



THE NORTH STAR

CMMHC

CENTRAL MINNESOTA MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

Welcome to the 'North Star' Newsletter, a quarterly update that aims to keep you informed about the latest news, achievements, and initiatives at CMMHC. The 'North Star' name originates from the CMMHC logo, which symbolizes inspiration and hope guiding life's purpose and mission; it is a fixed destination we depend on as our lives and the world around us change.

PERSPECTIVE BY AMBER WOHNOUTKA, RN, DIRECTOR OF NURSING

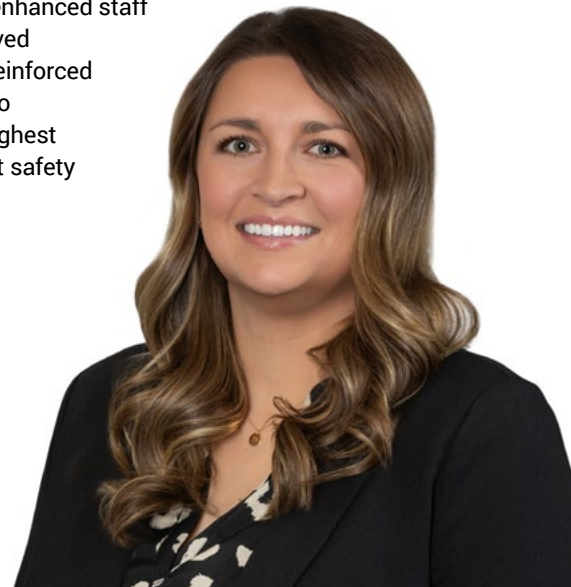
In this section, we invite you to get to know the leaders within CMMHC and share information from their unique perspectives, providing insights into their roles and contributions to our organization.

In my position as Director of Nursing, I provide clinical leadership and oversight for all nursing services within the agency, ensuring the delivery of safe, high-quality, and person-centered care. I am responsible for developing and implementing nursing policies and procedures in compliance with MDH, Minnesota statutes, CDC, and DHS standards. As the Director of Nursing, I work hard to support and supervise nursing staff, coordinate training and competency development, and promote best practices in medication management and clinical care across the agency. I collaborate closely with interdisciplinary teams to enhance client outcomes, promote client safety, and ensure continuity of care. We are working hard to continuously improve the clinical processes to meet the evolving needs of the individuals we serve.

Over the past year, we have strengthened our medication management practices by requiring all current and new staff involved in any aspect of medication administration to complete

a medication administration course through a designated accredited program. In addition to this external certification, we require staff to complete comprehensive agency-developed education and training tailored to our specific policies and procedures to meet statute requirements.

This training has enhanced staff knowledge, improved compliance, and reinforced our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of client safety and care.



Lisa's family includes her partner, David; her ex-husband and his husband; 3 sons and spouses/partners and 6 grandsons

BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

LISA FOBBE | CHAIR

Board Member Since 2017



What would you like the CMMHC community to know about you?

I have spent the past 25 years serving in elected roles and/or working at the local, state, and national levels, helping shape policy that supports individuals and strengthens communities through collaboration and thoughtful leadership. That work has been deeply meaningful and continues to influence how I show up today.

I'm now trying to be semi-retired! This includes spending more time with my family, especially my three sons and their families, including six energetic and wonderful grandsons who keep life full and keep me active! I also have the privilege of chairing three non-profit boards, including CMMHC, where I remain closely connected to work that matters deeply to me.

Mental health is not just part of my work—it's part of my life story. I lost my two brothers to challenges related to mental health and addiction. Those losses have shaped who I am and fuel my passion for ensuring others have access to the care, support, and dignity they deserve. It's what grounds me in this work every day.

I believe in meeting people where they are, listening first, and working together to build solutions that truly make a difference. I'm grateful to be part of an organization that does exactly that for so many individuals and families across our region.

How do you support your mental health?

