



The Outreach Vision **Winter 2025**

Building A Roadmap to 50 Years of Service

Message from our President



DEBBIE PANTIN
President and CEO

Welcome to the first issue of our quarterly newsletter for the New Year, *The Outreach Vision* !

A guiding tenet for all that we do here at Outreach is *strategy*. While strategy can be difficult to define, it can essentially be thought of as: “Determining how we will win in the period ahead.” I am excited to share with you in this issue some of our strategic plans for the next five years.

Outreach remains steadfast in our commitment to combat addiction and help individuals and families build healthy lives. Our Chief Strategy Officer Christal Montague worked with the Executive Team and a committee comprised of Board Members, consultants, to lead the charge, alongside key stakeholders, in developing a five-year Strategic Plan that will help guide us toward our 50th Anniversary in 2030.

Our commitment to help those in need of care. Fifty (50!) years is no small feat, and with our new strategic roadmap in hand, we are poised to meet our goals and help even more individuals and families onto the path toward recovery and building healthy futures.

As I reflect on my time here at Outreach as only the second CEO of this agency, I am honored to have been entrusted with the torch by our esteemed founder and current Board Chair Kathy Riddle. Being able to hear firsthand accounts of the early days and how this organization has evolved over the years to provide more services and serve more people in need is truly inspiring. Equally empowering is understanding that my team and I were hired to build on this legacy and continue its vital work in the face of uncertainty in our world, our country, and in our communities here in New York. We must remain flexible as we continue to address the ever-changing and complex needs of our clients, and that requires, yes, you guessed it—*strategy*.

I am confident that we have an extraordinary team of staff, Board members, advocates, and supporters like you, to help lift us up as we climb. As many explorers will tell you, it is a daunting task to navigate, especially when you're not sure what lies ahead.

Each year at our annual Metropolitan and Long Island Luncheons, we celebrate our collective gains and acknowledge individuals who helped us achieve our goals. At our most recent Metropolitan Luncheon, held on December 5, 2024, we had the opportunity to honor three outstanding leaders: Gerry Chasin of the Chasin Group; Joseph A. Geiger of the NYC District Council of Carpenters; and Drew O'Connor from Rudin. We also spotlighted one of our graduates, who spoke about his journey of self-discovery and recovery. Orlando Vasquez, a United States Navy veteran, delivered powerful and heartfelt remarks, ensuring there was not a dry eye in the room. You can read his testimony below and learn more about our specialized program for veterans.

The explosive growth of opioid drugs continues to impact the lives of New Yorkers from all walks of life. The need for specialized treatment has never been greater. In response, Outreach will continue to seek out opportunities to expand existing services and offerings.

As we celebrate our 45th Anniversary and begin our Countdown to 50, I hope you are inspired by our stories of hope and will follow, join, and collaborate with us to continue *Building Healthy Lives*.

With gratitude and excitement for our shared future,



President and CEO
Outreach



Building healthy lives requires vision, dedication, and thoughtful planning. In 1979, Co-Founder, President Emeritus, and current Board Chair Kathleen Riddle transformed her vision into reality with a \$60K grant and a well-thought-out plan. In a former candy store in Glendale, Queens, she opened the doors to an assessment and referral center named *Outreach Project*.

The initial mission was simple: to encourage local residents to seek treatment for substance use. Over time, that mission has expanded to meet the evolving needs of the communities we serve. Today, Outreach Development Corporation empowers children, adults, and families to realize their full potential through high-quality, evidence-based behavioral health treatment and training programs.

Forty-five years later, Outreach's commitment to vision, planning, and continuous improvement remains the cornerstone of our success in helping New Yorkers build healthy lives.

"Good fortune is what happens when opportunity meets with planning."

Thomas Edison

This guiding principle is at the heart of our new 2025-2030 strategic plan, developed under the leadership of current President and CEO Debra Pantin. As we approach our 50th anniversary, the plan will guide Outreach toward achieving its vision of just, equitable, and healthy communities, where all individuals can reach their highest potential.

Our strategic priorities focus on strengthening our service offerings, leadership, staffing, and the quality and innovation of our programs and services. With the input of several stakeholders, key areas for impact that align with our agency's mission, vision, and values were identified. Clear goals and defined actionable objectives have been set, creating a

roadmap for their achievement. This plan will guide our decision-making leading up to Outreach's Golden Anniversary in 2029-2030.

