



GILEAD

COMMUNITY SERVICES, INC

Improving Lives, Building Futures

WINTER 2025

BALM OF GILEAD

ROAD TO RECOVERY

A DECADE OF SERVICE

In the 10 years of the Road Race, one thing has remained the same: participation from a passionate committee member.

E.L. has been on the Road Race committee since the beginning and lends an important perspective, sharing resources and ideas that he thinks could help improve the event for everyone.

"The Road Race is very important," said E.L. "It's a symbol that we're all coming together to work towards whatever goal we set." He plans to raise \$200 this year at his annual bake sale fundraiser, a tradition he started last year with support from the committee. E.L. sees this event as an opportunity to connect with people, have a good time, and spread awareness about mental health and substance use services. "People need to know that if they're having a problem, they can go to somebody and talk to them about it."

Through all sorts of challenges, E.L. has been a fierce participant. "You got a guy from Valor Home who is 60 years old and still walking! It doesn't matter your time, it doesn't matter how fast you go, all that matters is that you're there to enjoy yourself for the day."

He encourages fellow clients from his program and others to come together for events like these. **"We stand together no matter the hard times. If we love each other, then we're really showing that we care. We have Thanksgiving together, we watch the Superbowl every year, we have picnics when it's nice out and that shows the other programs that there are people that care. No matter how hard things get, I know I have family here."**

By Marcella Micillo,
Development Coordinator

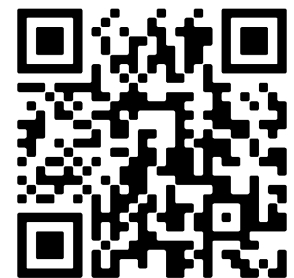
LEARN MORE ABOUT THE EVENT, REGISTER FOR THE RACE, DONATE, OR SPONSOR A CLIENT AT WWW.GILEADCS.ORG



Team Gilead is always there for support!



E.L. with his homemade cupcakes, ready for the bake sale.



SCAN ME

GOOD NEIGHBORS

CELEBRATING THE LIVES OF THOSE WE LOST THIS YEAR

In memory of Laura Vaczek



Among all the trees in Smith Park, there is one that stands out. It doesn't look different. But it is. It was planted 35 years ago by Gilead clients to honor those in recovery. One of those clients was Laura Vaczek.

Like the tree, Laura hoped to put down roots. To grow strong and independent. To blossom into an individual who could bring something important to her community.

In the mid-seventies, Laura was struggling with her mental health. She was living at home, in and out of the hospital, trying to deal with her illness. Then she heard about Gilead House, a home on High Street founded by Wesleyan students where both students and individuals living with a mental health condition worked together to learn how to live independently.

The rules at Gilead House were strict. All residents were expected to lend a hand with household chores, to have a job outside the house, or be looking for one, or be in a program helping them with their needs. Residents were out of the house by 9 a.m. and back by 4 p.m. to prepare a meal to share with their housemates.

After a year, Laura left Gilead House, found her own apartment and eventually got a job in admissions at the Middlesex Hospital Emergency Room department. She became a part-time student, eventually graduating with an Associate's Degree from Middlesex Community College in General Studies. She remained connected to Gilead, eventually helping run the programs, including helping to establish the first Social Center.

At the Social Center, Laura was encouraged to pursue her own art, and many of Laura's paintings can still be seen hanging on the walls at Gilead, and gracing thank-you notes and greeting cards. Laura went on to lead a rich and productive life in her community, helping others, and making lifelong friends.

Like the tree she planted 35 years ago, Laura was an indispensable part of the life around her, standing tall as an example of the ways in which Gilead helps individuals to find their potential. Laura will always be considered a member of the Gilead Family and she will be greatly missed.

