



Bert Nash
2021
ANNUAL
REPORT





Grateful for Bert Nash.

Over the last 71 years, the Bert Nash Center has had to adapt and adjust to the changing needs of our community. That's never been truer than over the past two years.

Last year at this time, we were learning how to navigate the pandemic. And I was so inspired by our Bert Nash Center team and how we came together as a staff and overcame countless obstacles in order to continue to deliver mental health services to our community.

As you know, we have continued to deal with the physical and mental impacts of the pandemic. But I couldn't be more impressed by our BNC team and their continued dedication to provide vital mental health services to those who need it the most, especially during these extraordinary times we have been living in.

I also want to share how incredibly fortunate and grateful we are to have a community that rallies behind mental health. And each of you are part of this celebration. This pandemic has truly caused a mental health crisis in our country, and here in Douglas County we are seeing an unprecedented amount of folks needing help. The financial support of our contributors has truly impacted the way we can continue and expand our ability to respond to this increasing demand for care. Here are some examples from the past year:

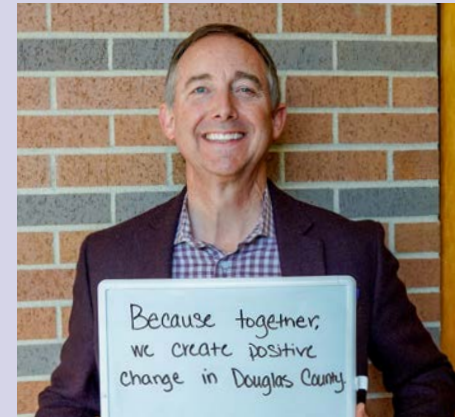
- We expanded our hours of operation.
- We opened the Transitions supportive housing facility.
- We trained a record number of people in Mental Health First Aid.

- Our team taught 72 classes and trained 838 first aiders. Kudos to Julia Gaughan who leads those life-saving efforts!
- We hosted 31 Discover Bert Nash tours and had 280 community members attend and learn more about the Center.
- We committed to working with an equity consultant and doing the important work of inclusion, diversity, equity and belonging.
- We received an almost \$2 million grant that will be used to expand our services.
- We moved all of our community support services to the Medical Arts Building down the street to make room for our expanding staff, additional services, and improve our team members working experiences.
- And work continues on construction of the Treatment and Recovery Center, which will open in the summer of 2022

That's just a short list of all the accomplishments in 2021.

Our theme for 2021 for the Bert Nash Center was Live With Gratitude. I am grateful for our team members at the Bert Nash Center, who despite the pressures and numerous challenges we continue to face during an ongoing pandemic, their resolve and commitment remain steadfast. And I am grateful for our wonderful supporters and donors. Because of you, we can fulfill our mission to respond to needs, restore lives, and build a healthy community.

Patrick Schmitz, CEO



I couldn't be prouder of our BNC team and their continued dedication to provide vital mental health services to those who need it the most, especially during these extraordinary times we are living in.

Bert Nash committed to the important work of racial equity.

This story was published in September 2021

In June 2020, days after the murder of George Floyd, Bert Nash Center CEO Patrick Schmitz issued a statement on behalf of the organization in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Part of the statement included a commitment by the Center's Executive Team to "undertake the important work of evaluating how implicit and unconscious bias are at work within our organization. This is a combination of personal work and organizational work, which we are committed to doing."

In addition, the Bert Nash Center CEO said, "We will provide training and support for our staff to serve our community in culturally appropriate ways, recognizing with humility that this also means increasing our commitment to hiring a diverse team to serve our diverse community.

"I can and will do better. We can and will do better."

As part of the ongoing commitment to continue the important work of racial equity, the Center is working with Dr. Danica Moore, equity consultant, and her organization, 4tified Educational Practices.

"I am excited to see where this goes and to watch folks develop in the work," said Dr. Moore, who has also facilitated learning with Lawrence Public Schools, Boys and Girls Club, and served on panels with LMH Health.

Dr. Moore, who came to Lawrence in 2002, had worked with Bert Nash Center in-school therapists in the past through the WRAP (Working to Recognize Alternative Possibilities) program when she was involved with Lawrence Public Schools.

"But I didn't know about all of the different Bert Nash departments and how they function," she said. "It has been eye-opening to see how much this organization has impacted and influenced our community."

One of her first orders of business was to meet with each of the Bert Nash Center teams individually to hear directly from the BNC staff.

"It's helpful for me to sit down with all the various departments," Dr. Moore said. "These initial dialogues really help me understand an organization, to see what some common themes are, and to find out how people's jobs align with equity."

In her role as an equity facilitator and coach, Dr. Moore will work with the Bert Nash Center over the next three years, perhaps longer.

"A relationship with an organization develops over time," she said. "To work toward equity takes a consistent collaboration over time. They didn't want this to be a one-and-done, check the box and move on. They wanted something that would be sustainable."

Dr. Moore's work will involve the Bert Nash Center leadership team all the way through to the frontline staff.

"One of the first things we're going to do is look at the strategic plan that is being drafted and think about how everyone engages in the mission statement in a way that carries out equity," she said.

Robyn Burton, Bert Nash Center Community Engagement Coordinator, who is biracial — her mother is Indian and her dad is Black — is excited to see the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Belonging (IDEB) work the Center is doing.

"I grew up in a primarily white town, school, and neighborhood. Growing up I always wished there would be more people that looked like me in those communities, but I never really got to experience that before I left home. I want to be able to work to create a more inclusive and diverse environment

“Diversity work is important because I truly believe that every person deserves to be seen, heard, and respected. Especially in the field of mental health and within Bert Nash, our mission is not fully fulfilled if we are not working toward making sure every individual has that experience when they access our services.”

that allows my children to feel a sense of belonging that I never got to have,” Robyn said. “Working at an organization that is actively working to grow and be better as it relates to IDEB work was No. 1 on my list when applying to jobs, and I get to see firsthand what Bert Nash is doing to make these changes. As a community health organization, it is so important to constantly work to serve all community members, regarding race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or ability.”

Bert Nash Center therapist Samadia Saquee, who is Black/Sierra Leonean, said, “To me, diversity work is important because I truly believe that every person deserves to be seen, heard, and respected. Especially in the field of mental health and within Bert Nash, our mission is not fully fulfilled if we are not working toward making sure every individual has that experience when they access our services. My hope is that people walk away feeling like they were treated like a human being and that they felt understood.”

