

Odyssey House *news*

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Celebrating Mother's Day

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Run for Your Life Returns

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Looking Ahead to Life after Covid-19

As the pandemic continues to evolve and society begins to reopen, what does the new normal look like for the treatment and recovery community?

It's been over a year since Covid-19 disrupted everyone's lives—a year of protests and upheaval that left people struggling with social isolation, economic uncertainty, and the loss of loved ones. The pandemic has been especially difficult for people with substance use disorders, as treatment centers were forced to reduce their capacity or close altogether, leaving vulnerable people without access to lifesaving services.

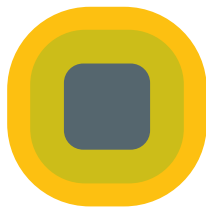
Now, as coronavirus cases continue to drop and New York rebounds out of lockdown, it's time to reflect on the lessons we learned and the victories we achieved in the past year, and look ahead to the future.

Odyssey House, like medical and human services providers across the country, adopted advanced technology to help our

clients stay connected to services and maintain their recovery (see pages 6-7). And while we welcome the return of in-person groups and events, the flexibility and connectivity that technology provides for patient-centered care will continue to be a part of our services.

We also embarked on a successful vaccination campaign among both staff and clients (see page 5). Working with our partner, Damian Family Care Centers, we have been offering on-site vaccinations since December 2020. The availability of these powerfully effective vaccines has played a large role in moving us toward a "new normal" and instilling a sense of optimism for the future.

Life after the pandemic may never look or feel quite the same as before. Covid-19 has significantly disrupted how we work, socialize, learn, and do business. But we can take the lessons we learned from the challenges of the past year and use them to reach those who were left behind. ●



Odyssey House

Where recovery gets real

Highlighting the Struggles and Triumphs of Mothers in Treatment



"Recovery has made me a better person."

Recover like a Mother, Chapter 13

Mother's Day 2021 Campaign

Supporting women and their children in treatment at Odyssey House

Visit youtube.com/OdysseyHouseNY to watch the entire "Recover Like a Mother" series.

This spring, Odyssey House launched our first-ever virtual fundraising campaign to raise critically needed funds for the women, and their children, in treatment at Odyssey House. Thanks to our donors and sponsors, we raised more than \$50,000, all of which went directly to stabilize the families in our program.

The campaign was centered on our "Recover Like a Mother" 14-part video series celebrating the determination, strength, and stigma-fighting work of moms in recovery. Moms who are currently, or were formerly clients at Odyssey House, shared their personal stories and reflected on how treatment and recovery from substance use disorders have impacted their lives and the lives of their children.



Odyssey House Board Member Prisca Salazar-Rodriguez co-chaired the campaign.

Mother's Day has normally been a difficult one for Tawanna H., 40, after she had her children taken away from her in 2017. She reflected on what Mother's Day would mean to her this year: "I'm going to be clean and sober for one year. I have my children with me. I get to celebrate Mother's Day with them. It's going to be the best. I'm very proud to be a mother on Mother's Day this year. I'm very proud of myself."

She continued, "I am proud of the young moms at Odyssey House who, despite the challenges in their own lives, are determined to raise their children in a safe and healthy home. They are the future and it is a future full of promise."

Mothers in our Family Center at the George Rosenfeld Center for Recovery (GRCR) learn how to break the cycle of

"I'm very proud to be a mother on Mother's Day this year. I'm very proud of myself."

– Tawanna H.

"They are the future."

The campaign was co-chaired by Odyssey House Board Members: Lisa Glass, Dr. Kate Rothko Prizel, and Prisca Salazar-Rodriguez. Ms. Salazar-Rodriguez joined the Board last year and was eager to get involved after visiting the Family Center.

"In becoming a part of the Odyssey House family, I toured the facility here on Randall's Island and I met with a young mom and her daughter. Seeing firsthand the care and the opportunity for a new life was just incredible," said Ms. Salazar-Rodriguez.

substance abuse and create nurturing homes for their children. The GRCR provides a bright, safe and supportive environment to overcome substance abuse and learn new life skills—from managing emotional stress to developing better parenting and vocational skills.

