

## From the desk of the Executive Director:



*Julie Ann Avin, President*

I've been writing columns for the MIRCI newsletter at least quarterly for over 25 years – during the first 10 of those years the newsletter was published monthly. For a week, I've been trying to decide what to share with those of you who support MIRCI and receive our newsletter, but haven't been able to formulate a theme for this edition. Then I decided to ask some of the youth attending our new Youth Drop-in Center what they would share with you about MIRCI, and received more than I expected. These young people were so open and willing to share freely with me. Below are remarks from a few of the folks with whom I talked.

"It's a good environment. A place to see different opportunities – housing placements, clothes, EBT (food stamps), and help with job applications. If you don't have a home, mom or dad, MIRCI is your family. You can take a nap if you're tired."

James Nabors

"MIRCI is open armed. There is cultural acceptance. It's diverse and accepting. I came here and got clothes to wear. I can take a shower here. I'll be forever grateful."

Gillet Hood

"MIRCI has good hospitality. The people here care about us. I was in the hospital, and Craig checked on me. He asked others here about me. They care."

Wade

These conversations took place within the drop-in center. James took a break from the computer to talk with me. Gillet talked while playing a game of chess with Craig, one of the counselors at the center. Wade and another guy were preparing to cook lunch for everyone – chicken Alfredo, and making sure everyone had a Gatorade or water. It was a typical hot July day in Columbia, and like Gillet, I'm grateful. I'm grateful that there's a safe, good environment with air conditioning and Gatorade for these young people. I'm grateful to the drop-in center staff for creating such an accepting environment. I'm grateful and honored to be part of an agency that is providing opportunities to these young people. There's so much potential in these young minds and bodies, and there's hope for their futures.

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## Five Years of Progress—Client Story

Melanie grew up in Lexington County prior to her entrance into MIRCI services in 2012. Starting in her teens, she struggled with bouts of severe depression, anxiety, and panic, which were debilitating to the degree she eventually had to stop working and apply for Social Security Disability. Melanie was able to attend MIRCI’s Friendship Center in addition to receiving permanent supportive housing, representative payee services, individual and group therapy, and psychiatric and nursing services. During Friendship Center activities, she was quiet, but provided a calming and supportive presence in the center. Many days, she could usually be found crocheting hats or afghans for family members or friends.

“One of the things I say to myself and to others all the time is I don’t know where I would be today without MIRCI.”

That same year, Melanie met Kevin Logan- she recalls their first date- “It was at the State Fair, because my rule for the first meeting is to meet in a public place. We walked around and listened to music, ate, and played games. Our favorite attraction was the sand sculpture.” With Kevin’s support, Melanie continued to make progress, and the couple married in December, 2014.

Mr. and Mrs. Logan left MIRCI’s supportive housing last year, and continued their growth as a couple searching for housing closer to their places of employment. She is now working part time in the field of childcare, and enjoys the infants and toddlers as much as they love her! She imparts her life experience in positive ways as an active participant in the couple’s church home, where she now teaches the young adult Sunday School class. Melanie shares future plans of returning to school. In time, she and Kevin hope to have their own home, and start a family. “One of the things I say to myself and to others all the time is I don’t know where I would be today without MIRCI.”



## 2017 52 WINDOWS RECAP



The 2017 Annual 52 Windows Gala was a huge success! We had close to 300 people in attendance and raised over 88,000 dollars through sponsorships, donations, ticket sales and art sales to support the housing and homeless programs of MIRCI! Thank you so much to everyone who made this such a wonderful event.

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Two Men and A Truck

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A stylized, hand-drawn graphic of the words "Thank You!" in a cursive, script font. The "T" is large and loops around the "hank", and the "Y" is also large and loops around the "ou!". The exclamation point is at the end of the "You!".

You can give online at [www.mirci.org](http://www.mirci.org)! All donations are tax deductible. Thank you for supporting MIRCI!