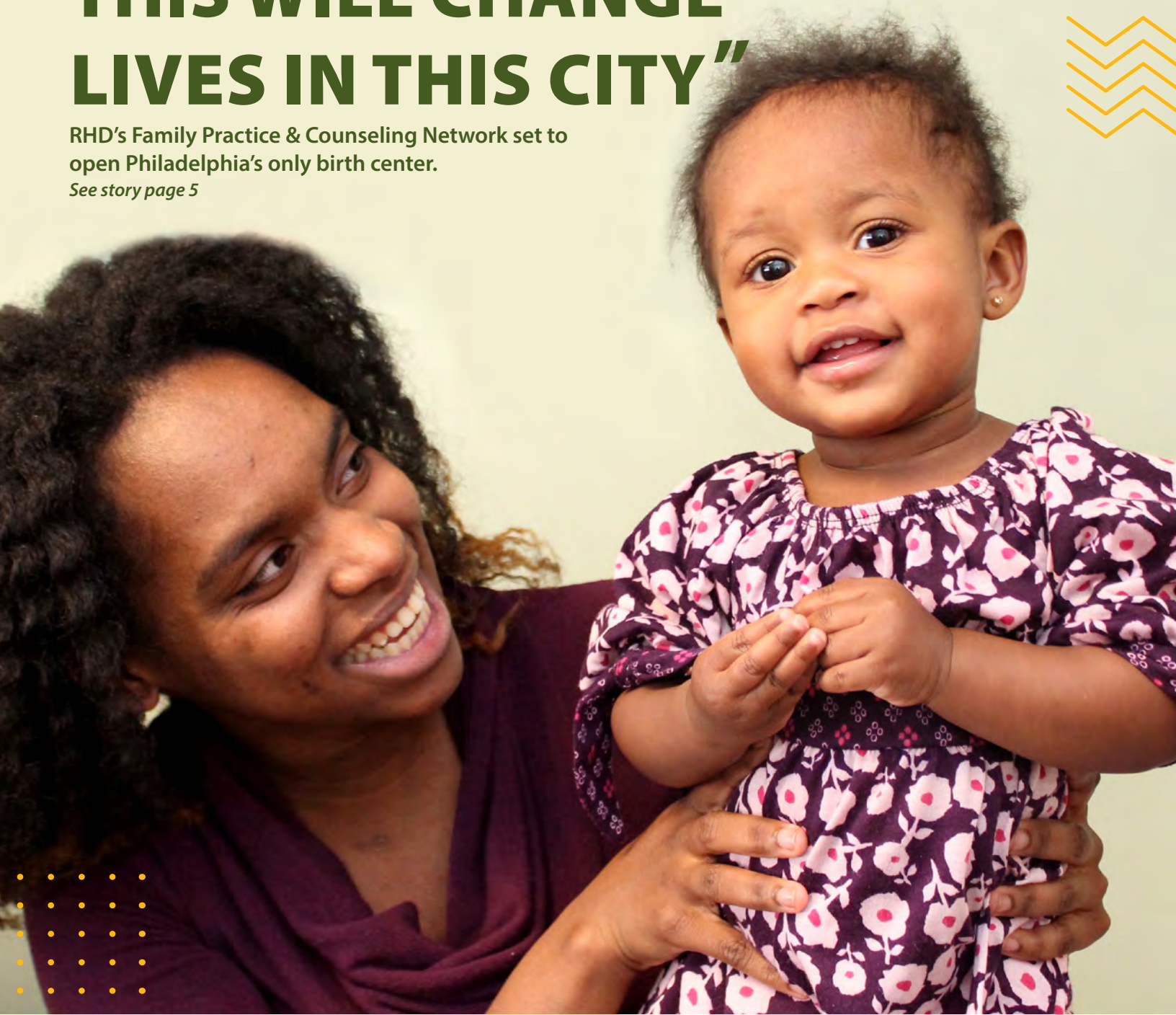


“THIS WILL CHANGE LIVES IN THIS CITY”

RHD's Family Practice & Counseling Network set to open Philadelphia's only birth center.

