Volunteers Key to Mental Health Access for 30 Years

One of the key reasons the Pro Bono Counseling Project (PBCP) has thrived for three decades is the immense generosity of our licensed mental health professional volunteers. Currently more than 890 strong, these dedicated volunteer clinicians provide counseling care at no cost to our clients. In 2020, this incredible group donated more than 16,000 hours of care.

As we celebrate PBCP’s milestone 30th anniversary, it is only fitting that we recognize the years of service that our volunteers have dedicated to the organization. We are grateful to have so many dedicated volunteers with whom we have worked since the beginning, when we were founded in 1991.

Lois Sheeler, LCSW-C, began volunteering with PBCP in August of 1991 and remains active today. She works with couples and families who have struggled connecting with each other. “I am fully committed to the concept that good mental health care should be available to all, regardless of ability to pay,” she explained.

Ms. Sheeler is not alone. There are 89 clinicians who have volunteered with PBCP for 20 years or more.

When we contacted Bernadette Zorio, APRN/PMH, about being a volunteer with PBCP, she was surprised to learn she has been with us since the beginning. “I am fully committed to the concept that good mental health care should be available to all, regardless of ability to pay,” she explained.

“I love being part of Pro Bono Counseling. I have enjoyed giving back to my community with my gifts through counseling,” she said. “I appreciate the incredible work Pro Bono Counseling does and I am proud to say I am a volunteer.”

Sherri Bloom, LCSW-C, is PBCP’s clinical director. She and her team match volunteer clinicians with clients who express an interest in counseling regarding various experiences. She has over 20 years experience and frequently provides case consultation.

“Pro Bono Counseling’s volunteer clinicians really are the driving force of our efforts,” she stated. “I am in awe of the amount of counseling hours they donate to clients each year.”

Long-time volunteer Alyce Ross, LCPC, has donated her time to PBCP clients for more than 20 years.

“I find volunteering with Pro Bono Counseling to be fulfilling and meaningful. I love what I do and I love making a difference,” she explained. “I know that not everyone has the means (or insurance coverage) to pay for counseling and yet they may be suffering and need help. It’s important to me that my life have purpose, and donating time to volunteer in an area where I know I can help gives me a sense of fulfillment.”

Remarkably, over 35% of our clinicians have volunteered for more than ten years. “We sincerely thank the thousands of mental health professionals who have donated care since we were founded in 1991,” stated PBCP Executive Director Amy Greensfelder. “To our friends who generously donated to Pro Bono Counseling during our 30 Days of Giving fundraiser! The grand total for the campaign as of this printing is $7,545.”

For more information or to enroll as a PBCP volunteer, visit our website at https://probonocounseling.org/clinicians/get-involved/.

Recognizing BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Month

The month of July is designated as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Mental Health Awareness Month to highlight the unique struggles that underrepresented groups face in seeking mental health care and treatment. BIPOC mental health awareness is more important than ever as the impact of both the pandemic and social injustice have significantly increased the levels of anxiety and stress people are experiencing.

The Pro Bono Counseling Project (PBCP) is committed to providing access to mental health services for underserved populations in Maryland and providing culturally and linguistically appropriate care to those in need. We understand the importance of connecting clients to therapists that are a good match, taking into consideration preferences for a counselor’s cultural background/experience, gender, and therapy style, among other factors. PBCP has two bilingual staff members and more than 80 multilingual licensed mental health professionals. Interpretation and translation services are also available at no cost to the client.

PBCP is also committed to providing continuing education to Maryland’s mental health providers to improve services for BIPOC clients. Throughout this past year, we have held workshops on diverse topics like cultural competence, working with limited English proficient populations, ethnic identity and therapeutic process, history and dynamics of Asian American and Pacific Islander racialization, and social justice.

New Spotlight Videos

Pro Bono Counseling now has two new videos that provide an overview of its services. Prior to the pandemic, students from the Shefflefield Institute filmed staff, volunteers, and clients as part of a final project for their video class. Their footage, as well as some additional video interviews, ultimately became two final PBCP videos: a brief one-minute overview and a more in-depth four-minute video.

When you have a moment, please check them out during your own private viewing – you are certain to recognize a few of the stars!

Video Links:

One-minute PBCP video
Larger PBCP Overview video

Thank You for Giving

Thank you for making a mental health connection! We are grateful to everyone who generously donated to Pro Bono Counseling during our 30 Days of Giving fundraiser! The grand total for the campaign as of this printing is $7,545.

Many of you were inspired to give in so many meaningful and thoughtful ways, including sending a 30th birthday card with your gift and pledging to give $30/month in honor of our milestone 30th anniversary!

Your valuable support and partnership allows us to continue to connect Maryland residents with the mental health care that they need.