

Connections |



A community publication on behavioral healthcare.

“No longer a secret”

Carol Kivler's mission of sharing her journey through clinical depression.



THE CABINET DOOR
A different kind of Rx

ECT TRUTHS AND FICTION
The alternative to conventional therapy

A LEGACY OF HOPE
A lifetime of devotion continues



from our CEO

Being in the field of behavioral health administration for 40 years, I am continually impressed by the compassion and drive demonstrated by many people who have crossed our paths.

The desire to give back to the community when impacted by mental illness and/or addiction, personally or professionally, appears strong.

In this issue, you will read about three women who have dedicated their lives in different ways to educate and make people aware about mental illness and addiction, thereby breaking down stigma.

We look forward to your feedback about this *Connections* issue or other topics.

C. RICHARD SARLE
PRESIDENT AND CEO



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We want to hear from you.

We invite our readers to share their Carrier Clinic experience, which may be used in an upcoming *Connections* newsletter. Our Community Relations Department can be reached at (908)281-1513 and at hsteel@carrierclinic.com.

Written letters may also be mailed to:

Carrier Clinic
c/o Community Relations
P.O. Box 147, Belle Mead, NJ
08502

Contact us 24/7:

Call 1(800)933-3579
or visit CarrierClinic.org



Scan to visit
our mobile
website.

The articles in this publication are not intended to provide specific medical advice or treatment recommendations to any individual or group. The publication is for information purposes only.

Comments or suggestions for *Connections* can be sent to Heather Steel at HSteel@carrierclinic.com. Please call our Access Center at 1(800)933-3579 if you wish to speak with someone about a possible admission.

behind THE CABINET DOOR

At Carrier, a different kind of **Rx** for a burgeoning problem

It's a mounting problem that kills more Americans each year than motor vehicle accidents — a quiet epidemic that's met relatively little public outrage, even as it's impacted countless families on an emotional, psychological and financial level.

The household medicine cabinet isn't the first image that springs to mind when we consider the marketplace for controlled substances. But, put a prescription medication in the hands of someone to whom it was not prescribed—or use it in a way in which it was not intended—and you enter a realm of illegal activity and often unforeseen consequences.

As a leading regional facility for substance abuse treatment and counseling, Carrier Clinic has long been positioned on the frontlines of the prescription drug abuse crisis. While New Jersey has tended to trail the national average overall, it's a statistic that offers little comfort to the families of the thousands of Garden State residents who have died from prescription drug use.

It's a problem that has particular resonance within the adolescent population. In fact, it's estimated that more teens abuse prescription drugs than cocaine, meth and heroin combined—with painkillers like Vicodin, Oxycodone and Oxycontin especially common.

The biggest problems in combating this crisis arise from the fact that these medications are often not illegal at the point that they become accessible to the abuser. Many people who develop a problem with prescription meds often begin with the best of intentions; feeling safe in the knowledge that a trusted doctor has recommended the drug. Whether arrived at through recreational adventuring or unintentional misuse, a dependency on prescription drugs can lead to severe depression, personality disorders and suicidal impulses.

For more than 30 years, Carrier Clinic has addressed the ramifications of the growing prescription drug abuse phenomenon (with particular emphasis on opioid painkillers) through a comprehensive treatment plan tailored to the medical, emotional and social needs of each individual, as well as that individual's family. At the Blake Recovery Center (BRC) on Carrier's Belle Mead campus, a supportive environment is offered via a program of medically-monitored detoxification, residential rehabilitation, outpatient services, and continuous counseling.



The element of counseling is a crucial component of the treatment program at BRC. Emphasis is placed on the development of anger and stress management skills, along with education in the behavioral patterns that stand in the way of recovery.

According to BRC Director, Elizabeth Hill, "Family members have an important role to play in the rehabilitation process, from the time that a patient is admitted to the day they return home...things like the weekly family meetings and weekly Parents Support Group demonstrate the value that we place on keeping engaged, and we encourage the family's voice to be heard."