Taking care of my mental health is something I'm continually working at—it doesn't come naturally or easily; it requires intention. I try to focus on balance—physical, emotional, and spiritual. Being outside is one of the important ways I reset, whether that's walking, hiking, cross-country skiing, canoeing, or paddleboarding. Nature has a way of grounding me and bringing a sense of calm. I also make great efforts to get enough sleep whenever I can. My faith is another cornerstone of my well-being. I'm involved in my faith community, especially through music, which brings me a deep sense of peace, connection, and joy.

What do you like most about your role as a board member?

What I value most is the opportunity to support an organization that is truly making a difference in people's lives, while working alongside a dedicated team of board members and staff who care deeply about this mission. I appreciate the ability to help shape direction and ensure we are responsive to the needs of our communities, while also supporting the incredible professionals who carry out this work every single day.

What are three words you would use to describe CMMHC?

Compassionate-Relevant-Transformational



ORGANIZATION INSIGHTS

Throughout the year, we'll be spotlighting one of CMMHC's core values each quarter—sharing what it means, how it shows up in our work, and why it matters to the people and communities we serve.

Hope is present in everything we do.

At CMMHC, hope isn't just something we talk about—it's something we carry into every interaction. It's there when someone reaches out for support for the first time. It's there when a family begins to understand better what their loved one is experiencing. And it's there in the steady encouragement our team offers each day. Even during difficult times, we believe change is possible, and every person has strengths worth building on.

CMMHC's Core Values



Hope is present in everything we do.



Our passion for healthier mental health drives us to never give up on Clients, the Community, or each other.



Our person-centered approach creates an environment for healing and recovery.



We are stronger together and see challenges as opportunities for collaboration and growth.

Hope also shapes how we show up as an organization. We invest in tools, training, and partnerships that make care more accessible and more effective. We celebrate progress—whether it's a major milestone or a small but meaningful step forward. Most importantly, we remind the people we serve, and each other, that no one has to face challenges alone. When we lead with hope, we create space for healing, growth, and possibility across our community.



In Memory of Amy Kemmetmueller

We are saddened to share that Amy Kemmetmueller passed away on March 20. Amy has been a valued member of our Monticello ACT team since 2024, and we will deeply miss her presence. Please keep her family, friends, and co-workers in your thoughts during this difficult time.

WELCOME to the New Director of Crisis & Community-Based Services

We are thrilled to announce Jenna Reed's promotion from Crisis Residential Supervisor to Director of Crisis. Jenna has quickly emerged as a strong leader in crisis services and brought valuable director-level experience to CMMHC.

"In my new role, I am excited to continue to support the lifesaving and life-changing work our Crisis team does. A mental health crisis can be experienced by anyone at any time in their life; as a helper, it truly is an honor to be invited to walk alongside someone in their darkest time, holding hope for them until they're able to do so again."

Jenna Reed





NORTH STAR EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR



At the Impact Forum, our CEO, Jessica Brandon, had the honor of announcing Mary Linn as the 2025 North Star Employee of the Year! Mary has devoted more than 30 years to CMMHC through her work in Outpatient Mental Health services, making a lasting impact on countless clients, colleagues, and our organization as a whole. She received numerous heartfelt nominations celebrating her exceptional dedication, compassion, and the many ways she exemplifies CMMHC's Purpose, Vision, and Mission. Take a moment to congratulate Mary the next time you see her and thank her for her extraordinary service and the meaningful work she continues to do every day.

Mary lives and breathes the principles of infant mental health. She has long displayed a simple sign on her door: "Always have the baby in mind." But this principle is not just something she displays; it is something she lives. In every consultation, Mary consistently centers on the needs of the infant or young child, regardless of whether the case focuses directly on them. She recognizes the critical importance of the parallel process and the emotional experiences of providers and caregivers working with young children. Mary has been a steadfast advocate for reflective supervision, offering a supportive space for clinicians navigating the intense emotional terrain of this work. Whether supporting a therapist through personal grief, infertility, new parenthood, or burnout, Mary shows up with presence, authenticity, and deep care.
-Tylor Cummings, Clinic Manager, St. Cloud & Waite Park

Employees, clients, local school personnel, and the general public nominated 20 individuals from across the agency for Employee of the Year. Nominees included Beatrice Barkon, Ashley Bergs, Sara Pfleuger, Dexter Hanson, Michelle Johnson, Kaitlyn Lewis, Brittany Liberty, Jamie Lynn, Paula McCartney, Monique Miller, Allison Netter, Gabrielle Ouedraogo, Jenna Reed, Johnny Suppon, Jo Tornell, Lauren Voss, Tammy Wedde, and Laura Williams.



