



The Digest

Latest News

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Out In The Community

- Stephenson County Walk & Wheel-A-Thon Resource Expo September 16, 2023, 9a-11a, Highland Community College
- Mt. Carroll Chamber Farmers' Market September 30, 2023, 8a-Noon
- Autumn on Parade Harvest Time Parade October 8, 2023

Events

- Navigating Teen & Adolescent Anxiety 9/26/23, 9a-3p Dixon Elks Lodge
- Strengthening Children & Teens Against Anxiety 9/26/23 6p Dixon Elks Lodge

One of a Kind Phyllis Berge

One of Sinnissippi Centers longest serving employees retired in July

One of Sinnissippi Centers' longest serving employees retired in July. **Phyllis Berge** served the agency for 41 years starting out as Secretary (1982), then Clerical Staff Supervisor (1987), and finally as Executive Secretary (1991) until her retirement in July 2023.

Current Sinnissippi Board member and former Sinnissippi Vice President/ Chief Administrative Officer **Larry Prindaville** worked with Phyllis the longest of anyone else at Sinnissippi. He had many positive comments.

"I met Phyllis in June 1982, shortly after she began work at Sinnissippi. If I remember correctly, she was initially assigned to work providing clerical coverage for clinical staff working from 12noon-9pm (Mon.-Thu., and Sat.)."

Phyllis was young and inexperienced, but eager to work. She told me that her life's goal was to be a secretary and that she had taken courses in school to prepare her for that career.

From her very first days at Sinnissippi, Phyllis proved herself to be among the very best of secretaries. No job was too small for her to give her full attention to doing it well and no assignment was so big that it intimidated her in the least. She consistently volunteered to take on additional duties and when a full-time day position became available, Phyllis immediately applied for it and her application for the position was immediately accepted.

Phyllis' work ethic was excellent. She arrived at work early every day, and stayed late whenever anything came up that required her immediate attention. She was so dependable that when something totally new came up, Phyllis was one of the first 'go to' persons because she was consistently able to figure it out and get the job done.

I was fortunate to have Phyllis as my primary secretary for over 25 years. Whenever I asked her to do something for me, and in the earlier years it was often something that



Phyllis Berge (center) at Sinnissippi Centers' 50th Anniversary Celebration in October 2016. Also pictured, past Sinnissippi board members Dawn Holland (left) and Michelle Spinden (right)

Phyllis Berge - continued on page 2

Freeport Office Expansion

When Sinnissippi Centers opened our Freeport office, we did so with a modest space, knowing that there was a need in the community for additional mental health and substance use services, but not knowing what the response from the community would be, or how quickly we might see the demand increase.

"In a few short months, we were already serving nearly 300 individuals and families from Stephenson County," says Sinnissippi Centers' President/ CEO Patrick Phelan, "and our partners in the community have let us know that there is a significant need for our services," adds Phelan.

"So, we are expanding our office-based mental health and substance use treatment services. We are also introducing new services, such as Community Support Team, Recovery Support provided by individuals



The Freeport office expansion offers more meeting and group services spaces

Freeport Expansion - continued on page 3

What's New?

Golf Open a Success!

The 31st Annual Sinnissippi Centers Golf Open was another success thanks to all the sponsors, golfers, donors, Deer Valley staff, and Sinnissippi staff who played a part. This year proceeds benefited veteran services at Sinnissippi Centers.



SBM Business Equipment Center golfers get in on the golf open fun

Social Media Benefits

The number of users of social media sites continues to steadily rise along with the amount of time people spend on social media. It's important for a behavioral healthcare agency to utilize social media to promote their services but also to inform on topics of wellness and to encourage individuals to seek treatment and support who need it. With this in mind, Sinnissippi will soon be adding TikTok to our social media sites which include Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, and YouTube.



September is Recovery Month and Suicide Prevention Month

Look for posts on Sinnissippi Centers' social media regarding Recovery Month and Suicide Prevent Month during September. Comment, like, share from our Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and LinkedIn pages.

Phyllis Berge

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needed to be typed, usually immediately and in the later years, it was usually something to do with my computer not working right, I needed Phyllis to fix it. She would tell me my problem was usually 'user error,' but I think she was just joking with me.

Phyllis was, and is, a 'one of a kind' person! A trusted colleague, an integral member of the team, and a good friend. You can't get better than that.

I'm sure I never told her often enough: 'Thank you, Phyllis, for everything.'"