By Lucy McMillan
Chief Development Officer

In memory of Clifford Skinner



Cliff was the first resident of the Valor Home and quickly turned it into his home. You could always count on him greeting you when arriving to the program. On many occasions he would let you know that you deserved to get paid more for doing good work! Anyone working

with Cliff could always anticipate his annual birthday meal at the Olympia Diner where he would invite everyone to join. **Cliff appreciated the opportunity to live in the community where he loved and was loved.**

By Wendi Blakey,
Clinical Department Director

In memory of Alycia Tepley



Alycia was a long-time client of the Middletown Social Club and a friend to everyone! She was very talented and enjoyed singing, dancing, karaoke, Prom Night, Valentines Dinner at

the Club and trips to the mall for more "bling!" She participated every Friday in the Art Group, creating and coloring prints which were featured at last year's Quizine for a Cause. She was a very kind and thoughtful person who cared very much about her peers. **Alycia always had a smile on her face and would help anyone who needed it.**

By Joe Crispino,
Program Manager

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

GRANTS AT A GLANCE...

- \$50,000** from the **American Savings Bank Foundation** for the Farrell Treatment Center kitchen renovation.
- \$9,000** from the **Shifting Gears Foundation** to help subsidize the costs for clients at Middletown outpatient clinic.
- \$5,000** from the **Atkins Memorial Foundation** to help subsidize the costs for clients at Middletown outpatient clinic.
- \$2,550** from the **Middletown Arts Council** for 'The Power of Art to Heal' project created by Gilead clients with Suzanne Wind Gaskell

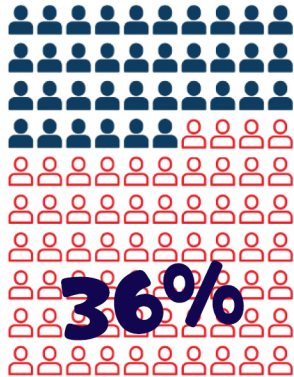


Artist and board member, Suzanne Wind Gaskell, worked with clients to create a series of panels to be displayed in the Middletown Outpatient Clinic.



Artwork from this series was presented by client artists at the annual Quizine for a Cause fundraiser.

MHFA Training Participants

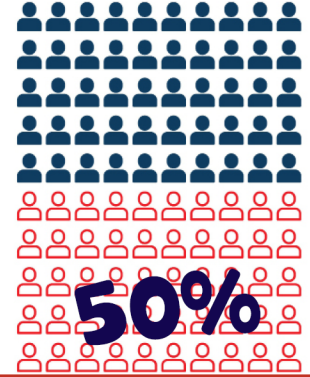


Identified as someone with serious mental illness or in mental health recovery

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING

Thanks to a \$50,000 grant from the Cigna Group Foundation, Gilead took on an ambitious goal to certify five trainers and provide free Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training to 250 community members! Not only did we meet the goal but the feedback from the participants was fantastic! MHFA training prepares participants to interact with a person in crisis and connect them to help.

MHFA Training Participants



Support a family member with mental illness or in mental health recovery

AFTER THE TRAINING, PARTICIPANTS:

Recognize signs & symptoms of mental health or substance abuse

92% have a moderate or high level of knowledge

Have a supportive conversation with anyone about mental health or substance abuse

87% agree or strongly agree

Ask anyone directly whether they are considering suicide

91% agree or strongly agree

Respond to a substance use crisis, including an overdose

61% agree or strongly agree



MHFA is offered through Gilead's Mental Health Resource Center at 175 E Main St.

For information on MHFA, service navigation or other offerings, please call (860) 530 - HELP or email mhrc@gileadcs.org

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

REBORN FROM THE ASHES

In April of 2021, a fire tragically destroyed apartments occupied by five Shoreline Community Apartment Program (SCAP) clients.

Luckily no one was hurt but everyone was displaced and needed to find temporary homes. In 2024, ground finally broke on new construction and is expected to be ready for occupancy any day. **"The rebuild is like a wound being healed. Out of the ashes comes this new building of HOPE and RECOVERY. All of SCAP is so excited to start this new chapter,"** said Kimberly Falango, Program Manager. "We are looking forward to the increased level of independence that this home will offer!"



