



## Ideas & Insights from The Community Chest's "Summit on Combating the Loneliness Epidemic" Breakout Sessions, January 11, 2024

The following highlights the 5 breakout sessions, the panelists invited to each session and the ideas and insights developed during each discussion.

### Innovative Approaches for Creating Connections through Health & Mental Health Services

Dive into approaches focused on enhancing social connections and combating loneliness via health and mental health services.

#### **Panelists:**

- Yuna Youn, Clinical Director of Korean Community Services
- Teresa McMahon, LCSW, MBA, LCADC, Vice President, Vantage Health System
- Karen Acker, Chief Administrative Officer/ Chief Compliance Officer, West Bergen Mental Healthcare
- Danielle Lambert, LCSW, Behavioral Health Manager of The Gregory P. Shadek Behavioral Care Center

**Moderator:** Jennifer Yanowitz, LSW, Strategic Program Manager, Englewood Health

#### **Ideas**

- Create a Mental Health training like the one for "Mental Health First Aid" that is modified and shortened specifically to address "loneliness" for lay people
- Teach/train
- Creating a workforce for this - remove obstacles
- Embrace technology thoughtfully/ strategically
- Address compassion fatigue/ stress helping ourselves

#### **Insights**

- How to even begin engagement when someone is isolated?
- Concern around asking the tough question?

### Innovative Approaches for Creating Connections through Creative Placemaking

Urban planning expert Kelsey Zlevor shared imaginative ways to transform public spaces into mental landscapes that foster connections and combat loneliness.

**Speaker:** Kelsey Zlevor, MCRP

**Moderator:** Leonardo Vazquez, AICP/PP, Executive Director, The Northern New Jersey Community Foundation

#### **Ideas**

Connections with other park goers

Have to be prepared for contingency of people "living" in public spaces

Have to teach the process of change when engaging in the design

How can we take away fear?

#### **Insights**

Aligns with Age-Friendly movement

Lands are very much stolen

Changing the design of spaces generates questions and requests

## Innovative Approaches for Creating Connections for Teens

The panelists explore effective strategies for countering loneliness and strengthening social connections among young people in this engaging panel discussion.

### **Panelists:**

- Gia Shin, Founder, URNotAlone.org
- Drea Chakravorty, Connections Project Intern, The Community Chest
- Marion Pakingan-Wong, MA, MSW, LSW, Clinician, NJ4S-Bergen Hub
- Leonidas Restrepo, Detective/Sergeant, Englewood Police Dept.

**Moderator:** Vicki Sidrow, Associate Executive Director, The Community Chest

### **Ideas**

- Teens need a “Third Place” - cafe, volunteering
- Technology for Good - social supports
- Parental restrictions (not your friends)

### **Insights**

- More adult responsibility/ interventions
- Home/School, Clubs, Community Service
- Teens should be taught Mindfulness
- Teens should be encouraged to use technology for good, as a social support

## Innovative Approaches for Creating Connections at Work

Business leaders shared ways they are helping combat loneliness by enhancing employee connections and well-being in the workplace.

### **Panelists:**

- Berj Akian, CEO, ClassLink
- Alexa Bunucci, HR Representative, Veolia

**Moderator:** Paula Maylahn, Education Industry Consultant

### **Ideas**

- Opportunities for group retreats/activities should be created (for example, bringing teams to farms, vacation houses or other locations)
- Wellness checks during the workday in work locations (such as cafes) so that managers can check in for short times
- Contests (baby/HS pictures displays) can be set up to generate fun conversations
- Remember to have fun, such as summer BBQ with summer Friday events

### **Insights**

- Focus on our own wellbeing to bring our best self to what we do
- Normalizing humanity (work/home)

## Innovative Approaches for Creating Connections for Seniors

Community leaders spoke about their initiatives to reduce social isolation and how to combat loneliness among older adults.

### **Panelists:**

- Lynn Bartlett, Bergen County Housing Authority
- Davit Topchishvili, Planning Analyst/Coordinator of Federal and State Aid, Bergen County Division of Senior Services
- Tashiera Howard, Director of Older Adult Services, Bergen Family Center
- Marlene Salomon Ceragno, MA, CGP, CDP, CMDCP, Director of Caregiver Services and Outreach, Kaplen JCC on the Palisades, Taub Campus

**Moderator:** Janet Sharma, Coordinator, Age-Friendly Englewood

### **Ideas**

- Reach out to municipalities to identify those who are isolated - DPW, ambulance squad, police, fire
- Peer-to-peer conversation with those who are isolated
- Go where people are: NORCs
- Village movement: people helping people
- Mental Health First Aid for older adults
- Technology assistance: use, device, internet access - must use for government documents