

spring 2014

News



Independence Center is committed to providing a comprehensive system of high quality programs and services that assists adults in the St. Louis metropolitan area with serious and persistent mental illness to live and work in the community, independently and with dignity.

inside

2013 Year in Review

pg 9

3

Healthcare Home

4

Dancing with
the St. Louis Stars

13

Sheila's Story

14

Moving the
Fulcrum: Stigma at
the Tipping Point

15

New Board
of Directors

Overcoming Obstacles: *Brittney's Story*

Story on page 2



Brittny's Story

Two years ago, Brittny felt invisible, lost to herself and the world after more than a decade of mental illness and drug abuse.

"I had no clue about the Clubhouse community," she said. "I had no clue there was help out there for people with mental illness. I was in a rut mentally and psychologically, and I'd been isolating in a big way for a long, long time."

In October, after one and half years of psychosocial rehabilitation at Independence Center, Brittny, 34, stepped into her rightful place in the spotlight. Wearing a floral dress with a pop of vibrant yellow, she delivered a fifteen-minute monologue to a packed ballroom about her journey from desperation to recovery, bringing more than 600 people to their feet and many to tears.

Brittny was one of the opening plenary speakers at the 17th International Clubhouse Seminar, held at the St. Louis Ballpark Hilton this past fall. She gave a brave, unflinching narrative about being the victim of sexual abuse, living with schizoaffective disorder and self-medicating with drugs.

"The Clubhouse has been a life-saver to me," she told the crowd.

Since becoming a member, Brittny shared that she has quit smoking, returned to school and has implemented an exercise regimen for herself. She's fallen in love with Stanley, another Clubhouse member. "Being a member of the Clubhouse community has afforded me several opportunities to be part of something bigger than myself," she said.

Brittny joined Independence Center in April 2012, shortly after two workers reached out to her through a special statewide program that targets high cost Medicaid clients who also have chronic medical and mental health conditions. The Disease Management 3700 Project (DM 3700), a collaboration between the Department of Mental Health and MO Health Net, represents a seismic shift in how Medicaid has traditionally been administered. Instead of waiting for clients with mental illness to use the health care system on their own (often inefficiently and with

poor results), the state seeks them out and invites them to enroll in a Community Mental Health Center (CMHC), such as Independence Center, where they can find help managing both their physical and mental health care needs. That outreach, Brittny told the crowd, "saved my life."

Now, Brittny spends five days a week at Independence Center. She treats it like a full workday, arriving around 10 a.m. and leaving just before 6 p.m. The only time she misses is when she has a doctor's appointment (she suffers from degenerative disc disease and osteoarthritis). She also receives counseling and psychiatric medication through Midwest Psychiatry, the Center's outpatient psychiatric program.

Brittny, who enjoys writing poetry, reading murder mysteries and African American fiction and listening to "all kinds of music," says her life, though still challenging, has never been better. "There's so much out there for me," she said.

Brittny sees a very bright future for herself. Once she completes her bachelor's degree in psychology (she is currently a sophomore at the University of Phoenix), she wants to obtain her master's in social work or clinical mental health counseling so she can help those who've experienced many of the same challenges. Despite the many years of struggle, Brittny says she is thankful. "Everything I've seen or been through is the sum of the woman I am today."

After her plenary address, dozens of people lined up to shake her hand, hug her and share their own struggles. "I can honestly say I've never had that experience before, and that's what I guess made it surreal to me because I didn't know just how powerful my story was and how it affected people until that day."

But being in the spotlight is something Brittny may have to get used to. Weeks before she spoke at the Clubhouse conference, Independence Center Executive Director Mike Keller asked Brittny to give her testimony at Medicaid expansion hearings at Forest Park Community College. Her powerful story drew more comments than any other of the nearly 100 speakers.

"Despite everything that I've gone through traumatically, and the pain I've endured, and the mental illness, I was able to overcome a lot of those obstacles thrown in my path," she said. "I'm still here. I'm still standing. I didn't let all that stuff kill me. And now it seems that I'm being called to share my story with others."



*“It’s about the whole person.
Not just the diabetes. Not
just the mental illness. Not
just the social constraints.
We work with the person as
a whole.”*

Improving Quality of Life Through *Healthcare Home*

On a recent fall day, Independence Center member Steve Name had an appointment at Washington University – about 3.5 miles from the Clubhouse.

