



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Independence Center Members Selected for 2019 Missouri Mental Health Champions Award

Richard Cohen and Angelo Blanchard will be honored for their commitment to helping others with mental illness

(ST. LOUIS – March 18, 2019) Two long-time Independence Center members, Richard Cohen and Angelo Blanchard, will receive the 2019 Missouri Mental Health Champion Award for their efforts to help others with mental illness.

The award, given by the Missouri Mental Health Foundation, recognizes individuals living with mental illness who make positive contributions to their community and whose actions have increased the potential for independence in others with similar mental health conditions.

“Angelo and Richard are both very deserving of this award and we are extremely proud of them,” said Independence Center Executive Director Mark Bethell. “They lead our highly successful Mobile Outreach Program, which helps more than 87 people a month come to the Independence Center. As a result of their efforts and commitment, many more people are receiving the mental health care and support they need,” said Bethell.

The pair started the mobile outreach program three years ago. Before that, they spent a few years providing outreach over the phone, but not seeing people directly. Now, the pair is often working by 8 a.m. each day, picking up members and driving them to the Independence Center Clubhouse to participate in activities, have lunch with friends and run errands, such as picking up medications.

“Our goal when we started the Mobile Outreach program was to reach people who are living in isolation and fear due to their mental disorder, and help them feel connected. We wanted to build a network of people who care about each other,” said Blanchard.

Both Cohen and Blanchard have faced the challenges of living with mental illness for decades but have managed their condition with the help of Independence Center. They are also founding members of the IC Players theater group. Through the theater group, they perform regularly at Independence Center social programs, as well as in the local community.

The Mental Health Champions’ Banquet is scheduled for **Tuesday evening, June 18, 2019**. The event will be held at the Capitol Plaza Hotel, 415 W. McCarty Street, Jefferson City, MO.

Independence Center is a community-based rehabilitation program for adults with mental illness in the St. Louis area, built on the Clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation. Its mission is to provide all the services and resources a person with a serious and persistent mental illness needs to manage their symptoms, find belonging and purpose and gain the independence to live a healthy, quality life.

For questions about this story, please contact Jessica Williams and 618-772-2349.

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Cutline: Richard Cohen and Angelo Blanchard (pictured above) will Receive the 2019 Missouri Mental Health Champions Award