



Reaching out: Mark Ruf, an outreach worker at RHD's Street2Feet Outreach Center, talks with two clients he interacted with while living homeless in Stroudsburg as part of an innovative project to identify gaps in services.

Feet on the street

RHD's Street2Feet finds gaps in services with firsthand look at homelessness

Mark Ruf trudges into the woods, moving his shoulders horizontally to slide through the brush. When the path opens a bit, Ruf knows that means this area is being used as a camp by people experiencing homelessness. He's right — after a few hundred yards, he finds a tent.

In the distance, Ruf can see the remnants of a camp he's helped clear, where people have moved into housing after living in the woods. Ruf had been familiar with these settings as an outreach worker at RHD's Street2Feet Outreach Center. But this summer Ruf took his job a step further, as Street2Feet partnered with the county in a project that had Ruf living on the streets for a week to find out firsthand what gaps exist in local services and how to fill those gaps.

Ruf surrendered his wallet and credit cards, received only a few dollars a day to live on (the daily average of a typical monthly food stamp payment). He slept in tents, camping out in a car one night, and became intimately familiar with camps like this one, surrounded by refuse and waste.

"To a lot of people, this is what homelessness looks like in Stroudsburg," Ruf said. "But it doesn't have to be this way."

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THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE NONPROFIT RESOURCES FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

WHO WE ARE: Resources for Human Development is a national human services nonprofit founded in 1970 that specializes in creating innovative, quality services that support people of all abilities wherever the need exists. In partnership with local governments and those we serve, RHD builds better communities through more than 160 caring and effective programs in 14 states.

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FIGHTING FOR ACCESS

RHD Rhode Island helps Stephen turn his personal project into award-winning advocacy

Kenneth Kauffman | photos

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Celebrating RHD Boston

RH D Boston celebrated 20 years of providing residential, day and individual supports for men and women with developmental disabilities, mental illness and/or physical disabilities.

"The success of RHD Boston is evidence of what a diverse group of people can do with a common purpose," RHD Boston Director Susan Burnham said. "It all started with the belief that RHD's mission and values could be transported to a different state with a different way of doing business. Our partners at the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services listened to what RHD had to offer and invited us to help move people from institutions into the community, helping people find meaningful lives at home and at work, helping adults make the transition from their family into new homes in the community, supporting people to live independently, helping to show that art is a powerful way of engaging people and redefining how they see themselves and the world."

RHD Boston has 190 employees, representing 1,256 years of service. More than 40 percent have worked with RHD for more than 10 years.

"The individuals we serve have shown us the value of trust and the need to listen to what is meaningful to them," Burnham said. "Led by our core beliefs and values, RHD Boston continues to look for ways to make a difference."



RHD Boston: Director Susan Burnham, left, with cluster manager Grant Hightower at the RHD Boston celebration.

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MyRHD is published quarterly, mailed to supporters, donors and government officials. It is meant to inform about RHD's activities, innovations and successes in the more than 160 human-services programs it operates throughout the country. If you wish to unsubscribe to MyRHD, please email info@rhd.org or write us at the address above.

How you can help

More than 43,500 people each year gain the support and encouragement they need to build better lives for themselves, their families, and their communities through RHD's many human-services programs. Their milestones and successes, large and small, are made possible through the generosity of people like you.

Your support helps provide the resources people of all abilities need as they work to build better lives for themselves, their families and their communities. You can help support caring, effective and innovative programs that emphasize the person in the service, with a belief that each human being, no matter what their challenges, should be treated with dignity and respect. You can help give people the opportunity to develop to their full potential, improving the quality of life and creating brighter futures for all RHD clients.

Please use the enclosed envelope to send a check or visit us at www.rhd.org to donate online.



'They take my hand and pick me up'

RHD RIST provides support for people with mental health challenges

Support system: Case Manager Demetrius Dupree talks with Rikki (above) at RHD Ocean County RIST. Below, Elizabeth gets support from her staff at RIST (from left: Elizabeth, life skills specialist Greg Albanese, case manager Christine Janecek and Julie Barnett, RHD RIST Director).

Rikki came to RHD Ocean County Residential Intensive Support Team (RIST) at age 18, after experiencing homelessness and hospitalizations for three years. When she was last discharged from the hospital, she had no ID, no family involvement, and nowhere to go. But at RHD RIST, she found stability and a new focus on life.

