



The Digest

Latest News

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In The Community

- Sinnissippi Centers attended the Rock Falls Summer Splash at the end of June.
- Sinnissippi Centers' staff also participated in the Petunia Festival parade in Dixon.
- Sinnissippi Centers will participate in the Autumn on Parade Harvest Time Parade October 3rd.

Events

- Sinnissippi Centers' Golf Open August 5, 2021, at Rock River GAP, Rock Falls. 12:30 pm tee-off.

Exit Strategy: Adjusting to Normalcy

Sinnissippi Centers, and the nation, slowly coming out of the pandemic

Who would have thought over a year ago that we would be getting used to “a better normal” after a global pandemic? Many of our staff are back in their offices and an increasing number of our clients are back to in-person appointments. We are still working through this transition and we are still using telehealth when appropriate. So Sinnissippi Centers is closer to pre-COVID operations, but not quite all of the way there.

So let's look back at what “normal” meant before COVID-19. Before the pandemic, the country was already in the midst of several major behavioral health crises which worsened significantly during the pandemic. Between 1999 and 2018, roughly 700,000 Americans died of drug overdoses, the majority, 450,000, were opioid overdoses. During that same period more than 700,000 Americans died from suicide. Before the pandemic “normal” was less than half of all people needing some sort of behavioral healthcare treatment receiving it. This is due to a variety of reasons, but among the biggest reasons are stigma and lack of adequate insurance coverage and lack of funding.

However, the news isn't all bad. It is said even among the darkest clouds there can be silver linings, and this is true of COVID-19. “I think there are some rays of light that have come out of this dark time,” says **Patrick Phelan**, Sinnissippi Centers' President/CEO. “I think everyone has realized how important their own mental wellness is, how it is key to overall wellness, and how it's vital to do things to maintain a good level of mental wellness,” adds Phelan.

“I think we all have also learned the role organizations like Sinnissippi Centers play during a crisis, but also in everyday situations,” says Phelan. “People are aware that during this time there's have been an increase in people in crisis, suicidal ideation, depression, anxiety, substance use, and a number of behavioral health issues and how vital good treatment and support is for those individuals,” adds Phelan. “I think people are more aware now that mental illnesses and substance use disorders are real diseases on par with any other chronic illness and that they need symptom management, support, and other adaptations to have as high a quality of life as possible living with a life-long affliction.”

“So, I think this is a key time that we have this heightened awareness about mental wellness, but I think people also realize that there's a need for more funding for behavioral health and there's an awareness that the need is much greater than the current levels of funding can meet,” says Phelan.



Stronger Together

Thanks to grant funding from Healing Illinois, Sinnissippi Centers conducted a social justice and diversity campaign this spring. You may have seen the yard signs around the Sauk Valley, the billboards, or the banners at our offices.

In addition to COVID-19, 2020-21 was a period of time when there was unrest and a renewed focus on social justice and diversity. We ARE stronger together than by ourselves. Like the issue of social justice itself, alone we can move pebbles and small rocks, but together we can move mountains.

Sinnissippi Centers has always been committed to a diverse workforce and diversity in how we treat the individuals that come to us for their behavioral healthcare, and we remain committed now and into the future to advance the cause of social justice and diversity.

As you can see the people that took pictures of the signs even included some of their furry family members.



What's New?