Our plan also integrates Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging into each of our strategic objectives. Moreover, advanced data analytics, strong leadership, and strategic partnerships will be essential to our success.

While 2025 brings challenges faced by most of our nation's behavioral health agencies — including workforce shortages, inflation, and governmental cutbacks—our strategic plan addresses these issues directly. We are integrating new evidence-based practices, technological innovations, workforce recruitment & retention strategies, and creative fundraising approaches to overcome these challenges.

We invite you to join us on this journey toward Outreach's 50th Anniversary. To learn more about our plans and goals for the next five years, please visit our website at <http://opiny.org> for updates.

New Mobile Outreach Unit Brings Vital Addiction and Behavioral Health Services to Long Island Communities



Mobile Outreach Unit with Hempstead Town Supervisor Donald J. Clavin, Jr. and Guests

With the launch of a new outreach van, staffed by three addiction professionals, Outreach is now able to travel to the most remote areas of Nassau and Suffolk Counties. This initiative aims to reach adolescents, adults, and families grappling with addiction and behavioral health issues, offering them essential services, including treatment, food, and shelter.

“Our goal is to let individuals know that help is available and accessible to them,” said Katia Andrade, Director of Outreach’s REACT Center in Roosevelt, NY, which oversees this new initiative. “Through this mobile program, we provide immediate access to treatment and recovery services, offering hope to those most in need.”

This new mobile unit is part of a \$5.5 million initiative funded by the New York State Opioid Settlement Funds, administered by the State’s Office of Addiction Services and Supports. Outreach is one of 32 providers across New York State awarded funds from this program, designed to connect individuals in high-need areas to services that might otherwise be inaccessible.

“Even in some of Long Island’s most affluent areas, homelessness and addiction remain persistent challenges,” said Ms. Andrade. “We’re targeting all areas to ensure that those most in need get the help they deserve.”

The mobile unit is a wheelchair-accessible van staffed by a Program Coordinator, a Peer Specialist, and a Peer Care Coordinator. The peer staff, individuals with lived experience of

substance use and recovery, play a vital role in the program. They are trained to share their personal stories to connect with and support others who are struggling with addiction. “Our Peer staff will be there to say: ‘You’re not alone, we’ve been there, and there is hope,’” said Andrade.

When engaging with individuals, the mobile unit team takes a compassionate, non-judgmental approach. They begin by building rapport, asking general questions about living situations, needs, and substance use. They then provide information about local services, including overdose prevention and intervention, harm reduction resources, and available community support. The team offers free naloxone kits and fentanyl test strips to help prevent overdose, as well as personal care kits (shampoo, soap, toothbrushes, etc.), emergency supplies like food, clothing (mittens, socks, ponchos), and transportation to medical services, counseling, and treatment programs.

For those who are not ready to commit to services right away, the team provides contact information so they can follow up when they are ready.

A crucial component of the program’s success is the close collaboration with other community organizations and service providers across Long Island. Outreach has partnered with local agencies, including the Long Island Coalition for the Homeless’ (LICH) Street Outreach Team and Hands Across Long Island’s Mobile Shower Program. In addition, Outreach maintains extensive relationships with the broader network of Long Island providers, including local law enforcement, EMS, hospitals, and other health and human service organizations.

This initiative is an important step toward providing accessible, life-saving services to those who need them the most, no matter where they are.

Metropolitan Luncheon Honors Leaders, Spotlights Veteran Services & Raises Essential Funds at 43rd Annual Event

An annual tradition since 1981, Outreach’s annual Metropolitan Luncheon celebrates the agency’s accomplishments while honoring distinguished members of the New York metropolitan area business, labor, and trade communities who have demonstrated a commitment to supporting the organization’s mission of building healthy lives.

The 43rd Annual Luncheon took place on Thursday, December 5, 2024, at the iconic Cipriani 42nd Street in New York City, with over 700 guests in attendance. The event raised nearly \$900,000 in support of Outreach’s substance use and mental health treatment and training programs.

“The outpouring of support Outreach receives



from our donors enables us to address the evolving and complex needs of our clients through a variety of highly effective, innovative, evidence-based, and person-centered behavioral health treatment services. The funds we raise at our annual Metropolitan Luncheon help save lives," said Debbie Pantin, President and CEO.