"Now more than ever, our programs are urgently needed as American families grapple with an opioid epidemic that has been exacerbated by the pandemic," said Odyssey House President Dr. Peter Provet. "Thank you to everyone who supported this campaign – helping us maintain our mission, and commitment, to New Yorkers in need of our services." ●

Run the 2021 TCS New York City Marathon with Team Odyssey!

OFFICIAL CHARITY PARTNER



TATA
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NYRR NEW YORK ROAD RUNNERS

We are excited to announce that Odyssey House has been selected as an official charity partner of the 2021 TCS New York City Marathon for the third year in a row! This year's marathon will be particularly special, and we are thrilled to again have the opportunity to bolster our team and bring more attention to our mission: helping New Yorkers in need overcome drug and alcohol abuse, improve their physical and mental health, and defeat homelessness.

We'd like to offer you the chance to join the Odyssey House Run for Your Life team at the TCS New York City Marathon in November.

Running for Odyssey House not only provides you with guaranteed entry, it also gives you the opportunity to change lives and give back to your community. For a guaranteed entry, you must commit to raising a total of \$3,000 for Odyssey House, which will directly support the men, women, and families in our programs. That might sound like a lot to raise, but we'll support your fundraising with access to an easy-to-build, online crowdfunding page that you can use to track your progress.

Your entry package includes an Odyssey House racing jersey, an invitation to our annual team dinner on the Friday night before the marathon, and twice-weekly training opportunities with Team Odyssey. If you are interested in running with us on November 7, 2021, please contact Carolyn Abrams at cabrams@odysseyhousenyc.org. ●



MAKE RECOVERY REAL FOR A FELLOW NEW YORKER

Thanks to supporters like you, Odyssey House has been helping people achieve a healthy and sustained recovery for more than 50 years.

When you donate to our programs, you are helping us pursue our mission of providing the best possible treatment for drug-troubled men, women, and children, and helping them pursue their dreams of living healthy and productive lives.

Donate online at odysseyhousenyc.org/donate

SAVE THE DATE!

Run for Your Life 5K Returns this Fall

Sixteenth

Run For Your Life



September 18, 2021

After switching to a virtual-only event last year, we're excited to announce that our 16th Annual Run for Your Life will be held in person on Saturday, September 18th! Please join us at this family-friendly event to raise awareness of and funds for the recovery movement.

We will be observing all safety protocols and though we'll still be on Randall's Island, we'll be in a new location. We have more exciting, new things in store – stay tuned for details.

Not in NYC? No problem! Register for our virtual run and you can run anywhere, anytime in September for Recovery Month.

"Run for Your Life' is our flagship event, and we can't wait to be there in person with all of our supporters," said John Tavalacci, EVP, Chief Operating Officer. "It's going to look a little different this year, but the important thing is being able to celebrate Recovery Month together, safely. Come out and join us!"

Register & donate @ odysseyhousenyc.org

Crush Covid



Odyssey House staff, together for the first time in more than a year, gathered around the coronavirus-shaped piñata to celebrate everyone's hard work keeping themselves, their families, and their colleagues healthy.

Throughout the pandemic, one of Odyssey House's main priorities has been keeping our staff and clients safe and healthy while providing life-saving treatment for New Yorkers in need. This included a six-month-long vaccination campaign.

The campaign culminated in a fun-filled "Crush Covid" event, marking the first time Odyssey House staff from across our facilities had gathered together in more than a year. Held in the backyard of the Odyssey House Haven supportive housing program on East 121st Street, the event featured a barbecue, raffles and prizes, on-site vaccinations, arts and crafts, a Mr. Softee truck, and even a virus-shaped piñata.

The event was spearheaded by Colleen Beagen, VP Director of Human Resources, to acknowledge the hard work of our staff and celebrate the success of maintaining our mission during a challenging year.

"We also wanted to show appreciation to all the vaccinated staff for doing their part for our community to beat this devastating virus that has taken over our lives and taken so much from so many," said Ms. Beagen.

