panic attacks, such as losing control or having a heart attack.

For more information NCSS offers Mental Health First Aid Training to the community. Visit www.ncssinc.org where the schedule will be listed under Upcoming Events on the homepage.

If you have a question that you’d like answered send to NCSS, Ask Dr. Ted / Community Relations, 107 Fisher Pond Road, St. Albans, VT 05478 or email jhalbo@ncssinc.org.

Have you lost a loved one to suicide?

If you answered “yes,” please consider attending a free, confidential group that meets monthly in St. Albans. Everyone in the group, including its facilitators, have had someone close to them take their life and knows how devastating that experience can be. You can come and listen to others share what they are going through and how they are coping, or you can share your own story. The choice is always yours to do what feels right for you.

For information on dates, times and location, or to answer any questions you may have

Call Tony at 802-393-6503

did you know?

- Our mission is to ensure that the residents of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties have access to high quality services, which promote healthy living and emotional well-being.
- In the past year NCSS served 4,279 people in our offices, in local schools, in the community, in their homes, and in their places of work.
- NCSS focuses on Prevention, Wellness, and Integration through our three service divisions: Behavioral Health... Children, Youth, and Families... and Developmental Services.
- NCSS has been recognized with five consecutive three-year accreditations from CARF, the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.
Dr. Steve Broer went to Montpelier in September to discuss the 2015 Vermont Suicide Prevention Platform and NCSS’ involvement as one of the participating sites in the Zero Suicide initiative.

MONTPELIER, VT - In Health Matters, creating a zero-suicide environment, that’s the message of the 2015 Vermont Suicide Prevention Platform.

Health care providers and suicide prevention advocates met in Montpelier to discuss ways to improve public awareness, develop new treatment strategies, and reduce access to lethal means among people at risk of suicide.

In Vermont, the number of suicide deaths a year is higher than both motor-vehicle accidents and homicides. Franklin County alone saw five deaths by suicide this summer. “We know that within a five to six week period that there were five deaths by suicide in our region alone, best we can tell. Most of those individuals we didn’t even know who they were. That’s why the prevention platform is so important, for the community to be aware of how do you know when somebody is in trouble,” said Dr. Steve Broer, Director of Behavioral Health Services.

Suicide prevention advocates say one of the biggest steps that needs to be taken is to eliminate the stigma that comes with suicide. It can make it hard for people struggling to seek help.

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September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

Did you know that suicide is the THIRD leading cause of death among young people. Join us during September to learn more about Suicide Prevention and Awareness...
10th Annual “Community Partners Classic” Golf Tournament

This year’s tournament took place on Friday, June 17, 2016 at the Champlain Country Club. Fifty teams of golfers participated between the morning and afternoon tee times. Golfers were greeted with full sun and temperatures ranging from the high 70s to low 80 degrees. This event is meant to be a fun day of camaraderie for a good cause and golfers of all skill levels participate. All indications are that the participants had a great time and enjoyed their time on the course, the spectacular lunch, contests, and Wine Grab.

The winning teams for each of the two flights were the Enosburg Falls Country Club, with a score of 59 in the morning, and RPM Logos, with a score of 61 in the afternoon. To commemorate their achievement a plaque hangs in the clubhouse listing the winning teams, their score, and the team members.

Besides NCSS the other community partners that benefit from this charity tournament are Northwestern Medical Center and the United Way of Northwest Vermont.

A special thanks to the major sponsors who ensured that this event was a success:

• Supporting Sponsors – Peoples Trust Company, NFP, and Deringer
• Luncheon Sponsor – Bernstein Global Wealth Management
• Cart Sponsors – Morris Switzer and PC Construction
• Contest & Team Prize Sponsors – Laisius Marketing and The Richards Group
• Breakfast & Light Fare Sponsors – Connor Contracting, Inc. and The Tyler Place Family Resort
• Snack Station Sponsor – FairPoint Communications

Mark your calendars… next year’s tournament will be held on Friday, June 16, 2017.

2nd Annual Baby Expo: No Crying Matter

The NCSS Parent Child Center organized the Baby Expo! that took place on May 6th in the Bliss Auditorium at the St. Albans Historical Society Museum. The event was also sponsored by FGI Building Bright Futures.

The event provided parents and caregivers the opportunity to learn about the extensive network of children’s services including child health, child care, parenting, and community programs that are available locally.