See story page 5



MY RHD

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF RESOURCES FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



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IN THIS ISSUE

02 From RHD'S CEO
 How RHD expands & adapts services

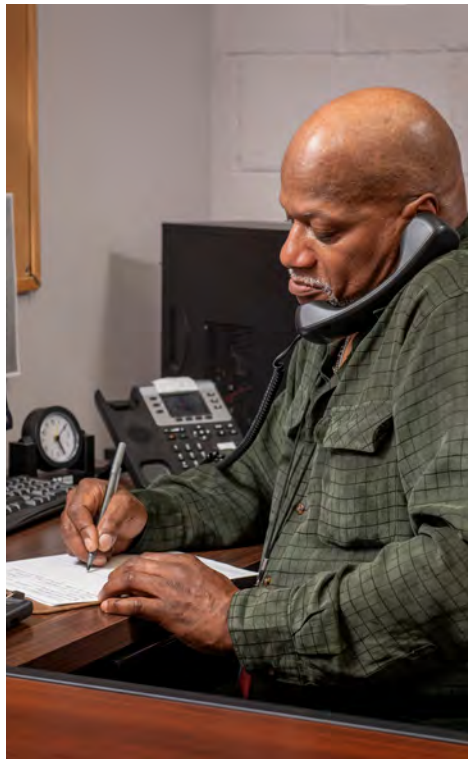
03 Wister Street
 Helping people reintegrate to society

05 Birth Center
 Empowering mothers in Philadelphia

07 People on a Path
 RHD Boston clients find their voice

09 New Perspectives
 Supporting people in crisis

10 In the News
 RHD makes headlines, changes lives



From RHD'S CEO

RHD's Healing Ajax peer support program for veterans expands services for women vets, and provides an example of how RHD programs adapt to meet changing needs.



Marco Giordano, CEO

Rochelle served in Afghanistan, and when she returned home after her service struggled to find support specifically designed to address the unique challenges that women veterans face. So RHD's Healing Ajax expanded its services to meet her needs.

RHD founded Healing Ajax in 2008 to meet the needs of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with an innovative, trauma-informed approach to helping veterans reintegrate into society. The program's name derives from the Greek warrior Ajax, who distinguished himself during battle but was unable to reintegrate into society and eventually committed suicide.

The Healing Ajax peer-to-peer model lends itself to veterans who are dealing with PTSD, depression, or other behavioral health challenges as a consequence of their military service. Core services include initial one-on-one assessments, participation in a weekly psycho-educational group adapted for veterans from the evidence-based Trauma Recovery and Empowerment Model (TREM), and referral to other services if needed, such as substance abuse treatment and veterans' benefits.

With a grant from 21st Century ILGWU Heritage Fund, Healing Ajax expanded and adapted services to support women. The program partners with support networks and advocacy organizations focused on the service, diversity, and resilience of women veterans.

"We provide women with one-on-one assessments and participation in free, confidential, easily accessed, trauma-informed weekly peer-to-peer Vet-TREM groups." Said Healing Ajax program director Tom Wagner. "What sets the women's group apart is that each group is run by women and issues specific to women veterans are explored."

"The program really helped me," Rochelle said. "We touched on a lot of things in our lives that happened recently, and in the past when I was serving. All of the ladies in the group were welcoming and made me feel comfortable."

Since 1970, RHD has been committed to empowering people of all abilities as they gain the skills and tools to build their most successful lives. We've embraced a lot of changes in that time,

The program really helped me. All of the ladies in the group were welcoming and made me feel comfortable.

