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Home for the Holidays

By Trish Larsen, Executive Director

For most, the holiday season is filled with hustle and bustle and a flurry of activity during which calendars fill with last-minute tasks and daily responsibilities. It is also a season filled with gift giving, gratitude, excitement, and anticipation. Most of all, it is a season of sharing. I am thrilled to announce that Minding Your Mind has received the gift of a new home to share! In November, Minding Your Mind signed a lease on a new office in Rosemont, Pennsylvania, where will be working together on a daily basis.

Our new workspace serves as a gathering place for speaker and facilitator training, program development, event planning, and brainstorming. Educational program creation and preparation will take place here. A very generous donor makes this all possible.

On a daily basis, we hear from school officials, students, and parents regarding the impact of our programs. Today's teens and young adults continue to suffer from increased and unprecedented levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Suicide is now the second leading cause of death among those ages 14-24. Minding Your Mind is working to change that statistic by providing extraordinary educational programs that offer hope and guidance for those who are suffering.

This school year, Minding Your Mind is on track to complete 1,000 school and community-wide presentations. Your continued support will enable us to successfully reach close to 100,000 individuals. We have fostered an amazing Minding Your Mind family, and now we have a new home. Together we are providing a necessary and significant service in our community. We can never say thank you enough! To show our appreciation for the incredible gift of our new office, we vow to continue to work enthusiastically to reach our goals. From here, we will lay the groundwork to educate more students, teachers, parents and
On behalf of our entire staff and all of our dedicated volunteers, I wish you and your families and loved ones a Joyous Holiday Season and a Happy and Healthy 2016.
Minding Your Mind executive director Trish Larsen, founders Steven and Amy Erlbaum, Honorary Chairperson Tracy Davidson welcome guests to the Gala.

The Blue Gene Gala is Minding Your Mind's most significant fundraising event of the year. We feel incredibly fortunate to have had that many people gathered to learn more about Minding Your Mind and support our mission. Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and donors, we will continue expanding our reach to a greater number of communities and impact more lives.

To see more pictures from the event taken by Kara Raudenbush Photography, click here.

To view media coverage, click here.

Speaker Spotlight

Celebrating Life

On December 31, 2015, Minding Your Mind speaker Drew will recognize a significant anniversary. He recently took time to reflect on the past year and his work at Minding Your Mind:

"As I approach the 6th anniversary of my attempted suicide on New Year’s Eve, I always take a few minutes to reflect on how fortunate I was to survive and the incredible events that have subsequently happened as a result of me being alive today. In 2015, I spoke over 100 times to schools in 10 states, reaching thousands of students; I was inducted to the Board of Directors for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), spoke at both state and national conferences, and was approved to host my first fundraiser for Minding Your Mind. I did all this while maintaining a 3.6 GPA at Temple University.

Looking Back

TCS New York City Marathon Runners Raise $20,000 for Minding Your Mind

On Sunday, November 1, almost 50,000 people ran the TCS New York City Marathon. Seven of those amazing, dedicated athletes ran this storied race in support of Minding Your Mind. They ran together to raise a combined total of $20,000 which was raised and donated to Minding Your Mind. The gratitude we feel for their generosity is outmatched only by the affection and admiration we feel in welcoming seven new friends to the MYM family.

The Survivor

When Claire Colahan was a senior at Duke University, her world appeared perfect on the
Through all of these experiences, I am continually reminded just how happy I am to be alive today."

Outside, but on the inside she was suffering from clinical depression. "I had no idea what was happening to me at the time. Everything completely changed seemingly overnight. I lost all personality and had no interest in doing the things I loved." After a diagnosis of clinical depression, Claire began participating in regular therapy sessions. One coping strategy her therapist gave her was to choose a physical activity and schedule time for it every day. "Consistency and physical activity are important when overcoming a mental health issue, so I scheduled a 5-mile run for myself every morning. These runs provided an escape from the negative thinking I had become so accustomed to. I've continued these runs even after the 'clinically depressed' diagnosis has gone away and now have turned this strategy into a passion."

When reviewing the Marathon Charity Partners, Minding Your Mind immediately resonated with Claire. Through her experience, she unfortunately learned how stigmatized mental illness is. "Stigmatizing a mental health diagnosis only makes an already difficult battle even more difficult by not providing the right resources to those who need them most. Many people who suffer from depression have nowhere to turn as a result of this stigmatization leading to an often fatal outcome." She achieved her physical goal of completing a marathon, and her emotional goal of recognizing the support she received from family and friends throughout her diagnosis.