He decided to walk through the autumn color in Forest Park instead of looking for a ride or catching a bus, as he would have typically done in the past.

It is everyday decisions like these that have made Steve, who lives with diabetes, schizophrenia and depression, a Healthcare Home success story.

Over the past 18 months, Steve has lost 25 pounds, increased his physical activity and cut his blood sugar level in half by swapping regular Coca-Cola for Coke Zero (a change he says he could have never made without the gentle nudging of his community support worker).

“The Clubhouse is my family,” says Steve, a member for six years. “I want to be here for a long time because people here need me. My friends say they’re happy that I made these changes for myself, but for them, too.”

Independence Center will soon enter its second year as a Healthcare Home program – a place where people can come throughout their lifetime to have their health-care needs identified and to receive comprehensive medical, behavioral and social services and supports.

To be eligible, members must have a diagnosis of a serious and persistent mental illness, complex health needs due to additional chronic medical conditions and active Missouri Healthnet insurance.

“This program coordinates care in a way that recognizes all of our members’ needs as an individual,” said Jan Markham, the Center’s Healthcare Home director. “It’s about the whole person. Not just the diabetes. Not just the mental illness. Not just the social constraints. We work with the person as a whole.”

continued on page 8



*Dancing with the St. Louis Stars,
a benefit for Independence Center,*
Raises Record-Breaking Funds!

and
aguire



Warner Baxter and
Lucy Fitzgerald

Sheila Young and
Steve Brockman

Independence Center

The 2014 Dancing with the St. Louis Stars raised over \$473,000, shattering donation records and stigma around mental illness.

After months of practice and preparation, St. Louis' own world-class community leaders donned costumes and dancing shoes for a star-studded competition, Dancing with the St. Louis Stars, a benefit for Independence Center on January 25, 2014, at the Four Seasons Hotel.

The gala, now in its sixth year, has become a signature fundraiser in St. Louis, supporting Independence Center's programs and services for adults

living with severe and persistent mental illness in the St. Louis community.

"This year was special because of how dedicated and creative the dancers were in fundraising and preparing their performances," said Jamie Clark, Independence Center development specialist and coordinator for the event. "They put their hearts and soles into their performances."

The Four Seasons was abuzz with excitement as guests were treated to David Diener and Agnieszka Maguire's sultry tango, coupled with a surprise Gangnam style finish. Warner Baxter and Lucy

continued on page 6



Fitzgerald swept the audience off their feet with their charming performance to a Frank Sinatra classic. Independence Center Member Sheila Young and Steve Brockman brought the crowd to their feet with their energetic performance to the rhythm of Beyoncé's "Crazy in Love." Cynthia Mercer and Michael Fitzgerald won the Judges' Favorite award with their stellar theatrical routine to "When I Was Your Man" by Bruno Mars.



Nicole Genovese and Spiro Marko "wowed" the crowd with their Latin-inspired performance to Enrique Iglesias's "Bailamos." Tom Minogue and Angie Brooks brought out their inner prince and princess as they treated guests to a special music video that complimented Tom's dapper dance moves to ABBA's "Gimme! Gimme! Gimme!"

But it was Sue McCollum and Senzo Makhaye who stole the crown with their "Bad Dancing for a Good Cause" campaign coupled with a surprise guest appearance by the Gateway Men's Chorus during their rendition of Donna Summer's "She Works Hard for the Money." Sue McCollum is the first woman CEO to win Dancing with the St. Louis Stars and she gives all the credit to the employees of Major Brands and their amazing network of support from their suppliers, partners, family and friends.

Tom Minogue and his professional partner, Angie Brooks, came in second, and Warner Baxter and his professional partner, Lucy Fitzgerald, placed third. Claire Kellett of KMOV News 4 served as emcee.

Competition judges included Steve Lipstein, President and Chief Executive Officer, BJC HealthCare and last year's dance champion; Ann Marr, Vice President of Human Resources, World Wide Technology, Inc.; Kent Christian, President, Wells Fargo Advisors Financial Group; and Ellen Sherberg, Publisher, St. Louis Business Journal.