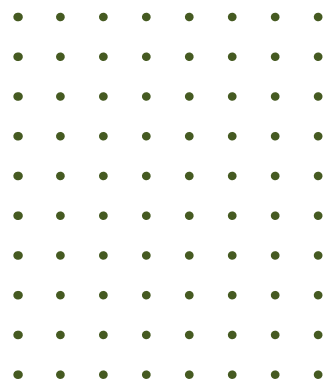
Rochelle, a participant in Healing Ajax's first support group for women veteran

and we're proud of the way we've remained flexible and had the ability to adapt to meet the changing needs of those we serve and our government and community partners. RHD's unique ability to respond to a wide variety of individual and community challenges has made us a national leader in creating and delivering the highest-quality services in person-centered, trauma-informed programs across the country.

In this issue of the MyRHD Magazine, we'll look at some of the ways in which RHD programs adapt and expand, changing to meet changing needs. From RHD New Perspectives taking on new services to join the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, to RHD's Family Practice & Counseling Network opening Philadelphia's first birth center, to RHD Boston taking on a new community project to empower their participants, RHD programs embrace the challenge to find new ways to support the people we're privileged to serve.

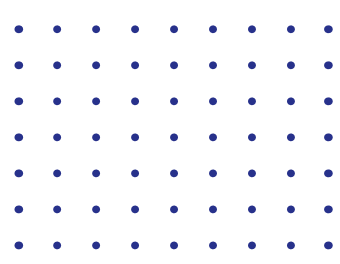
Healing Ajax is an example of that spirit.

"Healing Ajax is there for veterans who have fallen through the cracks and who have struggled to access resources through traditional services like the VA," Wagner said. "We want to reach and help as many veterans as we can. In many cases only a fellow veteran can truly appreciate what they're going through. Our only goal is to serve those who have so selflessly served our country."



Wister Street

RHD Wister Street's responsive, trauma-informed services help people in mental health recovery and with criminal justice histories return to, and contribute to, their communities.



Wister Street: Raquel (middle) with Wister Street staff

"I got a second chance here," said Yvonne. "They give us freedom and treat us with respect."

When Raquel came to RHD Wister Street, she suffered from depression and had lost custody of her four-year-old daughter.

"Every day, we had to get Raquel out of bed and work to motivate her," Program Director Nicole Brown said.

"She started working hard toward her recovery and going to programs. She wanted to start doing better for herself to get her daughter back. She even paid money out of her limited resources to get a psychological evaluation to present to the court for the custody case."

Six months before she left Wister Street, Raquel went to court to address the custody issue. She began visits with the daughter and eventually was able to leave Wister Street and move into her own housing. Three months later, the courts awarded Raquel full custody of her daughter. Today she's working, living independently, and credits her success to the support she received

at RHD Wister Street.

"Wister Street gave me the motivation, encouragement and support to keep going and to keep fighting for my daughter," Raquel said. "The people at Wister Street are my family. Even though I'm no longer there, they continue to support me whenever I need help. Because of Wister Street, I'm in a good place mentally and physically and my daughter is healthy and happy."

RHD Wister Street provides responsive and trauma-informed services to men and women with mental health and criminal justice histories to help them realize new possibilities and support them on their journey to return, reintegrate, and contribute to their communities. RHD Wister Street is the only co-ed re-entry program in Philadelphia with 24-hour care.

"Part of our mission is to instill our clients with dignity and to show them whatever they lost, they can get back," Brown said. "As they go through the process, it's amazing to see them achieve their goals and reclaim their lives."

"Almost a decade ago, RHD started plans to execute the transformation model throughout its behavioral health care-focused services. We wanted to make Wister Street more like home and more safe and secure. We are very proud we have been able to

achieve this. We are continually tweaking what we do to respond to the unique journey each resident experiences."

Wister Street is home to fourteen residents. Eight men and six women receive services for a minimum of two years, but in some cases residents are there as long as four years.

"The passion our teams bring to the recovery process is unique," Brown said. "We meet people where they are, validate them and treat them with respect and dignity at all times. This is our charge. We want them to transition to a place where they are going to be successful and manage their recovery and understand how to be independent to their fullest ability."

