



Over 4 decades of service building a better community

Winding down a year of success!

Even in difficult times, CLUSTER is working throughout Yonkers and the rest of Westchester and Rockland to create a stronger and healthier community. Our programs are addressing the challenges of poverty, homelessness, mental health, and domestic disputes and changing thousands of lives. It is an honor and a privilege to work with CLUSTER's clients to make a positive impact on this historically neglected community.

Below, you'll find stories of success from our programs that give all of us at CLUSTER great hope. These include a story about a single mother empowered to make informed decisions about her own health, the ongoing efforts of our staff to increase financial support of New York's mental health housing programs, and yet another successful gala--all thanks to your help.

You can also find some articles and opinion pieces from across the country that parallel some of the work to provide aid and human services to the most impoverished and at-risk populations of Westchester and Rockland. We hope that these stories inspire you to keep building momentum towards creating a better Yonkers--and beyond!

Warmly,

Your friends at CLUSTER

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A MOTHER FINDS THE HEALTHCARE SHE NEEDS



Anel, a single mother with a 14-year-old daughter, came to the Yonkers Public Library seeking help with a Social Security Disability matter. She was referred to one of the Case Managers at our More Than Books program, but, before he had gone far in his interview with Anel, he could tell that her challenges stretched far beyond just her benefits. Anel had a good command of English, but it quickly became clear that she would be most comfortable sharing her issues in Spanish, so we conducted our session in Spanish, which our Case Manager has spoken for over 30 years.

Anel had a range of painful, physical health problems that had prevented her from continuing her professional career since coming to New York from her native Puerto Rico. As a result, she had to rely on Public Assistance from the Department of Social Services (DSS), which she had found frustrating, and had accentuated a cycle of depression and anxiety that she had experienced for some time.

In the interview, CLUSTER's staff learned that Anel was receiving care for her physical health problems, though her limited income made managing her care challenging. Anel was not getting any help for the depression and emotional pain that she had been experiencing for a long time.

With Anel's consent, our More Than Books Case Manager:

- Contacted a leading Mental Health care provider in Yonkers, and arranged for her to do an intake for counseling services;
- Referred Anel to a Health Home Care Manager;
- Developed a strategy to include direct advocacy with DSS and Section 8 to address her rent arrears.

Within 10 days, Anel had her first counseling session and met with a care manager who worked with her closely on a range of needs, and had initiated a special request for assistance with her rent arrears at DSS. Within 2 months, her rent arrears were resolved - largely as a result of her own advocacy.

CLUSTER STAFF FIGHT FOR BETTER MENTAL HEALTH HOUSING



Every Thursday since the beginning of September, CLUSTER staff have been joining our peers at the Bring it Home to rally in front of Governor Cuomo's office for better and more sustainable mental health housing programs. Did you know that 40%-70% of New York State's mental health housing budget is lost to inflation? Meanwhile, with the proper model, it may be up to 94% less expensive to provide mental health housing rather than using psychiatric institutions, other hospitals, nursing homes, shelters, jails and prisons.

These rallies started in February, and CLUSTER has been present consistently to add our voice regarding this struggle, even as they became weekly events after Labor Day. This is an ongoing battle, but we are proud to stand with our colleagues to enact change. Our persistence, week after week, is just part of the CLUSTER commitment to building a healthier and stronger community in Westchester for all.

ANOTHER EXCEPTIONAL GALA



On behalf of our staff, partners, and grantees, CLUSTER would like to thank all who participated in making the Annual Gala a success. Our Annual Gala is not only a core part of CLUSTER's fundraising efforts, but also a wonderful way for our friends to come together and provide support regarding these important issues in our community. We would like to send a special thank you to our sponsors:

- PCSB Bank
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WHAT WE'RE READING

How Medicaid reduces evictions

*Poor Americans are less likely to be thrown out of their homes if they have health insurance. **Read more on The Economist.***

Seven things parents need to know about IEPs

*Almost 1 in 5 students have an Individual Education Plan. Follow this expert advise to get the most out of the support. **Read more on the Boston Globe.***

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