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EYE ON THE ELDERLY: HELPING MORRIS SENIORS



Morris therapists go to the clients

Mental health help where people live

LORRAINE ASH @LORRAINEVASH

For some Morris County seniors, the walls of their homes can come to feel less like a comfort and more like a barrier to life.

Behind those walls, problems mount — physical maladies, loneliness, grief as friends and loved ones die, mounting bills. If left unchecked, mental health experts say, these emotional challenges can worsen, compound and lead to depression and anxiety.

"Aging is a difficult chapter of life," said Michelle Papka, a neuropsychologist at Overlook Medical Center. "It feels like you're approaching the end. You feel like the rest of the world is going on and maybe forgetting about you a little bit."

Two years ago, the Institute of Medicine released a report showing nearly one in five older American adults — at least 5.6 million to 8 million people — suffer with a mental health or substance abuse condition.

Locally, a mental health delivery universe has risen to meet the obvious need — helping seniors where they live.

In the last several years, this world of care has started coming into its own: Psychological professionals who offer talk therapy in private practice are driving to seniors' homes to counsel them. Some geriatric care management agencies are hiring psychologists to offer talk therapy at clients' kitchen tables, too — and there are nonprofit programs doing likewise.

'Aches and pains increase'

State and local statistics have yet to catch up with the trend, which is unprecedented in American history.

"The need is increasing, certainly by dint of the numbers of older folks," said Aaron Welt, a Morristown-based clinical psychologist with a doctorate. "People are living longer. I've had any number of 90-plus-year-olds and 100-year-olds. You didn't see this 10 or 20 years ago."

"The aches and the pains increase," he added. "Their own children are older. There are financial issues. There are many sources of anxiety and depression."

Welt sees his Morris patients in his office, in their homes and in assisted living facilities, both privately and through Generations, a Rochelle Park-based company — one of the first in northern New Jersey to offer and implement both in-home care management plans and counseling.

Even government agencies are eyeing the demand for in-home counseling services. Morris County helps fund such services through the NewBridge@Home program but does not offer them directly, according to Theresa Davis, director of the county's Division on Aging, Disabilities and Veterans.

"No matter the age, any individual has access to our traditional system of care," said Laurie Becker, director of the county's Division of Community and Behavioral Health Services. "But people aging in their homes sometimes do need those specialized services. A lot of

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PHOTOS: KAREN MANCINELLI/CORRESPONDENT (ABOVE) AND JASON TOWLEN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER (TOP)

Andy Lapedesa (above), a Morristown-based licensed clinical social worker, specializes in geriatrics and provides talk therapy in homes of senior citizens. Top photo: Social worker Dawn Thomas of Family Support Care Management in Jefferson is on her way to visit another senior citizen. Her specialty is grief counseling

To find out more

Know a senior citizen who needs mental health services at home? Here are some people, practices and programs active in Morris County:

- » Cornerstone Family Programs, Senior Collaboration and Intensive Geriatric Case Management Program, www.cornerstonefamilyprograms.org/Services-and-Programs/Senior-Programs.html
- » Family Support Care Management, Dawn Thomas, licensed clinical social worker, Jefferson, 201-803-4131
- » Generations LLC, counseling and psychotherapy, <http://generations-llc.com/services/counseling-and-psychotherapy>
- » Jewish Family Service of MetroWest, Holocaust Survivor Services, www.jfsmetrowest.org/services/for-older-adults/holocaust-survivor-services
- » The Morris Guild of Psychotherapy, www.morrisguild.com
- » NewBridge@Home, <http://newbridge.org/services-for-seniors/independent-living-services>
- » Dr. Michelle Papka, clinical psychologist, www.drmichellepapka.com
- » SeniorBridge Home Care Morristown, <http://seniorbridge.com/Locations/NewJersey/Morristown.aspx>
- » Dr. Aaron G. Welt, clinical psychologist, Morristown, 973-538-7490

Selection of jurors to begin

Murder trial of husband in shooting death of wife

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The hours after a young couple were shot on Cedar Street in Boonton — the wife fatally — were fraught with tension as police chased the husband's claims that strangers had approached with a cry of "terrorists!" and opened fire.

Details of a crime that attracted national attention for its savagery and ended the life of a Pakistani mother of two young boys are about to unfold in a Morris County courtroom.

Within seven hours of the Aug. 16, 2011, killing of Nazish Noorani, 27, her spouse, Kashif Parvaiz, confessed to a detective that the shooting was "an accident" and that he didn't want to go to jail. Despite the confession, which was taped and will be played during the trial, Parvaiz has pleaded not guilty.

Parvaiz, now 29 and held in the Morris County Jail in lieu of \$3 million bail since his arrest, is scheduled to go on trial in Morristown on Tuesday when selection of a jury to hear charges that include murder, conspiracy and weapons possession will begin. State Superior Court Judge Robert Gilson wants testimony to begin Feb. 2, after a jury that has been screened for impartiality, opinions on the Muslim faith and use of social media has been empaneled.

Once testimony starts, the trial is expected to last four to five weeks.

Parvaiz, represented by attorneys John Latoracca and John J. Bruno, has maintained he is innocent. But

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A winding path to White House

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Election Day 2016 — Nov. 8, 2016, to be exact — is 660 days away.

That may seem like a long time, but within that span eight years ago, Barack Obama went from being a first term Illinois senator to president of the United States. If Gov. Chris Christie wants to become the first New Jersey governor since Woodrow Wilson to occupy the Oval Office, he will have to navigate a winding path wrought with so many potholes and detours it could pass for some of the state's roads.

Whether it is his sometimes outspoken personality, smoldering questions about the bridge scandal or his appeal to the ultra-conservative faction of the Republican Party, Christie will be challenged to erase a number of doubts.

"Christie tends to stand out because he attracts

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"He tends to play favorites and if you get on his bad side — even if you're trying to do good by your constituents, he seems to hold personal grudges."

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