

Employee Of The Month: Deanna Brace



Deanna Brace works as a marriage and family therapist at the Kearny office of the Family Service Bureau.

For Deanna Brace, mental health is not just about her job—it’s a key part of her life and maintaining balance as a professional therapist.

As a marriage and family therapist at the Family Service Bureau, an affiliate of New Community, Brace works in the FSB office in Kearny located about five miles from the headquarters of NCC. The Family Service Bureau, which has an office in Newark and in Kearny, provides mental and behavioral health services to youth, individuals, couples and families and deals with issues ranging from substance abuse to domestic violence and mental illness. The Kearny office is staffed with two full-time clinicians, interns during the school year and either three or four clinicians that alternate between the two offices.

There’s no typical day for Brace, who started off as an intern five years ago at the Newark office of FSB and has been full-time at Kearny for a year. “It’s a lot of what they’re bringing to you that day,” said Brace, who frequently works with clients who suffer from bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety and depression.

“Deanna is an outstanding clinician, team player and colleague,” her supervisor, Manuela Garcia, executive director of FSB, said. For Brace, maintaining a “therapeutic relationship” with clients rather than acting like an empathetic friend is a key to building a healthy and professional relationship.

Her clients, who mostly come from Kearny, Harrison and East Newark, disclose physically or emotionally traumatic events to Brace as their therapist. Because of this, Brace works at upkeeping her own mental health. “At the end of the day, if you’re burned out, you’re not helping yourself or anyone else,” she said.

If a case at work bothers her and constantly encroaches on her thoughts, Brace said that she tries to assess why. Her long drive home serves as a time to decompress. On weekends, Brace invests in spending time with family and friends to strengthen her own support network.

Chief of Health and Human Services Arti Kakkar, who oversees FSB as well as other departments, noted that Brace’s professionalism stands out.

“Her strength is the way she conducts herself with colleagues and quietly but diligently remains focused on her work,” Kakkar said.

For Brace, the challenges and rewards of the job are two sides of the same coin: What kind of impact has therapy had on a client’s life?

Her appointments with clients will eventually end and she wonders about how clients will continue to apply therapy to positively affect their lives.

“It’s really about helping the client help themselves,” she said.