



MIRCI



FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The time has changed to Standard Time, mid-term elections are over, and we're entering the holiday season. Frankly it's my favorite time of year. Perhaps it's because temperatures are cooler, the leaves are gorgeous colors, and the holidays mean time with family and dear friends. As much as I get excited for spending precious time with those dear to me, I also feel a responsibility to neighbors in our community that may not have family and close friends to visit, don't have the means to celebrate, and may not even have a place to call home.

Here at Mirci we are working to make the holidays bright for adults, unaccompanied youth and families with children we are honored to assist. Through a generous gift from Humana, we will be delivering over 230 meals on Thanksgiving Day. Various members of my family have joined me over the years at Mirci on Thanksgiving Day. It's a privilege for us to share the holiday with so many neighbors, and humbling at the same time.

Through the Central Carolina Community Foundation, the Cheerful Giver is making it possible for Mirci to provide Christmas gifts for adults and unaccompanied youth, and the Salvation Army is gathering gifts for the families with children in our supportive housing program. Mirci's clinical teams, dressed in various forms of Santa attire, will grab their sacks of gifts, and make their rounds spreading holiday cheer.

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Of course, while we deliver holiday food and gifts to the folks we house, there will still be our unsheltered neighbors during the holidays. Mirci's outreach team will be out in the community during the holidays, visiting our unsheltered neighbors, providing them with basic essentials and offering connections to mental healthcare and shelter.

I'm thankful for our supporters who make it possible for us to share the holiday spirit with the individuals and families we assist. I also remain committed to assisting people in navigating the emotional uncertainty of mental illness – not just during the holidays, but every day. I offer you the opportunity to partner with me in supporting Mirci every day. Use the link below to sign up to support Mirci in being the place where people can find a way forward when their life is at an impasse.

Julie Ann Avin



UPHOLDING MENTAL HEALTH

<https://www.mirci.org/get-involved>

JESSE'S LONG JOURNEY BACK TO HIMSELF

As a student at Dreher High School in the mid-1970s, Jesse McAllister drove a school bus to earn spending money. Low key and soft spoken, he got along with everyone. He went home each day to his parents and sister and a pristine, loving home that his mother had decorated with Queen Anne-style furniture and elegant collectibles.

After high school, Jesse took a job at a dry cleaners. The owner eventually promoted him, teaching him all aspects of the business. On the outside things seemed just fine. But Jesse began to struggle.

"I started making really bad decisions," he said. "At the time I wasn't on any medication for my mental health. Every time I'd get paid from my job I'd buy drugs or beer."

When his father died in 1988, Jesse, ever the dutiful son, moved back in with his mom to help her.

"I kept my mom's house clean – she didn't have to do a thing," he said.

Within a decade, however, Jesse's life had fallen completely apart. Years later he would be diagnosed as having major depression with psychotic tendencies. This is a mental disorder in which a person has depression and, at times, loses touch with reality. But Jesse didn't know about or understand his illness at that time. After his beloved mother died in 1998, he lost his job and had no way to continue paying rent on her apartment. He briefly moved in with his sister, but said he "didn't want to do right," and his sister finally asked him to leave.

By 1999, Jesse owned only one thing – an old Ford Escort. That is where he lived, along with Hyatt Park, for the better part of the next five years. Often, he'd be startled awake by a police officer telling him to shove off.

Jesse lost a drastic amount of weight and

stopped bathing. Eventually, he lost most of his teeth.

"I was very ashamed of that," Jesse said. "I made such a fool of myself while on drugs. I think back to how I used to look and even how I smelled. It got to where I could see no future for myself at the time – I just lived to get high."

He finally lost his car.

"One day (in 2005), I just couldn't take it anymore," he said. "There was nowhere else to go but down to the grave."

Jesse sought help at a community mental health center where he wept with despair. Admitted to a nearly month-long treatment program, he stayed sober afterward by attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings. His caseworker then arranged for him to apply for Mirci services.

"When I was accepted into the Mirci program, I cried because I couldn't believe I would be able to have a home again," he said. "I didn't have any income, so Mirci took care of the rent and light bill. Mirci took me to get food stamps and bought my toiletries. They also applied for me to get disability income and helped me manage it."

Under the care of a Mirci psychiatrist and supported by weekly visits with a Mirci counselor, Jesse was then referred to a GP, where he was treated for severe diabetes and high blood pressure. He was also able to get dentures. All helped restore Jesse's sense of balance, safety – and dignity.

"The apartment made a huge difference to my being able to stay on track," Jesse said. "I wanted so much to hold on to it and I knew that if I messed up, I could lose it."

Jesse said that today, his life is "beautiful." In Mirci housing the past 16 years, he keeps his apartment immaculate. Paintings and sculptures he purchased from thrift stores are arranged with an artist's eye for symmetry, scale and color. A collection of wooden African masks, paintings and carvings of elephants, tigers, leopards and giraffes – all reflect his fascination with nature, his heritage and love of God.

"Best of all, my sister and I are very close now and we check on each other daily," he said. "She and her family include me in everything. I've come a really long way."





JOIN US DEC. 1ST TO CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS!

Merry Mirci Holiday is our annual event to celebrate the holidays with you, our supporters, and thank you for the important role you play in making our work possible.

This year's event is Thursday, December 1st at The Hall at Senate's End. Merry Mirci is a wine tasting that will feature 24 different wines from France, Italy, the U.S. and South America. We'll serve a delicious array of foods chosen by the chef at Dupre catering to pair well with the featured wines. Two wine experts will speak briefly to offer tips and advice on pairing wines at your own holiday gatherings. If you like any of the wines you sample, you'll be able to order them that evening. During the tasting, some of the state's most talented jazz musicians will play smooth standards and holiday favorites. Our event will also feature a silent auction and wine raffle. The dress code is business casual or cocktail attire. It's going to be relaxed, casual and fun, and we hope to see you there!



Visit our ticket purchase site by focusing your cellphone camera on the QR code or typing in <http://bidpal.net/merrymirciholiday>.



PLEASE CONSIDER AN END-OF-YEAR GIFT

Kick off your holiday season with a spirit of giving while saving on your income taxes. Whether you donate to Mirci online on Giving Tuesday (the Tuesday after Thanksgiving) or at any point before the end of the calendar year, your donation will help Midlands residents who are navigating the emotional uncertainty of mental illness to find a way forward in 2023.

You can make your gift by mailing a check to Mirci, 1408 Gregg Street, Columbia, SC 29201, or by using the link or QR code.

Thank you for whatever you are able to do!

<https://www.mirci.org/get-involved/>



Tax information: Under IRC Section 170, individuals giving to a 501(c)3 organization that is a public charity (e.g. Mental Illness Recovery Center, Inc.) may deduct contributions representing up to 50% of the donor's adjusted gross income if the individual itemizes on his tax returns. Corporations may deduct all contributions to 501(c)3 organizations up to an amount normally equal to 10% of their taxable income.



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UPHOLDING
MENTAL HEALTH

Please Join Us

Merry MIRCI Holiday

December 1, 2022

6-9 PM

The Hall at Senate's End

Jazz, wine, food and friends.

Reserve your ticket at: <http://bidpal.net/merrymirciholiday>