

# Positive Change

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A publication of  
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www.ctclearinghouse.org  
www.wheelereap.org

**National Suicide Prevention  
Lifeline: 800.273.8255**

**Statewide Substance Use  
Disorder Access Line:  
800.563.4086**

Wheeler provides comprehensive solutions that address complex health issues, providing individuals, families and communities with accessible, innovative care that encourages health, recovery, and growth at all stages of life. Our integrated approach to primary and behavioral health, education, and recovery creates measurable results, positive outcomes and hopeful tomorrows for more than 30,000 individuals across Connecticut each year.



## Expanded Health Care Services in Waterbury: New Facility Opens at 855 Lakewood Road



On May 11, Wheeler's Waterbury Family Health & Wellness Center moved from 100 Jefferson Square to a beautiful new facility at 855 Lakewood Road in the Brass City.

An expanded array of primary care and behavioral health services, including medication-assisted treatment for addiction, is offered through walk-in, appointments, and telehealth and telemedicine services. On-site Genoa Healthcare Pharmacy and Quest Diagnostics locations allow for one-

stop convenience. Thanks in part to a grant from the American Savings Foundation, NARCAN®, a medication that reverses overdoses, will soon be available free to patients and families who do not otherwise have access to it. *(See full story on Page 3.)*

"The unprecedented COVID-19 health crisis underscores the need for high-quality, integrated health care for underserved communities such as Waterbury. The services offered through our community health center are designed to meet the complex needs of people in this city, many of whom struggle with chronic health conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol, as well as mental health and opioid addiction and other forms of substance use," said Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA, president and chief executive officer, Wheeler. "Our Family Health & Wellness Center provides care and treatment in one convenient location and is a community asset intended to strengthen and enhance the overall health and well-being of individuals and families in Waterbury and nearby cities and towns."

Wheeler's Waterbury Family Health & Wellness Center opened at 100 Jefferson Square in August 2019 and was Wheeler's fourth community health center, with other locations in Bristol, Hartford, and New Britain. *(Story continued on Page 2.)*

## Telehealth and Telemedicine: Support in Times of Crisis

When the COVID-19 outbreak reached our state, Wheeler quickly took action to meet the needs of individuals and families with minimal disruption in care through the rollout of telehealth and telemedicine. These services provide safe, confidential health-related treatment and information through electronic and telecommunication technologies, and enable remote patient and clinician contact, care advice, reminders, education, intervention, and more.

Telehealth and telemedicine services are available at Wheeler for many appointments, including some individual and family therapy, medical, psychiatry, and addiction services. Many services can be conducted by telephone or by video chat using Microsoft® Teams, a free program compatible with smartphones, tablets, and computers.



For information about telehealth services, visit [WheelerClinic.org/telehealth](http://WheelerClinic.org/telehealth), or call our Navigation Center at 888.793.3500.



# Wheeler

Innovative Care. Positive Change.

# a message of change from the president

[WheelerClinic.org](http://WheelerClinic.org)



Our Fall 2019 print issue of *Positive Change* highlighted significant transitions across Wheeler, including shifts in leadership and service delivery. Little did we know at the time that greater changes were in store for our organization, with the emergence and spread of COVID-19. As the virus reached Connecticut, Wheeler's dedicated team of more than 1,000 clinical professionals,

educators, administrators, and others jumped into action to meet the urgent needs of the vulnerable individuals and families we serve, many of whom have been hardest hit by the impact of this virus.

This issue of *Positive Change* highlights how we are addressing patient needs as we navigate a different health care landscape. We are delivering behavioral health, primary care, and community-based services through telehealth. We are providing creative, innovative online instruction to Northwest Village School students and support to their families. We are consistently sharing health- and wellness-related information on our website, Facebook Live, and other online platforms. We have brought to fruition the opening of

a new community health center facility and the expansion of primary care and behavioral health services at 855 Lakewood Road in Waterbury.

During this period, much has been said and written about the fact that none of us can effectively navigate our lives alone. We all need each other. Wheeler continues to move through uncharted waters because of our caring staff, our steady board leadership, and because of support from friends like you. A grant from the American Savings Foundation provides residents in the Waterbury region with easier access to NARCAN®, a lifesaving medication used to reverse drug overdoses. A gift from the Lindsay Foundation provides much-needed support for our addiction services, as well as our Basic Needs Fund, which helps us to respond to urgent needs in the community not covered by other forms of funding.

We are still in the midst of a challenging time. But together, we will move forward. Together, we will learn and grow. Thank you for supporting Wheeler. Be well. Stay healthy.

**Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA**  
President and Chief Executive Officer

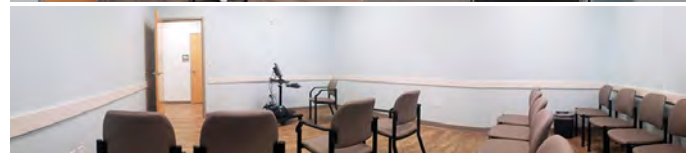
## Services in Waterbury (cont.)

### Behavioral Health for Children and Adults

- Individual, family, and group outpatient therapies
- Intensive outpatient programs (IOP)
- Psychiatric services, including psychiatric evaluations and medication management

### Medical Care for All Ages

- Care management for adults with complex health care needs and behavioral health concerns
- Chronic disease management for asthma, diabetes, hypertension/heart health, HIV, and hepatitis
- Laboratory and pharmacy services
- Linkages to specialty and ancillary services such as dental care
- Medication-assisted treatment for alcohol or opiate addiction
- Pediatric primary care and primary care for adults
- Prevention, health promotion, and wellness services
- Women's health



Visit [WheelerClinic.org/WaterburyFHCW/Tour](http://WheelerClinic.org/WaterburyFHCW/Tour) for a virtual tour of this facility.

# Supporting Our Communities

## Grant Provides Access to Overdose-Reversal Medication in Waterbury



Residents in the Waterbury region will have easier access to a lifesaving medication used to reverse overdoses, thanks to the American Savings Foundation and Wheeler's community health center at 855 Lakewood Road in the Brass City.

The Foundation has awarded Wheeler a \$2,000 grant to purchase and provide Naloxone (NARCAN®). Used with medication-assisted treatment for addiction (MAT), individual and group therapies, and integrated primary care provided in Waterbury, NARCAN is a vital tool for individuals and families who come to Wheeler for addiction treatment, a key service in the organization's continuum of care.

Wheeler will match the grant 1:1, providing NARCAN for residents and families who may not otherwise have access. Services are available on a walk-in or scheduled basis, and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Wheeler now provides and encourages telephonic and telehealth services, even for new patients. NARCAN can be accessed at many local pharmacies, listed at [www.drugfreect.org](http://www.drugfreect.org), including the Genoa Healthcare pharmacy on-site at the new location soon. Approximately two-dozen pharmacies in Waterbury have the medication available, according to the site.

"The Foundation recognizes the importance of addressing opioid abuse and is pleased to fund solutions and strategies through partner agencies such as Wheeler," said Maria Falvo, president & CEO of the American Savings Foundation. "The opioid epidemic impacts all of the communities we serve, and this program will save lives."

NARCAN offers portable, effective emergency overdose care for patients between treatment sessions. It is easily administered in a nasal spray and quickly reverses the symptoms of overdose, allowing the patient to get to an emergency department. NARCAN has saved tens of thousands of lives since 1996.

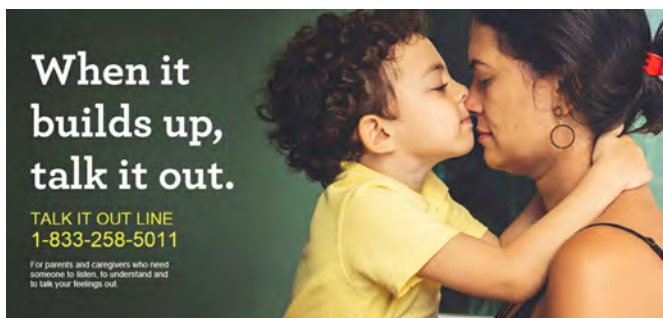
The need is pressing, and the services are lifesaving. Opioid overdose deaths have doubled in Connecticut since 2012, and the state has the eighth highest rate of opioid overdose deaths in the US. Final data from the Chief Medical Examiner in 2019 revealed that Waterbury had the second-highest number of overdose deaths in the state and a significant increase over previous years, with double the number of residents who died as compared to 2017.

"We know conclusively that access to NARCAN plays a vital role in recovery from substance use disorder," said Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA, Wheeler's president and chief executive officer. "At all of our outpatient locations, we are committed to making it available, even at intake, so patients and their families can feel comfortable taking that first step to recovery and knowing that we are partners in their journey. We are so appreciative of the Foundation for their investment in keeping Waterbury safer and healthier."

American Savings Foundation is a permanent charitable endowment which provides grants to local nonprofit organizations, and college scholarships to area students. Since its inception in 1995, the Foundation has contributed over \$61 million in total grants and scholarships in central Connecticut. For more information, call [860-827-2556](tel:860-827-2556) or visit the Foundation's website at [www.asfdn.org](http://www.asfdn.org).