Samadia Saquee

Robyn Burton



Dr. Danica Moore

Photo: Blu Artistry Photography, Nikki Campbell

Minority Mental Health Month highlights awareness and struggles.

This story was published in September 2021

THE PANDEMIC has impacted the physical wellbeing of people in different ways. It has also impacted the mental wellbeing of communities in different ways.

That was especially true for the BIPOC (Black and Indigenous people of color) communities.

"The past year and a half with the pandemic have been pretty intense for people of color," said Alex Kimball Williams. "You're talking about people that are very familial in their cultures. The pandemic took away that chance to congregate."

July is Minority Mental Health Month. It's a time to bring awareness to the unique struggles that racial and ethnic minority communities face regarding mental health.

"There are very big differences between different racial groups in terms of how they relate to mental health," said Alex, who is the Health Equity Planner for Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health.

Alex identifies as Alaskan Native and Black. Her husband is white.

"For the Native population, we definitely view health as being holistic and mental health is connected to the spiritual and physical parts of us," Alex said. "For the Black community, you aren't going to see suicide be among the top 10 causes of death. For Black Americans, you're going to see homicide, you're going to see other kinds of violence and tragedy. For a lot of Black folks, their mental health is deeply impacted by police brutality and oppression. This is a community that prides itself on being survivors."

But that can be a barrier to talking about mental health.

"As a community that takes pride in our ancestors for making it through so that we could be here today, to admit that that's something internal going on that we need help with, it goes against that identity of being resilient and tough," Alex said.

There can be other barriers to receiving mental health services. Language can be a barrier. So can the lack of health insurance. And the idea of therapy can be scary.

"There are huge unknowns and of course the fear that they are going to be further traumatized through white therapy," Alex said. "Things that have happened historically have bred mistrust of medical and mental health practitioners."

People of color oftentimes prefer to be seen by a medical or mental health professional who is a person of color.

"People of color like to see someone who looks like them," Alex said. "Like when I was working with the vaccination clinics and I would go around and talk with people of color, the first question would be, did you get vaccinated? Just getting representation from people who look like them, talks like them, people they can trust, that definitely goes a long way as far as spreading awareness around certain communities."



“We were challenged to examine what was in place within our organizations and the broader community — what was working and what wasn’t.”

THIS PAST YEAR WAS DIFFICULT for the BIPOC communities not only because of the pandemic, but also because of the trauma of racial injustice and systemic racism.

“When we think about why we are engaging in this dialog of health equity, we all can agree that the pandemic exposed health inequities and forced us to rethink our intentions and actions around nearly every aspect of our lives,” said Erica Hill, the Director of LMH Health Foundation Finance & Strategic Initiatives, LMH Health Equity, Inclusion and Diversity and President of the Lawrence Board of Education. “We were challenged to examine what was in place within our organizations and the broader community — what was working and what wasn’t.”

Strides have been made in recent years to destigmatize the subject of mental illness and treatment, but many people in underrepresented communities face internal stigma when it comes to getting help. Erica, who is Black, said there are many factors that contribute to the stigma.

“Seeking mental health care could be viewed as a weakness, running counter to the survivalist or resilient mentality in our culture,” Erica said. “Reluctance to seek both physical and mental health care may be attributed to a general distrust of the medical community because of historical injustices, such as being exploited by the medical community in the name of medical advancement. To gain trust medical communities could start by



listening and seeking to understand and being intentional about addressing racial inequities and health disparities.”

Having a community wide strategy to advance healthy equity is a key to sustainable, meaningful change.

“Advancing health equity should be a foundational element of our community, meaning it should be at the core of all decisions, policies, programs and strategic plans,” Erica said. “I’m fortunate to serve alongside my peers as a Unified Command Equity Impact Advisor to ensure our community is centering equity in our COVID responses. I am optimistic that this structure can be used as a model to continue this work beyond COVID. As a community, we have to be intentional about addressing inequities. Being intentional will get us on the right pathway to get us closer to where we want to go, and who we want to be as a community.”



WITH A BACKGROUND as a football player and coach and in law enforcement, Myrone Grady is accustomed to projecting strength and toughness.

"I'm a football guy, I always have one more rep in me," said Myrone, who is Black and a lieutenant with the Lawrence Police Department. "Coming from a guy who played college football, who's been a college football coach, and then got into law enforcement, there's a lot of big personalities, egos and alpha male personality that are involved in those activities."

But even tough guys need help sometimes. For Myrone, one of those times came when his mother died more than 10 years ago.

"I maybe didn't believe that anxiety and that kind of thing were real until it happened to me," Myrone said. "When I went to work, I could always block that stuff out. I could fake it so well. When I was going through my difficulties, nobody really knew. But I was struggling. People I worked with had no idea. I caught myself kind of being upset that nobody could see it, but I couldn't be mad because I had hidden it so well. That was eye opening

for me. If you know you're struggling, it's up to you to get help. You have to be selfish with your own self-care."

For Myrone's own self-care and mental health, he went down what he called a "path of self-discovery." He adopted a lifestyle of mindfulness and meditation that helped him get through the tough time he was experiencing.

"I tell people all the time, I feel like meditation saved my life," he said.

This past year, during the pandemic as well as with the presidential election and the social unrest happening, Myrone's mental health again began to suffer.

He decided he needed to step back from social media and focus on things that were the priorities in his life, like his family.

"During the pandemic, and specifically with all of the stuff that was going on this time last summer, one thing I did for my mental health was I unplugged," Myrone said. "I deleted my Facebook account. I focused in on things that would help ground me and center me, the things that I could control. I started a garden, more than anything for my mental health. I went back to a simpler life where there wasn't so much social media pressure to live up to whatever expectations others have of you. That was key for me. Nobody forced me to do it; I just felt like it was time. I was finding myself not being happy by something I chose to use."

Myrone has returned to social media, but on his own terms, he said. He's also continued to practice mindfulness and meditation. And he's learning to open up more about how he's feeling.

"Now that I've gotten older, it's gotten easier to have those conversations," Myrone said. "We have to be able to talk about the hard things and to help each other get through it. That's all part of being part of a community of like-minded people who care for one another."

"I maybe didn't believe that anxiety and that kind of thing were real until it happened to me."

“I felt very helpless. Everything felt like it was too hard. I felt like I couldn’t ever get to a manageable level.”

SONIA JORDAN HAD A BABY — her third — in January 2020. She planned on being off work for eight weeks for maternity leave.

Then the pandemic changed everything.

“I came back early from maternity leave to work on the pandemic,” Sonia said.