"I came in with absolutely nothing, but when they found me, that's when my life got good," Rikki said. "I am happy and really, incredibly, grateful that I was given the opportunity to be part of this program. I owe them my stability. I owe them the confidence I have in my sanity."

"Mental illness was like walking on unstable ground, like mud. Every time I fell, I just kept sinking deeper and deeper. Now I feel like the ground is stable underneath me. Even if I fall, they take my hand and pick me up and we keep walking. I still have my challenges — as does everybody else — but they do a really great job of providing the support I need to not keep getting dragged down."

Today Rikki works at a local day care center for children, and is attending school in pursuit of a degree in nursing.

"We've been through a lot together; the staff here are like family," Rikki said. "It's an amazing program. They help people not to feel like a damaged person — you can feel like I feel: regular, normal, successful. Just the fact they don't call us 'patients.' We're part of the universe. I feel like I can become anything I want to be."

RHD RIST, located in New Jersey, supports and encourages individuals who experience mental illness in the development of life skills required to sustain successful living in the community. The RIST program is based on the common belief that by responding to the basic good and strength in people, we create our best opportunity for maximizing positive individual commitment and responsibility. RIST provides the holistic services needed to maintain independent living with community integration for individuals experiencing homelessness, chemical dependence, and mental illness.

RIST currently supports 85 people who are living in the community. Participants must be referred to RIST by the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Last year RHD expanded its RIST model to Iowa, where a new program in the Cedar Rapids area provides in-home services and supports to participants diagnosed with serious mental illness. It's a model of service that works anywhere.

"We try to be flexible and meet consumers where they're at — what they need now, what's important to them today," said Julie Barnett, Director of RHD Ocean County RIST. "For so many people we meet, no one has asked: What do you want? What do you want to work on? We ask the people we support what's important to them, and we work together to achieve those goals in a way that involves wellness and recovery. People want to be asked what's important to them. For some, they may want a car. For some it's as simple as what color they want in their bedroom. People should be in position to work toward what they want."

"RHD from the start has wanted to involve wellness, has wanted to involve recovery. That's the RHD way — meet that person where they are."

Elizabeth went through an episode of depression and mania after her mother died, and she lacked a stable living environment. She was attending a day program when she heard about RHD.

"I heard people talk about being able to have their own place," she said. "When I was accepted into the program, it was the best thing that ever happened to me. I felt like I was rescued."

"They've been supportive in so many ways; they're like my extended family. They encourage me."

Elizabeth is now living in her own apartment and working as a certified home health aide.

"We have to go through the baby steps of building trust," Barnett said. "But they know we're always on their side, and that we'll fight for them."





STREET

from front page

Street2Feet, located in Stroudsburg, a borough in Monroe County, Pennsylvania, provides vital services to people experiencing homelessness, including case management; linkage to mental health services; linkage to drug and alcohol services; medical clinic; dental clinic; and vocational support. Since opening its doors last year, Street2Feet helped 80 people attain housing, and helped 50 people find jobs.

Street2Feet is part of RHD's Crossroads Community Services, a permanent supportive housing program providing services to people who have serious and persistent mental illness, and who have experienced homelessness. Intensive case management provides recovery-oriented services and helps people sustain their housing.

"The unique challenge in Monroe County, because it's close to New York City and New Jersey, and because of the proximity to the university, is that you see higher rents and very limited affordable housing given a pretty large population," said Leslie Perryman, Director of Crossroads Community Services and Street2Feet. "There is a larger homeless population than there are supports around them. We've seen a large population become homeless even though they're working because they can't sustain housing, plus people who are struggling to find employment when local industry closed down. Our 2013 point-in-time count showed 133 people living unsheltered, a number that rose to 183 in 2015 — and that's a huge number for this area."

There are fewer than 90 beds available for more than 180 people experiencing homelessness, in a county where 15 percent of residents live below the poverty line. The need was met in part by a grant that set up funding for Crossroads and Street2Feet. In addition to helping people get health insurance and other benefits, an average of five people each month are able to attain housing with the support of these RHD programs.

Even with that progress, Ruf took on his project to see where services could be improved.