Congratulations, Drew! #BeTheOne to share Drew's story with someone you know who would benefit from his words and wisdom.

Grace & Gratitude
Grants Received since September 1, 2015
Fox & Road Charities
Elsie Lee Garthwaite Memorial Foundation
Lily Foundation
Snider Foundation

The Three Amigos
Bradley Yoder, Jeremy Alder, and Daryl Brubaker are friends who each have someone very dear to them who has struggled with mental illness. Bradley lost his brother, Chris, in 2011, after a "25-year tumultuous roller-coaster/battle/journey through multiple diagnoses and coping strategies." Chris was only 40 years old. Bradley ran "in memory of Chris, for all the joys and struggles of his life...and for all those kids out there who, with their families, are unnecessarily in the dark..."
The Dialogue Projects Supports Minding Your Mind

Founded by four friends who saw many of their peers and loved ones struggle with mental health difficulties, The Dialogue Projects is a social mission launched to raise funds for mental health organizations and to create awareness through the sale of Dialogue Bags. The bags feature an illustrated elephant on one side, representing the proverbial 'elephant in the room' in regard to discussion and education on mental health issues.

In October, a Dialogue Mini was designed specifically for Minding Your Mind. Enclosed in each bag is a card that explains the mission of our organization, and a significant percent of the proceeds from each sale will be given to Minding Your Mind. We are grateful for the support of The Dialogue Projects and appreciate their efforts to raise awareness of our programs.

Order your own White Dialogue Mini today!

Giving Tuesday Campaign Raises Awareness and Funds

because of treatable mental and emotional struggles."

Bradley recruited two friends to run along with him. Jeremy Alder ran for Minding Your Mind in this year's NYC Marathon in honor of several dear friends and family members who have struggled with mental health. He chose MYM as a way to support the quality mental health education needed by those who struggle with mental health issues every day.

Daryl Brubaker rounds out this trio. He chose Minding Your Mind as his charity partner so his friends and family could contribute to his goal publicly, anonymously, or in memory/honor of a friend or family member affected by mental illness.

The Professional
It has been Jessica Atkins' dream to run in the NYC Marathon since she began distance running in 2008. She chose Minding Your Mind because our mission resonated strongly with her as a mental health professional in the school setting. "As a mental health professional, I continuously battle the barriers created by stigma. These barriers range from students and parents resisting services/help, to staff and students stereotyping and/or fearing individuals with mental health issues. The children I work with experience a variety of difficulties including mood disorders, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, abuse/neglect, bullying, and addictive behaviors (to name just a few). These struggles affect every facet of their functioning, from their success in school to their ability to gain/maintain employment and live independently." Her personal goal was to contribute to MYM's effort to eliminate mental healthcare barriers and ensure that young people get the care they need and deserve.
For the second year in a row, Minding Your Mind participated in #GivingTuesday, the global event observed on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving. #GivingTuesday takes the essence of the holiday - thanks and giving - and puts it into action.

This year, MYM offered supporters three ways to give, each of which raised funds, awareness, or both.

1) Organize a "Blue Gene" dress-down day at their place of work. Participants would "Pay Up to Dress Down" and proceeds were donated to Minding Your Mind.

2) Tell, Talk, Tag, or Tweet 12 friends about Minding Your Mind. The number 12 was chosen for its significance, in that in the U.S. a person dies by suicide every 12 minutes.

3) Use the Giving Pyramid to make a donation.

Response to the emails and social media posts was strong and we will continue to draw on the themes throughout the coming year to raise both funding and awareness.

You know, you can organize a "Blue Gene" dress-down day at your place of work. Participants would "Pay Up to Dress Down" and proceeds were donated to Minding Your Mind.

The Native
James Porfido is a New York City native who learned about the work Minding Your Mind does from a mutual friend. The mission and the programs we offer inspired James to combine his enthusiasm for running with a strong desire to make it count toward something bigger than just miles and motion.

The Birthday Girl
Dawn Roberts is an avid runner who takes time to help mentor and coach other runners. The marathon was five days before her 46th birthday, and she called it her "Birthday Race!" She chose to partner with Minding Your Mind on behalf of her family members that have been touched by mental illness and for everyone impacted by mental illness. In the weeks since the race concluded, Dawn has become one of our most prolific supporters on social media. All of Dawn's friends know exactly what Minding Your Mind is doing and why they should be paying attention! We are fortunate to have developed such a great friend and strong advocate in Dawn.

