

Case Manager Community Partner Award

Kim Tchakirides, MA has been the Director of Liberty Safe Haven since it opened in 2005. Liberty Safe Haven, sponsored by Liberty Community Services in New Haven, is a thirty-three apartment harm reduction model supportive housing development. It provides housing and services for formerly homeless individuals who have HIV/AIDS and/or are in recovery for mental illness or substance abuse. The average length of homelessness for individuals entering the program is eight years, with one third of the individuals having been homeless for fifteen or more years.

An extremely caring person, Kim works with tenants to help them achieve success in supportive housing. According to Kim's colleagues, "Kim has worked tirelessly to make this program succeed and to create a community... she has advocated for the individuals in her program... and has articulated to the community the value of a harm reduction model... Kim and her staff have built a caring community where every individual is respected, honored, and where the potential for recovery is seen every day as a new improvement and gradual steps forward."

As director, Kim's responsibilities include the day-to-day operation of the Safe Haven program as well as the supervision of two of Liberty Community Services' scattered site supportive housing programs in the community and the Day Program at Liberty Safe Haven.

Kim's broad base of human service experience includes working with children and adolescents with various mental health conditions and learning disabilities and adults in recovery for substance abuse, coordinating a men's halfway house, and advocating for victims of sexual assault. In this work, she saw many individuals cycle in and out of homelessness and wanted to be part of a permanent solution. Kim worked for two years as the manager for Liberty Community Services' outreach department before she began her work at Liberty Safe Haven.

The Case Management Community Partner Award is awarded to someone who provides case management through a supportive housing program who shows a commitment to supportive housing advocacy, makes advocacy a focus of his or her work with supportive housing tenants, and works to build a sense of community among residents.

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For the past ten years, **Denise Ozanne** has been the Housing Coordinator for the Shelter Plus Care Programs at Greater Danbury Mental Health Authority (GDMHA.) During this time, she has helped over 150 tenants who have rental assistance certificates to attain and maintain housing in the community. Individuals in the Shelter Plus Care Program have previously experienced homelessness and struggle with disabilities and/or addiction.

According to colleagues, “Denise’s passion in supportive housing and her belief that recovery is possible is translated to her tenants in her day to day work. She is the ultimate optimist and believes that hope and recovery are not only possible but attainable.”

In order to increase awareness among men and women in the program about tenancy issues, legal rights, first time homeownership opportunities and other important information, Denise holds quarterly tenant meetings that host a variety of expert speakers.

Denise has participated on several statewide Housing and Homeless committees within the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. In December 2008, she completed her Master of Health Administration at Ancell School, Western Connecticut State University.

During her 17 years in the mental health field at Fairfield Hills Hospital, Denise says she had the opportunity to see “years and years of individual recoveries,” through which she realized how vital a role housing plays in the success of recovery. When the hospital closed, her belief in the importance of housing led her to her current position.

