

Mississippi PROFILE

A Publication of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health

FALL 2015

SIMPSON COUNTY COMES TOGETHER FOR THE BOSWELL HURRICANES

The Boswell Hurricanes faced their toughest challenge yet on Thursday, Oct. 22 as they faced off against the Simpson Academy Cougars – and they came out on top. Trailing by a touchdown at the half, the Hurricanes came back from halftime ready to play and beat the Cougars 44-28.

The Hurricanes are the team of clients served at Boswell Regional Center. They got their start in 2005, shortly after Hurricane Katrina affected so much of Mississippi. At the time, Boswell was searching for some more ways to motivate their clients to attend classes.

“One of the ways we decided to do that was to have a football game, where the guys we served could have a football game with some of the staff,” said Boswell Regional Center Director Steven Allen. “A lot of them who normally wouldn’t come to class started coming so they could participate in the game, and they called themselves the Hurricanes because Katrina had just come through.”



“Mr. Beeson is one of those folks who has a heart for the people we serve and will do anything it takes to make them happy. We should all be more like him.”

The clients came to class, where they learned about teamwork, responsibility, and also about unity and some of the basics of football. They played their game that year, and over the course of several years,

it became a tradition with the clients served at Boswell playing against the clients served by Boswell in the local community.

Boswell Regional Center employee Will Beeson has coordinated the game every year. This year, he has also been involved in the Simpson County Development Foundation’s leadership program. It so happens that a coach at Simpson County Academy is also involved

in that program this year. Part of that program is that each group going through it selects a community service program to plan and complete.

“They took it upon themselves to make this a project they were going to expand,” Allen said. “They took something good and they made it great. Everybody in the county has always showed us support, but it was just overwhelming this year.

“Mr. Beeson is one of those folks who has a heart for the people we serve and will do anything it takes to make them happy. We all should be more like him.”

Beeson and the rest of the group from

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Supporting a *better* tomorrow...TODAY!



**MISSISSIPPI PROFILE
FALL 2015**

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The Mississippi Profile is devoted to providing the public with information about services provided or administered by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health. It also strives to increase public awareness and knowledge about mental illness, intellectual/developmental disabilities, substance use, and Alzheimer's disease and other dementia to improve health and quality of life.

This publication is free of charge to persons interested in mental health, intellectual and developmental disabilities, substance use, Alzheimer's disease and other dementia, the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, or the individuals it serves. It is the policy of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health to comply with federal and state laws assuring equal opportunities of employment and services.

The editor reserves the right to edit all materials printed in this publication. Send requests for items to be included in the newsletter and other inquiries to:

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the Fall 2015 issue of Mississippi Profile. I am happy to share with you a few of the things that are going on in the Department of Mental Health and the state's public mental health system. One event we had this fall stands out. The department hosted "Facing the Storm," its second annual trauma conference in September, and professionals from all over the state attended. It included a pre-conference session for law enforcement officers designed to offer them more insight into mental illness and interacting with those citizens they may encounter who are struggling with a mental illness. The keynote speaker for this conference, Dr. Gloria Morrow, gave an excellent presentation on the importance of cultural responsiveness in mental health treatment. We are looking forward to next year's trauma conference already.



We recognized September as National Recovery Month, just as thousands of others across the country did. Over the past several years, DMH has worked to move towards a person-centered and recovery-oriented system of care. This recognition in particular serves as a time to remind everyone that it is possible to lead healthy and productive lives despite a diagnosis of mental illness. People can and do recover, we at DMH want to share that positive message of recovery with as many people as possible. Also in this issue you'll find stories about the NAVIGATE program and the transition services taking place at Specialized Treatment Facility. These are both programs designed to serve young people in their communities. Serving people in the communities where they live is one way to support recovery, and we want to continue offering those community service options as often as we can.

As you may have already seen on the front page, another great story in this issue comes from Boswell Regional Center. Each year they have a football game there for clients served through that program, and it transformed into something really incredible this year. The whole community came together to provide a truly special event for the men and women at Boswell, and it couldn't have turned out any better. I'm glad to see our communities in Mississippi supporting their neighbors, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. That kind of involvement and support truly does make a better tomorrow for everyone.

