



Mental Health America Announces Winners Of 2020 Awards

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2020

Alexandria, VA—Mental Health America (MHA) is happy to announce today the 2020 recipients of the Clifford W. Beers Award, our Mental Health Corporate Excellence Award, the Innovation in Programming Award, the Media Award, the youth-focused mPower Award, and the George Goodman and Ruth P. Brudney Social Work Award.

MHA's 2020 Clifford W. Beers Award will be presented to mental health advocate and Emmy Award-winning actor, **Maurice Benard**. The Clifford W. Beers Award is MHA's highest honor and is presented annually to an individual with the lived experience of mental illness who best reflects the example set by MHA founder Clifford W. Beers in their efforts to improve conditions for and attitudes toward people living with mental health conditions.

Maurice Benard is a mental health advocate, television and film actor, and New York Times best-selling author. He started his acting career on the soap opera *All My Children*, from 1987 to 1990. He then went on to start a career on *General Hospital*, where he has been for over 25 years. Maurice was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder when he was 22 and institutionalized twice. Now 57, he has spent decades advocating for mental health awareness. He has been very public about his diagnosis and struggles, and has used his public platform to educate his fans about mental illness and bipolar. He has worked with multiple mental health organizations - including MHA - over the last two decades, and collaborated with the writers of *General Hospital* to incorporate his diagnosis into his character Sonny Corinthos' story line, thereby elevating the conversation and showing viewers the realities of the illness. Benard has won 2 Daytime Emmys for his work on *General Hospital*. In early 2020 he published [his memoir](#), *Nothing General About It: How Love and Lithium Saved Me On and Off General Hospital* and currently runs an Instagram Live series called [State of Mind](#) every Sunday to discuss mental health and his personal journey.

MHA's **2020 Mental Health Corporate Excellence Award** goes to **Verizon Media**. The award honors and recognizes corporations that demonstrate a commitment to its employees by offering programs, accommodations, and training that support mental health wellness in the workplace. [Verizon Media](#) remains committed to shaping the way mental health is perceived and supported within its workforce and the global community. The media company reaches more than 900 million people across the globe each month, connecting them with trusted news and content from its ecosystem of premium brands like Yahoo, TechCrunch and HuffPost. With a focus on breaking down stigmas and normalizing mental health, Verizon Media implemented a comprehensive plan to address the emotional well-being of its workforce. Through partnerships with leading mental health organizations they established best practices and implemented training programs centered on building a robust wellness program. In the wake of COVID-19, the company expanded existing resources and developed new offerings to address the unprecedented health crisis.

Source: <https://mhanational.org/mental-health-america-announces-winners-2020-awards>

MHA's **2020 Media Award** recognizes journalists, authors, digital platforms, media outlets, television shows and filmmakers that have tackled the issues of mental illness and addiction – and in doing so, have educated, informed, and broken down stigma and shame around these issues. This year's recipients include six outstanding and diverse examples across multiple platforms:

- **Sesame Workshop** is the nonprofit educational organization behind Sesame Street, the pioneering television show that has been reaching and teaching children since 1969. Today, Sesame Workshop is an innovative force for change, with a mission to help kids everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. Sesame is present in more than 150 countries, providing almost two hundred million children with access to life-changing early education, critical health lessons, and helpful tools to build resilience from tough situations. Their [Social Impacts Initiatives](#) educate people worldwide about a host of issues that impact children's mental health, including traumatic experiences, autism, gender equality, and helping military children and families thrive when parents are deployed. Most recently, Sesame has [created content](#) to help children and families deal with the uncertainty of COVID-19 and [teamed up with CNN](#) to discuss racism, trauma and how families can build empathy and embrace diversity.
- **Hannah Dyer**, a journalist with The Washington Post shares with readers the different shapes childhood trauma takes and the importance of mental health care for young immigrants, by showing the role therapy played for one traumatized Honduran teenager in immigration detention. The [story](#) was the first to explore the kind of therapy migrant children are given in detention. It also broke news about how those therapy notes are used. The reporting had instant impact, with legislation introduced in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, an internal federal audit, and policy changes in migrant child shelter therapy rooms around the country. Hannah's work revealed that the U.S government was requiring detained migrant children to attend therapy, and then sharing the things they tell therapists with ICE, to be used against them in court. The piece told the story of on the case of Kevin Euceda, a teenager who confided in a therapist at a migrant child shelter, and now faces deportation as a result. The piece made the trauma of one young migrant real to readers across the country and was one of the most read in the Washington Post for days, with more than a million readers.
- **My Ascension**, a feature length documentary that chronicles a suicide attempt that left 16-year-old varsity cheerleader, Emma Benoit, paralyzed. Her journey propelled her on a mission to use her painful experience to help others find hope, while shining more light on the fact that 20 young people die every day by suicide in the in the United States. The [film](#) shows Emma's inspiring journey and quest to walk again, as she works to bring Hope Squad, a school-based peer to peer suicide prevention program, to Louisiana. The film also highlights the stories of two remarkable young people who tragically did not survive their attempts, and we learn first-hand from their families, friends, school officials and suicide prevention experts about the devastating effects of suicide and what can be done to prevent it.
- **Lift the Mask: Portraits of Life with Mental Illness** is a [documentary](#) by The Quell Foundation. The film reveals and addresses systemic problems with social and cultural stigma, and the challenges associated with gaining access to effective treatment. The film captures six individuals from a variety of backgrounds, living with different mental health diagnoses, who, in recounting their own experiences, speak directly to these issues. The film addresses how the criminal justice system is ill-prepared and under-resourced to manage the mental health of their population of people and sheds light on the difficulty of finding and maintaining medications that work once achieving access to proper and timely treatment. Several of the film's subjects speak directly to the deleterious effects associated with a severe shortage of mental health care providers. Each story shares how the acceptance and understanding of a loved one, often a parent or partner, is one of the most crucial and challenging aspects of proper care for someone struggling with

mental

illness.

- KXAN-TV (Austin) knew that Texas health experts estimated one in six students is significantly affected by mental illness. Many drop out of school, wind through the juvenile justice system, even end their own lives. Away from home, schools are often where these mental health concerns arise. As state leaders aim to tackle this critical campus safety issue, KXAN decided to explore potential solutions across Texas and beyond by creating the [Save our Students](#) initiative. The station created a multi-page digital project, featuring more than 40 stories that were also shared with other Nexstar stations in Texas online. KXAN utilized Facebook Live and digital chats on [kxan.com](#) to explain the project and take questions from viewers. More than 50 KXAN staff members worked on the project in some way, including the seven reporters and five photographers behind the stories. The team traveled across the country – including California, Ohio and all over Texas – to report these solutions-oriented stories. This project launched as a partnership with the Solutions Journalism Network, which provided guidance and feedback over the course of the eight months it took to complete.
- WSOC-TV (Charlotte), led by Executive Kim Holt and anchor Erica Bryant, committed to telling the [community impact of mental illness](#) across its 22-county viewing area. The station developed an hour-long prime time television special focused on mental health entitled “Charlotte’s Hidden Crisis.” The live broadcast featured pre-recorded vignettes featuring individuals and families discussing what it’s like to live with a mental health diagnosis, suicide attempts and loss, and the challenge associated with seeking mental health services. The station also developed a printed and online resource guide that featured mental health resources. To ensure that viewers connected to these services, the station hosted a live phone bank that was staffed by local mental health advocates and clinicians. Call bank volunteers answered over 700 calls from Spanish and English-speaking callers on the day of the broadcast. The station also began working on a second Charlotte’s Hidden Crisis live broadcast for December 2019. This live broadcast focused on veteran’s mental health, normalizing therapy, social media and mental health, the stigma of medication, and the signs of suicide. WSOC-TV made a commitment to use appropriate non-stigmatizing language and accurate data when reporting on deaths by suicide and mental health overall. They continue to be advocates for using their influence to educate their viewers about mental health and wellness.