Besides NCSS and Building Bright Futures, workshops were offered throughout the day by community partners including the Vermont Department of Health, Northwestern Medical Center, and Let’s Grow Kids. Attendees also received free giveaways and resources.
GRAND ROUNDS Training
Monthly series addresses a wide-range of topics
NCSS welcomes community members to join staff for in-depth discussions on a wide-range of human services topics taught by professionals. Topics include the areas of behavioral health, children, youth and families plus, developmental services. These one hour brown bag seminars are usually held from 12:00-1:00pm at Northwestern Counseling & Support Services. This is a great opportunity to learn more about specific subjects and many of the services that are available through NCSS and our community partners.

To learn more about the topics, dates, and location refer to the calendar of events in the St. Albans Messenger, County Courier, and The Islander or log onto our website www.ncssinc.org. To register for a Grand Rounds presentation, call 393-6406 or email Meredith.Vaughn@ncssinc.org

Mental Health First Aid
Community training scheduled for Fall 2016
Do you realize that you’re more likely to encounter a person in an emotional or mental crisis than someone having a heart attack? Mental health disorders are more common than heart disease and cancer combined.

What if a program were introduced that could prevent a major disruption to a person’s work and family life or the need to be hospitalized?
What if individuals that encounter depression and anxiety disorders could be helped sooner rather than suffering for long periods without treatment? The number of lost days at work and the economic burden would be significantly reduced. Nationwide, untreated mental health disorders cost $79 billion in lost productivity every year.

Some additional facts to consider... over 1 in 5 people in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties presently seeks help for mental health services... suicide rates are rising... growing prescription drug abuse problem related to a range of concerns... domestic violence rates in Vermont are at an all-time high... all of these and more have resulted in demand for support being greater than the resources to meet the needs.

The training modules for Fall 2016 include:

| Oct. 4 | Introduction and Overview |
| Oct. 11 | Depression |
| Oct. 18 | Anxiety Disorders |
| Oct. 25 | Psychosis |
| Nov. 1 | Substance Use Disorders |
| Nov. 8 | Children’s Disorders |

All training sessions are on Tuesdays from 5:30 – 8:00pm

Introduction and Overview to Mental Health First Aid
October 4, 2016
Have you ever thought of becoming a Mental Health First Aider? Come learn about how this program will change the way you look at individuals who are dealing with mental health struggles such as, depression and anxiety disorders.

Depression
October 11, 2016
The word depression is used in many different ways. We all may have a short-term depressed mood, but we cope and soon recover without treatment. But a major depressive disorder lasts for at least two weeks and affects a person’s ability to work, to carry out usual daily activities, and to have satisfying personal relationships.

Anxiety Disorders
October 18, 2016
Everyone experiences anxiety at some time – anxiety can be quite useful in helping a person to avoid dangerous situations and motivate the solving of everyday problems. Anxiety can vary in severity from mild uneasiness to a terrifying panic attack. You’ll learn the different types and how an anxiety disorder differs from normal anxiety.
Belinda Bessette was one of the ten presenters that trained the 112 MVU staff.

Mental health problems in youth are common. In fact, half of all mental health disorders show first signs before a person turns fourteen years old, and three quarters of mental health disorders begin before age twenty-four. Unfortunately, less than 20% of children and adolescents with diagnosable mental health problems receive the treatment they need.

Since January 2015 NCSS has been presenting ongoing Youth Mental Health First Aid trainings to educators, nurses, law enforcement, foster parents, faith communities, and to community members. The greatest achievement was training the entire MVU staff as reported by Jennifer Costa, WCAX – Channel 3 News.

Psychosis
October 25, 2016

Psychosis is a general term used to describe a mental health problem in which a person has lost some contact with reality, resulting in severe disturbances in thinking, emotion, and behavior. Psychosis can severely disrupt a person’s relationships, work, and usual activities. Although less common than other mental disorders there are numerous disorders in which a person can experience psychosis.

Substance Use Disorders
November 1, 2016

Different substances affect the brain in different ways. People use substances because of these effects, which include increasing feelings of pleasure or decreasing feelings of distress. Substance use disorders include abuse of alcohol or other drugs which leads to work, school, home, health, or legal problems or dependence on alcohol or other drugs.

Children’s Disorders
November 8, 2016

Childhood is a time of rapid changes of physical and emotional development. This can also be a very stressful time while building relationships, self-esteem and a sense of identity. Learn the signs to look for in children who struggle with emotional, behavioral or mental health challenges.

Program Charge: $100 for series, $50 for Franklin and Grand Isle County residents, of 6 MHFA modules. Includes the cost of materials.

Certification: Participants will receive certificates as Mental Health First Aiders.

Program Size: Limited to 20

Pre-registration Required: For more information about the program contact Meredith Vaughn at 393-6406 or Meredith.Vaughn@ncssinc.org

Location: NCSS Main Office, 107 Fisher Pond Road, Main Conference Room

did you know?

