

2025



Newsletter

WINTER / VOLUME 29

Quarterly News & Updates



Happy New Year

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From the Desk of...

James Parauda

CEO

Q&A With NJ Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz

On December 10th, I had the opportunity to meet with NJ Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz, who has served NJ District 21 for 15 years. Asw. Munoz is a retired nurse who serves on the Budget Committee and is the longest-serving member of the Assembly Health Committee. Her mission is aligned with that of TCCMO as she also sits on the task force for child abuse and neglect and the ad hoc committee on domestic violence. Below you'll find a summary of our interview. To read the full interview please click here: [Full Interview with Assemblywoman Muñoz.docx](#)

TCCMO: Who or what influenced your decision to go into politics?

Assemblywoman Munoz:

It was my husband, Dr Eric Munoz, a practicing trauma surgeon who served on the city council in Summit in 1992 and then on the Assembly in 2001. I was very active in the community, and got to know the people in my district. As the only nurse in the legislature, I understand the interconnectedness between the delivery of health care and our legislature.

TCCMO: Do you feel like there are any contributions that you can point to in the areas of mental health, substance use and intellectual disabilities that you're proud of?

Assemblywoman Munoz:

I am on the task force for child abuse and neglect. I was on the ad hoc committee on domestic violence, and I have introduced legislation that would require all nurses to do a continuing education program on domestic violence. I think that one of the barriers that we have for mental health is getting people to go into healthcare professions in general is because of the cost of education. And so I currently have a piece of legislation that would allow for loan forgiveness for people who go into mental health become mental health providers in underserved areas.

TCCMO: What are your goals during this term?

Assemblywoman Munoz:

Well, I have a number of goals. Number one is obviously in health care. I (also) have a package of six bills regarding ghost guns (so people cannot) modify the ghost gun to become a semi-automatic weapon. I focus on health care issues. I focus on budgetary issues. I, as a budget officer, have a very in-depth understanding of the budget and we (have been) in a structural deficit every year for the last number of years. As a person who lives in a district that's heavily dependent on New Jersey Transit, I've been a strong advocate for working to improve NJ transit and have been on multiple committees regarding that issue.

TCCMO: What do you do in your free time?

Assemblywoman Munoz:

I exercise every day. I'm an avid knitter, and I've started a program called Knit One, Give One. It's a program to help prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome. I have a group of knitters, including myself, and we knit caps that have some color purple. I have an initiative, a piece of legislation that says that every mother should receive education about a period of purple crying. And when they finish the video and they get the information, we give them a cap that's been knitted to remind the mothers that it is periodic and that it will resolve. We know that the number one cause of brain injury in children under the age of one is head trauma from Shaken Baby Syndrome.

TCCMO: What is your favorite snack?

Assemblywoman Munoz:

This bakery in summit makes unbelievable, raspberry crumb cake, and I will give myself that as a treat every day. And I am an apple a day person.

TCCMO: What advice would you give to the youth who might want to become involved in their communities?

Assemblywoman Munoz:

Volunteer for an issue that you care about. Look for opportunities in clubs, it gives you a pathway. Working as a volunteer in these clubs. And next thing you know, you have an entry to a career or a school that of your choice because of the work that you've done.

TCCMO: What is your leadership style?

Assemblywoman Munoz:

I believe my leadership style is building consensus. And, you know, I have been a member of the minority party for the entire time I've been in the legislature. I just put in a piece of legislation, my sun block legislation, and I made sure I reached out to a Democrat, and (asked), "Would you go on this bill with me?" The way to get things done is to work together on issues that you can both agree that you need to work on and come together to some consensus.

TCCMO: What are the significant issues facing New Jersey from a legislative perspective?

Assemblywoman Munoz:

I think a significant issue is our budget. For the last three budget sessions, we've had a \$2 billion structural deficit. Another issue that I think that we really must take a look at is over-development because of our flooding issue, and we are building a lot on permeable land that already floods. I think that's critically important.

Tri County CMO wants to thank **Assemblywoman Munoz** for her service to the NJ Legislature, time and candidness in answering our questions. For more information about the Assemblywoman, go to [NJ Legislature](#) webpage.

Happy
New Year

Youth Success Story

This edition, we are featuring Daniel, a young man that has been enrolled in CMO services for almost one year. Daniel started with CMO while he was understandably struggling with grief due to the loss of his father.

Daniel and his mother dealt with their grief in different ways, which took a toll on their relationship as well. Ultimately, Daniel desired to work through his challenges and become more independent. Daniel has been engaging with Simone, an Intensive in Community (IIC) therapist through CMO, which has been significantly helpful for his mental health. Additionally, therapy addressed challenges within the family and resulted in an improved relationship between Daniel and his mother.

Daniel also had the support of a mentor, Andre, to help him with goals and career planning. Daniel recently enrolled in Raritan Valley Community College to begin classes in the spring. He works part-time and has passed his driver's permit exam. Daniel's Care Manager, Tyra, along with the rest of their team, are proud of Daniel for making such strides to better himself and his future.

TCCMO wishes Daniel the best as he begins college and moves into this next chapter of his life.



