



**DISCOVER YOU.**  
*Empowering Journeys to Mental Wellness*

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# Interview with *Wil Morris, CEO*

## A JOURNEY OF COMPASSION AND INNOVATION

In an insightful conversation, Wil Morris, CEO of Sanilac County Community Mental Health, opens up about the mission, challenges, and future goals of the organization. He shares a focus on innovation, community impact, and ambitious plans that promise a hopeful future for mental health care.

### CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE MISSION AND VISION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION AND HOW THEY GUIDE YOUR DAILY OPERATIONS?

Our mission and vision are the core of everything we do. We exist to provide support and care for individuals facing mental health challenges, helping them navigate difficult times and move towards independence. Historically, our vision statements were complex, but we are updating them to reflect our daily impact more clearly. Our goal is to make a tangible difference in

people's lives, offering a supportive hand during their hardest moments. This is what we've always done, and this is what we intend to do in an even more comprehensive way in the year to come.

### WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES CURRENTLY FACING THE MENTAL HEALTH CARE SECTOR, AND HOW IS SANILAC CMH ADDRESSING THEM?

One of the most significant challenges is the heightened attention on mental health due to various societal issues, such as school shootings and the lack of hospital beds. This increased focus has people looking at us with an expectation of expanding our reach and services, which is wonderful but leads to its own growing pains. The demand stretches our resources thin, leading to staffing needs as we try to meet the growing demand. Another challenge is the persistent stigma around mental health. Despite progress, many still view those with behavioral health issues negatively. We work tirelessly to combat this stigma by reminding everyone that mental health issues are common and it's okay to seek help.

### HOW DO YOU MEASURE THE SUCCESS AND IMPACT OF YOUR ORGANIZATION'S SERVICES ON THE COMMUNITY?

We measure success in several ways, including client satisfaction and health outcomes. Seeing individuals we helped years ago now living healthy, happy lives is incredibly rewarding. Success stories, like adults who benefited from our services as children, are a testament to our impact. Unfortunately, societal stigma persists, but we continue to fight against it by promoting understanding and acceptance of mental health issues.

### WHAT INNOVATIVE APPROACHES OR TECHNOLOGIES ARE YOU USING TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH CARE DELIVERY?

We've embraced technology to enhance our services, such as teletherapy and video consultations, which allow us to reach more people, especially in rural areas. We're also working on co-locating our staff in rural health clinics, enabling us to provide mental health services directly to patients during their regular doctor visits. This not only reduces stigma but also expands our reach while keeping costs low. Additionally, we are collaborating with local healthcare providers to share resources and streamline care.

## CAN YOU SHARE A RECENT SUCCESS STORY THAT HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPACT OF YOUR ORGANIZATION'S WORK ON AN INDIVIDUAL OR COMMUNITY?

One success story involves our staff providing support at urgent care centers in the community in substance use disorder cases. This initiative allowed us to reach individuals who might not have sought help otherwise. We met people with immediate needs, offering quick consultations and referrals. This proactive approach has allowed us to meet people where they are and provide care that they may not have otherwise sought out. It has changed how the community viewed substance use disorder care and increased trust in our services.

## HOW DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH THE LATEST RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENTS IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE?

Our medical director is deeply involved in ongoing education, subscribing to medical journals and attending conferences. Our staff also participates in continuous education, ensuring we are always informed about the latest evidence-based practices. Collaboration and a willingness to learn are crucial in our rural setting, where resources can be limited. We put our heads together to figure things out and take care of the needs of our citizens.

## WHAT ARE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S PRIORITIES FOR THE COMING YEAR, AND HOW DO YOU PLAN TO ACHIEVE THEM?

As many know, we are a CCBHC test site, and over the past year we have served over 200 more people than we did in the previous year. This is a 21 to 23% increase. By the end of the fiscal year, I am expecting that we will have served 40% more people than we did last year. We are seeing a lot of people that are coming in and seeing us for a very short time, and then they are good to go. And that's how it should be! I foresee that in the future, we will see 3,000+ people a year for early intervention, that we can be a resource for when they are dealing with trauma, get them help early on so they have the tools to live fully without needing extended care long-term, because it was addressed early on.

