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NewBridge “Race to Sustain Hope” Gala Raised \$100K, Awareness of Pitfalls in NJ’s July 1 Change in Mental Health Funding

NewBridge Services “Race to Sustain Hope” Gala on April 21 raised \$100,000 for the nonprofit as well as awareness about New Jersey’s imminent change in the way it funds mental health that’s expected to have devastating repercussions unless financial safeguards are added.

More than 160 supporters attended the event held at the Wyndham Hamilton Park Hotel and Conference Center in Florham Park. Guests included state Assemblyman Anthony M. Bucco (R-Morris), Morris County Freeholder Morris County Freeholder Christine Myers, and attorney Marcy McMann, chair of the Morris County Mental Health Addictions Services.

The trio explained how the state’s shift to fee-for-service funding of mental health on July 1 could greatly limit access to treatment for people with mental illness, and how counties and towns would have to cope with greater demand on police and other first responders, hospital emergency departments, and jails.

Gala attendees also heard from **NewBridge Jobs Plus** alumna Fergie Romero, who described how

the alternative education program helped her earn a New Jersey high school diploma in 2015 and launch a career in community health care.

Romero had become a mother during her junior year at Dover High School. She dropped out during her senior year, when, after missing too many classes when her daughter was ill, she was given an ultimatum: repeat the school year, or leave.

“NewBridge was a great stepping-stone. Everyone was so welcoming and helpful,” she said. “I don’t know what I would have done if I hadn’t gone there.” NewBridge subsequently helped her land a job with Zufall Health.” NewBridge saw my potential before I did,” said the 19-year-old, who intends to pursue a nursing degree.

The gala was sponsored by: the Holmes Family Foundation; Wyndham Worldwide; The Robert Collins Fund; Columbia Bank; Boiling Springs Savings Bank; and Christian Health Care Center. Friends of NewBridge sponsors include: Atlantic Health Systems, CR Bard, Fulton Bank of NJ, Genoa, Murphy McKeon P.C., PSE&G, Robert L. Parker, Art Schmidt and Betty Cass-Schmidt.