Ryan O’Donovan, shown with his mother, Wendi O’Donovan, graduated from the Center for Autism and Developmental Disorders program last spring.
Dear Friends:

Welcome to our new publication, Possibilities, which is intended to provide you with useful information about Maine Behavioral Healthcare (MBH) and showcase our progress in building a comprehensive system of behavioral health services throughout Maine and eastern New Hampshire.

• In this inaugural issue, you will read about Ryan O’Donovan, a young man with autism who benefited from our outstanding Developmental Disorders Program and whose family members responded with a gift that is appreciated by the program’s patients.

• Another article features Robyn Ostrander, MD, the new Chair of the Glickman Center for Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, who oversees the most comprehensive array of treatment, training and research programs in youth psychiatry north of Boston.

• You’ll read how the Lunder Family Alliance at Spring Harbor Hospital helped a young woman and her parents, and how new crisis service initiatives are quickly assessing patients and connecting them with treatment.

I arrived at Maine Behavioral Healthcare last year, after spending two decades in mental health leadership positions. I was attracted by MBH’s unique configuration—how it integrates behavioral health services with a large medical center, Maine Medical Center, and community agencies. It is our integrated nature that allows us to deliver on our promises, including to increase the quality of the services we provide. We are making progress but have much more to accomplish.

Please consider supporting Maine Behavioral Healthcare. We serve all populations, including many patients who lack health insurance and have no ability to pay for their care.

Your gift will help, and it will have an impact on our patients’ lives. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Merz
President and CEO
Progress in Living with Autism

The O’Donovan Family Has Benefited from the Developmental Disorders Program

Tim and Wendi O’Donovan have seen what happens when a specialized team knows how to capitalize on teachable moments. That is the essence of the treatment their son, Ryan, received from Maine Behavioral Healthcare’s Developmental Disorders Program. "They really taught Ryan, because they knew how to get into his world and bring him out," says Wendi. “Today he independently uses the skills he learned there.”

All parents of children with autism hope to see true progress. But it took years before Ryan, now 20, and his parents did. “We were scrambling all the time to find services,” recalls Wendi of those early days. “We didn’t know anybody, and we didn’t know what to do.”

"Ryan chugged along in a school program, but treatment wasn’t what it is today," Tim adds. “Things have evolved. When Ryan was diagnosed, autism was much rarer. At the time, we were told that 1 in 500 children were autistic. Today, it is estimated to be 1 in 66.”

Fortunately, around the time Ryan began to have a higher degree of anxiety and agitation, the family met Matthew Siegel, MD, who had arrived as the new director of Spring Harbor Hospital’s Developmental Disorders Unit. “Like many kids with significant autism, at puberty Ryan began experiencing more intense emotions and increased awareness of the world around him,” Dr. Siegel explains. “When someone doesn’t have the increased ability needed to react to a given situation, they can become physically aggressive—and remorseful afterward.”

Ryan was admitted to the hospital’s specialized unit—of which there are only ten in the U.S.—something his parents will never forget. “It’s not easy to turn your 14-year-old son over to strangers,” Wendi says. “But I trusted them, and we were feeling blessed to have met Dr. Siegel. When I look back, it was like we had been floundering in the ship together. Dr. Siegel became the captain of Ryan’s ship.”

CADD Staff Have Developed Useful Tools

Ryan required a few more stays at Spring Harbor Hospital. Each time, he was stabilized and able to return home, even though he needed more intensive care, and it was becoming a challenge to maintain a calm and safe family life. “We work with our patients to increase their capacity to regulate the brain’s activity and process their emotions,” says Dr. Siegel. “There are no proven medications for that. Over time with our help, Ryan made slow, steady progress.

“Despite these challenges, Ryan was never cut off from the community,” he adds. “The O’Donovans are remarkable people. They have always involved Ryan in family activities, such as shopping and skiing, even when it puts enormous responsibility on them.”

When Ryan subsequently moved to a group home, he was able to take advantage of the new Center for Autism and Developmental Disorders (CADD) outpatient treatment program. “We used to drive him everywhere for the services he needed—speech, occupational and physical therapy, social worker support,” says Wendi. “CADD brought all of them under one roof.”

