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**St. Clair County  
Community Mental Health**

*Promoting Discovery & Recovery Opportunities  
for Healthy Minds & Bodies*



[www.scccmh.org](http://www.scccmh.org)

The caring team at St. Clair County Community Mental Health is here to support you! For information, access to services, and crisis support, contact the Region 10 Access Line at 1-888-225-4447. For in-person crisis intervention, contact the Mobile Crisis Unit at 1-810-966-2475. Both phone lines are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



**St. Clair County  
Community Mental Health**

*Promoting Discovery & Recovery Opportunities  
for Healthy Minds & Bodies*



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Artwork by:  
**Heather Segura**  
**Marine City High School**  
2022 "Best in Show" Winner





## LIVING THE POWER OF POSSIBILITY

*By Debra Johnson, Chief Executive Officer*

In the United States, there are more than 100,000 self-help books in print, with thousands more added every year. Many concentrate on teaching the reader how to be more successful — with varying levels of success. However, research reveals that there are some basic principles most of these books share. First and foremost, they all highlight the power of possibility, the principle that recognizes that every second of every day offers new and exciting opportunities. Understanding and embracing this principle is a characteristic common to those we serve, our staff, and the people and organizations recognized in our 2021 Annual Report.

Seeing and seizing possibilities is something we here at St. Clair County Community Mental Health (SCCCMH) are proud to do each and every day. In part because of this positive

forward thinking attitude, twice in 2021 SCCCMH was recognized as an excellent place to work.

In the first instance, Modern Healthcare magazine named SCCCMH a “Best Place to Work in Healthcare”, ranking us 54th of only 150 organizations honored nationwide. In the second instance, SCCCMH was voted one of the “Best of the Best” employers in the Greater Blue Water Thumb area in the Port Huron Times Herald annual review. Both awards are courtesy of a dedicated staff that together make SCCCMH not only an effective and caring environment for those we serve, but a place where staff can grow professionally and form lifelong bonds with their co-workers.

These accolades are especially appreciated and appropriate given the great job our staff continued to do during COVID. It is safe to say that everyone hoped 2020 would be the year the COVID pandemic ended and life returned to normal. Unfortunately, as we all know, the virus continued to disrupt the lives of many Americans throughout 2021 and continues to do so. During this period, SCCCMH continued to meet our obligation to protect our staff, those we serve, and the Blue Water community by following all safety guidelines from local, state and federal governments. I am proud that our staff, from the first day COVID restrictions came into effect until today, approached all COVID requirements with a professional and positive attitude.

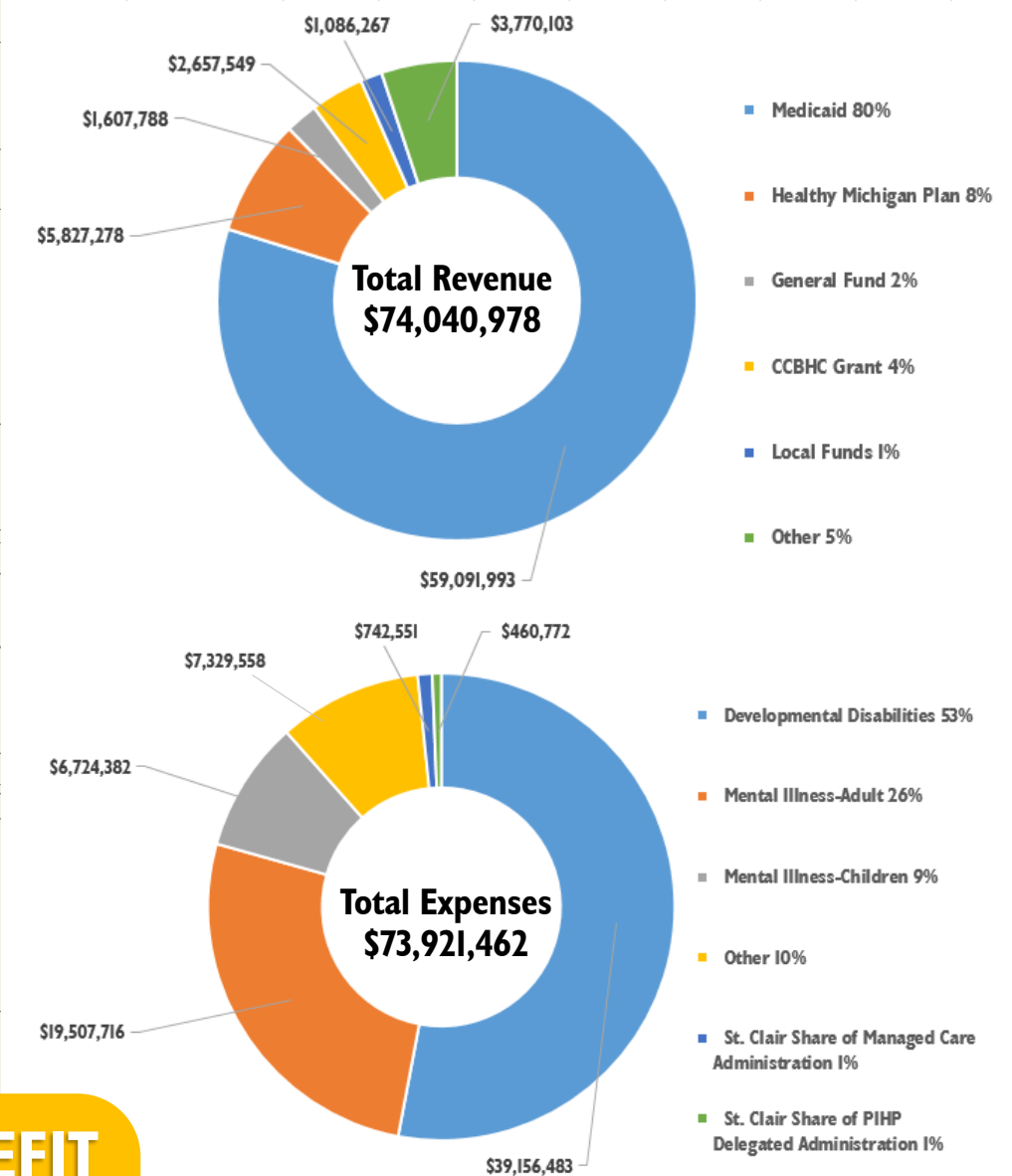
Despite COVID, our expansion as a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) also continued at full strength last year. By becoming a CCBHC, we are able to provide a comprehensive range of behavioral health services, including substance use disorder treatment services, in coordination with physical health care services. The significant expansion in services that resulted was followed by a necessary increase in the size of SCCCMH staff. In January of 2019, we had 268 employees, a year later 323 employees, and in January of this year, we had approximately 380 employees, an increase of 42% over 2019. This increase in the types of programs offered and those who qualify for services also contributed to our decision to open a dedicated location for children, our Child and Family Services building, on 24th Street in Port Huron, as well as current plans to repurpose areas in our main Port Huron building and opening a new, larger location in Marine City.