Sonia, who is Hispanic, returned to work part time four or five weeks after her daughter was born. But thanks to her agency’s infant at work policy, Sonia was able to bring her daughter to work.

“I was glad for the opportunity to have her here at work, but it was really challenging to do all of the work that was being required at the time because of the pandemic and to have a baby strapped to my chest,” Sonia said.

Sonia is the director of informatics for Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health. Her department did the epidemiology work during the pandemic, as well as the disease investigation, isolation and quarantine orders, contact investigation, and health statistics.

Prior to the pandemic, Sonia was someone who had anxiety as well as depression and minor obsessive compulsive disorders. The pandemic intensified all of those feelings.

“I definitely noticed my anxiety was highly increased, but I also noticed that my OCD tendencies were really increased as well,” Sonia said. “I recognized what was happening, and I have strategies for how to manage it, but I couldn’t summon the willpower to do those strategies. I felt very helpless. Everything felt like it was too hard. I felt like I couldn’t ever get to a manageable level. That was a hard period of time, and I think it was a hard period of time for a lot of us.”

Sonia turned to a book by Dr. Stephen Illardi, titled the “Depression Cure.” Dr. Illardi is a professor of psychology and clinical researcher at the University of Kansas.

“I started to slowly but surely to implement a lot of the things he talks



about in the book,” Sonia said. “The hard thing when you’re depressed is you don’t really have a lot of motivation to be doing self-improvements. At first, I didn’t think it was going to work, but at some point, the clouds began to lift. For me, there was a pattern of recovery where I felt like I was making progress, but it wasn’t linear or direct.”

Sonia’s mental health is doing better, but it is still a process.

“I think there are a lot of people who are struggling. It should not surprise that our populations of color would struggle more with their mental health because these are populations that are already under a huge amount of stress from things like systemic racism,” Sonia said. “We have inequities and disparities existing in our community based on our ethnic populations. All of that becomes more intense during times of high stress like a pandemic. We need to give each other just an immense amount of grace in that process of trying to figure out what life looks like in the post-COVID era.”

Suicide prevention awareness: “There is always help.”

This story was published in September 2021 for Suicide Awareness Prevention Month



Anyone struggling with thoughts of suicide should call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255 or (785) 841-2345.

JORDAN OTT came into his dad’s bedroom. It was 3 in the morning.

“Mom keeps calling,” Jordan told his dad, Elwood. “She’s crying.”

When Elwood called his ex-wife, she told him the news. Their son, Isaiah, had killed himself. He was 16.

That was June 6, eight years ago. Younger brother Jordan was 11 at the time. He’s 19 now.

“The day itself is always kind of a roller coaster of emotions, that it’s another year,” Elwood said. “As much as it makes me upset or sad, I still look back on those times with him and it makes me smile.”

Isaiah would have celebrated his birthday 25th birthday on Aug. 25.

“I was told that loved ones live on in our hearts and are always around. I believe it,” Elwood said in a Facebook post he wrote on Isaiah’s birthday. “This healing journey hasn’t been easy, yet doing the work has been worth it.”

For Elwood, the healing journey is an ongoing process.

“Honestly, I didn’t do it the healthiest way early on; I just buried my feelings, stayed busy and wouldn’t allow myself to process it. It eventually weighed me down and took its toll on me,” Elwood said. “Counseling has helped. Journaling has helped. Exercise has helped. Reaching out to people has helped. Also, reflecting on and embracing the good times. That’s what has helped me survive.”

The loss of his brother motivated Jordan to reach out to others who may be hurting. Jordan organized a fundraiser walk in March 2019 in memory of his brother to raise awareness about suicide. Jordan was a junior in high school at the time. About 300 people attended the event at the Boys

and Girls Club of Lawrence Teen Center. Organizations like the Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center and Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ were part of the event. Jordan is a group leader at the Boys and Girls Club Teen Center; Elwood works for the Boys and Girls Club of America.

“The event was just a way to carry on his name and to give back to my community,” Jordan said. “After losing my brother, I just wanted to let people know they are not alone. You never know what somebody might be going through. It’s OK to feel how you feel. Life can be hard, but there is always help. Don’t be afraid to ask for it.”



Jordan, left, and Elwood Ott hold a painting of Isaiah from when he was younger. The artist was Steven Grounds.

Amy Wempe Douglass, husband Jeremy, and son Dodge visit Hayleigh's gravesite.

THE ANNUAL DOUGLAS COUNTY FREE FAIR in August was always an important time for Hayleigh Wempe, a member of the Palmyra 4-H Club, who used to show her sheep during the livestock competition at the fair.

This year was different. Speaking to a group of 4-H'ers, Amy Wempe Douglass, Hayleigh's mom, shared a message her cousin Holly Swearingen, a behavioral health specialist at the Bert Nash Center, helped write:

"HQ (Hayleigh Quinn) had been struggling with depression and lost the fight to suicidal thoughts. There is a misconception that if we talk about depression and suicide, we are pushing those thoughts and actions into their head. That is not true. The more we talk to each other and our kids about those sad or scary thoughts the more help they can get to work through those inaccurate thoughts and win the battle. Everyone at some point in time has had a dark or depressed thought. Luckily most can fight it and know that the thoughts are inaccurate. However, not everyone, especially kids, are able to process what is going on in their mind. That's why I strongly urge you to talk to your kids and each other about the sad things we think so they realize no one is alone."

"The more I talk about it, the more therapeutic it is."

Hayleigh died by suicide on Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021. She was 15 and a freshman at Baldwin High School and a member of the wrestling, volleyball and softball teams.

"I wanted people to know what happened," said Amy, who is a nurse. "I always said I was never ashamed of Hayleigh in life, and I was not going to be ashamed of the way she died."

Amy said Hayleigh had engaged in self-harm behaviors before and had been seeing a therapist. Amy used to have frank conversations with Hayleigh about her mental health.

"Suicide is a permanent solution to temporary problems. I don't know where I heard that, but I remember telling Hayleigh that very thing," Amy said. "I wanted to try and normalize mental health for her. I told her there was no shame in talking about it."

Amy has been up front when talking with Hayleigh's friends.

"I found out after the fact that on social media Hayleigh had made some veiled threats about hurting herself," Amy said. "The night she took her life she made suicidal threats. None of her friends told anybody. I know there was a lot of guilt. I told them, this was a decision that Hayleigh made, and nobody but Hayleigh made, but she made it on wholly false information, just untruths about herself. It was important for those kids to understand it had nothing to do with them."

Amy said talking about her daughter's death is helpful with her own healing process. She also hopes it will bring mental health out in the open and help others who may be struggling.

