

Warwick Police Chief: Kent Center a Valuable Community Team Member

June 24, 2015 – Stephen M. McCartney shares the tremendous impact The Kent Center has made on the City of Warwick in a letter to the Editor of the Warwick Beacon.

To the Editor:

As you well know, our top priority is to ensure the well-being of our community. In 2012, the city of Warwick was named the safest major city in Rhode Island. This recognition is achieved, in part, by The Kent Center and Warwick Police Department's mutual success toward improving safe and effective response to persons experiencing mental health problems.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to witness the tremendous impact The Kent Center's staff and programs have made on this community. They have provided refresher training to officers on how to handle the unique challenges that often present with individuals with mental illness. The Kent Center assisted the Warwick Police Department in developing the first Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training in Rhode Island, instruction proven to effectively diffuse a situation so it does not escalate. The Kent Center has long participated in the Warwick Police Department's Mental Health Crisis Response Team stakeholder/partner meetings.

The Kent Center recognizes the negative effect of un-addressed behavioral health problems on the individual in crisis and impact on the economy of the city, given the cost increases across systems, including law enforcement and criminal justice intervention. The Kent Center works collaboratively with us to divert individuals from the criminal justice system whenever clinically appropriate. Their involvement in Probation & Parole re-entry forums and role in Correctional discharge planning are proven examples of their success in this regard.

The Kent Center's focus on health promotion, illness prevention, and early treatment intervention is further evidenced by their commitment to our community's most vulnerable populations, which includes our veterans, elderly, and youth dealing with behavioral health problems. They developed Rhode Island's first Veterans Court. They also collaborate with school officials in providing appropriate crisis intervention. Most recently, they worked with the Warwick Police Department in developing a first responder elder services pocket-guide that includes behavioral health resources.

They have gone far to help me and the Warwick Police Department improve overall community mental health and resiliency.

Stephen M. McCartney
Colonel
Chief of Police