



Community Connections — January 2026

Executive Director Bruce Eddy, PhD Announces Retirement

After 20 years of mental health advocacy as the first Executive Director of CMHF, Bruce looks forward to championing whole person integration in the health care space, playing his bass, and pursuing his passion for classic cars.

Bruce Eddy has worked with CMHF since its inception — as a contract employee for eight years, then for 20 years as its first Executive Director.



During his tenure, Bruce has seen CMHF evolve from funding primarily state-designated Community Mental Health Centers to funding more nonprofits, a shift that has allowed the agency to take a bigger role in the community.

He's also been at the helm for the planning and implementation of alternative funding methods, such as value-based payments, ensuring CMHF stays at the forefront of changes in the health care sphere.

Our staff and our Board of Directors are grateful for Bruce's contributions. His work has positioned our agency for a successful transition and the continued ability to positively impact our county and its residents.

Legislating Mental Health for Missourians

Three Jackson County elected officials ended 2025 by sponsoring bills that address concerns about the risks to minors and adults of AI-powered therapy services.



When it comes to mental health care and professional services in Missouri, SB1444 and HB2318 would make it unlawful for artificial intelligence or AI (such as website chatbots) to be misrepresented as human. The bills, which are sponsored by District 7 Sen. Patty Lewis and District 25 Rep. Pattie Mansur respectively, were introduced in December 2025. District 122 Rep. Tara Peters introduced a similar end-of-session bill, HB2368, which makes it a fineable offense to advertise or represent AI as human-based mental health care.

Why does this legislation matter? The Missouri Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, NASW-MO, has advocated for AI

regulation, citing key ethical considerations when AI is incorporated in therapeutic settings. Among its concerns, the group cites privacy risks, inherent bias and discrimination within AI algorithms, and the paramount importance of human connections as factors that warrant using AI as a tool, not a replacement, for human mental health professionals.

CMHF will continue to monitor these bills, which may undergo further wording changes before being finalized. We thank these legislators for their diligence and foresight in ensuring Missouri residents continue to receive ethical, unbiased mental health care.

Network Spotlight: Journey to New Life

Journey to New Life offers formerly incarcerated individuals help with basic human needs as well as healing, hope, and the power to begin their lives again.





Since its founding in 2013, [Journey to New Life](#) (JTNL) has been an invaluable resource to persons reentering society following prison. Thanks to the expertise of its founders, who recognized the lack of services available to individuals trying to rebuild their lives after incarceration, the agency has grown steadily.

Throughout its growth, JTNL has remained focused on helping individuals with histories of mental illness, substance abuse, and trauma. True to its mission of "removing

roadblocks to success," today the agency offers services that include residences, peer support, career development, case management, and community engagement.

This holistic approach to well-being gives JTNL residents a safe, supportive environment in which to rebuild their lives and long-term life skills — including a support network — that ensure their success and stability beyond their time spent in the program.



Meet Jill!

Community, accountability, and hope. Jill Hanlin found them all in 2020 when she entered the Journey to New Life program.

From participating in the agency's services to administering those same services to others, Jill understands better than most the life-changing power of a supportive environment. Discover what inspires her work as JTNL's Community Engagement Manager.

[Read Jill's conversation](#)

A Successful 2026 Starts with Self Care

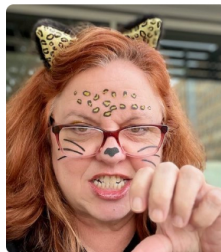
January is [Mental Wellness Month](#), and the new year is a great time to establish positive habits like reducing stress, mindfulness, and self care.

Journaling is a self-care method that helps individuals identify thoughts or feelings that hold them back — or brainstorm positive ways to cope with life's letdowns. Share this resource to help someone kick off the new year on a positive note.

[Download the worksheet](#)



Staff Spotlight: Samantha McCall



What's your favorite part of working at CMHF?

Mental health parity has always been a voting priority for me. Now I can also champion the cause at work!

Favorite KC restaurant?

Westside Local

Favorite KC spot

The Ewing and Muriel Kauffman Memorial Garden during the fall monarch migration.

CMHF's new Communications Specialist is a Topeka native who's lived in Kansas City, Missouri, since 2015. In between raising three daughters, she earned her bachelor's degree at Washburn University and a master's in journalism at the University of Kansas. Her digital marketing career has included working for large corporations, advertising agencies, and local nonprofits.

In her free time, Samantha enjoys travel, live music, hanging out with her cats, and pollinator gardening. Her biggest gardening success to date was watching 11 monarch butterflies hatch in a single day.

Samantha's biggest 2026 goal is to self-publish her first novel, *Dead Air*, a murder mystery set partially in Kansas City that's also a love letter to the radio stations and DJs she listened to as a kid.

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