"The more I talk about it, the more therapeutic it is for me," Amy said. "I also think it's important for her friends to see where her head was. She made this decision based on things they know were patently untrue. If we can stop anybody else from making this same choice, being open and talking about Hayleigh's story will be worth it."



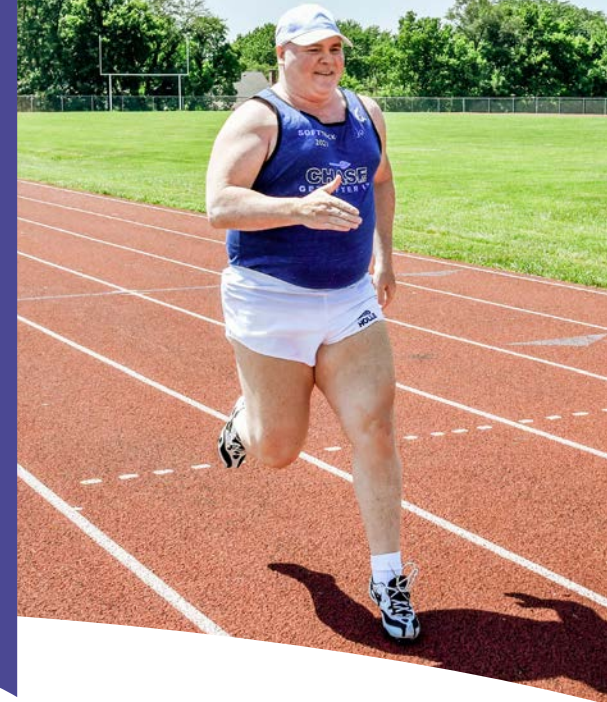
MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID is a course designed to help people from all backgrounds learn about the signs and symptoms of various mental health challenges and crises. One important component of Mental Health First Aid is learning about the warning signs of suicide and how to ask the critical question, "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" so that a person might actively engage with someone to prevent an attempt. Mental Health First Aid helps people develop their empathy skills and increases abilities to connect with friends and family members who are struggling. Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center is now offering MHFA virtually. A class listing is available online: bertnash.org/mental-health-first-aid-program.



CHRIS

ALWAYS WANTED
TO BE A
RUNNER.

NOT ONLY IS HE
A RUNNER NOW,
HE'S ALSO A
MEDAL WINNER.



CHRIS, who has been a Bert Nash Center client since 2008, earned a bronze medal in the men's age 50-54 100-meter dash at the 2021 Sunflower Games July 10 in Topeka. The week before the race, Chris, who is 50, said he felt prepared.

"I'm ready to go," he said. "I'm going to try the best I can. There are some really good competitors. I've got short legs, so I have to spin pretty fast to catch up to the people who have longer legs than me."

Chris tripped and fell at a race in 2018 and hadn't competed since then. But he wanted to compete again.

"I've continued to move toward my goals," Chris said.

His Bert Nash Center case manager, Lauren Alexander, helps him work toward meeting his specific life goals.

"She keeps me focused," Chris said.

Chris and Lauren meet weekly to check in and review his progress. Chris looks forward to their visits.

"I wish I could meet with my case manager twice a week," he said.

Lauren is proud of Chris for working to meet his goals.

"She promised me before the Sunflower Games whether win, lose or draw, we would go to Wendy's and get chicken sandwiches," Chris said. "I'm going to take her up on it."

When Chris first started coming to the Bert Nash Center, he kept to himself.

"I didn't speak to people when I got here," he said.

But over time, he has opened up. He enjoys talking with the front-desk staff at the Center.

"Socialization has been a big thing for him," Lauren said.

Chris plans to run again in next year's Sunflower Games. He may even compete in the 200 and 400 dashes, in addition to the 100. He will also compete in the Senior Games in September.

"It's always good to have something to look forward to that you're working toward," Lauren said to Chris. "It's just like your psychological journey. It's the 100-meter dash this year. But it's the 100-, 200- and 400-meter dash next year. You build up your tolerance, plus it's just good to be healthy.

"You just be the healthiest version of you," Lauren said to Chris.

BNC CLIENT RUNNING TOWARD THE HEALTHIEST VERSION OF HIMSELF

GRYFFIN CAME TO BERT NASH LOOKING FOR SUPPORT, AND FOUND IT.

WHEN GRYFFIN started coming to the Bert Nash Center for services, they found the help they needed. They also found a sense of connection and community.

"As a trans individual, especially someone nonbinary, I'm often the odd one out," Gryffin said. "I don't often get the chance to participate fully, there are parts of my experiences, my identity, which just don't fit."

After joining a trans dialectical behavior therapy group led by Bert Nash Center therapist Amy Hammer, Gryffin fits in. "That really was an aha moment. Suddenly I didn't have to explain or exclude my experiences," Gryffin said.

"They just got it. In this group, I have become more certain of myself."

Three years ago, when Gryffin began coming to the Bert Nash Center, they were at a low point.

"I've been depressed and anxious for as long as I can remember. I was miserable, but I was making it," Gryffin said. "And suddenly I couldn't do that anymore. I had heard good things about Bert Nash. I came here looking for some sort of support."

Gryffin began seeing therapist Emma Kaiser, a member of the Bert Nash Center's dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) team and found the support they needed.

"Emma and I have a really great relationship," Gryffin said. "Before I had this problem where I wouldn't tell my therapist the truth. I wanted to give them the best version of myself, which isn't the most honest version of myself. Now I'm able to just let my guard and say when I'm needing some support. And that's been wonderful."

When Gryffin came to the Bert Nash Center, they were feeling unstable and didn't have many personal connections. Through DBT, Gryffin has learned valuable life skills.

"I particularly benefit from DBT skill building," Gryffin said. "That has been really helpful in helping me navigate the intricacies of becoming a person and building for myself that life worth living that we talk about a lot in DBT."

Since they joined the trans DBT group, Gryffin has settled into their own identity. They came out publicly and began dating a trans woman. Gryffin and Audrey became partners and are now engaged.

"I have that stability and those strong relationships that I really longed for," Gryffin said. "I feel grateful for the connections that I've made through Bert Nash, the skills that I've learned, and the stability that I've gained."

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A LIFETIME OF TRAUMA: “RESILIENCE, REALLY, THAT’S THE KEY.”

This story was published in July 2021

FOR BONNIE CASTRO helping others is a way to help herself.

Bonnie is a Bert Nash Center Community Support Services case manager. Drawing upon her own recovery journey, she helps others who are going through mental health issues.