"If we can figure out a way to do one thing better for our clients, it's worth sleeping outside for six days," Ruf said.

"You spend a lot of time trying to get food in your stomach and looking for a safe place to sleep," Ruf said. "One of the things we learned is that there is no meal on Saturday that is conveniently located for our population; we have people we're trying to support who are not eating for 24 hours. So we're investing in MREs, military ready-to-eat meals. Add water, they're self-heating, self-contained, they're not going to expire, they're ready to go.

"Street2Feet doesn't do meals; we're diving into Saturday meals because we see there's a need that wasn't being met elsewhere. That's something that was cool to see, how we fit into that puzzle. We want to make sure we're not duplicating services, which just enables the population and isn't efficient."

He also discovered how important shoes are.

"Our clients already ask for shoes, and you can see why — you have to walk a lot," Ruf said. "Three days in, I had blisters. I know how to treat

blisters, but a lot of the homeless population doesn't. Their feet get infected and if you can't walk, you can't eat."

The project received heavy coverage in the local media, to the point where Ruf had this experience: "On day one, I was behind a grocery store getting my stuff from under a bush where I'd hidden things, and I was behind a business, and the owner came out and said: Hey, are you that guy?"

"PR was the best thing that came out of it," Ruf said. "One of the goals going in was to engage people and bring new clients into our program, but during the project I learned that our clients are great at advocating for us. That was a learning experience, and a huge upside — seeing how good our word of mouth is with our clients. I'm in the community some of the time, they're in that community all the time. I was able to stop being worried about getting more people to come through our doors.

"We got such positive feedback, it had such scope," Ruf said. "We really see it in community engagement with our work here, particularly people donating items that our population needs, from shoes to shampoo. We are not ones to brag about ourselves; we aren't here to say: Look at me! But sometimes in order to get the resources our clients need, sometimes you need to say: Hey, look at us. Look at what our clients did, look at what our clients are experiencing."

In the west end of Monroe County and in Mt. Pocono, where resources for people experiencing homelessness often verge on non-existent, the awareness raised by Ruf's project inspired a homelessness summit.

Street2Feet will help lead a discussion where churches, community groups and other providers will gather to explore new ways to meet the needs Ruf's project detailed.

Street2Feet is funded through a federal grant that ended on July 25 and wasn't renewed until the end of September. This one-time emergency gap had the potential to close the program. The community stepped forward to help raise money to temporarily fund operations at Street2Feet, illustrating the impact Street2Feet has had on the Stroudsburg area. You can help support this community fundraising effort at www.rhd.org/street2feet.

When Ruf recently re-walked some of the areas he'd frequented while living homeless, he came upon an old camp in the woods. A client named George had been living in a tent in a homeless camp for three years when Ruf first made contact. After many visits to gain his trust, George eventually came to the center, where he received support in locating a housing program that suited his needs.

George has maintained his housing almost a full year and is currently receiving the medical treatment he needs. The camp where he'd lived for so long is now abandoned.

"That's what we want," he said. "We love to close these camps."

“If we can figure out a way to do one thing better for our clients, it's worth sleeping outside for six days.”

Accessibility: Stephen and RHD Direct Support Professional Brian Mustari check out one of the buildings he's surveyed.



FIGHTING FOR ACCESS

When RHD Rhode Island won entry into an art exhibit at Pawtucket City Hall commemorating the Americans with Disabilities Act, everyone lent a hand in helping get the artists' work on the walls. Stephen, a client at RHD Rhode Island, went to city hall to supervise the setup. He wanted to make sure the installation, that of all things celebrated the ADA, was accessible. Stephen has cerebral palsy, and he knows the challenges people in wheelchairs face.

He found that the building was very accessible, beginning with a lift he could use to navigate the stairs. But Stephen found that he needed somebody to open the door of the lift once he reached the second floor. The janitor happened to be there that day, but he wasn't sure what might have happened if he'd dropped by unannounced, or if there had been no one there to help.

So he made a note, and took a few photographs, and the Pawtucket City Hall became the next project for Equal Access RI — a personal experiment Stephen began in order to track the accessibility of public buildings in Rhode Island. With the support of the staff at RHD Rhode Island, Stephen's project has developed partnerships with other human service agencies and accomplished changes at a number of buildings, including schools in the Johnston School District.

