

MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

E-NEWSLETTER FROM THE DESK OF JODI STREICH, PH.D. - MENTAL HEALTH DIRECTOR



UPCOMING 25th ANNIVERSARY EVENT

Limited seating available. Last call to RSVP.

We will be holding a commemorative ceremony to honor the 25th anniversary on September 11th, 2026, at the **Rodkins Academic Success Center**. It will run from **9:30AM to 12PM**. Lunch will follow. Guests are welcome to come in uniform. Parking is free but you must register your car beforehand. The RSVP link will bring you to the parking registration website.

[You can RSVP Here:](#)

Or you can use your camera to scan the QR code



If you're unable to attend in-person, you can join us virtually. Thanks to Rutgers TV we will be live-streaming this event. You can use the RSVP link to register and we will send you the live-stream link via email closer to the event date.

This is the live-stream link so you can save it for later: <https://go.rutgers.edu/911tributelive>

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Questions? Email us at wtchp-help@eohsi.rutgers.edu

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RUTGERS HEALTH

Environmental and Occupational
Health Sciences Institute



9.11 World Trade Center Health Program

A Message from Jodi Streich, Ph.D.

Mental Health Director

Dear Members,

As we approach the 25th anniversary of September 11th, I find myself reflecting on the extraordinary privilege it has been to serve this community for so many years. What began as a commitment to care has grown into something far deeper — a bond built on trust, resilience and the shared understanding of what it means to have answered the call on one of the most difficult days in our nation's history.

This is a special edition of our newsletter and a special year. We are honored to invite you to join us on September 11, 2026, for our 25th Anniversary Commemoration at the Rodkins Academic Success Center at Rutgers University.

In this issue you will also find a heartfelt story from a memorial I recently discovered in Kinsale, Ireland — a reminder that your sacrifice and service are honored far beyond these walls. You will meet some wonderful new members of our mental health team and learn about our new and returning group offerings for the upcoming Fall season.

It has been our honor to serve you for the past 25 years.

With deepest respect and gratitude,

Jodi Streich, Ph.D.
Mental Health Director
WTC Health Program at Rutgers
University Clinical Center of
Excellence



A YEAR OF DUAL MILESTONES

This year holds special significance beyond our own milestone. As our nation marks its 250th anniversary, we reflect on the values that have defined America — courage, service and resilience. The first responders we serve embody those values as deeply as anyone in our nation's history. On this silver anniversary we honor both their sacrifice and the enduring spirit of the country they protected.



9/11 MEMORIAL SPOTLIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD: KINSALE, IRELAND

By Jodi Streich, Ph.D.

During a recent trip to Kinsale, Ireland, I had the opportunity to visit the Garden of Remembrance, a beautiful memorial dedicated to Father Michael Judge, chaplain of the New York City Fire Department, and the 343 firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty on September 11, 2001.

The garden was created by Kathleen Murphy, who grew up in Kinsale and spent more than 40 years in New York City as a senior staff nurse at Lenox Hill Hospital. After her passing in 2011, the garden continues to honor her memory while serving as a lasting tribute to Father Judge and the 343 firefighters whose courage and sacrifice will never be forgotten.



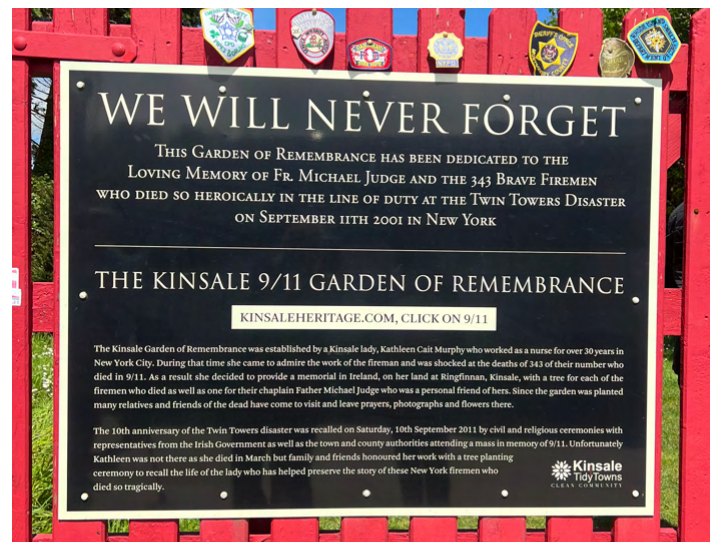
(Above) Jodi Streich standing at the red gate with We Will Never Forget sign.



