



Visibility, Voice, and the Power of Peer Support

This season, The Center has been stepping forward—into the streets, into deeper conversations, and into the work of connection.

In this issue, we highlight The Pride Program, which offers meaningful, person-centered support to individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities—reminding us that inclusion isn't just about access, but belonging. We also reflect on our first-ever appearance in Homer's 4th of July Parade, where Center staff, community members, and one erupting emotions volcano marched together to bring creativity, color, and advocacy to Pioneer Avenue.

And finally, we celebrate the growth of Peer Support at The Center, with 11 individuals completing a 38-hour training that lays the foundation for helping others walk through recovery—not as professionals alone, but as people who have lived it.

These stories all share a common thread: everyone deserves to be seen, supported, and valued. We're honored to do this work—together, and out in the open.

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Supporting Every Ability

A Look at Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities During Disability Pride Month



Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (often referred to as I/DD) are lifelong conditions that impact how a person learns, communicates, moves, and interacts with the world. These disabilities are often present from early childhood and can vary widely—from mild learning challenges to significant support needs in daily life.

What they all have in common is this: people with I/DD deserve to live lives filled with dignity, purpose, and connection.

At The Center, our Pride Program exists to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in exactly that way. Pride offers individualized services rooted in person-centered planning—helping participants set and reach goals related to independent living, employment, communication, community access, and emotional well-being.

Staff work directly with individuals in their homes, in the community, and through group activities that build life skills, strengthen relationships, and empower each person to navigate life with confidence. Just as important, we walk alongside families and caregivers, offering guidance, advocacy, and hope. We don't believe in "fixing" people. We believe in standing beside them, in helping remove barriers, and in celebrating progress—however big or small. Everyone deserves to feel a sense of belonging. That's the heart of the Pride Program.

Because when we create a community that embraces every ability, we're not just offering services—we're cultivating something deeper: inclusion, resilience, and pride.



Celebrating Disability Pride in Soldotna

July is Disability Pride Month—a time to honor the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and celebrate the rights, visibility, and voices of individuals with disabilities. It's a month not just of remembrance, but of joy, creativity, and community.

This year, The Center's Pride program was honored to participate in the Disability Pride Fair at Soldotna Creek Park, one of many statewide events organized by volunteers from the disability community. Designed to be fun, inclusive, and uplifting, the fair brought together people from all walks of life to recognize and celebrate the talents, contributions, and unique identities of those living with disabilities.

The event showcased local artists, crafters, and performers, with community service providers—including our Pride Program—on hand to offer support, resources, and encouragement. Speakers shared stories of advocacy and resilience. Guests were treated to free t-shirts, delicious BBQ, and the runaway hit of the day—a homemade bubble machine that filled the park with laughter and a swirling cloud of soapy magic.

Participating in events like this isn't just about showing up—it's about standing up. It's about honoring inclusion not only in services, but in celebration. We are proud to be part of a movement that continues to open doors, shift perceptions, and remind every individual: you are seen, you belong, and your pride is powerful.



With the help of one of her providers, a Pride client won the t-shirt design contest, and was awarded \$100



Peer Support Training

-Christy Russ

Eliza Eller, Peer Support Trainer and her associate and Kathleen Euster, Peer Support Trainer and Somatics Coach from Muskeg Wellness provided a 38-hour peer support training that's the first required step to obtain one's Peer Support Certification from Alaska.

Peer Support is a service provided by individuals who have lived experience of mental health challenges and/or substance use disorders and are actively in recovery. These individuals work alongside clients in a mentoring role to support them in achieving their goals. Clients often feel especially comfortable with Peer Support Professionals as they have been in a similar situation as the client and can relate to their current challenges.



The training was attended by staff and clients from SPBHS; staff and clients from K-Bay Recovery Connection; and a couple other community members. The training was full due to space restrictions and 11 proud students collected their Certificates of Graduation from the training on Saturday June 21st, 2025!



July Anniversaries

- Daniel Allen - 2014
- Kathyryn Dzekian - 2014



Making a Colorful Debut in the 4th of July Parade!