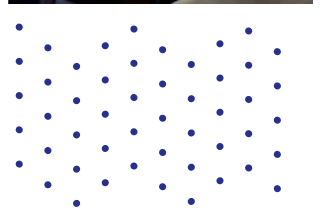
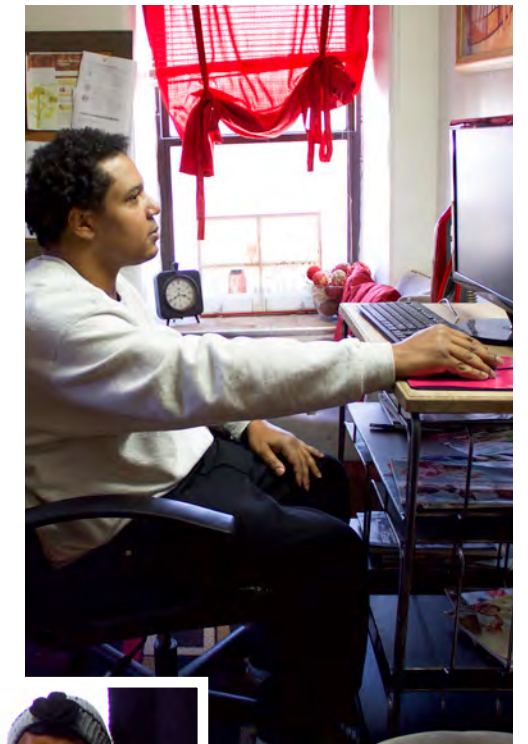
When clients first arrive at Wister Street established peers help them get acclimated. Then new residents develop a vision statement and set recovery goals with care coordinators.

"I got a second chance here," said Yvonne. "They give us freedom and treat us with respect."

"Wister Street gave me a helping hand," said Michelle. "Without Wister Street, I may not even be here. They cared when I needed it most."

To stay focused on recovery, individuals at Wister Street engage in meaningful daytime activities, such as school, work, recovery programs and family visits.

"People come here having lost everything. We want to make their stay something they can take with them forever, and they can reflect on as a good experience," Brown said. "We are proud of the work we do at Wister Street. It's been my passion, and the team's passion, to serve others."



'This will change lives'

RHD's Family Practice & Counseling Network opens the only birth center in Philadelphia, where women are respected and engaged in their experience of child birth — with better outcomes and lower costs.



"I want more women who look like me to have access to this kind of care, too."

-Tahara Prescott-Palmer, Certified Nurse Midwife

Kiersten very much wanted to have her daughter in a natural, home-like setting. But she lives in Philadelphia, and her options were limited. Kiersten had her baby in a hospital, even though that was not her first choice. It was the only choice she had.

"I knew what I wanted, but I felt like that was my only choice," Kiersten said. "I didn't have money for a midwife, and I couldn't do a home birth. I wanted to be able to do what I wanted — but it didn't seem like an option for me at all.

"I wish I had that support. Placing that option where people don't know that option exists? That will change lives in this city."

RHD's Family Practice and Counseling Network, the largest nurse-led health care network in the country, is creating that change for Kiersten and thousands of women like her. FPCN is set to open the only birth center in Philadelphia this year.

"Women need to be respected, and engaged in their own experiences of pregnancy and child birth," FPCN director Donna Torrisi said. "Philadelphia has the worst maternal and child outcomes of any large city. We will create a birth center that will help address those issues, and makes sure women in Philadelphia get the support they need — a sense of ownership and control, and the best possible treatment with dignity."

A birth center is a free-standing facility for childbirth in a home-like setting. Healthy women with low risk pregnancies give birth under the care of midwives who also provide prenatal, post-partum and newborn care. Trained staff offer childbirth and breastfeeding education, a key component of the birth center experience. Birth center care is "high touch" and "low tech." Few interventions are used while attentive, compassionate care is provided that supports birth as a normal physiologic process.