Our priority is to expand our reach and serve more people. Early intervention is key, and we are proud of the progress we've made in this area. By enhancing our services and maintaining strong community partnerships, we hope to make a lasting positive impact.

## WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF WHEN IT COMES TO THIS ORGANIZATION AND WHAT YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED IN 2023?

Early intervention and compassion are crucial in making a meaningful impact on mental health in our community. We all care about the person walking in our front door with a silent cry for help that just needs us to hold their hand for 15 minutes. This is what early intervention looks like, and I have always thought that early intervention is the key, and now we are able to do it, and that is what I'm most proud of.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHERS IN OUR COMMUNITY LOOKING TO MAKE A MEANINGFUL IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH?

One of the things that I stress with my staff when I do new employee orientations is that everyone is different, and everyone's cry for help is different. It's essential to recognize that everyone experiences mental health issues differently, and what might seem trivial to one person can be a significant crisis for another. Listening with empathy and offering support without judgment can make a world of difference.



*Wil Morris' dedication to improving mental health care shines through in his words and actions. With a clear vision and innovative strategies, the Sanilac Community Mental Health team is paving the way for a more compassionate and effective mental health care system.*

# Finding Strength *Tanis' Story*



Tanis found himself at a crossroads after a painful event in his life led to suicidal thoughts. Seeking help at Sanilac Community Mental Health, he discovered an underlying anxiety issue that had been impacting his life. "Waking up and feeling like everything is against you, feeling an unbearable weight and hopelessness, no one should have to deal with that alone," he states with surety and confidence.

Through this journey, Tanis relearned how to manage his anxiety, finding solace in breathing techniques and the power of doing activities he enjoys, even if just for a couple of hours. "Everyone is different in the way they learn to cope; the way I cope at times is through laughter, or doing an activity I love. What works for me might not work for anyone else, but finding what works for you is a part of the journey."

It is evident throughout conversation that Tanis remains motivated by the knowledge that he can control his life. He acknowledges that there are days when motivation wanes, but emphasizes the importance of persistence and self-care. Tanis's journey serves as a powerful reminder that everyone copes differently and that finding effective methods for managing mental health is a personal and ongoing process. "I no longer deal with suicidal thoughts, and that never would have happened had I not reached out for help."

Tanis is very passionate about dissolving common misconceptions about mental health, such as the belief that nobody cares. "There is a stigma, especially around men and mental health. For any men that hear or read my story, I just want you to know. Don't give two s---s about what other people think. Do it for you and get help."

Looking forward, Tanis focuses on living life as it comes, rather than worrying about the future. His message to others is one of hope and resilience: "Don't give up. Just try, and if nothing happens, at least you made the effort." His story is a testament to the strength found in vulnerability and the transformative power of seeking help.



# Discovering Determination *Mackenzie's Story*

Mackenzie's journey is a tale of resilience, determination, and realizing dreams. Struggling with mental health and epilepsy, Mackenzie faced significant challenges, including the inability to drive, which made finding employment difficult. Employers were hesitant due to her reliance on public transportation, making her path even steeper.

"When I started work here (Creative Enterprises), I was dealing with severe anxiety, and I wasn't used to talking to people or socializing," states Mackenzie. "Eventually

# Living Resilience

## Elizabeth's Story

Elizabeth's journey is a powerful testament to resilience and the importance of seeking help. As a mother of seven, she has faced many challenges, but it was her youngest daughter's need for assistance that spurred her to confront her own struggles with PTSD from early life experiences. Initially, Elizabeth saw asking for help as a sign of weakness, a mindset she attributes to her fiercely independent nature. However, the overwhelming weight of her responsibilities led her to seek the support she needed.

