



2019, A Year of Connection

2019 has been a year of forward momentum and advancements for Sanilac County Community Mental Health (Sanilac CMH). We caught up with Wil Morris, CEO of the organization, and dove into what made 2019 a great year and what's yet to come.

When you look back at 2019, what are you most proud of?

Relationships. Connection. I am proud of how we, as an organization, have fostered new relationships and strengthened long standing community partnerships.

Can you pinpoint some of those relationships and connections for us?

Most certainly. The first thing that comes to mind is our partnership for an Opioid Response Grant. It was an honor to be asked to be an initial partner in this opportunity. We have a very strong relationship with the Health Department, that has never been better. We acknowledge each other's role, and celebrate each other's success, the same as with our other community partners.

Mental Health First Aid is another important, meaningful connection between the community and Sanilac CMH. Instead of just being the place that provides mental health treatment, we are a part of a community, and we just happen to provide behavioral health care. That sense of connection has been increasingly evident this year.

Another highlight is our new court liaison position. In 2019 the State increased our general fund dollars for the year, and because we are the safety net for the community's mental health needs, we invested that money into a court liaison position. This liaison maintains a relationship with the judge, the prosecutor, and law enforcement, while continuously checking who's on the docket to see if they have a relationship with Sanilac CMH and who should have a relationship with us that doesn't. This is not to prevent people

from consequences, but to make sure that the consequences are appropriate for the circumstance. Sometimes that means additional help or making sure that the person understands the consequences of their situation fully. Everything that I hear from the Sheriff, the county Judges, and Prosecutors is always that this person is a relationship builder who is making sure our citizens are getting the help they need at the appropriate levels.

It sounds like you have seen great success in community partnerships. What has been happening internally at Sanilac CMH?

One of our biggest accomplishments this year was to finish bargaining our union agreements, and I think we accomplished that in a positive way. We made ourselves more fiscally sound. We've had a lot of turnover in the last year, but our core staff really picked up the slack as people retired. We restructured the organization over the holidays so that we were operating on a skeleton crew allowing employees more time with their families, which helped reduced our sub cost for the year.

With that I have received no negative voices from those we serve concerning services. Happy staff, lower budget, full services, that's a three-way win!

Another proud point that I would like to attribute to our staff are our service time metrics. When someone calls, and needs service, we get them in relatively quickly. Our access times are roughly about half of what the requirement is. Instead of 14 days, we usually get them in within 7 days.

What do you envision for 2020?

We recently requested additional Medicaid funds to expand our services and provide

quicker crisis services response time. We are also looking to do more with integrated care and even looking at co-locating staff in multiple places in the county with our medical professionals. Our goal is to figure out what we can do to help individuals access us, by us being accessible in their daily routine. That is the wave of the future. In other large communities with more resources, they have been able to provide more integrated care and they have seen significant health improvements and cost savings.

This is the core principal and concept of the State's mental health redesign that is scheduled to start in 2020. If we can assist citizens with their physical health conditions, we can save the state money and then reinvest those funds to continuously help people. Preventative care saves on the health insurance side. As we save physical health dollars, they will boost mental health dollars, which will increase the physical health of individuals, and then boost their mental health at the same time.

If all the pieces fall together it's a really great idea. But as those pieces fall together we need to be vigilant that they come together in such a way that the uniqueness of our specific programs that have been tailored to meet the needs of Sanilac County continue. This is the area of concern for me here at Sanilac CMH. Will our community be able to keep our autonomy, I don't know. My goal is for the state to leave our version of the safety net alone and allow us to serve our community and meet its needs fully in the way that we need to.

My job is to meet the needs of this community. And when we have these conversations at the state level, what is on the forefront of my mind are my local relationships. What makes sense for an urban area may not make sense for us and I plan to be the voice that advocates for rural Michigan. Because when a school district calls, we send therapists, because we are the safety net, we are connected, we have a relationship. I am proud that this is how we operate, and this is how I want to continually operate.

Do you have any final thoughts you would like to share?