- Psychiatry: Of the 4,279 individuals served by NCSS last year, only 19% received medication from one of our Psychiatrists or Nurse Practitioner. While medication can be very effective for certain mental health conditions, most individuals do not require medication as part of their treatment plan.

- Access: 50% of programs in NCSS’ Behavioral Health Division (Crisis, Outpatient, Integrated Health, Nursing & Psychiatry, Community Rehabilitation & Treatment) are accessible to the persons we serve 24 hours a day / 7 days a week. An additional 25% are accessible beyond traditional working hours.

- Employment of Persons with a Severe & Persistent Mental Illness: 40% of individuals served in the Community Rehabilitation & Treatment employment program and have obtained competitive employment. The employment program also has the 2nd highest access rate (getting persons into services quickly) in the state of Vermont.
On a sun drenched day the third annual Autism Walk of Northwestern Vermont, organized by Northwestern Counseling & Support Services, was held on Sunday, May 15, 2016 at the Collins Perley Sports & Fitness Center in St. Albans.

Over 200 participants including, children, young adults and adults diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), family members, friends, healthcare professionals, and members of the community walked to raise awareness of ASD.

The walk promotes the rights of individuals with autism and encourages respect for their differences. Today, 1 in 88 children and 1 in 54 boys, are diagnosed with ASD, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Autism is the fastest growing serious developmental disability in the U.S.

In addition to the walk participants enjoyed face painting, sensory toys station, bowling station, music, food, and beverages.

WPTZ, Channel 5, was on hand and included a short segment on the nightly news, including an interview with Todd Bauman, Director of Children, Youth & Family Services.
Autism Resources for Parents

NCSS provides support where you need it. Given the sharp increase in autism spectrum disorders and increased need in the community, NCSS has created wrap around services to accommodate the entire spectrum.

Early Intervention Services (Birth - 3 Years Old)
This program brings together families and service providers from many aspects of the community, including public and private agencies, parent child centers, local school districts, and private providers. Supports and services come together to meet each child’s unique needs and the needs of their family in their home and community.

School Based Services (3 - 21 Years Old)
Training and support services will be provided in all settings, as determined by each child’s team.

Family Support Program (Lifetime)
The Family Support Program provides support in the home and community for families raising children with ASD.

Program for Adaptive & Expressive Arts (Lifetime)
Communication, physical, social and emotional skills building program.

For more information about the services above, please call 802-524-6554

Online Resources
www.AutismSpeaks.org
www.vermontfamilynetwork.org Vermont Family Network.

Childcare a Challenge: More Children Than Spaces

ST. ALBANS — Childcare specialists recommend starting to look for a suitable childcare provider as early as possible, claiming it to be the biggest stressor in the lives of soon-to-be parents.

Finding care for a child with special needs can also be a challenge, according to a local parent whose son has been with 15 providers in five years.

“Honestly, when you know you’re pregnant, you should start looking for child care,” Danielle Lindley, the program manager for Northwestern Counseling & Support Services’ (NCSS) Family Center, said.

The study “Stalled at the Start: Vermont’s Child Care Challenge,” published in June, analyzes the supply and demand for regulated infant and toddler care in Vermont. It was put out by Let’s Grow Kids, a public awareness campaign focused on the importance high-quality, affordable child care can play in a child’s first five years.

The study shows that almost half of Vermont infants and toddlers likely to need care do not have access to regulated early care and learning programs. On top of that, 79 percent of infants and toddlers likely to need care do not have access to high-quality programs.

When it comes to childcare licensing and registration requirements, infants are children ages six weeks to 23 months old. Toddlers are children ages two to three years old.

The study also looked at access to regulated and high-quality programs at the county level.

In Franklin County, there are 785 infants and 425 toddlers likely to need childcare, according to the study. Ninety-eight percent of the infants don’t have access to high-quality programs, while 65 percent don’t have access to any regulated programs.

“There’s not enough infant openings,” Michelle Trayah, NCSS childcare resource development specialist for NCSS, said.

“The biggest thing that we’re finding a low amount of is there’s not enough infant openings,” Michelle Trayah, the childcare resource development specialist for NCSS, said. “Infants are really hard to place right now, and that’s across the board, across all of the towns.”

Segment from 7/19/16 issue of the St. Albans Messenger and written by Elaine Ezerins

The full article is available on the St. Albans Messenger website, samessenger.com

A publication of NCSS
Children's Crisis Services Now Travel to Schools

ST. ALBANS — Children in crisis now have the option to have their needs met in a school setting, instead of being transported to Northwestern Counseling & Support Services.