(Above) Red Gate covered in patches from emergency services departments across America.



(Above) Additional pictures of red gate with close-ups of patches displayed on it.
(Right) Close up of plaque



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9/11 MEMORIAL SPOTLIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD: KINSALE, IRELAND



(Above) Each of the 343 trees has the name of a fallen firefighter.

I was deeply touched by this memorial. Although I was traveling with a group, there was something about this place that invited quiet reflection. As we made our way back to the bus, everyone was silent, each of us lost in our own thoughts. It was a poignant reminder that the impact of September 11 reaches far beyond our own communities, and that people around the world continue to honor and remember those we lost. I wanted to share this meaningful place with you because I know many of our members have dedicated their lives to service, and I thought you would appreciate knowing that this small town in Ireland has created such a heartfelt and moving tribute.



(Above) FDNY Maltese Cross with 343 to honor the firefighters on the Irish countryside



(Above) Plaque close up

(Right) Memorial bench and plaque



9/11 MEMORIAL SPOTLIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD: KINSALE, IRELAND



(Above) Bench honoring FDNY Pipes and Drums, Kathleen Murphy, and the 343 firefighters..



(Above) Sculpture made from steel from the World Trade Center.



(Above) The faces of the 343 firefighters.



(Above) 343 trees with American flags to honor the firefighters on the Irish hillside.

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9/11 MEMORIAL SPOTLIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD: KINSALE, IRELAND

Beginning with this issue, we are launching a new recurring feature, 9/11 Memorial Spotlights Around the World. In each newsletter, we will highlight a memorial or place of remembrance from somewhere around the globe, celebrating the many ways communities continue to honor the lives, courage, sacrifice, and enduring legacy of September 11.

(Right) Kathleen Murphy memorial stone with her photo and May They All Rest In Peace



NEW BRUNSWICK FIRE DEPARTMENT: ANNOUNCEMENT



We are proud to share this stunning image from the New Brunswick Fire Department as they proudly supported the recent Police Unity Tour through New Jersey on its way to Washington DC. The Police Unity Tour honors fallen law enforcement officers and their families, a mission that resonates deeply with our own community.

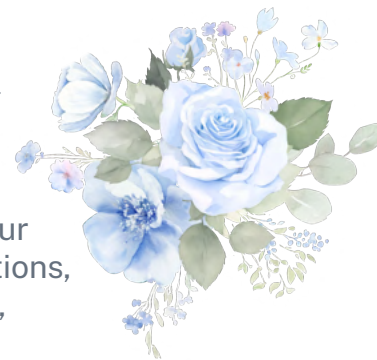
We are honored and grateful to have the New Brunswick Fire Department returning to our 9/11 25th Anniversary Commemoration on September 11, 2026. They will once again display their flag and ladder trucks as a powerful backdrop to our ceremony and will perform the traditional ringing of the bells. This year they will be showcasing their brand new flag, a fitting tribute for this milestone anniversary.

Thank you to Captain Wright and the entire New Brunswick Fire Department for your continued dedication and support.

WELLNESS CORNER: ANNIVERSARY ANXIETY

The 25th Anniversary: Understanding Anniversary Reactions

As we approach the 25th anniversary of September 11, many members of our World Trade Center community may notice changes in their thoughts, emotions, or physical well-being. For some, these reactions may be subtle. For others, they may be more intense than expected. Both experiences are normal.



Anniversary dates often serve as powerful reminders of traumatic events. Even after many years, the brain and body can respond to cues associated with trauma, including media coverage, memorial events, conversations, familiar sights or sounds, or simply the realization of a significant milestone. These reminders can temporarily reactivate memories and emotions that may have felt more distant in recent years.

You may notice increased anxiety, sadness, irritability, difficulty sleeping, changes in concentration, heightened vigilance, or a desire to withdraw from others. Some individuals experience vivid memories or dreams, while others find themselves reflecting more deeply on the people, places, and experiences that changed their lives. These reactions are not a sign of weakness or of moving backward. Rather, they reflect the enduring impact of extraordinary experiences.

The 25th anniversary may carry particular significance. Milestone anniversaries often prompt reflection, not only on what was lost, but also on the years that have passed, the changes that have occurred, and the ways in which individuals, families, and communities have adapted. There is no right or wrong way to experience this anniversary. Some people choose to participate in commemorative events, while others find that limiting media exposure or spending time with loved ones is more helpful. It is important to honor what feels most supportive for you.



