

## **Excellence in Leadership Nomination**

From: Co-Sponsor, Jesse Bell

Nominee: Cathie Buscaglia

I would like to nominate Cathie Buscaglia for the Excellence in Leadership award. Cathie is director of innovation and special projects with Howard Center and has dedicated her entire career to supporting innovative programs in the Mental Health field. In the past three years she has worked tirelessly on the development and launch of an innovative and much-needed service for individuals with chronic and persistent mental illness. Through relentless hard work, vision, and leadership, they successfully created a new home for 16 people, ensuring that those living with complex diagnoses such as intellectual disability, substance use disorder, or traumatic brain injury have a safe and supportive environment.

The building includes 16 individual bedrooms, a commercial kitchen, living and dining room space, a laundry room, exercise space, and five bathrooms, all designed with the residents' specific needs in mind. The idea of creating a true home, rather than just transitional housing, was central to Cathie's vision. She paid meticulous attention to every detail, ensuring that the space would not only meet the functional requirements of residents but also provide a sense of dignity and comfort. Cathie was determined to create a space that demonstrated how everyone, including those facing mental health challenges, should be treated with –respect, compassion, and the opportunity for a fresh start.

On April 4, 2024, 16 residents moved into their new home, marking the beginning of a new chapter in their lives. Since then, they have been warmly welcomed as new Shelburne residents, benefiting from a supportive environment that encourages healing, growth, and community. Through their hard work and dedication, Cathie has truly set a new standard for how mental health care facilities can be designed — as a place of safety, beauty, and belonging.

In addition to Cathie's work on housing, she also spearheaded the opening of the new Mental Health Urgent Care, which provides an essential, therapeutic alternative to emergency department visits for adults experiencing a self-defined mental health crisis. This initiative is a lifeline for individuals in critical need, offering support to those in a suicide crisis, those with co-occurring medical conditions, or those who simply need immediate peer support.

Cathie's passion and dedication to these innovative projects have made a lasting impact on the mental health community and provided invaluable services to individuals who may otherwise have been overlooked. She has shown extraordinary dedication to improving the quality of life for people in crisis, and I wholeheartedly believe her work deserves recognition.