The children’s mobile crisis response team at NMC works with schools to deliver care and services to kids in the community.

Two crisis clinicians are available Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. to visit children in schools, assess and understand the crisis and de-escalate the situation for the child in an appropriate manner.

“Two years ago, we agreed to become a pilot site for what is called Integrated Family Services,” Samantha Thomas, the Children’s Initial Response Team Leader, said. “With IFS, we’ve just been able to be more creative with how we respond to what our community needs.”

This meant expanding the capacity of their services to meet children in school.

“I think what is a crisis is really defined by the person who’s experiencing the crisis,” Thomas said. “Sometimes schools will call us and say they have a youth that is thinking about ending their life. That’s very much a crisis.”

“But we also might have a school calling and letting us know about a youth who is escalated and might be behaviorally unsafe,” she continued, “who might be acting out, who might be physically unsafe with themselves.”

“We know that behavior is communication,” Thomas said. “So when we have our crisis staff down there, they are able to offer another lens to look at -- OK, what is this kid really struggling with right now? What are they telling us through their actions and how can we be supportive to the school in future events?”

Thomas said that schools are also learning how trauma affects children and manifests in their behavior.

“At IFS, we’re really trying to understand that if we intervene earlier, and intervene in a more impactful way, then we will create better outcomes and maybe reduce the amount of clinical need that children come to us with,” Bethany Bessette, Clinical Services Program Manager for the children’s division, said.

“I think a lot of that comes with education and supporting the adults in the community to deal with some of the pieces that they’re already seeing,” Bessette said.

“When you’re supporting kids, you’re always supporting the adults around them that are impacting their life,” Thomas said. “Think that’s one of our secondary gains, if you will, from our crisis staff going into the schools. School staff is seeing our crisis clinicians really work and kind of gaining some skills themselves.”

With the schools working together with the clinicians and providing feedback, the mobile crisis team is able to address what is working and the areas they could improve on.

Segment from the 2/19/16 issue of the St. Albans Messenger and written by Elaine Ezerins.

The full article at samessenger.com

NCSS Here for You Episodes on the NCSS YouTube Channel

Learn more about NCSS programs and services at your convenience... 24 hours a day

We are currently utilizing YouTube as a means to post and distribute video content from the NCSS Here for You television show that airs on both Northwest Access TV – Channel 15 and LCATV - Channel 15. This allows us to provide viewers a well rounded and more in-depth understanding of the diverse programs and services provided by NCSS at their convenience.

At the annual Northwest Access TV Producer’s Awards Ceremonies NCSS Here for You has received the following awards:

2016  100th Original Episode Award
2014  People’s Choice Award
2013  Best Non-Profit Show

BREAKING NEWS: The Northwest Access TV viewing area will be expanding this fall to include Bakersfield, Berkshire, Enosburg, Fairfield, Montgomery and Richford. With the addition of the eastern portion of the county along with the areas already being served: St. Albans City, St. Albans Town, Swanton, Sheldon, and Highgate... this makes Northwest Access TV Franklin County’s Media Center.
The 2016 Buddy Walk® of Northwestern Vermont will be held on Sunday, October 2, 2016 at the Collins Perley Sports & Fitness Center. The Buddy Walk® was developed by the National Down Syndrome Society in 1995 to celebrate Down Syndrome Awareness Month during October and to promote acceptance and inclusion of people with Down syndrome.

Anyone can participate in the Buddy Walk®. Participants include children, young adults and adults with Down syndrome, family members and friends.

Besides the walk this year’s event will include a bouncy house, sensory toy station, face painting, music, a raffle drawing for numerous prizes, and food and beverages.

A special thanks to our event sponsor Kittell Branagan & Sargent. This is the 8th annual Buddy Walk® organized by Northwestern Counseling & Support Services. The Buddy Walk® has grown from 17 walks in 1995 to nearly 300 walks this year.

NCSS staff collaborates to provide services throughout the community:

- Integrated health team providing support in 100% of Patient Centered Medical Homes (Primary Care Physician Offices) in Franklin and Grand Isle counties.
- Clinician located in Emergency Department at NMC by working with NCSS and other community partners NMC reported over 15% avoidable Emergency Department visits in 2015.
- Providing behavioral health services in Northern Tier Center for Health (NOTCH) locations throughout Franklin and Grand Isle counties.
- Partnerships with 84% of schools which include services such as: therapy, consultation, substance abuse treatment, behavioral supports, specialized services for children diagnosed with autism.
- Mobile Outreach Team works closely with law enforcement and other community partners to prevent unnecessary arrests and hospitalizations.