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## Wheeler's Mobile Crisis Team Supports "Talk It Out" Hotline for Families



Parents and caregivers who need help managing the stress and increased needs resulting from caring for their children during the COVID-19 crisis can call Connecticut's "Talk It Out" hotline.

An initiative of the Connecticut Department of Children and Families, the hotline provides support from a network of trained professionals, including staff from Wheeler, who will listen and speak with people about their concerns, and if additional help is needed, make referrals to responsive programs, including Mobile Crisis Intervention Services.

Call [1-833-258-5011](tel:1-833-258-5011) or visit [www.talkitoutct.com](http://www.talkitoutct.com). The hotline, which has English and Spanish capacity, is available Monday through Friday from 8 am to 8 pm and on weekends from 1 pm to 8 pm.



# Caring for Patients and Families

## More Anxious? Wheeler is Here for You.

To help guide people during this stressful time, Wheeler's knowledgeable team developed an array of online content to encourage and educate individuals and families across Connecticut. The piece below is authored by Katie Singh, LCSW. Other articles are posted at [WheelerClinic.org/COVID-19](https://www.wheelerclinic.org/COVID-19).



*Katie Singh, LCSW, Senior Director, Outpatient and Community Services*

From 9/11 to the Great Recession and more, individuals, families, and communities have endured stressful, life-changing events. But, because of its fluid nature and indefinite duration, the COVID-19 pandemic presents new challenges. People everywhere continue to grapple with the adjustment to shifts in their day-to-day lives, while balancing added anxiety and fear with potentially pre-existing mental health and emotional challenges. The good news is that there are a lot of things that people can do each day to manage the unknown. Here are some tips and strategies.

**Maintain a routine as much as possible.** Make a concerted effort to eat healthy food, get the proper amount of sleep, and exercise, even if you must adapt to a new setting. Within your daily or weekly routines, be sure to take time to do what you enjoy doing, or maybe stretch by trying something new.

**Find ways to connect with others.** Various online platforms like Zoom, FaceTime, and Skype provide effective ways to communicate with associates and loved ones. Pick what works for you, and make time to connect and socialize.

**Help people, as you can.** Even with new limits and guidelines for social distancing, you can find creative, effective ways to show others that you care. For example, you might want to check in on a neighbor by phone or text, or with a quick, socially distant visit.

**Tackle projects around your house.** With shifts in your schedule, you may find that you have additional time on your hands. Tend to projects that you have been putting off, especially as your at-home work and family schedules allow.

**Set limits for yourself with news and social media.** Make sure the news you consume is reliable, and establish boundaries for how frequently or how long you will watch or read the news or participate on social media.

**Practice mindfulness.** Be aware of and pay attention to the present moment. Use guided meditation and guided imagery to increase your awareness and focus. If anxious thoughts intrude, push those thoughts out of the way.

**Be patient with yourself.** Accept that everything will not go as planned, and all of us are doing our best to manage in this new normal.

**Seek help.** If you experience changes in mood or appetite, or if your anxiety is too much to manage on your own, reach out to your behavioral health provider, or seek out mental health services.

To access services through Wheeler, call our Navigation Center at **888.793.3500**. Our team helps individuals to develop and strengthen their coping skills through several evidence-based therapies and regular check-ins that promote health, safety, and sobriety. Telehealth and telephonic services are provided.

All storms eventually pass. Together, we will continue to move through this crisis.

An array of COVID-19-related stories and resources can be found on our website. Topics explore many aspects of how to deal with this crisis, including managing grief; loss of major milestones; talking with your children about the pandemic, and related issues, including the need to wear masks; managing addictions; the joys of distance learning, and more! Visit [WheelerClinic.org/COVID-19](https://www.wheelerclinic.org/COVID-19).

# Fostering Health, Meeting Needs

## Wheeler and Holcomb Farm Expand Agreement, Providing Farm-Fresh Produce for Patients in Bristol, New Britain, Hartford, and Waterbury



Now, more than ever, it's critical to ensure that individuals and families in underserved communities have access to nutritious food. Starting in June, patients at Wheeler's four community health centers have access to farm-fresh produce, thanks to a \$12,000 commitment from Wheeler through private donations and a \$12,000 matching gift from the Friends of Holcomb Farm through their Fresh Access Program. This expansion builds on an existing agreement, which, for the past two years, has provided approximately two tons of healthy produce annually to Wheeler patients at 43 Woodland Street in Hartford and for use at the Corsini Demonstration Kitchen on the same campus at 49 Woodland Street.

