



COALITION TO SAVE OUR MENTAL HEALTH CENTERS

# The Mental Health Booster

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Serving the neighborhoods of North Park, Brynford Park, Independence Park, Forest Glen, Albany Park, Mayfair, North Mayfair, Sauganash, and Irving Park

## October 29, 2015: The Kedzie Center Celebrates Its First Anniversary

On October 29, 2015, Chicago's first community-funded mental health center celebrated its first anniversary. During its initial year of operations, The Kedzie Center, located at 4141 N. Kedzie Avenue, has provided clinical services to consumers in over 1,100 sessions. These sessions include individual therapy and counseling for children, adults, couples, and families, as well as specialized group counseling sessions for parents, seniors, children, and homeless individuals.

The Kedzie Center's first year of services marks the culmination of a decade long effort by community residents working with the Coalition to Save Our Mental Health Centers to restore and expand mental health services in their community. On November 6, 2012, nearly 74% of the voters in the North River community passed a binding referendum to raise their own property taxes approximately \$16-20 per home per year to fund The Kedzie Center's operations.

"The services being provided at The Kedzie Center have exceeded the expectations of the community. We are all proud to know that the center is there because we stepped up as a community to make it possible," stated Coalition member Mike McGrail.

In addition to services provided at the center,



On October 29, 2014, over one hundred local residents, faith leaders, and legislators joined together to celebrate the grand opening of The Kedzie Center with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

staff members have developed relationships with local institutions to improve the services at the center. Local schools are able to refer families to the center and staff provide training to educators on how to respond effectively to parents and kids in distress. Seniors have also been able to receive help at various senior living facilities with a focus on group sessions and senior-specific issues.

"There are so many people in our diverse

community who need help, and thanks to The Kedzie Center they are finally able to get that help," reported North River community resident and Coalition member Juliet Pierce.

As it heads into its second year, The Kedzie Center is looking to expand on the foundation it has created by increasing services at the center, providing additional community-based services, and increasing the capacity to address the diverse language needs of the community.

## The Coalition's Community Access Network Transforms Delivery of Community Mental Health Services

COALITION TO SAVE OUR MENTAL HEALTH CENTERS is pleased to acknowledge support from:

The Albert Pick, Jr. Fund

Chicago Community Trust

The Retirement Research Foundation

Congregation of Mayfair Lutheran Church

Thank you for your support!



Tim's House, a ministry for people struggling with homelessness, discuss post-traumatic stress disorder.

With new mental health services available to anyone living in the community, many groups in the North River community began to wonder how they can work to ensure that individuals who need help are able to easily obtain services at The Kedzie Center.

After holding initial meetings, local groups decided to create the Community Access Network to address issues of access in the community and to bridge the gap between services and the people who need them.

The Community Access Network consists of over 30 groups, called Access Points, that are able to refer individuals to The Kedzie Center and provide information and

other services to help anyone struggling with mental illness get the help they need.

Access Points in the Network include faith-based groups, community centers, food pantries, senior housing communities, ethnic groups, homeless groups, and service providers. Each access point is trained to recognize individuals in distress and to assist them with getting services from the Center quickly and easily.

"Our vision for the Community Access Network is to have multiple access points in each sector of The Kedzie Center program area. Anyone who needs help should be able to walk into a church, mosque, or community center close to them and be connected to mental health services," said Access Network Member, Diana Bryant.

In addition to connecting people to clinical services, access points are transforming the way mental health needs are being met in the community. Older adults who generally do not seek out mental health services due to barriers like decreased mobility are now receiving services from The Kedzie Center in the form of group therapy sessions and seminars on mental health issues on-site at the senior community access points. People struggling with homelessness are also getting help at Tim's House, one of the enlisted access points.

For more information on mental health services:

The Kedzie Center

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www.thekedziecenter.org

## A Promise Kept to Those Who Need Our Help

They say that Chicago is a city of neighborhoods. It is a city that takes pride in its bustling downtown, ethnically and culturally diverse neighborhoods, and vibrant residential areas. But among the many great things Chicago is known for, the city's current public mental health system is certainly not one of them. In fact, Chicago's public mental health system has been falling to pieces for decades as City and State budgets are cut, centers are closed and "consolidated," and existing centers struggle to function with therapists handling huge caseloads. As a result, our fellow Chicagoans who are in need of mental health services fall through the cracks. In the face of these cuts and closures, any efforts to address the situation seemed all but futile.

Yet we, the North River community, did not back down. We did what no one has ever done before in the history of Chicago: We created our own new community mental health center. For years, we spoke up on the ballot about the need for more mental health services in our community. We even voted to pay for these essential services because we believe in making our community a better place to live. In 2010 we partnered with bipartisan legislators to pass a State Law—the Community Expanded Mental Health Services Act of 2011—to allow any community in Chicago to be able to initiate its own Expanded Mental Health Services Program (EMHSP). Then, in 2012, we became the first community to vote to create an EMHSP. Over the years, we voted on four referendum questions asking if we were willing to raise our own property taxes to restore mental health services in our commu-



*North River community residents and Coalition members fight to keep existing public mental health centers open.*

nity. And four times we resoundingly and convincingly said YES!

Our efforts have now allowed us to establish The Kedzie Center—the first Expanded Mental Health Center—right here in our neighborhood. The Kedzie Center serves as a beacon of hope for everyone in our community. At the center, children struggling in school due to bullying, relationships issues, family stress, or loss can receive support. Parents can sign up for support groups where they can learn parenting skills and share challenges with other parents. A senior citizen dealing with the gradual loss of independence or a beloved partner can seek solace from a caring professional at the center or in a community setting closer to their home. A veteran struggling to hold down a job due to

post-traumatic stress disorder can finally receive treatment and help in finding resources. Nowhere else have so many vulnerable individuals ever been able to receive help like they can at The Kedzie Center. All these would not be possible without our efforts and unwavering dedication to our community.

But our work is hardly over. Our community's mental health needs are constantly changing, which means our challenges to meet them are too. We have the responsibility of continuing to be aware of these changes and care for our community in collaboration with The Kedzie Center. More importantly, we have the responsibility of making sure that our community members do not fall back into the cracks of a broken system.

### JOIN THE COMMUNITY ACCESS NETWORK!

Are you interested in joining the North River Community Access Network? Fill out the form and mail it back to the Coalition to Save Our Mental Health Centers. We look forward to hearing from you!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Organization (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information (preferred method of contact) \_\_\_\_\_

Tell us a little bit about why you would like to join the Access Network.

\_\_\_\_\_  
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The Governing Commission that oversees the North River Expanded Mental Health Services Program holds monthly meetings at St. John's Episcopal Church at 3857 N Kostner Ave. Residents living in the North River community are welcome to attend.

If you are interested in attending, please contact the Commission.

Phone: 773-939-0695

Email: [nremhsp@hotmail.com](mailto:nremhsp@hotmail.com)

Website: [www.northriverexpandedmentaltheservicescommission.org](http://www.northriverexpandedmentaltheservicescommission.org)

The Coalition to Save Our Mental Health Centers is a 501c3 non-profit organization dedicated to expanding and restoring mental health services in Chicago.

Contact us for more information!

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