Our heartfelt thanks to all of those who put their hearts and "soles" into this race, and chose Minding Your Mind as the beneficiary of their generosity.

Looking Forward

Former NFL Star Ricky Williams to Keynote MYM Event on March 30, 2016
Support Minding Your Mind Every Time You Shop Online!

Every time you shop on Amazon.com you can help support Minding Your Mind. Simply use the Amazon Smile web address: http://smile.amazon.com/

Enter "Minding Your Mind" as your charity and checkout as you normally would!

Thank you for your support!

Upcoming Events

MARCH 30  Ricky Williams @ University of Pennsylvania

MAY 14  Run For Your Mind 5K @ the Cynwyd Trail

MAY 19  A Celebration of Life Philadelphia @ Union Trust, Philadelphia

Follow MYM on Social Media

MYM hosts an active and ever-growing community of individuals who are interested in making mental health education a priority in our communities. We have over 4,000 followers on Minding Your Mind, with support from the Andrew Kukes Foundation for Social Anxiety, will hold a presentation on the evening of March 30, 2016, focusing on educating the community about the signs, symptoms, and treatment options for Social Anxiety Disorder.

Former Heisman Trophy winner and NFL star Ricky Williams will highlight his journey after being diagnosed with Social Anxiety Disorder while living in the limelight and playing in the NFL. MYM speaker Jackie will share her journey through a mental health crisis, and Dr. Judith Beck, president of the Beck Institute for Cognitive Therapy, will lead a discussion of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy as an effective treatment option for Social Anxiety Disorder.

Please join our mailing list to receive details on registering for this program.

A Celebration of Life Philadelphia

On Thursday, May 19, 2016, Minding Your Mind speaker Drew is hosting A Celebration of Life Philadelphia: An Evening of Hope & Remembrance honoring friends lost and those who survive.

This very special event will take place at the Union Trust in Philadelphia and will include musical entertainment, hors d'oeuvres, open bar, silent auction, and the opportunity to meet Minding Your Mind speakers.

A Celebration of Life began in 2011 to honor the memory of Kyle Craig, a 21-year-old student at Vanderbilt University who took his own life in May of 2010. Kyle hid his internal struggles from his family, friends, and professors. The grief over his shocking loss was transformed into action. Beginning in Nashville, and expanding to New York City and now Philadelphia, this annual event has raised over $250,000 for Minding Your Mind!
Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn, and there is always room for one more. Come see what everyone is talking about!

A Celebration of Life Philadelphia will honor Kyle and inspire others to change the conversation about mental health.

"In 2010, Kyle Craig lost his life. In 2010, I saved mine. It is a true privilege to carry the torch of A Celebration of Life and bring the event's message of hope and healing to Philadelphia," shares Drew. "Proceeds from this event will support the important work that Minding Your Mind is doing every day to save the lives of young people. I was once one of those kids in crisis without an understanding of where to turn. I am fortunate that I am a survivor. Every day, the work we do has the potential to rewrite the ending to someone's story."

Please email Drew for information about sponsorship opportunities and tickets.

Featured Facilitator

Minding Your Mind's mindfulness programs teach empowering techniques that promote mental health for adolescents and teens. The goal is to increase awareness on how our thoughts and experiences are processed in our brains. These programs are led by an amazing and gifted group of program facilitators.

With a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction, Deborah Cyb was a classroom teacher for many years.

She started practicing mindfulness in 2005 and was inspired by how it can be used to develop a toolbox of coping strategies to reduce stress and increase mental wellbeing.

Deborah recognized how valuable the skills developed from mindfulness would be in a classroom and merged her passion for mindfulness with her passion for teaching. This inspired her to move beyond a practitioner of mindfulness and become an instructor.

Deborah has completed several Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Programs from the Mindfulness Institute of Jefferson-Myrna Brind Center of Integrative Medicine at Jefferson Hospital in Philadelphia. She is a
student of Mindful Schools, having graduated from the Fundamentals and Educator Curriculum courses, and is in the process of completing the Mindful Schools’ year-long certification program.

To schedule a mindfulness program for your school or community, please click here.