Candidates for Governor Square off on Community Health Issues

BURLINGTON — Vermont’s five leading candidates for governor agreed that community mental health organizations and home health agencies are good for the state and should be fully funded.

They overwhelmingly agreed that the state has not achieved parity between mental health and physical health, and they largely agreed that Vermont is relying too much on incarceration for people with mental health and substance abuse issues.

The Gubernatorial Forum: Community Health and Support Services was broadcast and streamed LIVE by Vermont PBS
Family programs aren’t limited to winter alone. This Missiquoi Wildlife Refuge Scavenger Hunt was arranged by the Parent Child Center at Northwestern Counseling & Support Services in July of 2014 and is representative of the Family Center’s efforts on behalf of families.

ST. ALBANS – Community members are invited to join in on the Winter Family Fun Challenge sponsored by the Family Center at Northwestern Counseling & Support Services and other events next month as well.

Every week since Jan. 4, three activities have been and will continue to be posted on the Family Center and Department of Health St. Albans Facebook pages.

Families that complete at least one of the activities per week can be entered to win weekly prizes including winter sporting gear and play accessories, passes and outwear.

The contest aside, however, the events are geared toward creating closer families and community and fun opportunities to battle cabin fever.

For example, the three activities for this week are: get cozy on the sofa and read three books as a family, find three animals friends outside like a squirrel or a bird and go on a hunt for the largest icicle.

To take part in the challenge, families post a photo to Facebook capturing their participation or email the photo to Margaret.Maley@ncssinc.org.

The Winter Family Fun Challenge is just one of the events the Family Center will sponsor for the winter season.

There will be birdhouse painting on Feb. 22, a field trip to ECHO on Feb. 24 and sledding at Hard’ack on Feb. 27.

Families can register by emailing Margaret Maley.

The Family Center is one of 15 parent child centers in the state.

“We cover Franklin and Grand Isle counties,” Heather Wilson, an Early Childhood Support Team leader, said. “So we cover northwestern Vermont.”

There are eight core components that each parent child center offers including home visiting, parent education and support, early childhood services, play groups, and referrals to local resources.

“One of the biggest challenges of living in a small rural community is finding families to connect with,” said one of the participants of the Parent Child Center. “The Alburgh playgroup has been a welcoming space to meet new friends and enjoy each other’s company. We have established wonderful friendships here that will continue in the future.”

“We try and promote that parent/child services is the answer,” Wilson said. “That anyone can call us and throw anything at us and we will help find them the place that they need to be, help find them the resource.”

If parents or caregivers have questions about formula, breast-feeding, car seats, diapers, counseling, child development, or pregnancy, the Parent Child Center will help them find an answer.

“They can really ask for anything,” Wilson said. “We try to be a hub for the community so we can guide them.”

If the Parent Child Center isn’t the best person to answer the question, they will refer the caregiver or parent to another agency. “We don’t provide everything ourselves, we rely a lot on our partnerships with other agencies,” Wilson said.

Children’s integrated services are designed to help an assortment of people: children from birth to six years old, pregnant and postpartum mothers, early care and education providers, and anyone raising a child.

Segment from the St. Albans Messenger and written by Elaine Ezerins.
SWANTON — Tanya White said her son has had anger issues since the age of 3. For a long time, she added, he had episodes on a daily basis.

“Furniture being thrown, anything he could get his hands on. Windows got smashed,” White said Thursday. Due to a cognitive delay, she added, “He was unable to communicate his frustrations as a young child.”

When James reached his teen years, White said she and her husband, Scott, sought help at the Howard Center. They lived in Chittenden County until, a year and seven months ago, when the family moved to Swanton and began working with Northwestern Counseling & Support Services.

Now, James has a case worker that meets with him and his family and takes him into the community, people to help him in school, aid with setting up a bank account, finding housing and getting a job, visits to SpectrumYouth and Family Services in Burlington, and one-on-one counseling.

James’ family occasionally uses respite care, too, and they’ve received help with the difficult behaviors their son may display.

“Whatever James needs, I call NCSS and if it’s available, if it exists and they have access to it, it’s available to James,” said White.

ST. ALBANS — Following the nationwide trend, Northwestern Counseling & Support Services (NCSS) has partnered with the St. Albans Police Department (SAPD) to pilot a program where a mental health clinician works alongside law enforcement out in the field.

After the closure of the Vermont State Hospital in Waterbury, NCSS received additional funding from Act 79 and part of it went into building a mobile crisis team, including a position designated solely to working with the police.

“We didn’t know what it would look like at the time,” Tony Stevens, the crisis team leader, said. “It was all conceptual.”