In 2021, we continued to design and add programs that met the needs of those we serve. These include the Next Step Program that fills a gap between those who need typical services and those who need more focused services, and the Opportunities for Success (OFS) program, which began operating in Fall of 2021. OFS assists individuals with intellectual / developmental disabilities develop job skills and find competitive employment in the community. Like other mental health care providers, we are also innovating and expanding to address the children’s mental health crisis, including several innovative programs that allow us to collaborate with local schools. You can learn more about the Next Step Program on page 7, the Opportunities for Success program on 13, and all our efforts in addressing the children’s mental health crisis on page 12.

Unfortunately, there are two important challenges at the state level that make it much more difficult for SCCCMH and other mental health providers to ensure our young people receive the behavioral health services they deserve. The first is insufficient resources to address the lack of inpatient psychiatric access for children and adolescents. In 1993, there were 729 inpatient psychiatric beds for children and adolescents in community hospitals. Today, there are only 389 for the approximately 2.9 million Michiganders under 18 years of age. This means there is only one inpatient psychiatric treatment opportunity for every 7,414 youth. Furthermore, available spots are typically full with long waiting lists.

Many times, hospitals decide to admit children with less severe symptoms because they provide less stress on staff. This leaves hundreds and hundreds of Michigan families waiting for their child to receive the help they need. Often, these children are

## SCCCMH PROGRAM OPERATIONS REVENUE & EXPENSES FISCAL YEAR 2021



## COMMUNITY BENEFIT

Employees contributed \$5,564 to the Red Cross, United Way, and CMH Endowment funds

Hosted the Annual Recovery Summit with 15 webinars and 385 attendees

Participated in 118 community outreach activities

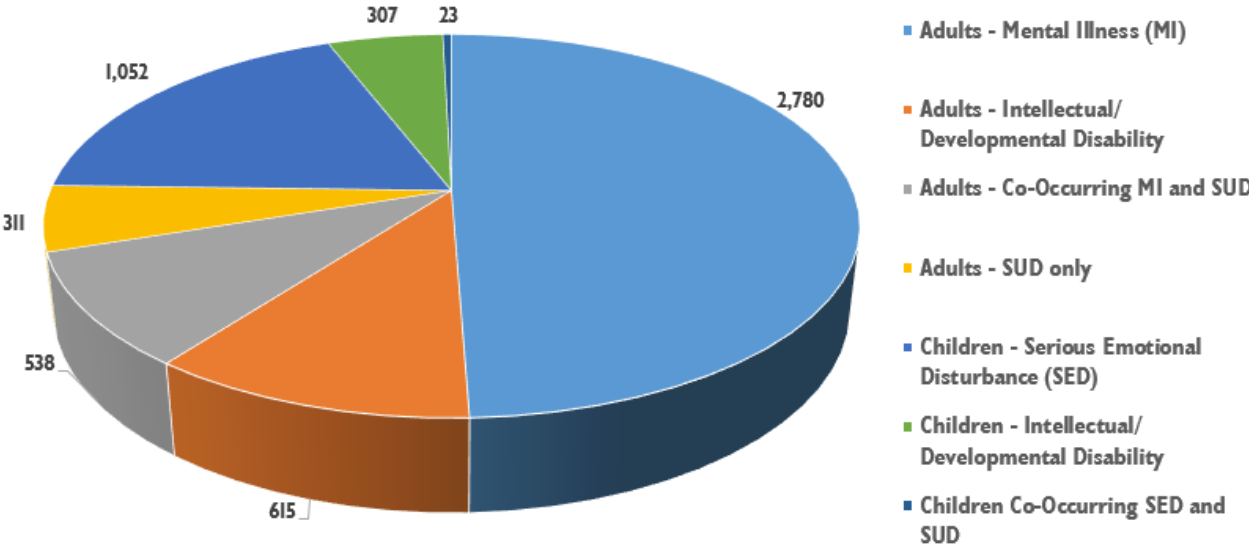
Port Huron Payroll taxes paid: \$107,044

Employees gave \$14,391 to area organizations through *Casual for a Cause* donations



# PERSONS SERVED IN FISCAL YEAR 2021

Total number of individuals served: 5,065



## CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY



Staff believed I could grow, change and recover. **94%**



Services were available at times that were convenient to me. **94%**



Staff were sensitive to my cultural / ethnic background and treated me with respect. **94%**



My family got the help we need for our child. **90%**



Overall, I am satisfied with the services I have received. **95%**

forced to spend weeks at area hospital emergency rooms, only to be discharged without receiving the assistance they need. The second important children’s mental health challenge that can only be addressed by state government is the lack of Therapeutic Group Homes for children, mostly due to licensing criteria that impede the ability of organizations like SCCCMH to develop and staff them. Therapeutic Group Homes are facilities for children and adolescents with significant emotional or behavioral problems who can still engage in community-based activities but need an alternative living arrangement. This is a less restrictive environment than inpatient psychiatric treatment. Because of both of these challenges, children with the need for the most intensive treatment often fail to receive it. However, I am happy to report that , State Senator Dan Lauwers, recently introduced Senate Bill 992 to hopefully solve the Therapeutic Group Home problem.

