



life. with balance.

# In Tune With Our Community

formerly Community Concern of WNY  
**2018 Annual Report**

## Our Why:

We all strive to find harmony in our lives. To find concordance between our family, our passions, our work and our home. There are many challenges to a harmonious existence: sickness, addiction, the realities of aging and the burdens of life. Harmonia helps to harmonize our clients' lives again, so they can move to a melody that supports healthy balance. Harmonia is the Latin word for harmony, and can also mean melody, consonance and concordance. It speaks to disparate pieces working together to create something whole. Sounds beautiful.

## Vision:

Harmonia Collaborative Care empowers individuals to be healthy and fulfilled.

## Mission:

Harmonia Collaborative Care delivers best-practice health home, senior and behavioral health services to foster individuals' independence and improve their quality of life.

## What We Do:

Harmonia Collaborative Care offers behavioral health and senior care services, along with Health Home case management, from our two beautiful facilities in Derby and Hamburg, and from individuals' homes across Western New York. Formerly known as Community Concern of Western New York, our professional staff prides itself in providing empathic care to help bring balance to the lives of our clients. We strive to enable people to attain their highest level of well-being and independence through our integrated Mental Health, Senior and Health Home (transition care) services, while reducing the cost of care for individuals and funders alike.

## Why the Name Change?

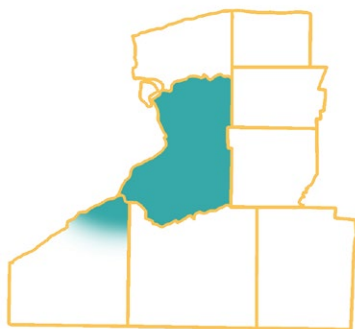
For years, people have struggled to understand the services our organization provides. The word "concern" was especially troubling for people to define as it related to a human service agency. Broad, sweeping images of "concerning" community issues (political, socio-economic, legal) often jumped to people's minds. Following our acquisition of Hamburg Counseling Services in late 2017, which substantially increased our service capacity and geographic diversity, the time was right to look introspectively and objectively at our structure, goals and potential, as well as the perception we held in the minds of our many constituents.



# Harmonia at a Glance — Services Offered

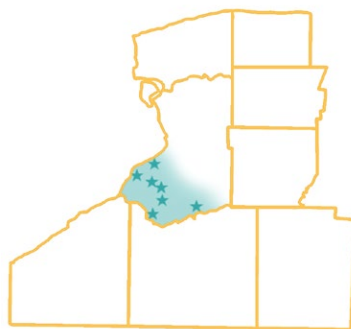
Harmonia services are designed to improve and enhance mental health, personal growth and independence.

- **Counseling Services** – Professionally trained and licensed clinicians provide treatment for mental health conditions. Our holistic, empathic approach enables clients to take advantage of quality therapeutic services which include:
  - Individual therapy
  - Marital/Couples therapy
  - Family therapy
  - Group therapy
  - Crisis intervention
  - Medication treatment from licensed psychiatric nurse practitioners
  - Case management
  - Linkage to vocational or social programs
- **Senior Care** — Harmonia Senior Care Specialists offer compassionate care to seniors facing the challenges of lifestyle change. Senior Care Managers provide a free assessment to link clients with:
  - Health and pharmaceutical insurance
  - Referrals to home care options
  - Assistance with housing options
  - Assistance with benefits and entitlements (HEAP, SNAP, Medicaid, etc.)
  - Linkage to caregiver support groups
  - Unbiased service provider information and referral
  - Unbiased nursing home information
  - Transportation options
- **Home Health** — Our specialists help Medicaid recipients with mental health concerns and chronic conditions to stay healthy and out of the hospital/emergency room. Harmonia managers coordinate and provide access to care available in the community.