Thousands of votes were cast online prior to the event via the event website. Guests were able to vote the night of the event and a combination of the judges' scores, online votes, and votes that evening helped determine the dance champions.

Just Dancing Ballroom Dance Studio provided their services to teach all of the celebrities a dance of their choice. Ameren Missouri served as the presenting sponsor this year. Other sponsors included Stifel, Emerson, Mercy, Thompson Coburn, Barnes-Jewish Hospital, Novus International, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Scottrade, Healthlink, Centene Corporation, Rubin-Brown, Watlow, Missouri Baptist Medical Center, Missouri Foundation for Health, Enterprise Bank &



Trust, BMO Harris Bank, US Bank, Moneta Group Charitable Foundation, Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine, Genovese Jewelers, FreeMan Marketing, Dana Lewis Hair & Makeup, Major Brands, Coca-Cola, video services provided by Video Views and Rob Garcia, and production services provided by Executive Producer Lynn Jacobs with Switch and Jeffrey Powell.

"This year was the culmination of many years of hard work," Jamie said. "We've made some long-lasting friendships with very influential people and companies in the community, and continue to improve ways of raising funds."

Jamie said she knew early on the night was going to be extra special. At one point, Independence Center Executive Director Mike Keller asked her "How are things looking?"

Jamie remembers telling him, "If I tell you now you might not believe me. Head back into the event and it will be a nice surprise when you announce the total later tonight." By evening's end, a goal of \$270,000 had been shattered by an astonishing \$473,000.

"People really feel strongly connected to what we are trying to do at Independence Center," Jamie said. "Many of our dancers know someone or have a family member that lives with mental illness. That makes the connection even stronger."

For more information on Dancing with the St. Louis Stars, a benefit for Independence Center, visit www.dancingwiththestlouisstars.org, and for information on Independence Center's programs and services please call (314) 880-5404 or visit www.independencecenter.org.

Photos, from top left: Rebecca, Tom and Kristen Minogue ; Cheri Hoffman, Sue McCollum and Suzanne Sitherwood; Jack (President, IC Board of Directors) and Teresa Huether; Mike Keller (Executive Director), Ann and Steve Desloge; Patti Leonard, David Diener and Joanne Greene; Ray and Diane Barrett, Nancy and Craig Schnuck; Ron Kruszewski (Event Chair) and Lauren Reese; Arnold Donald; Celebrity Judges Steve Lipstein, Ann Marr, Claire Kellett (Emcee), Kent Christian and Ellen Sherberg



An average of 237 members are enrolled in the program each month. So far, the results have not only been encouraging, but also exciting. Almost 59 percent of enrolled members have improved their blood pressure, 46 percent have improved their cholesterol and 49 percent have improved their blood sugar readings.

"All 18-month results, no matter how they sliced the data, were positive for savings and health outcomes," Markham said. "We really couldn't be happier. It's exciting to be part of an effort that is helping to save our members' lives."

Independence Center's push toward life-changing initiatives for people with mental illness and other serious health conditions grows out of a collaborative partnership between the state's provider community and the Missouri Department of Mental Health.

Seven years ago, Dr. Joe Parks, chief clinical director for the Missouri Department of Mental Health, co-published a benchmark study that found that people served by public mental health systems die, on average, 25 years earlier than the general population.

More than 80 percent of those premature deaths are due to treatable medical conditions caused by preventable risk factors such as smoking, obesity, substance abuse and inadequate access to medical care.

Numerous other studies showed that people with serious mental illness and chronic health conditions are more likely than not to receive no medical care whatsoever for those conditions.

The Healthcare Home model, which is being implemented in community mental health centers across the state, provides assessment (including metabolic screening), primary care consultation (up to four times per year as needed) and care coordination. Missouri was the first state in the nation to receive a special Medicaid waiver to launch the effort in early 2012.

Since then, Independence Center members have received 200 metabolic screenings, an average of 15 each month. Additionally, almost 100 members have received 187 primary care consultations.

Each member enrolled in the program has the opportunity to develop their own plan of care with the help of their plan coordinator, nurse care manager, primary care physician, psychiatrist and community support worker.