Josh Cate, was hired in 2014 for the position of law enforcement clinician, but didn’t start going out into the field until last October.

“I worked in human services for close to 19 years,” Cate said. “I’ve had a lot of experience dealing with folks whether it’s emotional behavioral issues [or] mental health issues [in] both adults and children.”

Cate said his ability to assess a situation and be willing to be on the scene, even if chaotic, lent itself to this job. Having a level of rapport with officers and knowing when to not step on toes, also came in handy, he said.

“I think Josh is great at building relationships,” Stevens said. “To walk into someone else’s shop and come into their own culture and be the new guy, I think he’s done a great job.”
NCSS’s Family Center and Building Bright Futures hosted the kids and family activities in the big gym at City School during Healthy Hearts. Children could try out yoga, Zumba, play with parachutes and ride-on toys, hula hoops or take a bounce in the bounce house.

The Fourth Annual Healthy Hearts, an activity focused health fair, drew more than 550 attendees, about 250 more than last year. Held at St. Albans City School, the event provided free health screenings, playtime activities, informational booths, interactive demonstrations and massage. Overall the event focused on cardiovascular health, which is a serious problem locally. To that end, families enjoyed healthy snacks, too.

A Healthy Hearts on the move health fair was held on March 5th at St. Albans City School with Northwestern Medical Center and NCSS serving as organizers. The entire NCSS Parent Child Center (PCC) staff are to be commended for their involvement in making this event fun for all of the children that participated.

The Developmental Services division offers Person Centered Care for individuals with intellectual disabilities including:

- **Program for Adaptive & Expressive Arts (PAEA):** delivers therapeutic music and art services to clients and members of the community.
- **Academy of Learning:** provides independent living skills, enhances artistic expression, expands appreciation for a holistic approach to health and wellness, and acquiring new academic talents.
- **Peer Services:** connecting individuals receiving developmental services from NCSS with peer advocates and mentors. Supports breaking down barriers and finding solutions.

**Student with Autism Heads to First Prom**

*An NCSS Cross-Divisional success story*

Over the years, Developmental Services and Children, Youth & Family Services staff have supported Renee as she continues to grow and attain goals.

*This segment aired on WNY ABC22+WFFF Fox 44 on 5/13/16*
WCAX - Channel 3: Fan of the Day

BURLINGTON — The Developmental Services Division’s Academy of Learning was featured as the WCAX - Channel 3 Fan of the day on February 18th.

“The :30” Anchor, Keith McGilvery paid a visit to the Academy of Learning on February 18th and visited with faculty and students for a short segment that was featured on the evening news.

First Ever Upcycled Art Library Tour

Recently, residents joined NCSS in Celebrating the Artists participating in the Program for Adaptive and Expressive Arts. The creations of these talented people were on display in the libraries of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties beginning April 15 through September 7th!

| May 9th - May 17th: Swanton Library | July 5th - July 12th: Enosburgh Library | Aug. 29th - Sept. 7th Alburgh Library |
| May 23rd - May 31st: Highgate Library | July 18th - July 25th: Richford Library | |
| June 6th - June 14th: Georgia Library | Aug. 1st - Aug. 9th: Fairfield Library | |
On Father’s Day, June 21, 2015, members of the Knights of Columbus, Council 297, St. Albans, Vermont, passed out Tootsie Rolls, and solicited donations for a charitable cause, before and after the 8am and 10:15 am masses at Holy Angels Church.

Knights of Columbus Tootsie Roll Project Chairman, Jonathan Quick oversaw the details with the help of some of his fellow Knights. They used the funds to sponsor a camper to attend Camp Rainbow.

On August 5, 2015 Chairman Jonathan Quick presented a check to Tina Cross, Coordinator of Camp Rainbow, and Kaydeen Juaire, Co-Coordinator of Camp Rainbow, at the Northwestern Counseling & Support Services at the Family Center in St. Albans, Vermont.

On August 8, 2015 Chairman Jonathan Quick gathered his fellow helper Knights to pose with the Coordinator of Camp Rainbow, Tina Cross and Rainbow Camper Ace Lambert.

Chairman Jonathan Quick would like to acknowledge and thank those whose generous donations made this possible.

The Soar Learning Center is approved by Vermont’s Agency of Education as an independent school and is CARF accredited as a day treatment program that offers:

- Comprehensive academic, special education, behavioral, and clinical services to children and adolescents in grades K-12.
- The primary goal is to provide students with the academic, social, and interpersonal skills necessary to be successful in a traditional school setting and in their community.

