



MY RHD

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF RESOURCES FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



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RHD makes headlines, changes lives



YEARS AND COUNTING



From RHD'S CEO

RHD's Cafe the Lodge takes on an important role in its community supporting individuals in recovery from mental health challenges, and sees a very artful response of support.



Marco Giordano, CEO

RHD founded Cafe the Lodge in 2011, as a full-service cafe that employs people in recovery from mental health challenges. Lodge clients prepare and serve quality coffee, tea, breakfast and lunch in an environment that affirms self-determination and supports people who express a desire to work at jobs that make them feel productive and part of the community. Thanks to our amazing staff at the Cafe, the program has since become a thriving business and a fixture in its Bethlehem neighborhood.

Cafe the Lodge's unique focus on recovery and art caught the attention of the 2019 SouthSide Arts & Music Festival, which selected the Cafe as the site for a mural by renowned artist Pau Quintanajornet.

"With each person that comes into the Cafe, we are given the opportunity to show them what recovery looks like," said Cafe the Lodge Director lan Panyko. "This project, I think, shows that we've had an impact and that people support what we're doing. We were thrilled. It was incredible to hear that it was going to be possible.

"We hosted an open house with the artist when she arrived from Germany. We were looking forward to the opportunity to get the community's input and to allow the artist to see how we operate at The Lodge. Once we got together and started brainstorming, we came up with a design that was way beyond anything we ever imagined."

Now Bethlehem residents in search of great food and coffee are greeted by a remarkable mural that highlights the mental health recovery mission of Cafe The Lodge.

"The community was engaging the artist while she was working it," Panyko said. "Pau fit right in with all of us and it was very common to see her sitting with community members and individuals in the morning having breakfast and waxing philosophical over a cup of coffee.

"What was completed far exceeded our expectations. There were many days that I would be talking to Pau on her lift when a car would slow down and shout support across the street. This mural was exactly what the community wanted."



- Cafe the Lodge Director Ian Panyko



At RHD we work hard to deliver the highest-quality services to people in need, and have the maximum impact possible in the communities where we operate. It's a wonderful and humbling experience when the community responds, and supports our mission. RHD's Cafe the Lodge is a great example of that.

"One of the wonderful things about the mural arts program has been the ability to engage the community through normalized interactions and challenge the stereotype of mental illness," Panyko said. "This project put more attention on that, and we have welcomed it!"









One Step Closer to Home

RHD's One Step Away partners with a local realtor's philanthropic arm to help Ram and his daughter get housing, showcasing RHD programs' determination to find every possible opportunity for their clients.

Ram buckled his daughter Symphony into a car seat, and the child giggled happily.

"She's excited," Ram said. "She's getting her new home today."

Ram is a *One Step Away* vendor, and he and Symphony were moving into an apartment thanks to a unique partnership between *One Step Away* and Berger Rental Communities Philanthropic Arm, the "Hope and Door" program. It's the first time Ram has had his name on a lease, the first time in his adult life he would have a place of his own.

Ram, like many *One Step Away* vendors, has been effective enough working in the program to earn his own income and make significant strides toward self-sufficiency. While he was able to care for his daughter and was able to chip in on rent at other people's homes, Ram was still housing insecure.

"Many of our vendors earn enough income to sustain housing – but to acquire a market-rate apartment, you're looking at first-month, last-month, security deposit and a credit check," said One Step Away director Emily Taylor. "That's a challenge for a lot of our participants. So we're always looking for ways to partner with people in the city who can provide these resources. The people at Berger Rental Communities came to us with an amazing opportunity, and we worked hard to make it happen."

Berger Rental Communities' philanthropic program assists families who are newly homeless because of job loss, health issues or other uncontrollable events. Each year, BRC will donate four apartments to house families that qualify for Hope & Door. BRC will work with local agencies or other qualified third parties to locate families based upon specific criteria, specifically families who have become situationally homeless. There is an extensive application and interview process.

"The people who are successful working in *One Step Away* have shown that they have work ethic, commitment and the drive to improve their lives," Taylor said. "They just need opportunity. We try to make those opportunities a little easier to come by."

Ram is the first person to qualify for the program. When he walked into his new apartment, several members of the staff of Berger Rental Communities was there to welcome him. Ram was stunned almost to silence ("It's just surreal," he said) as the crowd burst into applause when he walked in, but Symphony squealed with delight and joined in – clapping her hands and dancing in her new home.

"I'm thankful, and grateful," Ram said. "There are times when a person just needs a chance. RHD has given us vendors a chance with the *One Step Away* program."