"The community support worker serves as the pivot that makes this whole thing work," said Jennifer Higginbotham, Independence Center associate director. "They're the coordinating piece between the mental and the physical health care."

Even so, change is not the sole responsibility of any one person or role, rather the team and the Center as a whole, Higginbotham said, adding that staff and members have been working together to change the health culture throughout the Clubhouse.

Members and staff had to come together to make choices such as what will be served in the cafeteria, as well as what healthy snacks might replace candy and chips in the snack bar.

Our cafeteria has "come very far," said Higginbotham. "It was hard for a while. But they're serving fresh fruit every day. There's a fresh salad every day. They're trying a lot of new recipes, including vegetarian options."

The snack bar is the more difficult needle to move.

"We still believe in choice," Higginbotham said.

"We don't want to say no soda, no chocolate. People, including me, would have a fit. But we're working on it. We all need to be healthier."

Higginbotham said efforts are ongoing to encourage healthy portions, as well as increase weekend, evening and holiday activities that are more focused on wellness. Staff and members are also training to be wellness coaches to each other. Additionally, a "new and improved" wellness committee will include both members and staff and focus on obesity and smoking cessation.

As for Steve, he said he is committed to continuing down a path to better health. He still wants to lose some more weight and insists on keeping his diabetic indicators in check. His grandfather died young from health complications and he doesn't want to repeat the history.

"My grandfather went blind, his kidneys stopped and he died at 56," Steve said. "I need to make the changes, or I'm in the same situation in eight years."

Plus, with his work and friends at Independence Center, Name says people depend on him to be around.

"Someone cried when they heard about my health," he said. "It never occurred to me that I needed to stay healthy for other people so they don't feel sad and miss me. That's a big reason why I'm working so hard at this."

2013

Year in Review



2013 Board of Directors

PRESIDENT

Jack Huether

VICE PRESIDENT

Cyndy Donato

TREASURER

Christina Jenkins

SECRETARY

John Cowling

M.Coleen Beckemeyer

Ken Bower

Roslyn Corcoran

Steve C. Drapekin

Mark Eggert

William French

Sarah Gehlert, Ph.D.

Karen Gotsch

R.Gregory Hoester

Tishaura Jones

Peter Kieffer, M.D.

Mary Kistner

Chris Koenemann

John Morrison

Matthew Sallaberry

Margaret Schramm

Matt Slater

Julie Suntrup

Peter Van Cleve

Timothy Vosse

Stephen Whyte

Bonnie Woods

Sandra Young

Board of Visitors

CHAIR

Peter H. Raven, Ph.D.

Valerie D. Bell

Mrs. Peter Bunce

Sen. & Mrs. Jack Danforth

Mrs. Samuel Guze

Eddie Lawlor, Ph.D.

Talbot MacCarthy

Marylen Mann

Ellen Sherberg

Rabbi Susan Talve

Blanche Touhill, Ph.D.

Murray Weidenbaum, P.D.

Elizabeth Wood

DEAR FRIENDS:

We are proud to share this 2013 Annual Report on Independence Center's programs, finances and development with you, our supporters and investors. It's a pleasure to be able to recount the growth and success we've experienced as an organization, and even more so, to tell you what this means for the members we serve.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of our Wellness Program, a groundbreaking initiative at that time. Our wellness emphasis was the subject of some controversy in its early years, when few mental health providers appreciated the significant linkage between behavioral and physical health. Independence Center's management simply realized that we were losing too many Clubhouse members to premature death, not due to their mental illness but to cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, and other physical illnesses. Out of this concern, and with generous start-up funding from the Missouri Foundation for Health, an innovative program was devised to monitor wellness indicators, and address related issues — such as nutrition, exercise, smoking cessation, and stress management — within the Clubhouse.

Ten years on, there is a vastly wider appreciation of the need for primary care and behavioral health integration. Independence Center now enjoys a designation as a Healthcare Home, and provides health coaching, metabolic screening and primary care physician support. As this is a joint project between our Midwest Psychiatry Clinic and our Clubhouse, all members are able to participate. In its first year, 184 metabolic screenings were completed, and 98 members participated in 187 primary care consultations. Our quality indicators demonstrated improvement on multiple indices, including diabetes risk, asthma medication adherence, BMI, and the incidence of hypertension and coronary artery disease.