During this time, we encourage you to be especially mindful of your well-being. Maintaining routines, prioritizing sleep, engaging in physical activity, connecting with trusted family members or friends, and practicing healthy coping strategies can all be beneficial. Equally important is recognizing when additional support may be helpful.

Our mental health team understands that anniversary reactions are a well recognized and expected response to trauma. Whether you are experiencing distress for the first time, noticing a temporary increase in longstanding symptoms, or simply wanting someone to talk with, we are here to help. You do not have to navigate this time alone.

As always, our commitment extends beyond providing treatment. We are honored to support the resilience of this community and remain dedicated to walking alongside you, not only during significant anniversaries, but throughout the year.

If you would like to speak with a member of our mental health team, please contact us at 848-445-1266 or wtchp-help@eohsi.rutgers.edu.

FALL 2026 VIRTUAL GROUP OFFERINGS



9/11 Anniversary Group

A space for first responders to share their unique experiences with the support of their peers in a safe, therapeutic environment.

Facilitators: Angela Cabble and Elvin Vallejo
Fridays, 2:00 to 3:30pm

The Out-of-Towner's Group

A 9/11 support group. This is for WTC responders who have left the NY-NJ area. You are still part of our community! Join us over Zoom for connection, conversation and support.

Facilitator: Erika January, Ph.D.
Fridays 10AM-11:30AM EST (Zoom)



Blue Line Support Group

This support group is for individuals who are active/retired law enforcement officers. It is designed to be a safe environment to discuss and share concerns, stories, and experiences with other officers. The goal of the blue line support group is to provide a place for law enforcement officers to process their experiences together, offer comfort and comradery, strengthen interpersonal support, and increase resiliency and well-being.

Facilitator: Heather Rothwell-Termotto, Ph.D.
Thursdays, 1:30 to 3:00pm

Firehouse Kitchen

The firehouse kitchen has long been a place of bonding for firefighters. This support group is for both current and retired firefighters to discuss various aspects of this profession and to engage in honest conversations about any current stressors you are facing. Connect with peers and discuss professional topics.

Facilitator: Jodi Streich, Ph.D.
Mondays 1:30PM



Project Uplift

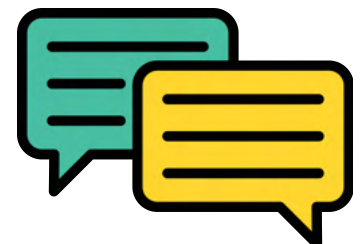
This program teaches mental health skills along with mindfulness and meditation to help cope with stress, anxiety, depression or chronic health problems. This program runs for eight consecutive weeks, typically twice per year in October and again in February. Members are encouraged to commit to the full eight weeks. Our next cycle should begin in February, although we will not finalize dates until the interest questionnaire is sent out.

Facilitator: Amy Menes and Sofia Loiacono
Date/Time TBD

Retiree Social Support Group

This group provides support related to life transitions such as retirement and other events. The focus is on sharing coping strategies to deal with stress, personal experiences and building a sense of community.

Facilitators: Mike Smith and Lily Spagnola
Mondays, starting August 3rd (time TBD)



FALL 2026 VIRTUAL GROUP OFFERINGS (Continued...)



Health and Wellness Group

This virtual group will focus on a holistic approach to well-being through presentations and discussion focused on the health-related domains of food and diet, working/moving the body, sleep hygiene, stress management, social connections, relationships, and spiritual well-being.

Facilitators: Nancy Medina, Psy.D. and Nnamdi Uzoaru

Day and Time: TBD

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Cancer Support Group

This group provides a setting for first responders to share their experience with cancer amongst peers who have undergone similar health issues. This is a peer support group with a focus on sharing coping strategies, relating personal experiences, and processing life changes due to a cancer diagnosis.

Facilitator: Social Work Team

Wednesdays, 5:00 to 6:30pm

Sleep Hygiene Group ***NEW***

The goal of this group is to provide comprehensive support to members with OSA and PTSD/panic symptoms who struggle with claustrophobic symptoms pertaining to the CPAP mask. We aim to improve sleep hygiene and overall wellness.

Facilitator: TBD

Day and Time: TBD

Chronic Pain Support Group ***NEW***

The goal of this group is to provide a safe and supportive space for individuals with chronic pain to share experiences, develop healthy coping strategies, and improve overall well-being. The group encourages connection, resilience, and empowerment in managing the challenges of chronic pain.

Facilitator: TBD

Day and Time: TBD

If you are interested in participating in any of our virtual group offerings, please call us at **(848)445-0227**.