"I probably wouldn't be here if I didn't ask for help; my daughter would not be here if she didn't ask for help," Elizabeth recalls. "It's been an interesting road, getting to this point. I didn't think I would ever tell anyone about my life experiences, but asking for help has changed everything."

Elizabeth's story is one of transformation and hope. Her journey has not only improved her own well-being but has also had a profound impact on her family. By being open about her experiences, she hopes to teach her children that seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness. She wants them to carry this lesson forward to their own children and inspire others in their community to be brave enough to ask for the support they need.

"Daily life has changed significantly since I started here at CMH," states Elizabeth. "I understand my family members better, and they understand my struggles." The daily tasks that once seemed insurmountable, like grocery shopping, have become manageable. Therapy has helped her identify and articulate her feelings, reducing the constant state of alertness that once dominated her life. This has also alleviated the stress and anxiety that exacerbated symptoms in her physical body.

Elizabeth's story highlights the crucial role of support systems in overcoming personal battles. "Some people think that people won't listen or care. But I have found so many caring people both in group and individual therapy. It's so good to be able to relate to people!"

When asked about the advice she would give to others that may be experiencing mental health challenges, Elizabeth recommends, "Reach out. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Just like on an airplane, you must put the air mask on yourself first. As a mom, sometimes we forget to do that. But for our kids, we must learn to put our mask on and take care of ourselves if we are ever going to be able to take care of them."

I started to open up, and I met some really good coworkers. They helped me find confidence, and I realized that I could be motivated to get my driver's license."

Mackenzie's advice is simple yet profound: "If you leave it alone, it's not going to get any better." She knows firsthand the importance of perseverance and seeking help. Initially reluctant to ask for assistance, she soon realized the power of reaching out. "Be brave and ask," she encourages. "It will do great things for you. Just trying each day, the small steps can lead you to something big."

Today, Mackenzie works three days a week, earning praise for her excellent performance. She is also enrolled in an online Dental Hygienist program, marking yet another milestone in her journey. Every step Mackenzie takes propels her closer to a future of her own making, embodying hope and determination.



# CMH Staff of the Year

## *Gloria Klinesteker*

Gloria Klinesteker is the recipient of the 2024 Staff of the Year award. Gloria serves as a therapist and is loved by staff and the individuals that interact with her.

Gloria became a part of the CMH family just over a decade ago and is regarded as one of the most positive therapists you will ever meet. "I love the people here; they are the best part of the job. The people I serve, the people I work with. They make my day every day."

"On a daily basis we offer hope. We work with individuals that society doesn't know what to do with, and we have the opportunity to love them, provide them with respect and dignity, and help them build self-esteem. I love the fact that we get to instill all of those things."

Gloria exemplifies a genuine tenderness for people and their recovery experience. You can tell by the sincerity of her actions that she is passionate about her job and the impact it has on the lives of others. Thank you, Gloria, for being a valuable part of our CMH family!



# CMH Community Partner in Recovery

## *Jennifer Greer*

We are pleased to recognize Jennifer Greer as our 2024 Community Partner in Recovery. Jennifer is recognized for being a supportive and friendly face for individuals who utilize Sanilac Transportation services and for being a true advocate for mental health and recovery.



Jennifer began providing room and board services to individuals in 2018, and it has truly become her passion. "Because of being a part of Sanilac Transportation, I got to see the people who fell through the cracks of society. Room and board gives individuals the freedom of movement to bring them to a new level of independence. It's not a long-term thing, but it helps individuals graduate to a new level and gives them the tools they need to learn to be on their own. I've had several people who can now be more independent because they've been given a room and board opportunity."

"I want to leave a legacy of kindness and generosity, be empathetic, see the goodness in people. To let people know that no matter who you are, you can make a change."

We want to extend a heart felt thank you to Jennifer for her continued commitment to improving the lives of our community members.