Sincerely,
Diana S. Mikula, Executive Director

DMH ANNOUNCES MISSISSIPPI PREVENTION ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITIES AND COLLEGES

The Mississippi Department of Mental Health's (DMH) Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Services has received a five-year discretionary grant that aims to transform Mississippi's prevention system and prevent underage drinking and prescription drug use.

The Mississippi Prevention Alliance for Communities and Colleges (mPACC) aims to increase awareness of the consequences of substance use, its risk factors and protective factors, and to alter alcohol and prescription drug consumption patterns by funding up to 11

Community Prevention Coalitions (CPCs) to serve an estimated 394,165 adolescents and 344,900 young adults from diverse social and cultural backgrounds per grant year. The grant is awarded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

"Mississippi has made great strides in decreasing the prevalence of licit and illicit substance use among youth and young adults," said DMH employee Thia Walker, Director of the Statewide Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup. "Past discretionary prevention grants, similar to the current mPACC grant, have been extremely beneficial to the state in preventing the use of substances and delaying the age of initiation for substance use."

The goals of this grant include not just reducing alcohol use and binge drinking, but also increasing the communication between families and individuals regarding the dangers of alcohol and substance use. The project will increase the number of evidence-based prevention education strategies while also expanding statewide training and technical assistance opportunities over the life of the grant.

In addition, it will institute an organizational mentoring system

through the CPCs to improve the entire prevention workforce, and best practices will be disseminated throughout the state. The effective implementation of these programs will leave the state even better poised to enhance its prevention services, workforce, and infrastructure.

"The implementation of the initiatives set forth from this grant will continue to decrease the prevalence of youth and young adult's substance use behaviors and their associated consequences," Walker said.

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the leadership program worked together to get this game set up, and the whole community pitched in. It was set for Oct. 22, the same day as Boswell's Fall Festival. The day ended up being a celebration, complete with a parade, a homecoming court, cheerleaders, a cookout, and the Fall Festival that night.

Seven of the ladies served at Boswell Regional Center were included in the homecoming court, and one lucky lady was selected as the homecoming queen. They were complete with gowns and tiaras, and the cheerleaders and other students from Mendenhall High School did the hair and makeup for them. They celebrated with the help of citizens from the area who donated their time – and their convertibles – to drive them around for everyone to admire in a homecoming parade.

A pep rally was thrown by Magee High School, whose band and junior high cheerleaders performed with the cheering squad fielded by Boswell, and a gymnast put on a show by tumbling throughout the field. The game took place at Boswell, and the teams both made a grand entrance through a giant football helmet, running out ready for kickoff just like the

teams many Boswell clients watch on television each week.

"It was just a full day, and then that night we had our annual Fall Festival, which had a lot of folks from our businesses around Simpson County. There was just so much community involvement in everything," Allen said.

The Simpson County Development Foundation bought the trophies that all the individuals received, they bought the tiaras for the ladies, a local group made their sashes, and there were untold numbers of booths and vendors at the Fall Festival.

That community involvement has much more of a purpose than simply providing a fun day. The activities they offered for the clients served through Boswell gave a true enrichment to their lives.

"We had one guy in particular who came up to me crying after playing football. He's in our Success program. He told me it was the first trophy he'd ever received, and he's probably 35 or 40. He was as happy as could be," Allen said.

The Boswell Hurricanes are active throughout the whole year, even when not preparing for games. They stay active together, working on unity and team building exercises. This was simply the first time they've actually played a team, a fact that gives those clients an even bigger boost to their self-esteem.

"One of our guys, before the game, he saw that Simpson Academy school bus, and he came up to me and he said, 'It's useless. These people are professionals. We can't win.' After the game, he came up to me crying saying, 'I'm just so emotional. I didn't think we could do it,'" Allen said.

"I don't know how our guys could feel any better than they already do now." Allen said the players from the Simpson Academy Cougars may have lost the game, but he knows all of those young men and women walked away as winners in another aspect.

"Many of their parents came up to me at the Fall Festival that night and were just in awe of what their kids had learned by playing against the folks that we support. It's a pretty humbling experience for a 50-year-old guy to say 'yes sir' to a 17-year-old kid," Allen said.

"I wish everyone could have been there. What we do – this is what it's all about."