Also, regrettably efforts to pass Senate Bills 597 and 598 continue, which would give full financial control, oversight, and decision making of Medicaid mental health services to for-profit private insurance companies. This would cripple the public mental health system, of which community mental health organizations like SCCCMH are a part. If passed these bills would reduce services, increase costs, destroy the kind of community collaboration between community mental health organizations and other key community stakeholders that proved so beneficial to the public during the COVID pandemic, and replace local control with control from Lansing. These bills would also divert tax dollars meant to fund assistance for people with serious behavioral health disorders to big out-of-state for-profit insurance companies, harming those with serious mental illness, kids with severe emotional disturbances, those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as people with substance use disorders. To register your objection to these bills to your state senator and state representative, go to [www.cmha.org](http://www.cmha.org) and click on the “Advocacy Center” tab.

In the face of these challenges, as we navigate the rest of 2022 and 2023, let us remember how easy it is to help one another through a simple smile, kind word, listening ear, friendly hug, and sincere complement. Let us strive to emulate the examples of those honored in this annual report!



## EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR GINA BASS-MADDOX

COVID-19 created serious challenges for all of us, including St. Clair County Community Mental Health (SCCCMH). One such challenge was how to provide services during lockdown periods to the roughly 40 individuals participating in our Community Integration Services (CIS) program. CIS provides life skill development, sensory integration, and socialization opportunities in both classroom and community settings for adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Exhibiting the most serious of challenging behaviors and experiencing the greatest impairment in functioning, an interruption of services could have very negative consequences for these individuals. Responding with lightning speed to the risk of an interruption in services, the 2021 SCCCMH Employee of the Year, Gina Bass-Maddox,

quickly created, scheduled, coordinated, and facilitated virtual classes for these individuals. At the height of the pandemic, as many as 38 individuals participated in one or more of 15 to 18 weekly classes that included music and movement, exercises, cooking classes, crafts, social stories, and other life skills. Thanks to these classes, critical engagement with these individuals continued throughout the pandemic period.

Devotion to others is nothing new to Gina. After working for many years in area group homes or in direct care, five years ago Gina accepted a position at SCCCMH. For the last four years, she has worked in the CIS Department. Gina is quick to credit her co-workers for her success, sharing that “What we do doesn’t work without a great and supportive team. Everybody in CIS is committed to what we do. We love coming into work and helping change our individuals’ lives by creating a safe space for them.” She is equally quick to credit husband Michael and her son Khalil, who understand and encourage her dedication to CIS participants.

**Congratulations Gina and thank you for your extraordinary work ethic, dedication, and can-do spirit!**



# SCCCMH TEAM OF THE YEAR

## APPLIED BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS (ABA)

Autism spectrum disorder, which is characterized by a combination of difficulty in communicating, forming relationships, using language, employing abstract concepts, and repetitive patterns of behavior, has biological underpinnings and is rooted in brain development. There are about 5 ½ million adults and 1 ½ million youths with autism spectrum disorder in the United States today.

In 2013, the Michigan legislature mandated that children with autism spectrum disorder between the ages of 18 months and five years (later expanded to people up to the age of 21) covered by Medicaid and MICHild be provided Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) therapy. Passing strict scientific tests of usefulness, quality, and effectiveness, ABA therapy applies reinforcement principles to everyday situations to improve language skills, non-verbal communication, peer interactions, daily living skills, ability to follow instructions, and cognitive skills.

Concerned that there was a lack of other ABA providers in St. Clair County who could provide the level of care mandated by the state, in October 2015 SCCCMH opened a dedicated center-based ABA program, while also providing some in-home services. The plan was to operate the program until St. Clair County had multiple providers who could match the level of services SCCCMH provided. The center-based approach provided an environment outside of the home where resources, toys, and opportunities such as peer engagement and classroom routines were more plentiful and could be tailored to the needs, preferences, and skills of each child. Children could practice skills with one another in short group times that mimic those that occur in most preschool and early school-aged settings. At the end of 2021, when there were three ABA providers who met the same level of care as provided by SCCCMH, the difficult decision was made to end the SCCCMH ABA program.



Back row left to right: Talia Brown, Shelby Fretenborough, Emma McDonald, Melissa Singer, Amanda Roskey, Lisa Azar, Delores Johnson; Front row left to right: Elizabeth Merlo, Luisa Sanchez



Kristina Hill-Kaufman, Kayla Parr, Melissa Rinehart, Krystal Sawdon, Rachael Truene, Robert Shafron

During its six years of operation, our ABA staff demonstrated unparalleled teamwork, dedication, professionalism, empathy, and compassion to the individuals they served. Thanks to this team, hundreds of children with autism have an improved quality of life and enjoy an increased and enhanced emotional life with their parents and other family members. Their teamwork was never more on display than during the last two years, when COVID-19 required many necessary modifications to the ABA Program. These modifications included a three-month center-based closure, during which time ABA staff continued to reach out to families weekly and provide parent training and support, sending packets of material so children could continue working toward their ABA goals while they were home. When the center re-opened, the entire ABA team, demonstrating a can-do attitude, adaptability and determination, were critical to the success of innovative changes implemented throughout the year that ensured the health and safety of SCCCMH staff and the children and families they served, while also providing the same high quality of service and supports to ABA program participants and their families.