The largest institutional undertaking of FY'13 was the transition to a new agency-wide Electronic Health Record, which impacted all of our programs and supporting departments. The EHR enables us to gather, share, and compare data with other health agencies in our area and nationwide, assuring that our outcomes are appropriate, our programming is effective, and quality improvement is continuous. Though the challenges presented in so large a change will continue for a time, we are already seeing an enormous payoff in our functioning.

Independence Center's Board of Directors formulated a new multi-year strategic plan during FY'13, to guide our work for the next three years, and reorganized its committee structures to better address Institutional Marketing, Quality and Safety, and Planned Giving. We are proud to have such a dynamic and talented board, unstinting in its dedication to our mission.

We wound down Phase II of our "Rebuilding Futures, Restoring Lives" Capital Campaign in FY'13, in preparation for fulfilling on our lease/purchase agreement on the Clubhouse space developed for us in 2007, which has now been accomplished. Occupancy costs on the Clubhouse and all our facilities are lower than they were before we undertook this significant expansion almost eight years ago, and our spaces are not only larger, but much more program appropriate.

On the financial front, growth was seen both in program revenues and our fund development efforts. Our 2013 "Dancing with the St. Louis Stars" gala garnered more than \$260,000 to underwrite unreimbursed services, while forging new relationships with area corporations, and exposing our work to hundreds of community leaders.

As we reflect on our growth and progress, we are humbled by the generosity of so many friends like you. You've helped us provide employment, housing, educational, wellness, medication management and community support needs to our members, some of the most vulnerable members of our community .

That's a beautiful investment, and we are deeply grateful for it.



J. Michael Keller
Executive Director



Jack Huether
Board President

2013 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

**IN 2013,
INDEPENDENCE
CENTER DONATED
SERVICES TO THE
COMMUNITY IN THE AMOUNT OF
\$561,554**

**FOR EVERY
DOLLAR
CONTRIBUTED TO
INDEPENDENCE
CENTER 89¢
IS SPENT ON
PROGRAMS
AND SERVICES**

Program Services

89%

2%

Development

**General /
Admin**

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

We thank the following companies who have supported Independence Center's Employment Program in 2013.

ADP/UCXpress
 Barnes Extended Care
 Barnes-Jewish Hospital
 Bowood Farms/Usage Café
 Bryan Cave LLP
 Cardinal Ritter/Our Lady of Life
 City of Maryland Heights
 Clean - The Uniform Company
 Cracker Barrel
 Dierberg's
 Equifax
 Favazza's
 FedEx
 Floor Trader
 Friendship Village
 Grace & Peace Fellowship
 Grand Manor Nursing Home
 H&R Block
 Home Goods
 Joey B's
 Kindred Hospital
 Labre Center
 Lowe's
 Marshall's
 Mary Culver Home
 Metro-Gateway Arch
 Missouri Botanical Gardens
 Northwest Coffee Co
 Panera
 Places for People
 Proctor & Gamble
 Quizno's
 Redevelopment Opportunities for Women
 Residence Inn Downtown
 Saint Louis Public Library
 Schnuck's
 Sleeve -A- Message
 Steak N' Shake
 Stifel
 St. Louis Science Center
 St. Louis University Hospital
 Storage Banc
 Subway
 TJ Maxx
 University City Children's Center
 Walgreens
 Washington University School of Medicine
 Wells Fargo
 Westwood Country Club
 Whole Foods
 YMCA
 Zip Mail

ASSETS

Cash/Investments	\$4,403,973
------------------	-------------

ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE

Other Current Assets	\$2,869,648
Net Property Equipment/Other	\$860,879
Total Assets	\$8,134,500

LIABILITIES & FUND BALANCE

Current Liabilities	\$581,314
Long Term Debt & Notes Payable	\$213,612
Net Assets	\$7,339,574
Total Liabilities & Fund Balance	\$8,134,500

REVENUES

Contributions	\$708,563
Grants	\$270,702
Third Party Contracts	\$6,677,939
Rental & Sales	\$312,355
Interest & Other	\$196,623
Total Revenues	\$8,166,182

EXPENSES

Program Services	\$6,561,056
General & Administrative	\$636,653
Fundraising	\$167,654
Total Expenses	\$7,365,363

Change in Net Assets (Before Charity Services)	\$800,819
Less Charity Services	(\$561,554)
Total Change in Net Assets	\$239,265
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	\$6,862,696
Net Assets from Capital Campaign	\$237,611
Net Assets, End of Year	\$7,339,572

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2013

2013 EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR



Thank you to
Bowood Farms
in support of our
Employment Program.