It's an experience that seems to have stuck with not only the Boswell clients, but the participants in the community too. Discussions are already underway for how to top it with another game next year.

"This is the beginning of something great," Allen said. "Something greater."



Dr. Jim Herzog Reappointed to Board of Mental Health



Dr. Jim Herzog of Jackson has been reappointed to the Mississippi Board of Mental Health by Governor Phil Bryant.

Dr. Herzog is a clinical psychologist in private practice. He received a bachelor's degree in psychology from Creighton University and a master's and doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of Mississippi. Currently, his practice involves consultation with the Region 8 Mental Health Services, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation/Disability Services, and Catholic Charities, as well as providing individual therapy and assessment with adults, adolescents, and children. Dr. Herzog was appointed to serve as the Clinical Psychologist representative on the board.

The Board of Mental Health is the governing board of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health. It is composed of nine members appointed by the Governor of Mississippi and confirmed by the state Senate. Members' terms are staggered to ensure continuity of quality care and professional oversight of services. By statute, the nine-member board is composed of a physician, a psychiatrist, a clinical psychologist, a social worker with experience in the field of mental health, and one citizen representative from each of Mississippi's five congressional districts (as existed in 1974).

Sen. Wicker Attends Alzheimer's Conference

Senator Roger Wicker and several Mississippi legislators attended the Alzheimer's Conference Legislative Forum on Wednesday, August 19.

The Annual Alzheimer's Conference Legislative Forum is a function of the 16th Annual Conference on Alzheimer's Disease and Psychiatric Disorders in Older Adults. The Forum was the culmination of an afternoon of Mississippi-centric



presentations concerning advances being made in Mississippi in the area of Alzheimer's disease and other dementia, such as in the areas of Alzheimer's research, collaboration and state-level planning, and in the areas of funding and support.

The event featured U. S. Senator Roger Wicker and his plans to introduce legislation titled the "Ensuring Useful Research

Expenditures is Key for Alzheimer's (EUREKA) Act." The proposal would encourage private-public partnerships to award a prize for accomplishments in the field of Alzheimer's research.

In addition to Sen. Wicker, the following individuals were a part of the panel:

- Kim Coalter, LCSW, Constituent Services Representative for Senator Thad Cochran, United States Senate
- Rep. Greg Snowden, Speaker Pro Tempore, Mississippi House of Representatives
- Rep. Cecil Brown, Mississippi House of Representatives
- Rep. William Shirley, Mississippi House of Representatives

"The Division of Alzheimer's disease would like to thank our Conference hosts, vendors, and participants for supporting the recent Alzheimer's Conferences," said

Kathy Van Cleave, Director of the Division of Alzheimer's.

"We had approximately 450 registrants between both the Pre-Conference and General Conference. We appreciate the hospitality expressed by the City of Meridian during the Conference and their tireless efforts to navigate the unforeseen construction in downtown Meridian.

"We also want to publicly thank our DMH Registration and CE team, the Moderator team from Boswell Regional Center, the Alzheimer's Planning Council members and the Board of Mental Health for their continued support of this event. Thank you for making the conferences a success."

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH CELEBRATES NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH

The Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH) joined thousands of others across the country in recognizing September as National Recovery Month, a reminder that people can and do recover from mental illness.

DMH has embraced the concept of recovery through its programs and services statewide as it transitions to a person-centered and recovery-oriented system of care. As mental health professionals and individuals in recovery throughout the nation celebrated September's recognition, DMH urged everyone to remember that though mental illness may affect an estimated one in five people, they can recover to lead healthy, productive and happy lives.

"Though seldom talked about as openly as many other physical health issues, mental illnesses are common and, more importantly, they are treatable," said DMH Executive Director Diana Mikula. "Often, individuals who experience a mental and/or substance use disorder feel

Support from peers is essential to recovery, so it's important that people in the community get involved by starting conversations about prevention, treatment and recovery.

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isolated and alone. Yet, every year thousands of Mississippians experience these conditions.

“It’s imperative that we offer support to people facing mental and/or substance use disorders. In fact, we need to create environments and relationships that promote acceptance. Support from peers is essential to recovery, so it’s important that people in the community get involved by starting conversations about prevention, treatment, and recovery.”

