

Awards honor Stark behavioral health champions

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CANTON Stark County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery is honoring individuals and organizations that are advancing the community's health and well-being.

The local mental health board this week named six winners of the annual HOPE Awards and two winners of the Crisis Intervention Team Awards.

The HOPE awards honor people and organizations that are advancing behavioral health in the county. The recipients were:

- Abigail Harding, Professional of the Year. Harding works for CommQuest Services as a counselor in the Jackson Local School District and was nominated for the empathy and kindness she shows to students, parents and staff members.
- David Thomas, Comprehensive Behavioral Health Associates, Advocate of the Year. Thomas helps his clients and members of the community. He volunteers his time reading to schoolchildren, performing magic shows for charity and teaching self-defense classes.
- Interdenominational Ministerial Association of Stark County and Vicinity, Innovation Award. The association worked with Canton City Public Health to distribute the overdose antidote naloxone at area churches.
- NAMI Stark County, Community Champion Award. NAMI Stark County, a not-for-profit group, works to give individuals and families impacted by mental illness hope for recovery. NAMI also conducts crisis intervention training for police officers, and works with schools and organizations to break the stigma around mental illness.
- Hannah Tapyrik, Young Advocate of the Year. Tapyrik, a graduate of GlenOak High School, has worked to prevent youth suicide in the community and is vice president of StarkMHAR's youth advisory board.

– Katie Doll, Young Advocate of the Year. Doll is the former president of Perry High School’s Students Against Destructive Decisions. She has worked to prevent youth suicide and has spent time in Columbus and Washington, D.C., advocating for the health and wellness of young people.

The CIT awards honor people who are advancing the use of best practices during encounters with individuals who are struggling with substance use or mental illness. The recipients were:

– Officer Kelly Crowl, CIT Officer of the Year. Crowl, a police officer for 14 years, has spent eleven of them as a school resource officer in the Louisville City School District, where she routinely uses her CIT training to help young people in crisis.

– Stark County Common Pleas Judge Taryn Heath, CIT Champion of the Year. Heath is a liaison between the courts and the behavioral health system, and has worked on a committee that aims to reduce the number of inmates with mental health issues at the Stark County Jail. She also presides over the Honor Court program for veterans.

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