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Mental Health America of Central Carolinas (MHACC) Wins National Equity Champion Award



Pictured, L to R: Schroeder Stribling, President and CEO Mental Health America National, Courtney Lang, JD, MHA National Board of Directors, Megan Bryant, MHACC Counseling Center Clinical Director, Kathy Rogers, MHACC Executive Director, Jennifer Bright, MHA National Board Chair.

Charlotte, N.C. – Mental Health America of Central Carolinas (MHACC) is proud to kickoff [BIPOC Mental Health Month](#), also known as National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, by sharing recent recognition with The Betty Humphries Equity Champion Award. Accepted at the National Conference in June, this award is bestowed by national affiliate Mental Health America (MHA), to an individual or organization for demonstrating an ongoing commitment to fight for diversity, equity, and inclusion. It recognizes those who advance the intersectionality of mental health as it relates to discrimination, poverty, stigma, racism, and overall social and economic determinants of health.

The Equity Champion Award was awarded in response to MHACC's recent program expansion to create a new free [MHA Counseling Center: Where Mental Health Matters](#). The center in East Charlotte is one of the ways the organization is addressing racial equity by increasing access to care for uninsured and underinsured Mecklenburg County residents. In addition, the MHA Counseling Center partners with Johnson C. Smith University and UNC Charlotte, to offer four internship opportunities each year to Master of Counseling or Master of Social Work students. With the goal of increasing the pipeline of clinicians of color, interns provide the counseling under the supervision of Megan Bryant, MHACC Clinical Director. Bryant said, "What I've found during my years in this field is that (clients) want someone who looks like them. They want someone who gets it—not just the textbook version."

MHACC received the recognition after years of addressing racial equity through a Task Force facilitating conversations, incorporating diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) into our Core Values, and a Workplace Culture Committee developing policies that reflect the organization's eye toward DEIB.

The MHA Counseling Center was established in an owned office suite, with renovations and multiyear program underwriting thanks to a \$1.25 million grant from Mecklenburg County American Rescue Plan grant. MHACC Executive Director Kathy Rogers conceptualized the Center while she worked in the office throughout the pandemic, while other staff worked primarily remotely, and wanted to ensure MHA was using all of its hard assets to serve the community. Rogers said, "We know that the pandemic disproportionately impacted the mental health of communities of color and the Center is designed to address these disparities." The grant also covered an awareness campaign, "[My Mental Health Matters. And So Does Yours.](#)" Rogers also stated, "While receiving the Betty Humphries Equity Champion Award is a great honor for our organization, it is also humbling as we know there is still so much work to be done."

[Mental Health America](#) has affiliates across the nation. Founded in 1933, Mental Health America of Central Carolinas has been the voice of hope for those impacted by mental illness in the greater Charlotte area and is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year.

In addition to the MHA Counseling Center in Charlotte, MHACC offers free short-term counseling with a network of providers in Cabarrus, as well as Mecklenburg County – for those who can't afford it and were impacted by the pandemic. MHACC provides family support services to parents of children with behavioral, emotional or mental health needs; peer support for adults living with chronic mental illnesses; and mental health education and preventative trainings to the broader community. MHACC's programs bring together mental health consumers, parents, advocates, and service providers to address systemic issues impacting mental health.

For more information about MHACC or to learn about upcoming events and programs, visit mhaofcc.org.

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