This policy of engagement and communication isn't limited to adults. Young children whose lives are impacted by a family member's drug addiction can participate in the *Bright Futures for Kids* program, designed to help ages 4-12 develop the coping skills and the positive social tools they need to live a drug-free lifestyle.

**FOR MORE
INFORMATION**

On the range of addiction services and programs offered by Carrier Clinic, call the Community Relations Department at 1(908)281-1513, or visit www.CarrierClinic.org.

No a secret longer

To Carol Kivler, “having it all” also means having lived much of the past two decades with clinical depression—an illness that she describes as being “as much a part of who I am as my long arms, long legs, and dyed hair.”

The veteran international executive coach and corporate consultant never set out to become one of the nation’s most sought-after authorities on the subject of Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT). But, after having experienced her own journey through the minefields of depression—a journey that first brought her to the door of Carrier Clinic some 22 years ago, the founder of *Courageous Recovery* has made it her “ministry” to educate the public on the positives of ECT, an often misunderstood treatment saddled with “a frightening stigma, surrounded by an even more frightening illness.”

Carol was still married to her former husband of over 30 years, and working as an adjunct business professor at Mercer County Community College, when her severe depression made it impossible to function in the home or workplace. After it became evident that prescribed medications had failed to achieve any result, her psychiatrist recommended that Carol consider checking into Carrier, and on the day after Mothers Day 1990, Carol Kivler entered into an experience that, in her words, “gave me back my life.”

At first glance, Carol Kivler might be regarded as a living, breathing embodiment of the phrase “having it all.” The mother and grandmother is a published author, an in-demand public speaker, and a successful business owner with more than 100 valued clients.



This first trip to Carrier’s Belle Meade facility was no overnight success for the new patient, as a supervised program of medication was judged ineffective—and after “24 days in lockdown,” Carol found herself with “very little options...I was consumed with suicidal ideation.”

Something clearly needed to be done, and that “something” was ECT, a form of treatment that has regained a remarkable amount of respect in recent years, after decades of being regarded as an archaic, even barbaric, relic of a less enlightened era. That stigma was still very much in place in the year 1990, a point in which the image of Jack Nicholson, writhing painfully on the shock-therapy table in *“One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest,”* had been seared into the public consciousness.

As Carol explains in the pages of her acclaimed memoir *“Will I Ever Be the Same Again?”*, ECT turned out to be “the silver bullet that saved my life and pulled me back into the world of the living...in my case, the world of the thriving.” Still, it was not a decision that was arrived at easily—and in Carol’s case, it was a nurse by the name of Diana who “sat with me; convinced me that this is what I needed to do.”



“She said, ‘my face will be the last you see before you go to sleep, and the first you see when you awake’,” Carol says of the Carrier team member. “Her compassion was so genuine, so sincere, that I went back to thank her personally after I was released.”

While Carol would go on to experience three additional episodes of acute depression—and undergo more than 50 ECT treatments during stays at Carrier and other hospitals—she notes that her first few ECT sessions resulted in “a noticeable difference in my outlook and mood, and within a few months I was in recovery.”

“A remarkable success story, and a genuine advocate for the patient. Carol speaks from a perspective of experience and real insight.”

— DR. UMESH MEHTA, MEDICAL CHIEF OF OLDER ADULT SERVICES AT CARRIER CLINIC.

That first stay at the Carrier campus also made Carol Kivler a believer in the therapeutic power of keeping engaged and active as a way to counter the isolating qualities of both the disease and the treatment; a regimen in which “you have to learn how to sleep again, how to eat, how to be yourself again.”

“I had lost all structure in my life, and when I first came to Carrier I remember going to horticulture class, dance class, yoga, walking,” says the woman who continues to maintain a daily wellness routine of gym visits, outdoor recreation and journal writing. “In a way, it was like being on The Love Boat!”

