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Official News Release

For Immediate Release

TRIO HONORED FOR LEADERSHIP AT FIRST MORRIS COUNTY STIGMA-FREE CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE FOCUSES ON FOSTERING TREATMENT AND RECOVERY FOR SUBSTANCE
USE AND MENTAL ILLNESS

Three leaders of Morris County's Stigma-Free Initiative, a countywide movement aimed at

**MORRIS COUNTY
PROUD TO BE
STIGMA-FREE**

promoting treatment for mental illness and addiction to foster recovery, received the first Leadership in Action awards at yesterday's Stigma-Free Conference held at the Morristown Medical Center.

Honored for promoting a non-judgmental approach to offering treatment, and providing real alternatives toward recovery, were:

- **Dana Critchlaw**, Jefferson Township—JT Connect
- **Rosaelena Klingener**—Prime Healthcare/Saint Clare's
- **James M. Gannon**, Morris County Sheriff

They were honored at a conference sponsored by the **Morris County Board of Freeholders** and **Atlantic Health System** in collaboration with the Morris County Department of Human Services and the Stigma-Free Community.

Entitled "Removing the Stigma of Mental Illness and Addiction: Building Healthy Communities," the **purpose of the event was to bring the community together to help:**

- Create a non-judgmental environment where individuals with mental illness and addictions feel supported by their community and neighbors

- Encourage people to seek treatment for these illnesses without fear of stigma
- Provide prevention, treatment, & recovery resource information
- Share ideas on stigma free activities — discuss successes and challenges



(l/r) County Human Services Director Jennifer Carpinteri, County Behavioral Health Services Director Laurie Becker, Dana Critchlaw, Sheriff James M. Gannon, Rosaelena Klingener, and Freeholder Kathy DeFillippo

“We understand this Stigma-Free effort is not something the county Freeholder Board could just proclaim as a reality – issue a proclamation and it will go away,” said **Morris County Freeholder Kathy DeFillippo**. “We understand that Stigma-Free has to be more than just a slogan, that it has to become a fabric of live in our county community to have any real meaning, and to have a chance to succeed.”

“Atlantic Health System is committed to building healthier communities, and that involves programs and partnerships outside of the walls of our hospitals,” said **Trish O’Keefe, PhD, RN, president of Morristown Medical Center**. “We aim to provide person-centered care that reflects the unique needs of each individual we’re privileged to serve. Through our ongoing partnerships with Morris County organizations, we’re able to ensure that both medical and psychosocial needs are met.”

Guest speakers at the conference provided, who spoke of the importance of a Stigma-Free approach, included: **Bob Davison**, CEO of the Mental Health Association of Essex and Morris; **Pamela Garanger** of the National Alliance on Mentally Illness; **Melissa Kiritsis** of Jefferson's JT Connect; and **James M. Gannon**, Morris County Sheriff.

The Honorees:

Rosaelena Klingener: A registered nurse, licensed social worker and nationally certified mental health first aid instructor, Rosaelena has worked for more than 25 year in the mental health field at Saint Clare's Hospital. She is an advocate who makes connections, starts conversations, and fosters change.

In June, Rosaelena received NAMI New Jersey's Provider Recognition Award for her compassionate support of individuals and families affected by mental illness.

She has long been committed to raising awareness, educating the public and bridging the gaps that prevent communities from accessing needed mental health and substance abuse services and resources. She has worked to promote a culture of understanding in which individuals get support in their wellness and recovery journeys.

Dana Critchlaw: A life-long Jefferson resident, Dana has long been a dedicated local volunteer and is the current leader of Jefferson Township CONNECT.

After her cousin took his own life in 2012, she began to reach out to people who were suffering, working to remove barriers that prevented people, like her cousin, from speaking up about the hurt and pain that mental illness can cause. Her efforts received strong public support.

In May of 2017, she chaired an inaugural event, "Hike for Hope," partnering with the Mayor's Wellness campaign and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. The event raised \$3,400 for to help educational efforts by AFSP.

Dana describes these last five years as an opportunity to "discover light in a dark time." She knows in her heart that her late cousin, Danny, is thankful that she has spoken up for those who cannot find the courage to speak for themselves.

Morris County Sheriff James M. Gannon: The former Chief of Investigations at the Morris County Prosecutor's Office and Global Head of Security Risk at Novartis Pharmaceuticals took office in January. He promptly made combatting the opioid epidemic in Morris County a priority, launching three programs:

Hope One – A mobile outreach program with the Morris County Department of Human Services and the Center for Addiction Recovery Education and Success (CARES). The

mobile unit provides critical support for individuals struggling with drug addiction. Life-saving Narcan training is available for persons living with addiction.

Hope Wing - The Hope Wing helps inmates address their addictions while incarcerated and serving their time through “New Direction” curriculum.

ID Program - The Sheriff’s Office and county Department of Human Services instituted an identification program for people ages of 18-54. Without ID, people cannot get blood work at a hospital, receive drug detox or treatment and cannot even obtain a library book.

Sheriff Gannon said he realizes the answer to the opioid epidemic lies in the private and public partnerships forged in Morris County.

To learn more about the Stigma-Free initiative, find resources, read the latest Stigma-Free news, and take a look at the a calendar of upcoming events related to mental illness and substance abuse, visit the Stigma Free website at <https://morriscountystigmafree.org/> A Stigma Free Toolkit also is available for towns and communities.

***Stigma is defined** as a mark of disgrace which results from the judgment by others. When an individual is labeled by their illness they experience judgment and prejudice. Stigma brings experiences and feelings of shame, embarrassment, distress, hopelessness and reluctance to seek or accept help.*

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