In May 2024, the new building site was leveled.



Progress as of January 2025!



By November, the foundation was set.

HUSKY DREAMS COME TRUE

There's no bigger fan of UConn basketball than B.W.!

B.W. is a long time UConn basketball fan and his wish to see the Huskies up close and in action came true when last minute tickets to the UConn Women's game became available. The donors had won the tickets as part of a live auction item at Quizine. When they realized they couldn't attend they generously offered them to Gilead. We put out a call to interested staff and clients and randomly chose B.W.'s name! Gilead staff, Joyce Saulnier, accompanied him to the game and they had the best time! Joyce took lots of pictures and reported that **"B.W. loved every minute of it and was so thankful. He couldn't believe how close we were to the court."**



B.W. & Joyce showing their Husky pride!



Thank you to Bill & Shawn for donating the tickets! Great seats!

ROAD TO RECOVERY

A FUN NEW TRADITION

For years, the cool weather also meant it was time for the annual client versus staff softball game. Despite changing times, one thing still rings true, staff and clients have always valued opportunities to come together and have some fun.

On October 2nd Gilead hosted its first ever Cornhole Tournament. The idea for the event stemmed from longstanding conversations about wanting to create more opportunities for staff, clients and board members to have fun and connect. Cornhole came to mind as the perfect way to gather – anyone can play!

In total, 32 staff members and 32 clients signed up to play, with many donating their cornhole games for the event. Pairing clients with staff members provided an opportunity to reinforce the sense of community that embodies the Gilead mission. This event gave us all a chance to build new relationships, catch up with old friends, and have some fun! Our winning duo, Shanleigh Connors, Director of GAP, and client J.R. embodied the spirit of this event. They had never met each other until they arrived to play cornhole that day! **The overwhelming positivity that came from the event is inspiring another Cornhole Tournament in 2025.**

By Diane Cenotti
Clinical Department Director



A perfect opportunity to mix and mingle.



Some people formed teams, some were assigned at random.

FARRELL HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

This is a tradition that the Farrell family was thrilled to see return!

Farrell alumni, staff and current clients came together to celebrate the miracles of recovery and the transformative power of belonging to a larger community. The event was full of the warm, positive, and empowering energy that is cultivated by all those at Farrell.

The “12 Days of Christmas” song, another staple of the event, was performed and created by current clients and was a smash hit as usual! The song pokes fun at the staff and the Farrell experience in a creative, humorous, and well-meaning way. There was a large recovery meeting with emotional and inspiring

testimonials shared by men whose lives had been changed from the inside out. It was a honor and privilege to participate in this powerful tradition.



Farrell alumni (aka the "Farrell Warriors") join clients and staff for the annual group photo on the steps of the program.

The party concluded with a group picture that will be added to the collection from years past. They serve as snapshots of hope, frameworks of freedom, visions of recovery, and testaments to the healing power of belonging to a community. **Farrell looks forward to carrying on with this tradition for many years to come, and to continue celebrating the recovery of all who walk through its doors and once called this place home.**

By Michael Menegus,
Service Care Coordinator



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Move for Every 1 Road Race

April 6, 2025

Gratitude Gathering

May 9, 2025

20th Annual Quizine for a Cause

November 2, 2025



Artwork by Laura Vaczek

WISH LIST

Plates, cups & cutlery
Books
Tablets
Small kitchen appliances
Mugs
Holiday Decorations
Art supplies

Please note that according to Gilead policy, we cannot accept used clothing, upholstered furniture, bedding, or mattresses. Thank you for understanding!

**Please contact Marcella Micillo at 475-321-2735 or mmicillo@gileadcs.org if you wish to donate an item from the wish list.*

Gilead Community Services is funded in part by



Most of Gilead Community
Service programs are
CARF-accredited

