



## CONTENTS ALSO INCLUDE:

- P2 SB&H Offers Youth Mental Health First Aid Training
- P3 Recovery a Hard Journey from Darkness Into Light
- P4 Michelle Griffith Named VP of HR at SB&H
- P5 Stephen Thompson Joins SB&H Board of Directors

## SB&H Celebrates Recovery College Graduates

Southwest Behavioral & Health Services (SB&H) celebrated recent graduates of the Recovery College in a ceremony on July 9. The graduates have spent the past six months learning Positive Psychology strategies for their own personal and professional growth at SB&H and to support their work with the organization's members.

"We have had great success with the Recovery College thanks to the dedication and commitment of the students and instructors," said Southwest Behavioral & Health Services CEO Steven Sheets. "The 100-level course content is rigorous, and we send our warmest congratulations to the newest round of graduates."

The goal of the Recovery College is to provide increased educational opportunities to enhance learning, as well as meet the demands for continuing education. Currently, the Recovery College provides ongoing continuing education and training services in the behavioral health field for clients and staff.

The recent graduates of the Recovery College are all SB&H staff members. In order to complete the program, the graduates participated in classroom and online engagement – in addition to their regular duties as employees of SB&H.



## SB&H Offers Youth Mental Health First Aid Training

Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) is designed to teach individuals how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis.

YMHFA is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with youth. The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches an action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations.

In the past 3 months, SB&H's YMHFA trainers have successfully facilitated 10 training classes with 209 people trained to become a youth mental health first aider. Training attendees were from school districts, government agencies, universities, libraries and communities in the valley. Free YMHFA trainings will continue to be provided at various locations throughout the valley. Please check our website [www.sbhservices.org](http://www.sbhservices.org) for more training information.



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# Recovery a Hard Journey from Darkness Into Light

By Paul Rubi

My mental health issues surfaced in childhood. However, no one was able to tell me or my parents that my struggles would affect the decisions I would make throughout my life and that ultimately, those choices would have dire consequences. My poor choices affected me and my family in negative ways. I believe my mental health issues and my parents' views on child-rearing fueled my poor decisions.

While I am not a Ph.D., I've lived long enough to arrive at my own conclusions about the effects that mental health challenges can have on human beings. I believe how a child is raised makes a huge difference in how mental health challenges will develop and manifest themselves. Nurturing is stronger than genetics. Family defines who we are as a person.

One sad truth about having a mental health problem is the stigma that goes along with it. People, especially our families, often think that erratic or not quite "normal" behavior is due to moral defects, especially if mental illness is coupled with addiction. Both bring tragedy, broken trust and horrible consequences. Personal experience tells me that the one who is sick suffers the most, because he or she has to live with the consequences of their poor decisions.

Unfortunately and all too often, individuals who suffer from mental illness don't have the awareness or tools necessary to change their life. They have to hit rock bottom. Hitting rock bottom is really the painful realization that how one has lived his or her life up to that point in time has been a complete and devastating failure. But the good news is that once an individual hits rock bottom, the opportunity for recovery begins.

Recovery is an alternative. We say goodbye to demons of the past and learn to recreate our lives according to an enlightened self-awareness about ourselves, our life and our relationship to it. We stop being self-centered. It's not easy. Recovery means we must be willing to be scathingly honest about ourselves and our failings. It means we must look for the good that is intrinsic in all of us. Failing to find good and owning it sets us up to fail again and again. Understanding we can be and are fundamentally decent is what we use to begin to rebuild our lives. Recovery means nourishing our psyche, body and soul. Recovery can be dark, so it's important to get help.

Southwest Behavioral & Health Services offers a variety of care options for people in need. They are a resource that can shine a light on who you really are, which is an important part of a truthful and meaningful recovery. Holding onto this truth can be a lifeline, as there are a lot of amends to be made to those we harmed as a result of our addiction.

Mental illness and addiction are diseases that bring suffering and pain. It's imperative to know the source of the disease so you can manage the challenges that come along with it. When individuals are in anguish, they tend to make poor life decisions. Getting help can mean a new self-awareness, thought patterns and spiritual beliefs. Once someone asks for help, recovery can begin.

It's important to know that recovery from mental health challenges is possible. Recovery is real. It is rewarding and permits the individual to take what has been a dark and desolate time in their life and turn it into a time of joy and hope. You can even help others.



Paul Rubi is a peer support specialist at Southwest Behavioral & Health Services.





Michelle Griffith

## Michelle Griffith Named VP of HR at SB&H

SB&H announced that Michelle Griffith, a human resources leader with extensive HR experience, has been named the new Vice President of Human Resources. Griffith is a change and transformational HR leader focused on integrating the people strategy with the business strategy to effectively drive organizational performance and goals. She began her appointment on July 15th.

“Michelle has dedicated her career to improving the lives of the people in her care,” said President and CEO of Southwest Behavioral & Health Services Steven Sheets. “Her experience in implementing state-of-the-art HR systems that not only meet strategic goals but also enhance employees’ lives will be an asset to our organization. We look forward to the leadership that she will bring to this critical role.”

Griffith was most recently Senior Director of Human Resources for UMOM New Day Centers. Additional experience includes leadership positions at Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health and Trench Safety Equipment Corporation.



## Stephen Thompson Joins SB&H Board of Directors

SB&H announced that Stephen Thompson has joined the organization's Board of Directors.

"Stephen brings a wealth of financial management experience to the board," said President and CEO of Southwest Behavioral & Health Services Steven Sheets. "He is a seasoned executive with 'Big Four' accounting experience. The unique perspectives and experience he will bring will continue to support our efforts to meet the ever-changing needs of the communities we serve."

Thompson currently owns a franchise of SYNERGY HomeCare that operates in the Phoenix metro area; SYNERGY is a non-medical home care agency that provides respite, personal care and companionship for the elderly or those recovering from illness, surgery and childbirth and the disabled. His past professional experience includes executive positions with OneWest Bank, Countrywide Bank and Deloitte & Touche, LLP.



Stephen Thompson

### Interested in Being on the Board of Directors?

Are you, or is someone you know, interested in serving on the Board of Directors of Southwest Behavioral & Health Services and making a difference in the community?

Contact **Lynda Riford** at [lyndar@sbhservices.org](mailto:lyndar@sbhservices.org).







Transitions is published quarterly to keep the community informed about new developments at Southwest Behavioral & Health Services.

If you have suggestions for future newsletter topics or would like to be added to our email list, please contact:

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