In recovery now for the better part of a decade, Carol Kivler would leave teaching and return to school for her Masters degree, starting up Kivler Communications in 1994 as a natural outlet for “my gift for persuasion and influence.” Still, even with her life back on track it would take Carol a full ten years to “open the door” and go public with her ECT experiences—a decision that she now considers “the most rewarding thing I’ve ever done.”

It was a first exposure to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) that led Carol to declare “I had found my ‘peeps’...these were people who had the same experiences as me; who didn’t judge me, and within a week they had me scheduled to do a half dozen presentations for them.”

Continued on next page ➤



Conducting the “*In Our Own Voice*” program for NAMI, and sitting on the nonprofit organization’s board as its only “consumer” member, inspired Carol to establish *Courageous Recovery* in 2006, as a vehicle to spread her message through presentations and workshops for schools, support groups, treatment facilities and family members of people with clinical depression and other mental illnesses.

Carol, who continues to donate 100 percent of her *Courageous Recovery* speaking fees (as well as 15 percent of book sales) to NAMI’s Mercer chapter, retains a team of marketing, social media and design specialists to assist in her endeavor, and employs meditation techniques to help her field some of the often difficult and emotionally draining

"ECT helped me get back to being a well put-together person...I tell them that Carrier gave me back my life."

questions that she’s asked at her presentations.

The public face of *Courageous Recovery* has also returned to Carrier Clinic as recently as autumn of 2011, this time as guest speaker at a conference on ECT and its role in the treatment of an illness that remains “not curable, but manageable.”

“In the psychiatric community, you tend to become your diagnosis,” says the woman whose own diagnosis of depression was just the beginning of an astonishing change of life. “ECT helped me get back to being a well put-together person...I tell them that Carrier gave me back my life.”



ECT.

ELECTROCONVULSIVE THERAPY

GETTING BACK TO ‘Better Than Before’

To many Americans, any mention of shock therapy evokes images of its largely unregulated early years—a time of no anesthetic, higher doses of electricity, and discredited theories. The reality is that an estimated 100,000 Americans undergo ECT each year, and ECT has exhibited a higher rate of success in the treatment of patients with severe psychotic depression, treatment-resistant schizophrenia, catatonia and bipolar disorder.

It has been estimated that some 85 percent of people who undergo ECT go on to a full recovery. And, since ECT works faster than a meds-only program, it has proven particularly effective for patients who are considered at risk for suicide attempts.

In the most commonly employed form of treatment, hand-held electrodes are applied to the head, with a small current administered in brief pulses. It produces a controlled seizure activity that stimulates the brain

to correct imbalances that are responsible for problems with sleeping, appetite and mood. The patient is carefully monitored throughout for heart rate, pulse, oxygen level, pulse oximeter and blood pressure. The entire procedure commonly takes less than 10 minutes.

Electroconvulsive Therapy patients typically receive a series of 6 to 12 ECT sessions, given up to three times per week. Regular maintenance sessions may be recommended as well for patients who experience recurring symptoms.

“Contrary to what we see in the movies, patients undergoing ECT do not experience any discomfort whatsoever.”

DR. UMESH MEHTA, MEDICAL CHIEF OF OLDER ADULT SERVICES AT CARRIER CLINIC.

“ECT is a very humane, very well researched, extremely effective treatment option for people for whom more traditional treatments have not worked, says Dr. Mehta. “Carrier Clinic is one of the largest and most experienced providers of ECT services on the East Coast, offering both a fully trained staff and the most up-to-date technology in use.”

For more information on ECT call 1(908)281-1513, or visit www.carrierclinic.org. If you need clinical information regarding ECT or would like to schedule treatments, please contact our ECT Coordinator at 1(908)281-1440.

Leela Ramashandra

Carrier Profile

Walking through the hallways at East Mountain School, Leela Ramashandra is hard to spot. Her small frame and long dark hair, which is always pulled into a ponytail, makes her blend in with the teenagers around her.



