



## INC Board Funds Family Focus Aurora for Mental Health Community Liaison

The \$35,000 grant recognizes Family Focus Aurora's role in serving the region's Latino community. The grant funds a new community liaison among Family Focus, local townships and social service organizations to connect individuals with mental health support. This position will work in partnership with Family Focus to educate the community about mental health issues, reduce the stigma associated with accessing mental health services, create a welcoming hand-off between agencies, and reduce barriers (language, cultural and access to insurance).

Jerry Murphy, Executive Director of the INC Board said, "This grant recognizes Family Focus' leadership in creating a safe space where members from the region's Latino community know they can go to find the help they need." Mariana Osoria, Vice President of Centers at Family Focus said, "This partnership will bring together those who want mental health services and service providers in our community. It's a great fit with our commitment to support children by strengthening families".

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## #StigmaFree

With October being Mental Health Awareness Month, we would like to share the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)'s three steps to be stigma free. You can also take the pledge to let others know that there is hope and understanding. You can change the way the world sees mental health.

See more at: <https://www.nami.org/stigmfree#whatisstigmfree>.

### Step 1: Educate Yourself and Others

Everyone knows a little about mental health issues but knowing the facts about mental illness can help you educate others and reject stigmatizing stereotypes. They are not the result of personal weakness, lack of character or poor upbringing. Understanding mental health isn't only about being able to identify symptoms and having a name for these conditions but dispelling many false ideas about mental

health conditions as well.

### Step 2: See the Person and Not the Illness

**1 in 5 Americans live with a mental health condition and each of them has their own story, path and journey that says more about them than their diagnosis. Whether you live with mental illness or are a friend, family member, caregiver or medical professional getting to know a person and treating them with kindness and empathy means far more than just knowing what they are going through.**

### Step 3: Take Action on Mental Health Issues

**Our mental health care systems have been in crisis for far too long and often keeps treatment and recovery out of the hands of many who need it. We can take action now as we push for better legislation and policies to improve lives for everyone. By lending your support you can show that this cause is important to you and desperately needed for millions of Americans.**



## New Volunteers Step Up

The INC Board and staff would like to welcome two new community volunteers. William Harding has been appointed to the Aurora Township Community Mental Health 708 board. He attended his first meeting on October 3, 2016.

And in Kaneville Township, Jennifer Long joins six other volunteers to serve on the Kaneville Township 708 board. We look forward to her participation and input.

Please note that all INC Board and Township Mental Health 708 Board meetings are open to the public. Check out the dates on our website [www.incboard.org](http://www.incboard.org), or call the office and talk to Jerry, Dalila or Eileen.

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## *Writing Your Way to Healing*

*by Jada Hudson, M.S., LCPC, Sugar Grove Community Mental Health 708 Board Member*

You experienced a trauma. It was horrible. What now? How do you even begin to think about it? Where do you go first? You can't get it out of your head, and you don't want people to think you're weak. Should you talk to someone, or should you try to sort it out on your own? Should you take your time, or do you need to come forward right away?

The most important thing you can do to begin healing from a trauma is to deal with it right away! That means, beginning to think through what exactly happened and how it made you feel. In fact, one of the most helpful ways to begin to think through a traumatic event is by writing about it. There are so many subconscious thoughts that human beings hold internally – dreams, ambitions, fears, habits, desires, etc., and when people begin to write down their reflections on a situation, it engages their thinking on a deeper level. By using a different part of the brain, reflective writing can help us think about a traumatic situation differently, shedding new light on it, and helping us be able to wrap our minds around it. You may be surprised! The part of the brain that is engaged during reflective writing may produce even more thoughtful insights than talking aloud can produce.

This is not to minimize the importance of talking through a situation with a peer supporter or a counselor. Having someone to ask insightful questions and relate to what you have been through is invaluable. But, there is also power in taking a pen to paper and spilling your heart out. Think of this as translating your feelings into a story. There was an event, framed by all of your other life events, that occurred, and at the moment it makes no sense. But, as you fill in the words on the page, the story starts to take shape. You are the author and the main character, and you can begin to see how the event fits.

Research Psychologist James Pennebaker of the University of Texas conducted a number of studies that all found that writing about a stressful or traumatic event helped people come to terms with the emotional aftermath of such an event. Not only did writing help mentally and emotionally, but it also helped physically! Those in his study were less prone to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but they were also less likely to suffer from asthma, arthritis, and even chronic fatigue syndrome later. And, he quantified it! Pennebaker found that when people write for about 20 minutes a day – ideally at the end of the day – for three or four consecutive days, they were likely to have half the number of medical visits.

But, I must warn you that writing immediately after a traumatic event could make you angry, as you remember the event. But, in my experience, anything you can do to get your thoughts out immediately after it happens is going to help you move forward. A high percentage of first responders are introverts and need time to think about things on their own. That is totally fine! Many introverts will sleep more and process a trauma internally. One way to begin to think through an event without having to process with another person immediately is to write your experience down.

If you're up for it, grab a piece of paper, and begin to write down everything that happened. Ask yourself what you were feeling, why you were feeling that way, what senses were you using, what was stressing you out, what were you proud of, what do you wish hadn't happened, and, most importantly, what you want to learn

from this experience. Once you've done some writing, set the paper down, and plan to write again later.

When you're ready, it is also incredibly important to process a traumatic experience with a peer supporter, a counselor, or a clinician. So, reach out and get help because processing takes time, and the sooner you can begin to heal after a trauma, the sooner you'll begin to see the sunlight again.

Jada Hudson may be reached at (630) 815-3735.

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### “Layperson’s Guide to Mental Illness”

INC staff, in conjunction with the Kane County Behavioral Health Council’s Community Awareness Committee, has developed a presentation for public viewing on the subject of mental illness. If your club, church, social service club, neighborhood organization or other group would like a presentation contact Jerry or Dalila at (630) 892-5456 to find out more or schedule a presentation.



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