**Thank you Lisa, Talia, Shelby, Kristina, Delores, Emma, Elizabeth, Jessica, Kayla, Melisa, Amanda, Luisa, Krystal, Robert, Melissa, and Rachael for being an amazing team who always put the families you serve first. Congratulations!**



*First row left to right:  
Tairan Malachi-Cooney, Cheri Jessup,  
Erika Rice, Katelyn Bartholomew*

*Second row left to right:  
Christine Davis, Audrey Bell,  
John Halliday, Jalen Cates*



## THE POWER OF A JOB

For most people, a job is a source of pride providing financial security, regular social connections, and a dependable daily schedule. The resulting emotional and psychological benefits are key components for promoting and maintaining good mental health. Because of this, when a person wants to work but cannot find work, they often experience anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. This can be especially damaging for individuals with behavioral health disorders, who face more challenges than the average person in finding a job. In 2019, people with mild to moderate mental illness were three times more likely, and those with serious mental illness seven times more likely, to be unemployed than the average American. That same year, among individuals with an intellectual/developmental disability, only 44% were in the labor force and 28% had never been in the work force.

To help individuals with behavioral health disorders who want to get a job, St. Clair County Community Mental Health (SCCCMH) has two employment programs. The first, the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) program, supports persons living with mental illness. The second, Opportunities for Success (OFS), supports persons with an intellectual / developmental disorder discover skills, interests, and what they would like to do in the future as a career. Both concentrate on finding participants regular employment at competitive community wages.

In its eighth year, the IPS program helps individuals find prospective employers and teaches job search skills, with the goal of having participants interviewing for jobs within 30 days of entering the program. Although SCCCMH works directly with area employers to encourage their participation in the IPS program, where a person finds employment is 100% their choice. Program participants are employed in many different industries, including restaurant, factory, and office work. Since the beginning of the program in 2014, the IPS program has assisted approximately 1,000 people!

OFS began operating just last Fall. In order to develop a job plan based around each person's unique skills, OFS uses the Discovery Model, which is a 2-8 week program that includes community visits, home visits, conversations with a participant's family, and investigating the participant's interests. Once the Discovery phase is completed, work begins developing a job plan based around their skills.

SCCCMH offers two complimentary programs that assist those in search of a job. The first is the Customized Employment Model, which is ideal for individuals with an intellectual / developmental disability. It provides competitive integrated employment or self-employment through a relationship between the employee and employer that is personalized to meet the needs of both. The second program is Benefits-to-Work Coaching, which helps people with state or federal benefits understand how their benefits will be affected when they go back to work. This is extremely important as the balance between existing benefits and the desire to work is unique for each person.

As in the success of many SCCCMH programs, collaboration with other local organizations helps ensure success for program participants. SCCCMH works closely with Michigan Rehabilitation Services, Community Enterprises, Goodwill, and Touchstone Services, which operates the Blue Water Clubhouse. IPS and OFS are unique and highly effective programs that are helping people receiving SCCCMH services in profound and long-lasting ways. C.S. Lewis observed, "You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream." No matter their age or background, SCCCMH's employment professionals stand ready to help those we serve achieve their employment dreams. Thank you Katelyn, Audrey, Jalen, Tairan, Christine, John, Cheri and Erika!



# AMERICA'S YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

In December 2021, the U.S. Surgeon General issued the report "Protecting Youth Mental Health." This report confirmed concerns about youth mental health that began nearly a decade ago. For example, anxiety rose 28% among youth from 2011 to 2015, feelings of sadness rose 40% from 2009 to 2019, and suicide rose 57% from 2007 to 2018. Of course, these troubling trends accelerated even more during COVID, with already historically high levels of anxiety and depression among young people doubling in the United States during the pandemic.

There are many causes of the youth mental health crisis. Some of these causes pre-date the pandemic, including the negative impact of social media, increasing academic competition, and unrealistic expectations created by cultural messaging around appearance, intelligence and success. Other causes clearly arose as the result of the pandemic, including anxiety about the virus, disruptions in routine, loneliness and social disconnection from not being able to attend school in person.

St. Clair County Community Mental Health provided services to 1,378 children in 2021, a more than 20% increase over pre-pandemic numbers.

In St. Clair County we also experienced an increased need for youth mental health services. In 2021, St. Clair County Community Mental Health (SCCCMH) provided services to 1,378 children. This was up from 1,277 in 2020, a 7.3% increase, and up 21% from 1,010 in 2018. In response, in 2020 SCCCMMH opened a dedicated Child & Family Services building at 2415 24th Street in Port Huron. In addition to providing direct services at this location, SCCCMMH implemented or supported additional programs that address youth mental health. These programs include school-based programs, a coaches training program, an autism support group, children's Mental Health First Aid training, and our



creative arts contests, featured in this annual report, that help fight stigma around behavioral health issues.

In collaboration with the St. Clair County Health Department, SCCCMMH sponsors school-based health centers available at no cost to students and in Capac, Marysville, and Yale public schools. These centers help students receive the support they need to succeed both in school and at home by helping them improve their health, wellness, and academic performance. Thanks to funding from our CCBHC grant, we sponsor Prepare U, a 15-week mental health curriculum, in seven local high schools. With the same funding, we are also able to sponsor the Calm Classroom program, which teaches 3-minute daily relaxation techniques, in ten local elementary, middle and high schools.

We also offer our self-created Coaches Training Program, which brings special attention to student athletes who frequently see even higher rates of mental health concerns because of injuries, emotional stress, and physical strain that can put them at higher risks of anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts than their non-athletic peers. This training is free and open to any high schools in St. Clair County.

We also facilitate an Autism Support Group for parents, run by staff at our Child and Family Services building. The group offers the opportunity for positive conversation and support, connecting families with the shared life experience of having a child with autism.

Another great training offered by SCCCMMH that is available to everyone in St. Clair County is Youth Mental Health First Aid. These classes teach how to help someone ages 12-18 who is experiencing a mental health or addiction challenge or is in crisis. If you are interested in reserving a seat at an upcoming training, check our website at [scccmh.org](http://scccmh.org) or call us at 810-985-8900.

Combating and reversing the negative trends in youth mental health is a responsibility we all share. Together we can improve the behavioral health of our children!