In August Stephen was honored for his efforts with the Blackstone Valley Creative Advocate in Disability Award, presented annually to an individual with a disability who is "dedicated to positively affecting the lives of individuals with disabilities, creatively helping expand the full inclusion of all people in our communities." In addition, Stephen is in discussions with the Pawtucket School Committee about turning his advocacy efforts into a paying job as an independent contractor.

"When I'd have to eat lunch by myself in a classroom because there wasn't a lift for the cafeteria, or when I'd miss out on gym class because I couldn't access the gym, I felt excluded, like I wasn't a 'regular' student, like I didn't fit in or belong," said Stephen, who regularly blogs on his experiences on the Equal Access RI website. "I want to make sure that other people don't have to experience the same struggles that I did."

RHD Rhode Island is a day program that serves individuals with developmental disabilities. The creative, intellectually stimulating, art-based day program provides family support services, community job development and supported employment. While most people in the community know it as an art studio, RHD Rhode Island's person-centered services engage clients no matter where their interests lie.

"At RHD Rhode Island, our program isn't just one thing — and we're proud of that," Director Mike Wilson said. "We don't say no, we say: OK, what could that look like? Let's look at what you're interested in, and see how that could work. You have an idea, and that has value, and we respect that by pursuing it with you. We respect and honor what your interests are."

"When you're surrounded by creative people, they problem solve in a creative manner. It happens here all the time; the free flow of creativity certainly lends itself to the art, but it shows up in how we problem solve in general."

When Stephen began day services at RHD Rhode Island, he'd already convinced Rhode Island Commissioner of Education Deborah Gist to meet with him to discuss his experiences with access at Johnston Public Schools. The staff jumped in to help Stephen turn his passion for advocacy into a formal presentation.

"We had six weeks to prepare," Stephen said. "The wonderful people at RHD-RI were there to support me, to lend a hand, and most importantly to push me to do more myself, instead of simply doing things for me."

"The staff helped me take my old Johnston presentation and completely reorganize and simplify it, making it more effective and appropriate for our new audience. Even more impressive, with their help, I was able to create a basic business plan, design a logo, print business cards, take professional photos, and develop an entire website in time for the meeting. My staff encouraged me to be confident in my own voice and to lead the presentation myself, even though I was really nervous about it, and they helped me practice it ahead of time."

When Stephen gave his presentation, the RHD Rhode Island staff showed up to support him.



I think, because of my perspective, I can make a difference. We all deserve the freedom to access the places we want to go. I'm glad I've had the support to be able to pursue it.



"You know what I'm proudest of?" Wilson said. "After Stephen gave his presentation, the superintendent turned to me and said: And why are you here? I loved that. To me, that's success. It's about Stephen and who he is. The focus is on him. We're there to support him, but not do it for him, not overshadow who he is and what his idea is."

"I think we helped him kind of negotiate this process. And I think he learned a lot from what we were able to do with him. But we learned a lot from him, too."

Stephen's efforts have been very successful; he convinced his high school to pull out seats in the auditorium and add a handicap seating

section, Graniteville Elementary School installed new intercom system by the handicap ramp, and the Johnston Town Hall agreed to install a ramp for wheelchair access.

Stephen continues to do assessments at public buildings and make recommendations to local officials. His preferred method is to show up unannounced and try to access the building as he would on any normal day, and just see how he does.

"He's into the adventure of it," said RHD Rhode Island Direct Service Professional Brian Mustari, who assists Stephen in taking notes and photographs, and helps work on the website.

Stephen's efforts are based on the simple notion that a building can be within the letter of the law as far accessibility and meet the existing federal standards — but still present challenges that could limit access to people.

"I think, because of my perspective, I can make a difference," Stephen said. "We all deserve the freedom to access the places we want to go. I'm glad I've had the support to be able to pursue it."



On the wall at City Hall, Kevin makes big strides in and out of the studio

Visitors to Kevin's work area at RHD Rhode Island get an enthusiastic tour, highlighted by the press clippings that show him as a featured artist in an exhibition at City Hall. In many ways, the event marked Kevin's emergence as an artist — a development that has seen him make giant strides outside the studio, as well.

Pawtucket celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act with an exhibit that showcased the works of local artists with disabilities.