"Many of our patients, especially now, do not have access to affordable fresh produce near where they live and regularly consume food high

in carbs and low in protein, fiber, and vitamins, which often results in high rates of obesity and related diseases such as diabetes and hypertension," said Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA, president and chief executive officer, Wheeler. "This expanded agreement, part of a broader nutrition program at Wheeler, serves patients at our four community health center locations and for a longer period of time, from June through November, helping to meet basic needs, while introducing individuals and families to positive food choices."

"We're excited to expand our partnership with Wheeler to help meet the needs of individuals and families in central Connecticut and Greater Waterbury," said Mark Fiorentino, vice president of the Friends of Holcomb Farm. "All people should have access to fresh, nutritious food, which, in turn, supports overall health."

Holcomb Farm is a 312-acre working historic farm located in the heart of West Granby, Connecticut. The farm is operated collaboratively by the Town of Granby and a Board of Directors comprising local citizens. Each year, the Friends of Holcomb Farm donates more than eight tons of healthy produce to over 1,000 people through its Fresh Access program, nearly \$25,000 worth of nutritious, local produce. Through this program, the Friends of Holcomb Farm serves two populations: food-insecure individuals and families who have trouble affording or accessing healthy food, and individuals and families who are struggling with a health crisis. Visit [www.holcombfarm.org](http://www.holcombfarm.org).

## Culinary Fun through Facebook Live



For the past three months, Wheeler's *Healthy Kids in the Kitchen* cooking classes have been happening online through Facebook Live. Wheeler's registered dietitian nutritionist, Jessica Masterson RDN, CDE, CDN, conducts virtual classes from the Corsini Kitchen at 49 Woodland Street in Hartford. Parents and children follow along from home, making delicious recipes. *Healthy Kids in the Kitchen* is provided to the community free through the generous support of the Corsini and

Brantner Families. The events are held virtually on Wheeler's Facebook page on Mondays at 12:30 pm. Additionally, Nutrition Talks are offered on Facebook Live on Wednesdays at 11 am, providing strategies for healthy eating and maintaining overall health.



## Building Renamed, Walkama Honored



The primary five-story building at Wheeler's Hartford flagship community health center will be renamed the Susan Walkama Family Health & Wellness Center, and a virtual event will be held on June 25 to celebrate the legacy of this visionary leader. Susan retired on November 1, 2019 after nearly 40 years at Wheeler, including more than a dozen as president and CEO.

The building at 43 Woodland Street, located at the Wheeler Family Health & Wellness Center campus at 43–49 Woodland Street, opened in January 2018, after a yearlong, \$5-million renovation that dramatically redesigned the interior to match Wheeler's philosophy of truly integrated health care services. It houses the majority of services offered, including primary care and behavioral health, addiction treatment, dental care, specialty care like OB-GYN, chiropractic, complementary medicine, a full-service pharmacy and laboratory, and more.

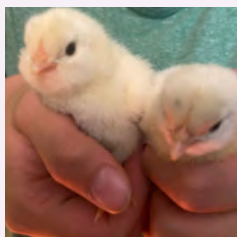


# Innovative Service Delivery

## Beauty, Hope, and Exploration in Virtual Classrooms

As the COVID-19 crisis prompted the closure of schools statewide, teaching teams at Wheeler's Northwest Village School (NVS) found creative ways to inspire youth in virtual classrooms, expanding on the strong foundation of learning that students acquired in the traditional classroom.

"We're teaching students through a generalized-skills approach, and we are reinforcing their ability to be functional learners in their communities and homes," said Jon Oddo, MS, CAGS, vice president/principal, Wheeler's Northwest Village School. "Our multidisciplinary teams—teachers, paraprofessionals, and clinicians—all work together in a virtual setting, guiding students through creative writing exercises, interactive technology, science, art, and more."



According to Oddo, many lessons are delivered through engaging, creative techniques. For example, the NVS high school teaching team illuminates US History, World War II, and the inner workings of American government through interactive online activities, mock cabinet meetings, and direct instruction through Microsoft® Teams. Science teachers use interactive technology and the enhancement of simple objects to teach Earth Science. Students in art class explore the worlds of artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat and others to find beauty in chaos and to learn how to stay grounded in these discoveries. Recently, nine baby chicks were born into the NVS community, part of students' online exploration of the natural world.



