

## Stigma Free Meeting Minutes 1/16/24

### **Attendees:**

Danielle Pagani, Surbhi Kapadia, Dawn Cetrulo, Corinne Scarpa, Daniel Kilday, Beth Abbott, Jan Bottcher, Lynn Benson, Keith Kazmark, Stephanie McTigue, Sheila Brogan, Danielle Fabrizio and John Judge

### **Minutes:**

- Meeting began with individuals introducing themselves as there were a few new faces today at today's meeting.
- Danielle Pagani reported the Cards of Joy campaign was a great success. Danielle thanked everyone on the committee for making contributions and spreading the word. Over 1000 cards were received. After reviewing the cards, some were considered not appropriate for distribution. 808 cards were distributed to residents at Ridgecrest, Share, Genesis, Family of Caring, Bergen New Bridge Medical Center, and The Valley Hospital. Many cards received were Christmas specific and not all of the recipients celebrate Christmas. For next year's campaign the instructions will clearly state that cards should be secular and generic without mention of specific holidays.
- Danielle Pagani provided respiratory illness update. As of week ending December 30<sup>th</sup>, Bergen County has a medium Covid-19 hospital admission level. If you are at high risk for severe illness from Covid-19 it's recommended to wear a high quality mask when indoors in public and if you spend time with those that are at higher risk of severe illness it's recommended to take precautions, mask, and test. As per the CDC, cases of flu and RSV are decreasing, but COVID-19 cases are increasing. Data is from: <https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/index.html> NJDOH and CDC state getting vaccinated is key in prevention of illness.
- Danielle Pagani- If you or someone you know needs information, guidance, or referrals to resources please contact the Health Department. We also have a limited supply of at-home COVID-19 test kits from the county.
- Keith Kazmark, Village Manager, thanked Dawn for extending an invitation to the Stigma Free meetings. Keith shared he has experience working with the Stigma Free Committee previously in Woodland Park. The Woodland Park Stigma Free committee was created in December 2016 after 4 people in the community died by suicide that year. Keith expressed his support, both professionally and personally, for Ridgewood's Stigma Free Committee and enthusiasm to help. He encouraged any of the members to reach out to him if he or his office can be of assistance.
- Jan Bottcher, who logged in a few minutes late, introduced herself. She shared with Keith she had been in communication with his office regarding the Citizens for Swimming program.

- Fire Chief Judge announced that Operation Blue Angel is ready to go. All supplies and equipment have been ordered. The Village will announce the initiative in February, as that is when the Village's new Communications and Special Projects Director will start. Keith announced the new director will start in mid-February. The Village is excited to have this person onboard. She is a Ridgewood resident and has a pulse on the community.
- Dan Kilday, Supervisor of Wellness at Ridgewood Public Schools, reported on the implementation of creative coping toolkit funded through a Health Department grant. The toolkit included access to viewing of two documentaries titled *Angst* and *Like*. Each is about 50 minutes long. *Angst* focuses on school-based anxiety and *Like* highlights the effects of social media on mental health. RPS is looking to host 4 to 5 viewings of the movies in March. One viewing will be intended for parents and include a post movie panel discussion/question and answer session. The toolkit also includes curriculum that can be inserted into the classroom.
- Surbhi Kapadia, Local Health Outreach Coordinator, provided an update on another initiative with RPS funded through a Health Department grant. Health is coordinating for Matt Bellace, PhD, to present to middle school students and parents a drug and alcohol prevention program titled "A Better High." The programs have been tentatively scheduled as follows: student presentation at GWMS on 5/7, parent presentation at BFMS on 5/7, and student presentation at BFMS on 5/8.
- Danielle Pagani shared on behalf of Dana Napoletano, from Bergen County, Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services that the Mental Health Symposium is scheduled for May 1<sup>st</sup> at Biagio's in Paramus. This year's symposium will highlight youth lead initiatives. Dana reached out to Ridgewood Stigma Free to ask for a recommendation for a Ridgewood youth presenter to be a speaker at this year's symposium. Dan suggested reaching out to Kevin Feeley at RHS to see if he had any student recommendations. Danielle agreed Kevin would be a great person to ask and would reach out to him.
- Danielle Fabrizio with Valley Health System stated the Winter/Spring Health Series with Ridgewood Library Series will consist of 4 programs and a 10-week walking group. The information sessions will be offered virtually, in-person and hybrid formats. Flyer for these events will be attached to the minutes. Valley and the Health Department are coordinating two programs as well. In February for Heart Health Awareness Month a cardiac program geared towards women will be held at Village Hall on February 15, 10:30-11:30am. In May for Mental Health Awareness Month a program titled "Blues vs Depression" will be held May 16, 10:30-11:30am at Village Hall.
- Corrine Scarpa shared information regarding several upcoming events at New Bridge Medical Center. Real Talk Tuesdays is a Veteran's Group that meets at the Rochelle Park American Legion from 10-11am. There was a meeting today January 16<sup>th</sup> and the next one will be Tuesday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>. It is open to all and no registration is required. A

Drum Circle will be held on January 23 at 11am at the New Bridge Medical Auditorium. The Rotary Stigma Free Committee is hosting a talk on “Anxiety and Depression in All Stages of Life” on January 27, from 2-4pm at the Fort Lee Library. Flyers for all these events will be attached to meeting minutes.

- Danielle Pagani noted that several usual committee members like Mary Davy from West Bergen Mental Healthcare and Gabrielle Milani with the Lukin Center for Psychotherapy were not present today. At a previous Stigma Free meeting, it was suggested that a comprehensive list of local support groups be made accessible to the community. Danielle requested all members send her a list or link to information regarding support groups they offer. Danielle will compile the information and share.
- In celebration of Mental Health Awareness Month in May, Surbhi asked if Keith could help organize a day for employees to take a photo wearing lyme green. Health also has “Ridgewood Stigma Free” t-shirts to provide for the photo if someone does not have a lyme green item. Keith offered his support. He also announced the Village will be taking part in a “Soup-er Bowl” the Friday prior to the Super Bowl. Employees can wear their favorite jersey and bring in cans of soup to donate to the YMCA Food Pantry. Keith also mentioned previous work with school athletic teams. Other ideas such as socks and laces were mentioned. Dan mentioned he would touch base with the RHS athletic director. Jan recommended working specifically with the RHS football team, as an RHS alumni died by suicide in Fall of 2023, was on the RHS football team.
- Chief Judge shared that April is Autism Awareness Month. He hopes to offer 3-4 trainings regarding disability awareness for Village first responders. Other ideas include a t-shirt fundraiser and informational panel in collaboration with Health.
- Beth shared Age Friendly Ridgewood and Ridgewood Public Library are collaborating on a virtual event. They are screening, *Keys Bags Names Words: Hope in Aging and Dementia*. The film portrays stories of personal and global impacts of Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia. Event will be Thursday, February 29 at 7 PM via Zoom. Online registration link:  
<https://engagedpatrons.org/EventsRegister.cfm?SiteID=5615&BranchID=1000001001&Branch=Ridgewood%20Public%20Library&EventID=516046&PK=>. Flyer will be shared.
- Lynn Benson is a parent from Ridgewood with a background in Social Work. Both her children graduated from RHS. She asked if there is an information hub that is available to the community. Lynn suggested that we work on sharing mental health resources including 988 repetitively throughout different communication channels. Lynn also suggested a snail mail campaign where we could do a mass mailing to residents.
- Sheila Brogan recounted that when Ridgewood Stigma Free was initially formed, a brochure was created. Other formats for distributing resources that were discussed included bookmarks and wallet cards. Resources will be posted on the Stigma Free page.