Given RHD Rhode Island's reputation in the local arts community, it was no surprise that the creative arts day program had a number of pieces selected by the Pawtucket Arts and Culture Commission and VSA Arts Rhode Island. But Kevin was a new addition.

"It's been phenomenal for Kevin," said Nate Carroll, Art Coordinator at RHD Rhode Island. "He's been coming here for some time, and while Kevin is visually impaired he's very hard working and has made slow and steady progress in his style and process.

"He's been kind of unsung as an artist, but he's always diligently working on his art. Then all of a sudden — bang."

When Kevin made the jump as an artist, he began to develop a solid portfolio of work, going from pencil sketches to robust acrylic paintings. He's begun to appear on local shows, and his work sells regularly.

"You see confidence in him now," Carroll said. "There is literally a bounce in his step. He's always quiet, but he hugs people when he meets them — and that's new. He's really come along, as an artist and also in terms of his social skills."

Kevin's portrait of famed Mexican painter Frida Kahlo is among the first pieces that greets visitors as they view the exhibit on the City Hall's second floor.

"Just thrilled," Kevin said. "Happy. Very overwhelmed."

RHD Rhode Island is a day program that serves individuals with developmental disabilities. A creative, fun, intellectually stimulating, art-based day program, RHD Rhode Island provides family support services, community job development and supported employment services.

Learning to communicate in a new way



Dyann Roth, CEO

“Beautiful” ... “Wonderful” ... “Good.” Stephanie Petro is a vocational arts and education supervisor at RHD’s Center for Creative Works, and she gives enthusiastic feedback to Kelly, an artist at the studio. Communication can be a challenge for many of the artists at CCW, a creative arts day program for people with intellectual disabilities. Kelly is blind and deaf, so communication means that Stephanie takes Kelly’s hands in hers and makes the sign for “beautiful” — four fingers and thumb

coming together in a peak at her chin and then expanding, almost blossoming, in front of her face — as Kelly works on her sculpture. Kelly claps her hands excitedly, both at the positive feedback over her work and at the fact that she can have this conversation in the first place.

“She’s patient with me; she knows I’m still learning sign language,” Stephanie said. “She’s fast; I know she’s waiting for me, sometimes. But I think Kelly appreciates that I’m learning her language.”

Stephanie taught herself what’s called “tactile signing” — a version of sign language specifically for people who are deaf and blind, where the person puts his or her hands over the signer’s hands and feels the shape, movement and location of the signs. She did this on her own time, because she felt like Kelly should be able to communicate and interact in the studio. She felt like Kelly deserved that.

“Kelly didn’t have a lot of interaction or engagement, and I thought it was pretty obvious that she was not happy,” Stephanie said. “She’d self-injure, and she’d get frustrated that she couldn’t communicate — the same way anybody who wasn’t able to talk would get frustrated.

“And I just thought, you know ... no. That’s not good enough. We can do better. We can do more.”

Stephanie had read Helen Keller’s book, and found a video on tactile signing at the local library and began learning letters and words — enough to get started. Soon they were having real conversations, and Kelly not only became much happier in the studio, she started taking giant steps forward in her work.

Kelly would sit all day with a bag full of yarn and use her fingers to weave the yarn into long chains. The staff at CCW picked up on the finger weaving as a creative technique that had potential to become art. Expanding that activity into an organized art form would require communication and creative vision, and Stephanie worked to make sure that happened.

Stephanie began introducing more and more materials to her and supporting her as she learned to weave materials, through, around, in, and out of various found objects and into amorphic forms that became increasingly beautiful. Stephanie could communicate with Kelly to talk about what the forms meant to her, and what Kelly was trying to build with each sculpture.



“We’re just thinking of ways for her to be in control of what she’s doing, to have options and make decisions,” Stephanie said. “Textiles are so important to her, because everything she knows is by touch. She’s very intelligent; she knows what’s up. But too many of her teachers just didn’t know how to talk to her in her language. That’s how it is with a lot of our clients — you have to learn their language, sometimes. Well, this is Kelly’s language.”

Kelly has shown work in several shows, and she’s become much more active in the studio. All across the country, RHD staff are committed to person-centered services. We meet people where they are; and that certainly includes reaching out in various ways to communicate. One of the greatest needs any of us have is the desire to be heard — in all the forms that entails. To see the lengths Stephanie has gone to in order to make sure Kelly has the chance to be heard is an example of what we strive for at RHD.