FPCN has engaged partners such as faculty from the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, Hahnemann University Hospital and Drexel Obstetrics and Gynecology who will ensure that the birth center meets the highest standards of quality care. FPCN cares for almost 25,000 patients each year, and has a history of expanding to new areas and offering diverse services that meet changing community needs.

"Creating and maintaining a trusting and compassionate relationship between patient and provider is what we at FPCN have done exceptionally well for 27 years," Torrisi said.

RHD founded FPCN in 1992 as a network of nurse-led health centers that offers integrated, high-quality primary care for all ages in historically underserved communities. FPCN offers a full range of women's healthcare services, including prenatal care.

The prenatal care team will include UPenn School of Nursing Midwives, Drexel University OB-GYN providers, an RN health educator, doulas, Behavioral Health Consultants, Nutritionists and Social Workers. Prenatal care services provide support to the entire family as preparations are made to meet challenges that accompany pregnancy and the transition to parenting. Postpartum appointments are encouraged for all patients to assess family adjustments, health and well-being and family planning needs.

"FPCN's strong business practices and outstanding delivery of care make them the perfect provider to open a birth center in Philadelphia," said Susan Sherman, President & CEO of the Independence Foundation.

FPCN conducted focus groups with mothers and health care professionals throughout Philadelphia, and continually heard the desire for the ability to give birth in a birth center.

"Women are desperate for childbirth options in Philadelphia," said Naima Black, Maternity Care Coalition's Breastfeeding & Community Doula Program Coordinator. "Every day I hear from women who want to give birth at a birth center or have a home birth, but as Medicaid recipients their options are so limited. The time is now for real choices in childbirth for women in Philadelphia."

"Women want a choice," said Isabelle, who received pre-natal and postpartum care at FPCN. "The hospital is not what I wanted, and it's scary to think you can't choose."

"I witnessed the continual support and respect given to women during the pregnancy and birthing period," said Tahara Prescott-Palmer, a West Philadelphia resident and Certified Nurse Midwife. "I want more women who look like me to have access to this kind of care, too."



Azalea had her daughter in a birth center, and from pre-natal care to giving birth, she had the experience she wanted.



"Women need to be respected, and engaged in their own experiences of pregnancy and child birth."
FPCN Director Donna Torrisi

People on a Path

At RHD Boston, an innovative new project helps participants advocate for themselves, improving life skills and social skills while pursuing their goals together.

Ken's anxiety makes it difficult for him to speak in public, or engage new people. But since he's been working with, and helping lead, the People on a Path project at RHD Boston, Ken is meeting with local businesses to advocate for the project and stepped up to deliver a speech at the People on a Path kickoff event.

"I'm getting out of my comfort zone," Ken said. "It's a challenge. But I'm trying to overcome it. We've all been working for this, and we want to see it all come together. And if you want something to happen ... well, you've got to work for it."

People on a Path is a new project at RHD Boston, which provides residential, day and individual supports for men and women with developmental disabilities, a dual diagnoses of mental illness and/or physical disabilities. The program focuses on a person-centered planning approach, and provides intensive support in the area of life skills, social skills, and community integration with an emphasis on having fun while pursuing personal goals. People on a Path is an employment and leadership initiative for individuals at RHD Boston.

Local professional artists create employment-themed and -inspired art installations for the People on a Path project. RHD Boston participants then engage local businesses that would host the installations, supporting people with disabilities as they gain exposure, raise funds, and inspire other participants to join the project – to, essentially, join people on their path. Local businesses can bid on pieces via an online auction.

The unique thing about this project is that while RHD cluster manager Pauline Murray is taking the lead in spearheading People on a Path, and all the staff at the program is helping in various ways, the RHD Boston participants take on the responsibility for advocacy and community engagement.

"They're gaining interpersonal skills, and they're gaining confidence," Murray said.