Increasing confidence in vaccines

Throughout the vaccination campaign, Odyssey House held webinars and Q&A sessions to inform staff and reduce hesitancy. Despite these efforts, some hesitancy remained.



Grace Lopopolo, Administrative Assistant, celebrates getting her vaccine with Odyssey House President Dr. Peter Provet.



The event featured giveaways like water bottles, colorful masks, and more.



Staff decorate their own swag bags at the arts and crafts table.



Chiyo Jikko, Assistant Controller, feels safer after getting vaccinated.

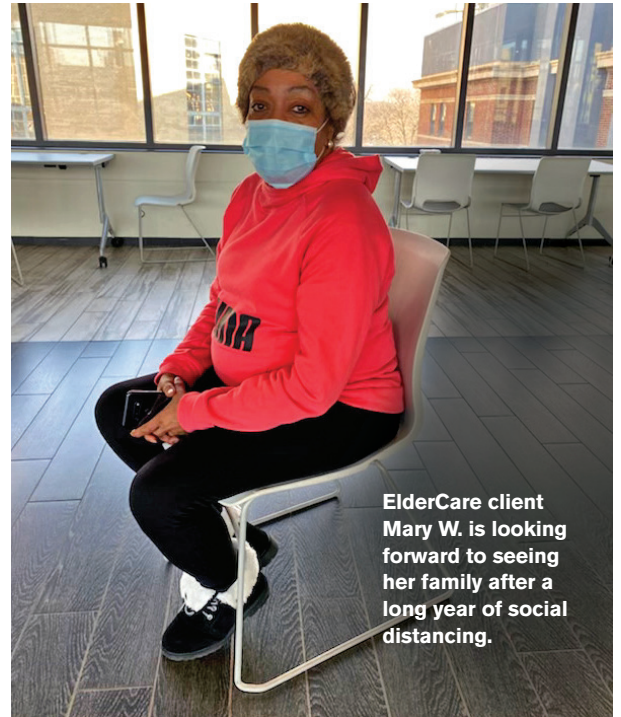
The Crush Covid event also served as an opportunity to educate staff who were on the fence about the vaccine and encourage them to get their shot that day (except for those with exemptions). Thirteen people signed up and got vaccinated on the spot.

“Sometimes people just need to see someone they trust getting vaccinated to get on board,” said Ms. Beagen. “And having it available right there makes it more accessible.”

Chiyo Jikko, Assistant Controller, was among the staff to be vaccinated at the event. “I knew I needed to be vaccinated eventually, and the event was a great opportunity to do that. The event made me feel that I was not alone. I received a lot of support from everyone,” said Ms. Jikko.

She added, “It was great to see my colleagues face-to-face again after a long year. I am happy to know that I am protected from Covid-19. Now I can travel again!” ●

“Being vaccinated took care of so many worries.”



ElderCare client Mary W. is looking forward to seeing her family after a long year of social distancing.

When the first highly effective vaccines were approved, many people saw a glimmer of hope for the first time in nearly a year. As a residential long-term care facility, Odyssey House staff and clients were among the first group eligible to be vaccinated and, in partnership with Damian Family Care Centers (DFCC), began offering on-site vaccinations to clients, tenants, and staff immediately.

To encourage vaccination, we embarked on a concerted and sustained information campaign, sharing articles, flyers, and upbeat emails to address concerns and offering frequent and flexible appointment options for convenience. We also held educational webinars with Daphne Juste, Clinical Support Coordinator, and Dr. Gilbert Ross, DFCC Medical Director, at which staff members were encouraged to share their experiences with the vaccination and to ask questions. As of June 10th, 74% of staff had been vaccinated, with more scheduling appointments every week.