## *Thank you!*

# Growing Tenacity

## Adalynn's Story

Adalynn, affectionately known as Addie, is an 11-year-old girl who was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) at the age of two. From the beginning, her journey has been a whirlwind of therapies, challenges, and small victories. Diagnosed early, she was one of the first children in our community to attend CMH's Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Program and speech therapy, making her a pioneer in her own right.

Despite the hurdles, Addie's family never gave up. "Early on we were told she would never speak or be able to take care of herself," says Addie's mom. "And that's the problem," interjects Addie's dad, "kids with her severity are given up on by society." "It was a fight every day, but we never gave up," states Mom as she and Addie smile at each other.

Today, Addie is fully potty trained, uses 15 to 20 words, and has learned to mimic those around her, a significant milestone that brings immense joy to her family.

Addie's favorite activities include playing on the water slide, watching people, and parties! "She is always using the party emoji when she types because they are her favorite thing," says Mom. She is also particularly fond of pinatas, because what is a party without a pinata! Her family remains hopeful and motivated by her progress, finding joy in every small victory and using each challenge as an opportunity to prove that Addie can lead a fulfilling life.

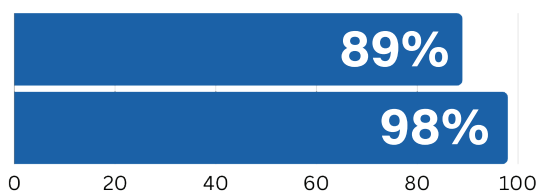
Her parents wish to dispel misconceptions about autism. They emphasize that autism is not a trend or a fad, but a serious condition that requires understanding and support. They urge others to treat children with autism like any other kid, allowing them to grow and thrive in their own unique ways.

Addie's story is one of tenacity and hope, showcasing the strength of a family's love and the incredible progress that can be made with patience, dedication, and belief in the possibilities. Her journey reminds us all that with the right support, children with autism can achieve great things and lead enriching lives.



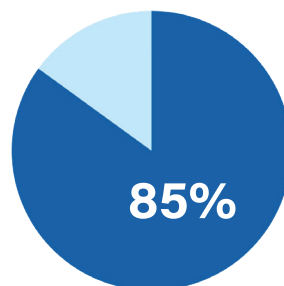
# Sanilac CMH Customer Satisfaction

These responses are taken from a survey distributed to a random selection of 341 individuals who received services at Sanilac CMH during May 2023. Out of these individuals, 193 completed the survey.

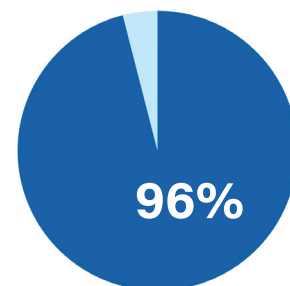


**89%** of the individuals said that as a result of the services they have received, they **are better able to control their life**

**98%** said services were available at times that were convenient to them.



**85%** of the individuals said that as a result of the services they have received, they **do better in social situations.**



**96%** of the individuals said that overall, they **were satisfied with the services they have received.**

*Thank you to our board members past and present who continue to oversee and support the forward momentum of Sanilac CMH.*

## 2022-23 Board Members

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## SANILAC CMH AUTHORITY 2022-2023 FINANCIALS

### EXPECTED REVENUE BY SOURCE

Traditional Medicaid	20,266,009	77.86%
Healthy Michigan Medicaid	1,906,244	7.32%
State Funds	603,557	2.32%
Contract Revenue	1,101,273	4.23%
Industrial Sales	472,542	1.82%
Local & County	434,410	1.67%
Grants	1,239,338	4.76%
Other Service Fees	4,210	0.02%
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>26,027,583</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

### EXPECTED EXPENDITURES

Staffing	10,981,484	42.45%
Residential Services	7,326,225	28.32%
Operating Costs	2,093,627	8.09%
Contract Services	4,169,056	16.12%
Inpatient	1,209,443	4.68%
Drawdown	87,952	0.34%
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>25,867,787</b>	<b>100.00%</b>