## ART OF CARING AWARDS

Art of Caring awards recognize individuals, businesses, and community organizations that make a significant impact on the programs and individuals supported by St. Clair County Community Mental Health.



**Capac Jr. / Sr. High School Student Council**, which continues to go above and beyond every Thanksgiving. These high school students raise funds, then buy and donate frozen turkeys and sides dishes that they deliver to the SCCCMMH Capac office to distribute to area families in need of a dinner.

**Marty and Cindy Garavaglia**, who have donated countless hours assisting the CMH Players. The CMH Players include individuals receiving community mental health services, SCCCMMH staff, and local community actors who reduce stigma associated with mental illness and share the message that recovery is possible by performing over 25 plays or movies since 2005. Marty and Cindy have participated in many of these as actors, where they lend their talents and experience to assisting other cast members, but also have helped in the less glamorous roles of locating, transporting, or creating scenery, costumes, bringing snacks at rehearsals, and even the tedious task of cleaning up after a production.

**Kevin Daniel**, owner and president of Michigan Manufactured Products, has consistently supported individuals in SCCCMMH's Individual Placement Support program (IPS). This program helps individuals receiving SCCCMMH services to find competitive employment, which is regular full or part-time employment at wages at or above the minimum wage. Kevin currently employs two former participants in the IPS program, recently hired a current participant, and has employed many others over the years. Kevin's commitment goes beyond merely providing a job. He goes the extra mile to ensure participants' work experience is positive and that they have the opportunity to develop manufacturing skills, learn new things, and if desired move on to larger factories.

**Pam Malone**, co-owner and manager of Captain Jims Art Gallery, has been a great supporter of SCCCMMH's IPS, assisting with mock interviews for participants interested in obtaining retail employment. The last three individuals she helped prepare for real-world interviews all obtained the employment they were seeking and each shared that the preparation and assistance Pam provided was instrumental to their success.

## A BETTER, BRIGHTER LIFE



The opioid crisis began in the late 1990s when pharmaceutical companies claimed that users would not become addicted to prescription opioid pain relievers. Responding to this claim, healthcare providers began prescribing opioids at large rates. Like many Americans, Lisa's battle with opioids did not begin with a deliberate choice to take the drug, but with a prescription for pain following a medical procedure, in her case a C-section. The medication allowed her to quickly return to working multiple jobs to support herself and her three children. As with so many others, the addiction crept up on her, slowly and silently. Eventually, it led to heroin and then cocaine and alcohol.

Lisa's struggle with addiction led her to a critical decision about three years ago.

In search of a supportive environment, she decided to relocate from Flint to Port Huron, where she quickly sought and received St. Clair County Community Mental Health (SCCCMMH) services. Here at SCCCMMH, she began a serious and persistent effort to recover from alcohol and substance use. For many people experiencing addiction, their journey to recovery involves several resets, when along the way they stumble and have to find the inner strength to start again. But many share that there is a moment when they feel, they know, that this time will be different, and Lisa shares that this happened for her when she started working with SCCCMMH on her recovery.

For Lisa, a key component of her recovery was finding regular employment, something her addiction had stolen from her. She wanted to reclaim the pride that comes with being independent. With the assistance of the Individual Placement and Support program here at SCCCMMH, she peppered the area with applications and prepared for interviews. She was hired at a national chain hotel as a housekeeper and was promoted to head housekeeper within six months. Then, about a year ago, she found out a housekeeper position with benefits was available at Sacred Heart Rehabilitation Center, a place she herself had sought help for her recovery. She shares that she wanted the job as a way to give back. "Everybody in recovery needs someone who understands them and can support them. It starts with someone who has been there, done it, and is still doing it."

Having taken control of her life she refuses to surrender it back to addiction. She is a true role model who has taken control of her life and her recovery and is living her life to the fullest. Walking in recovery for almost two years, she is reminded daily of her love for her three children, Tyler, Melinda and Vanessa, and their love for her. "I am being the mother my mom raised me to be. I will never go back. I'm going to keep pushing forward. I'm going to keep moving forward toward a better and brighter life."

"Everybody in recovery needs someone who understands them and can support them. It starts with someone who has been there, done it, and is still doing it."





## BUILDING A NEW LIFE

As a young woman, Sally Law experienced mental health symptoms and was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Later, she became convinced her accurate diagnosis was Borderline Personality Disorder, a belief confirmed when she began receiving St. Clair County Community Mental Health Services (SCCCMH) in 2016. That year, she made a yearlong commitment to participate in SCCCMMH's Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), a structured treatment program for people with Borderline Personality Disorder. DBT helps people learn how to identify and change spontaneous, automatic, destructive or disturbing thought patterns that negatively influences behaviors and worsens emotional difficulties, depression, and anxiety. DBT does this in part by teaching strategies such as emotional regulation and mindfulness.

For Sally, DBT created accountability, helped her set goals, and allowed her to work with people keenly interested in helping her achieve her goals. Sally speaks passionately about the impact DBT had on her life. "DBT saved me. It taught me that my feelings are OK, that they are not necessarily facts. I learned that I do not have to react to every situation. Instead, I work to stay mindful and in the moment. DBT impacted my life on such a level that I am a different human being today."

After graduating from the program, Sally's next goal was to become a member of the DBT team as a Peer Support Specialist. Peer Supports have lived experience similar to those they help and assist in a variety of tasks that help an individual achieve their treatment goals. When the opportunity presented itself Sally rose to the challenge and was hired just before Christmas last year as a full-time Peer Support Specialist on the DBT team. She shares that "it is amazing to be on this side of DBT." Sally is a true inspiration who is giving back to others like herself.

"DBT saved me. It taught me that my feelings are OK, that they are not necessarily facts. I learned that I do not have to react to every situation. Instead, I work to stay mindful and in the moment. DBT impacted my life on such a level that I am a different human being today."

## IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

Sometimes, people with a behavioral health condition do not seek professional help, usually because of stigma, denial, or a belief treatment will not work. This was the case for Ella Lincoln, who shares that she first noticed symptoms of mental illness as an adolescent in high school. She says that at that time it seemed to her that "most people didn't understand mental illness and thought bad things about people who had a mental illness." Like many before and after her, instead of seeking treatment Ella began self-medicating with drugs and alcohol. It wasn't until about a decade ago that she made the life-changing decision to accept that she needed professional help and, becoming her own advocate, actively sought support from St. Clair County Community Mental Health (SCCCMH).

"If you need help, get it. You can do it."

Ella shares that one of her long-term goals was to obtain regular, full-time employment with wages, benefits, and a retirement plan, which would allow her to reduce her dependence on Social Security Disability. When she learned about SCCCMMH's Individual Placement Services program, she leapt at the opportunity. Ella learned how to prepare a resume and practical job interview skills that helped alleviate the anxiety she always felt in job interviews in the past. Consequently, over time she has accepted employment at four area businesses, each time securing a position that improved her wages and benefits while increasing her job satisfaction. She shares that "I like the jobs I've had. I am proud of what I do and I enjoy the opportunity to see people." Indeed, the insecurity and anxiety she always felt in the past in similar situations is now completely gone. In their place is a strong sense of self-worth and satisfaction. With a smile, she shares, "If you need help, get it. You can do it." Congratulations Ella and thank you for sharing your story!



## MIDDLE SCHOOL WRITING CONTEST

Jasmine Walker, an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at Algonac Junior / Senior High School was selected as the Grand Prize winner in the 15<sup>th</sup> annual St. Clair County Community Mental Health Middle School Writing Contest for her poetry entry "The Fight for Light." Jasmine's poem is printed on page 10 of this annual report. In recognition of her accomplishment, she will receive a congratulatory ribbon and \$250 prize. The annual writing contest is held to educate middle school students about, and to chip away at stigma associated with, mental health conditions. All entries are original, individual pieces of writing from a middle school student, grades 6 — 8, residing in or attending school in St. Clair County. This year's entries addressed the theme "The Power of Possibility." All contest winners will receive prizes for their accomplishments. The complete contest results are as follows:

|                                  |                   |                               |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| GRAND PRIZE WINNER               | Jasmine Walker    | Algonac Jr. / Sr. High School |
| FICTION 1 <sup>st</sup> PLACE    | Kira Tilly        | Algonac Jr. / Sr. High School |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> PLACE            | Ava Murray        | Algonac Jr. / Sr. High School |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> PLACE            | Isla Pearson      | Algonac Jr. / Sr. High School |
| NONFICTION 1 <sup>st</sup> PLACE | Taylor Caza       | Marysville Middle School      |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> PLACE            | Collin Grove      | Algonac Jr. / Sr. High School |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> PLACE            | Mackenzie Adamson | Algonac Jr. / Sr. High School |
| POETRY 1 <sup>st</sup> PLACE     | Taylor Caza       | Marysville Middle School      |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> PLACE            | Lexi Bertrand     | Algonac Jr. / Sr. High School |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> PLACE            | McKenzie Groce    | Fort Gratiot Middle School    |

From left to right: English Language Arts Teacher Mary Rulhman, writing contest winner Jasmine Walker, and Principal Ryan Melrose



## HIGH SCHOOL ART CONTEST

The artwork of Heather Segura, a sophomore at Marine City High School, was voted "Best in Show" in the 19<sup>th</sup> annual St. Clair County Community Mental Health High School Art Contest. The annual art contest is held to educate high school students about, and to chip away at stigma associated with mental health conditions. The winning artwork is used to promote May as National Mental Health Month. All artwork is the original, individual work of a high school student, grades 9 — 12, residing or attending school in St. Clair County. This year's entries addressed the theme "The Power of Possibility."

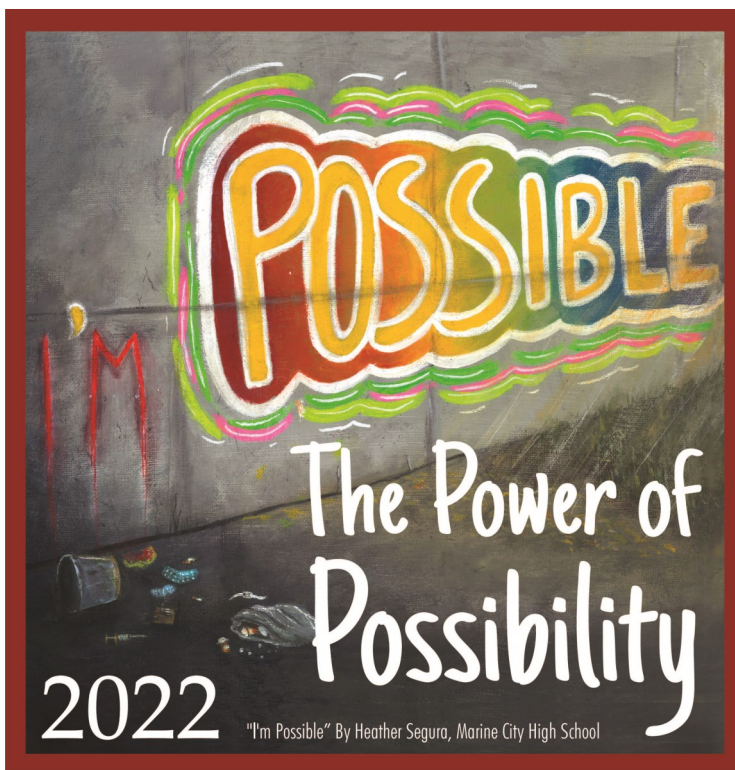
Heather will receive a congratulatory ribbon and \$350 prize. Her winning artwork is on the cover of this annual report, will be featured on billboards, on posters distributed to hundreds of agencies and businesses in St. Clair County, and permanently displayed at all SCCCMMH locations. All contest winners will receive prizes for their accomplishments. The complete contest results are as follows:

|                       |                      |                                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Best in Show          | Heather Segura       | Marine City High School              |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Place | Grace Mason          | St. Clair High School                |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place | Nicole Szczepanski   | Marysville High School               |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Place | Destiny Charest      | Marysville High School               |
| People's Choice       | Emily Domagalski     | St. Clair High School                |
| Honorable Mentions    | Elaina Bailey        | Marysville High School               |
|                       | Michael Pitzo        | Marysville High School               |
|                       | Ashlyn Kinney        | Port Huron Northern High School      |
|                       | Olivia Carr          | St. Clair High School                |
|                       | Anastasia Stachowiak | Cardinal Mooney Catholic High School |
|                       | Nicole Zawadzinski   | Cardinal Mooney Catholic High School |



