

# The Exchange

The Quarterly Trauma-Informed Newsletter for The Guidance Center

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## STEPS Drop-In Center Celebrating 25 Years

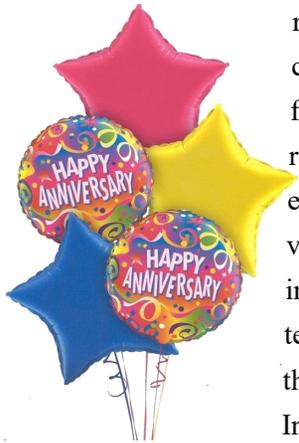
The STEPS Drop-In Center is a social recreational club that offers membership, fellowship, and participation in a variety of activities to individuals who live with a mental illness. STEPS first opened its doors in 1994 in response to the State of Pennsylvania increasing their efforts to promote the development of social networks and recreational opportunities for individuals living with a mental illness to engage in their own personal recovery. Drop-In Centers are one of the most accessible ways a community can provide opportunities for individuals to engage in meaningful social and recreational activities with others who share similar experiences. Through these shared experiences, individuals can learn to build natural supportive networks in their own communities. The STEPS Drop-In Center was initially funded through a grant supported by the National Presbyterian Church but today, the Drop-In Center is managed and supported through a partnership with The Guidance Center and McKean County Department of Human Services. The day-to-day operations of the Center are managed by a group of member-elected officers with oversight provided by a Board of Directors comprised of both consumers and non-consumers.

STEPS offers a wide variety of activities and ways to get involved, including leagues for pool, darts, bowling, and Skip-Bo, craft-making, board game play, family days, movie days, and classes in painting, poetry, and wellness. Recently, several members of STEPS formed a choir that has performed in the community to help increase mental health awareness. The center also offers meals to members three times a week. The only requirement for the free membership are that a person be a current or former consumer of mental health services. Applications to join the club can be picked up at the center.

*STEPS Drop-In Center is located at 62 Main St. in Bradford. Hours of Operation are Monday-Friday 12:00-6:00 P.M. Saturdays 12:00-4:00 P.M.*



A group of singers with the STEPS Drop In Center in Bradford sang "Lean On Me" during a performance Thursday in Veterans Square. The event was held in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month. *Photo courtesy of The Bradford Era*



**Come Join Us**



**The STEPS Drop in Center  
will be celebrating their  
25th anniversary with an  
open house!**

**Thursday October 3<sup>rd</sup>  
1:30-4:00 P.M.**



**W**e often hear about the risks of getting too much sun but could not enough sunshine actually be just as harmful? While it's true that sunburns and skin cancer are very real threats and that using SPF daily is essential, there are also many positive results from daily sun exposure. Here are five ways the sun can benefit your mental and physical health:

### 1. Increased Vitamin D

Vitamin D has some important functions in the body like helping to reduce inflammation and modulate cell growth. It's also very hard to get enough Vitamin D from food sources alone. The sun is the best natural source of Vitamin D and it only takes 5-15 minutes of sunlight a few times a week to notice a difference. Exposing your arms and face to direct sunlight will help your body soak up this necessary vitamin. Just remember to use sunscreen if you'll be outside for more than 15 minutes.

### 2. Improved Mood

It turns out "sunny disposition" is more than just an expression. Researchers at BYU found more mental health distress in people during seasons with little sun exposure. On the contrary, days with plenty of sunshine were associated with better mental health. In fact, the availability of sunshine has more impact on mood than rainfall, temperature, or any other environmental factor. Exposure to sun increases your serotonin and has been

shown to help with anxiety and depression, especially in combination with other treatments.

### 3. Higher Quality Sleep

That serotonin you soak up from the sun's rays does more than boost your mood – it might also help you get more restful sleep at night. Working in tandem with serotonin is melatonin, a chemical in your brain that lulls you into slumber and one that sun also helps your body produce. Getting enough sunlight during the day will promote better sleep at night.

### 4. Stronger Bones

Low Vitamin D has been linked to diseases like osteoporosis and rickets, and one of the most specific benefits of Vitamin D is building stronger bones and teeth. For adults, a daily intake of 4,000 IU's is recommended. Calcium is also an important part of bone strength and getting enough sun will improve your body's absorption of calcium.

### 5. Lower Blood Pressure

When sunlight hits your skin, your body releases something called nitric oxide into your blood. This compound brings down blood pressure and improves heart health. Maintaining healthy blood pressure can reduce your risks of cardiac disease and stroke. Feelings of relaxation may also naturally bring down blood pressure, so boosting your happiness by soaking up rays also aids in keeping your pressure down.

The sun can be your body's best friend. Smart sun exposure boosts your mood, can be an effective part of treatment for depression and anxiety, and improves physical well-being. So get out there and soak up a few minutes of sunshine today!

(adapted from <https://www.tricitymed.org/2018/08/5-ways-the-sun-impacts-your-mental-and-physical-health/>)



## Got Ideas?

We'd love your contributions! You can speak to your supervisor, your TIC Committee Dept. Rep or email [cchahal@guidancecenter.net](mailto:cchahal@guidancecenter.net)