"In addition to innovative instruction, we're providing the same kind of support that we did in the actual classroom," added Oddo. "If a student is struggling emotionally, or is having difficulty grasping a particular lesson, our paraprofessionals work separately with that individual outside of the virtual setting to resolve issues and get the student quickly back on track."

Northwest Village School is a therapeutic day school serving students ages 4-21 with complex social, emotional, developmental, learning, and/or behavioral challenges. For information, visit [WheelerClinic.org/nvs](http://WheelerClinic.org/nvs).

## Wheeler, Online and in the Community

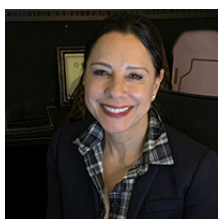
### Podcast with Wheeler President and CEO



OneDigital New England recently highlighted the vital work that local nonprofit organizations perform in communities across our state, through their "Friends with Employee Benefits & HR" podcast. Wheeler's President and CEO, Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA,

talked with host Jeff Cross about how Wheeler is adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic, keeping volunteers engaged, and more.

### Insights on Trauma, Grief



Kim Nelson, LCSW, Wheeler's chief program officer, was interviewed by the *Record-Journal* about how COVID-19 is affecting mental health, and services to help individuals manage trauma. Kim wrote an article to help families cope with grief during this period. Visit [WheelerClinic.org/COVID-19](http://WheelerClinic.org/COVID-19).

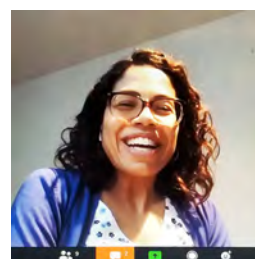
### Young Professionals and Mental Health



Wheeler's Victoria Prestileo, LCSW, associate director, Community-based Services, and Dan Fallon, LPC, CEAP, program manager, Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), talked online recently with members of the

MetroHartford Alliance HYPE (Hartford Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs) about how to manage stress and anxiety during this challenging time, as well as strategies for engaging a company EAP.

### The Harms of Hypertension



On May 21, Wheeler's Vice President of Nursing, Tina Loarte-Rodriguez, MSQAc, BSN, BS, RN, CIC, CPPS, CPHRM, gave an online presentation to members of the Faith Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Hartford, about hypertension symptoms, prevention, and treatment. The program was presented by Access Health CT.



# Dollars and Change

## Lindsay Foundation Supports Basic Needs Fund, Addiction Services

Patients at Wheeler struggling with basic needs or substance use disorders will benefit from the philanthropic generosity of an Avon family foundation.

The Brian and Marilyn Lindsay Foundation was created three years ago to honor the memory of Brian Lindsay, who passed away in 2016.

“My husband and I never felt entitled to any successes we achieved. Everything came as a result of hard work and sacrifices,” Marilyn says. “Along the way, we gave to charitable organizations we admired because it just felt right. For a few years, we talked about creating our own charitable foundation one day, which, after he passed, became a way to honor Brian and cope with my grief.”



With the other members of the foundation, longtime friends Attorney Robert A. Scalise Jr., Roger Abate, and Carole Phelps, they have supported Wheeler in a variety of ways for the last several years, most recently with a gift to support medication-assisted treatment for addiction and the Basic Needs Fund, both vital during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Marilyn and her board are true friends of everyone we serve,” says Sabrina Trocchi, PhD, MPA, Wheeler’s president and chief executive officer. “There has never been a more important time to ensure that our patients have access to resources to help their recovery, or address the immediate needs that they may have in getting through the pandemic healthy and well.”

The full version of this story can be found at our website: [WheelerClinic.org/Lindsay](http://WheelerClinic.org/Lindsay).

## Wheeler’s Golf Classic Rescheduled to September 16, 2020



Same great event. Same venue. Different date. Wheeler’s 35th Annual Golf Classic, presented by Mutual of America, has been rescheduled to Wednesday, September 16, at the Country Club of Farmington.

Your participation and/or sponsorship in our only fundraiser of 2020 will support Wheeler’s Basic Needs Fund, which serves the individuals and families in our care by addressing a range of environmental and social factors that

interfere with a patient’s health and well-being, but are not addressed by other means of funding. For information, visit [WheelerClinic.org/GolfClassic](http://WheelerClinic.org/GolfClassic).



## Will You Help?

**Basic Needs Fund** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Your donation provides for the supports and services that insurance and other funding doesn't.

**Wheeler Innovation Fund** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Your dollars allow our staff to experiment with new ideas and address issues with innovative approaches.

**General Support** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Support the care of individuals, families, and communities across our state each year, through Wheeler’s continuum of more than 100 services and programs.

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