For the first time ever, The Center proudly joined the Homer 4th of July Parade—bringing joy, color, and creativity to Pioneer Avenue.

Our float was decorated with handcrafted art made by children in our summer groups, each piece a reflection of imagination, resilience, and the emotional work they've been doing. The ever-popular Emotions Volcano made its triumphant return, erupting safely down the parade route and reminding everyone, with a wink of fun, "Don't let your emotions erupt—talk it out instead."

Walking alongside the float were Center staff members Rainbow O'Phelan, Rob Johnson, and Donna Duncan, joined by supportive community members who waved and cheered. Ashley Moore towed the trailer for the float that was generously provided by Mary Calhoun, wife of our Board President, John Calhoun.

It was great fun to be in the parade, but also an honor to get to remind the community that mental health matters, that every child's story deserves to be seen, and that we're here—not just behind closed doors, but out in the heart of Homer. Because advocacy doesn't just happen in offices. Sometimes, it marches down the street with paper-mâché, confetti, and a volcano full of feelings.



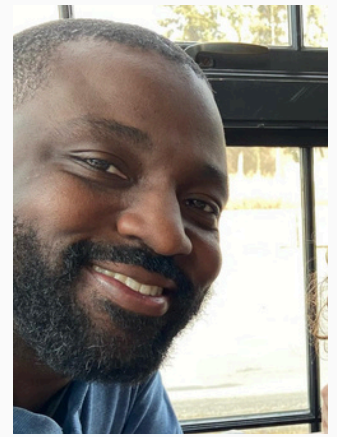
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Board Elections & A Grateful Transition

At our most recent board meeting, elections were held to appoint new officers to lead The Center's Board of Directors through the coming year. We're proud to announce the results:

- John Calhoun – President
- Ahnie Litecky – Vice President
- Brian Partridge – Treasurer
- Morris Richardson – Secretary

We offer a heartfelt and resounding thank you to Brian Partridge, who has faithfully served The Center for many years—most recently as Board President across multiple terms. Brian's steady leadership, thoughtful presence, and deep commitment to the mission of behavioral health in our region have left an enduring impact.

We are also deeply grateful to each and every board member for the time, insight, and care they bring to the table. Their work often happens quietly, behind the scenes—but its effects ripple outward through every program, every decision, and every life The Center touches. To serve is to lead. To lead is to listen. Thank you for doing both with integrity and heart.

SPBHS

Our Mission

The Center Partners with individuals, families, and communities to enhance the health, productivity, and social engagement by offering compassionate and evidenced-based services in the areas of developmental disabilities, mental health, substance abuse, and co-occurring disorders.

Our Vision

A dynamic organization committed to outstanding care with and for communities, valuing integrity, and respect for all.

We Believe

- In the Individual's right to self-determination
- In the individual's right to be treated with dignity, kindness, and respect.
- In innovative response to obstacles.
- That cooperation is founded on respect, honesty, and forgiveness, as well as the opportunity to change.
- In forging partnerships that create synergy within the community.
- That diverse opinions enrich outcomes.
- In collaboration, commitment, teamwork, and problem solving
- That integrity and personal responsibility are core to ethical behavior.

SERVICES

The Center— Individual, group, couples, and family therapy. For children, young adults, and adults. SPBHS takes all insurance and offers a sliding scale for anyone without. Additionally, medication support, YHDP, ASAP services, case management, and our administrative offices are all housed at The Center.

Journeys— Adult mental health rehab services. Individual and group day support across multiple settings including in home, in the community, and at our Parkside Building. Case management, IPS, and other services are also available through Journeys.

Child and Family Services— Youth (ages 4-21) mental health rehab services are available for children and families across multiple settings including in home, in the community, in schools, and in our Center offices.

Pride— Child and adult Intellectual and Development Disability Services. For any individual with a State Waiver, we offer Day Hab, Supported Living, and Family Hab services across multiple settings in home, in the community and at our Parkside Building.

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(yes, we still fax things)



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