MHA’s 2020 George Goodman and Ruth P. Brudney Social Work Award was established by the Board of Directors of MHA in November 1986 to recognize significant contributions made to the care and treatment of people with mental illnesses by practicing professionals in the field of social work. This year the award goes to **Julius Boatwright**. Julius is a Licensed Master Social Worker who completed a Trauma-Informed Community Practice Workshop with Duquesne University through their Department of Psychology and Rita McGinley Clinic. He obtained his Master of Social Work degree with a Certificate in Human Services Management from the University of Pittsburgh. Julius also earned a bachelor’s degree in Communication from Pitt. Lastly, Mr. Boatwright completed a 1-year professional development program for nonprofit executives with Leadership Pittsburgh and the California-based Rockwood Leadership Institute. Julius serves as the Founder and Chief Executive Officer with [Steel Smiling](#). They bridge the gap between Black people and mental health support through education, advocacy, and awareness. Their Mental Health Workforce Development Program (Beams to Bridges) equips Black adults with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to serve as Community Mental Health Workers. While completing the programmatic experience, cohort members receive the following: weekly workforce stipends, emergency financial assistance, mental health training, behavioral health treatment, and social service support.

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MHA's **2020 mPower Award** goes to **Satvik Sethi**. The mPower Award celebrates the life and work of a teen or young adult who has spoken out about mental health issues to educate his or her peers and fight stigma.

Satvik is a 22-year-old mental health activist and social entrepreneur on a journey to make the world happier. He is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer at [Runaway](#), a 100% student owned and operated social venture that aims to promote mental health awareness and help those in need of emotional support. Runaway has been featured by UNICEF, World Health Organization, and Vice. Satvik has also been featured on the 25 Under 25 Social Entrepreneurs List by Impaction and Culture Media Co., and has been recognized as 1 of 8 Inspiring Mental Health Youth Activists by Mashable, and 1 of 15 Students Changing Collegiate Mental Health by Mental Health America as part of the first cohort of our Collegiate Mental Health Innovation Council for the impact he has created through his passionate advocacy.

Finally, MHA's **Innovation in Programming Award**, which recognizes the continuing innovation and creativity of the MHA affiliate network in program development and implementation, goes to **MHA of Greater Dallas** and its [Mind Your Garden](#) program. When we think of parks, we think of places for people to commune and connect with nature, but they also provide places for people to have fun, and find mental, physical, and spiritual health, and social wellbeing. Parks and green spaces help restore people from the stress of day-to-day challenges, hassles and struggles. The Mind Your Garden program was created as a community movement to promote the relationship between mental health and the environment. In partnership with [Texas A&M Forest Service](#), and The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, MHA of Greater Dallas created an opportunity for the Dallas-Ft. Worth Metroplex to develop healthy coping skills while utilizing nature within an urban setting. Through this program, they provide the community with needed resources to achieve overall mental health. With the current state of the world, the program is designed to help consumers by creating a relationship with nature and by making mental health a priority. This initiative ensures that people have access to parks and green spaces lower their stress, depression, and increase their overall quality of life and resiliency against developing mental illness.

All awards will be distributed during MHA's Annual Conference. This year, MHA's Annual Conference programming has been changed due to current events and will take place September 3-4, 2020 and is now themed [COVID-19, Mental Health, and the Need for Equity](#). We have added a virtual component and will have an in-person option if deemed safe and District of Columbia regulations allow. More information on the conference new program, speakers and registration process will be announced in the coming weeks.

"We look forward to celebrating these amazing award winners in September," said Paul Gionfriddo, president and CEO of Mental Health America. "Now more than ever, it's important to highlight the critical work of advocates, the media and providers who are speaking up and working on the national, state and local levels, to address the issues facing those with mental health and addiction concerns – together, we can continue to address mental illness Before Stage 4."