Sinnissippi Centers' President and CEO, **Patrick Phelan**, met Phyllis when he interviewed for the position in 2013. He says:

"I vividly remember my first interview for the CEO role at Sinnissippi. These interviews were being held at a local hotel in a meeting room just off the lobby. In the lobby I was greeted by a person who introduced herself as Phyllis. Although she was quiet and unassuming, for whatever reason it was clear to me that she had a lot of knowledge, history, and influence. My immediate thought was, 'Be nice to Phyllis and it will help my chances a lot.' It must have worked.

Phyllis always kept me organized. I shared the story at Staff Day (an annual Sinnissippi training day in June) about her giving me a hard time at a previous Staff Day, because I had gone up to give my remarks without my notes. When I came back to the table she said, 'You forgot (and then listed the 10 things I forgot). I bet you wish you had your notes don't you.'

That was also true when she reviewed written materials I was going to put out. I have always asked her to proofread important documents for me. She is quite possibly the most precise person on the planet, but what I really learned from Phyllis is where commas are supposed to go and where they are not. I told her recently that I am lost not knowing where to put my commas these days.

One of the most impressive things about Phyllis was her dedication, which everyone knows. Not only was she with us for 41 years, but during that time she was always here early every morning (I am not sure what time really because I am still in bed when she comes in) and there have been times, most notably the Credible Electronic Health Record software implementation, when she would still be here 12 or 14 hours later.

I have a habit of dropping things out of my pockets. I would drop a dollar, or a ten or a twenty on the floor in the office. Phyllis would send out an email to our administration group saying, 'Someone has lost an item of value. Please see me to claim.' The email would include a picture of a crumpled bill laying in the hallway. Of course, every time I saw the subject line I knew I had left more money laying around. One year at our Management Team Christmas party I dropped my wallet. Phyllis decided to see how long it would be before I missed it. I probably wouldn't have noticed it missing for a while, but Phyllis couldn't quite keep a poker face across the table."

Sinnissippi Centers' Vice President/Chief Operating Officer **Stacie Kemp** echoes what Larry Prindaville & Patrick Phelan said: *"Phyllis knows something about everything as it relates to the operations of the organization. Others often 'joke' that Phyllis was the one who really runs the show. You could always count on Phyllis to know the history behind a decision, to know where to find the missing power cord, to remember to forward the phones on a holiday, and to come into the office before the rest of us are awake to make sure the coffee is made and the doors are open and welcome for clients."*



Phyllis Berge (then Phyllis Bradley) standing, right, with Sinnissippi's first computer mid 1980's



Phyllis Berge, left, with former President/CEO Jim Sarver.

One True Hand - Recovery Poem

From time to time we are honored to feature stories of recovery and other contributions, like this poem, from our clients. They are valuable looks into what it means to have a mental illness or substance use disorder and what it means to be in recovery.

HAND

You struggle
And fray

You look
And search
Hoping to find a hand

A helping hand that can
pull you out of
the depths of your
struggles

Your struggles with
alcohol
With drugs
With harming oneself
With the demons in your
mind

You will almost accept any hand that
you happen to find

But in the vast open way of mental
health
Not every hand is a helping hand
Some hands judge
Tearing you apart
Hands that stare coldly at you while
you talk



Hands that reply with the
same responses like it's on
repeat
Like they are a robot

But I'm one of the lucky
ones

I have found a hand

A hand that's true
A hand that's helpful
A hand that's outstanding
at what they do

I have taken that hand
And am slowly pulling
away

Away from the demons in my mind
Away from the chains of my struggles

The struggles will still be there
But things are better
Since accepting the one
True
Hand

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Freeport Expansion

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with lived experiences, domestic violence services and more. The additional space will allow us to expand current services, introduce new services needed in the community and across Stephenson County, and provide space for continued growth over the next couple years. It will also allow for expanded group treatment and meeting spaces.

Freeport Office Supervisor Tiffany Chander says, "We are very excited for the new space to be complete! We are hoping to make our space as comfortable as possible for our clients and are excited to expand our programs."



A view of the new reception area at the Freeport Office

Recent Donations continued on back page

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Editor: Andrew Jackson
Writers: Andrew Jackson, Stacie Kemp, Patrick Phelan, Larry Prindaville
Contributors: Tiffany Chander, Christie Garas, Gloria Martin, Patrick Phelan, DeAnne White



SINNISSIPPI CENTERS
Together we inspire wellness

Sinnissippi Centers, Inc.

Administrative office
325 Illinois Route 2
Dixon, IL 61021

24-hour Emergency Phone Number

800-242-7642

www.sinnissippi.org

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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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