IC GOES ELECTRONIC

Independence Center's largest project for the year was our transition to a new agency-wide Electronic Health Record. Previously, we were unable to respond in a timely manner to requests for information, and were in need of a system capable of sharing information with other mental health agencies in our area and nation-wide. The transition to our new EHR impacted all of our programs and supporting departments. It required a thorough study of what and why we were collecting information, and projecting what we would need in the future. It was definitely a collaborative effort! We are happy to report that in April of 2013, our new Electronic Health Records were initiated.

IC DEVELOPS A NEW 3-YEAR PLAN

In 2013, Independence Center initiated a process to develop a new 3-year strategic plan. This process involved input from board members, management and Independence Center staff and participants. Our goal was to have a plan that was less detailed and program specific, and provided more direction for our agency as a whole as we move forward into the future. We completed the plan with the help of an outside consultant in June of 2013, and has been included in our 2014 goals.

IC WINDS DOWN CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

2013 saw the wind-down of Phase II of our multi-year "Rebuilding Futures, Restoring Lives" Capital Campaign whose purpose was to raise money for our new Clubhouse facility. Although our financial targets were not completely met, we are happy to report that we have realized our ultimate goal of decreasing our yearly occupancy costs. The Center was able to raise enough money, 4.6 million, to offset the costs of a new mortgage, keeping our occupancy costs less than those we had in 2006. The original goal of the board of directors who initiated the plan was to ensure that escalating rents would not erode revenues necessary for program services.

2013 HEALTHCARE HOME OUTCOMES

Evaluation of July, 2012 – June, 2013 data reflects all the hard work of members and staff on improving health and creating a culture of wellness.

- There was an average Healthcare Home enrollment of 237 members/month in 2013.
- 184 metabolic screenings were completed, with an average of 15 per month.
- Our primary care physician conducted 187 primary care consultations, in which 98 members participated.

Of the 9 Quality Indicators listed below, 8 showed improvement.

In January of 2012, the state of Missouri became the first state to initiate the coordination of primary and behavioral healthcare with its Healthcare Home approach. Independence Center was given this designation as a Healthcare Home for Missouri's Medicaid recipients with a serious mental illness and other chronic health conditions. Through this initiative, the Center enrolled 240 members in its Healthcare Home.

INDICATORS	2012	2013	GOAL	CHANGE
Diabetes				
B/P Control	22.34%	50%	65%	27.66%
LDL Control	19.8%	30.56%	36%	10.76%
HbA1C Control	17.26	29.17%	60%	11.91%
Asthma				
Prescribed Medication	88.89%	91.67%	70%	2.78%
Hypertension				
B/P Control	27.68%	40.46%	60%	12.78%
Coronary Artery Disease				
LDL Control	20%	40%	70%	20%
Metabolic Screening				
Completion Rate	.08%	52%	80%	51.2%
Weight				
BMI Control	19.4%	16.27%	37%	-3.13%
Tobacco Use				
	56.9%	59.24%	56%	2.34%

Members and staff are commended for their hard work, perseverance and the tremendous improvements in health that were accomplished in 2013!

Finding My Way: Sheila's Story



Sheila Young is known for her friendly grin and the fresh flower she always wears in her hair.

In an interview prior to the event, Sheila hoped to be known as the first member ever to win Dancing with the St. Louis Stars, Independence Center's annual fundraising gala. "I'd like to make some history here," she says, smiling and fluffing the pink carnation tucked behind her ear. "I think it could happen." It wasn't in the stars for Sheila to win the event, but she and partner Steve Brockman were the only dancers to receive a standing ovation from the enthusiastic and awe-inspired crowd!

Sheila, 53, has been a member of Independence Center since 2009. She represented the Center as the member dancer in the star-studded event that took place on January 25, 2014, at the Four Seasons Hotel St. Louis.

