

Mental Health services available to all who want, need them

By Michael Garrett
CEO - CNS Healthcare

I watched a recent news story with great disappointment. While use of mental health services increased during the pandemic, many people are now discontinuing counseling because of cost and other barriers. To that I say, "Please, don't- your health is too important!"

At CNS Healthcare, we have worked long and hard to ensure that everyone has access to quality mental health resources, support, and assistance. I am a sincere believer that everyone could benefit from a yearly mental health check-up the same way we do a physical one. For this to happen, CNS Healthcare is leading the charge to remove the stigma once associated with mental health and substance use disorder needs and services. The reality is, we could all use a little help, and it is important to take care of your brain.



Michael Garrett

To remove all possible barriers, CNS Healthcare offices are conveniently located on bus lines. At some of our offices, we offer transportation for medication management and therapy appointments. Our case managers and peers are also willing to "meet you where you are." Literally. This includes your home, park, restaurant, or other places that

are convenient and comfortable. Additional transportation for more informal activities like visiting the food bank or Secretary of State can also be made available.

Our offices are professional, comforting and calming. The décor conveys the value and respect that we have for the people we serve.

In addition to being informed and qualified, our entire staff is committed to providing quality care is to everyone that enters our offices. We care about and are aware of the individual needs of every person. We are more than just an appointment; we are a partner in your mental well-being.

We host picnics and holiday parties for our persons-served, have a clothing closet, and host "Compassion in Action" events year-round, such as a Turkey Giveaway, Warm Coat drive, and more.

Our services are available via Virtual Care, or in-office and no one is turned away because of their inability to pay. Whether you are insured, underinsured, or not insured, we have you covered. At select sites, services- from behavioral health home to medication assisted treatment are located under the same roof as a pharmacy, lab, and primary care provider to save time and money.

Let us talk about health, including mental health resources, uplift people who choose to take advantage of them, and encourage others to do the same. A mentally strong community is a healthy community. Mental health is more important than ever, and now is the time to spread that message, not the time to silence the conversation.

Learn more at www.cnshealthcare.org



Trunino Lowe is a Detroit trumpet player and long-time student of Rebirth Inc. Photo Courtesy by Trunino Lowe

Rebirth Inc

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often started out as studio musicians that were at the whims of industry labels who promised them records with little to no follow through.

Artists had to find creative ways to collaborate and promote themselves without the Motown incubator in the city.

In 1978, Harrison and notable jazz pianist Harold McKinney co-founded Rebirth, a nonprofit jazz performance and education organization, in which many artists have participated.

"As growing artists at that time," said Harrison, "We needed a place to get together and keep jazz alive for us and the new generation."

Harrison spent decades working with numerous K-12 schools and colleges throughout the state to expose students to jazz music and cultivate young talent. He provided workshops to Detroit students at Detroit High School of Performing Arts, Duke Ellington Academy, Renaissance High School, Martin Luther King High School and Cass Tech High School among others. He also visited several colleges on the state's west side and upper peninsula.

In the early 1990s, Harrison was awarded the title of "Jazz Master by Arts Midwest, which led him to tour throughout the United States and the Middle East and North Africa, growing a worldwide audience.

During COVID, performances and in-person workshops in schools and music venues were cut short.

The pandemic, Harrison said, left a big void for performing and collaborating. There was some virtual programming the duo engaged in with the Knight Foundation and area high schools. They hosted "Detroit Grooves," a series of Detroit jazz artists live stream performances for students to enjoy.

Last year, with the world slowly opening up during the pandemic, Harrison began performing live again, including the Passing the Torch concert in Ann Arbor's Kerrytown neighborhood, which included young musicians he worked with.

Students at Rebirth gather at

the residence in the north end every Tuesday for Upper Room Sessions, where participants can learn to play together as an ensemble. Often times Harrison and his contemporaries hire the students for gig opportunities.

"Nowadays, with the internet," said Harrison, "it's so much easier for musicians to get their work out there. Be heard and promoted. You can rely on yourself as an entrepreneur on your own terms."

Inspiring the Next Generation of Detroit Jazz Artists

Trunino Lowe is a 24-year-old Detroit resident and trumpet player who has worked under the tutelage of Harrison since elementary school.

"Wendell used to come to my middle school and bring groups twice a year for workshops and performances to work with students and music," said Lowe.

He was instructed by Harrison and Wise to play tunes through sound techniques and practice. Lowe once again intersected with Harrison when he came to his high school.