From left to right, Algonac Jr./Sr. HS Principal Sherri Becker, SCCCMMH Chief Executive Officer Debra Johnson, art contest winner Heather Segura, and art teacher Marney Williams





**St. Clair County Community Mental Health**  
Promoting Discovery & Recovery Opportunities for Healthy Minds & Bodies

St. Clair County Community Mental Health supports individuals with mental illnesses, intellectual/developmental disabilities and substance use disorders, focusing on integrated health care and recovery.

**Information & access to services:**  
**1-888-225-4447**

**24-hour crisis intervention:**  
**1-810-966-2575**

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SERVICES, SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES: [WWW.SCCCMH.ORG](http://WWW.SCCCMH.ORG)

## THE FIGHT FOR LIGHT

By: Jasmine Walker, Algonac Jr. / Sr. High School

Why does my life have to be so hard?  
I try to get better, but I feel so discharged.  
I've been stuck in this deep hole for years and years,  
But when I try to climb out, the opening at the top just disappears.  
I look for help, but it feels like no one is listening.  
Wait, right in front of me possibility is just glistening!  
I turn around and stop dead in my tracks,  
All of my emotions just start to unpack.  
I cry and cry until I finally see,  
The beautiful light that is reaching out to me.  
I take its hand and hold on tight,  
My mind is ready for an amazing flight!  
I am being healed and filled with goodness,  
All of the light is getting rid of my terrible illness!  
I now begin to realize that God was here all along,  
He was by my side even through the hard times, keeping me strong!  
I have now gained back all of my dignity,  
But couldn't have done it without the power of possibility.

The artwork by Heather Segura has been printed as our 2022 poster.  
Copies of this poster are available at the SCCCMH main office in Port Huron.

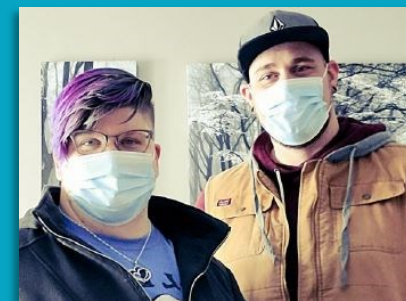
## ANNUAL ELEMENTARY BOOKMARK CONTEST



## RIGHTS CHAMPION OF THE YEAR

Tricia Gapshes

The Rights Champion of the Year award recognizes an individual for their extraordinary contributions to the Rights Protection System, protecting the human rights of individuals with mental illness, intellectual/developmental disabilities and substance use disorders. Last year, Tricia Gapshes demonstrated exceptional care for an individual who chose to remain at home prior to their passing. Honoring their wishes, Tricia ensured the individual received the necessary care and comfort needed and did likewise for people in the person's support system. In another instant, Tricia successfully advocated and coordinated care for a person with multiple and complex medical and behavioral needs. Recognized for these and other outstanding accomplishments in honoring the dignity of those we serve, Tricia Gapshes was named our 2021 Rights Champion of the Year. Congratulations Tricia and thank you for all you do!



## RIGHTS CHAMPION TEAM OF THE YEAR

Rory Horan and Rebecca Sarazen of Community Based Services Division, Blue Water Developmental Housing

The Rights Champion Team of the Year award recognizes a team for their extraordinary contributions to the Rights Protection System, protecting the human rights of individuals with mental illness, intellectual/developmental disabilities and substance use disorders. Last year, exhibiting extraordinary teamwork, Rory and Rebecca provided 24-hour support to two individuals residing in a supported living arrangement to ensure they were able to remain in their own home where they felt safe and most comfortable. To do so, Rory and Rebecca worked 12-hour shifts every day for 90 consecutive days. Recognized for their extraordinary dedication to others, Rory and Rebecca were named our 2021 Rights Champion Team of the Year. Congratulations Rory and Rebecca and thank you for your incredible service!

From left to right: Karen Recker, Renee Polio-McQuire, Keith Gilbert, Sonya Simpson, Camilla Smith, Joe Windhorst. Not pictured: Dr. Mohammad Saeed

## NEXT STEP PROGRAM

People with behavioral health disorders do not all need the same level of treatment. For many, coordination of the services they need and emotional support on a monthly basis works well for them. Others respond better working with a team that administers a comprehensive treatment plan that helps them maintain their independence in the community. At St. Clair County Community Mental Health (SCCCMH), the former meet with case managers and the latter group works with our Assertive Community Treatment staff, who meet up to seven days a week with individuals to provide a range of highly integrated services. However, over time it became clear there was a third group that needed a level of services somewhere between these two options. The answer was the Next Step program, designed and implemented by SCCCMH staff in 2021.

Next Step staff meet with participants no more than three times a week and see most people twice a week. Most people stay in the program about six months before transitioning into other treatment. Participants include those with mental illness, intellectual / developmental disabilities, and substance use disorders. Typically, circumstances out of the control of an individual arise that suggest they would benefit from participation in the Next Step program. These can include an increase in behavioral health symptoms' intensity or duration, lacking or at risk of losing independent housing, seeking psychiatric treatment at the ER at least once a month, having limited personal supports, participating in mental health court, or having experienced multiple hospitalizations.

The Next Step program has proven to be a great addition to the services we provide. Congratulations and many thanks to the Next Step staff for their hard work in seamlessly integrating this important new department into our service offerings.