This year's Luncheon honored three outstanding leaders. Chief Operating Officer Krista Whitman adds, *"Our honorees have made significant contributions in real estate, finance, and labor, and they are also deeply committed to helping New Yorkers suffering from life-threatening behavioral health issues. Substance misuse and overdoses continue to overwhelm our community, our state, and our nation."*



Gerry Chasin, Managing Director of Wealth Management & Institutional Consulting at the Chasin Group, received the 2024 Jim Berg Memorial Award, a special recognition honoring individuals for their exceptional service to Outreach and the community. The award is named in memory of Jim Berg, a respected labor law and real estate leader who served as an Outreach board member.

Credit: Blue Pictorial NYC Photographer

Also honored were, Joseph A. Geiger, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the New York City District Council of Carpenters, who was named 2024 Labor Leader of the Year, and Drew O'Connor, Senior Vice President and Head of Commercial Property Management at Rudin, who was recognized as the 2024 Humanitarian of the Year.

The event also highlighted Outreach's specialized services for veterans, featuring a video about the Veterans Program and inspiring remarks from Outreach Men's Community Residence graduate and Naval Veteran Orlando Vasquez. (To read an excerpt from Mr. Vasquez's remarks on his transformative experience at Outreach, see 'In



His Own Words' below.) Additional information about Outreach's Veterans Services Program can be found on our website at [opiny.org/veterans-drug-alcohol-outpatient-treatment/](https://www.opiny.org/veterans-drug-alcohol-outpatient-treatment/).

Outreach extends its heartfelt gratitude to the 2024 Metropolitan Luncheon Committee, chaired by Daniel Kindbergh, Chair of the Outreach Project Board of Directors, for their tireless dedication to ensuring the agency met its event goals. Special recognition also goes to Marsha Radulov, Outreach's Director of Special Events & Fundraising, who has successfully organized this major event for the past 20 years.



Credit: Blue Pictorial NYC Photographer

Thank You to Our 2024 Metropolitan Luncheon Sponsors!



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IN HIS OWN WORDS

Outreach Graduate Orlando Vasquez



At the 43rd Annual Metropolitan Luncheon, Orlando Vasquez, a graduate of the Men's Community Residence, shared a powerful testimony about his transformative journey at Outreach. A proud Naval veteran, electrician, and member of Local Union 3 IBEW, Mr. Vasquez is also a dedicated husband and father of 10. His heartfelt words resonated deeply with the audience, culminating in a standing ovation. Below is an excerpt from his inspiring remarks:

I want to thank everybody for being here and extend a warm welcome to all my fellow veterans, my proud United States military. I would also like to welcome those from Local 3 and all the unions that are represented here this morning. Thank you for making America great. Thank you for making America strong. I commend you.

I'd like to start by telling you a little bit about my personal story. It's intimate. But I'd like to share it here with you because you guys are like family, and I feel comfortable in telling you about me, where I came from, and how it took me a long time — 15 years — to build a life. That life consisted of being a father, a

I still go there for outpatient services on a monthly basis. Because if it's not broken, why fix it? I get the support and the understanding that I need. I look forward to it. That has been an ongoing theme with Outreach. I got out into the world and am welcomed back with open arms and respect. They treat me like a human being. They helped me help myself, as I had no sense of self-worth. When I stayed there, I couldn't even look at myself in the mirror. Outreach is a sanctuary, someplace that you can never forget.

You never forget the feeling of secure camaraderie and acceptance. It's something

husband, a provider, and a family member. I had saved enough money to buy a home, have a nice car in the driveway, and put food on the table. Before I knew it, almost out of nowhere, substance abuse, addiction, and cocaine took that all away from me.

I found myself in a deep dark place. Someplace that I never thought that I was meant to be. It was kind of like being in an avalanche and you don't know which way is up. Or that feeling of like you are running in place, and you can't make any ground. It was at that point that I knew that it was now or never, and I needed some help. I was at my wits end and I knew that that I couldn't do it by myself. Until that point, I was always trying to do things on my own. That's when I met Outreach.