Along the way, Ryan has benefited from tools developed by the CADD staff. Processing sheets, for example, are designed to increase coping skills. “They include sets of pictures and words that communicate emotions—sad, happy, mad,” Dr. Siegel explains. “For each emotion, there is a concrete coping strategy—take a deep breath, bounce on a ball, take a bite of an apple—intended to interrupt the agitation cycle. The child can choose to do one of those things.”

The O’Donovans observed how use of the processing sheets helped their son. “Ryan has learned to understand his emotions—what they are and what they mean—and is expressing himself now,” says Wendi. “This is huge. The staff there has really shaped him.”

"When Ryan was diagnosed, we were told that 1 in 500 children were autistic. Today, it is estimated to be 1 in 66.” – Tim O’Donovan
Research Seeks to Understand Childhood Aggression

It is a research challenge, and those who are familiar with autism understand that it has the potential to change lives. Dr. Siegel and his colleagues are attempting to understand the how and why of aggression in children with autism by studying it in the moment.

“We are trying to develop biomarkers—objective biological signals—for the developmental emergence of aggression in children,” Dr. Siegel explains. “For children who are severely affected by autism, a big part of the problem is that caregivers don’t know that aggression is coming. There is often no warning. If we can understand the processes that precede and underlie aggression, we think we can intervene to reduce risks.”

How does one study aggression as it builds and emerges? Dr. Siegel is working with a team of scientists across the country who have developed a unique approach. “Our pilot study underway within our inpatient research network has patients wearing wristband sensors that detect physiological arousal signals, such as heart rate and skin sweat,” he says. “Those signals are processed and converted into usable information that is sent wirelessly to a tablet or smartphone.”

Using a simple app, the device can display colors that reflect risk: green for doing well, yellow noting that a problem may be developing, green indicating that aggression is increasing and red to warn that aggression is likely imminent.

Inpatients at Spring Harbor Hospital are participating in the pilot study, which was funded by the Nancy Lurie Marks Foundation and the Simons Foundation. Scientific colleagues are at Brown University, Northeastern University, University of Cincinnati and University of Pittsburgh. Data from the pilot study will be available later this winter.

“The majority of research underway on autism is focused on the high-functioning, verbal population,” Dr. Siegel notes. “But there are enormous needs in those with severe autism, as well as a lot to learn from them.”

Dr. Siegel has organized a six-hospital research network; the next step will be to utilize the pilot data to make the case for funding a rigorous, multi-site study of aggression biomarkers within the network. “Of course, we need funding assistance from philanthropy or governmental grants to perform that work,” he says.

“We are optimistic. This research is highly innovative and translatable. It represents a true contribution that we can make—and something that will improve the lives of people with autism and their families.”

More than a playground

This past spring, Ryan graduated from CADD. The O’Donovans maintain a strong connection with Spring Harbor Hospital and Dr. Siegel and, through their generosity, have an ongoing impact on the care of children with autism and other developmental disorders. In 2012, Tim, Wendi and family members made a collective gift to construct a playground at Spring Harbor designed specifically for children with autism. The Michael E. O’Donovan Playground is named for Tim’s uncle, who had recently passed away.

“From the time Ryan was small, we knew he needed a playground where he would be safe and comfortable, but we didn’t realize that a playground could teach so much to children with autism to help them manage the demands of the outside world,” says Wendi.

It is something Dr. Siegel wanted for patients. “The O’Donovan Playground is now part of our therapeutic program at the hospital,” he says. “We have more than 100 children admitted to our unit each year, and they all use it. It’s fun for them, and it also increases their self-regulation. For example, swinging can be effective in bringing down a child’s arousal level.”

“Each time we had to hospitalize Ryan, it had a significant emotional impact on us,” says Tim. “The playground was an opportunity to do something good for lots of kids. My uncle would be so proud and happy about it. Having it be in memory of a family member helped us feel hope for Ryan’s future, our family and all children with autism.”

“So many times we felt hopeless,” says Wendi. “The parents of autistic children need to know they shouldn’t lose hope.”