# COMMUNICATIONS AWARD WINNER

Annie Nawrocki EBW-TV



Some people are lucky enough to know when still very young the direction they want to steer their life. Annie Nawrocki is one of those people, realizing at the age of 12 that she wanted to work in radio and television. Pursuing this dream took Annie to various Detroit area radio stations before she settled in as a feature reporter at EBW-TV, a live-streaming, on-line independent television station that emphasizes positive events, news, and people in the Blue Water area. She and EBW were a perfect fit. She shares that it is a blessing to tell meaningful stories at EBW

about “real people and real things who are making a difference in the community.”

This is particularly true regarding her stories that covered mental illness, intellectual / developmental disabilities and substance use disorders, where her ability to produce a story with a clear and powerful narrative cut through the many myths that continue to negatively affect the lives of individuals who need behavioral health care treatment. The impact of these stories were further enhanced by her innate curiosity and openness to new experiences. As she explains it, “Often before I talked to a person I thought I knew what the story was but after talking to them the story often went into another direction.”

Today, Annie is concentrating on her family; husband Sean Richardson, two-year-old son Davie, and 6-month-old daughter Emma, but looks forward to returning to EBW in the future. In recognition of her professionalism and dedication to informing the Blue Water community about behavioral health and other important issues, Annie Nawrocki was named the 2022 SCCCMH Communications Award winner.

“Often before I talked to a person I thought I knew what the story was but after talking to them the story often went into another direction.”

# COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD WINNER

*Kathy Swantek, Executive Director of  
Blue Water Developmental Housing*

Forty-five years ago, Kathy Swantek began a lifetime of dedicated service at Blue Water Developmental Housing (BWDH) that has immeasurably improved the lives of countless Blue Water area residents. A non-profit organization, BWDH provides housing for about 210 low-income individuals and people with behavioral health disorders experiencing different levels of disability and medical needs at 13 licensed homes. Leading BWDH for many years as its executive director, Kathy deflects praise about herself to her team, explaining, “I didn’t do this alone. I’ve been able to work with many talented collaborators through the years. Without everyone acting as a team, we cannot fulfill our mission.”

As a passionate advocate and leader on the issues of affordable housing and homelessness for decades, Kathy knows that housing is a moral issue deserving of community support. She knows the pride, self-respect, and positive aspirations that result from living in a comfortable apartment or home. She knows that everyone wants a space they can call their own that reflects who they are and where they, their family and their friends can share time together. Therefore, in addition to her day job at BWDH, she has served on many committees and boards related to housing, most noticeably as Chairperson of the Housing and Support Services Workgroup of the Community Services Coordinating Body for over 20 years. This is typical of Kathy, who, throughout her life, has embraced Ralph Waldo Emerson’s dictum that the purpose of life is “to be useful, to be honorable, and to be passionate.”

Thank you Kathy for a lifetime spent selflessly and passionately advocating for others in our community who lack what we all deserve, a home “where love resides, memories are created, friends always belong, and laughter never ends.” We are immensely pleased to recognize you as our 2022 Community Service Award winner!



# ORGANIZATION OF THE YEAR PORT HURON POLICE DEPARTMENT



All communities want a professional, accountable, transparent and innovative police department staffed by officers who show initiative, respect for the public, knowledge of the law, and a love for the community they serve, and whose leadership collaborates and innovates to solve problems. The Blue Water community is fortunate to have such a department in the Port Huron Police Department (PHPD).

The professionalism of the PHPD is a particular blessing for individuals in our area with behavioral health disorders. PHPD has prioritized behavioral health training for their staff, training provided by St. Clair County Community Mental Health (SCCCMH). These opportunities include PHPD staff participating in an 8-hour Mental Health First Aid training that teaches how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders, a 3-hour behavioral health training for new officers, and a SCCCMH presentation on different important topics during PHPD’s annual in-house training.

Behavioral health training is just the beginning of PHPD’s collaborative efforts with SCCCMH. PHPD works closely with SCCCMH’s Mobile Crisis Unit (MCU), which responds 24/7 to assist people experiencing a mental health crisis. If PHPD officers encounter a situation where diversion, not arrest, is an alternative, they contact the MCU. Officers also contact the MCU when they have repeated contact with an individual who is demonstrating mental health symptoms so MCU can do an outreach if appropriate. MCU members are also invited to platoon staff debriefings and can request ride-alongs with PHPD officers, making the collaborative effort complete.

PHPD collaborates with other community organizations as well, beginning with their participation in the Community Services Coordinating Body (CSCB), a coalition of public and private human service agencies in the county. They have two officers who serve on the CSCB’s Critical Incident

Stress Management Team, which helps people recover from a critical incident / traumatic event, which may overwhelm normal coping skills. They also sit on the CSCB’s Suicide Prevention Committee and last April they teamed up with Odyssey House to reduce repeated overdoses and provide recovery resources to those facing substance use disorders. Together, a PHPD officer and Odyssey House addiction professional contacts individuals who have experienced an overdose to provide education, Narcan (for opioid overdoses), referrals for treatment, and ongoing follow-up.

Just as important, PHPD leadership demonstrates concern for the behavioral health of their officers. PHPD is the only law enforcement agency in St. Clair County to have its own peer-lead Critical Incident Team to support the mental health of its officers. They were also instrumental in the development of SCCCMH’s First Responder Hotline, a 24/7 confidential mental health hotline geared specifically toward people working in the emergency response / first responder field. Finally, in 2021 and 2022, they put on an autism awareness event.

We are truly blessed to have the dedicated and hardworking officers of the Port Huron Police Department serving our community. In recognition of their pivotal role in improving the lives of Port Huron and Blue Water area residents, PHPD was named the SCCCMH 2022 Organization of the Year. Many thanks to Chief Platzter, Assistant Chief Kuehn, Captain Kerrigan, and every officer and employee of the PHPD for your many sacrifices and commitment the Blue Water community.