"The main thing is, they're finding their voice."

People on a Path can trace its origins to RHD's Leadership Development Program, a corporate-wide program that helps groom and develop RHD staff as they prepare for leadership positions in their programs and in the corporation. Seeing people grow in the LDP program at RHD Boston, Ken began advocating for a leadership program for participants.

"Ken is a very capable person, but he is one of many people who might fall through the cracks of traditional employment programs," Murray said. "We came up with this idea, and presented it to our leadership."

"One of the amazing things about RHD is that we're so open to new ideas. When I brought this to (RHD Boston director Susan Burnham), she just said: 'Go for it. Let's try it.' If you have an idea that will benefit the people we support, you get a lot of freedom to try new things."

Participants at RHD Boston decided on a template for the artwork – a person reaching upward, moving along his or her path – and began recruiting artists to create work that told a unique story.

"When I met with Pauline, and the participants here, their enthusiasm was so infectious," said Avril Heffernan, a local artist who is contributing several pieces and worked with the RHD Boston participants as they collaborated on their signature piece that would introduce the project.

Donna is a participant in RHD Boston's residential program, and is an accomplished artist in her own right working at Gateway Arts. Joining this project helped her become more comfortable interacting with new people and being in new situations. She's recently begun teaching "Paint Night" art classes at RHD Boston, a big step forward in her social skill development. Donna said she gained



Pathing Up Together: RHD Boston staff and clients celebrated the launch of People on a Path at a kickoff event this spring.

confidence from working alongside her friends on People on a Path.

"We're like a family here," she said.

Joan is one RHD Boston participant who is always very social, so this project represented an exciting new opportunity.

"I like seeing people, and talking to people," Joan said. "I like meeting new people. I want to go out and do more. I just hope this grows bigger."

The People on a Path auction website launches this summer. Participants will set about recruiting local businesses to join the effort, and hope it raises awareness, brings in more people, and grows.

"We're seeing people engage their community, rather than just living in it," Murray said. "You really see a sense of belonging to something. People are empowered to recognize their own abilities."

Each individual's participation in the program is tailored to display and strengthen their specific capabilities, and help each person gain life skills and social skills. Participants at RHD Boston help

out in various ways – one of Ryan's goals this year was to learn to cook, and for the People on a Path kickoff event this spring, Ryan volunteered to cater the event and cooked for almost 20 people.

"Everyone is coming together," Ken said. "We're excited to see where it goes."



People on a Path: Ken (top) is one of the RHD Boston participants who worked on a collaborative art piece that became the first People on a Path art installation. At left, Donna shows off her artwork. RHD Boston clients Ryan and Tom (bottom) collaborate on their design.



New Perspectives

RHD New Perspectives joins the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, and expands services to help local police in interactions with people in crisis.



New Perspectives: The staff at RHD New Perspectives is taking on new challenges to support people in crisis, including joining the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

When RHD New Perspectives went live as a crisis center in the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's national network of local centers this year, the program quickly began better serving callers in distress, connecting people in the Poconos region with life-saving resources.

"It was a very positive experience," New Perspectives director Michael Usino said. "We handled every call and brought first-hand knowledge of local services, interventions and resources available."

Still the program is working toward doing more. As one of only eight local call centers in Pennsylvania offering support to people calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, New Perspectives handles calls from midnight to 8 am. Callers during other hours are routed elsewhere, including outside Pennsylvania. New Perspectives is working toward becoming a 24/7 call center, which Usino estimates will increase their volume by about 600 percent.

"We know that we can grow this service and help more people who may be in crisis," Usino said.

That's nothing new for New Perspectives, a short-term residential program for adults in Carbon, Monroe and Pike counties. The program provides supervised mental health stabilization services as an alternative to psychiatric hospitalization for individuals who are in psychiatric crisis. Each year the New Perspectives residential program supports more than 300 people.