- High school students are offered the opportunity to participate in vocational training program that includes job placement and training as well as prospect of earning wages.
- In addition to the 180 day school calendar, the Soar Learning Center provides an extended school year program including experiential learning activities.
One Shot at Happiness
Basketball gives Richford teen chance to show newfound bravery

RICHFORD — Not yet 16 years old, Gina Shields already knows plenty about being strong.

It isn’t physical strength she can tell you about. Born with a developmental disorder, the Richford Middle-Senior High School student couldn’t walk until she was 2 and was told by doctors she’d likely never play sports.

But the strength to move to a strange small town where she faced down bullying? The strength to carry on at school even as her mother battled cancer, twice? The strength to come to terms with her autism and ADHD, which make day-to-day socializing difficult and at times, impossible?

Gina Shields knows all about that.

The Shot

It all culminated Tuesday, Jan. 5, in a defining moment for the eighth grader, late in a middle school game against Sheldon, when visiting coach Doug Kittell arranged with officials and both teams to give Gina a shot at the basket.

Her mom, Kara Shields, with her hair wrapped in a bandanna and her terrier, Jack, yipping on the couch, recalls that evening as she pulls out her phone to show the video. She has three files of the shot, all filmed by different people from different angles.

The videos play, showing Gina standing to the right of the foul line, just a little closer to the hoop. She heaves the ball toward the net once, twice, and again, her teammates moving her into position, rebounding the ball and passing it back.

Finally, on the sixth try, the ball bounces in. Both teams’ players celebrate. And before time expires, Gina makes another shot, this time on her first try, as she dribbles the ball down the court.

A 15-year-old on the autistic spectrum, who just a few years earlier was picked on and bullied at the playground, now was receiving high fives and hugs from friends she never thought she’d have.

“I’m very proud, and everyone has been so supportive,” Gina says, curled up in big brown chair next to her mom at their apartment in Richford. “It makes me want to do it more.”

Autism

School has never been easy for Gina. Beyond struggling to concentrate and battling just to get to class on time, the hustle and bustle in the halls between periods can be overwhelming for her. And because it’s difficult for Gina to pick up on social cues, when she says the wrong thing at the wrong time, peers often shy away.

“We talk openly about her autism. That isn’t something to hide from her. It’s something she wishes she didn’t have. She wishes she understood it more and it would go away. She’s trying to figure it out. We spend a lot of her day talking about how to interact in that social circle,” says Kim Lloyd, Gina’s one-on-one aide from Northwestern Counseling and Support Services, who has worked with her since sixth grade. “It’s something she’s learned to accept and we all help her and we all understand we have our weaknesses and our strong points.”

Article from 1/22/16 issue of the St. Albans Messenger and written by Joel Lehman, Managing Editor. The full article is available at samessenger.com

This story was also featured in a segment on WPTZ Channel 5 (NBC)
A member of the NCSS family has passed away.

Frank X. MacNeil was instrumental in his leadership of our agency when it was Franklin - Grand Isle Mental Health Services, Inc. Frank spent 29 years with the agency serving as Executive Director from 1970 until his retirement in 1998.

In 2012 we honored Frank with a “Lifetime Achievement Award” in appreciation of his many contributions to the agency, the greater community, and the clients and families that we serve. Frank will be remembered as a kind and caring visionary, with strong family and community ties.

---Obituary featured in 7/22 St. Albans Messenger---

Francis Xavier (Frank) MacNeil died peacefully on Wednesday, July 20, at Northwestern Medical Center. He is survived by his wife, Dolly, of St. Albans; his daughter, Jennifer of Rockville, Maryland; his son Matthew of Winooski and a large extended family throughout Canada and the U.S.

Frank was born in Sydney, Nova Scotia on November 25, 1930. He was the son of the late Helen (MacLean) and Stephen MacNeil. He graduated from St. Francis Xavier University in 1952 and later returned there to teach Psychology. He also attended the University of Toronto where he obtained a Master’s of Divinity while attending St. Basil’s Seminary. He was ordained a catholic priest and remained as such for 11 years. In the early 1960s he continued his academic pursuits at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

He came to Vermont in 1968 to work as a staff psychologist at Franklin-Grand Isle Mental Health (now NCSS). In 1970, he was made Executive Director, a role in which he remained until his retirement in 1998. Committed to supporting this community, Frank devoted his time to serving on the Boards of Martha’s Kitchen and Franklin County Court Diversion while also volunteering for NMC’s Meals on Wheels and Franklin County Home Health’s Hospice Program.

Put More Healthy Food on Your Table with 3SquaresVT

What is 3SquaresVT?