Other celebrity dancers included Tom Minogue, David Diener, Warner Baxter, Sue McCollum, Nicole Genovese and Cynthia Mercer.

Sheila stated she was, "Excited and nervous at the same time," while not a novice to dance as she danced

jazz, modern and musical theater while in high school and college. "It's been over 25 years, maybe 30 years, since I've really danced," she stated.

Still, the grandmother of two belies her age. When she's wasn't working the front desk at Independence Center or doing kitchen prep for her part-time transitional employment job, Sheila confessed she was doing the cha-cha-cha, the ballroom rumba and otherwise "just shaking it" to music in her apartment.

A native of St. Louis, Sheila returned to her hometown in 2008, shortly before the birth of her first grandson. Prior to that, she worked in Hawaii as a stateroom stewardess for Norwegian Cruise Lines, a job that fed her need for adventure and being close to the sea. However, she struggled with panic attacks while on the ocean, and worried that her employers would find out.

While major depression and anxiety ultimately forced her to leave her job, Sheila says she has found her way back to a meaningful life in St. Louis through her grandchildren and her work at Independence Center.

Since joining in 2009, Sheila has seized the various support services provided at Independence Center including securing transitional housing and employment, and enjoying many social activities.

Before Sheila found Independence Center, she was lonely and isolated. With one phone call she reached what she remembers as "such a friendly and welcoming voice" that she felt encouraged to sign up for a tour. She says, "I can be myself here at Independence Center. No one questions or judges me. I can be my true self as opposed to masking everything. People care about me here. They're my second family."

Sheila still craves an island vibe. Each day when she arrives at the Center, her first stop is to score a fresh bloom from Martha's Flowers and tuck it behind her ear. Carnations, lilies, roses, she loves them all. "Maybe I can't be on the beach," she says, "but I can bring a little beach to me."

Sheila says she is keeping an "open mind," but after being part of the Dancing competition, her desire to perform was rejuvenated and she secretly hopes a musical theater number will be in her future!

"It was just so much fun and I was very thankful to be part of Dancing with the St. Louis Stars. I did my very, very best."

Moving the Fulcrum: Stigma at the Tipping Point

A highlight of the 17th Clubhouse International Seminar in St. Louis in October was a plenary panel organized by Independence Center Executive Director Mike Keller and devoted to erasing the stigma around mental illness.

Inspired by his participation in Rosalynn Carter's 35th annual Mental Health Symposium at the Carter Center in Atlanta, Keller recreated a program on how to reduce mental health stigma by studying other successful anti-stigma movements – civil rights, cancer awareness and gay and lesbian rights.

The session titled "Moving the Fulcrum: Stigma at the Tipping Point," focused on transformational change and what Keller called "the forces that create the opening for a major shift in public consciousness and attitudes about a social issue."

"How does a group come to claim its own identity and refuse to be named or labeled by others?" Keller asked a packed room at the St. Louis Ballpark Hilton. "What happens when black men refuse to be called 'boy'? When gay and lesbian people are unapologetically 'out and loud and proud'? When people claim the title cancer survivor rather than cancer victim? And what are the lessons that might be applied from the progress these groups have made to our persistent struggle for public understanding of mental illness?"

Four panelists representing different stigmatized groups recounted their lived experience of finding their own voice and speaking their own truth.

Virvus Jones, former comptroller of the City of St. Louis, reflected on his participation in the civil rights movement.

"I think my motivation for getting involved was the same as those who got involved in women's liberation, gay rights, Latino rights or the mental health rights movement," he said. "The common thread in all these movements has been the respect for the dignity of all human beings. To me, that means regardless of skin color, ethnicity, gender or mental capacity, a person's dignity must be respected."

Mark Glickman of the Clubhouse International Board of Directors in California discussed how African Americans and other minorities have systematically entered the political and cultural mainstream of life in the United States.

"People with mental illness must also be made visible on our own terms, and as real people," Glickman said. "So, what lessons can we take from the successes of the civil rights movements around the world? First, the squeaky wheel gets the grease. We are in a quiet revolution in mental health recovery. Now it is time to stop being so quiet."