Be sure to visit Olympia Sports stores during Autism Awareness Month in April, when associates will be collecting donations to benefit autism research. To find a store near you, please visit OlympiaSports.net
MBH initiative aims to assess and serve patients quickly

It includes a new approach to bed management

The phone conference occurs each morning at 10:00 am, and it is proving to be an efficient, effective way to assure that patients receive the care they need quickly. The “rapid check-in” provides real-time information on bed availability to staff at organizations affiliated with Maine Behavioral Healthcare (MBH).

It is part of a larger initiative aimed at improving how patients flow through MBH’s increasingly integrated system. “Our main goal is to assess and serve patients as soon as possible,” says Ron Young, director of emergency services. “That means assuring they have rapid access to psychiatric therapy and case management. It also means preventing patients, many of whom are experiencing a crisis, from spending time in an emergency department (ED) while they wait for an inpatient bed.

“A lot happens in an ED,” he notes. “It’s too stimulating for patients with mental illness, especially if someone is experiencing their first psychotic break. And we know it is difficult for family members.”

The morning check-in covers the status of approximately 180 psychiatric beds at five hospitals and two crisis stabilization units. “We discuss who has beds available and who is anticipating them later in the day,” Ron explains. Individual staff can then stay in touch to arrange the transfer of a patient who needs care.

Maine Behavioral Healthcare’s new bed management system is working well, says Matt Hincks, RN, director of emergency services and inpatient behavioral health at Mid Coast Hospital. “We do our best when patients come to our ED, but it’s frustrating for them, because they want treatment. On average, 25 patients arrive in our ED each week who need treatment for a mental illness. With the rapid check-in, we know what’s going on at the other hospitals. We’re problem-solving and collaborating.”

“Our crisis services in southern and mid-coast Maine include a mobile component where skilled staff go, when appropriate, to the home, school or law enforcement,” Ron adds. “It’s better to assess the patient where they are and avoid an unnecessary trip to the ED. In addition, our crisis staff, who work 24/7, are now either on-site at our affiliated hospitals or can be dispatched from our community-based behavioral healthcare centers. We have set a response time of within 60 minutes and are measuring our performance on a regular basis.

“We’re seeing the benefits of all this work. People are receiving the treatment they need in a more immediate way.”

What if you could support Maine Behavioral Healthcare and…

- do it without affecting your current income?
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Know that your gift can help us provide a seamless and compassionate continuum of care by a community of providers who collaborate to promote recovery and the overall mental and physical well-being of those we are privileged to serve.

For more information about making a planned gift to Maine Behavioral Healthcare, please call Michelle Zichella, Director of Development, at 207-661-6100 or contact your estate planner.
Robyn Ostrander, MD, joined Spring Harbor Hospital in 2016. As Chair of the Glickman Center for Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, she oversees the most comprehensive array of treatment, training and research programs in youth psychiatry north of Boston. Dr. Ostrander most recently served as Senior Medical Director at The Brattleboro Retreat in Brattleboro, Vermont.

What drew you to treating children and adolescents?
During my training, I saw that psychiatric illness often begins in adolescence. In the most recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey, in which 38,000 Maine high school students participated, 23% reported symptoms of depression. Childhood behavioral problems are also often related to early trauma. If you intervene early, children and adolescents may go on to develop normally and not need intensive services later in life. I believe we are able to provide better care to children, compared to adults, because they function within a system—parents, teachers, coaches—that can help identify issues and participate in treatment.

Is early intervention an increasingly prominent theme in behavioral healthcare?
Yes, because we know that psychiatric illness, such as anxiety and depression, often are the result of genetics, as well as early life experiences. If we can identify problems, such as trauma, we can intervene and perhaps avoid high-risk behaviors and psychiatric illness, as well as other medical illnesses, later on. Children do best when they are with their own families, so we partner with pediatricians to support parents who may be struggling or when there may be abuse in the home.