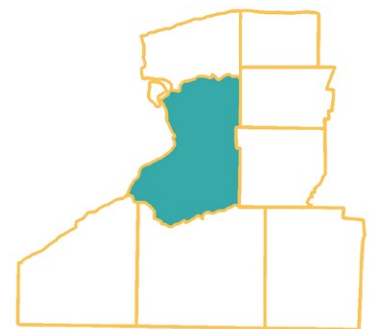
## Behavioral Health:

All of Erie and Northern Chautauqua counties



## Senior Care:

Springville, Hamburg, Evans, Eden, Collins, North Collins, Gowanda and surrounding areas



## Health Home:

All of Erie County

# Dear Clients, Colleagues, Donors and Supporters,

Our organization has undergone quite a transformation over the last few years, and I've been honored and invigorated to play a role in these strategic changes.

## **For nearly 50 years, we have been serving people in need throughout southern Erie County and beyond.**

Our focus on behavioral health and senior care has impacted tens of thousands of families, allowing their loved ones to remain independent and active contributors to society, while deferring and significantly reducing the high costs of hospitalizations, nursing/residential homes, incarcerations and other undesirable alternatives.

You've watched our agency grow substantially in recent years, punctuated by our acquisition of Hamburg Counseling Services, Inc. in late 2017. While this not only increased our capacity, skill set, diversity and geographic reach — resulting in record levels of service again in 2018 — it also provided us with a natural and ideal opportunity to step back and evaluate our entire organization. It didn't take long to recognize this larger team now had many new opportunities to improve — not just in terms of growth, but also in its strategies, priorities, efficiencies and breadth.

To fully understand our structure and fine tune our focus, we collaborated with the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York, the Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation, and the John R. Oishei Foundation, which approved us for their GetSET (Success in Extraordinary Times) Initiative. This grant included a strategic road map designed to help us build capacity and demonstrate our value not only to those we serve, but also those stakeholders upon whom our success depends.

As a result, we have looked critically at — and evaluated virtually everything about — our organization, from internal processes and personnel to fiscal health and market position.

The most obvious change is our new brand. The Harmonia name, logo mark and tagline came about after much research, whose findings included confusion as to what characteristics and imagery our prior name created in the minds of our audiences. The word “concern” was especially troubling for people, as it often carries negative connotations, such as worry and anxiety. Alternatively, Harmonia — who in Greek mythology was the goddess of harmony and concord — carries images of people working together — happily and in-tune with one another. It seemed like the perfect choice not just for the agency we are today, but for the one we want to become.

The GetSET Initiative has given us far more than a new name. It has guided us in developing a plan that allows us to establish goals, strategies and tactics for improving dozens of areas across our agency, such as:

- Establishing growth targets and business plans within each of our service teams, and defining a path to achieve them;
- Evaluating vendors to control expenses and improve functionality, efficiency and value;
- Exploring opportunities for potential partnerships and strategic alliances;
- Strengthening our outreach with key influencers to help establish our new brand and ensure its favorable positioning;
- Ensuring all practitioners are certified in evidence-based treatment;
- Developing a marketing plan, along with clear fundraising and development objectives; and
- Creating strategies that expand the skills and certifications of our staff and the expertise among our board.



We also recognize the need to change how we think in relation to our new size and growth targets. When I began here 13 years ago, we had a staff of roughly a dozen. Today we have three times that many full- and part-time professionals. As a result, we give our counselors, case managers and other colleagues more autonomy, allowing them to delegate, work independently and create roles where needed. We've created an environment that looks and feels like a private practice. We have experienced clinicians and knowledgeable experts. We provide steady training to our newer staff. We are headquartered along a warm, peaceful countryside, while our Hamburg location is nestled in a quaint village.

These characteristics are true points of differentiation — and they're being recognized. We've seen a heightened appreciation among team members and added appeal among new hires. They've resulted in a dedicated team with little turnover — a personal point of pride. Stability is what patients are seeking. Continuity is critical to helping them become and remain independent — and our steady, cohesive team improves the odds that they'll achieve their goals.