Bonnie has borderline personality disorder. Speaking from experience, Bonnie said, “It gets better. You learn skills. You learn ways to cope.”

June 27 was National PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) Awareness Day. For Bonnie, she has had a lifetime of dealing with trauma.

It began when she was 5 years old, and her single mom met a man who moved in.

“I’m just going to call it what it was, it was rape,” Bonnie said. “This went on for a very long time.”

Bonnie has a brother and two sisters who were also abused.

“We all endured the same trauma,” she said.

When Bonnie was 7, she told her mom what was happening. Her mom confronted the man who denied it and said Bonnie was lying. Bonnie said her mom believed the man.

“I had this moment of severe invalidation,” Bonnie said. “I was like nobody loves me and I don’t want to be here anymore. That was the moment I started feeling suicidal.”

When Bonnie was 16, she tried to kill herself. She took a bunch of pills and drank half a bottle of vodka. She had a near fatal overdose.

“I woke up the next morning alive,” she said. “At that point, I thought I probably needed help.”

Bonnie walked to her best friend’s house, which was nearby. Her friend wasn’t there, but her friend’s mom was home. The friend’s mom called an

ambulance. Bonnie spent two weeks in intensive care at University of Kansas Medical Center.

Bonnie confided to her grandmother that she wanted to kill herself. Her grandmother called Bonnie’s caseworker. For the next two years, Bonnie was institutionalized.

“I honestly didn’t think I had much time left on this earth,” Bonnie said. “There were flashbacks every night. I had really, really bad self-worth. I didn’t know why I was here.”

When she was 19 and a client at Wyandot Center for Community Behavioral Healthcare, Bonnie began working with a therapist named Amy Hammer and learning about dialectical behavior therapy (DBT). DBT is an evidence-based practice that combines strategies like mindfulness, acceptance and emotional regulation. It took time for Bonnie to embrace the goals of DBT.

“I might have been one of Amy’s worst clients. I think Amy might say that, too,” Bonnie said. “I fought against it all the way. I just had a mindset that I didn’t care. I didn’t believe in help, because my trauma was so severe.”

At some point, she did believe.

She was inspired by stories of people like Pat Deegan and Marsha Linehan, who both have powerful recovery stories and are leaders in the field of mental health recovery. Marsha is the developer of dialectical behavior therapy.

“I started yearning to get better,” Bonnie said. “There was this internal desire for change to happen.”

After working with Amy Hammer for four years, Bonnie decided she wanted to work in the mental health field. She started teaching skills to other



"I honestly didn't think I had much time left on this earth."

people that she had to use herself.

"Working with Amy was a big deal," Bonnie said. "She was very compassionate and validating, which is what I needed at the time."

Bonnie joined the Bert Nash Center team in August 2020 and reconnected with Amy who has been a DBT therapist at the Center since 2007.

Bonnie has found that by helping others, she helps herself.

"I'm in a really good place working for Bert Nash," Bonnie said. "I still have self-worth issues, and there's always going to be fleeting thoughts about the trauma. People with borderline personality disorder have to admit this, because it has to be normalized. I'm helping clients recognize it for themselves, like I have had to do for myself."

For Bonnie, recovery is a process.

"Picture a garden in your mind and these seeds get planted randomly and over time they grow," she said. "That's how it went for me; these seeds kept getting planted. And the more I worked in therapy, the more resiliency I built up. Resilience, really, that's the key."

From Bonnie, I want to thank the following people who also were a light in my darkness: Jane Magathan, Brenda Ulmer, Kay Hoffsomer, CJ Sullivan, Dr. Michael Leason, Sue Lewis, Simon Messmer, Amy Copeland, Randy Johnson, Marilyn Wherry, Cindy Taylor, Stephanie Mayberry and Brenda Rand. All these people provided me with opportunities and moments to improve myself. A special thanks to the consumer movement in Missouri; I learned healing can happen in huge numbers.

NOTE: Anyone struggling with thoughts of suicide should call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255 or (785) 841-2345.



KU FOOTBALL GREAT HAS MESSAGE FOR ATHLETES: IT'S OK TO ASK FOR HELP.

This story was published in September 2021



TONY SANDS spent his football career running away from opposing players.

But he couldn't run away from himself.

Football was his identity. But once his playing days were over, Tony, the second all-time leading rusher in Kansas history, was faced with figuring out who he was after football.

"My life was programmed around football," said Tony, whose 396 yards against Missouri in 1991 still stands as the Kansas single-game rushing record.

That transition from star football player to former football player was difficult.

"Those days of having a stadium full of people rooting for you, those days were over," Tony said. "It took me to some dark places. No one knew that I was close to taking a gun and ending my life. Because I didn't reach out to get help. Not that I didn't have people I could have talked to, but I was scared to open up to them. Now I always tell people, there is always somebody, you can talk to."

Tony shared his story during Drawing Up A Play For Mental Health: A Panel Discussion On Mental Health In Athletics. The Bert Nash Center event, sponsored by Holman Needle & Ink, was held Sept. 20 at the Lawrence Arts Center.

Other panelists included Darrell Stuckey, KU Director of Football Operations; Samantha Van Hoecke, KU pole vaulter, Dr. Mary Fry, KU School of Sports Psychology professor; Audrey Trowbridge, Lawrence High School track coach and Lawrence Free State social worker; and Nicole Stafford, Bert Nash Center Child and Family Services director.

In his new book, "I Was Before My Time," Tony shares his story — overcoming depression and suicidal thoughts and creating a healthy, successful life after football.

"First I had to accept that I had a problem that I needed to get corrected. What turned it around for me was my wife telling me that my life was bigger

than sports, that sports was just part of my life," Tony said. "When I started speaking to athletes, I found myself healing myself."

Football had taught Tony about mental toughness, to tough it out, to push through. That was the culture.

"You can't be an athlete and not be tough," Tony said. "So, we thought being tough was if I have something bothering me, I have to keep it inside and man up. Versus saying, I don't have all the answers and I need help."

Being Black also made it hard for Tony to talk about his mental health.

"Mental health was a taboo subject throughout the Black community," Tony said. "We were always told that what goes on in the home stays in the home, even if you might be experiencing some mental health issues. You're crazy, you have some screws loose upstairs, your elevator doesn't go all the way up, these were some of the stigmas that were attached to mental health."

As far as athletics, the sport with the highest rate of suicide is football.

