



# Virtual Dancing With The St. Louis Stars Event Raises Over \$710,000 For Independence Center

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**ST. LOUIS** - Nearly two dozen St. Louis business leaders and their supporters joined together to raise more than \$710,000 to support Independence Center's mission of restoring the lives of those suffering from mental illness.

The funds were raised through Independence Center's annual Dancing with the St. Louis Stars competition, which is the nonprofit's largest annual fundraiser. This year, to celebrate 40 years of serving the St. Louis community, Independence Center hosted a special virtual version of the event and brought back 23 of the former dancers and top St. Louis executives who have competed in years' past. Based on online voting and fundraising efforts, Jim Brennan of McKelvey Homes was crowned the "Champion of Champions" for the event, raising over \$130,000 in donations.

"I am so grateful for the overwhelming support I received from my friends, family, employees and especially our St. Louis homebuilding community in helping me raise funds to support those suffering from mental illness," said Brennan. "The real winner of

this competition was Independence Center and we're just so fortunate to have them in the St. Louis community."

The evening was emceed by Independence Center member Brittny Adams and included special appearances by Founding Director Bob Harvey, KTRS Radio Anchor Jennifer Blome and KMOV Anchor Claire Kellett. This year's event was dedicated to longstanding Independence Center board member and mental health advocate, William "Bill" French, who passed away in December.

Independence Center Business Development Manager Abby Berger said this year's participants stepped up in a tremendous way to help Independence Center continue providing services and offering resources during this critical time when so many in the community are dealing with mental health concerns.

"The pandemic continues to challenge us in many ways and it has significantly impacted our revenue and our ability to provide services," said Berger. "We had a critical need to meet our fundraising goal this year, which was originally \$495,000. To find out that we surpassed that goal by more than \$200,000 is surreal. This will make a tremendous impact on our ability to continue helping those suffering from mental illness."

The business leaders and dancers who competed this year included; Bob Tomaso, Husch Blackwell Office Managing Partner; Ed Monser, Emerson Retired President; Mark Trudeau, Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals President & CEO; Team Nichols (Lisa & Ally Nichols), Technology Partners, Inc. CEO; Mark Bulanda, Emerson Senior Vice President; Nancy Staudt, Washington University School of Law Dean; Tim & Robin Wentworth, Evernorth – Cigna CEO; Jim Brennan, McKelvey Homes Owner & President; Arnold Donald, Carnival CEO; Craig Schnuck, Schnuck Markets, Inc. CEO & Chairman Emeritus; Jim Castellano, RubinBrown Retired Chairman; Richard Schul, Emerson Former Group President; Lynn Ann Vogel, Vogel Law Office Partner; Fred Kostecki, RubinBrown Managing Partner; Kristin Johnson, Edward Jones Chief of Human Resources Officer; Ron Daugherty, Daugherty Business Solutions President & CEO; Chris Hampel, Independence Center Member; DeAndra Smith, Independence Center Member; Lisa Rodgers, Independence Center Member; Marco Mino, Independence Center Member; Terri Hodges, Independence Center Member; Brittny Adams, Independence Center Member and Michelle Tibbs, Independence Center Member.

Independence Center is a community-based rehabilitation program for adults with mental illness in the St. Louis area, built on the Clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation. Its mission is to provide all the services and resources a person with a

serious and persistent mental illness needs to manage their symptoms, find belonging and purpose and gain the independence to live a healthy, quality life. For more information about Independence Center, go to [www.independencecenter.org](http://www.independencecenter.org).