As you read the pages ahead, you'll see examples of the great work our providers perform and the innovative ideas they bring to their clients and colleagues. You'll see an impressive track record of growth and service, and the names of many people, past and present, that have brought us to where we are today. You'll see a proven team of stewards, worthy of your time, trust and donations to care for our neighbors in need. And you'll see why I'm so excited about what the future has in store for Harmonia Collaborative Care — and so honored to have been chosen to lead it.

Sincerely,



**Valerie Nowak** LMHC, MPA  
Chief Executive Officer



# 2018 Performance Highlights

Last year we generated many substantial year-over-year improvements, including:

**77%**  
more requests for mental health services

**99%**  
more referrals for mental health services

**58%**  
more mental health treatment sessions provided

**2,156**  
people with mental health issues served — up 128%

**83%**  
more senior care cases managed

**33%**  
more Health Home cases managed for clients with multiple chronic physical and behavioral health illnesses

The launch and growth of our

**CarePanion Program,**  
our in-home housekeeping and companionship program for seniors. It served 45 private pay and county-funded individuals as of this writing, with a goal of reaching 75 by the end of 2019.

## Behavioral Health Overview

Our largest service area is our Behavioral Health team, which includes more than a dozen licensed therapists who serve patients (age 13 and older) experiencing social, emotional or mental health problems that interfere with their daily life. From individual counseling and couples/family therapy to crisis intervention and medication management, our counselors help people with a wide range of issues and disorders, such as depression, anxiety, anger management or post-traumatic stress. Our experienced team is led by Licensed Mental Health Counselors Megan Brautlacht and Debra Henderson, both of whom received promotions to Clinic Coordinators this past year. Together, we help our community members get through many of life's most challenging moments.

Our track record of success is especially gratifying, as we see thousands of patients overcome and manage their health issues each year, en route to leading rewarding, productive lives. We also see it in our client engagement scores (i.e., the percentage of patients who stop getting treatment), which are among the best in the state. Similarly, our hospital admission and medication adherence rates are both better than their state and national averages, and our client satisfaction and behavioral health reporting scores are better than our state and regional averages — which gives our funders, donors and other partners confidence in our abilities and inspires their support.

Much of this is due to the degree to which we engage our clients and give them hope. More than 90 percent of people who come in for their first counseling appointment return for additional sessions — with three quarters attending at least four sessions per year. They find these sessions helpful in improving their mental health and quality of life.

These numbers also stem from the stability we've built within our behavioral health team. By trusting our counselors and giving them autonomy that's commensurate with their experience, we have staff members who feel respected and valued. That makes for a great work environment with long-term employees — including two with 22- and 19-year tenures, respectively — and provides the critical stability and continuity that is vital to our clients' comfort and success.

*"Harmonia lets me fully engage with my clients in the therapeutic setting of my choice, comfort, and ability. Our clinic allows me, as a clinician, to fully utilize and incorporate my own skill set to best serve our clients."*

*-Tammy Lyn Davis, LMHC*



Megan Brautlacht, LMHC  
Clinic Coordinator



Debra Henderson, LMHC  
Clinic Coordinator

## Behavioral Health Quality Reporting

We continue to have the best quality scores in the region and state across a key set of indicators, including client engagement, medication adherence and preventable hospital admissions.

*The lower the score, the better*

### Statewide



### WNY



### Harmonia



## Mental Health Treatment Sessions

Our Behavioral Health team has generated a nearly 100% increase in the number of annual treatment sessions it provides in just five years.

2014	6,420
2015	6,996
2016	7,315
2017	8,083
2018	12,753

## Health Home Care Overview



*Kristy Gasiewicz*  
Program Director

Harmonia helps clients with a variety of mental health and substance abuse issues, as well as chronic health conditions. We guide them as they link to health care and civil services, so that they can receive counseling and Medicaid benefits, or transition back into society following a period of incarceration. We teach them to obtain housing, access transportation, apply for jobs, receive food stamps and other forms of public assistance, and schedule medical and other important appointments. We also serve as advocates for individuals in their interactions with landlords, social services, food stamps, utility companies and medical providers. In short, we encourage and empower people to manage life's challenges.

