

Event on Mental Health is Standing Room Only

First Bank of Greenwich Supports Mental Health Awareness with Memorable Speaker Event

BY LIZ LEAMY

Last Tuesday, the First Bank of Greenwich helped kick off Mental Health Awareness week with a memorable event at the J House in which two area residents, Victoria Caputo and Nicole Franchella, discussed this all-important topic to

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help build support, knowledge, understanding and methods of navigating this issue in an optimal and effective manner in and around the community.

This event, in support of Mental Illness Awareness week, was attended by more than 125 people and orchestrated and put together by Frank Gaudio, the dynamic President and CEO of the First Bank of Greenwich and his dedicated Board of Directors and employees.

“I think this is a very important matter and a topic that needs to get out there and be discussed. This is why we’re here,” said Gaudio. “It’s about supporting and helping each other and that’s what’s so exciting and important about everything that is happening here tonight.”

Caputo, who hails from Port Chester, New York and Franchella, a Norwalk native who now lives in

Manhattan, hit the proverbial ball out of the park as they discussed their experience and plans to affect change in regard to this issue, as both captured the attention and heart of the crowd.

Franchella, 25, and Caputo, 23, spoke about ways in which they are striving to build awareness and inspire change in regard to this critical subject, an issue that according to statistics, much of the U.S. population either deals or has dealt with at some point in their lives. (According to reports, 61.2 million American adults are affected by a mental disorder, while one in 17 Americans live with a serious mental illness and one out of four American families has a relative who has a mental illness.)

Franchella was inspired to create her popular jewelry and clothing line this past year that is dedicated to building awareness and support in regard to this matter, while Caputo discussed how her personal journey led her to write her compelling book, ‘Trust Me: Through the Eyes of a Survivor,’ published in 2018 and available for purchase on Amazon.com.

According to Caputo, who is also a motivational speaker and mental health advocate, one of her primary goals is to help break the stigma surrounding mental illness through these efforts.

“I believe people need to be educated [about mental illness]. That is such a key thing,” said Caputo. “What also inspires and motivates me is knowing I might help even just one person out there with what I’ve been doing. That means everything.”

Franchella is also all about affecting change in regard to this matter.

“I wanted to do this to help give purpose to this whole [subject] and to the fact that the pain that goes along with all of it can be faced and dealt with in an effective and positive way,” said Franchella, whose Light.In.Tough.Times.com is also dedicated to help create a sense of community for those affected or who might know someone affected by mental illness. “I wanted to help people and give purpose to those who have experienced or are experiencing pain. There’s so much light and hope in life and I think once you experience pain, you know and have a greater understanding about what life is.”



Victoria Caputo (left), Frank J. Gaudio, President and CEO of the First Bank of Greenwich and Nicole Franchella (right) at the First Bank of Greenwich event held at the JHouse in Riverside.

The power of Franchella’s narrative as well as Caputo’s (both of who are First Bank of Greenwich customers) certainly seemed to have a profound and lasting effect among those in attendance at this event as the majority of people remained in the conference room well after the speech portion of the event was over.

Clearly, Franchella and Caputo’s message of hope and strength resonated with everyone at this event, including those members who serve on the First Bank of Greenwich’s Board of Directors.

“It’s wonderful to be part of this night and whole story,” said Barry Small, a First Bank of Greenwich Board member who is the retired CEO of Weeden and Company. “We want to be part of building lives and be involved in and part of this discussion. This is about more than business, it’s about heart and soul.”

His colleagues agreed.

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