

Centerstone July Spotlight Event Focused on Self-Care

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ALTON – Centerstone, a national leader in behavioral health care, held the third Centerstone Spotlight Series event of 2019 on July 30 at Centerstone, 2615 Edwards Street, Alton, from 5-7 p.m. The topic of the event was self-care.

Expert panel members included:

Laura Ballard – Ballard is a passionate child advocate. As a special educator and school administrator for 25 years, her purpose is to assist students in dreaming about the

possibility of accomplishing goals beyond any limitations others may perceive. Her leadership style is empowering her staff to be the best version of themselves and to believe in the possibility of their students. She has learned tremendously through raising her three children with her husband, especially her adopted son, Drey.

Ty Bechel – Bechel is the Program Coordinator for Chestnut Health Systems and Executive Director for Amare. Bechel is also the author of “Heroin Rising: A Tale of True Terror,” “Heroin Rising II: Out of the Ashes,” and, soon-to-be-released horror and thriller fiction anthology, “Reality or Madness: An Anthology of Fiction.” Bechel is not only a person in long-term recovery from drug and alcohol addiction, but also a certified peer recovery specialist, 2018 Molina Community Champion, writer and director of the two-act theater drama “If I Never Wake Up,” columnist of Restoring the Soul for Alton Advantage, and chair of the Madison County Connected Marketing Team.

A.J. French – French has personal and professional expertise regarding mental health recovery. Career highlights include participating in a White House briefing on suicide prevention and meeting with the U.S. Surgeon General for a discussion on mental health. She has presented training modules and taught principles of self-care and wellness for faith leaders in Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Minnesota and Tennessee. French has developed Certified Recovery Support Specialist (CRSS) Competency Trainings for the State of Illinois and serves on the statewide CRSS Steering Committee. She serves on the Illinois Mental Health Planning & Advisory Council (IMHPAC), a federally mandated advisory body to the state mental health authority and to the Protection & Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illnesses (PAIMI) Council. French serves as the CEO for Gift of Voice, a nonprofit mental health and trauma recovery training center operated primarily by people in mental health recovery. She facilitates self-care curriculums such as Wellness Recovery Action Plan® (WRAP) and Whole Health Action Management (WHAM). Having won numerous awards and known for her determined spirit, French resides in Madison County, Illinois.

Jan Green – Green, LCSW, is a Therapist for Madison County Catholic Charities. She has a master’s degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in social work. Green has worked at Alton Mental Health, Department of Children and Family Services, and psychological services in St. Clair County.

Brittany Pinnon-Becker – Pinnon-Becker holds a master’s degree in counseling from McKendree University. She is a clinical coordinator at Centerstone, where she has worked for five years. Having worked in crisis for five years and currently supervising a team of intake and crisis clinicians, Pinnon-Becker recognizes the need for self-care.

The Spotlight Series events are held once a quarter throughout 2019, on the last Tuesday of January, April, July, and October, from 5-7 p.m. at various locations.

Each event will begin with appetizers, refreshments and networking from 5-5:30 p.m., followed by presentations by the experts and question-and-answer sessions with audience members.

In September of 2016, Centerstone launched “Centerstone Spotlights,” an educational series designed to highlight key behavioral health topics affecting our community.

Past Spotlights have been on Grief, Suicide Prevention, Caring for Aging Adults, and Substance Abuse.

“Each Spotlight Series discussion will feature a panel of experts from the surrounding area, and we really think this will showcase the strength of our community and our ability to work together to address issues in our own backyards,” said Centerstone Director of Advancement Jocelyn Popit.

About Centerstone

Centerstone is a not-for-profit health care organization dedicated to delivering care that changes people’s lives. We provide mental health and substance abuse treatment, education and support to communities in Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee and additionally offer individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities life skills development, employment and housing services. Nationally, we have specialized programs for service members, veterans and their loved ones, and develop employee assistance programs for businesses of all sizes. Our research institute improves behavioral healthcare through research and technology, and our foundation secures philanthropic resources to support our work. For more information, visit www.centerstone.org.

Centerstone CEO John Markley (far left) addresses the July Spotlight Series panelists - Laura Ballard, A.J. French, Ty Bechel, Jan Green, and Brittany Pinnon-Becker, and attendees on Tuesday, July 30 at Centerstone in Alton.