Our services are an important part of Medicaid reform, designed to reduce the likelihood that low-income people become incarcerated, homeless or hospitalized, which decreases the number of expensive incidents paid for by county taxpayers.

We see Health Homes as one of Harmonia's biggest opportunities for growth, and we've invested in this sector accordingly. We added Kristy Gasiewicz as Program Director in the fall of 2018. Working from our Derby headquarters, she joined us from a large regional provider and adds more than a decade of experience and substantial industry connections. Shortly thereafter we added another staff member, Lynn Borgogelli, who provides health home services from our Hamburg location. Together, this team has already grown its division from 70 cases per month to roughly 100, a more than 40 percent increase in less than a year. Moreover, we're expanding our capacity to add 40 to 50 more cases to meet the growing need in the community, as we implement our strategic growth and hiring plan. We also hope to add child Health Home services in the near future.

The biggest reason for this growth has been a heightened focus on outreach. Our case managers are emphasizing more personal contact — not just phone calls, letters and other impersonal tactics, but actual in-person conversations and observations.

"I've seen first-hand that many of Erie County's bigger providers are overloaded and their clients aren't receiving the quality care experience that they deserve," Gasiewicz explains. "I don't think that's right. They deserve more."

We're also adding and strengthening our relationships with many key influencers who interact with our clients routinely. These include physicians, emergency room discharge planners, parole/probation officers and other social service professionals. We've also begun taking on more "higher need" clients, such as the recently incarcerated, chronically homeless and extensively hospitalized.

## CarePanion Overview

We're also ramping up our newest program, which complements our Senior Care and Behavioral Health services. Called CarePanion, it provides in-home housekeeping, safety reviews and companionship for seniors, all of which further increase the likelihood that seniors and others in need can remain independent, while improving their quality of life.



*Cami Kent  
Program Director*

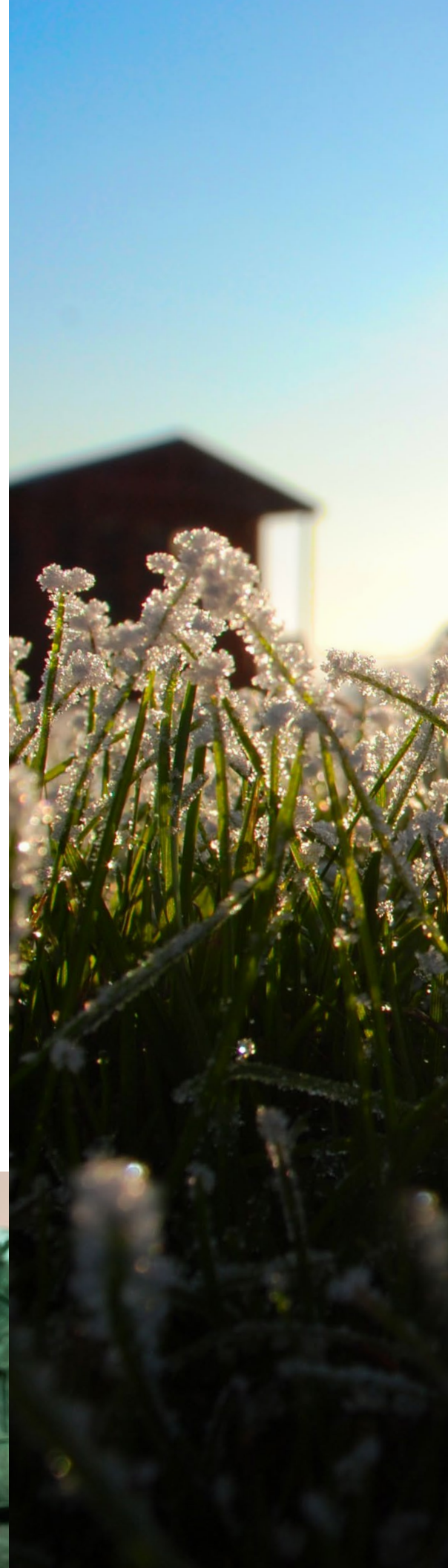
This program has two distinct client components: county funded and private payment. Together they made up 43 of the agency's CarePanion clients as of July 2019, and our team is aggressively targeting a goal of 75 clients by year end.

