It’s the most wonderful time of the year for many people, but for some older adults, it is a time of isolation and sadness.

“The holiday season is supposed to be a time full of joy, parties, and family gatherings. But for many people, it can be a time of loneliness, reflection on past failures, and anxiety about an uncertain future,” says Dr. Wendy Weinstein, Unit Chief at BryLin Hospital.

Dr. Weinstein sees older adults presenting with a variety of concerns, such as difficulty coping with change, stress, death of a loved one, depression, memory impairments, anxiety, or agitation, commonly associated with dementia.

“Sometimes these emotional problems can also occur in older adults who suffer with chronic pain, heart disease, diabetes, stroke, or other medical disorders as well.”

According to the National Council on Aging, older adults struggle with depression risks including chronic illness and pain, decreased functional ability, reduced mobility, financial concerns, lack of physical activity, and loneliness. Older adults often experience grief after the loss of a spouse, loved one, or best friend.

Also, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that nearly one-third of all seniors live by themselves, an estimated 14 million seniors are aging alone.

Continued on Page 2
James Peterson, crisis clinician for NY Project Hope, Spectrum Health and Human Services, says that many seniors can’t arrive at the type of joy most of us experience during the holidays.

“Many seniors no longer feel part of things and are disconnected from their communities, especially if they live in an assisted living facility,” he said. “They no longer live in the home they cared for so many years, experience loss of independence, and perhaps have energy and mobility issues.”

When NY Project Hope staff members visit with older adults in the community, they encourage them to talk and spend most time listening. Inclusion is the most important consideration for older adults.

“Don’t just take them a plate of food, have them come over and help you cook the meal,” Peterson said. “Invite them to decorate the tree and wrap presents, pick them up and take them out shopping.”

Stigma is common with older adults experiencing depression or other mental health issues. Older adults are encouraged to talk to their doctor if they are experiencing symptoms of depression or other mental challenges.

“Many older adults, including their caregivers, often think that depression will go away by itself,” Dr. Weinstein said. “I’ve seen others who might think that they’re too old to get help or that getting help is a sign of weakness or some sort of moral failing, which is not uncommon amongst that generation.”

Dr. Weinstein says that it’s important to know, “like diabetes or heart disease, depression is a highly treatable medical condition. Even the most seriously depressed people can be treated successfully, often in a matter of weeks, and they can return to a happy and more fulfilling life.”
UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER 1, 9 AM-10 AM:
Horizon Health Presentation
Utilizing Compassion in the Workplace

DECEMBER 13, 10 AM–11 AM:
Horizon Health Presentation
Harm Reduction 101

DECEMBER 20, 7 PM:
Longest Night Service
Pilgrim St. Luke’s United Church of Christ

DECEMBER 21, 5 PM:
Homeless Person’s Memorial Day

BEGINNING JANUARY 1ST, 2023
New Directions Youth and Family Services
will be providing Family Peer Support Services in Erie County to families without Medicaid insurance.

Referrals can be sent to Laura Lloyd at lloyd@ndyfs.org or by phone (716) 535-1745

NDYFS will also accept referrals for CFTSS/FPSS for those families who have Medicaid as well.

ERIE COUNTY Department of Senior Services
Promoting the well-being of all older adults through coordinated and cost-effective services which enhance their independence, dignity, and quality of life.
716-858-8526 | erie.gov/seniorservices/

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
A national 24/7 hotline that offers immediate crisis counseling to anyone experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster.
1-800-985-5990 | disasterdistress.samhsa.gov

2-1-1 Western New York
Free and confidential link to health and human services. Every day, across Western New York, people just like you are looking for help.
Dial 2-1-1 | 211wny.org

Veteran Crisis Line
Connecting Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring VA responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text.
Dial 988 and Press 1, 24/7 or Text to 838255 veteranscrisisline.net

Visit letstalkstigma.org/events for more