Over the past several years, the public mental health system in Mississippi has worked to foster those conversations by sharing personal stories of recovery from individuals who have been served through the system and are experiencing success in their recovery.

The state has also seen the development of a network of Certified Peer Support Specialists, individuals or family members of individuals who are living with mental illness who provide mutual support groups and peer-run services in addition to the traditional mental health services.

First supported through DMH, in June 2015 the network was incorporated with the state as the Association of Mississippi Peer Support Specialists and is now a peer-led organization. Their vision is to be a source of inspiration, empowerment, and encouragement to peer supporters of all mental health conditions throughout the state.

The message of recovery is essential to promote. For peer supporters, studies have shown that helping others helps improve one’s own chances at long-term recovery. Sharing personal experiences also brings additional hope to other peers in recovery.

Mississippi’s peer supporters have been sharing their stories of recovery in printed and in video testimonials. They can be viewed on the DMH web site on the Recovery page www.dmh.ms.gov/think-recovery/.

NAVIGATE AIDS YOUTH IN REGION 6

A pilot project over the past year has brought a new, team-based approach to serving teenagers and young adults in their communities to Region 6 LifeHelp Community Mental Health Center.

The Department of Mental Health and LifeHelp launched NAVIGATE last year, a program in which multidisciplinary teams provide mental health services to teenagers and young adults who have had their first experience with serious mental illness. The goal is to increase early identification of teens and young adults experiencing psychosis in order to provide services, support and linkage with other resources.

“I needed help managing my anger,” said one teenager. “I didn’t have any support or services until my mom put me in this program. The **NAVIGATE** program helped me a lot, and the medicine changed the way I looked at things before.”

Services are delivered by Coordinated Specialty Care Teams, which provide early intervention and recovery-oriented services that have been shown to improve outcomes in youth and young adults who are at risk for serious mental illness.

“The program has enhanced the PACT services already being provided by LifeHelp and has given us

the opportunity to reach individuals at a younger age and, hopefully, reduce the number of psychotic episodes and the long-term damage of psychosis for the individuals we serve,” team members said. “That, we believe, will benefit the clients, their loved ones, and the community as a whole.”

The team said NAVIGATE has already made a big difference in the lives of individuals there. Clients are more engaged and eager to participate, and medication compliance and stability have improved. Clients have also become better at managing relationships. Most importantly, there are goals for the future including education and employment.

Once someone has been referred to NAVIGATE, the Coordinated Specialty Care team members will meet to determine the best course of treatment, and will continue to meet each week while that individual is receiving services. LifeHelp hopes to expand their numbers by reaching out to even more community stakeholders and soliciting referrals and community involvement.

“We hope that through ongoing community education, we can expand the number of clients in the program and reduce the stigma that is persistently attached to mental health services,” the team said.

“We want the individuals we serve to be contributing members of the community, to be appreciated by the community, and to take pride in their achievements and contributions.”

‘Facing the Storm,’ Second Annual Trauma Conference, Has Record Turnout



The Department of Mental Health’s second annual trauma-focused conference played host to both behavioral health professionals from throughout the state and also to law enforcement personnel through three days of sessions on a wide variety of topics.

“Facing the Storm: From Basic to Practice” included five pre-conference sessions, five plenary sessions, six intense breakout sessions and 21 breakout sessions. Covered were issues related to childhood trauma, risk and resiliency, human trafficking, domestic violence, peer support and many more. New to this year was a pre-conference session geared specifically for law enforcement and first responders that included topics on interacting with individuals in mental health crisis, the neurobiology of trauma and the victimology of human trafficking.

“The planning committee did an excellent job in choosing appropriate topics for cross- system training,” Jackie Chatmon said. “We were very pleased with the record turnout and look forward to planning next year’s conference.”

Also featured was a keynote presentation from Dr. Gloria Morrow, a clinical psychologist who is a Master Trainer for the California Brief Multicultural Competence Scale. Her presentation exhorted the service providers there to become not just culturally competent, but culturally responsive.

“I still believe that even if we have wonderful knowledge, we can

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still not serve people well when we don't understand their cultural world," she said. "If a person comes to see me who is different from me, and I don't understand who they are culturally, and I'm not culturally responsive to those individuals, I'm still not going to help them in the way they need help."

