

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Alane Swain Executive Director

Mental Health America – Spartanburg County (864) 345-0014

[info@mhaspartanburg.org](mailto:info@mhaspartanburg.org)

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MHA-Spartanburg Honors Outstanding Mental Health Advocates at 10th Annual Symposium

Spartanburg, S.C. – Mental Health America of Spartanburg County proudly announces the recipients of its 10th Annual Mental Health Symposium Awards, celebrating individuals and organizations that have made exceptional contributions to promoting mental wellness in our community. The awards were presented at the 10th Annual Mental Health Symposium, held on October 11, 2025, honoring a decade of advancing minds and enhancing care.

**Award Winners:**

Elizabeth Pratt *Lifetime Achievement Award*

Elizabeth Pratt, M.Div., Ed.S, LMFT, LMFT/S, has been a cornerstone of the Upstate mental health community for more than 20 years, serving with compassion, humility, and unwavering commitment to the healing and empowerment of others. As Director of Clinical Services at Project R.E.S.T. (formerly Safe Homes–Rape Crisis Coalition), Elizabeth has provided expert individual and group psychotherapy to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, while also supervising and mentoring a team of clinicians.

Her leadership has cultivated a culture of empathy and excellence that extends far beyond the organization. A former professor in Converse University’s Marriage and Family Therapy program and a respected supervisor at EMERGE, she has helped shape the next generation of therapists through thoughtful guidance and trauma-informed practice. Known for her warmth, integrity, and authenticity, Elizabeth continues to be a quiet but powerful force in building a stronger, more compassionate Spartanburg.

Dr. Kelly Kennedy *Mental Health Clinical Advocate Award*

Dr. Kelly Kennedy, Ph.D., LMFT/S, is honored for her leadership, mentorship, and advocacy in advancing ethical, inclusive, and accessible mental health care. A dedicated educator and clinician, Dr. Kennedy’s work has opened pathways to care for underserved populations while cultivating integrity and equity in clinical education and supervision.

Known for her exceptional ability to bridge theory and practice, Dr. Kennedy challenges those she teaches and mentors to think critically, uphold ethical standards, and lead with compassion. Her contributions have left an enduring mark on the Upstate’s mental health landscape, and her commitment to community wellness continues to inspire clinicians and students alike.

### Sara Parker *Mental Health Clinical Advocate Award*

Sara Parker, LMFT, is recognized for her steadfast dedication and far-reaching contributions to the mental health community through her work at EMERGE Family Therapy Center. Since joining the organization in 2011, Sara has played an essential role in shaping its growth, stability, and ability to provide high-quality, affordable care across the Upstate.

As Operations Director, Sara ensures that EMERGE runs smoothly day to day while also guiding it through seasons of change and expansion. From helping transition the clinic into new facilities and implementing electronic health records to navigating the challenges of the pandemic and the shift to telehealth, her leadership has been both practical and deeply human.

Sara is known for her calm presence, her compassion in moments of crisis, and her tireless commitment to helping others. She is the person colleagues turn to for guidance, encouragement, and solutions—and her influence can be felt in every part of EMERGE’s work. Her belief in the mission, her mentorship of emerging clinicians, and her dedication to community care have created a ripple effect of impact that continues to strengthen mental health services throughout Spartanburg and beyond.

### Ashley Hairr and Meg Chapman *Mental Health Community Advocates of the Year*

Ashley Hairr, LMFT, and Meg Chapman, LMFT, are recognized for their creation and ongoing stewardship of Upstate Therapist Connect, a Facebook community founded in 2016 to foster connection, collaboration, and resource-sharing among mental health professionals.

Now hosting more than 2,300 members and averaging 5,000 posts annually, the group has become an essential referral and networking hub - helping clinicians connect clients to appropriate services, share resources, and build supportive professional relationships. Despite the challenges that come with moderating a large and diverse online community, Ashley and Meg have remained steadfast in their mission to create a space that reflects the very best of the helping professions: accessibility, integrity, and genuine community care.

### Madison Miller *Young Adult Advocate of the Year*

Madison Miller, a sophomore at the University of South Carolina Upstate and member of the women’s basketball team, exemplifies courage and compassion in her advocacy for mental health awareness among youth and young adults.

Originally from Hamburg, New Jersey, Madison uses her voice and platform to challenge stigma and promote healing. Her poetry collection, *My Teenage Experience* - written between ages 16 and 19 - offers an unflinching exploration of adolescence, mental illness, and recovery. Through her words and her presence, Madison reminds others that vulnerability is strength and that no one is ever truly alone.

On campus and beyond, Madison models openness and empathy, creating safe spaces for conversation and support. Her message to peers is simple but profound: emotions are valid, help is available, and healing is possible.

### Camron Carr *Youth Advocate of the Year*

Camron Carr is recognized for his enthusiasm, leadership, and commitment to promoting mental health awareness among his peers. As an MHA-Spartanburg youth board member, Camron brings curiosity, maturity, and genuine compassion to his work, consistently seeking ways to contribute to the organization's mission.

Over the past year, he has stepped outside of his comfort zone to take on new challenges - addressing his first envelope for the Friends Campaign, attending the North Carolina MHA Conference, and helping develop a mental health class for the Spartanburgers Health and Wellness Fair. His willingness to learn and lead by example reflects both his dedication and his remarkable sense of responsibility.

Having lived around the world - including in China, England, Mexico, and New York— Camron brings a broad perspective and a deep appreciation for community connection. His thoughtfulness and initiative make him an invaluable member of MHA-Spartanburg and a model of youth advocacy in action.

### Contec Inc. *Corporate Partner of the Year*

Contec Inc. is recognized for its ongoing partnership and corporate citizenship in support of mental health awareness and education throughout Spartanburg County. The company's commitment to community engagement, employee well-being, and philanthropic collaboration with MHA-Spartanburg demonstrates the powerful impact of business leadership rooted in compassion and responsibility.

### Cathy McCabe *Mary Miles Award*

Cathy McCabe is recognized for her unwavering dedication and leadership to Mental Health America of Spartanburg County and stewardship of its mission. Involved in countless community efforts across Spartanburg, Cathy still makes time to volunteer with MHA-Spartanburg, where her impact has been extraordinary.

She made an immediate mark on the organization by creating the Be Kind to Your Mind campaign - now approaching its fifth annual celebration in 2026 - and continues to champion it as a cornerstone of MHA's outreach and education efforts. Her positivity, encouragement, and tireless energy elevate every initiative she touches, inspiring those around her to dream bigger and serve better.

Though retired, and a devoted mother and grandmother, Cathy continues to use her intelligence, expertise, and experience to strengthen both the organization and the mental health of Spartanburg County. MHA-Spartanburg is deeply grateful for her leadership and all she does to advance mental health advocacy in our community.

For more information about the award winners or upcoming programs, please visit [www.mhaspartanburg.org](http://www.mhaspartanburg.org) or email [info@mhaspartanburg.org](mailto:info@mhaspartanburg.org).

### **About Mental Health America of Spartanburg County**

Mental Health America of Spartanburg County aims to promote positive mental health, raise awareness about mental illness, reduce stigma that prevents seeking treatment, and initiate crucial community conversations through education, advocacy, and collaboration.