Staff Acknowledgments

Sinnissippi Centers recently held our annual Staff Day training and recognition event. Many staff members were recognized for their length of service and their accomplishments. Among those honored were Records Clerk, Nicole Webb and Staff Accountant, Veronica Bailey, for 20 years of service, Chief Financial Officer Teresa Good for her 30 years of service, and Director of Child and Adolescent Services Gloria Martin for an amazing 45 years of service. Many other staff members have devoted 10 or more years to the agency. Staff who achieved new credentials/certifications in the past 12 months included: Intact Clinicians Olivia Shaffer, Rebecca Feick, Olimpia Bernal, Kelly Huston, and Paul Mysliwiec, who all received their Child Welfare Employee Licenses, Matthew Kolve who received his Comp TIA A+ IT Certification, and Recovery Home Specialist Shandra Carter who received her Certified Peer Recovery Specialist certification. Several staff received new degrees in the past 12 months including Director of Outpatient Services Jennifer Thomason who completed her Master's in Business Administration, Behavioral Health Clinicians Sierra Elsbury and Tyler Verbout, who completed their Masters' in Psychology, Intake Coordinator Payton Mifflin, Behavioral Health Clinicians Jacob Mohr and Sara Magnafici, Recovery Home Manager Stephanie Englund, who all completed Master's of Social Work, and Behavioral Health Clinician Jessica McCarver who completed her Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy. Sue Linder, Lara Peterson, and Mikaela Keeney also completed Bachelor's degrees in the last 12 months. Congratulations to all our staff for their hard work and dedication.

Sinnissippi Intact Service Expansion

Due to a shortage of Intact Family Service (IFS) providers in Stephenson and Jo Daviess counties, DCFS reached out to Sinnissippi Centers, Inc. (SCI) over a year ago to discuss the potential for expanding the SCI Intact Program to include these two additional counties.

Intact Family Services is a child welfare program and referrals must come from DCFS or the court system. To make this happen, SCI has added a full time Intact supervisor and several additional Intact clinicians. We have hired staff who either live in Stephenson County, or close enough to make travel to these counties feasible. We currently have about 25 Intact families who live in these two counties.

Families involved with Intact Services keep custody of their child who continues to live in the home, which is where the term "Intact" originates. The goal of the Intact program is to reduce the stressors that contributed to the family's contact with DCFS to reduce the risk of future harm to their children. Often concerns such as mental health or substance use are adding to the risk factors facing the family. Since families do not remain in services long with SCI, usually about 6 months, it is important that they have access to these additional treatment service in a timely manner. Sinnissippi Centers plans to make counseling services available to our Intact families closer to where they are living.

SCI has leased space at 524 West Stephenson in Freeport to provide a physical location for SCI staff when

they are in the area or need to meet with clients and families somewhere other than their homes. The space is undergoing renovations, and an opening date has not been set yet. Plans are to have offices for the supervisor, several

Intact workers, and a part-time mental health and/or substance use clinicians who will be working with Intact families. There will also be a large conference room for meetings, training, or groups.

SCI also has a contract to provide an evidence-based parenting program to families who are involved with DCFS called the Positive Parenting Program. Known as Triple P, these services will also be available in Stephenson and

Jo Daviess counties. According to **Amanda Rousonelos**, Program Manager, "Triple P is a parenting intervention with the main goals of increasing the knowledge, skills, and confidence of parents and reducing the prevalence of mental health, emotional, and behavioral problems in children and adolescents."

Gretchen Wing-Shallenberger, Intact Services Supervisor, shares, "The community has been very welcoming to the presence of the Sinnissippi Intact Program in the area, and we are establishing strong collaborative relationships already." **Jennifer Thomason**, Director of Outpatient Services reports, "We are excited to be bringing much needed child welfare services to these counties and look forward to our growing presence in these communities."



FORE!

It's exciting that after the challenges of the past 18 months we have all experienced, Sinnissippi is planning to have our **29th Annual Sinnissippi Centers Golf Open**.

The Golf Open will be **Thursday August 5, 2021 at Rock River GAP** in Rock Falls. **Tee-off is at 12:30**. Every golfer gets 18-holes of golf with cart, a goodie bag with treats, a free item at the end, and entry into on-course games and prize raffles.

We also plan to have the dinner and awards banquet per usual, indoors, with some limited seating outdoors for those who aren't yet comfortable eating inside yet.

We will follow COVID-19 guidelines in place at the time of the event, but the data is looking good for a "normal" Golf Open.

For more information, call 815-284-6611, email info@sinnissippi.com, or check out our event on our website at www.sinnissippi.org and on Facebook.



Expansion of Sinnissippi's CST

Sinnissippi Centers' Community Support Team (CST) is a specialized community-based program designed to support adult individuals experiencing severe, chronic mental illness who are finding it difficult to navigate their wellness on their own.

