

Raleigh Mental Health Executive Named to Etheridge Foundation Board of Advisors

Kathleen O'Connell has been named to the board of advisors of The Etheridge Foundation, the non-profit founded by rock icon Melissa Etheridge.

RALEIGH, NC, UNITED STATES, February 4, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Kathleen O'Connell, a Raleigh-based licensed clinical mental health professional and Clinical Director of the Intensive Outpatient Program and Therapy Services at [Gupta Psychiatry & Wellness](#), has been named to the board of advisors of [The Etheridge Foundation](#), the Southern California-based non-profit founded by rock icon Melissa Etheridge.

The Etheridge Foundation advances transformative new treatments for opioid use disorder (OUD) through advocacy and by supporting groundbreaking research. It helps to fund studies on plant medicine and psychedelic therapies for OUD that use an integrated understanding of factors such as mental health issues, trauma, and chronic pain, with the ultimate goal of providing safe, legal, and equitable access to effective new treatments nationwide for all who could benefit.

Ms. O'Connell is an experienced substance abuse and crisis stabilization counselor in both residential and in-patient settings. She uses Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR) to work with adults dealing with trauma-related disorders. She holds multiple professional licenses and earned master's degrees from both N.C. Central and UNC-Wilmington, where she also received her undergraduate degree. She comes from a family of medical professionals.

"We are so pleased that Kate has agreed to join our Advisory Board. Leading edge clinicians like Kate are true rock stars in the mental health field!" said Etheridge. "Kate's expertise base in North Carolina, a hub for innovation in the South, is strategically important as our team advocates for changes to law and policy, making plant medicine and psychedelic therapies more accessible to patients in need."

Etheridge stormed onto the American rock scene in 1988 with the release of her critically acclaimed self-titled debut album. Known for her confessional lyrics and raspy, smoky vocals, she has remained one of America's favorite rock stars for more than two decades.

She is the recipient of two Grammy Awards for "Best Female Rock Performance," a "Songwriter of

the Year” honor at the ASCAP Pop Awards, and achieved a career milestone with her victory in the “Best Song” category at the 2007 Academy Awards for I Need to Wake Up, written for the Al Gore documentary An Inconvenient Truth. With massive original hits such as I’m the Only One and Come to My Window, Etheridge is a musical and cultural icon.

Etheridge has also proven herself to be an artist who has never allowed “inconvenient truths” to keep her silent. She publicly acknowledged her sexual orientation at a time when it was considered risky to do so, and continues her activism for Marriage Equality to this day.

After being diagnosed with breast cancer in October 2004, Etheridge appeared on the 2005 Grammy telecast despite losing her hair from chemotherapy, to sing “Piece of My Heart” in tribute to Janis Joplin. As a cancer survivor, Melissa has publicly advocated for the therapeutic benefits of medicinal cannabis.

Etheridge founded The Etheridge Foundation after losing her 21-year-old son Beckett to opioid addiction in 2020. In turn, she channeled her personal grief into activism, with a goal to help people heal through the transformative power of plant medicines.

“I am so pleased and honored to assist Melissa and the Etheridge Foundation team with its research, treatment and advocacy efforts, both here in North Carolina and nationally,” said Ms. O’Connell. “The team that Melissa and Linda (Wallem) have assembled in partnership with researchers, doctors and clinicians is beyond impressive. As the nation’s only non-profit focused on groundbreaking plant medicine therapies for opioid use disorder, I’m looking forward to doing my part to make a real difference in how we look at and treat mental disorders.”

Anna Symonds
The Etheridge Foundation
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