

## **The Kent Center's Open House Featured in Warwick Beacon**

May 26, 2015 – Open house raises awareness of mental illness (written by The Warwick Beacon's Nicole Bouchier).

"Now I have purpose." Jean Nelson spoke those words about the impact Hillsgrove House, a service of The Kent Center for Human & Organizational Development, has had on her life. On Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. an outdoor open house was held by the center for Mental Health Awareness Month. All around the parking lot were staff and members of Hillsgrove House and various other services of The Kent Center.

Sarah Channing, Kent Center Director of Development, said that this was the "first annual" open house. After seeing how many people attended within the first half-hour of the event, she said she was "very excited about the turnout."

Hillsgrove House, 70 Minnesota Ave., is unique, and its originality has proven to be the source of its success. It is based on the clubhouse model, meant to increase the feeling of membership in a community. It is the only clubhouse in Rhode Island that is certified by the International Center for Clubhouse Development.

Staff and members also work hand in hand, with the staff taking on a supportive role as the members go about their work. The schedule is six hours a day, six days a week, and meant to help members prioritize the work-order day. Each member works in a unit of their choice, whether it's business, learning, arts/environment or kitchen. Each unit has a staff director, but the members take part in daily planning and weekly meetings. Once comfortable and confident enough, members can seek temporary employment at an outside company that lasts six months or look for more permanent positions.

Nelson first went to Hillsgrove in 2006, and after a span of time away she has returned. "I'm taking care of myself now," she said, talking about living in her own apartment and the work she does at the clubhouse.

Her former case agent and now staff member of Hillsgrove, Cindi Cady, was the one who called Nelson to ask her if she would like to come back and help out. The two work within the learning unit, and Nelson helps put out the "news at noon" that covers daily news from Hillsgrove and the community. In the learning unit, people may come to learn how to use computers or how to read and write, among various other skills. As Nelson explained, "We get taught, then we teach."

Hillsgrove House was not the only Kent Center service with a table at the open house. Two service dogs were present and attracting quite a bit of attention. The Intensive Diversion Program (IDP) also had information available at their station for two programs to aid women in Providence and local veterans that have experienced trauma and are now facing charges.

The court program uses Moral Reconciliation Therapy, which lasts for at least 20 weeks, and focuses on evidence-based treatment and skill building. The therapy is meant to encourage better decision making through improved moral reasoning and appropriate behaviors.

If someone completes the program successfully, they may be able to have the charges against them minimized or dismissed. The ultimate goal is to prevent the client from repeating their actions and encouraging them to make better choices in their life.

The Kent Center has treated Rhode Islanders who suffer from mental illnesses, substance abuse and trauma for nearly 40 years. Over time, the center has created partnerships with the YMCA and companies that offer employment opportunities. The open house was meant to not only raise awareness for mental illnesses, but also to let the public know that there are local options available for treatment and recovery of mental illnesses.

This article can be found here:

[http://www.warwickonline.com/stories/Open-house-raises-awareness-of-mental-illness,102762?category\\_id=4&content\\_class=1&town\\_id=1&sub\\_type=stories](http://www.warwickonline.com/stories/Open-house-raises-awareness-of-mental-illness,102762?category_id=4&content_class=1&town_id=1&sub_type=stories)