There are three things I would like for community to think about:

1. We, Sanilac CMH, are always looking for how we can do things better, and how we can help the community. If there is a hot topic, or mental health concern, let us know what it is and maybe we can help. In this past year, the community was looking for answers and training on children's issues. So, we invested in community presentations and worked as an active part of the prevention network to bring that training into our community. So, if there are topics you want to hear about, we want to answer your questions.
2. At Sanilac CMH we perceive ourselves as serving the community. Yes, we are mandated to serve a select portion of the community, but we won't turn anyone away. If someone comes to us for help, we will serve them if we can or connect them with the resources they need. Because at the end of the day it's all about serving the people of our community.
3. Last but not least, the time of thinking of mental health as being its own standalone topic is over. It is deeply connected to every aspect of our lives and should be incorporated into our health care just like our physical health. Having a mental health condition is no different than diabetes. Just like physical conditions, some experience mental health conditions short term, and there are simple adjustments and treatments that will allow that person to live their fullest life. Sometimes the condition is chronic and requires a long-term solution. Like our physical health, we treat these things because we want to improve the quality of life. As a community, we can improve the quality of life for everyone, if we do it together. Join us in making a connection to your neighbors and each other and let's start caring for the whole person, both physically and mentally.



Promoting Independence

Caleb's Story

The words are spoken with confidence and full conviction as Caleb calmly tugs at the front of his button up shirt to display that he is also wearing his favorite color. As he talks about his favorite painting, and the trees and flowers that make up its composition, you can tell that Caleb has developed an artist's eye for shade and structure.

Caleb has been a part of the CMH art class for the past 3 years and currently has one of his paintings going to Lansing to be showcased around the state. This is not his first time as a featured artist - Caleb was also showcased last year as a featured artist and his talent and independence continue to grow!

"I really like my group, and my class, and my new house", he states with a twinkle in his eye. Caleb has found a new form of independence in the past year as he transitioned into a new house living with his brother, shopping for himself, and expanding his artistry. When asked how he feels about being a featured artist yet again, he sits a little taller and states "I'm excited, I'm proud".

This absolute gentleman and class act is a beaming example of how the connection of support systems, creativity, and relationships promote independence.

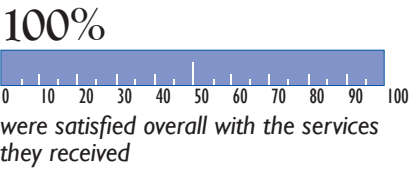
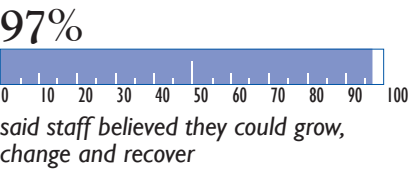
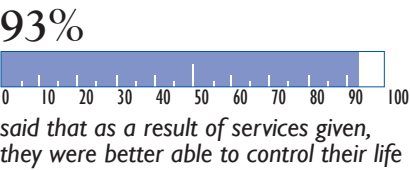
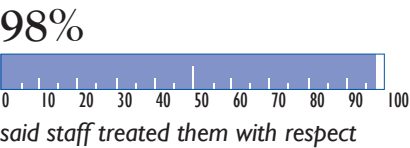
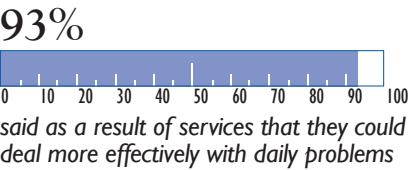


"Green – light green –
is my favorite color."



Satisfaction

CMH received outstanding 2019 Customer Satisfaction results which speaks to the quality and diversity of our clinical services. Further, we received almost universal positive comments from those completing the survey. Some of the highlights include:



2018-19 Financials Revenue

Medicaid	15,538,604
Healthy Michigan	1,590,847
Earned Income	1,193,981
State Funds	611,397
Local & County	432,206
Service Fees	130,579
Total	\$ 19,497,614

Expenditures

Developmental Disability Program	5,713,873
Mental Illness Program	3,768,969
Child Mental Illness Program	956,680
Community Residential Program	5,473,557
State & Community Inpatient Program	815,813
Other Expenditures	412,637
Administration	2,356,085
Total Expenditure:	\$ 19,497,614

Connor’s Story



“The connection of people and family is a strong bond that shapes our potential and future.” This profound statement could completely encapsulate the journey that Connor and his parents, Jessica and Jay, have been on.

“When Connor was around 2, I started noticing something different about him.” States Jessica, “After visiting our doctor and he was tested and diagnosed for autism, our school directed us to contact CMH.”

