

Advocate



DEVOTED BOARD MEMBER RETIRES

Steve Pettit shares memories from 20 years of service

SEND SILENCE PACKING

Suicide prevention display available to community October 3

Alison Malmon headlines MIAW 2018

Founder of Active Minds will share her journey after the suicide death of her brother at fall Oaklawn luncheon

A word from the director



Matt Lentsch
Executive Director,
Oaklawn Foundation



Mission:

With uncommon expertise in mental health and addiction services, Oaklawn joins with individuals, families and our community on the journey toward health and wholeness.

Vision:

To help people live in harmony with self, others and God, through healing and growth of the whole person.

Values:

As a faith-based organization, the people of Oaklawn are committed to:

- Compassion
- Integrity
- Human dignity
- Professional expertise
- Community partnerships

Dear Friends,

I want to thank you for helping to make this year so successful for our Foundation! This past year, we've focused on prevention and early intervention programs for youth, specifically Partnership for Children and Camp Mariposa, and we're grateful to have so many individuals and businesses eager to invest in the lives of our community's young people. I want to say a special word of thanks to Everence, Bradley Company and Radiology Inc., some of our most recent stakeholders. Additionally, we had a fantastic 19th Spring Spectacular with Sheila Walsh and raised more than \$54,000 for local mental health and addiction services.

Also this year, we launched a new website for the Oaklawn Foundation, www.oaklawndonate.org. Here, you can meet our board members, learn about our top donors and read stories about a few of the people you help through your financial support of Oaklawn. You can also easily make a one-time donation or schedule recurring donations. I'd like to highlight two stories from the website, and I hope you'll take a few moments to get online and check them out:

- Ancon Construction has been a supporter of Oaklawn for more than 25 years, both financially and through the leadership of its employees, who have served on boards and offered counsel. The employee-owners continue to choose Oaklawn to support the tens of thousands of people who receive services here and to invest in the health of our community.
- The Simmons family struggled with their twin boys' behavior problems. The kids often got in trouble at school or extracurricular programs, and Mom and Dad were frequently called away from work to pick them up. But that wasn't solving the problem. When the boys were referred to Partnership for Children and started receiving the services they needed, "the difference was like night and day."

Looking ahead, we're excited to host Alison Malmon, the founder of Active Minds, during this year's Mental Illness Awareness Week celebration and the very impactful Send Silence Packing suicide prevention exhibit (read more about these on pages two and three). Thank you for everything you do to support health and wholeness in our community!

Gratefully,

Matthew Lentsch

Oaklawn supports job training



Dennis became a member of the Clubhouse of St. Joseph County in January 2016. In late spring of 2017, Dennis said he'd like to look for a job and start working. In November the same year, Dennis' wish came true. The Clubhouse placed him in the transitional job placement program where he was given an opportunity to work at Oaklawn as a Housekeeper. Dennis worked 12 hours during three days of the week.

Clubhouse staff assisted Dennis in riding the Transpo bus and he was able to commute to and from work. He proved himself to be a responsible employee and completed his job there successfully. Congratulations to Dennis for a job well done!

'A true friend'

>> *Steve Pettit makes a lasting impact after 20 years on Foundation Board*

Three three-year terms. That's the typical tenure of a member of the Oaklawn Foundation Board. But Steve Pettit's service to the board has been anything but typical. Steve retired from the Foundation Board in 2017, after more than 20 years of helping to fund mental health and addiction services in Elkhart and, later, St. Joseph counties.

"Steve has been an incredible asset to us," said Matt Lentsch, executive director of the Oaklawn Foundation. "He's smart, thoughtful and passionate about serving our community through mental health services. He's been a true friend to Oaklawn and an extraordinary advocate for mental health."

Steve joined the Foundation board in the mid-'90s after friends from Rotary encouraged him to get involved. A long-time Goshen resident and commercial real estate broker, he knew about Oaklawn, but didn't realize the breadth and complexity of its services. Becoming more familiar with the organization has given him tremendous respect for its leaders and a true passion for helping.

"I want to be a part of an organization that I can honestly say with pride, 'This is a good organization doing good work,'" he said.

Partnership for Children and Camp Mariposa, both early intervention programs for at-risk youth, are a few of the efforts he's pleased to have been a part of. Oaklawn's first capital campaign in 2005 and 2006 is another.

"Our building campaign was very successful and sort of launched Oaklawn onto another level," he recalled.



The Foundation raised \$4 million to add an education center at Oaklawn's Goshen campus, build two adult group homes and grow Oaklawn's endowment fund.

He's also seen a lot of changes. During his first years, Oaklawn's largest annual fundraiser was a house raffle. That ended when the organization started Spring Spectacular in 2000, under the leadership of Matt Lentsch, who had recently joined the organization as executive director of the Foundation.

"It's been a better fundraiser," he said, and the speakers who have shared their stories each year "open people's minds to the fact that if you have a mental illness, it's not any different than a physical illness."

That's something Steve has personal experience with. He began experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety during his senior year of high school and has had to deal with them off-and-on throughout his life.

"That's been my thorn in the flesh," he said. "That's part of what drives me – I know how difficult and painful it can be. But everybody has something to deal with; that's mine."