It is a federal nutrition program that can help you buy more healthy food. Monthly benefits come on a debit card you use at many grocery stores and farmers’ markets, so you have privacy and flexibility when you shop.

If everyone in the household is 65+ or gets SSI, benefits are directly deposited into your bank account.

Who is Eligible?

3SquaresVT is open to everyone who qualifies, including individuals, families, seniors and people with disabilities. Eligibility is based on household income.

Many Vermonters are eligible and don’t know it!

There are special rules that make it easier for households that include a senior or person with disability, or that get the VT Earned Income Tax Credit to be eligible.

How Much Can People Get?

Benefits are based on monthly income, expenses and household size.

Even the minimum amount of $16 per month can help with grocery bills!

9 out of 10 3SquaresVT households get at least $50 each month.

How to Apply?

Contact:

Franklin Grand Isle Community Action
5 Lemnah Dr.
St. Albans, VT 05478
802-527-7392

Put More Healthy Food on Your Table with 3SquaresVT
The Family Center, located at 130 Fisher Pond Rd., houses services for children and families, prenatal to 21, as well as developmental services. We provide many of these services within the community:

- Serve individuals with intellectual disabilities through innovative programming such as, the Program for Adaptive and Expressive Arts and the Employment Program.
- Serve adolescents through employment support, substance abuse treatment, and group based supports.
- We continue to grow our services for children diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder this includes supports offered in the home, school and community based settings.

Some of the Foster Grandparents who were in attendance with Mary Pelkey (third from right) Foster Grandparent Program Coordinator / United Way of Northwest Vermont and Samantha Thomas (far right) NCSS Children’s Initial Response Team Leader.

Responding to Challenging Behaviors
Understanding Trauma for Foster Grandparents

On August 10, 2016, Samantha Thomas, Children’s Initial Response Team Leader, provided a presentation entitled “Responding to Challenging Behaviors: Understanding Trauma for Foster Grandparents.” Samantha was invited to speak to the Franklin/Grand Isle County Foster Grandparents by the program coordinator, Mary Pelkey, as part of their quarterly in-service. Foster Grandparents work within local schools to offer additional support to classrooms. They are often assigned 3 to 4 individual students who might need some additional “Grammy” support.

Samantha shared information about the impact of traumatic experiences on child development, how this may be displayed in the classroom setting and offered suggestions for how to support traumatized children within their roles as Foster Grandparents. The ladies were eager listeners often asking questions and sharing their experiences.

Mary shared the reactions of one participant who said, “I was really worried about one of my students this year but now I am not.” Another participant stated, “I’m so glad I didn’t miss this in-service.”

Coming soon....
NCSS Website to be Responsive!
NCSSinc.org more accessible and user friendly

Over a year ago, NCSS started on the journey to make www.ncssinc.org a responsive, aka mobile friendly, site. Through much deliberation, thought and efforts on the community relations team, a cross divisional committee, and Vermont Design Works, are creating a new and enhanced site. Our website redesign features responsiveness, making the site easy to use on any size device. The site also has revitalized modules such as the calendar of events, news page, and new photos. Additionally, this shift will make it possible for improvements to our blog, so stay tuned!

Over the coming months, we will continue to revamp our website with the information most useful for our clients and staff. Please feel free to provide feedback to our community relations team.

As you can see in these photos, the navigation of the website changes slightly on each device, making the information that you see on each page sized appropriately for legibility. We hope that you will find these changes to be helpful to getting the information you need with ease.

I was really worried about one of my students this year but now I am not.

A Foster Grandparent

The Family Center, located at 130 Fisher Pond Rd., houses services for children and families, prenatal to 21, as well as developmental services. We provide many of these services within the community:

- Serve individuals with intellectual disabilities through innovative programming such as, the Program for Adaptive and Expressive Arts and the Employment Program.
- The Parent Child Center, one part of our Family Center, consists of four core teams, operating 20 Primary Prevention Programs in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties.
- Serve adolescents through employment support, substance abuse treatment, and group based supports.
- We continue to grow our services for children diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder this includes supports offered in the home, school and community based settings.
Being mindful of your mental health is as important as addressing your medical health care needs. NCSS wants you to know...

• Mental illness can strike anyone! However, often the stigma associated with mental illness either prevents or causes delays for people seeking treatment.

• Approximately 1 in 5 adults experience mental illness diagnosis in a given year and half of all chronic mental illness begins by age 14.

• You can learn about early warning signs and symptoms of mental health disorders by attending training that NCSS offers to the community including, Mental Health First Aid and Youth Mental Health First Aid.

• NCSS prefers to use STIGMA as an acronym for... Striving To Increase Good Mental Health Awareness.