“Kelly’s story is really a testament to how powerful art can be as a vehicle for communication and self-expression for someone who has so little access to the types of communication and self-expression the rest of us have,” CCW Director Lori Bartol said. “And it’s a statement about how amazing, dedicated and creative many of our staff are who take on these challenges every day.”



In touch: Kelly, a deaf and blind artist at RHD’s Center for Creative Works, can communicate in the studio thanks to Stephanie Petro’s willingness to learn her language — in this case, “tactile signing,” a version of sign language where the person puts his or her hands over the signer’s hands and feels the shape, movement and location of the signs.

CHANGING LIVES, MAKING HEADLINES

For more on these stories and other news about RHD's innovative programs around the country serving people of all abilities, please visit the media center at www.rhd.org.

Genny O'Donnell, Director of RHD's CHOC, honored as Your Way Home's Champion for Change in homeless services

Genny O'Donnell, Director of RHD's Coordinated Homeless Outreach Center (CHOC) of Montgomery County, was honored with the Champion of Change award at the Your Way Home summit.

Your Way Home Montgomery County is a partnership between government, philanthropy, nonprofits and community partners working to solve the problem of homelessness in our community.

"I believe that people deserve housing regardless of anything else that may be going on in their lives," O'Donnell said. "Home is a place to learn, grow, and develop as a person; a place to try new things. I have been lucky that I have come from a good home and I want people, all people, to experience home in all of its most enriching and endearing traits as well as in its frustrating and alarming ones.

"What inspires me to continue is seeing people "make it" and knowing that our lofty goal of ending homelessness, together, is far from lofty and actually possible."

RHD welcomes Pennsylvania Secretary of Human Services Ted Dallas for "Conversations with the Secretary" series

State Rep. Stephen Kinsey, D-Phila., hosted a public meeting with Pennsylvania Secretary of Human Services Ted Dallas at RHD May 29 as part of his "A Conversation with the Secretary" series.

Secretary Dallas fielded questions on the state budget, the Governor's vision for DHS, and the changing landscape of funding for human services.

"We understand, when we make our decisions, that the folks we're serving are somebody's brother, somebody's child, somebody's mother," Secretary Dallas said. "If we forget that when doing our job we're going to miss something. These are people, and they need our help. That's our job.

"Our budget makes significant investment in people. Our department is about serving people. If you always think about people first, you have a better chance to make the right decisions."

RHD's Lehigh Valley ACT hits a "home run" with Magellan Behavioral Health, recognized for outstanding service

RHD's Lehigh Valley ACT received the "Home Run" Quality Improvement Award from Magellan Behavioral Health of Pennsylvania, recognizing RHD for outstanding service and dedication to promoting quality improvement standards.

Lehigh Valley Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) is a recovery-focused, multidisciplinary, assertive community treatment program providing intensive, individual support for people in Lehigh and Northampton counties who are working to overcome the barriers to recovery from mental illness.

RHD's NOVA III honored by Mayor's commission on drug and alcohol services for work in addiction recovery

The Mayor's Commission on Drug and Alcohol Services honored RHD's NOVA III with an award at the Commission's Dinner. NOVA III is a long-term, multi-disciplinary, residential treatment facility that provides services for adults who are experiencing serious mental health challenges and co-occurring substance use disorders as they work to achieve stable and sustained recovery.

To date RHD-NOVA III has successfully impacted more than 150 individuals.

RHD featured at Dept. of Behavioral Health & Intellectual disAbility Services' Transformation Decade Celebration

RHD's High Fidelity Wraparound and RHD's Dialectical Behavior Therapy program ("RH-DBT") presented at the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services' Transformation Decade Celebration: Evidence-based Practices Open House July 8 at Community Behavioral Health.

High Fidelity Wraparound serves youth ages 13-16 and their families. The youth are referred by the Youth Study Center, and must be first offenders, found eligible for a court diversion program, and have a history of serious behavioral health issues.

Clients celebrate Graduation at RHD's FaSST/Connections

RHD's FaSST/Connections held a graduation ceremony for clients who'd progressed through the program and worked to break the cycle of homelessness — acquiring housing, education, and gained employment. FaSST/Connections links 700 individuals to benefits, behavioral health services, medical services, and housing each year.

