



The Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force is the voice of the community on issues related to the quality and responsiveness of mental health and substance use disorder services.

Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force 2021 Award Recipients

The Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force (MHTF) is very gratified to congratulate the remarkable recipients of our 2021 awards recognizing outstanding leadership and mental health advocacy.

Karen Avery Award

Sarah Joyce will be the eighth recipient of the *Karen Avery Award*. The award was established to honor Karen Avery's legacy as an advocate, mentor, peer, and leader in advancing the rights of people with disabilities.



Sarah is the Outpatient Program Manager at Meta House, Inc., in Milwaukee, WI, a nationally recognized, gender-responsive substance use treatment program dedicated to helping women through the progression of recovery. Under her direction the clinical team treats Substance Use Disorder alongside other co-occurring mental health concerns including trauma. Ms Joyce has extensive specialized training in the treatment of women who have experienced trauma and who are dealing with substance use related issues.

The nomination highlighted Sarah's contributions to the peer role at Meta House: *"Sarah's expansion of the peer role at Meta House has not only elevated the voices of peers but empowers clients to see themselves as leaders. Thanks to Sarah, peers are heavily involved with client engagement and retention in treatment. Peers form relationships with clients beginning their recovery journey at Meta House, offer follow up calls for questions and concerns, and meet with clients to offer extra support."*

Outstanding Achievement Award

Attorney Pete Koneazny will be the fifth recipient of the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force *Outstanding Achievement Award*. Pete has been a tireless advocate to improve conditions in the justice system for people with mental illness and has also worked to advance diversion from the justice system, and supports and services for re-entry. As one of the lead attorneys working on the Milwaukee County Jail Lawsuit, he has been responsible for monitoring conditions in the jail for people with mental illness and disabilities. Over the course of the lawsuit he was responsible for putting constant pressure on the Sheriff and County to provide adequate health and mental health care for people in custody. He regularly met with individual lawyers whose clients were suffering and used his role to get them relief and to address the systemic failures leading to their difficulties. Pete has been a leader in elevating mental health related concerns at the Jail and House of Corrections (HOC). If a community agency or a family member had a concern about a person with mental health needs who was incarcerated, you could count on Pete to follow up with administrators to ensure the concerns were addressed.



Pete recently retired as the Litigation Director of the Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee. Throughout his career, he has been the go to person in our community when systems are failing individuals.

Along with lawyers at the ACLU, he has lowered the barriers for lawyers, community advocates, and ordinary people to obtain legal advice when they perceived the need to challenge what is occurring. He has also worked consistently on issues involving predatory payday lenders, eviction defense and homelessness including litigating these issues based on the ADA and Fair Housing Act. He is a longtime member of the Milwaukee Mental Health Task, and also active in the Milwaukee County Community Justice Council and MICAH.

Marie C. Perry Rising Leader Award

Troney C. Small, Jr. will be the third recipient of the *Marie C. Perry Rising Leader Award*. Inspired by the dedication of our inaugural recipient, the Award honors Marie's memory and recognizes visionary leadership by an individual who is a rising leader in the Milwaukee area mental health community.



For the past three years, Troney, has been a Family Navigator with the Next Step Clinic in Milwaukee, supporting families and children with developmental and mental health challenges. Troney has been an active member of the Milwaukee Coalition for Children's Mental Health. He is a certified Peer Support Specialist provider through Just Listen, a nonprofit program for individuals who are recovering from addiction. He has developed content and ran support groups for fathers and other caregivers to address mental health and parenting issues. Troney and his family recently started an initiative, *Riding Over Stigma*, to support mental health awareness for boys and men of color in Milwaukee, in honor of his brother Justin Small who lost his battle with his mental health condition. Troney's advocacy work began 11 years ago when he met Brenda Wesley and was given the opportunity to act in a play she wrote and produced titled "*Pieces In My Own Voice*". The play helps raise mental health awareness and reduce stigma. It has been performed throughout Wisconsin and nationally.

The nomination noted that: *"Troney pours himself into his personal and professional relationships, connecting easily with families, youth, professionals, and so many others to normalize mental health challenges, including addressing the stigma of mental illness. Sharing openly about his own lived experience, his work has changed the perspectives of countless people about mental health, mental illness, and developmental delays. His work has opened hesitant people up to addressing their own concerns, or those they have about their children or other loved ones."*

As the recipient of the Marie C. Perry award, Troney will receive a scholarship for conference registration, fees, and logistics or continuing education to further his professional development. This was generously endowed by Marie's family. Troney plans to use his scholarship toward finishing his Associates Degree in Community Engagement. Currently, Troney is working for Rogers Behavioral Health as an Orientation and Onboarding Training Specialist.

Congratulations to the 2021 Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force award recipients, Sarah Joyce, Pete Koneazny, and Troney C. Small, Jr. We thank them for their dedicated advocacy.