Important Notice: Anniversary Support

This year, in the weeks preceding and following the anniversary of 9/11, the WTC Health Program at Rutgers CCE will offer several drop-in Zoom support sessions. **Registration is not required.** Mental health clinicians will be present at each session. Please feel free to drop in if it would be helpful to talk with someone, seek support, or connect with others during this emotional time. The dates and times are listed to the right.

Drop-In Schedule:

Tuesday 9/1/26 (2-3pm)

Thursday 9/3/26 (2-3 pm)

Tuesday 9/8/26 (1-2 pm)

Thursday 9/10/26 (9-10 am)

Friday 9/11/26 (3-4 pm)

Monday 9/14/26 (11-12 pm)

Wednesday 9/16/26 (3-4 pm)

MEET THE MENTAL HEALTH TEAM

We are pleased to introduce and reintroduce members of our mental health team.



Erika January, Ph.D.

Assistant Director

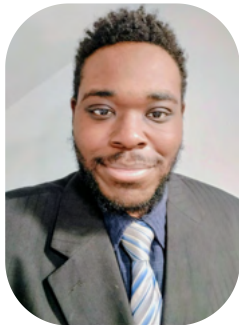
Assistant Director and licensed psychologist with over 20 years of experience in various clinical settings including counseling centers, hospital based wellness programs and private practice. EMDR trained with a certification in eating disorders, addictions and compulsions. Professional interests include trauma, anxiety, life transitions and disordered eating. In her free time enjoys swimming, reading, making homemade ice cream and movie nights with her family.



Angela Cabbie

Doctoral Intern

Rising fifth year doctoral student, Counseling Psychology Ph.D. program, Seton Hall University. Research interests include disparities in mental health services in rural areas among Black communities and trauma work. Has worked with 9/11 first responders at the WTC Mental Health Program for two years as an extern and is currently serving as an intern. Previously worked as a licensed mental health counselor in a psychiatric setting for 13 years. Enjoys outings with family and friends, traveling, spades and jewelry making.



Nnamdi Uzoaru

Doctoral Intern

Graduate student at Kean University's Combined School and Clinical Psychology Psy.D program, currently completing his one-year doctoral internship at the Rutgers World Trade Center Health Program. Interests include working with underserved populations and clients who struggle with health related issues. Particularly excited to be working with members in the Health and Wellness Program. Outside of the office enjoys cooking, trying new restaurants and spending time with family and friends.



Nancy Medina, Psy.D.

Staff Clinician

Full time staff clinician at the Rutgers World Trade Center Health Program. Clinical interests include serving first responder and veteran populations and the study of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. Grateful for the opportunity to serve the 9/11 responder community and looks forward to assisting members in navigating their mental health challenges and supporting them on their journey to well-being.

James Doherty

Staff Assistant

Staff Assistant with the World Trade Center CCE Mental Health Department, helping to coordinate between members and staff. When not working enjoys reading, spending time with family and friends and being outdoors

MEET THE MENTAL HEALTH TEAM

We are pleased to introduce and reintroduce members of our mental health team.



Elvin Vallejo

Psychology Intern

Psychology Intern from St. Elizabeth University and Licensed Professional Counselor with over 12 years of mental health experience. Brings a rich history of working with clients across a variety of settings. Will be co-facilitating the 9/11 Anniversary Group held Fridays from 2:00 to 3:30pm alongside Angela Cabbie. Fun fact: He is an identical twin!



Lily Spagnola

Mental Health Extern

Mental health extern at the WTC Health Program and current Psy.D. student at Immaculata University. Especially excited to begin working with members as her father was a 9/11 first responder. Will be co-facilitating the Retiree Group with Mike Smith on Mondays from 6:00 to 7:30pm starting August 3rd. Fun fact: She has four dogs, a fish and a frog!



Sofia Loiacono

Mental Health Extern

2026 to 2027 mental health extern currently completing her Master's degree in Applied Psychology at Rutgers University. Outside of her academic and professional pursuits enjoys reading and spending time with her pets.



Mike Smith, MS Ed, LMHC, LCADC, CRC

Group Facilitator

40 years of experience in various types of counseling and human service work. Licensed as a Mental Health and Chemical Abuse and Dependency Counselor as well as Certified as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Has been facilitating the Retirees Support Group for the past three years. Also available to provide services for members experiencing substance abuse related issues or challenges.



Heather Rothwell-Termotto, Ph.D.

