

Choose Mental Health Announces Individual and Organization Winners of Inaugural SMILE Award

Leading nonprofit honors those supporting youth mental health through tangible, meaningful and innovative initiatives.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, U.S.A., December 12, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Choose Mental Health](#),

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Dan Pontius, President of Choose Mental Health

the national voice for children’s mental health, is pleased to announce the recipients of the SMILE Award, standing for, “Sustained Mental Health Initiatives and Lifetime of Excellence,” designed to recognize and celebrate outstanding businesses, organizations and individuals across the United States that are actively working to address the ongoing youth mental health crisis.

This year’s inaugural winners included one individual – Rhainazelle Manzano - and one organization – Youth Guidance - who have demonstrated significant efforts to support mental health initiatives in the workplace and the communities they serve.

Individual Winner

Rhainazelle Manzano of Bend Health has been awarded the Individual SMILE Award for her work as a Behavioral Care Manager. Specializing in supporting youth diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and developmental disabilities, Rhainazelle's impact goes beyond clinical duties, reflecting a profound dedication to the well-being of the children she supports. She extends her influence on a broader spectrum of mental health conditions, advocating for evidence-based, personalized approaches in treatment plans, as well as transcends professional boundaries to spend her personal time volunteering with Feed the Children.

“My inspiration for advocating for youth mental health stems from the empathy and unwavering passion for the children I’ve had the opportunity to work with. I’m fueled by my commitment to champion an individualized approach to behavioral health care. Witnessing tangible

improvements in behavior, emotional regulation, and overall well-being solidified this dedication to advocating for effective policies and practices,” said Rhainazelle Manzano. “This, coupled with my academic journey, empowered me to bridge the gap between research and practice. I’m grounded in creating a brighter and more hopeful future for young individuals facing mental health challenges.”

Organization Winner

Youth Guidance in Chicago, Illinois has been awarded the SMILE Award for their work to provide resources and tools that equip young people with the skills to manage stress, cope with adversity, and build emotional intelligence. Through a combination of educational programs, post-secondary opportunities, workshops, and outreach initiatives - specifically its emotional services programs including Evolve its social-emotional learning (SEL) program, Becoming A Man® (BAM®) and Working on Womanhood (WOW) programs – Youth Guidance’s active approach to supporting youth mental health helps create a future where every young person can thrive emotionally, academically, personally and have a bright future.

Entering its 100th year of service, Youth Guidance has served nearly 15,000 youth, many of whom face barriers to success in school, especially given environment-induced stresses such as neighborhood and family experiences. Youth Guidance counsels youth and families while simultaneously working within schools to instill systems and programs that will serve as interventions to create healthy resilience in students. This work leads to higher student success rates and better overall outcomes.

“Youth Guidance is committed to providing resources and tools that equip young people with the skills to manage stress, cope with adversity, and build emotional intelligence,” said Dr. Nacole Milbrook, Chief Program Officer at Youth Guidance. “We understand the unique challenges faced by today's youth and place a special emphasis on advocating for mental health initiatives that empower young people to navigate these challenges with both resilience and confidence. We aim to dismantle the stigma by fostering open conversations and creating a supportive environment where mental health concerns are met with empathy, understanding, and effective intervention. We’re honored to be accepting an award from an organization like Choose Mental



Health whose mission is so closely aligned with our own.”

To learn more about Youth Guidance and its programs to support youth mental health, visit: <https://www.youth-guidance.org/#ourprograms>.

“The goal with the SMILE Award was to recognize champions of youth mental health across the United States. We were so impressed with the nominations we received in the first year of this award, and we are thrilled to recognize Rhainazelle Manzano and Youth Guidance for their important contributions in the fight for youth mental health,” said Dan Pontius, President of Choose Mental Health.

For more information about the SMILE Awards and to stay informed on important award program updates, please visit <https://www.choosementalhealth.org/smileaward/>.

Learn more about becoming a corporate partner with Choose Mental Health online [here](#).

About Choose Mental Health

Choose Mental Health is the national voice for children’s mental health, providing parents and caregivers with a resource that offers straightforward answers to mental health, relationships, family dynamics, anger, depression, and other critical topics. Choose Mental Health also provides a clear treatment path so help comes faster. Fundraising efforts support scholarships for children and youth who cannot afford mental health care. Choose Mental Health also recognizes leaders making a difference in the fight for youth mental health via its annual SMILE Award program. To learn more, please visit: www.ChooseMentalHealth.org.

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