Do you find that parents are especially concerned about the stigma of mental illness?
Some parents voice concern about their child being labeled. Yet treatment is effective, and depression and suicide have far more impact on children than many other illnesses. But we continue to underfund research on mental illness. As a profession, I believe we should increase our focus on treatment outcomes as one way to reverse this inequity. Psychotherapy works, often in 8-12 sessions, and medications can restore function to a child’s life. By saying “my child has depression,” parents can reduce stigma and may save lives by encouraging other kids to come for treatment. They are courageous for seeking treatment.

Do families play an important role in a child’s treatment?
Parents and family members are the experts on the children we see. Our goal is to empower and educate them so they know what to look for—what is normal behavior? what are the signs of illness? how do we monitor for improvement? Parents also are critical in examining patterns in their child’s behavior and understanding the way the family functions, and then relaying that information to mental health providers so that we can offer the right interventions.

Is there new research that is helping to shape treatment?
We recently held the ninth annual Glickman Symposium here in Portland, which is an opportunity to hear from investigators from academic centers around the U.S. This year’s discussion focused on treating first-episode psychosis. We utilize this model to intervene, sometimes even before the first episode of psychotic symptoms, with outreach, family education and group sessions and targeted medications. Research is also showing that specific psychotherapies are effective in patients with psychosis. This is causing us to think differently about treatment, and it argues for payment reform so that patients can receive the comprehensive services they need.

Are you optimistic about the future of treating children and adolescents with mental illness?
Yes, because we are steadily improving treatment and removing barriers to accessing it. Since my arrival here, I see Spring Harbor Hospital, Maine Behavioral Healthcare and Maine Medical Center working together and firmly devoted to integrated care. This is the goal: to integrate behavioral healthcare with the rest of healthcare—obstetrics, pediatrics, the emergency department and internal and family medicine. Mostly, I am optimistic because I work with children, and they do get better.
Along with Treatment, the Right Support

The Lunder Family Alliance makes all the difference

Those who are diagnosed with a mental illness often are relieved and grateful for treatment that combines medication and ongoing counseling. But is that enough? At Spring Harbor Hospital, patients and families benefit from the Lunder Family Alliance (LFA), a unique, integrated program designed to address the challenges facing those who leave the hospital after treatment. They discover that they are not alone, and neither are the families who love them.

Michelle Michaud remembers landing a job that seemed promising, but before long she heard a familiar refrain: “You need to get along with people a lot better if you are going to be successful.” Michelle was left to wonder why she kept losing jobs. Then her symptoms became serious.

“I was trying to make ends meet, having panic attacks, and then I lost my apartment and was living in my car,” recalls the Portland resident, who graduated from Maine College of Art (MECA) in 2009. “Things were great during high school and at MECA. I tried to pinpoint when I began to have trouble.”

A car accident in June 2016 brought her to Maine Medical Center, and she was subsequently transferred to Spring Harbor Hospital. “I didn’t know what to expect, but I began to realize it was going to be helpful,” she says. “I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. I felt relief, because now I can explain that I have this problem, and I’m taking care of it.”

FAMILY NAVIGATOR AND EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST GO TO WORK

Her parents also are relieved. “The difference in Michelle is huge,” says Chris Michaud, her father. “She’s back to being the kid we knew—very smart, very creative and fun to be around.”

He and Michelle’s mother appreciated the call they received from Betsy Oakleaf, the LFA family navigator, after their daughter was admitted to Spring Harbor Hospital. “I spoke with Betsy many times, and then we met with her,” Chris says. “She educated and enlightened us and gave us a folder of information, which was helpful.”

“Parents often feel lost in the system,” explains Betsy, who works with family members during and after the inpatient stay. “I tell them ‘I’m here to think about you, because you may not have been able to do that.’”

She has developed a curriculum aimed at helping families play a useful role. “Sometimes people think that, once patients are discharged, they are all right and will, for example, show up for their appointments,” she says. “But they need support, so I help parents learn active listening skills so they are doing just that—supporting their adult child rather than enabling them.”

Meanwhile, Michelle met with Liisa Sloat, an LFA employment specialist, during and after her hospital stay. “We meet with the patient right away to discuss how they can still work or attend school,” Liisa says. “It makes them feel they are in control.”