"Music was a huge source to me, one of the things I most gravitated towards where I could focus and engage," Lowe said. He recalled speaking with Harrison about his continued interest and the jazz legend said, 'C'mon, we gonna deal with some tunes.'

Their working relationship began intentionally from that point. Lowe visited Harrison's studio often over the years to fine tune his craft and gain opportunities to perform with Harrison and other musicians.

"The opportunity for that type of learning is one of a kind," said Lowe. "Something that we as musicians take for granted. He [Harrison] pushes you to be better and go to the next level. The type of community learning environment is a rare thing nowadays."

Lowe credits his love for music to Harrison for having a heavy hand in helping him figure out his own sound, learn the bebop language, work with Detroit masters as well as learn the ins and outs of the music industry from copyrighting, publishing and distributing your own music.

"Wendell was from an era of musicians that left a mark on the city. Without Wendell and others doing what they do, things wouldn't be how they are now."

"We want to help communities create their own spaces for activities and enjoyment."

The objectives of this project are to spur neighborhood development and revitalization, mitigate localized flooding through low-cost stormwater management strategies, create opportunities for the creative workforce and highlight neighborhood creativity. These spaces will become hubs for small business activations, events and sources of pride for residents in each community.

John George, president at Motor City Blight Busters Inc., told the Michigan Chronicle that his organization, which creates safe, inhabitable spaces in Detroit, is more than thrilled to be a pilot neighborhood in the Artists Village community center (at 17336 Lahser Road in Detroit), and benefit from the project.

"We met with architects, business owners, the community - everybody wants us to continue and expand, not only with restoration and beautification of the alley but with Blighter Busters and ... they want us to run projects and programs," George said of various local events. "There is going to be some significant improvements. ... Our goal at Blight Busters is to save the world starting with Detroit. Anything that anyone can do to help us to that end excites me. We believe Detroit is [on the cusp of a] greater comeback story in the nation's history. You have to remember how far we feel and where we were at and where we're poised to go. I'm optimistic [about that future]."

For more information, visit www.detroitmi.gov/ace and detroitblightbusters.org/.

Accessible City

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several places to reach to make sure people with disabilities are able to live without struggling much longer."

How to Make Detroit ADA-Compliant City-wide

The City of Detroit participated in the Centre for Public Impact's 2021 Earned Legitimacy program to improve its strategies and to focus on increasing public engagement, representation, equity and inclusion of the disability community.

"Housing is a huge issue," said Citchen-Spruce. "There is much development and investment in housing, and we need the city to work with developers to ensure there is low-income affordable housing with a universal design in mind."

Stamp said one example for assessing the city's programs and services to be more accommodating for people with disabilities is the partnership with the Housing and Revitalization Department.

"All new developments and renovations must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA is a civil rights legislation with accessibility requirements and standards for equitable access for the disability community. So, no residential and commercial properties are exempted from a lawsuit or 'grandfathered' from existing and new building codes."

In May, Mayor Mike Duggan and other city officials joined Nova Development Group of Detroit to break ground on a 14-unit apartment complex on the city's far east side and adapt the building as accessible to all Detroiters, and not just those without disabilities. To qualify for one of these units, applicants must have a physical or mental disability under Detroit Housing Commission (DHC) supportive service guidelines.

"We need developers and construction companies like that to build more accessible homes," said Stamp. "Most developers follow the bare minimum requirements for accessible housing, which is hardly enough to accommodate 19.2 percent of the overall Detroit population who are residents with a disability. Over 128,000 residents with a disability -- that is 1 out of 5 residents living with a disability."

One of other strategies the Office of Disability Affairs has been working on is the Affordable Housing Locator website where property owners and landlords can list their accessible properties for anyone who wishes to reside in Detroit, including individuals with disabilities who love to live, work and do business in the city.

"There are many new developments happening in Detroit and we want individuals with disabilities to know that more accessible and affordable housing options are forthcoming."

Detroit's Disability Community Speaks on City Needs

Citchen-Spruce's work includes joining a city cohort to speak to residents with disabilities or their loved ones about their concerns.

"There are several challenges in navigating the city," said Citchen-Spruce. "Going around to public buildings, for example, the entry doors can be too heavy if you're in a wheelchair. Sidewalks are always a challenge; it's gotten better but still very hard. They're caved in oftentimes in the neighborhood, and it makes it difficult moving around."

Under the Civil Rights, Inclusion and Opportunity Department, Stamp said the office has made improvements to the process of handling civil rights complaints.