RHD founded *One Step Away*, Philadelphia's street magazine, in 2009. Since then, *One Step Away* has grown to be a thriving program providing meaningful income for people experiencing homelessness or joblessness. More than 65 vendors each month find opportunity at *One Step Away*, and for more than 80 percent of *One Step Away* vendors, distributing the street magazine is their only source of income.

In its history, *One Step Away* has distributed almost 1 million issues, serving as an important voice of advocacy on issues of poverty and homelessness. It has also won North American Street Newspaper Association and International Street Newspaper Association awards for journalism. More than 100 writers – both people experiencing homelessness, volunteers in the community, and other homelessness providers working in partnership with *One Step Away*, contribute to the magazine each year.

Ram will get rental assistance for a full year, and then he'll have to be self-sufficient. In that year, he can save money, work toward education and/or employment and gain sustainability. "Hope and Door" provides more than just housing – Ram walked into a fully-furnished apartment, a stocked refrigerator, and a closet full of baby clothes and supplies for Symphony.

"We want people to have stability," said Bill Nye, the chief operating officer at Berger Rental Communities. "Ram can take a breath, he can start building a life from a solid foundation, without the stress and stigma of homelessness. When you're worrying where you're going to sleep next month, it makes everything so much harder."

One of the driving forces behind the Hope and Door program, Nye brings a unique personal history to this endeavor.

"I was situationally homeless," he said. "I had a job; I was employed full-time. But I was living in my car."

Realizing his struggle would have been so much easier if he could have simply started with housing, Nye worked with Berger Rental Communities to help other people have that chance.

"Any family with a child sleeping outdoors because they lack a home is unacceptable," said Alison Wainwright, executive assistant at Berger Rental Communities. "BRC's philanthropic mission is to end family homelessness in areas specifically surrounding its apartment communities. Hope & Door offers a hand up, not a hand out, assisting families who have become homeless due to no fault of their own. The intent is to provide a lifelong fix, not a quick fix."

Nye said the program also unites BRC employees around the cause, attracting similar empathetic and compassionate people to the company. That was evident when Ram and Symphony moved in,

as BRC staff greeted them with a "Welcome Home" banner, and furniture and necessities the staff had donated.

Ram has lived in four different shelters, and "couch-surfed" at other people's homes for six years. He's struggled with housing instability off and on since he was 10 years old, and struggled to find the consistent housing that would let him stabilize. He's not just grateful to have this chance, he's embracing what he sees as a responsibility.

"I'm the first family in this program, and I know that means there's added responsibility to be successful," Ram said. "I worked hard for this chance, and now I can prove that when you take a chance on people, they can succeed.

"That's one thing OSA has done for a lot of us vendors. You learn to push yourself to be successful in OSA – and in life."









Healthy, Happy & at Home

RHD North Carolina's innovative partnership with Duke University and Alliance Health helps people achieve stable housing and better health — at a dramatically lower cost to taxpayers.

Quanda was frequently hospitalized, most recently with multiple strokes while residing in a Durham, NC, rescue shelter. Quanda was caught in a cycle of health problems and housing insecurity that made her life infinitely more challenging — at a significant cost to providers and taxpayers.

It also made her a candidate for the Health and Housing Case Management Program at RHD North Carolina, a partnership between Duke University, Alliance Health (which serves hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians in the state's public behavioral health system), and RHD. Today Quanda is in her own apartment, managing her health, and going back to school.

"RHD helped me a lot," Quanda said. "Having a place of my own, I'm able to take care of myself, and take care of my responsibilities.

Before, I didn't like my life. But this has given me a motivation to live."

manageable."

Led by RHD Ca

Quanda is just one of many success stories of this unique partnership at RHD North Carolina. An Alliance study of health care costs at Duke University Hospital found that the vast majority of costs were driven by a fairly small number of people. After identifying those "heavy users," RHD provided housing and case management — and quickly reduced hospitalizations by more than 40 percent. One individual recorded more than 20 hospitalizations in 12 months prior to attaining housing through RHD. With housing and case management, that individual was hospitalized only once.

"It's been tremendously successful," said RHD NC director Nicholas Hobbs. "Chronic homelessness creates such instability that it becomes harder to manage any other issue — including, of course, health care. By providing housing and case management, we can make other challenges more manageable."

Led by RHD Case Manager Rodney Daniel, RHD attains housing for an average of four people per quarter. Since January, RHD has housed 27 people and 22 have retained their housing.