I love the name Outreach because that's exactly what they did for me, they reached out, like a superhero with the cape on. I was in that deep dark hole, too deep to climb out. They extended down a strong hand and pulled me up. They said just put your foot on the wall, and we'll help get your mind in the right place. That's exactly what they did.

you can't put a price on. The people who work there, the people who are involved and sitting on this stage, they make miracles happen. Like the police department and the fire department, they save lives. I am living right now and standing in front of you because of God, my savior Jesus Christ, pointed me to Outreach. It's a blessing to me. It's a blessing to my family, to my ten children, and to my wife who deserves a great husband. I came from a broken home, so did my father and his father before him. I didn't know how to function but with the help of my lord and savior, and Outreach, I am here today.

I want to thank you for coming out this holiday season... and for your support. What you've done for our children; all my 10 children their lives, you've touched.... Thank you and God bless.



SERVICES FOR VETERANS OUTREACH RECOVERY CENTER BRENTWOOD, NY

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**From Service to Support: Outreach's Former
Military Personnel Support Fellow Heroes**

Outreach is proud to have staff members from various branches of the military, many of whom work directly with veterans in our treatment programs. Their lived experiences in the services provide a unique understanding and perspective for our clients. Below are profiles of a few of these dedicated team members.



Laura Hagemeyer, LMSW

What is your title and where are you based at Outreach?

I am a Primary Counselor at Outreach Integrated Opioid Treatment Program (IOTP).

What are your key job responsibilities?

Provide individual, group, and family counseling, complete all necessary documentation including legal progress reports, maintain relationships with collateral contacts, and conduct toxicologies.

What branch of the military did you serve in?

United States Air Force

Does your prior military experience come to bear in anyway in your work at Outreach?

In the USAF, my primary responsibilities were to meet with patients who attended the Mental Health clinic for individual and group sessions. My experience with others while serving in uniform was similar. The experiences I've gained in the military about integrity, honesty, courage, not giving up the fight, being a good wingman, leading when needed, following when needed—I aim to use these tools everywhere I go. I never give up on my clients.

What do you like most about working at Outreach?

When clients tell me they feel important here, and that they haven't felt that in other programs. Seeing my clients progress in their recovery and their overall mental health.



Oswald Ramdoo, M.A., MASTER CASAC, NCAC II, SAP

effectively and efficiently towards helping clients attain a healthy and productive life. I ensure the treatment complies with the specific standards of the contracting agencies and the requirements of governmental regulatory bodies. I provide leadership and manage the day-to-day operations of the facility.

What branch of the military did you serve in?

U.S Army

Does your prior military experience come to

What is your title and where are you based at Outreach?

I am an Assistant Director at the Men's Community Residence in Brentwood, NY.

What are your key job responsibilities?

I assist the Program Director in the development and maintenance of appropriate substance abuse treatment services. I oversee clinical aspects of treatment, including admissions, assessments, transfers, referrals, and the completion of an appropriate treatment program. I supervise staff to ensure appropriate services are administered



Jessica Shuren, LCSW, CASAC

What is your title and where are you based at Outreach?

Assistant Vice President of Outpatient Services, main office in Bellport, but oversee sites in Suffolk, Nassau, Queens and Brooklyn

What are your key job responsibilities?

Oversee overall programming for the modality, encourage and foster growth through the development of community relationships, and act as liaison between sites and executive leadership.

bear in anyway in your work at Outreach?

Absolutely...I use many of my experiences from Basic Combat Training, and Advanced Individual Training in presentations and group sessions.

What do you like most about working at Outreach?

The opportunity to serve veterans and civilians... helping them to overcome their addiction and build healthy and productive lives.

What branch of the military did you serve in?

United States Air Force

Does your prior military experience come to bear in anyway in your work at Outreach?

The "attention to detail" that I learned in the military was a large part of my career as an Air Traffic Controller in the Air Force, and now plays a role in ensuring compliance with state and federal regulations such as OASAS and Medicaid. Additionally, my military experience provided a basis for the growth of the services we provide to veterans. As a "closed" group, veterans can be difficult to reach, though having peers, professionals who also served, working at Outreach provides a sense of belonging and a non-judgmental environment.

What do you like most about working at Outreach?

The continued attention to quality care and services and the positive reputation Outreach has within communities.



