

## **Stigma Free Committee Meeting Minutes**

**May 29, 2019**

### **1. Welcome and Statement of Sunshine Law Notice by Acting Chair Karen DeMarco**

### **2. Roll Call:**

Dr. Paul Barbato, Shelisa Foster, Vicki Iucci, William Paige, Margaret Preis, Karen DeMarco, Elaine Wing

### **3. Nomination of Officers for 2019-2020** (all carried & seated as shown below)

Chair – Karen DeMarco      Vice Chair – Shelisa Foster      Secretary – Elaine Wing

### **4. Adoption of Meeting Schedule**

All mtgs will be at the Dumont Public Library, 180 Washington Ave, Dumont. Lower level classroom. Upcoming mtgs: July 17, Sept. 18, Oct. 16. November and December mtg. dates based on location availability. Mtgs start promptly at 6:30 pm.

### **5. Ordinance 1562 Adopted on 04/16/19 by Dumont Borough Council -**

Karen read the ordinance emphasizing Section Four (pages 3-4). This section essentially outlines the mission and duties of the Stigma Free Committee.

### **6. Self Introductions of the Committee Members**

**a. Shelisa Foster**, Licensed Professional Counselor. Dir. of Operations at Bergen's Promise (Bergen County organization servicing persons ages 5-21 yrs. who live with emotional, behavioral health issues, intellectual and developmental disabilities and substance abuse). Serve about 1250 youth. Works collaboratively with schools, medical, enforcement, legal, and other agencies. Certified in "Nurture Heart Approach (relational interaction)." Working with youth entire MH career. Pysch screener...In home clinical work... Parent of two kids, Dumont resident for three years.

**b. Maggie Preis** Admin. Asst to CEO and Dir. of PI Services...at Vantage Health System; began six years ago. Certified MH First Aid Instructor. Serves on two other Stigma Free Task Forces: Englewood and Closter. Dumont resident for six years.

**c. Dr. Paul Barbato**, Dir of Special Services for Dumont Public Schools. Planning and preparing programming with MH agencies and universities to provide support for the DPS students. Spoke of Care Plus collaboration (DPS has a FT clinician) and internships that are benefitting the DPS population.

**d. William (Billy) Paige**, Brings personal experience with depression to the Committee. Spoke of gratitude that services are now provided to youth. Very encouraged and desires to make this Committee work.

**e. Vicki Iucci** - Brings experience with mental illness (depression, bi-polar, autism...) among family members. Licensed clinical social worker. Worked FT at EHMC for 32 years; now PT. Caregiver for adult autistic son who lives at home. Dumont resident for 30 years. Asked to be part of the Committee as representative for the Dumont Women's Club.

**f. Rev. Elaine Wing** – Dumont resident for 13 years. Pastor at Calvary UMC. Interest in MH for long time – family members with MH challenges. Adoption (terminated) of a young adolescent with MH issues involved her in DPS, Bergen Promise, Care Plus and other organizations. Works with adults and families with MH, behavioral and substance abuse issues in current and previous churches. Completed three Clinical Pastoral Education units. Recognizes that faith-based organizations need to work collaboratively.

**g. Karen DeMarco** – Became involved in MH arena when her then teenage son was diagnosed with severe depression; also became aware of a “self-imposed stigma” around his response to depression. Husband is very supportive of the Stigma Free effort and he authored the text for the ordinance adopted by Dumont Boro.

**h. Dumont Councilwoman Carole Stewart** is the Boro Liaison. She “proactively gave this Task Force/Committee legs,” said Karen.

**7. Structure of the Stigma Free Committee** All community members of Dumont are welcome to participate in this Task Force...they will be the “boots on the ground” to conduct activities. Interested members can provide their contact information to the Dumont Boro Clerk and the Committee will connect.

**8. Symposium hosted by the Dumont Community Group 05-13-19** was very fruitful; approx. 30 in attendance. Two DHS students spoke about anxiety and depression. Karen, Maggie, Billie, Councilpersons Stewart and LaBruno were in attendance. Twenty residents submitted interest cards, giving the Committee a starting point.

