

## TOWN

# Long Island Community Foundation Awards \$20,000 to Provide Long Term Care Planning for Veterans

The Association for Mental Health and Wellness (MHAW) announced the awarding of \$20,000 from the Long Island Community Foundation for the purpose of attending to the unique physical and mental health issues of older Veterans. Funding will assist aging Veterans living in Suffolk County United Veterans' permanent supportive housing and those Veterans identified as at risk through the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Project with co-morbid mental health and physical health problems. It will help connect them with long term supports that will help prepare them for a successful transition from independent living to an acceptance of added supports that may include home care and personal assistance, assisted living, or nursing home placement.

"This grant will stabilize and improve the health of 23 high-risk Veterans from our seven permanent supportive houses as well as the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Project who present with mental health barriers that negatively impact appropriate level of self-care," said Marcelle Leis, Director of Veteran Services for MHAW. "We are honored to be selected to provide these vital services to these Veterans."

"Elderly Veterans, as well as younger Veterans who may have sustained co-morbid mental health and physical injuries, including Traumatic Brain Injuries, are at an increased

need for long term supports," said Michael Stoltz, LCSW, CEO of MHAW. "The work we will do in this grant will help Veterans to emotionally prepare for a successful transition to resources that address their specific overall care needs."

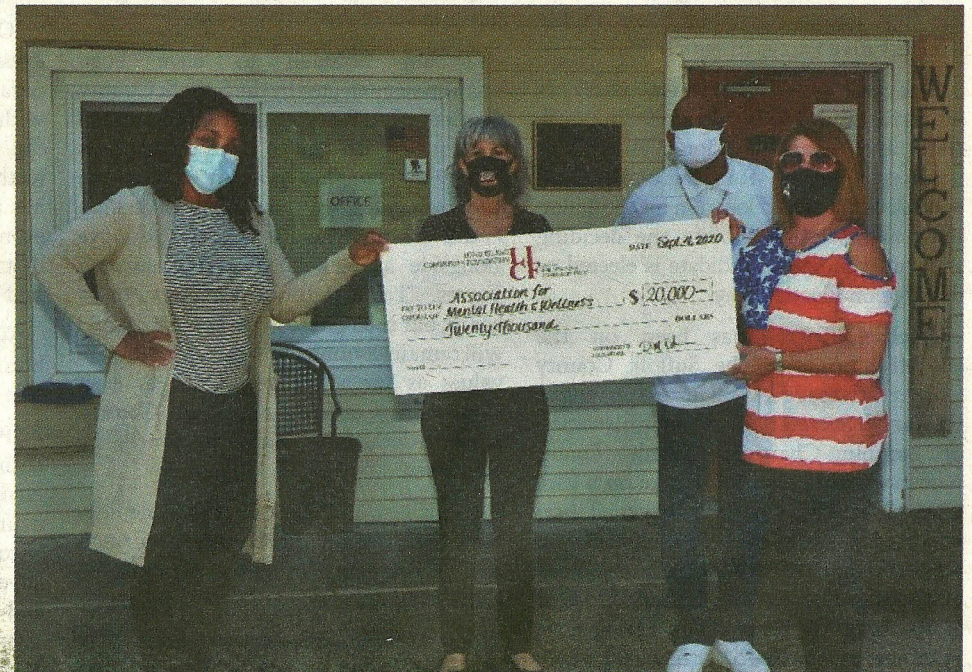
"The COVID-19 pandemic continues to disproportionately affect the senior Veteran population due to their complex health and mental health care issues," says David Okorn, Executive Director of the Long Island Community Foundation. "Hiring additional staff will enable MHAW to connect at-risk senior Veterans in Suffolk County to critical long-term services."

Suffolk County United Veterans, a project of the Association for Mental Health and Wellness, operates seven permanent supportive housing sites for formerly homeless Veterans. Of these residents, many are older Veterans that have been living in our housing for over five years, their bodies badly damaged from years of abuse or neglect. The majority are over the age of 60.

Launched in 2012 as a pilot partnership between MHAW and the Suffolk County Veterans Services Agency, the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Project takes a confidential, one-on-one, peer-to-peer approach that has rapidly captured the attention and support of Veterans and mental

health professionals statewide and nationally. Named in honor an Iraq war veteran from Mount Sinai, NY, the Dwyer Project serves

Veterans facing reintegration challenges including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).



L to R: Marie C. Smith, Director, Donor Relations and Communications, Long Island Community Foundation; Ruth McDade, Director of Development, Association for Mental Health and Wellness; Wilkens Young, Director, Suffolk County United Veterans; Marcelle Leis, Director of Veteran Services, Association for Mental Health and Wellness.