

The Bradley Bulletin

News and notes for our friends and supporters.

Spring 2018

Trustee's Hospitality is a Boon for Bradley

Every year, Jeffrey Hirsh brings the sparkle to Bravo Bradley's live auction. Not only does he donate a cocktail party for 20 at his picturesque restaurant on Narragansett Bay, but the Bradley Hospital Foundation Board Trustee also offers up a stunner from the Van Busch fine jewelry collection.

"I never know until a month before the gala which piece to pick," says Jeff of the line he showcases along with original artwork at the Lobster Pot, his restaurant in Bristol, Rhode Island. "It has to be unique but also appeal to the largest number of people."

At last year's Bravo Bradley Jeff donated a beautiful 12.42 carat green amethyst ring surrounded by more than half a carat of diamonds and set in 18-karat white gold. The bidding war for that one during the live auction was fierce.

"It's simply a joy to be a part of Bravo Bradley," says Jeff, who serves on the gala's event committee. "I'm glad to be a part of it in a way that helps further inspire the guests' generosity."

A Hall of Fame businessman, Jeff is active in Rhode Island's hospitality and tourism industry. "Owning the Lobster Pot these past 31 years has enabled me to meet a huge number of people from a vast array of backgrounds," says Jeff. "It's allowed me to be involved in and spread the word about how important Bradley Hospital is to our community."

Growing up in Barrington, Jeff says he heard a lot about Bradley Hospital located in the neighboring town. When trustees Ruth Kauffman and Martha "Martie" Livingston—his friends, customers, and neighbors—asked him to host a cultivation cocktail party for Bradley at his restaurant, he readily agreed. That was back in the early 2000s.



His event at the Lobster Pot was a huge success. Inspired to do more, Jeff joined the hospital's Board of Governors and later, the Board of Trustees. Then, in 2006, he teamed with Ruth and fellow trustee Jozy Mainelli to co-chair Bradley Hospital's seventy-fifth anniversary gala. He's been giving of his time and talents ever since.

"I'm so impressed by Bradley's staff," says Jeff. "Their dedication to healing kids with complex mental health issues—and eliminating the stigma—is simply amazing."

"Jeff Hirsh has an incredible gift for reaching out and bringing people together," says Dan Wall, President of Bradley Hospital. "He's a tireless ambassador for the hospital—our networker-in-chief. I couldn't be more grateful for his generosity and central role in Bravo Bradley every year."



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Compass Program Enhances Safety of At-Risk Girls

Amanda Pelletier, LICSW, has devoted a majority of her career in social work to the patients of Bradley Hospital. “And each year,” she says, “the opportunities for these kids just get better and brighter.” As clinical director of the Compass Program, Amanda works with teen girls who are struggling with severe emotional problems and ways to stay safe. The residential treatment program for girls ages 13 through 18 uses dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), an evidence-based treatment for self-harm and chronic suicidal thoughts as well as mood and anxiety disorders.

The goal of DBT is to develop new skills such as mindfulness, distress tolerance, and interpersonal effectiveness.

“DBT is one of the most effective tools we have in our toolbox,” says Amanda. “We are seeing the girls respond well to the treatment during the six to nine months they spend with us.” Bradley Hospital has designated the Compass Program as the fund-a-need beneficiary for Bravo Bradley’s 2018 event on June 1.

“Through skills groups, the girls are gaining the critical tools they need to deal with significant emotional stress,” says Amanda. “They learn how to tolerate extreme sadness and anxiety which can lead to unsafe behaviors. Most important, the skills have staying power once they leave Bradley and transition back to their lives.”



Video Monkey Might Hold Key to Improving Brain Function

Could a video game featuring a wily pirate monkey help children suffering from mental illness? That’s the hope of a neuropsychologist at Bradley Hospital who is studying “executive function”—the ability to control impulses, make decisions, and organize behavior.

These neurologically-based skills have gained attention in recent years as research has identified a deficit in executive function (EF) as a risk for pediatric mental health disorders.

Neuropsychologist Brian Kavanaugh, PsyD, and others at Bradley Hospital believe that if we can increase activity in the frontal regions of the brain—the area responsible for executive function—children can gradually improve these important skills.

To test this idea, Dr. Kavanaugh is conducting a study aimed at improving EF in children ages 8 to 12 with an EF deficit as well as depression or anxiety. Using a pirate-themed computerized cognitive training game, children play 30 minutes a day for six

weeks. By catching a pirate monkey that’s stolen a ring, among other activities, they practice skills like “stop, think, act,” as well as thinking flexibly and ignoring irrelevant stimuli to maintain attention.

“We’re looking at children with depression/anxiety because we believe that if they can regulate their behavior with improved executive function, they can learn to better regulate their negative thought patterns,” explains Dr. Kavanaugh.

Dr. Kavanaugh is optimistic that the results of the pilot study will lead to additional research and, eventually, cognitive interventions in clinical care to help children with EF deficits and a variety of mental health challenges.