"It's very helpful," said Julia Gamble, nurse practitioner at Duke Outpatient Clinic. "People need help navigating this process, at a time when patients are very vulnerable. Rodney does a great job working with us; he's very professional, responsive and compassionate and connects with the patients. We've seen people who were really heavy utilizers of our health care system become much more stable.

"It's traumatizing for patients to experience homelessness, and to feel that vulnerability — because what you see is a sense of helplessness, that the system isn't working for them. Rodney helps people access the system and helps make the system work for them, when they're in position where they could really give up hope.

"That is life-changing. It really takes traumainformed care to the next level."

This project had been a dream of Alliance Senior Vice President for Community Health and Well-Being Ann Oshel for years. Crafting an intake system that established eligibility criteria, incorporating technology, and engaging the right partnerships created the framework. When Durham Housing Authority made vouchers available for this population, The Health and Housing Case



Management program was born.

"It lets doctors essentially write a prescription for housing," Oshel said.

RHD was the choice to provide essential case management to make it all work.

"RHD's leadership lives the mission of supportive housing," Oshel said. "RHD has always been a willing partner to go above and beyond. There is a leap of faith to something like this; there will be issues that come up that you just have to work out. RHD's ability to be innovative and take risks was really important. That's the spirit of our partnership with RHD — a commitment to do the right thing, first, and go from there."

While Duke, Alliance Health and RHD are still working to develop data on cost savings to the hospital, Oshel is confident the program will show significant savings.

"There is a humungous cost impact," Oshel said. "One of the things I'm most proud of is the grass roots nature of this partnership. It was sweat equity and perseverance that made it happen; it wasn't like we just dumped millions of dollars into this."

After years of being in and out of the hospital, Quandas' health is stable. She is also able to care for her granddaughter.

"I don't think there are words for what Rodney does," Quanda said. "It's not just housing assistance; he's there for me. He's a real backbone in my life. I appreciate him, and all he's done for me. I don't think you can find anybody better."

Gary is in a wheelchair, and had been living in the woods for months. Now in housing with RHD, Gary has seen just one hospital visit in the last six months.

"One time a lady gave me an electric blanket, but I didn't have any place to plug it in," Gary said. "I didn't have any more faith, I was down in the gutter. I was just living day-to-day, just 'how am I going to make it to tomorrow?' I never thought about next year, or even next week.

"Rodney came like an angel and rescued me. If it hadn't been for RHD, I wouldn't have made it. This is the first time I've ever had my name on a lease. It's just a burden off me. To be able to come home to my own place, it's just awesome."

Charlene had been homeless for two years, living in her car. With support from RHD, she's in her own apartment with her son.

"I love it," Charlene said. " When I got this place, I cried. I'm the happiest person in the world right now."

Charlene has Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, and climbing stairs is difficult for her. In an effort to secure housing quickly, Daniel found her a thirdfloor apartment. Now that her health has stabilized, Daniel is working to move Charlene into an apartment without stairs.

"There's never a dull moment with me, but he's always there," Charlene said.

"He's a one-name person, like 'Oprah,' or 'Beyonce," Oshel said. "In Durham, you just say 'Rodney' and everyone knows who you're talking about."

"When you work with someone who is homeless, and you give them a set of keys and watch them sign a lease? Nothing matches that," Daniel said.





A Legacy of Caring

RHD celebrates Donna Torrisi, who retires after having built RHD's Family Practice & Counseling Network into the largest nurse-led health care network in the country.



Donna Torrisi's journey to change the face of health care in Philadelphia began with a community meeting in 1992. Torrisi was working at an HMO in Philadelphia when in 1991 she helped write a grant proposal for RHD to open a health center for residents of public housing. It was RHD's first foray into primary care, seeing a desperate need in the community for better health care. In putting together the proposal, RHD sought out Torrisi's expertise in the field for guidance — and then asked her to run this new model of care.

"I remember thinking: I would love to see a nurse-practitioner practice," Torrisi says. "I had the good fortune to be asked to create a model of care to serve residents of public housing. I saw the chance to fulfill a dream to create a model of care that provided a compassionate environment for staff and patients."

In a meeting with the Abbottsford Homes Tenant Management Corporation, helmed by community leader Dorothy Harrell, Torrisi laid out her vision. She wondered how it would be accepted, whether the community would insist on the traditional model of doctor-dominated care and resist bringing Torrisi's dream to life in their community.

"To my delight, Dorothy said: In my experience, it's nurses who do the caring. And this community needs caring," Torrisi said.