East Mountain School, a private, special education school located on the grounds of Carrier Clinic, offers special education and therapeutic services for adolescents in grades 7 through 12 who are affected by behavioral and psychiatric disorders.

But Mrs. Ramashandra (*affectionately known as Mrs. Ram by the students and faculty*) has a passion for teaching and a compassion for her students that definitely makes her stand out in a crowd.

A favorite at EMS, Mrs. Ram was hired in 2000 to be a math teacher, but today she is more widely known as the Community Services Program teacher. Looking for an opportunity to serve the community while involving her students, Mrs. Ram developed the Community Services Program in 2001 and offered it as an elective. In the program, students visit and participate in community blood drives, senior assisted living facilities, soup kitchens and a children’s day care.



“The Community Service Program provides our students with a great opportunity to give something back to the community, and to learn how they are connected to others. They also get the chance to utilize the social skills they have learned in school, because they are interacting with people who may be very different from them,” says Mrs. Ram.

“For many of our students, helping others is a bit of a foreign concept, because many of our kids have very little themselves,” she continues. “However, they gain a confidence by giving back, and they do a wonderful job with their volunteer work. For over 10 years, I have watched this program bring out the positive and compassionate personality of these students. For me, working with these kids is enriching and rewarding.”

UPCOMING EVENTS¹²

JUNE 19

26th Carrier Clinic Golf Classic at Cherry Valley Country Club

JULY 13

Carrier Clinic night at the Somerset Patriots Ballpark

SEPTEMBER 15

2nd Annual Walk of Hope held on Carrier’s Belle Mead campus

NOVEMBER 10

3rd Annual Kindred Spirit Gala at the Somerset Hills Hotel

Come BLOG with us!



Heather W. Steel
Public Relations Manager

Join us on our website blog to stay up-to-date on Carrier’s latest events, screenings, mental health tips and news around the campus. We encourage you to contribute your thoughts, and share your experiences with us.

VISIT: Carrierclinic.org/blog



A Legacy of HOPE (IN MEMORY OF JUDY)

Near a bench just outside the Human Resources office at Carrier Clinic, a couple of cats can be seen enjoying a measure of “Me(ow) time”—aloof to the activity around them, but reassuring in their continuous presence. The cats, and a plaque affixed to the bench, represent a memorial to a cherished member of the Carrier family—the late Judith “Judy” Peter, world traveler, animal lover and Vice President of HR at Carrier Clinic until her passing in 2009.



As a 17-year veteran of the clinic’s administrative staff, Judy was a frequent spokesperson for Carrier. She was well versed in the many ways that her fellow team members have worked to make the Carrier name synonymous with quality care.

It therefore came as little surprise to those who knew her, when in 2012 the estate of Judith Peter bequeathed a generous gift of \$100,000 to the *Bright Futures for Kids* Program, at the facility that Judy described as “the leading behavioral health care provider in New Jersey, with an emphasis on quality of care.”

Presented through Carrier’s Rehabilitation and Addictions Services, *Bright Futures for Kids* is a weekly early intervention/prevention program for children ages 4 through 11. Offered free of charge to the community, the program utilizes puppets, games, crafts and other kid-friendly activities to help children communicate their feelings and learn healthy coping skills.



Funding for *Bright Futures for Kids* has been opened up to donations from private businesses and individuals, welcoming donations via year-end charitable gifts, employee payroll deductions—and estates, a form of financial support known as “legacy” giving. “Legacies can mean different things for different people,” explains Donna Zaleski, Director of Fund Development. “For some, a legacy is found in their children; for others, it is in the work they have performed; and still others leave their legacy by supporting a special cause or organization.”

**Judy’s legacy is more than just a memory.
All gifts can make a difference. To memorialize
or honor someone you know, please use the
enclosed envelope and help to change a life.**