Steve says he's grateful to have been born in a generation that saw decreased stigma and increased treatment options.

And the journey hasn't been as difficult as he feared when he first began experiencing symptoms. He's led a happy, normal and successful life.

He graduated from Purdue University with a degree in business economics. He ran one of his family's businesses before striking out on his own in real estate. He and his wife, Beth, have been married for 47 years, and they have two sons and five grandchildren.

Today, they run Boomers in the Know, an online retailer of fashion reading glasses and sunglasses.

"As I look back over my life – now I'm 67 years old and I have the benefit of 20/20 hindsight – it hasn't been that bad," he said. "Anxiety and depression are pretty common, often relatively minor, and you learn how to manage it and be OK with it. My life has been blessed."

From Grief to Game Changer

>> *Active Minds' Alison Malmon headlines Oaklawn's fifth annual Mental Illness Awareness Week*

In the wake of her brother's suicide, Alison Malmon found herself asking "what if?" What if he had sought help sooner? What if one of his friends would have reached out to him when they noticed a change in his behavior? What if he had known that mental illnesses are most commonly diagnosed in people his age?

Those what ifs started a movement that today reaches hundreds of thousands of people across the U.S.

Alison is the founder of Active Minds, the leading organization for mental health resources on college campuses, with 600 chapters and programs that reach 529,000 people. She will be the featured speaker at Oaklawn's Mental Illness Awareness Week fundraiser and luncheon on Tuesday, October 2, at Palais Royale in South Bend. Sponsorship of this event will also bring Alison's presentation to local high schools.

In 15 years, Active Minds has helped to change the conversation around mental illness. That was Alison's hope all along.

Alison's brother, Brian, had been a star student at Columbia University. He had a 3.8 GPA, made the dean's list, served as president of his cappella group and worked as the sports editor of his college newspaper. But during his senior year, his family learned that he had been experiencing psychosis and depression since his freshman year.

It's commonly understood that the earlier you get treatment, the more likely you are to recover, said Alison. And although Brian received top-notch intensive treatment for more than a year once his mental illness was discovered, he eventually succumbed to his illness.

"There was so much opportunity for him to get help faster," Alison said. "There was opportunity for his friends to intervene, but they didn't know what to do or what to say. Nobody taught him about depression and psychosis and that this is the age of onset for almost every mental health disorder. He didn't know what he was dealing with."

So he kept it hidden from the world. In the year after his death, Alison realized that if the roles were reversed, she would have done the same thing. She knew she had to do something, and she would start on her own campus, the University of Pennsylvania.

On the one-year anniversary of Brian's death, she wrote to every major mental health organization asking what programs they had available on college campuses. She didn't receive a single response.



"That was the confirmation for me that this was something I had to do," she said. "I wasn't finding anything because it wasn't there."

And while many organizations produce helpful information about mental illness, she knew it would make a bigger impact if it was student-to-student; she knew it would have made a difference for Brian.

In 2003, exactly a year and a half after her brother had died by suicide, Alison held the first meeting of what was then called Open Minds. After graduation, she launched Active Minds as a non-profit. It has been her life's work, and it has changed lives of innumerable students.

At the end of June, a study in conjunction with the RAND Corporation of 12 campuses in California demonstrated that students involved with Active Minds had decreased stigma and were more likely to report that they had reached out to a friend struggling with a mental health issue. Even the mere presence of an Active Mind chapter on campus



had a positive effect on the attitude toward mental illness on campus.

And the stories of students about Active Minds match that data.

“Active Minds has changed people’s lives in so many different ways, because they come to Active Minds for so many different reasons,” she said. “They’ve decided to go into psychiatry or mental health law; it’s really impacted a lot of our students’ professional plans, but a lot of students say that it literally saved their lives.”

For more information about becoming a sponsor of Oaklawn’s Mental Illness Awareness Week, including the Send Silence Packing exhibit, contact Matt Lentsch at matt.lentsch@oaklawn.org or 574-535-8679.

To purchase tickets to the lunch, visit www.oaklawn.org/miaw

Send Silence Packing

In addition to featuring Alison Malmon from Active Minds during Mental Illness Awareness Week, Oaklawn will host the Send Silence Packing display from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. tentatively held at the campus of the University of Notre Dame.

Send Silence Packing is an incredibly moving art display of 1,000 backpacks, representing the 1,000 students who die each year by suicide. Many of the backpacks have been donated by families of someone who died by suicide, and most include a photo and story. When the backpacks are set out on display, it takes up about a third of a football field.

“We wanted to educate people who wouldn’t necessarily go to hear a speaker or attend a mental health training,” said Malmon. “We wanted something that represented students, and was both unavoidable and accessible to the general public. So when you host Send Silence Packing, you can’t not see it.”

Traveling with the display are volunteers who hand out information about “the role everybody can play in preventing suicide, the warning signs and how to reach out to somebody” you think might be struggling, said Malmon.





OAKLAWN

Toward Health & Wholeness

P.O. Box 809
Goshen, IN 46527

Oaklawn

oaklawn.org

Toward Health and Wholeness

