



TOWN OF VERNON

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MEDIA ADVISORY

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Town of Vernon Offers Support to Help Residents Cope with Pandemic Grief, Loss and Anxiety

(VERNON, Connecticut) – As part of its recovery strategy from the coronavirus pandemic, the Town of Vernon is offering mental health support to residents.

Grief, loss, anxiety, depression and other feelings are natural responses to the stresses of the pandemic. The Town is offering support groups, led by a trained facilitator, for residents who would like an opportunity to share their experiences and concerns or to listen to others.

“The Town of Vernon has offered safe access to groceries and other essential supplies, COVID-19 testing and established a nationally-recognized vaccination program to help people get through the pandemic,” Vernon Mayor Dan Champagne said. “As part of our ongoing local recovery effort we are now offering free support groups for our residents.”

Vernon’s Department of Social Services is offering the groups through public-private and community partnerships. Solstice Healthcare, Priority Urgent Care and the Vernon Community Network, will organize the support groups for adults. Support groups for children featuring Gizmo, Vernon’s Comfort Canine and a member of the C.E.R.T. team, will also be offered. Children will receive a copy of *Gizmo’s Pawesome Guide to Mental Health*, which helps children better understand mental health.

“This has been a stressful time for many in our community,” said Michael Purcaro, Vernon’s Town Administrator and Emergency and Risk Management Director. “Some are struggling with the loss of loved ones or friends, loss of a job and general uncertainty about the pandemic and the reopening of society. Our goal is to help people positively address those stressors.”

The pandemic has affected mental health in a variety of ways. More than 40 percent of adults have reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder during the pandemic, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, which studies national health issues. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports stress caused

by the pandemic can cause feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, and frustration that can have a variety of physical impacts, including worsening existing health and mental health conditions.

“Joining with a small group to talk or listen can help people begin to move forward,” said Michelle Hill, Vernon’s Acting Director of Social Services. “This is an important part of the recovery process. Mind, body and spirit -- they’re all connected.”

Discussion topics will include:

- Loneliness and Isolation Resulting in Grief and Loss
- Strengthening Your Relationships Post-Pandemic
- Transitioning Back to ‘Normal’
- Healthy Lifestyle Tips for Post-pandemic Life
- Youth Social and Emotional Learning Sessions with Gizmo the Dog

For more information or to sign up, please call Vernon Social Services at 860-870-3661.

About the Town of Vernon

The Town of Vernon is a celebrated place to live, work and visit. From its beautiful parks and lakes, to its vast trails and historic homes and buildings, Vernon is a resilient and thriving community that promotes the health and wellbeing of its residents and values the natural environment. With a resident population of approximately 30,000 and occupying 18.03 square miles, Vernon combines a balanced appreciation of history, and a strong economic base for growth, both residential and commercial. Located 15 minutes east of the Connecticut capital of Hartford, and 25 miles from the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, the Town of Vernon is strategically located in “New England's Knowledge Corridor” with close proximity to some of the top colleges and universities in the country.

Designated a certified Sustainable Community, the Town of Vernon offers a wide range of benefits and services to its residents. The Town of Vernon is a full-service municipality that practices a management philosophy of continuous quality improvement. To learn more about the Town of Vernon, please call (860) 870- 3670 or visit www.vernon-ct.gov.

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