"Football is more of that gladiator, you're in a coliseum-type mentality, and we take on that personality," Tony said. "But there's a difference between mental toughness and mental health. When I was going through my situation, even those closest to me were not aware of what I was going through. I was afraid if I did reach out, how it was going to be perceived."

Tony has a different message for athletes he talks with now.

"Even though we are successful athletes, at the end of the day we are humans who deal with issues just like everybody else. No matter how high you climb, no matter what you achieve, no matter how much money you make, it doesn't eliminate you from day-to-day problems that everyone goes through. Everybody has something they are dealing with," Tony said. "I want to be out in front of this and let athletes know that it is OK to ask for help."

"At the end of the day, it's about saving lives."

Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds

Bert Nash Center's Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds summer program had a great summer! Thank you to Program Manager Rhonda Stubbs and her entire summer program staff, including team leaders Jacob Hook and Cory Jones. And thank you to all the kids and their families for a great summer!

Special thanks to McGrew Real Estate for sponsoring the Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Summer Program. Brenda Johnston, McGrew Real Estate realtor, represented the agency at the summer program celebration. The children made a card thanking McGrew Real Estate for sponsoring the summer program. Thank you, McGrew Real Estate, for supporting our children's mental health and well-being!



A close-up photograph of a woman with blonde hair holding a small brown and white Chihuahua dog. The woman is wearing a dark jacket and has a cigarette in her hand, which is adorned with several rings. The dog is wearing a bright green shirt with the word 'BEST' visible. The background shows a tent and some outdoor equipment, suggesting a fair or festival setting.

Lending
a helping
hand.



Since 2006, the Bert Nash Center Homeless Outreach Team has been helping some of the most vulnerable among us.

“We’re just trying to help people, and it’s a privilege when they will actually let you come into their lives,” said Kelly Martin, a member of the Bert Nash Center Homeless Outreach Team. “They are just people who are trying to do their best to get by.”

The Bert Nash Center Homeless Outreach Team is funded through a partnership with the city of Lawrence and works with those who are experiencing homelessness.

During the pandemic, the number of people in Lawrence who are experiencing homelessness has grown. As a result, the Bert Nash Homeless Outreach Team continues to experience a high demand for services.

One person who is experiencing homelessness said of the Bert Nash Center’s Homeless Outreach Team: “They are the best bunch of people I’ve ever met. They’re good people. What I like about them is that they’re not actually here for the job, they like the job and they’re here. It makes a big difference. They do a lot for a lot of people out here.”

And you can help. \$100 can help buy a tent, sleeping bag, birth certificate, and state ID for one person experiencing homelessness. Donations can be made at bertnash.org/donate. Thank you for helping some of the most vulnerable of our community.



THEY ARE JUST
PEOPLE WHO ARE
TRYING TO DO THEIR
BEST TO GET BY.



from the GOVERNING BOARD

SHERIFF JAY ARMBRISTER "I've always strived to help those who cannot help themselves and Bert Nash embodies that so selflessly and wholly. I am honored to be a part of the Bert Nash family and look forward to serving our community."

GENE BAUER "We are so blessed to have the Bert Nash Center in our midst. Having a personal passion/commitment to mental health issues since graduate school, I feel that by serving on the BNC Board I am able to support its programs and offerings that are vital to the overall mental health of our community."

CLAY BRITTON "I support the work of Bert Nash because caring for the mental health of our family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers is one of the best ways we — as a community — can care for each other."

BRAD BURNSIDE "My involvement as a Governing Board member is based on the remarkable and powerful impact Bert Nash has on the lives of Douglas County residents."

JOSH DAVIS "The importance of mental health has been evident in my life both in the struggles as well as the ways that professionals can help improve it. I feel privileged to be able to help contribute to the Bert Nash mission which has such a positive impact for our community."

GENE DORSEY "Regardless of ability to pay, Bert Nash supports all of Douglas County with quality mental health care. We all face mental health challenges at some time in our life and it is important to keep Bert Nash strong for ourselves, our family, and our neighbors."

MATTHEW HERBERT "I support Bert Nash because I believe a community can only be great when a real, genuine effort is made by all members of the community to ensure that those most in need within the community are supported. From my experience and perspective, the mental health needs of a community are often put secondary to more immediate needs such as food and housing. As such, I've made it a personal goal of mine to support community mental health to make sure it is neither forgotten nor ignored."

KIRSTEN KUHN "Mental and behavioral health concerns have such wide-ranging impacts for people, now more than ever. Encouraging and providing proper care helps our community members achieve their educational, professional, and personal goals. Bert Nash supports a thriving Douglas County, which is why I support Bert Nash."

KRISTINA MEASE "I am very passionate about mental health awareness, and I know the work of the Bert Nash Community Health Center can impact the lives of those in our community in a powerful way. I look forward to serving the organization and helping to promote their efforts!"

LUCIA ORTH "I support Bert Nash Center because strong mental health services can change lives, families, and communities. I've seen this up close. As an attorney who in early years of law practice specialized in nonprofit law, I admire and support the mission of Bert Nash Center, its leadership, and superb staff, and want to make sure that the Center thrives."

TINA ROSENTHAL, CHAIR "I support Bert Nash because I want to help break the stigma associated with mental health. Bert Nash has served our community well and I want to ensure that they will be able to continue the good work they do in our community."

PATRICK SCHMITZ, CEO "As we continue to deal with the physical and mental impacts of the pandemic, I am thankful for our Bert Nash Center team and their continued dedication to provide vital mental health services to those in our community who need it the most, especially during these extraordinary times we are living in. Their resolve and passion remain steadfast, despite the pressures and challenges we continue to face. That is why the Bert Nash Center team is at the top of my gratitude list, today and every day!"

Additional Governing Board Members:
Barbara Ballard and Kathy and Matt Brown

from the **ENDOWMENT BOARD**

JERREE CATLIN, CHAIR "Good mental health is so important for a healthy quality of life and Bert Nash provides a wide range of services that support a healthy Lawrence community. Bert Nash services have always responded to those in crisis, but almost everyone experiences a time when they could benefit from the many services at Bert Nash. If you or someone you know have lost someone dear, are having problems with a child, or suffering from loneliness, Bert Nash offers services that can improve or restore your quality of life."

AMY CLARK "The importance of the collective well-being of an entire community has certainly been emphasized the past few years. Mental health is a critical part of the equation, and I am honored to help the community by supporting this amazing organization."

JANE FEVURLY "It is important that I support Bert Nash and their mission because good mental health is so critical to overall health. It is vital that mental healthcare receives the recognition and support that it deserves to make Douglas County a healthier community. Supporting Bert Nash is such a pleasure."

