



Gratitude Gathering Honors Volunteers and Supporters

Pro Bono Counseling (PBC) held its annual Gratitude Gathering on Thursday, May 2, to celebrate volunteers for the impact they make each year to ensure all Marylanders have access to mental health care. During the event, PBC also acknowledged the generous supporters and community partners, and presented humanitarian and civic awards.

"Pro Bono Counseling has been able to connect thousands of Marylanders with the mental health care resources they need and deserve for more than 30 years thanks to the dedication of licensed mental health professionals enrolled as volunteers, as well as the partnership of our generous constituents and donors," stated PBC Executive Director Amy Greensfelder, LCSW.

Amy kicked off the event with introductory remarks and provided an overview and history of the organization and the vital role volunteers fulfill each year.

PBC continued the tradition of presenting the CHAI Dr. Radha Pathak Humanitarian Award during the event.



Dr. Asma Naeem

Radha's son, Dr. Sujay Pathak, spoke about the legacy of his mother before Amy presented the award to Dr. Asma Naeem for the work she is doing to prioritize social justice.

"I am deeply honored to receive this award from Pro Bono Counseling, which provides such essential services for Maryland citizens and shares similar values as the BMA," said Dr. Asma Naeem, the museum's Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. "For several years the BMA has been working to make social justice the norm so that everyone feels welcome regardless of their race, ethnicity, education, or socio-economic status. We believe art experiences can be a catalyst for inspiration, conversation, and connection to make our world a better place."

In celebration of the ten-year anniversary of PBC's Terapias Initiative, the Terapias Community Care Award was presented to:



Pro Bono Counseling Volunteer Clinicians

Donna Batkis, LCSW-C; Kathleen Page, MD, and the Behavior Health Equity Across Maryland team; Catalina Rodriguez Lima, Director of the Baltimore City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs; and Giuliana Valencia-Banks, Baltimore County's Chief of Immigrant Affairs. They were recognized for their response attending to the emotional, language, and cultural needs of the families impacted by the Key Bridge tragedy.

Makeda Crane graciously shared inspirational remarks about her experience with PBC from a client perspective and thanked all of the volunteers for the services they donate each year.

PBC's Outreach Coordinator Yolonda Nelson-Swain and Clinical Director Sherri Bloom honored volunteers by highlighting their milestone achievements and collective impact. Event attendees were in awe to learn how many years many clinicians have been volunteering and the amount of clients they had seen. Since PBC was established in 1991, 3,119 licensed mental health volunteers have donated 209,840 total counseling hours to 40,890 families and individuals throughout the state of Maryland.

"The Gratitude Gathering was truly one of the most beautifully presented and moving events of its kind," stated Lauren Goodsmith, MS, MPH. "Everything was so thoughtfully done, from the setting and offerings to the words that were shared about and by the honorees. On top of everything else, I had the opportunity to reconnect with some former colleagues and a former professor and clinical supervisor!"

The event also served as a fundraiser for PBC, with more than \$28,000 raised through sponsorships, donations, and silent auction proceeds. PBC thanks everyone for their generosity and support.

The WARMLine Connection

Staying connected socially with meaningful relationships is beneficial to everyone's well-being, but can become more difficult as we age. For many older individuals, limited mobility and agency can fuel feelings of isolation, loneliness, and helplessness. Pro Bono Counseling's mental health WARMLine is a free resource for all Marylanders, providing meaningful care and connection, and that often includes providing much needed company and support.

Recently an older individual contacted PBC's WARMLine in a near-panic due to the discovery of a letter from their landlord. They felt terrified at the prospect of opening the letter. While the caller typically relied on their child to assist with difficult or frightening tasks, they worried about being "a bother" by contacting them for help. They also expressed intense anxiety about waiting to open the letter.

During the call, the WARMLine associate validated their feelings of anxiety, gently challenged their belief that they were "a bother" and suggested that the caller and WARMLine associate open the letter together. The WARMLine associate guided the caller through some breathing exercises, and then prompted the caller to open the letter.

As it turned out, the letter was a routine flier, rather than the eviction notice the caller feared. The caller expressed extreme relief. The caller thanked the WARMLine associate for taking on this task with them, explaining that they felt they would not have been able to get through this without the associate's help.

The WARMLine associate reminded the caller that they had the strength to tackle this task all along; they just needed a little bit of company. The caller ended the call by stating, "You have helped me so much today."

If you or someone you know is feeling sad, anxious, or isolated, call the WARMLine at 410.598.0234.

Welcome New PBC Volunteers

Please welcome the following mental health clinicians who enrolled as Pro Bono Counseling (PBC) volunteers last month:

- Ruyi Lyn
- Barbara Pulgar, LCSW-C
- Mary Stapleton, PhD, LCPC
- Vernesa White

Have you considered volunteering with PBC? It offers many benefits, including thoroughly screened clients matched based upon your experience and preferences, free continuing education workshops, case consultations, and networking opportunities.

To learn more about volunteering or to enroll, click [HERE](#)

PBC Resource Corner: Mental Health Association of MD

Since May is designated as Mental Health Awareness Month, we are highlighting the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD). MHAMD unites professionals, consumers, advocates, and families who share the same mission and "envision a just, humane, and healthy society where each individual is accorded respect, dignity, and the opportunity to achieve their full potential – free from stigma and prejudice."

MHAMD's public policy team works with



Congress and government officials to affect laws and policies. They offer community outreach and behavioral health education to Marylanders of all ages to increase knowledge and to reduce mental health stigma. MHAMD also provides Mental Health First Aid Certification Courses for recognition and response to a mental health or substance use concern or crisis and identification of community resources. For more info, call 443.901.1550 or visit mhamd.org.

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 Gratitude Gathering SUPPORTERS

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