In addition to cultural responsiveness, she urged everyone to practice cultural humility.

"When I begin to be humbled by the fact that I'm sitting in the room with people who have experienced the level of trauma they have, and I have been called to help them, then I should have some humility," she said. "The way I demonstrate that humility is by listening to their stories."

She cited a 1999 Surgeon General report that showed people of color – African-Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Native Americans and Hispanic/Latino Americans – were not receiving adequate care, in large part because of cultural differences. Morrow noted that those cultural differences were not just relating to race, but of various socioeconomic backgrounds.

"I want to talk about widening the welcome and deepening the support," she said. "How do we do that? Number one, we do that by recognizing what we don't know."

Professionals should recognize that even though they have been through years of school, it is their clients who have gone through trauma and are still there. The clients,

I still believe that even if we have wonderful knowledge, we can still not serve people well when we don't understand their cultural world.

she said, are the experts in that area, and the professionals should listen to those clients to learn how they have survived. There is beauty in the stories they share, Morrow said.

"You will see some things and hear some things and learn some things within the story that will help to inform what that person needs in order to be helped."

She also urged everyone to face their own biases and stereotypes, saying that everyone has their own stereotypes and prejudices. It is crucial for them to recognize those stereotypes and realize the diversity that exists not just in humanity, but even within each specific community. You can't serve someone, she said, if you can't treat them with humanity. She reminded conference attendees that each person has their own story.

She reminded the conference also of the diversity that exists within in spirituality, which is often a critical part of responsiveness. Even people of the same religion or denomination can have varying thoughts about spiritual issues, she said, and providers must be careful during discussions of religion and spirituality.

"We can talk about trauma-informed care all day long, but if we are not a welcoming environment where people of any group can be welcome and be supported there, we may not be providing the best service," Morrow said.

Going beyond serving others, Morrow spoke



Transition Planning Vital for Youth at STF

Parents and guardians are vital members of the Treatment Team at the Specialized Treatment Facility (STF). The gains a youth develops during treatment is most likely to remain successful with community supports, and STF strongly encourages parent/guardian involvement.

On the day of admission, the parents/guardians, youth and the STF treatment staff begin working together to decide a smooth and successful transition back to the community. Since 2011, STF has had a paradigm shift from “discharge planning” to “transition planning,” which reflects a change in services instead of a discharge from services.

During the course of treatment planning and when appropriate, other community stakeholders, which could include representatives from the Department of Human Services, private providers, Mississippi Youth Programs Around the Clock (MYPAC), community mental health centers or schools, are also welcomed to the Treatment Team planning.

After a return to home, the youth’s follow-up mental health care is important since it includes continued mental health therapy and medication management. It is important to ensure the readiness of follow-up to ensure that medication refills are not delayed. When leaving STF, the parent/guardian is given the remainder of the youth’s medications and a one-month refill prescription. With limited psychiatrists in the state, it is critical to get an appointment early so that medication refills are not delayed.

Prior to leaving STF, the master’s level therapist will discuss with the parent/guardian the choices for follow-up aftercare. These choices most often are between follow-up care with their local community mental health center or the MYPAC program.

When the local community mental health center is chosen, the parent/guardian will be asked to take their youth during a home-pass to the local CMHC for an initial intake. The initial contact between the CMHC and the family confirms next steps are prepared for the first mental health appointment and medication renewal.

When the MYPAC program is chosen, then the parent/guardian can choose among three different providers, and the MYPAC representative is invited to attend Treatment Team. For the FY 16 first quarter, approximately 40% of the youth’s families chose MYPAC services, 35% Community Mental Health Centers, and others chose private providers. Of those families staff were able to contact after the seventh day of discharge, 67% were successful. After the thirtieth day of discharge, 50% of the youth were still successful.

One young man has transitioned from STF with an interview and acceptance into a private school, is doing well and is involved in sports. The family chose a private provider for follow-up mental healthcare. Empowering families with choices about follow-up care is making family units stronger, one youth at time.

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about cultural responsiveness between coworkers, noting that the way employees treat each other will be indicative of the way they treat those they serve. She also made sure to mention that individuals need to take care of themselves as well, saying that broken people can break other people.

