



MIRCI



FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I began writing this column for our spring newsletter on National Employee Appreciation Day which got me thinking about Mirci staff and some of the spectacular things they do to provide behavioral healthcare and supportive housing to hundreds of adults, youth, and families with children.

From the outreach team that first engages individuals with Mirci, to the benefits specialists that connect individuals with disability income and health insurance, there's a continuity in how we help people take care of their mental health.

I just have to share a few of the special interventions and supportive services Mirci staff have provided:

- The nurse manager who drove to Myrtle Beach to give an injection to a patient who was there due to a family death.
- An outreach director who spent part of her Christmas holiday at a nursing home where an elderly man with dementia and living on the streets got placed once her team became engaged.
- The housing specialists who make sure every single resident receives a personalized birthday card. For most, it's their only card.

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- Dozens of staff and their families that show up to deliver hundreds of Thanksgiving meals to our residents – before the staff have their own Thanksgiving meals.

Of course, we also have the finance, admin, human resources and operations staff working in the background to make sure the resources are available when needed to provide behavioral healthcare and supportive housing.

I frequently tell our team members that hands down we have the very best staff – and it shows. Mirci's behavioral healthcare and housing help people manage their illness, reduce the use of hospitals and emergency rooms, improve their personal relationships, and uphold their mental health.

Mirci staff are rock stars!

Julie Ann Avin

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UPHOLDING MENTAL HEALTH

Game Changers - Mirci's Clinical Team

Mirci Mental Health Clinician May Kirby points out that for many people with mental illness, “life is a lot like the game, *Chutes and Ladders*, except all the slides are short and all the ladders are long.”

Mirci understands the need to not only help people achieve stability, but to also keep them stable and healthy over the long run. No other community-based behavioral health program in South Carolina is more effective at helping people with severe mental illness live well and independently.

An ordinary approach won't work for Mirci's 300+ mental health clients, most of whom were either homeless or in danger of becoming homeless when they first came into the program. Mental illness had derailed their lives, making it nearly impossible for them to care for themselves.

Mirci Chief Clinical Officer, Julie Plane said that most clients who come into Mirci's program are completely alone.

“We know that in many cases, we are the only people a client has – there is no one else checking on them,” Plane said. “It's important to us to get to know them on a personal level and build a relationship of trust.”

Mirci's gold standard approach to mental health is based on something called the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) model. ACT involves a community-based team made up of medical, behavioral and rehabilitation professionals who collaborate to provide the best possible care for each client. Mirci's ACT team is made up of clinicians (licensed social workers and counselors), several nurses and nurse practitioners, two psychiatrists, benefits specialists, housing experts and outreach and support professionals.

“Regular visits to clients' homes by multiple team members is a crucial part

of the ACT approach, providing valuable information critical to effective management of a person's mental health,” said Clinician Kim Baker.

Clinicians share their observations in daily meetings with medical staff, allowing psychiatrists to quickly tailor a client's medication if needed. Clinicians also take other steps in response to the needs they see. They help clients obtain IDs and documentation, make phone calls and cut through red tape to get home health services, domestic violence support or substance use disorder treatment. Clinicians also offer group therapy sessions on topics like anxiety and conflict resolution. They even accompany clients to doctors' appointments.

“For clients who really need help focusing and understanding, we go along to help explain what they need to do to care for themselves and so we can remind them afterward,” said Clinician Caroline Kearns.

She says her Mirci job is very different from her decade-long work as an inpatient hospital social worker.

“In hospitals, we see people for mental health issues when they come in, but all that we can usually do is put a band aid on it because we have to get the patients up and out of there,” she said. “I came to work at Mirci because I realized I needed more human connection and I wanted to see progress being made instead of seeing the same kinds of issues over and over and never being able to change anything. Here, we meet people where they are. In doing so we let them know they have value and worth.”



Mirci's Behavioral Health Services At-A-Glance

- More than 300 clients are enrolled.
- More than 80% of services occur within a client's home environment.
- Each year, 94% of clients make progress on their plan of care goals.
- At the same time clients are accepted into Mirci's behavioral health program, Mirci's benefits and housing staff begin working to get them disability benefits and find them permanent, affordable housing.
- Approximately half of our clients are male, and half are female.
- Client ages range from 18-40 (24%); 41-65 (72%); and 65+ (3%).
- The racial make up of clients includes: African American (52%); White (44%); Other (4%).
- Mirci's behavioral health services help save the local healthcare system from \$5 million to \$7 million each year by reducing the need for emergency room and inpatient care among our clients.



SHOW THE WORLD YOUR BUSINESS CARES: SPONSOR OUR GALA!

Elegant, fun and interesting, *52 Windows* is a one-of-a-kind art auction and gala that raises funds to help Mirci continue to provide wraparound care for people with mental illness.

52 Windows also celebrates the creativity of local artists and the businesses who strongly support mental health in our community.

Sponsorship comes with tickets and marketing benefits. If *your* business would like to be a part of *52 Windows*, please contact us at **(803) 786-1844. ext 103** or email **kaddy@mirci.org**.



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UPHOLDING
MENTAL HEALTH

52 WINDOWS
AN EVENING OF ART

MAY 18 • 701 WHALEY • 6 PM

Featured Artists

ANN ANRRICH	TARIQ MIX
IJA CHARLES	ALDO MUZZARELLI
CHRISTINA CLARK	WANDA SPONG
NINA KNOWLTON	GEORGE STONE
GINNY MERETT	LANI STRINGER

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