New Perspectives also provides telephone and mobile crisis

intervention services that handle about 1,000 calls each month. The program provides assessment, crisis intervention counseling, crisis stabilization, referral and linkage with other services. The services make New Perspectives a natural fit for expanding services like joining the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – and a new initiative providing tele-crisis services to local police departments.

Through a grant from Health Choices PA and with the support of Community Care Behavioral Health, New Perspectives is now equipping local police departments with iPads that officers can use to connect with a trained mental health professional during interactions with individuals who may be in crisis.

"When police officers encounter an individual in crisis, they are able to connect with us via video, and we can provide intervention on the spot," Usino said. "Now that interaction does not always have to be about arrest, or hospitalization – it's about: How can we help you?"

Initial data from the use of tele-crisis services now only show better outcomes for individuals in crisis, they reduce time police officers spend on these interactions from an average of about three hours to an average of about 20 minutes – a massive savings in time, resources, capacity and taxpayer funds.

"We present an opportunity for de-escalation for people experiencing mental health crisis," Usino said. "We give people the opportunity to take a breather, and everybody works together to help people transition back to the community."

In The News

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.



Actress, LGBT advocate Laverne Cox hosts RHD Morris Home, recovery program for transgender community

Award-winning actress and LGBT advocate Laverne Cox ("Orange is the New Black") hosted RHD Morris Home at her show "An Evening With Laverne Cox" at Penn. Cox talked with several Morris Home residents, congratulating them on their hard work and encouraging them in their recovery.

Morris Home is the first residential recovery program in the country to offer comprehensive services specifically for the transgender community. Morris Home's campaign to expand services and grow the program in a safe and welcoming new environment was featured on PhillyCAM and in The Philadelphia Gay News in a story titled "Transgender Recovery Will Expand Services." The story quoted Sean, who went from addiction to recovery at Morris Home and is now employed as a peer specialist:

"The program is so intimate and it's completely different from anything else that's currently available. The intimacy creates a different value to the people that are here. None of my success would have been possible without the nurturing support from the Morris Home staff," he said.

With the help of Morris Home, Sean was able to find and maintain employment at a juicery in Rittenhouse Square and completed training to be a peer specialist to assist others with their recovery journey.

"I know I wouldn't be where I am today without the program."

How You Can Help

More than 50,000 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 their most successful lives. You can help support caring, effective and innovative programs that emphasize

RHD hosts conference on Trauma-Informed Care

RHD's second annual Trauma-Informed Care Conference, "Trauma-Informed Care in 2019: Now What?" focused on a deeper dive into the practical application of Trauma-Informed Care, one person at a time, one provider at a time. Dr. Sandra L. Bloom, Associate Professor, Health Management and Policy at the Dornsife School of Public Health, Drexel University, was the keynote speaker. Dr. Bloom is the founder of the Sanctuary Model, a non-hierarchical, participatory "trauma-informed and evidence-supported" system.

RHD's history of innovative services began in the behavioral health field in 1970, responding to a need for outpatient services.

RHD Street2Feet Outreach Center celebrates five years of supporting people experiencing homelessness

A packed house at East Stroudsburg United Methodist Church helped RHD Street2Feet Outreach Center celebrate its five year anniversary as the only day shelter and outreach program for adults experiencing homelessness in Monroe County.

"It's hard to believe it's been five years," Street2Feet Director Leslie Perryman said. "We've been able to open eyes and shine a light on the needs of people experiencing homelessness. They say it takes a village; well, we couldn't have done this without our village. A lot of people came together to help us make a difference."

In five years, Street2Feet has helped more than 350 people attain housing, and seen more than 200 people gain employment.



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 donate online at www.rhd.org.



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At the New York Outsider Art Fair

Artists from RHD's Center for Creative Works were accepted to the New York Outsider Art Fair, the nation's biggest showcase for outsider artists. The Center for Creative Works is a unique, creative arts program for people with intellectual disabilities.