Getting to Know TCCMO

Janet Hrehowesik is our newest Learning and Development Coordinator at TCCMO, with a special focus on the Nurtured Heart Approach (NHA). While she is new to the position, she has been with TCCMO for nearly twelve years serving families as a care manager. In her new role, Janet enjoys "getting to do Nurtured Heart all day, every day" while still engaging with families and the community.

Janet has taken on the responsibility of coordinating twice-monthly NHA trainings for families and providers who are interested in learning more about the approach. She has also been an integral part of the Developing Resiliency with Engaging Approaches to Maximize Success (DREAMS) program this year and in years past. The DREAMS initiative, which brings NHA to schools across New Jersey, has made its way down to Mercer County for the 2024-2025 school year.

Janet loves that she can be part of the agency's plans to spread NHA far and wide. She genuinely believes in the approach's effectiveness and has seen it work wonders in both her personal and professional life. She loves that it creates an "appreciative" and "nurturing" atmosphere that makes her and those around her want to be the best they can be.

Janet has seen the benefits of infusing NHA into the culture of the workplace at TCCMO and enjoys using her creative side to come up with engaging activities for staff meetings and events. With the work we do at TCCMO, it can be difficult at times to see the bright side of things, but Janet reminds us not to get bogged down by the negatives and to embrace the positives.

After all, "There is always something going right!" 🌟



Community Corner

United Way of Northern NJ:

The holidays are a nerve-racking time for families who are unable to afford the basics of housing, food, childcare, healthcare, and transportation. United Way of Northern NJ (UWNJ) takes pride in supporting these families. Last year, UWNJ, Gifts of the Season distributed over 5,000 gifts to households in need. This year, TCCMO had the honor to be selected to receive gifts, which we were able to distribute to the families we serve.



Vickie Mendez-Branch and Reggie Branch

Sensitive Santa (Collaboration with NJ4S & Branching Out):

This year, TCCMO had the pleasure of collaborating with NJ4S of Hunterdon, Somerset, and Warren & Branching Out Foundation on their Sensitive Santa event, an event that provides a more inclusive and accommodating environment for youth with intellectual, behavioral, and developmental disabilities during the holiday season!

Matching Gifts

We are happy to announce that Tri County CMO is now part of the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) Matching Gifts program. Therefore, anyone employed with J&J currently or retired from J&J can choose our agency for the matching gift if they participate in this program. If you know anyone affiliated with J&J, please let them know this is now an option. Donations will help us meet our Mission for the youth and families of Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren counties.



Pride in Partnership

19th Annual Liberation Based Healing Conference

Deja Amos, Chief Development Officer, presented at the 19th Annual Liberation Based Healing Conference on November 1st. The Liberation-Based Healing Conference is hosted by Dr. Rhea Almeida, LCSW, PhD of The Institute for Family Services in Somerset, NJ. Deja was a panelist for Organizational Equity: De-coding Power & Privilege within Institutional Structures & Liberatory Practices. Deja and her fellow panelists discussed methods of anti-racist, organizational, and systemic change within mental health.

Autism New Jersey's 42nd Annual Conference

Tri County CMO was able to send three care manager supervisors and one care manager to the Autism New Jersey's 42nd Annual Conference in October. This provided our staff with an opportunity to attend informative workshops and to network with valuable providers across the state. Our very own, Nicole Russo and Deja Amos, teamed up with Passaic County CMO and Bergen County CMO to get the word out about Care Management Services in New Jersey. For more information on Autism New Jersey, go to [Autism NJ- Home](#).



Growing Greatness



The Nurtured Heart Approach is a relationship philosophy that bases itself around connection. Through the approach we learn how to flip our energy and give connection only through positive interactions. This is done by setting clear boundaries, recognizing the good, and not highlighting the bad. It builds a child's inner wealth and guides them to use their intensity in positive ways.

Look closely this month at where you give the most energy. Take a moment to step back and reflect about the whole day. Acknowledge what went right, even if it's something small, and give your energy to that. Baby steps are important to make changes.

At TCCMO, we offer small group trainings twice a month. Come find out more!



[Click here](#)



[Scan here](#)



F Y I

The TCCMO Wellness Committee is focused on supporting employees' mental, spiritual and physical health within the workplace. By supporting the well-being of all staff, we aim to better serve our youth and families.

During the calendar year of 2024, the committee focused on three areas of employee wellness: increasing team-based wellness, mindful eating/nutrition-based wellness and staff self-care to avoid burnout. In May, each team committed to completing wellness focused activities at every team meeting. We had 13 teams participate in the challenge and many teams continued to prioritize team wellness in each meeting since.

To focus on mindful eating and nutrition-based wellness, the committee hosted a team-based smoothie challenge during the month of June. We had 10 teams participate in the challenge. The top three teams won prizes that the teams could use to purchase wellness items for their team.

In July, the committee hosted a virtual "lunch and learn" about Mindful Eating. Staff learned about the approach of mindful eating and how to incorporate it into our daily routines.

To focus on staff self-care and avoiding burnout, the Wellness Committee hosted an 8-week walking challenge for all staff throughout September and October. The challenge brought individuals and teams together to highlight the importance of physical wellness.