“When we’re not doing well, we’re not doing well at work either, and when we’re not doing well with one another, we’re not doing well with the people who need us the most. They don’t have the luxury of waiting until we feel better to get services.

“They’re in need when they come in,” she said.

She closed her presentation by again reminding those present that humility can be key to providing services. She asked them to keep in mind that the individuals they are serving may be at their lowest points, may have lost everything or may have no one else.

That means they get to be the teachers as they share how they have been resilient enough to get through the tough times.

“When we are able to do that, then we are truly doing what we should be doing to help them,” she said.

2015 MH/IDD AWARDS

BRADLEY A. SANDERS SERVICE AWARD

DMH Deputy Director Matt Armstrong received the Bradley A. Sanders Service Award at the 2015 MH/IDD Conference in October.

The Bradley A. Sanders Service Award honors a person who has made outstanding contributions in the field of behavioral healthcare management in Mississippi. The award is named for Mr. Bradley Sanders, who worked within state government for more than thirty years, much of it in the field of mental health services.

Armstrong has more than 30 years' experience with the Department of Mental Health. During his tenure, he has worked in early intervention programs, family support services, community services, and in intellectual and developmental disability services. He has spent his career working to improve the mental health and IDD services in Mississippi. His focus has always been on the people receiving services and their families, and he has led the way to transform the state's IDD system to include more community-based choices.

Armstrong has always been an advocate for people and families to have access to services in a community-based system. Because of that vision, hundreds of people with IDD have been transitioned to the communities of their choice. He has worked with regional programs, private ICF's, and all of the waiver providers to create a person-centered system that allows more independence.

Congratulations to Mr. Armstrong.



Pictured are (l to r) Bradley Sanders and Matt Armstrong.



Pictured are (l to r) Diana Mikula and Dr. Kenneth O'Neal.

PAUL D. COTTEN LEADERSHIP AWARD

DMH Executive Director Diana Mikula received the Paul D. Cotten Leadership Award at the 2015 MH/IDD Conference in October.

The Paul D. Cotten Leadership Award is presented to a Mississippian who has demonstrated exemplary leadership in the field of services for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The award recipient is selected from the membership of the Mississippi Chapter of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities based upon nominations from the members. The award is named for Paul D. Cotten, Ph.D. Dr. Cotten is a noted pioneer in the provision of services to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Mississippi. Ms. Mikula is a long-time DMH employee whose career

began at Mississippi State Hospital in 1995. She began working in human resources there before later moving on to administration. She later served as Director of the Bureau of Mental Health at the DMH Central Office, before being named Deputy Director of the department in 2011. She was named Executive Director of DMH in 2014.

Over the past several years, she has remained dedicated to the provision of quality services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Mississippi. She has supported the transition to a more community-based system of care. She believes that everyone has the right to live and recreate in communities of their choice, and she communicates that philosophy to everyone she meets.

In addition to her extensive experience at DMH, Ms. Mikula has been active in numerous professional organizations, including the Mississippi Hospital Association, and she is a former board member of MHA's Society of Behavioral Health Services. She also formerly served as the vice-president of Mental Health/Mental Retardation Council.

Congratulations to Ms. Mikula.

KINLOCH GILL MEMORIAL AWARD

Elon Espey, a nurse practitioner and director of the Newton Crisis Stabilization Unit, received the Kinloch Gill Memorial Award at the 2015 MH/IDD Conference in October.

The Kinloch Gill Memorial Award is bestowed upon a person who exemplifies a commitment to excellence in the field of community mental health and intellectual and developmental disability services. The award is named in memory of Dr. Kinloch Gill. Dr. Gill was a leader among the founding generation of professionals who established the community mental health system in Mississippi.



Pictured are (l to r) Elon Espey and Kelly Breland.

Ms. Espey is a leader in every sense of the word. She is passionate about the people she serves, and advocates strongly for both the clients and others who serve them. She is a dually-certified nurse practitioner, certified in both adult psychiatry and family practice. Throughout her career, her focus has always been on individuals who have a serious mental illness. She has worked at Central Mississippi Residential Center since the doors opened in April of 2000 and has been a leader there in educating, training and encouraging staff. She has been the energy behind the Central Mississippi Residential Center becoming the single point of entry for the East Mississippi Crisis Intervention Team.