Nominees & Leadership Team





ANNUAL IMPACT FORUM

In January, employees and Leadership Team members came together to reflect on the meaningful impact of CMMHC's work and look ahead to an exciting year in 2026. The event included a CMMHC sweatshirt and keychain giveaway, the 2025 year-in-review, 2026 initiatives, a question-and-answer segment, client success stories, and lunch (with fabulous pie). The highlight of the morning was the announcement of Mary Linn as the North Star Employee of the Year, along with the acknowledgment of award nominees. A huge thank you to all the employees who participated!



CLIENT STORY

This story is about a family receiving Early Intervention Family Services (EIFS), which supports healthy parent-child attachment and development to prevent emotional, behavioral, and psychological problems for children under age six and their caregivers.



A mother and child who had experienced trauma and dysregulation came in seeking EIFS services. The child would at times run from room to room, hit, and throw things, and his mom would have panic attacks, requiring multiple staff interventions in the office lobby. Child-Parent Psychotherapy helped to identify their trauma and work on repairing their sense of security and predictability. The child changed his behavior completely from looking like he had possible ADHD to being a more emotionally stable, articulate child who used toys to express things he had seen.

During this process, staff also reached out to the child's dad, whom CMMHC previously cared for. The father learned about CMMHC services to help his child and got involved, too. He shared his history of trauma through playing with his son, and was able to get some healing, too. He explored various toys, and when offered a temporary tattoo, this rough-tough tattooed parent chose one for himself.

This case is a reminder that the body holds the story for parents and children, and that all behavior has meaning. "It is not what is wrong with you, but what happened to you."

VIRTUAL GRIEF GROUP - NOW AVAILABLE

This 7-week support group provides a compassionate and supportive space for adults who have experienced the loss of a loved one and are seeking connection, understanding, and coping strategies. Participants will have the opportunity to process their grief alongside others navigating similar experiences. Individuals must complete a Client Comprehensive Evaluation (COMP) before participation to ensure the group is a good fit and meets each participant's therapeutic needs.

Julie Bengtson, MA, a Clinical Trainee in our Buffalo, MN office, facilitates this group and brings experience supporting individuals through grief and loss. **Contact 763.682.4400 for more information.**



CIRCLE OF SECURITY PARENTING GROUP

Circle of Security Parenting Group

Be Bigger, Stronger, Kinder, and Wiser Parents

Circle of Security (COS) is an evidence-based parenting approach that helps caregivers better understand their child's emotional needs and behavior. This group offers practical tools for strengthening the parent-child relationship, supporting emotional growth, and creating a sense of safety and connection, leading to greater confidence for children and more satisfaction for parents.

Who Should Attend:
This group is for parents and caregivers of children of all ages who want to build stronger relationships, better understand their child's emotional needs, and gain practical tools for supporting behavior and emotional regulation. Participants will learn alongside other parents in a supportive, interactive group setting.

Referral & Registration:
For children who are current CMMHC clients, caregivers will need a brief Comprehensive Evaluation for insurance billing. Our team will assist caregivers with getting established as needed. Please call 320.230.0611 for support. If the parent or caregiver is already an established client, referrals may be made directly to the group.

Group Information
Date: Wed, April 27 - June 10
Time: 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM
Location: Zoom Meeting
Facilitator: Mary Lutz, MS, LP (M448) (11)
Format:
• 8 weekly sessions
• One hour each
• Interactive education, videos, and guided discussion

To learn more about this program, visit our Circle of Security website or call 320.230.0611 for a free PDF for you.

CMMHC
Central Minnesota Health Care

CMMHC began offering an 8-week program for parents looking to strengthen their connection with their child while learning practical tools for responding to challenging emotions and behaviors. The group includes guided discussions with other parents and the group leader, interactive activities, and short videos with some reading and writing components.