"The staff at FaSST/Connections are there for you," said Hilda. "We got so much support. I look back at what I went through, and I'm so happy to have the life I have today."

Special relationship at FPCN: 'In here, it feels like home'



A right, not a privilege: Family Practice & Counseling Network Director Donna Torrissi (left) examines Nunzio, who has been a patient at FPCN for 19 years and has accessed the network's Abbottsford site for primary and behavioral health care.

"Let me tell you something about Donna Torrissi," said Nunzio, a patient at RHD's Family Practice and Counseling Network, where Torrissi is the director. "She's a visionary. She is the difference in my life. I've known her for 19 years; she's a nurse practitioner, founder, director, whatever her title is, all I know is the person I speak to. When I speak to Donna, I don't speak to a title, I speak to a person, just like I do with everyone else here.

"This whole place is a reflection of her, and her vision — that health care is a right, not a privilege. I heard President Obama on TV saying health care should be a right, not a privilege. And I thought: My friend Donna Torrissi has been saying that for 19 years. The rest of the country is just finally catching on."

The Family Practice & Counseling Network was founded in 1992 by Resources for Human Development as a lone health clinic and has now expanded into a network of nurse-managed health centers that offers primary care for all ages, and serves neighborhoods where many residents are low-income and/or uninsured. Under Torrissi's guidance, Family Practice has become one of the largest nurse-managed health centers in the country, handling more than 85,000 patient visits a year. It offers primary care for all ages, including family planning, prenatal care and dental care, as well as behavioral health care.

FPCN sites around the state celebrated National Health Center Week in August, with a number of events that showcased FPCN's model of integrated care. Nunzio says he's a great example of that. At 63 years old, he's blind and battling a number of health problems for which he comes to FPCN for primary care. He's also been diagnosed as bipolar, and has accessed all FPCN's clinical services under the same roof. Nunzio credits his stability to those services.

"What they've done for me, I can never repay," Nunzio said. "I'm not sure I can put into words the difference it's made in my life. When I'm feeling bad, I walk in here and I feel better even before I see someone. I go not just where I'm treated the best, but where I get the best results. I may not be the smartest man in the world, but I've been around the block a few times in my 63 years, and I know that when I get positive results, that's where I go.

"The Family Practice and Counseling Network, to me, has been awesome."