Residents in our ElderCare program were particularly relieved when the vaccinations arrived. Since the pandemic began, the residents have been committed to keeping themselves, their peers, and their families safe, and they are grateful to have easy access to the vaccine and medical services in the facility. Mary W. said she was looking forward to visiting her family who had been concerned for her health as an older person living in a residential program and also worried about the potential risk she could run of contracting the virus during a visit home. “Being vaccinated took care of so many worries,” she said. To date, more than 90% of our ElderCare clients have been vaccinated. ●

The Manor Art Group Honors Our Dedicated Staff



When the art group started last fall, the members decided to create a mural as a thank you to essential Odyssey House employees who have continued working throughout the pandemic.

The mural, which includes symbolic images of heroism and community positivity, was created by projecting text on a large canvas, which our artists then traced and painted. They also added patterns of smaller iconic images using multiple stencils. The final artwork is a bold expression of appreciation that honors our dedicated staff.

The bright, bold mural is on display outside the Manor facility on East 121st Street in East Harlem. ●

Mural Project Promotes Community and Collaboration



The Odyssey House Safe Space Mural Project is a collaborative art group with the Edgecombe Residential Treatment Facility and NYC Department of Correction. The project allows clients to express themselves in a constructive, safe manner while preparing to complete the Edgecombe Re-Entry program, and is designed to improve interactions, promote collaboration, and encourage positive thinking. Clients participate in every step of the mural process, from conception to creation.

The first mural, “The Great Wave of Recovery,” was completed in May 2021. Clients are now creating a second mural consisting of colorful, hand-painted affirmations. Carlo Lespes, Program Director of Edgecombe, said, “We are deeply proud of the Safe Space Mural Project and grateful for the unique opportunity to give back to our community through the medium of art.” ●

Putting Tech to Work: Adapting and Enhancing Our Services

Putting advanced technology to work for us at Odyssey House was already underway before Covid-19 disrupted our work and personal lives, and forced us to change how we interact with each other. We have consistently invested in ways to make our administrative and program management tasks more efficient with remote meetings, online services, and cloud-based data management systems.

But what changed dramatically, in a year of so many unforeseen challenges, were rapid transitions of selected client services from in-person to virtual interactions and administrative functions.

Our ability to quickly set up remote counseling, medical and court appointments, and other previously

in-person-only services made it possible for clients to progress in treatment while following public health directives on face coverings, physical distancing, and limiting exposure to others. And, of course, what worked to keep clients safe also protected our workforce.

Residential treatment adopts technology

As Renas Tili, Director, Information Systems and Technology, and his team worked in the background to provide remote technology, the program and housing staff had to adapt quickly to the demands for infection control. This was an especially urgent need in residential programs and supportive housing programs, where hundreds of clients and tenants now had to be kept safe from

a highly contagious virus while living in congregate living conditions.

For Jeremy King, VP, Senior Manager, Director of OASAS Residential Programs, this meant incorporating telehealth into a treatment regime based on in-person peer support and group engagement. Mr. King explained this was particularly helpful for individuals new to treatment and not ready to leave the program unsupervised for extended periods.

“Technology allowed clients, where medically appropriate, to receive primary and specialty medical care, including psychiatric care and medication management, in the safety of the treatment program and without having to travel to and from appointments.”

Grants Extend a Helping Hand to those in Need

Pandemic relief in the Bronx



Odyssey House was awarded a \$45,000 grant from the Robin Hood Relief Fund, which provided emergency support through food, housing, job security and more during the Covid-19 crisis. The grant supported Odyssey House's Helping Hand Crisis Fund, giving assistance to those who are going through financial hardship due to the effects of the pandemic.

The crisis fund provided financial support of \$50 to \$1,000 for clients enrolled in our Outpatient Program who reside in the South Bronx. In a borough that was hit particularly hard by the pandemic, grants that provide direct cash assistance for things like rent, utilities, and groceries, can make a big difference to people in early recovery who are struggling to get back on their feet. "Many of our clients are starting from scratch," said Maria Tapia, Clinical Supervisor. "It's rewarding to see our clients rebuild their lives."

Keeping clients connected



The Columbia University School of Management awarded Odyssey House a \$25,000 grant to provide Outpatient clients engaged in ongoing substance abuse treatment with a low-cost device (e.g., refurbished smart phones) and data plans to keep them connected to treatment services amid an unprecedented health crisis.