For children who are current CMMHC clients, caregivers will need a brief Comprehensive Evaluation for insurance billing. Our team can assist caregivers with getting established as needed. Please call 320.230.0611 for support. If the parent or caregiver is already an established client, they may submit a referral directly to the group. A Circle of Security video introduction is available for those interested.



CMMHC IN THE COMMUNITY

CMMHC'S COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION FROM JANUARY THROUGH MARCH INCLUDES

EVENTS

Winter Carnival (Sherburne County United Way) at the Boys & Girls Club in Elk River

Foley Community Connect at Foley High School



PANELS & PRESENTATIONS

Mental Health 101 (Presentation)

St. Cloud Chamber Leadership
Dr. Steven Loos, Chief Clinical Officer

Relationships Matter: How Connection Supports Mental Health At Work (Presentation)

St. Cloud Technical & Community College
Dr. Steven Loos, Chief Clinical Officer

Organizational and Vicarious Trauma (Presentation)

Ramsey County Mental Health Division Leadership
Dr. Steven Loos, Chief Clinical Officer

Recovery Community Network Monthly Meeting (Presentation)

Chad Bösl, Director of Training & Outreach, Susan Fuchs-Hoeschen, Director of Rehabilitative Services, Dexter Hanson, Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Buffalo Strong Community Panel: Crisis Response (Panel)

Sara Pflueger, Crisis Program Manager, Jenna Reed, Director of Crisis & Community-Based Services, and Sara Pflueger, Crisis Program Manager

Relationships Matter: How Connection Supports Mental Health At Work (Presentation)

St. Cloud Technical & Community College
Dr. Steven Loos, Chief Clinical Officer

National Civics Bee

Our very own Dexter Hanson, Marketing & Communications Coordinator, served as a judge for the regional National Civics Bee held in March, hosted by the Monticello and Elk River Chambers of Commerce. It was exciting to be a part of the community's efforts to encourage civic knowledge and engagement among middle school students.





NEW!

CMMHC SERVICE SPOTLIGHT EMAIL

CMMHC now sends an email twice monthly to community referral partners with up-to-date information for referring clients. This communication provides information on service availability by program, upcoming community events, client success stories, referral procedures, and details about CMMHC services. If you know of referral sources in our community who could benefit from receiving this weekly update email, please send the info to communications@cmmhc.org to add them to the list.

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COMING SOON!

CMMHC'S NEW BLOG

This ongoing feature will highlight the educational tools, information resources, and community connections CMMHC provides, exploring topics related to mental health, substance use, and crisis mental health for individuals and families across Central Minnesota. At times, we will include reflections from our Leadership Team to provide insight into trends and the lived experience of those we serve. This series will explore how CMMHC's four pillars come together in real, meaningful ways—through stories, insights, and resources that reflect our commitment to making mental health *healthier*.

We hope that you'll take a look and share with others.





PEER PERSPECTIVE

Our Peer Support Specialists share their unique views on healing and recovery to reach individuals with similar mental and chemical health challenges.

The Start of a Million Other Journeys

Have you ever started from scratch? All our experiences or journeys start from the beginning, or as some say, working your way from the bottom up. My journey through my restaurant and service career, my recovery journey, and even my journey to become a mental health provider had to start somewhere near the bottom, and I worked my way up.

My journey as a mental health provider began with a couple of months as support staff at CMMHC. It was not the bottom, but the beginning, where I got my foot in the door and started my new career. Three months later, they offered me a position as a Certified Peer Support Specialist. It wasn't until I had completed extensive training, years of clinical hours, and countless learning experiences that I earned the status of Mental Health Practitioner. During my time at CMMHC, I have worked in six different programs within the agency and continue to work my way "up."

I am telling you all this because this year I am starting from scratch again. I have found that new path and a new beginning of a continuing journey. I have made it this far on a G.E.D. and life experience, and I have come as far as I can without a college education. At forty-four, I am starting my first semester of college. I know it's going to be a long journey, but once again I am starting from scratch and working my way toward the degree I want to attain. What I've learned from past journeys is that it's worth it.