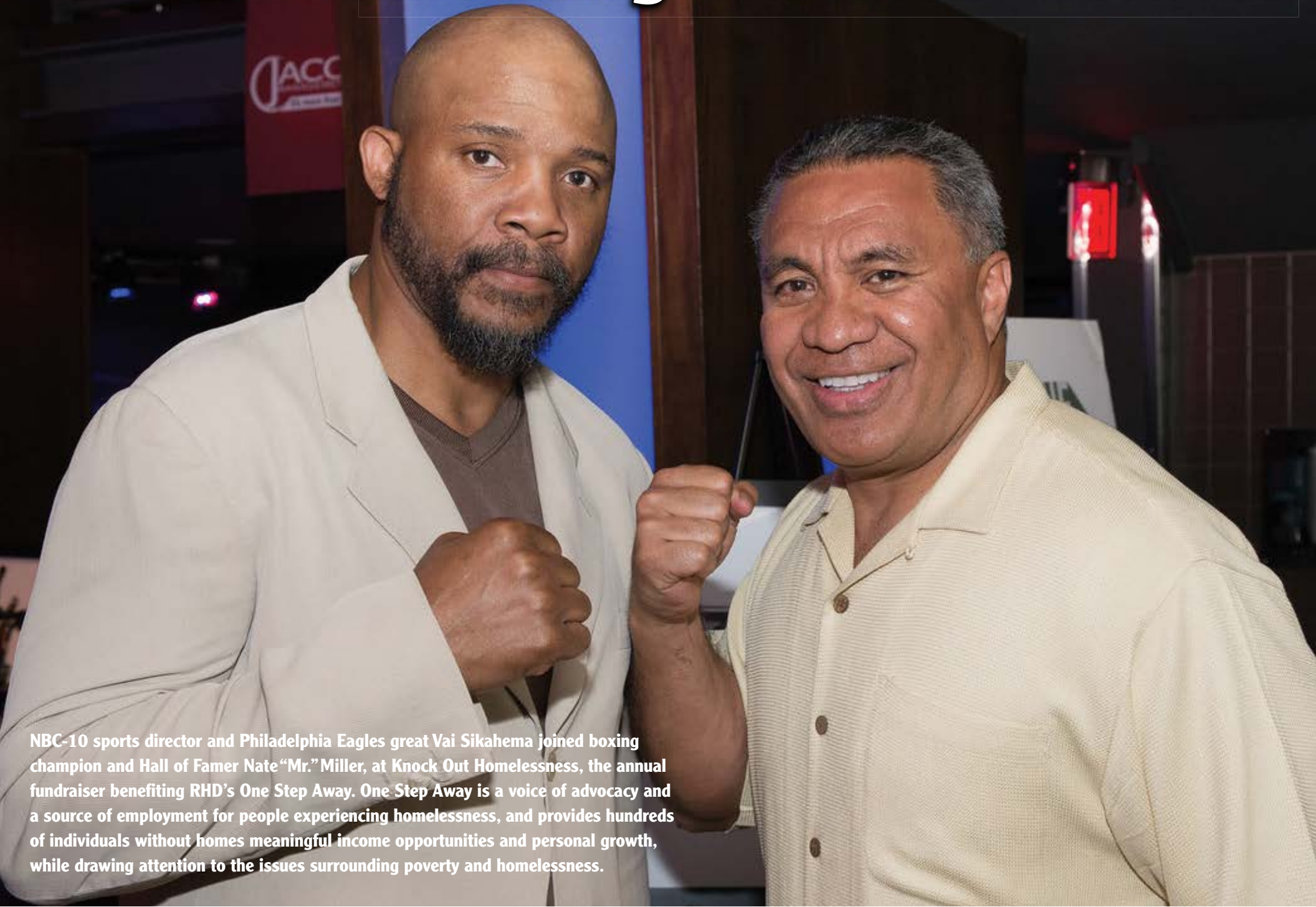
Patients at nurse-managed health centers are hospitalized 30 percent less, according to a National Nurse Center Consortium report, and use the emergency room 15 percent less than those of other providers. The Family Practice clinics (there are now five locations across Pennsylvania) have always been part of their community, and those communities have embraced them. Patients keep coming back because Family Practice combines top-quality medical care with a warm and friendly embrace.

"When I walk in the door, it's like you're treated special," Nunzio said. "When I come in here, it feels like home. It's like my second home. They know you, they want to know you. They make you feel like you belong. They are all good, professional, efficient, courteous and kind, from the reception area to everybody in the office."

This fall, FPCN will open the doors on an expansion at its site at 11th street, at the new Stephen and Sandra Sheller 11th Street Family Services Center. It will still reflect the ethic of each FPCN site — that the care extended to people is based on caring for the whole person.

"I've been very moved and inspired by the people we take care of," Torrissi said. "Nunzio is a very cool guy, very spirited and kind. These kinds of relationships are what has always made me want to be here. They're so important to all of us at FPCN. That's why we're here."

Knocking Out Homelessness



NBC-10 sports director and Philadelphia Eagles great Vai Sihakema joined boxing champion and Hall of Famer Nate “Mr.” Miller, at Knock Out Homelessness, the annual fundraiser benefiting RHD’s One Step Away. One Step Away is a voice of advocacy and a source of employment for people experiencing homelessness, and provides hundreds of individuals without homes meaningful income opportunities and personal growth, while drawing attention to the issues surrounding poverty and homelessness.

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1 RHD’s Mark Ruf lives on the streets to identify and fill gaps in services



6 An artist who is deaf and blind finds a way to communicate at RHD’s Center for Creative Works



2 RHD RIST provides support for people with mental illness

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4 RHD Rhode Island helps turn Stephen’s project into award-winning advocacy

About Resources for Human Development

A national human services nonprofit founded in 1970, Resources for Human Development serves tens of thousands of people of all abilities every year with caring, effective and innovative programs addressing intellectual and developmental disabilities, behavioral health, homelessness, addiction recovery and more. In partnership with local governments and those we serve, RHD builds better lives, families and communities.