Led by Director Cami Kent, the CarePanion team includes five part-time employees and is growing. Their footprint ranges from the Gowanda/Springville region in southern Erie County northward to the town of Cheektowaga. Together, they reach out to senior centers, apartment complexes, places of worship and other settings where seniors tend to gather.

"More and more, people want to keep their loved ones at home, and that can be really hard to do in rural areas because of the transportation challenges, especially in the winter," Kent explains.

Proactive outreach and customer service are what's setting our CarePanion team apart in this field. If we have a client in the hospital, we follow up with the family and make sure they are asking the right questions and planning for those next steps. Are they going to rehab? If so, for how long? Will they be returning home? If so, when?

"Basically, we're advocating for our seniors," adds Kent. "We ask, 'Are our clients getting what they need – and if not, how can we help?' Even if we have to refer them to somebody else, we're happy to, because we're here to make sure we're doing what's best for them."





## Senior Care Overview

It's not easy to get older. Seniors struggle with the realities of aging. It's incredibly frustrating to realize you're not able to do the things you enjoy anymore or perform basic tasks required to live at home. Those who are widowed or have no local children face even greater obstacles, including loneliness.

That's when our Senior Care Team does its best work. We help people find and manage home health care, care transitions, specialized medical services, insurance, transportation and financial services. We conduct assessments to ensure a person's needs are met and that their home is safe from potential falls, fires, medicinal errors or other hazards. We even provide companionship. In short, we help seniors to age in place, with dignity, in their homes.

This is especially important for seniors living in rural communities where isolation can be challenging, especially during winter. Nearly 10 percent of residents over 60 from Eden, Hamburg, Evans, Brant, Concord, Collins and North Collins are served by the program each year. That's more than 250 people — which is significant, considering the average annual cost to live in a nursing home is well over \$140,000 per year. If these needs weren't met by Harmonia, 29% of our clients report that they would be in a nursing home by now. That means we're saving taxpayers over \$7.5 million annually, in addition to the peace of mind we offer seniors and their families.

"If we can keep just four seniors out of a nursing home each year, this program pays for itself," says Senior Care Director Jennifer Gunia, who has been with our agency for 16 years.

Gunia leads two full-time and one part-time case managers, and oversees our newly launched CarePanion program. Last year, they handled an active case load of 254 managed clients, and served dozens of Information and Assistance clients over and above that (on average, 30 per month). Increasingly, they're caring for younger seniors — some in their early 60s — who have begun to realize they don't have to travel to downtown Buffalo to connect with these services.

The Hamburg acquisition was a major boost for this team. Erie County's Department of Senior Services recently allowed us to add the Hamburg and Springville markets to our service area, due to our track record of performance.

We've increased our outreach efforts too. In 2018, we partnered with the Western New York Integrated Care Collaborative to offer classes on diabetes self-management and other preventative health strategies. We've also heightened our focus on seniors' key influencers. Audiences include senior center, church and hospital staff, but less obvious ones such as lawn maintenance and snow removal services have also connected us to people in need. Understanding the "sandwich generation's" challenges is also critical; adult children welcome our assistance and are grateful for the precious time we return to them and their families.

The big challenge this team has is financial. Its municipal funds have been sharply reduced in recent years, making donations more vital than ever. If you'd like us to continue assisting our community's seniors and helping them maintain their dignity as they age in place, please contact us at 716-947-5025 or visit [harmonia-care.org/services/senior-care-coordination](http://harmonia-care.org/services/senior-care-coordination).



*Jennifer Gunia*  
Program Director

*"If we can keep just four seniors out of a nursing home each year, this program pays for itself."*

## Board of Directors

Community Concern's Board of Directors provides invaluable talent, leadership and consultation. The result is an organization that provides superior services, great value for contributors and consumers, and standards that exceed similar private and public sector services.