Honoree Plays Key Role in Securing Middle East Ceasefire

Steven J. Witkoff, Chairman and co-Chief Executive Officer of Witkoff and 2015 Metropolitan Luncheon Honoree was recently appointed as Middle East Envoy by the Trump Administration, and contributed to a successful bi-partisan team effort that helped broker a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

Outreach's New Apprenticeship Program to Help Build Behavioral Health Workforce

Outreach is to be the first non-profit behavioral health treatment organization in New York State to receive approval from the State's Department of Labor to operate a Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP). This new program offers candidates—who must already hold a Bachelor of Arts or Sciences in a human services-related field—an opportunity to be hired as full-time employees. While working, participants will receive a salary and benefits, and attend the Outreach Training Institute (OTI), at no cost to them, towards becoming a Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC). Apprentices will be classified as Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Counselor Aides for a 12-month term.



"This is a groundbreaking development for the treatment field, Outreach, and jobseekers alike," said Liliane Drago, Vice President of Training at Outreach. "With the ongoing substance use crisis in New York and across the country, and the increasing need for qualified counselors, this apprenticeship program is a vital solution. It's a win-win for both our workforce and the communities we serve."

The Outreach Apprenticeship Program is designed to expand career opportunities, particularly for underrepresented populations in the behavioral health field. The program provides a structured pathway into high-demand roles while allowing Outreach to cultivate and grow its workforce.

In the 2025-2026 pilot year, Outreach will place one apprentice in one of its four residential programs, which offer intensive, round-the-clock behavioral health treatment services. Apprentices will receive 350 hours of training at no cost to help them earn their CASAC certification through OASAS-accredited OTI. Apprentices will begin with a salary of \$19 per hour, with a wage increase to \$23 per hour after seven months.

Upon successful completion of the program and receipt of the CASAC credential, apprentices will be eligible for full-time positions as behavioral health treatment counselors at Outreach or with other providers. For more information about this program please visit <http://OPINY.org/about-oti/>.

Celebrating Another Year of Dedicated Service: **Outreach's Annual Staff Holiday Party**

In recognition of the staff's dedication and service, the Board of Directors and Executive Team hosted its annual all-staff Holiday Party at Douglaston Manor in Queens. Staff were treated to a festive afternoon filled with delicious food, dancing, Outreach-branded bags, caricature artists, raffles, and the popular annual Pet Contest.





Accolades & Partnerships

Staff Recognized for their Longevity of Service



At the agency's staff holiday party, several team members were recognized with the annual Longevity Awards, which honors staff who have been with Outreach for five years or more. We congratulate and applaud these dedicated individuals for their continued service and commitment to the organization's mission.

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Mary Brite, Senior Vice President & Chief Compliance Officer

Kathleen Norman-Edwards, Secretary, Bellport Outpatient Services

10 YEARS OF SERVICE

Jessica Alvarado, Program Coordinator, Bellport Outpatient Services

Michael Grant, Maintenance Worker, Outreach House II

Krista Renee Whitman, Senior Vice President & Chief Operating Officer

Linda Woodward, Case Manager, Richmond Hill Wellness Center & CCBHC

5 YEARS OF SERVICE

Maria Bak, Administrative Assistant, Greenpoint Outpatient Services

Samuel Bello, Instructor, Outreach House II

Katherine Bollman, Case Manager, Men's Community Residence

Megan Byrne, Peer Coordinator, Long Island SOR Program

Enoch Chan, MD, Medical Director

Gene Howard, Driver, Bellport Outpatient Services

Catherine Maguire, Program Director, Outreach House II

Christal Montague, Senior Vice President & Chief Strategy Officer

Leticia Rivera, Billing, Outreach House II

Vanessa Saunders, Administrative Assistant, Men's Community Residence

Douglas Sloan, Cook, Outreach House II

Other Staff Accomplishments:

Thanh Pham, Outreach's EQUITY grant Community Specialist, received a Citation of Honor from the Queen's Borough President for her work with the Queens General

Assembly.



Krista Whitman, Chief Operating Officer, was appointed by the Suffolk County Legislative Committee on Health to be a member of the Suffolk County Community Mental Health, Office of Persons with Development Disabilities and Alcohol & Substance Abuse Planning and Advisory Board.



John Venza, Vice President for Residential Services and Business Development, presented to the members of the Suffolk County Children's Single Point of Access committee on the topic of Cannabis Trends and the Impact on Youth Mental Health. He also spoke at the Michael Sena Run for Hope in Babylon, Long Island. John also provided a training on Adolescent Cannabis Use and Mental Health at Superintendent's Day for 100 faculty at the Western Suffolk BOCES at the Brennan School.

John Venza with Mark Brunza, Aspire Academy
Principal, at Western Suffolk BOCES



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