With that, the Family Practice and Counseling Network got its start.

And people in the underserved community of Abbottsford Falls

— and, eventually, people in underserved communities across

Philadelphia — got the care they needed.

This year Torrisi retires as Executive Director of FPCN, having led the health care network through a remarkable history — changing the laws in Pennsylvania to get nurses recognized as primary care practitioners, building FPCN into the largest nurse-managed health care network in the country, growing to five sites in the Philadelphia area and serving more than 22,000 people each year with the highest-quality integrated health care.

"Donna defied gravity at FPCN," said Emily Nichols, who will succeed Torrisi as FPCN Executive Director.

At a retirement ceremony in June, lawmakers, funders, patients, friends and colleagues celebrated Torrisi's amazing legacy.

"Donna Torrisi has been on the front lines of health care in Philadelphia her whole career," said Pennsylvania state Sen. Anthony Hardy Williams. "What Donna has done in FPCN has saved a lot of lives. She's an extraordinary woman who has dedicated her life to her community. She cares in a way that is so rare, and so special. There are generations of people who will never forget what Donna has done here."

"Where there were challenges and obstacles, Donna only saw possibility," said RHD CEO Marco Giordano. "In her 27 years with RHD, Donna demonstrated tremendous leadership, innovation, and vision while overseeing the delivery of critical services to thousands of patients in underserved communities. Donna leaves a lasting legacy of unparalleled service to the health care community, and we are so proud that she was part of RHD."

"She doesn't go through life thinking she's going to change the world; she just has these awesome ideas and she makes them

happen," Nichols said.

In addition to her trailblazing work at FPCN, Torrisi has often been recognized nationally for her iconic career in health care. This year Torrisi was honored by the Philadelphia Inquirer in its inaugural Influencers of Health Care awards.

Still Torrisi's legacy is likely the same charge she had at that first community meeting — a legacy of caring. Torrisi created a special atmosphere at FPCN, where everyone felt ownership of the health center and invested in excellent service delivery. She began staff meetings by asking: "What do you feel most proud of today?" inviting FPCN staff to embrace how critical their mission was, and how much of an impact they were making in their community.

"When I was looking for a place to work, I wanted to be part of a team, part of a community," said Tarik Khan, FPCN Family Nurse Practitioner. "I found that at FPCN. It's a family atmosphere."

"Donna Torrisi is the difference in my life," said Nunzio, an FPCN patient. "This whole place is a reflection of her. When I walk in the door, it's like you're treated special. It feels like home."

"This place saved my life," said Eugenia, an FPCN patient.

"When I came here, I was a wreck," said Calvin. "They helped me with everything I needed. They never refused me. Family Practice is here for you."

"When I came to FPCN, that's when my healing began," said Dee Dee. "FPCN gave me my health and gave me peace of mind."

"Creating and maintaining a trusting and compassionate relationship between patient and provider is what we at FPCN have done exceptionally well — caring for the whole person — body, mind and spirit," Torrisi said. "I'm proud of that."



















Emily Nichols takes over as executive director at RHD's Family Practice & Counseling Network

Symbolically, Donna Torrisi passed the torch to Emily Nichols. Literally, Torrisi passed Nichols the white buffalo.

When Torrisi retired this year after 27 years as Executive Director of RHD'S Family Practice & Counseling Network, she pulled the statue of a white buffalo ("It symbolizes hope, and optimism, and a sense that good things are coming," Torrisi said) off her desk and gave it to her successor. Nichols has been an integral part of the health network since she became the Center Director of The Health Annex, FPCN's health center in Southwest Philadelphia, and now takes over as Executive Director of FPCN, the largest nurse-led health care network in the country.

And today the white buffalo sits on her desk, in a sunny office inside the Abbottsford Falls location of FPCN.

Nichols had been Director of Operations for FPCN since 2013, working directly with Torrisi.

"We complimented each other," Nichols said. "While our styles were different, we shared many of the same core values about the work, who we serve and the importance of recognizing systemic racism and how it has affected our patients' lives.

"A couple of months before she retired, Donna said, 'All right Emily, I built the first floor, it's time for you to build the second floor.' I'm looking at taking this awesome base and expanding it. Growing within — improving within. I'm excited about it."

"She is a fabulous leader," Torrisi said. "Emily Nichols cares deeply about people, and cares deeply about the health centers. She brings so many gifts — sincerity, integrity, commitment, a great sense of humor. FPCN's future is in great hands."