To wrap up the year of wellness, the committee hosted a second "lunch and learn" on How to Avoid Burnout and a Self-Care Staff Day with on-site chair massages and a healthy catered lunch.

We are excited for another year of focusing on and supporting employee wellness!



Events held by TCCMO

TCCMO Holiday Party:

Every year TCCMO and Family Support Organization (FSO) team up to host our annual Family Holiday Party. This year was no different with a Candy Land theme. Our agencies planned a fun-filled night for our families with games, crafts, music and food as well as pictures with Christmas characters! We want to give a BIG THANK YOU to our community members and partners for their generous donations and support!



Cultural lunch:

TCCMO takes pride in celebrating the diverse cultures within our agency. As a part of our commitment to embracing diversity and inclusivity, the Race and Gender Equity (RGE) Committee decided to create cultural lunches to honor, celebrate and bring our employees together through the joy of food. We have hosted six cultural lunches where we have had food from countries like Afghanistan, Colombia, Poland, and many more! To end the year, we celebrated Ecuador, where one of our very own brought in traditional attire and shared about their culture!



Ready to make a big impact?

Partner with us to fundraise for Tri County CMO families

—email **Deja Amos** today! damos@tricountycmo.org

Or click the button below to **DONATE** directly from our Website!



2024



TCCMO Trainings



Tri County CMO
Training Department

impactful

Is offering the following IMPACTFUL film screenings to our school and community partners. Choose one or all of the social impact films in the Mental Health Trilogy to view as a community. Film Screenings will be followed by post-film community panel discussion and Q&A.

Please contact the TCCMO Training Department @ trainingdepartment@tricontycmo.org if interested in learning more about this series and how to schedule a screening.



Angst

Learn more at AngstMovie.com

Angst is a film-based program that aims to raise mental health awareness and remove the stigma surrounding anxiety. The program helps young people and their families recognize when anxiety goes beyond a healthy level by providing interviews, tips, and expert advice.



RACE TO BE HUMAN

Learn more at RaceToBeHumanMovie.com

RACE to Be Human is a program that offers actionable strategies for self-reflection and awareness. It combines insights from diverse experts to empower individuals and communities to respect and honor family, dignity, and diversity. The program fosters a sense of belonging and unity across all ethnicities.



UPSTANDERS

Learn more at TheUpstanders.com

"The Upstanders" is a film-based program that explores bullying and cyber-bullying, shares proven strategies, and promotes character building. It inspires qualities such as kindness, honesty, respect, empathy, trust, and connection, and highlights the importance of modeling empathy and resilience to transform attitudes and actions.



LIKE

Learn more at TheLikeMovie.com

The LIKE is a film-based program explores the impact of social media on our lives and the effects of technology on the brain and on learning. Understanding that virtual connection is a huge part of our socialization and can have many benefits, how do we use it to best inform, educate and inspire us to self-regulate, so we can enjoy a more balanced and fulfilled life?

WANT A BETTER CONNECTION WITH YOUR KID?

THEN CHECK THIS OUT

Nurtured Heart Approach

THE NURTURED HEART APPROACH IS AN ESSENTIAL SET OF STRATEGIES FOR TRANSFORMING THE MOST INTENSE CHILDREN: TRANSFORMING THE WAY CHILDREN PERCEIVE THEMSELVES, THEIR CAREGIVERS, AND THE WORLD AROUND THEM TEACHING CHILDREN THEY WILL RECEIVE RECOGNITION THROUGH POSITIVE BEHAVIORS SEEING INTENSITY TO BE A POWERFUL QUALITY THAT, IF DEVELOPED CORRECTLY, CAN DRIVE CHILDREN TO AMAZING ACHIEVEMENTS

THIS WILL BE CONDUCTED VIRTUALLY TWICE A MONTH

EVERY 2ND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH FROM 6PM-830PM
AND

EVERY 3RD WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH FROM 1030AM-1PM

CONTACT JANET HREHOWESIK TO SIGN UP

(908)255-5697 OR JHREHOWESIK@TRICOUNTYCMO.ORG
OR SCAN HERE TO SIGN UP



WARREN HUNTERDON SOMERSET
TRI COUNTY
CMT Management Organization
Keeping Families Strong

You won't want to miss our trainings
– they're great opportunities to
learn and grow!

Contact us for more information!

Tri County CMO Board Members

Leslie Brusser
Lesley Schwarzman
Dan Kerr
Avril Okeke

Daphney Rene - Board Chair
Melissa Fowler - Vice Chair
David Yazujian - Secretary
Pam Jacobs - Treasurer

Sakina Ladha
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How to Get Referred to Tri County CMO

PerformCare can help a parent or guardian connect their child to Children's System of Care services.

PerformCare staff are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide assessment and guidance to families facing challenges to their functioning and well-being.

PerformCare / Contracted Systems Administrator (CSA)
1-877-652-7624

<http://www.performcarenj.org/>

<http://www.performcarenj.org/families/index.aspx> (video guide)

**TCCMO wishes you a Happy New Year
filled with joy, success, health!**



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