Michelle Tibbs, an Independence Center member, talked about how the process of self-identity helped her not only accept her bipolar disorder, but also to channel this acceptance into a powerful agent for change.

"Use your experience to change the misconceptions of the world around you," she said. "Clean the lenses of those around you by showing them the true picture. Show them who you really are."

Val Comerford, program director of Crossroads Clubhouse in Massachusetts, spoke from multiple perspectives.

"Yes, I am a lesbian, a cancer survivor, a person in recovery from drug, alcohol and psychiatric illness," she said. "These are simply qualities of my personhood. They make me different from some people, but they do not make me less than anyone. The Clubhouse movement helped me understand that. And through the Clubhouse movement – through all of you – I have the amazing opportunity to help others understand it as well."

The panel – attended by more than 600 people – received multiple standing ovations, leading Keller to observe, "this afternoon's panelists retrace the Carter Center concept, but thanks to their courage and candor, we may have outdone the original."

Welcome New IC Board of Directors



Lorenzo Boyd,
Stifel



Dan Chavez,
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLC



Maggie Friedhoff,
Morgan Stanley Wealth
Management, LLC



Jeffrey Jensen,
Husch Blackwell LLP



Jonathan Leggs,
Cisco Systems



Margaret Schramm,
U.S. Bank



Matt Slater,
St. Louis Cardinals



Ian Watkins,
Mallinckrodt
Pharmaceuticals



Boonie Woods,
BarnesJewish Hospital



Sandra Young,
BJC Healthcare/Missouri
Baptist Medical Center

Independence Center hosted in-depth, day-long orientations for new Board members this past October and January providing them with hands-on experience both in and outside the Center's Clubhouse.

Independence Center Associate Director Beth Brown, likes to advise new Board members “not to wear their best clothes – you may be making lunch or scrubbing toilets.”

“We really want our Board to roll up their sleeves and experience the Clubhouse and as a member would,” Brown said. “It can be a tough, but a very rewarding day.”

New Board members, including Dan Chavez, Maggie Friedhoff, Margaret Schramm, Matt Slater, Bonnie Woods and Sandra Young participated in the October training and four new Board members, Jeff Jensen, Lorenzo Boyd, Jonathan Leggs and Ian Watkins joined the January event, which included pairing up with a members during the Clubhouse work day, visiting a Transitional Employment site, Newstead apartments, CommunityCare and Midwest Psychiatry.

New Board member Matt Slater, Director of Player Personnel for the St. Louis Cardinals, said, “To be

able to go out in the field and see the various branches of the Center helped me realize the scope of the operation. It’s very impressive.”

Slater was especially moved when the group visited the Newstead apartment of longtime Independence Center member Sue Bashir, who serenaded the group on her trumpet.

“She gave us a tour of her world,” Slater said. “She was very appreciative of all that the Center has done for her. It really gave me a hands-on feel of the impact you can have being involved with Independence Center. I wouldn’t have understood that as clearly without the orientation.”

Board member Margaret Schramm, with U.S. Bank, recommends the experience for any new Board member.

“To see people working and living in the community was very powerful,” Schramm said. “We visited with two members who are working in the community. In a relatively short period of time since joining the Center, they’d gone through Transitional Employment and had been hired by the Central West End on a permanent basis to do street work. They were very proud and felt better about themselves. That was important to me, and really inspired me.”



Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Louis, MO
Permit No 3928

4245 Forest Park Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63108

giveSTLday WHAT CAN WE DO IN A DAY?

REMEMBER TO VISIT US HERE
May 6, 2014 givestlday.org

Heard of #GiveLocalAmerica?

On May 6, 2014,
@IndpndncCntr will be one
of more than 100 local #nonprofits
participating in a national day of giving!

Check us out on
Facebook and Twitter
(facebook.com/icstlouis | @IndpndncCntr)



Independence Center's Clubhouse Shop is bringing back an eclectic mix of artisans, scavengers, designers, makers and up-cyclers. Join us and discover some unique pieces for your home.

The Market: Saturday, May 10, 9am–5pm
Cocktail Preview Night: Friday, May 9, 5pm-8pm
4245 Forest Park Ave in the CWE

314.880.5484
[www.clubhouseshop.org/themarket](http://clubhouseshop.org/themarket)