

# May is Mental Health Awareness Month; Local Nonprofit Works to Erase Stigma

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ST. LOUIS - Independence Center, a local nonprofit dedicated to helping adults living with mental illness, is spreading awareness during May as part of Mental Health Awareness Month. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the pandemic has drastically impacted the number of people suffering from anxiety and depression, making Independence Center's services more important than ever.

"You never know what someone could be struggling with behind closed doors," said Independence Center Business Development Manager Abby Berger. "If you know

someone living with a mental illness, it is important to be a resource for them. We have programs and help available for anyone trying to battle their mental health on their own and we're here to support them.”

Jim Pace, a member of the Independence Center, has dealt with his diagnosis of schizophrenia for most of his life. He said his involvement with the Independence Center has brought him an added layer of support that he couldn't find elsewhere.



"When I joined Independence Center, I was able to involve myself in my artwork and it got my mind off my troubles," said Pace. "I was able to find fulfillment, pride, peace of mind, and happiness. People at the Independence Center are like family to me. It has helped me so much to bond with them so I know I am not alone."

In honor of Mental Health Awareness Month, Independence Center is encouraging people to sign up for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) walk on May 14 in Creve Coeur Park at the Tremayne Shelter at 13725 Marine Ave. The event will take place from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the walk will start at 10 a.m. To find out how to join and support the Independence Center team, head to this site.

<https://www.namiwalks.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=donorDrive.team&teamID=48482>

"Mental illness impacts people all over," said Pace. "Do not think it can't happen to you or someone you love."

Independence Center's 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, or to learn more about their services, go to [www.independencecenter.org](http://www.independencecenter.org) or call 314.880.5476.