CHRIS HUTCHENS "Jalon and I feel so drawn to Bert Nash for what they provide to our community. There is such a massive gap between the number of people needing services and what is available that we just want to help anyway we can. The gap is money, education, and additional resources to help ease the burden of care."

JON JAMISON "Mental illness affects all walks of life. Bert Nash helps people to cope and to become healthier and live a life with more meaning. Supporting Bert Nash helps our community in many different ways, and it is an honor to be associated with so many professionals that truly care."

DANA KNORR "A strong community mental health system like Bert Nash is foundational to making Lawrence and Douglas County a great place to live. I'm committed to supporting open conversations about mental health within our community and look forward to contributing new ideas and continued growth at Bert Nash."

BARBARA NASH "I'm honored to be part of this wonderful organization. It keeps me connected to Bob. I think he would be pleased that I wanted to continue something that was important to him. He loved the Center. I'm so proud to be a Nash and to carry on that name."

PATRICK SCHMITZ, CEO "I want to thank all our generous supporters, especially our Building Bert Nash Society members. Because without you, we couldn't do what we do. Your investment directly impacts the mental health of our fellow community members every day, in many life-changing and life-saving ways. With sincere appreciation - Thank you!"

JEAN SHEPHERD "Over the past 40 years I've seen Bert Nash's commitment to providing for the mental health needs of our community never waiver; instead, it has grown with determination and creativity. I choose to be part of that growth as the needs of our community, our children and families, and our vulnerable populations continue to increase."

MYRA STROTHER "As the world becomes more uncertain and stressful, we all need support to help ourselves and others. I support Bert Nash because their true goal is helping everyone in our community to live their best lives through mental wellness."

KELLY WELCH "The Bert Nash Center serves so many whose needs would otherwise go unrecognized. Mental health is as essential as physical health, and both deserve compassion and treatment."

Additional Endowment Board Members:
Alice Ann Johnston

PIONEER CELEBRATION



The 2021 Pioneer Celebration took place virtually on April 20, 2021



The Bert Nash Center was pleased to recognize Shannon Oury, Executive Director of the Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority, as the 2021 Pioneer Award recipient.

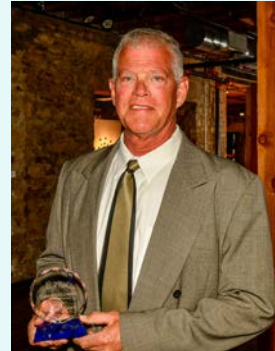
Shannon was recognized for her tremendous work around the issues of housing, homelessness, and the strong connection of these issues to mental illness. Shannon has been a longtime supporter of mental health services and in particular with the construction of The Cottages, part of the

Treatment and Recovery Campus of Douglas County, she clearly exemplified the Pioneer Award criteria.

Shannon: "The collaboration with the Bert Nash and the Behavioral Health Coalition is one of the most rewarding of my career. We have built The Cottages to provide safe and stable homes for community members who suffer from mental illness. We are working together here to create a community at the Treatment and Recovery Campus of Douglas County. This is work that the Housing Authority could not have accomplished alone. The Housing Authority has provided affordable housing for 50 years and it has been and remains our mission to provide housing for members of the community who need help to maintain housing. But it would not be possible without Bert Nash to provide the services these community members need so they can maintain their housing.

"I am very privileged to be able to do this rewarding work and to work with partners at Bert Nash to provide housing that our clients can make a home. A home is the foundation for each of us to create a satisfying life and it is gratifying to see this happen."

Congratulations, Shannon, and thank you for all you do for our community.



Ken McGovern, former Douglas County Sheriff, was the 2021 recipient of the Lyn Smith Award for Distinguished Service.

This award is in honor of Dr. Lynwood Smith, who was an active leader in the Lawrence community and who served on the Bert Nash Governing Board of Directors from 1997 until his passing in 2002. This award was created to formally distinguish and honor those individuals whose service to the community has been excep-

tional in the capacity of Director or Trustee for the Bert Nash Center.

Ken was appointed to the Governing Board of Directors by the Douglas County Commission shortly after he was elected Sheriff. He served on the board from 2007 to 2020 and was chair between 2011 and 2012. While serving as Sheriff, Ken sought resources to develop supports for the mental health needs of our First Responders. He was instrumental in creating a peer support group within the sheriff's department and helped start a first-responder assistance coordinator position made up of chaplains within our community. Ken's leadership to incorporate the Bert Nash Center into the local law enforcement training has equipped officers with skills for intervening with people who are experiencing a mental health crisis.

In addition, Ken championed efforts to address the mental health needs at the Douglas County Jail. The Sheriff's Office and the Bert Nash Center began a partnership in the early 2000s to create ways to provide mental health treatment and resources to inmates and find solutions to help transition individuals back out into the community to live safe and healthier lives.

Ken accomplished many things during his time in office and on the Governing Board of Directors. One accomplishment that particularly stands out is the conversation he started around the need for a Crisis Intervention Center. That conversation became a visionary dream and now it is a reality. It is the new Treatment and Recovery Campus of Douglas County. Thank you, Ken, and congratulations!



The 2021 Sandra Shaw Spirit Award recipient was Mindy Downs. The Spirit Award is the highest award a Bert Nash Center staff member can receive.

Mindy, a Community Support Services Case Manager, is known for her dedication to her clients, her fearless advocacy for others, and her determination to give a voice to those who might otherwise go unheard. In addition, she demonstrates a strong spirit of collaboration and cooperation, steadfastly searching for solutions, even when the solutions are hard to find. While Mindy is human, just like the rest of us, and not impervious to the roller coaster of emotions we have all experienced this past year, she has shown exceptional perseverance and determination in the face of obstacles and has never stopped working to transform the seemingly impossible into the achievable. In addition to her never-give-up attitude, Mindy is a loving parent, a devoted spouse, and a fervent lover of all creatures, great and small. She has a fun fashion sense, an award-winning smile, and a spritely energy that has earned her the nickname of "Tinkerbell" from one of her clients.

Congratulations, Mindy Downs, 2021 Spirit Award winner!



Outgoing Governing Board member Martha Gage was recognized for her years of service during the Bert Nash Center's annual Pioneer Celebration.

Martha joined the board in 2018. Her enthusiasm and passion for mental health has led the Governing Board to look beyond the typical governance of the Center, but to dive deep into the mission of responding to needs, restoring lives and building a healthy community. She has been an avid Ambassador and a Building Bert Nash team member, and although she is stepping off the Governing Board, we are grateful for the support of Martha and her late husband, Ralph, to help sustain Bert Nash into the future. Thank you, Martha.

