School started today, and for those of you who have been getting the MIRCI newsletter for several years, you know this transition always makes me thoughtful. This year our son is a sophomore in high school, and actually drove himself to school today. It seems like just yesterday that I watched as he walked off to school by himself for the first time in middle school. As a parent, I’m filled with pride each time he reaches a new milestone, and of course, I become reminiscent of school days past.

Just as I’m feeling proud of my son’s milestone this year, I’m also taking stock of the milestones MIRCI and some of our clients have recently reached. After struggling financially for the past 4 years, MIRCI is emerging from the funding crises we’ve experienced. Our Board of Directors has included in its Strategic Plan a goal to fund its operating reserves over the next 4 years.

Friendship Center, our program from which all other services grew, re-opened without state funding in March of this year, and is serving 20 to 30 individuals daily. The 2 staff members we have in the Friendship Center have managed to develop an even better series of activities and groups than we had before its closing in 2010. The members in the Friendship Center are completely running the work units and taking responsibility not just for the program, but for their personal recovery journeys.

Last week, I walked into the Friendship Center to discover a massive barbecue underway. The members were grilling barbecue chicken on the patio, and busily preparing side dishes in the kitchen. There was a celebratory mood among all. When I inquired about the occasion for having such a feast, the members were quick and proud to tell me. The celebration was for 3 years of sobriety for one of the members! This individual entered MIRCI services almost 5 years ago in a state of homelessness. Talk about reaching a milestone! He’s now living independently, has his own car, runs the canteen in the Friendship Center, and has not used substances for 3 years!

This time of reflection turns quickly into one of celebration and pride for the milestones so many of those served by MIRCI are reaching daily. Too often, we are driven to concentrate on deadlines and project goals. So for today, I’m going to take the time to recognize the milestones reached by individuals here at MIRCI. I’m going to reflect on the journeys to recovery, and the strength required getting there.

As I take time to reflect on the progress toward recovery that our members make daily, I hope you’ll take time to join me in this reflection. Remember when a person experiences a mental illness; it affects all areas of their life – family relations, ability to work, friendships, etc. Let’s recognize the strength these individuals exhibit in just getting through one day at a time in their recovery journeys. Let’s celebrate and enjoy these individual milestones, and be proud that through our support, people have a chance to recover from the many losses their illness may have caused.

Be proud to support MIRCI. If you’d like to contribute to assist our members in their recovery journeys, please consider sending a contribution in the enclosed envelope, or contact Tracey Wallace at twallace@mirci.org or (803)786-1844, ext. 106 for ways to volunteer.
This year’s annual fundraiser, 52 Windows, was a big success! We raised $56,000 to benefit MIRCI! This event would not have been a success without the many individuals who so generously shared their time and talents including: MIRCI Board of Directors and Staff who spent many hours ensuring all of the event details were taken care of; the Artists who created such inspiring works of art; the many Vendors who provided quality services at affordable rates for us; and our Sponsors who have shown MIRCI such generous support.

A complete listing of our sponsors is available on our website (mirci.org). Below is a list of those sponsors who gave at a Silver or Bronze level. We appreciate all who donated/volunteered/attended!

Stay tuned for details on next year’s event! We have some exciting changes in the planning stages for the event, but you can definitely look forward to an evening of art to benefit MIRCI!

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FRIENDSHIP CENTER WELCOMES CLIENTS AGAIN!

In the last newsletter we reported the relocation of our homeless services to Transitions. Another key component of that change was the re-opening of the Friendship Center Clubhouse. The Friendship Center is much more than just a drop-in center, it is a rehabilitative psychosocial program led by a Mental Health Professional.

This program serves approximately 40 clients/day through groups, organized activities and social interaction. Some of the topics covered include: Educational/Therapeutic Skills, Money Management, Meal Preparation, Safety, Social Interaction, and Understanding Mental Illness.

Clients have a lot of fun too! There is a book club, opportunities to share their musical skills, and recreational time (includes games, current event discussions, yoga, exercise, and much more) which engages our clients and helps them in their recovery process.

“People really do want to be engaged. When given the opportunity, they give 110% and thrive. They are committed to their recovery and they look forward to coming here because everyone has an opportunity to share their talents and to find their own voice” said program coordinator Veronica Williams.

- **MIRCI NEWS**

Being a non-profit agency, MIRCI relies on a percentage of our budget to be funded by grants. Our Executive Director, Julie Ann Avin, works all year long completing dozens of grant applications to find funding for our various programs. This is the time of year that a large portion of the grant awards are announced. MIRCI is appreciative for the following partners in providing necessary funding to allow MIRCI to continue it’s mission of assisting individuals with mental illness with their recovery:

**United Way of the Midlands—$125,000 (includes $20,000 from Women in Philanthropy)** to support the Housing with Help Program for the 2013-2014 fiscal year. This grant will be used to provide the necessary clinical and supportive services to assist individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness throughout the coming year.

**BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina Foundation—$150,000 ($50,000/year for three years)** to support individuals with serious mental illness who are uninsured. Funds will be used to provide homeless outreach, access to and placement in housing, and intensive psychiatric treatment and supportive services.

**TD Charitable Foundation – $7,500** to the Housing and Homeless programs. These funds will support the Assertive Community Treatment team in assisting individuals who are homeless and have a mental illness to transition into stable, supported housing.

**Sisters of Charity—$10,000** Community Enrichment Grant to assist in funding of a conversion to Electronic Health Records. These funds will assist MIRCI in complying with a federal mandate to convert to the new system to avoid Medicaid reimbursement penalties.

**Richland County Discretionary Grant—$10,000** to assist with funding the Rosewood Out-Patient Clinic. These funds allow MIRCI to be able to provide psychiatric clinic services to individuals needing better access to mental health services in order to effectively manage their illness. These services result in a decrease of emergency room use and hospitalizations.

**United Way of the Midlands—$75,000** to assist with funding a Disability Specialist at MIRCI. The Disability Specialist assists individuals in obtaining and maintaining mainstream benefits to which they are entitled due to their disability.

**NORD Family Foundation—$25,000** ($20,000 to Housing and Homeless programs and $5,000 for Electronic Health Record conversion). These funds will go toward funding our Assertive Community Treatment team and our Homeless Outreach Worker who engages homeless individuals and evaluates for possible assistance from MIRCI.
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February 2013—June 2013

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The following individuals contributed to a funeral fund in memory of Paul Curatone:

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