

Courage and Compassion in the Advocacy of Mental Health Award

Written by Lou Ann Goral
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Two Individuals honored for their dedication and efforts in working with mental illness.

DAVENPORT, Iowa – On January 11, 2014, the Vera French Community Mental Health Center honored two dedicated individuals with the ***Courage and Compassion in the Advocacy of Mental Health Award*** for their efforts and contributions to improving conditions for people with mental illness.

For almost 40 years, Chris McCormick Pries has worked at Vera French Community Mental Health Center and is currently a Board Certified Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner and the Clinical Director. Chris is also a major provider of community services for individuals, educators, counselors, and care givers in the Quad Cities. She is involved with Jason's Box, the Mental Health Legal Task Force, Eating Disorders Consortium, the Safety Net in Peril Committee, a trainer for the Davenport and Bettendorf police and a public speaker bringing awareness to eradicate the stigma of mental illness. Chris has dedicated her life to providing quality, accessible and comprehensive care to those suffering from mental illness and has worked compassionately to make their lives more complete.

Dr. William Nissen has been working with the patients of the Vera French Community Mental Health Center since 1980. He is an Adult Psychiatrist responsible for evaluating patients for the presence of psychiatric disorders, medication management and hospital care. Dr. Nissen completed his MD, Master of Science in Anatomy, and Bachelor of Science Degrees at the University of Iowa. He has served as Medical Director of Adult Services and continues as the Medical Director at the Vera French Pine Knoll Residential Facility. Dr. Nissen's work with individuals with persistent mental illness has helped many to live the best lives possible in the community. He encourages patients to understand their illness and to take appropriate steps to

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maintain their health and safety.

“Both award winners are exemplary examples of courage and compassion, not only for Vera French clients but also for their co-workers, board members and the community,” stated Anne Armknecht, CEO of the Vera French Community Mental Health Center. “They have gone above and beyond in leading efforts to combat the negative social stigma and providing services that improve the lives for those suffering from mental illness.”

About Vera French Community Mental Health Center:

Vera French Community Mental Health Center serves as mental health advocate for all populations in Scott County,

Iowa. Through the center's clinical and community outreach services, our staff seeks to help people live well, coping

with depression and other forms of mental illness. Services include individual, group and family therapy for children

and adults in a clinic setting. Vera French also offers school-based therapy available in elementary schools in the

Davenport, Bettendorf, Pleasant Valley and North Scott school districts.

Additional programs for chronically ill adults include the Pine Knoll Residential care facility for 24-hour support and

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three voluntary outpatient programs to assist individuals in gaining new skill sets needed to live independently.

An Adult Day Program offering group therapy helps patients transition to or remaining in a non-hospitalized status.

The Carol Center provides a place for learning skill sets, receiving a subsidized meal and peer interaction.

For more information, visit <http://www.verafrenchmhc.org>