Staff Clinician

Recently earned her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Fairleigh Dickinson University. Prior to pursuing her doctorate earned her Master's degree at New York University in Mental Health Counseling. Currently completing her post doctoral training at the World Trade Center Health Program and is in her fourth year. Passionate about the comprehensive services provided to those impacted by the events of September 11. Grateful for the opportunity to provide ongoing care to a population she deeply respects and considers it a privilege to be a part of members' journey toward growth and healing. Looks forward to meeting you!



Amy Menes

Mental Health Intern

Amy is a psychology doctoral candidate at Rutgers University. She holds two Master's degrees in psychology, and is certified as a NJ Disaster Response Crisis Counselor, Prevention Specialist, and School Psychologist. She is passionate about helping individuals navigate challenges related to trauma, substance use, and life transitions. She feels it is an honor and a privilege to hold space and support those impacted by 9/11. Outside of work, Amy is working toward her Psy.D. at Rutgers University, and serves as a counselor in several community-based settings. When she's not working, she enjoys spending time with her loved ones, gardening, and hiking.

MEET THE SOCIAL WORK TEAM

We are pleased to introduce the social work team.

Valerie

Hello everyone! My name is Valerie. I work in the social work department of the Rutgers WTC Health Program. I educate members about Program benefits, assist with disability paperwork and provide mental health therapy services. When I'm not working, I enjoy going to concerts, crocheting, and watching new movies/TV shows. Fun fact: I've been to 75 concerts and counting! I look forward to speaking with you in person at the clinic or over the phone following your visit!

Gina

Hi I'm Gina! I am in the social work department and am licensed to offer mental health therapy services as well. I help members with disability paperwork and help our members understand all the benefits available to them through the Program. Outside of work I love going to national women's league soccer games, I also volunteered for the world cup this year :)

Adeola

Hello, I'm Adeola. I recently joined the WTC Health Program social work team as a Student Assistant. I support program operations by helping organize patient records, ensuring accurate data entry, and keeping digital files up to date. Outside of work, I'm a Public Health student on the pre-med track who enjoys reading, fitness, and shopping. Fun Fact: I was born in the UK.

Zowie

Hi! My name is Zowie. I work in the Social Work Department. I help patients understand Program benefits, complete disability paperwork, and access mental health referrals while also completing my final year of Rutgers' MSW program. Outside of work and school, I enjoy reading, exploring new coffee shops and restaurants, going for walks to enjoy nature, and attending concerts. Fun fact about me, I have been an aunt since I was one!

Candice

My name is Candice and I work in the Social Work department and am a MSW student. I am responsible for completing disability paperwork, mental health referrals, and benefits. When I am out of the office, I enjoy reading dark psychological thriller books, spending time with my family, and taking naps. Fun fact: my arms are double-jointed and it freaks people out!

Kate

Hello all-I'm Kate. I've been in the social work department for quite a long time so at some point we probably met. I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to help so many of you over the years-you are my heroes. Fun Fact: When I'm not here, I enjoy gardening, my 3 pups and especially my granddaughter.

Important Notice:

The **deadline** to file an Application for World Trade Center Notice (Form RS6047-N) with the [New York State and Local Retirement System](#) (NYSLRS) is **September 11, 2026**. You can access more details [here](#). You can go directly to the application [here](#).

Purpose of the Notice: This form is not a claim for disability benefits. It is filed by eligible members who are not currently disabled to protect their rights and the rights of their beneficiaries to apply for WTC disability or reclassification benefits in the future.

Actual Disability Claims: There is no specific expiration deadline to file an actual Application for World Trade Center Accidental Disability Presumption (Form RS6047-W) if you are already disabled, but filing the notice (RS6047-N) by September 11, 2026, is **mandatory** to preserve future eligibility if you are not currently disabled.

Consider Certification and Services today!

PSYCHOEDUCATION



Members have learned valuable lessons, skills and techniques that have helped improve overall well-being.

A SAFE SPACE

Members have found it liberating to have the chance to open up and discuss topics they may have been hesitant or uncomfortable to.



HOW MEMBERS FOUND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES HELPFUL

GROUP SOLIDARITY



Members have found comfort in the realization that they are not alone in the difficulties they face, such as through group therapy alongside fellow like-minded individuals.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Members have found value in the additional support offered from our various services.



Invest in Your Well-Being.
WE'RE HERE FOR YOU.

9.11 World Trade Center Health Program

Rutgers University WTC Health Program Clinical Center of Excellence (CCE) at the Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute (EOHSI)

170 Frelinghuysen Road, Piscataway, NJ 08854

Main Tel. 848-445-1169 | Fax 732-445-0784

Clinician I met with today _____