### *Chairman of the Board*

Howard Martin

### *Vice Chairman*

Louis Atti, CPCU

### *Treasurer*

Thomas Gordon, Esq.

### *Secretary*

Christine Kluckhohn, PT, DPT, MSHSA

### *At-Large Directors:*

Kathleen Armstrong

John Grennell, Esq.

Suzanne Jasinski

Ross Kenzie

Rajan Patel, CPA

## Executive Team

Valerie Nowak, LMHC, MPA

*Chief Executive Officer*

Michelle Chiappetta, AA

*Director of Finance*

Megan Brautlacht, LMHC

*Behavioral Health Clinic Coordinator, Derby*

Debra Henderson, LMHC

*Behavioral Health Clinic Coordinator, Hamburg*

Kristy Gasiewicz, MS

*Health Home Care Program Director*

Jennifer Gunia, BS

*Senior Services Program Director*

Cami Kent, MPA

*CarePanion Program Director*

## Support Staff

Sandra Eschberger, ABS

*Front Office Manager*

Monique Hebert-Bublyk, BS

*Billing and Credentialing Specialist*

## How Can You Make a Difference?

### Donors

Harmonia Collaborative Care is a not-for-profit organization that relies on donations and contributions to sustain the quality of the services and impact the lives of all our neighbors. Please help us in fostering good mental health and independence in our community.

Your tax-deductible donation can be made at [harmonia-care.org/donate](http://harmonia-care.org/donate), by calling 716.947.5025, or by mailing a check to:

Harmonia Collaborative Care  
6722 Erie Road (Route 5)  
Derby, NY 14047

### Professionals

We want to be the first choice for behavioral health and senior care professionals — and we're actively growing. We believe a "life with balance" is an important part of where you choose to work. Ask us about our approach to work-life balance, and visit [harmonia-care.org/careers](http://harmonia-care.org/careers) to see what positions we're currently looking to fill. We regularly seek new board members as well.



## Farewell: Jerry Bartone

In January 2019, Jerry Bartone, MA, MBA, our longtime CEO, retired after 29 years of service in that top post. During his tenure, the agency grew exponentially, from an operating budget of roughly \$200,000 and six employees to the nearly \$2 million budget and staff of close to 40 it has today. He saw the agency's revenue double during the last three years and placed it on a trajectory to continue growing substantially.

Jerry oversaw the addition of Health Home Services to the organization as well as numerous niche programs to fill unmet needs in the community. Examples include our Turn-It-Around counseling program for at-risk adolescents in the Lake Shore and North Collins school districts, and the Living Without Violence program, which lowers domestic violence cases.

Jerry also led efforts to secure funding from organizations like the John R. Oishei Foundation, Ralph C. Wilson Foundation and Health Foundation for Western and Central New York. He headed the agency's acquisition of Hamburg Counseling Services, Inc. in late 2017 and worked with board and staff colleagues to lay the plans to significantly expand our Derby headquarters in the coming years, with an eye toward integrated care, lower costs and better outcomes.

"[We are] in a rapid growth stage of business development, working increasingly with primary care physicians — our number-one referral source," Jerry said at the time of his retirement. "Significant changes in healthcare delivery and value-based reimbursements are underway, and the time felt right for me to pass the baton to our next generation of transformative leaders."

On behalf of everyone associated with the organization we now call Harmonia — and the countless lives which Jerry improved through his hard work and passion over the last three decades — we thank him for all that he did, and we wish him a long, rewarding retirement.



## We also wish to thank these wonderful colleagues for their many years of service as they embark upon their retirements:

**Sharen Trembath** started as a volunteer for "Evans Help" in the 1970s. Later, when the agency became "Community Concern of Evans and Brant," she was named Medical Assistant, a role she held with us until her retirement in October 2019.

**Lynn Skubish**, Front Office Manager, 14 years of service

**Joyce Torge**, RN, 13 years of service — and with her... Pepper, the therapy dog.

**Marlene Longdon**, Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner, 6 years of service



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716.947.5025