"When a person with a disability files a civil rights complaint, sometimes their case is not discrimination-related but rather an accessibility challenge," said Stamp. "In the past, investigations would be closed because of no civil rights violation [or that the city is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act], but now those accessibility-related cases can be forwarded to the Office of Disability Affairs for further assistance."

Stamp said the most common accessibility complaints are sidewalk-related, mostly be-

cause homeowner's trees have uprooted some sidewalks over time.

However, the Office of Disability Affairs said they are working closely with the Department of Public Works to improve prioritization and resources for sidewalk repairs because when one piece of the sidewalk is broken, the entire route is inaccessible to an individual with a disability.

"Even though we have the Improve Detroit app," said Stamp, "we will be launching a new sidewalk repair request system specifically for the disability community to help us identify and prioritize repairs to broken city sidewalks affecting individuals with disabilities."

One such progress of the partnership between the Department of Public Works and the Office of Disability Affairs is having repaired the sidewalks at Three Mile Munich Park.

Individuals who use a wheelchair rely on pedestrian routes to navigate to their destination. Sidewalk accessibility also includes challenges due to the shared use of a tight space.

Citchen-Spruce said during COVID when restaurants expanded outdoor seating, the patio furniture often spread into the sidewalk, which made it difficult for people with wheelchairs or service animals who were moving through downtown.

Looking Ahead at 2023 ODA Strategic Plan: Community Impact

Since the establishment of the Office of Disability Affairs, Stamp told the Michigan Chronicle they have been meeting with colleagues at the Department of Homeland Security & Emergency Management, the Police Department and the Fire Department to discuss ways they can improve emergency responders' and law enforcement's interaction with people with disabilities.

ODA said they are working ahead of schedule, since ODA is expected to carry out this objective in 2023, as part of phase 3 of the 3-year strategic plan.

"Last year, we broadcasted an interdepartmental message to all law enforcement officers about service dogs and the Americans with Disabilities Act," said Stamp. "This is an attempt to clarify some of the public's misunderstandings of service dogs, and to prevent unintentional negative reaction toward a person with a disability who is protected by the ADA. Service dogs are working dogs allowed to assist a disabled person in public spaces.

On the other hand, I was surprised to learn that many law enforcement officers have expressed interest in learning American Sign Language so that they can communicate more effectively with the deaf and hard of hearing community. In fact, one of our community partners reached out to me to let me know that they were overwhelmed and could not take on more participants for their free ASL classes, especially from the Detroit Police Department. So, I am working on identifying resources and arranging similar ASL classes for the law enforcement officers."

"The Detroit Police Department already has a system to work with people who are mentally ill," said Citchen-Spruce, "So ODA should work with them to expand on the model to include not just people in wheelchairs or autism. Officers should learn how to interact with people with [all] disabilities. Disabilities is a vast spectrum. It includes people who are deaf, blind, suffered traumatic brain injuries, or mental health issues. They should know to interact with all different kinds of needs to be successful and bring along mental health professionals to help."

As the city continues to engage with community residents and partners in adapting city services and infrastructure for universal inclusivity and accessibility, Citchen-Spruce said the city needs to be considerate to understanding the racial makeup of the people they serve in the disability community.

"The city of Detroit has over 100,000 residents with disabilities," said Citchen-Spruce. "Being an 80 percent Black city, African Americans, statistically speaking within the state and nationally, have the highest rate of disability. It's very important that the ODA get to know the community and implement plans that are considerate. We look forward to having a city that is fully accessible to everyone."

Arts Alley

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that," said Duggan. "Activating neighborhood alleys in this creative way is going to help turn them into real community assets and attractions."

The Detroit Arts, Culture, & Entrepreneurship Office will execute community engagement throughout key areas in the city. The five pilot Arts Alleys will be in the Jefferson Chalmers, Old Redford, Schulze, NW Goldberg and Springwells neighborhoods.

ACE will collaborate with residents in these areas, their neighbors and other stakeholders through the summer and fall to develop designs to overhaul an alley in each neighborhood. These transformations will bring new landscaping, improved surfacing and amenities while partnering together with local artists and residents to imbue these improvements with a sense of history, beauty and imagination.

Sidewalk Detroit, a Detroit-based, Black-owned company, is currently working with the city to conduct the community engagement phase of the design process. After the design process for each alley is completed this Fall, ACE will issue an RFP for general contractors in early 2023, with improvements to begin later in the year.

The City's Arts & Culture Director Rochelle Riley said that beautified alleys will add to residents' quality of life.

"The COVID-19 pandemic showed us the importance of safe, accessible green spaces in our neighborhoods," said Riley.