## **9. Prospective Activities for 2019**

**a. MH First Aid Training** – 8 hr certificate course that Maggie can run. Min of 5, max of 25 ppl. Cost of books is \$ 20. Per person. Can be held wherever. Suggested two consecutive Saturdays. Karen will do a survey to determine schedule that works best. Need two week lead. Maggie will pick dates and set up flyers. First group of SFTF members will not be charged the \$ 20. Designed for lay people, educators, emergency responders... (non clinical). Focus: ID signs and symptoms of MH and how to get appropriate help. Interactive course. Topics covered: suicide, substance abuse, opioids, psychosis, depression, anxiety, and self-injury. Action: reach out to the 20 persons who indicated an interest at the May 13 mtg. as well as other persons from community, churches etcera.

**b. Permanent signs in Boro and at entrance to schools...** Supt. of DPW will possibly make signs for Dumont saying “Stigma Free...” Locations for 4-6 signs need to be identified. Karen asked Paul to find out if the electronic reader boards

can post the Stigma Free logo on the DPS boards. The logo and words "Stigma Free" were designed to raise awareness by stimulating conversation, especially among the older population who may not be educated about or sensitive to MH.

### **c. Involvement of Students & Awareness of DPS Educators/Staff/Parents**

- Karen asked: What will work to get the DPS involved? Which schools (age of students) are our primary focus? Paul shared possibility of tapping into the DPS Annual MH Awareness Day held in January. Integrate Stigma Free work into the event. This next school year it will be brought to the middle school level; bring DHS students interested in the Stigma Free effort. Paul spoke about the collaborative efforts with agencies and vendors outside DPS.

Paul and others wondered if Stigma Free efforts and committee could be mentioned to educators and parents at meetings throughout the year.

Conversation continued around DPS teacher training. MH issues are offered as part of the required CD training. Classroom aides are also trained. Teachers and aides get to choose courses beyond the % that are mandated.

Wellness Rooms were discussed. DHS and Honiss have locations / programs. DPS has established some mindfulness programs with an effort to move the student from a "fixed" to a "growth mindset" involving mentors, homework help etc. DPS has added guidance on social and emotional learning (an ongoing process); Flexible seating in the classroom etc.

Karen spoke of the overwhelming response to her social media post about their son's experience. This illustrates the need of parents and youth to know about resources available to them.

### **d. What can we do to gather input? Committee priorities?**

a. Conversation included funding assistance given by the Dumont Women's Group to the Stigma Free work.

b. Vicki spoke about her interest in serving the older population struggling with MH issues. She asked if programs are held at Dumont Senior Centers. Karen suggested that Vicki reach out to Donna Faulborn on FB (her best communication venue). Veterans named as another population needing assistance. Those who attended symposium in May seemed to be most interested in helping parents of youth.

### **e. Possible action steps for multiple ideas shared:**

Schedule the initial 20 people in the MH First Aid Training

Utilize Dumont Day – have a table there... Elaine suggested that the Stigma Free table is near Calvary's Messy Church because it attracts parents. Karen will register and speak to Sue Connelly. Karen will ask local vendor to make a SFTF banner.

Billy suggested being present at Dumont's 5K (Aug. 31) and poss. Other towns Flyers. Magnets. Wristbands...

Beginning of school year: flyer in parents' fall paperwork packets, mailings, back to school nights, Curriculum Night (April 2020)... Elaine suggested that the flyer speak to the parent's "emotional need" vs something more clinical.

Paul shared that DPS is will be focused on absenteeism as a port for conversation with the family.

Karen spoke about bringing Jr and Sr high students into this process of raising awareness. And, how to speak about MH but not to "be cool" by saying they are in a crisis when its not "real."

Paul, shared that DPS was involved in the Second Annual Symposium at Bergen Cty level. Maybe in 2020, a representative from Stigma Free could take part if asked back.

Maggie shared about efforts by Englewood and Closter SFTFs. Both held a symposium (well received). Both were very different; one more adult focused with speakers from Gamblers Anonymous Etc, the other more youth focused.

Elaine share about Calvary having a month-long focus on MH in worship\_– well received. This could be something that is encouraged and repeated by others.

**MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:00 PM**