We all must start somewhere, and it will happen numerous times in our lives. You may be nervous, excited, scared, or eager, among other feelings, but if you look back at other beginnings, and other journeys, and see how far you've come. It will help you to see how far you can go, even when life doesn't go exactly as planned. Finding that new starting point of your new journey is never out of reach.

Alex Martinez, MHP, CPSS (He/Him/His)
Mental Health Practitioner/Certified Peer Support Specialist
St. Cloud Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS/ SERVICES SPOTLIGHT

Peer Support Specialist Services

Did you know that CMMHC can cover the cost of Peer Support Specialists training? Late last year, CMMHC's Executive Leadership approved funding for two-week Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) training through **Recovery Innovations** for new applicants. Applicants must first confirm that they meet Behavioral Health Practitioner criteria (either a degree or a specified number of supervised hours in the field, 2000 or 4000, depending on the applicant's education). New employees must complete the course and receive certification to continue their employment with CMMHC.

Through paid Peer Support Specialist training, CMMHC removes barriers to employment and strengthens its ability to recruit and retain high-quality peer staff. If you know anyone who may be interested, encourage them to apply, and our HR Team will reach out to them.

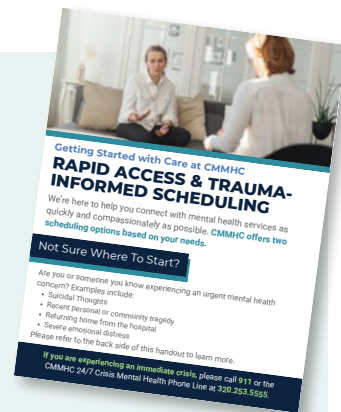
We Make It Easier to Get Started with Care at CMMHC

We know that reaching out for support isn't always easy. That's why we have simple, flexible ways to help people connect with care when they need it most.

Rapid Access Scheduling is a great option for individuals who are ready to take the first step. It allows people to schedule initial Comprehensive Evaluations or Diagnostic Assessments on a rotating two-week schedule, helping reduce wait times and get services started sooner.

For those going through especially difficult or overwhelming situations, **Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) Scheduling** offers quicker access to support. This option is available for individuals who have experienced a personal or community tragedy, are returning home from the hospital, or are struggling with suicidal thoughts or intense emotional distress. With TIC Scheduling, we can see most people within 1–2 business days.

These scheduling options make care easier to access for our community. To get started, clients can contact one of our offices: <https://cmmhc.org/locations>.



COMMUNITY RESOURCES FEATURE



This new specialized clinic opened in St. Cloud in October, focusing on diagnostic evaluations and individualized Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy for young children on the autism spectrum. It offers child-friendly, one-on-one therapy sessions, family support, and counseling. Their professional team works with children with autism and their families to develop skills, create connections, and instill confidence. You can find more information to help a child or provide the link to someone you know at <https://caravelautism.com/autism-center/st-cloud>.

HELP A CHILD



THINGS TO WATCH FOR



**DENTAL
CLINIC**
June 22nd
Buffalo Office

Thank you to everyone who contributes information to the newsletter every quarter. Your assistance makes this publication possible.

DONOR RECOGNITION

Thank you to the following individuals and organizations for their monetary and in-kind donations to CMMHC.

Anonymous - 3	Monticello Women of Today
Centra Sota Cooperative	Pleasureland, Inc.
City of Waite Park	Molly Thompson
Genevieve Grobe	
Enterprise Mobility	

We apologize if we unintentionally omitted a donor. Please contact CMMHC (development@cmmhc.org) so we can acknowledge you in the next newsletter.



This Mental Health Awareness Month in May, we invite you to be part of the CMMHC story.

Your gift—of any size—can help a child feel safe, a family feel supported, or an individual feel seen and valued.

Please consider making your donation today at <https://cmmhc.org/donate> or mailing it to:

CMMHC Development Department
411 3rd St N
Waite Park, MN 56387

MAKE A DONATION