Her mission is to ensure that psychiatric crisis services are readily available so individuals with serious mental illness can live in recovery in their communities. She is making a difference every day in the lives of the people we serve, their families, CMRC staff, and law enforcement officers as well.

Congratulations to Ms. Espey.



Pictured are (l to r) Debbie Waller and Kelly Breland.

JAMES C. STUBBS VOLUNTEER AWARD

Ms. Debbie Waller, a former DMH employee and well-known advocate for individuals living with mental illness, received the James C. Stubbs Volunteer Award at the 2015 MH/IDD Conference in October.

The James C. Stubbs Volunteer Award honors a person who has demonstrated a continuing interest and effort in providing volunteer and advocacy services to citizens of Mississippi with mental health needs and/or intellectual/developmental disabilities. The award is named in memory of Mr. James “Jimmy” Carlton Stubbs. Mr. Stubbs’ career in mental health began in 1950, when he served as staff assistant for the Board of Trustees of Mental

Institutions, the state’s predecessor to the Mississippi Department of Mental Health.

Ms. Waller has been known for her service throughout her entire career. She spent 12 years teaching students with special education needs before going to work at Mississippi State Hospital, where she coordinated and implemented educational programming for individuals living with mental illness and chemical dependency. When her family was personally affected by mental illness, she began devoting her time to being an advocate for individuals and their families. She is a certified teacher in the NAMI Family-to-Family program and a certified Wellness Recovery Action Plan facilitator. She has served on the NAMI Mississippi board for three years and is incredibly passionate about adequate services being provided within the mental health system for transitioning individuals to the community and providing support to their families.

Congratulations to Ms. Waller.

ALBERT RANDEL HENDRIX LEADERSHIP AWARD

Renee Brett, Director of South Mississippi Regional Center, received the Albert Randel Hendrix Leadership Award at the 2015 MH/IDD Conference in October.

The Albert Randel Hendrix Leadership Award is presented to a Mississippian who has demonstrated exemplary leadership in the field of services for persons with mental illness and/or intellectual and developmental disabilities.

This award is named in memory of Dr. Albert Randel Hendrix. Dr. Hendrix began his professional career with the Department of Mental Health at Ellisville State School in 1971. He served as Executive Director of the Department of Mental Health from 1986 until he retired in 2007.



Pictured are (l to r) Renee Brett and Kelly Breland.

Ms. Brett began her employment with the Department of Mental Health as a recreation aid and has served in various positions since then. Throughout her career, the programs under her supervision have been known for a dedication to excellent service. She transforms all areas she comes in contact with and has made the highest and most significant

contributions to the individuals whose lives she has touched.

Ms. Brett is completely dedicated to ensuring that those in her care are given the care and treatment they deserve. She is truly a leader who has a heart for people with disabilities and treats them with dignity and respect, while doing everything in her power to ensure they receive whatever assistance they need to live the best and most independent lives of their choosing.

Congratulations to Ms. Brett.



Pictured are (l to r) Wayne Brown and Emile Craig.

COMMISSIONER'S SERVICE AWARD

Mr. Wayne Brown, Commissioner for Singing River Mental Health, received the 2015 Commissioner's Service Award at the 2015 MH/IDD Conference in October.

The Commissioners' Service Award has been established to recognize a local mental health commissioner or member of the State Board of Mental Health who demonstrates outstanding care, compassion and dedication to the clients or patients he or she serves.

The award recognizes an individual who is actively involved in not only local activities, but who also takes an active role in helping to improve services statewide. The recipient of the award is elected by other members of the Commissioners Group, which is composed of mental health commissioners from throughout Mississippi.

Mr. Brown has served others throughout his entire career. He has served since 1994 as the commissioner for Singing River Mental Health, Region 14. He began his career as an engineer with the Mississippi Highway Department, and later served in the United States Air Force, and then continuing to serve as a civil engineer with Brookley Air Force Base for five years after his military service. He has also served in numerous civic and professional organizations. He is a Rotarian and a Paul Harris Fellow, and a Fellow with the Consulting Engineers Council. He is a Mason and former Master of R. P. Bowen Lodge, and President of George County Habitat for Humanity.

Congratulations to Mr. Brown.