Nichols' passion to work with underserved populations came from the values instilled in her by her parents. Nichols' mother was a high school English teacher.

"Somehow the kids with the most challenges found their way to

our home," Nichols said. "My mother felt she could give them some mentoring and guidance. Through this, I felt a responsibility to give back to people who may not have been as fortunate as me. It created my foundation."

Nichols received a BA in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University. While in college she volunteered in East Baltimore helping women and babies with HIV. Nichols went on to receive an MPH in Behavioral Science from Emory University and in 2010, became the center director of the Health Annex, FPCN's health center in Southwest Philadelphia. At the Health Annex, Nichols found her voice and absorbed the high standards that hallmark FPCN health centers.

"I developed good relationships with people there, but also figured who I am as a leader," she said.

In 2013, Nichols became director of operations for FPCN — a role that allowed her to work directly with each of the five FPCN center directors to define policies that best served their respective communities. She also expanded FPCN's use of technology to assist with practices and provide important data.

"I am a big data person — I'm asking what is the data saying? What is the story behind the data? It's a big love and I want to keep moving it forward," explained Nichols.

Under Nichols' direction, FPCN will be growing in additional areas, including increasing community engagement for each health site. On the immediate horizon, Nichols will be overseeing the opening of The Family Health and Birth Center, the only birth center in Philadelphia where women are engaged in their experience of childbirth, with better outcomes and lower costs.

"I want FPCN to be known as an innovative and integrated model of care across all disciplines for the good of our patients," said Nichols. "We need to meet them where they are, provide comprehensive trauma informed services for whatever they need. They deserve it and we need to provide that for them."

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.



Donna Torrisi & Tarik Khan of RHD's FPCN named Philadelphia Inquirer 2019 Influencers of Health Care

Donna Torrisi and Tarik Khan were honored as two of Philadelphia's "Influencers of Health Care" by the Philadelphia Inquirer. Torrisi is retiring this year as director of RHD's Family Practice & Counseling Network, which she led since RHD founded FPCN in 1992. FPCN is now the largest nurse-led health care network in the country. Kahn is a family nurse practitioner at FPCN and a tireless advocate for health care for people in need.

"Growing up, I recognized advocacy as a common trait in nurses through my mom, and I was later attracted to this field that is dedicated to helping make people's lives better," Khan said.

"I had the good fortune to be asked to create a model of care to serve residents of public housing," Torrisi said. "I saw the chance to fulfill a dream to create a model of care that provided a compassionate environment for staff and patients."

South Philly Review features RHD's IDEATE program

The South Philly Review profiled George and Dwayne, looking at how they are thriving at RHD's IDEATE, an inclusive employment program that provides trauma-informed support to individuals with barriers to getting and sustaining earning opportunities.

South Philly resident George Shands, founder of incense and car

freshener distributor G Fresh Emporium, and Germantown native Dwayne Boone, a Philadelphia-based artist, are two individuals who've flourished through IDEATE ...

"It's about accessibility and equity," said IDEATE employment specialist Sarah Schimeneck. "If someone is hitting barriers with their career, we provide solutions to those barriers, so that everyone has access to a platform where they can find success, express themselves and support themselves."

IDEATE is partnering with Rowhouse Grocery in Philadelphia to showcase George and Dwayne's work.

RHD Street2Feet's anti-littering initiative partnership with Pocono 3C covered by media across Pocono region

PBS, WBRE-TV, WNEP-TV, BRC-13, FOX56 and The Wilkes-Barre Times Leader covered RHD's Street2Feet Outreach Center and its partnership with the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau, The Pocono Mountains United Way, and The Monroe County Waste Authority to provide an amazing opportunity for Street2Feet clients that helps better their community.

RHD Street 2 Feet Outreach Center, the only day shelter and outreach program for adults who are homeless or facing homelessness in Monroe County, helping form The Pocono Community Caring Company (Pocono 3C) to provide no-barrier employment with same-day pay, putting Street2Feet clients to work as part of a new multi-county anti-littering initiative.

"It's amazing. We are so thrilled with the fact that they can find employment, same day employment. No barriers, they don't have to have an ID. It's helping the community and changing the stigma that goes with homelessness," said Elizabeth Bogart, RHD Street2Feet site supervisor.

"The raise in their self-esteem has been wonderful and just seeing how hard they are working," Bogart said. "Just in the last four days we have picked up over 200 bags of garbage."

Check out the media coverage of RHD's Street2Feet in the Media Center on the RHD website.

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

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.

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