



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Expanded Wilkes County crisis center to provide mental health, substance use treatment for region

NORTH WILKESBORO, N.C. – Community leaders on Friday celebrated the expansion of a regional crisis stabilization center that will offer support, hope and options for real recovery from mental health and substance use challenges.

Synergy Recovery at the Shirley B. Randleman Center will serve adults living throughout western North Carolina, with a focus on residents of Wilkes, Alleghany, Ashe, Watauga and Avery counties. The state-of-the-art facility is named after former state Sen. Shirley Randleman, who successfully advocated for \$1.4 million in state dollars for Vaya Health to help fund construction.

“The expanded center represents a long-term investment in the future of Wilkes County and all of northwestern North Carolina,” Randleman said. “Residents of our region deserve quality behavioral health treatment options that are close to home. I’m very proud of what we’ve accomplished by working together and enthusiastic about the benefits for our region for years to come.”

Behavioral health advocates and Wilkes County officials gathered at the 118 Peace St. facility for Friday’s ribbon-cutting while observing social distancing, capacity limits and mask requirements. The center is expected to begin accepting clients in late March or early April.

Synergy leases the building from county government and provides care through a contract with Vaya, which manages Medicaid and other public funds for behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability (IDD) services in 22 western North Carolina counties. Vaya is supporting the center through non-recurring community reinvestment funds and Medicaid and non-Medicaid funding for Synergy’s ongoing operations.

“Mental health and substance use challenges affect people from all walks of life, from residents of our state’s largest cities to our most rural mountain counties,” said Vaya CEO Brian Ingraham. “The Randleman Center will be a place of healing for all people – for our family members, friends and neighbors. I’m honored to be part of a true community effort to strengthen behavioral health services and supports available in western North Carolina.”

The need for mental health and substance use services statewide has continued to grow due to the COVID-19 pandemic, said Kody Kinsley, deputy secretary with the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services.

“The pandemic has broadly increased anxiety and depression across our state, exacerbated the opioid epidemic and made it more challenging to access services and supports for those in need,” Kinsley said. “But there is hope. During a person’s worst moment, at a point of crisis, this facility will offer a safe and accessible place that will promote health and wellness.”

The facility-based crisis center provides secure, residential stays for people experiencing mental health and substance use disorders, as well as people in need of non-hospital detox. It is expected to help relieve the strain on the Wilkes Medical Center emergency department and local law enforcement by providing services to people who are involuntarily committed to treatment.

The steering committee guiding the center expansion included representatives from Vaya, Synergy, Daymark Recovery Services, Project Lazarus, Wilkes Medical Center, the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners and the county’s administrative, social services, sheriff’s and health departments.

“The Randleman Center is here today thanks to years of work by a broad coalition of county agencies and community organizations,” said Wilkes County Manager John Yates. “Mental health and substance use disorders affect every aspect of life, and it takes comprehensive partnerships like these to effect real change on the local level.”

The new center includes two additional beds, for a total of 16, and new services and supports. The two-story building saw extensive renovations and a 1,647-square-foot addition to the first floor, for a total of 6,458 square feet. The facility-based crisis center occupies the entire lower floor, while the upper floor houses recovery support groups and Synergy’s administrative offices.

The Randleman Center also features a dedicated intake room, two new restrooms and a shower area accessible to people with disabilities, a family waiting room and green space accessible to people receiving crisis unit services.

“The renovated facility offers both expanded services and a modernized, welcoming environment that communicates respect for the individuals we serve,” said Synergy Clinical Director Carl Spake. “The Randleman Center is a place where people can feel comfortable and supported as they take the next step in their journey toward recovery.”

About Vaya Health

Based in Asheville, N.C., Vaya Health manages public funds for mental health, substance use disorder and intellectual or developmental disability services in 22 western North Carolina counties: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey. Access to care and crisis assistance are available 24/7 at 1-800-849-6127. Learn more at www.vayahealth.com.

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