“Initially, I was against him coming here.” Declared Connor’s dad Jay. “I was leery because he was going to be around strangers, but I told myself ‘just give it a chance’ because I knew he could use the help.” “I was worried too” Stated Jessica, “but on his second day the ABA

Jeff’s Story



“My life is really good right now, it’s like all the sudden I’ve woken up and I’m really getting to live my life.” Jeff is a ‘tell it like it is’ man as he recalls the events of his life that have brought him to this moment as the 2019 ACT Shining Star Award recipient. “It’s an award, an honor for those who are on a road to recover, and it’s to celebrate that they are making great progress on the road they are on.”

Jeff’s road of recovery started 12 years ago when he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, and he will openly tell you “it’s been a wild ride.” After being homeless on and off for about three years, using substances, and not treating his mental illness, Jeff knew it was time to make some positive changes in his life. “I knew it was time to seek help when I started having an episode and I destroyed the inside of my house. On that day, Deb from CMH found me in a manic state, and

Enhancing Lives

[Applied Behavioral Analysis] worker came to pick him up, and as I walked him out he left and didn’t even look back at me, and I just cried. From then on, I knew he would be okay. In one day, he had learned that it was okay to step away, and he never cried again. It was the start of our new beginning as a family.”

“Within the first week I noticed different things. Then one day he was at the house and he started reading, and he was counting one through ten in Spanish, and now he is doing some math problems, it’s just been so great!” “I would highly recommend ABA at CMH to anyone”, states Jay, “They have done wonders and it’s just phenomenal!”

“I think this whole process has taught us to trust in other people.” says Jessica. “We didn’t trust anyone to help him at first, and now I can’t imagine where we would be without the experiences and relationships we have here with the ABA staff. They are always asking about what we are working on at home, and I’ve asked a lot of questions and they have offered a lot of help.”

Connor has been a part of the ABA program for the past 3 years and has reached many milestones that his parent’s thought were out of reach. “He caught right up to where he should be, and we are just so grateful.” exclaims Jay. “He played catch up really quick.” Connor is now fully verbal speaking in full sentences, he is potty trained, playing pretend, reading, and ready to start kindergarten this fall.

“I’m not scared for his future anymore,” states his Mom, “there is a stigma around autism, but I wouldn’t have him any other way because he shows us every day how sweet and incredibly smart he is.” “If you think your child needs extra help don’t be afraid, it’s okay to ask for help” says Dad, “I would definitely point people in this direction.”

Embracing Recovery

she helped me, and I knew then because of her that ACT was where I needed to be.”

The journey has not always been easy, but Jeff’s progress is evident. “We made some changes in my medication, and things started smoothing out. Music therapy has been helping me a lot. I love Jazz, but I listen to everything but Opera. Some of my favorite bands are Incognito and The Brand New Heavies.”

Jeff is also serving on the Consumer Advisory Board. “I like being on the board a lot. We promote and help people to understand mental illness, and which helps break the stigma of it. One of the functions that we do every year is Walk A Mile in Lansing. The walk brings awareness that stigma isn’t acceptable.”

When asked what he would like to say to others who are unsure about seeking out treatment for their mental health, Jeff says, “Just to do it. Do it so you can better yourself and get an understanding of what’s going on so that you can feel like you are in the driver’s seat of your life. Stick with the plans, routines, and strategies that are recommended for you, because it will get better. And you will be able to live a good life.”

CMH Award Winners

CMH Staff of the Year

Linda Koepf is the recipient of the 2020 CMH Staff of the Year award. Linda is the Program Secretary for Clinic Services within the David Ehardt Center, and has been known to deal with issues head on - especially when watching over the Ehardt lobby. She has a great deal of compassion and knowledge which she uses to lead individuals through the process of becoming familiar with CMH. She is passionate about giving individuals a chance to shine and supporting them as they walk the road of recovery. Thank you, Linda, for being a valuable part of our CMH team.



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Community Partner in Recovery

We are pleased to recognize the Sandusky High School Class of 2020 Sweetheart Court as our Community Partner in Recovery. This group of students dedicated their sweetheart court platform to promote understanding and safe spaces for students to talk about mental health issues and provide resources for individuals in need of help. They started this conversation through the production of a video titled “Breaking the Stigma”. Thank you, Sandusky High School Class of 2020 Sweetheart Court, for all you do to decrease stigma and create a community conversation about youth mental health. You can view their video project by visiting: <https://youtu.be/f3XaZoZ8oLk>

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