Two outgoing Endowment Board Trustees, Amy Northrop and Anna Oliver, were recognized during the Bert Nash Center's annual Pioneer Celebration.



Amy joined the board in 2019. Her commitment to addressing mental health in our community has truly made an impact. Amy's thoughtful approach to whole person care and helping us educate more community members to learn about Bert Nash has shaped the Center's sustainable funding. We are fortunate to have had Amy's expertise and partnership with LMH Health and look forward to our continued collaboration.



Anna joined the board only a year before but her time with Bert Nash exceeds her time on the board by far. She began her longtime volunteer role with the Center in 2014 as an Ambassador. Anna has brought well over 50 community members to our Discover Bert Nash tours and her energy and passion for mental health has fueled advocacy in others. Anna truly exemplifies the Bert Nash spirit, and we are grateful for her contributions both as a Trustee and supporter. Anna, while we were excited for your move to Denver, we definitely miss you and your support for Bert Nash.

Thank you, Amy and Anna!



MEET SOME OF OUR DONORS



NATE MORSCHES

"In addition to owning RPG with a great group of business partners who all agree on the importance of mental health and believe in Bert Nash, I have also been a registered nurse for the past decade, having worked the frontlines of the pandemic in the ER and ICU. The fact is we have a mental health crisis on our

hands, and Bert Nash is at the forefront of the fight. This organization has been the hope of many people's lives. Please join me in supporting Bert Nash because there is just too much at stake."



JUSTIN AND JEAN ANDERSON

"Mental health awareness is at an all-time high and the pandemic and our response to it have increased the need for the vital services Bert Nash provides. Our community is stronger and smarter because of the efforts of Bert Nash. Our family chooses to support Bert Nash as a charity in order to ensure that those suffering from mental health issues have a strong and effective resource to secure treatment."



JONI LEE AND HAINES EASON

"We support Bert Nash because a community can't thrive without mental wellness, and every single person deserves access to this life-saving support. Haines and I have both struggled with our mental wellness; again and again, therapy has helped us move back to the light, back to a place where growth and healing are possible."

CONSTRUCTION SPECIALTIES

"Mental health in our community is one of the foundations of success for us all. Construction Specialties takes pride in being an active member of the Lawrence community and is very happy to support Bert Nash in doing such great work for neighbors, friends, family, and customers in our hometown."



KURT AND JULEE GOESER

"The need for quality mental health services in our community is staggering and Bert Nash offers so many services to address the many issues. Lawrence is a special place to call home and we feel blessed to have such an incredible organization that supports the entire region with treatment and recovery, crisis management and homeless outreach. We felt called to support this mission and are so proud and excited to see the great things they will do for our community."



RICHARD HOLMAN/HOLMAN NEEDLE & INK

"Mental health and the stigma associated with it makes me want to be involved and do what I can to help out. So, if we can help make it easier for people to get services and get the help that they need and go somewhere where they won't feel that stigma, that's what I want to do. Bert Nash is important to the community, and the more we can put out that message the easier it will be for people to get services."



THANK YOU TO ALL OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS WHO HAVE INVESTED IN SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH



THANK YOU, SPONSORS

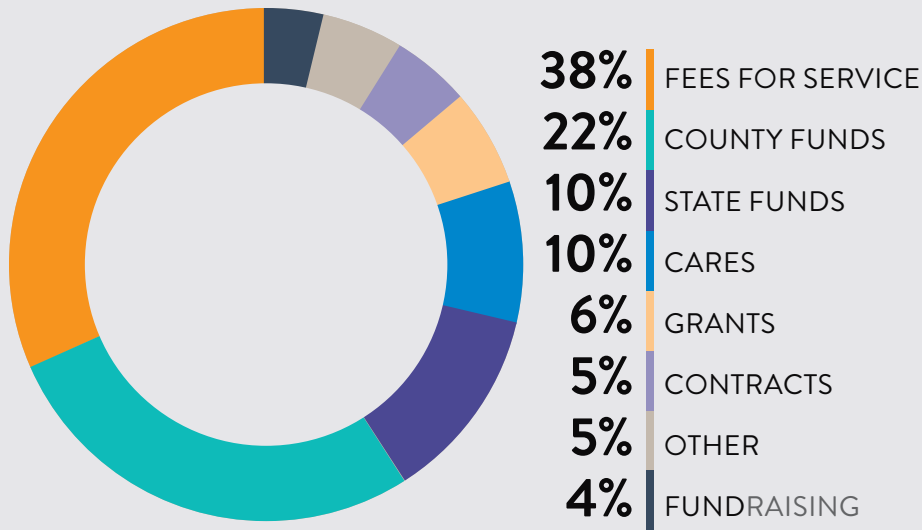


The Bert Nash Center is grateful for the meaningful support of the donors who have made a remarkable investment in the work we do and the mental health of our entire community. Nearly \$542,000 was contributed by 486 individuals, families and businesses during 2021. Those who invest both financially and in-kind, allow us to continue to provide accessible and affordable mental health care to our neighbors, family and friends. The following community sponsors have stepped forward to support specific programming initiatives or events in 2021.



BERT NASH

By the Numbers (For Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2021)



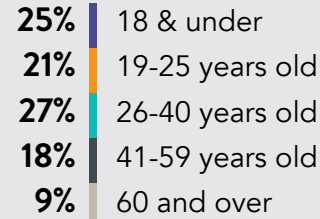
OPERATING REVENUES

\$17,656,540

\$3,855,986

Cost of uncompensated services (write-offs for sliding-fee scale and insurance write-offs) Bert Nash provided in 2021.

RESPONDING TO NEEDS



5,092 People Served

3,753 ADULTS

1,339 CHILDREN

RESTORING LIVES

1,899 New admissions in 2021

FEMALE 55%

MALE 45%

We serve a diverse community and aim to make our services accessible to everyone.

BUILDING A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

838 people were trained in 72 Mental Health First Aid classes.

280 people attended one of 31 Discover Bert Nash tours.

THE MISSION of the Bert Nash center is to advance the mental health of the Douglas County community through comprehensive behavioral health services responsive to evolving needs and changing environments.

BERT NASH VALUES:
COMPASSION, INTEGRITY,
EQUITY, ON A
FOUNDATION OF HOPE.



200 MAINE ST., SUITE A, LAWRENCE, KS 66044 • (785) 843-9192