Liisa coached Michelle in preparation for a job interview at the store where she currently works. “She helped me with questions to ask and what to wear,” says Michelle. “The biggest thing is I now go to work with confidence, because I have everything under control.”

Michelle continues to see Cameron Bonny, MD, a psychiatrist, and Linda Jacobson, RN, a mental health counselor. “I really appreciate Dr. Bonny,” she says. “He looks out for me, and he loves art.”

“Parents often feel lost in the system. I tell them ‘I’m here to think about you, because you may not have been able to do that.’” – Betsy Oakleaf

Michelle, now 29, and her parents are optimistic that she will find her way to work that taps her creativity. “It was a tough summer, but it’s really good to have my kid back,” says Chris.
MESSAGE FROM THE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE CHAIR

Dear Friends:

What an amazing year we have had at Maine Behavioral Healthcare!

During fiscal year 2016, we provided care to more than 16,000 people. We could not have done this without your help and commitment.

As you’ll read in the pages of this new magazine, your gifts have a tremendous impact on the work we do. Your support allowed us to create the Center for Autism and Developmental Disorders, which celebrated its first graduating class last summer.

We are three-quarters of the way to reaching our $1 million challenge grant goal for the Lunder Family Alliance at Spring Harbor Hospital. On page 7, Michelle Michaud, a Portland resident, shares her story personally thank our Development Committee, Board of Trustees, volunteers and staff for their gifts of time, talent, guidance and their passion for our mission.

And I especially want to thank you—all our friends and donors—for your generosity and continued support. As we continue our journey of excellence in patient care, innovative research, cutting-edge treatments and integration of behavioral and physical health, we hope you will continue this journey with us.

With heartfelt sincerity,

Kathleen Kilbride
Development Chair and Trustee

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Signs of Hope raised more than $180,000 to benefit the Lunder Family Alliance. Special thanks to our gracious hosts, John and Susie Marshall (from left), pictured here with guest Joe Boulos.
MBH’s 25th annual golf tournament raised funds to provide vital services for underprivileged kids. Pictured from left is John Bouchard, golf tournament chair, with Bill Caron, MaineHealth CEO.

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Mary and Michael Sauschuck
John and Karen Schacht
Liz Schlos
Kevin and Wendy Schofield
Susan Schraft and Richard Berne
Jeri Schroder
Theodore and Karen Scontras
Scratch Baking Company
Thomas Selby
Shades Advertising Specialties
Town of Shapleigh
Beverly and David Sherman
ShuttleBus Zoom
Sylvia Skillin
Lois and Jim Skilling
Skillins Greenhouse Florist
SmartSource
Janine Smestad
Ellen and Donald Smith
Jane Smith
Martha and Peter Smith
SMR Electric
Erie and Michael Soucy
Town of South Berwick
South Congregational Church
South Portland House of Pizza
Southern Maine Health Care
Southwest Airlines
Ann and Charles Spaulding
Mary and Donald St. Germain
Ann St. John Gray and Shawn Gray
Standard Baking Company
Sugarloaf
Sunday River
Mary Beth and Steve Sunenblick
Edward and Jennifer Suslovic
Tananora of Portland
The Tarrafa Family
Barbara Taylor
Creighton Taylor
TD Bank, N.A.
Philip P. Thompson, Jr.
B. Michael Thurlow
Sigita and Zygmun Tomczuk
Dean G. Tourigny, DDS PA
Town of Cape Elizabeth
Town of Freedom
Town of Kennebunk
Town of Lebanon
Town of North Berwick
Traditions Italian Ristorante
TruChoice Federal Credit Union
Alison Turscote
Liz and David Turesky
Melania Turgelsky
Kathy Tyson
United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut
United Way of Greater Portland
United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley
University of New England
UNUM
Anne and Jeffrey Valley
Daniel D. Viger
Martha E. Vignola
Patricia and Lyle Voss
Natasha Wallace
Patty Jo Walton
Bill Wang
Maureen and David Wedge
Jane Wellehan
Town of Wells

Memorial and Tribute Gifts

These gifts are a powerful way to honor or remember your loved one. Your gift provides critical funds to continue our work to provide a seamless and compassionate continuum of care through a community of providers.