Often, individuals utilizing CST will also have substance use concerns, legal issues, and/or homelessness.

CST connects with individuals at their homes and/or in community-based settings multiple times per week to provide a variety of services. These services can include: Case management, coordination of care, counseling, peer support, advocacy, medication monitoring and/or training, connection with our psychiatric team, consultation with other service providers, and assisting clients on how to manage symptoms so they can actively and successfully participate in a variety of adult daily living skills.

The first CST for Sinnissippi Centers was established in 2019 for Lee/Whiteside Counties and currently

has 57 participants. Our second team was established in 2020 and serves Ogle County and currently has 50 participants. Due to high level of referrals, we are set to add another

team later this summer so we will have three separate CST teams within the agency. This is very exciting and much needed for the communities we serve.

Our teams are dedicated to

supporting all the individuals with their wellness and recovery and have had great success with this model over the past two years. Client feedback has been very positive and appreciative with clients stating, "I know that without CST, I would not be doing as well as I am", "I feel nobody in my life calls me unless they want something from me. You guys are the only ones I feel care and actually call me back to check on me and that really helps me out and I thank you guys for that" and "This program is perfect! It has been very helpful to have visits at home and I have been able to stay out of the hospital since starting CST."



More News

Bidding a Fond Farewell

You may have noticed a subtle change in the Digest newsletter, online, or in social media - The absence of the Sinnissippi Foundation. As of July 1, 2021, the Sinnissippi Foundation ceased operations and all activities have been merged into Sinnissippi Centers. Founded in 1979 the Foundation's goals were to increase public awareness of Sinnissippi Centers' mission, to increase awareness of behavioral health, and to reduce the stigma that comes with having a mental illness or substance use disorder. Those goals have long been a part of Sinnissippi Centers' mission too. Now, all of those functions will occur within the same non-profit organization instead of two very closely tied ones. The same activities and programs conducted by the Sinnissippi Foundation will continue under the Sinnissippi Centers' banner including fundraising that benefits the clients of Sinnissippi Centers and their family members.



Construction Update

In the last issue of the Digest we reported on the construction going on at our Dixon office at 325 Illinois Route 2. That process is continuing past the original timeline, affected largely by COVID-19 related challenges.

When finished the Route 2 Dixon office will have more parking, a covered secure entrance, a new reception and waiting area with a bathroom just off the remodeled entrance, and many other improvements.

The covered secure entrance will be convenient for picking up and dropping off, and is the same entrance that previously was marked "South".

But while the changes to the entrance and other construction on the new reception and waiting area is being finished, the alternate entrance at the north side of the building, that faces Route 2, will be in operation.



Joint Commission Visit

Sinnissippi Centers received a Joint Commission review in the last week of May. And in the style of COVID-19 meetings, the reviewer virtually visited all Sinnissippi office, apartment, and Recovery Home sites, as well as reviewed hundreds of pages of policies and procedures, viewed client and staff files, and had discussions about our operations with staff and management. These surveys, normally done on-site and in person, are conducted every three years and are an exhaustive review of the quality of the agency. Throughout the survey, the Joint Commission representative was extremely complimentary of everyone she met, and the work that Sinnissippi Centers does. It is a credit to the professional and dedicated staff that we received exceptional marks during this survey.



The Digest Newsletter Summer 2021

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Office Locations

- Dixon
 - Illinois Route 2
 - Town Square Centre
- Mt. Carroll
- Oregon
- Rochelle
- Sterling

Apartment Sites

- Dixon
- Mt. Carroll
- Rochelle
- Sterling

Recovery Homes

- Dixon
- Amboy



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Sinnissippi Centers is accredited by The Joint Commission and recipient of the Gold Seal of Approval.

The Digest is a publication of Sinnissippi Centers, Inc.



Donations

Donations can be mailed to Sinnissippi Centers, 325 Illinois Route 2, Dixon, IL 61021.

You can also donate online, visit: www.sinnissippi.org/donate

You can specify if you would like to give your donation in honor or in memory of a family member or loved one.

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