Telehealth and virtual services offered a lifeline for people during the pandemic, but many low and no-income individuals faced significant challenges in engaging in such services, which put them at an increased risk of relapse and potential overdose.

"Continuity of service is critical for people in the early stages of recovery, who may be transitioning from residential treatment and require more intensive support from counselors," said Mary Callahan, Senior Manager, Director of Admissions, Outpatient and Recovery Support Services. "By providing our clients with mobile devices and/or data plans, clients were able to stay connected to their counselors and peer-recovery network."

The future is digital



Odyssey House has been chosen by BNY MELLON and Taproot Foundation for a selective information technology project that will help us develop digital strategies for our agency's data, billing, and communications functions.

Led by Renas Tili, Odyssey House Director of Information Systems and Technology, a team of top tech experts from BNY MELLON will provide free consultancy services that will guide us on meeting our current—and future—technological challenges such as: migration to cloud-based services, project management and budgeting, and developing long-term digital strategies.

We're excited to be working with BNY MELLON's cutting-edge technology experts, and also to be working again with the staff at Taproot. An earlier pro bono project we undertook with Taproot in 2008 helped us develop a new, modern website. In the fast-paced tech world, nonprofit organizations like us have to be creative in how we use and invest in new programs and services. Having partners like BNY MELLON and Taproot on board will help us stretch our resources as we strive to meet demand for increased digital services that best meet the needs of our clients and staff.

For individuals co-enrolled in opioid treatment programs while also enrolled in residential settings, telehealth technology helped clients receive individual counseling and medication management services without traveling to their Opioid Treatment Program. According to Mr. King, reducing time spent outside the treatment center is beneficial to a population that is at high risk for relapse and overdose.

Wired housing

Supportive housing at Odyssey House ranges from transitional housing with on-site counseling and medication management services, to scattered-site independent housing. Integration of technology within these services prior to Covid-19 focused on managing tenants' entitlements, funder reporting requirements, and staff assignments.

For Janice Glenn-Slaughter, VP Director of Mental Health & Housing Services, the impact of Covid-19 brought home the essential role on-site staffing has in supportive housing. "The majority of our tenants live alone and the challenges they face living with mental and physical health disorders require hands-on support. Covid-19 presented a real threat to their lives.

"Nothing will replace the need for in-person care, but extending what we can do for our tenants with technology gives us – and them – flexibility."

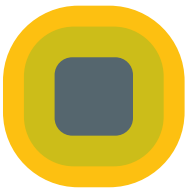
Tech investments pay off

According to Jeff Savoy, VP Director of Clinical Support Services, while there have been some barriers to facilitating remote services, such as ensuring the treatment experience is not distorted

by technology; complying with federal and state confidentiality and reporting guidelines; and training staff in providing virtual treatment, he sees "the flexibility and connectivity that technology provides for patient-centered care paying off and continuing as we pivot from this public health crisis."

As a human services organization, our commitment is ensuring we provide all our clients with as many tools as possible to help them engage in life-changing services, equip our staff with the resources they need to succeed in their roles, and prepare as best we can for future challenges.

This is an abridged version of an article written for Behavioral Health News. Visit odysseyhousenyc.org/news to read the full-length article. ●



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Odyssey House

Where recovery gets real

GET REAL ABOUT RECOVERY

If you or someone you know is struggling with addiction, call us at **866-888-7880**. We can help. Residential, outpatient, and housing services available immediately.



It is the mission of Odyssey House:

Visit our blog for more news and updates from Odyssey House!

odysseyhousenyc.org/news



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To provide comprehensive and innovative services to the broadest range of metro New York's population who:

- Abuse drugs
- Abuse alcohol
- Suffer from mental illness

To provide high quality, holistic treatment impacting all major life spheres: psychological, physical, social, family, educational and spiritual.

To support personal rehabilitation, renewal and family restoration.

In all of its activities, Odyssey House undertakes to act as a responsible employer and member of the community, and manage the assets of the organization in a professional manner.