Joyce and Paul Cotton
in memory of John Doherty
Richard Couture and Polly LeVasseur
in memory of Rita Couture
Valerie and Donovan Currier
in memory of Sandy Colello
Sandra D’Attilio
in memory of William D’Attilio
Georgann Dickey
in memory of Sandy Colello
Rebecca and John Gibb
in memory of Sandy Colello
Jerome Gillis
in memory of Barbara Gillis
Joanne and Evangelos Glicos
in memory of Sandy Colello
Betts Gorsky
in honor of Creighton Taylor
Barbara Gros
in memory of Charles Collins
Deborah Henry
in memory of Sandy Colello
Nancy B. Hodermarsky
in honor of David Smith
Venus and Michael Kane
in memory of Sandy Colello

Please send any corrections to this list to Lisa Bush at LBUSH@MaineBehavioralHealthcare.org.
United Insurance staff donated stuffed animals to comfort children who have been through painful circumstances.

The Trauma Intervention Program (TIP) of Greater Portland is composed of specially trained volunteers who provide emotional and practical support to survivors of traumatic events and their families in the first few hours following a tragedy.

Last October, employees at United Insurance locations throughout Maine participated in a stuffed toy drive to raise awareness and support for National Fire Prevention Month. Thanks to their thoughtful donation, TIP volunteers have a generous supply of comfort items to choose from when they respond to a call where a child is involved. For more information on TIP, call Leslie Skillin at 207-661-6478 or visit MaineBehavioralHealthcare.org/TIP.

Signs of Hope for Young Adults in Mental Health Treatment

More than 150 friends and donors gathered at the annual Signs of Hope event in July to celebrate the first anniversary of the Lunder Family Alliance at Spring Harbor Hospital. Hosted at the home of Susie and John Marshall, the event raised $180,000 to benefit the Alliance. Board Trustee Creighton Taylor spoke passionately of her experiences as the parent of an adult child in the mental health system and shared how her family’s journey has been transformed for the better due to the Alliance’s efforts.

Signs of Hope was an eye-opening opportunity to fully understand the impact of this incredible program that was made possible by a generous challenge grant. To learn more about the Lunder Family Alliance, visit SpringHarbor.org/lfa or call Michelle Zichella, Director of Development, at 207-661-6100.

Honor a Caregiver!

At Maine Behavioral Healthcare, we are committed to excellence in the care of each individual. Our patients, clients and families often express their gratitude for this excellent care in a variety of ways — through kind words, a smile, a hug or letters of thanks. Sometimes, patients and their families choose to express their gratitude through charitable gifts that help us care for more patients.

Your gifts truly matter. Your support ensures that you, your family and your neighbors continue to receive state-of-the-art care from our expert, compassionate team.

Our Grateful Patient Program is an opportunity to say thank you to a member of our care team, or support an area of care or a program that made a difference in your life. If you would like to make a gift today, please call Lisa Bush in the Development Office at 207-661-6101.
Maine Behavioral Healthcare Joins Changing Minds Campaign Kickoff at White House

Maine Behavioral Healthcare was among a handful of community-based agencies invited to attend last October’s launch of the Changing Minds Campaign at the White House. Changing Minds is a public awareness campaign designed to promote awareness about the traumatic effect that witnessing violence can have on children. It also raises awareness of how adults can help children heal and recover from these harmful experiences. The event convened leaders from the Department of Justice, the White House and stakeholder organizations from around the country.

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Aurora Smaldone at 207-661-6504.

Maine Behavioral Healthcare Joins Changing Minds Campaign Kickoff at White House

Wednesday, April 12, 2017
5:30 – 8:30 pm
Holiday Inn by the Bay
Portland, Maine

Proceeds Benefit the Trauma Intervention Program

Cocktails, Bountiful Hors d’oeuvres
Delightful Desserts
Awards Ceremony
Hosted by Shannon Moss
Tickets start at $50

For more information, please call 207-661-6101 or visit MaineBehavioralHealthcare.org/Heroes

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