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# The Art of Inquiry

*From the Desk of Dale Shreve,  
mhca President & CEO*

We grow up learning that having the right answer is the key to success. Correctly answering the teacher's questions, responding with the best correct response on an exam, even having the answer your boss wants to hear. But for successful leaders, having the right questions trumps having the right answers.

You have heard the phrase "what got you there won't keep you there." Research has shown that leaders who moved up the ranks most often did so by having the right answers. However, upon reaching the top they will only succeed by asking the right questions.

Pivoting from providing smart answers to posing smart questions can be a difficult transition. As Hal Gregersen states in his book *Questions are the Answer*, most of us don't think about questions and how, by asking better ones, we might unlock entirely different answers. Gregersen asserts that a more deliberate use of questions will help you be more innovative and more successful in addressing challenges.

Ever notice some people seem much better at asking questions than others? Asking better questions is an acquired skill that improves

with practice. Many fields including counseling, coaching, marketing and sales regularly use great questions to reframe issues – reframing issues bypasses the mental shortcuts we develop for processing information so new information can be fully considered and longstanding issues can be viewed from new perspectives.

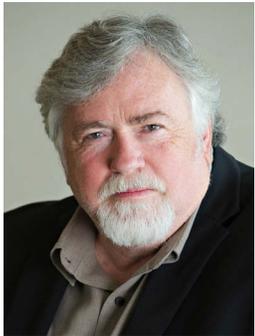
When working to reframe perspective on a situation, consider tactics such as changing your frame of reference from:

- Victimization to empowerment: An example from the Children's Hospital of Pittsburg- instead of "how do we enhance the MRI's technology so that frightened, squirming kid's images are clearer?" – ask "how do we



*Dale Shreve*

# Member Spotlight: Orville Mercer of Chestnut Health Systems



Orville Mercer

You've likely seen him around - Orville Mercer has been attending **mhca** conferences regularly since Chestnut Health Systems joined the association back in 2014 - but how much do you know about this soft-spoken Illinois native?

Orville first became interested in behavioral healthcare after developing a keen interest in transactional analysis. He earned a bachelor's degree in social work from Southern Illinois University and went on to earn his MSW from Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis.

After graduating, he did clinical work for a couple of years, working mostly with adult SPMI clients, but was soon promoted to program supervisor and then named CEO of MetroCentre for Life Management. He never envisioned himself in this role, nor did he deliberately pursue it - but like many leaders, he was recruited into the position by others who recognized his potential. His best advice to new leaders or aspiring CEOs - stay humble. "We're not all that and a bag of chips," he says. "We need to recruit people smarter than us and we need to rely on them."

He wasn't CEO of MetroCentre for long before he realized that the organization would need to become more comprehensive to survive. He approached Chestnut Health

Systems along with another smaller provider and helped orchestrate a successful 3-way merger - one of his proudest professional accomplishments. While the post-merger budget available to serve the local community has grown significantly, from about \$13.5 million in 1996 to more than \$50 million today, money was not the only mark of success. Orville is very proud of the evidenced-based research and multiple publications written by Chestnut Health Systems' researchers in the field, as they are a tangible indication of the organization's contribution to the field of behavioral healthcare.



He thinks it's important to work at a job you love, and he loves working in behavioral healthcare because he sees it as an opportunity to really make a difference in people's lives. "My favorite movie is *It's a Wonderful Life*. It really illustrates what it's like to do the work we do every day. We plant

seeds, and often do not harvest; as we don't always see the end result. Still, I've seen enough real-world examples of success to know that our city and our county are better off because we are here," he said.

He also believes he and Chestnut Health Systems are better off because of their involvement in **mhca**. "I have always found **mhca** members to be very generous and helpful whenever I've sought their input or advice." He enjoys serving with many of his **mhca** peers on Genoa Healthcare's Advisory Committee and especially admires the remarkable work Rick Weaver and Tom Sebastian have done creating a provider network in Washington, saying their work helped inform the development of a similar model for Illinois.

In his free time, Orville enjoys reading theology and is currently reading *The Commentary of The Heidelberg Catechism*, by Dr. Zacharias Ursinus. He says it is dense, thought-provoking reading and he's impressed by how something written in the 1500s by candlelight provides such intense analysis, and scholarship that is still relevant to us today.

He also enjoys bicycle riding, having logged 3,400 miles in the past two years with a goal to complete another 1,400 miles this summer. He usually bikes solo, or with his wife, Jane.

He has many times over covered all 110 miles of paved trail





in Madison County, Illinois, as well as much of the Mickelson Trail in South Dakota and a lot of the Katy Trail in Missouri.

One surprising fact he shared – he was attending a retreat in the Colorado mountains 43 years ago when he first met Jane. He proposed to her 2 days later and they’ve been married for 41 years. The best im-

pulsive decision he has ever made!

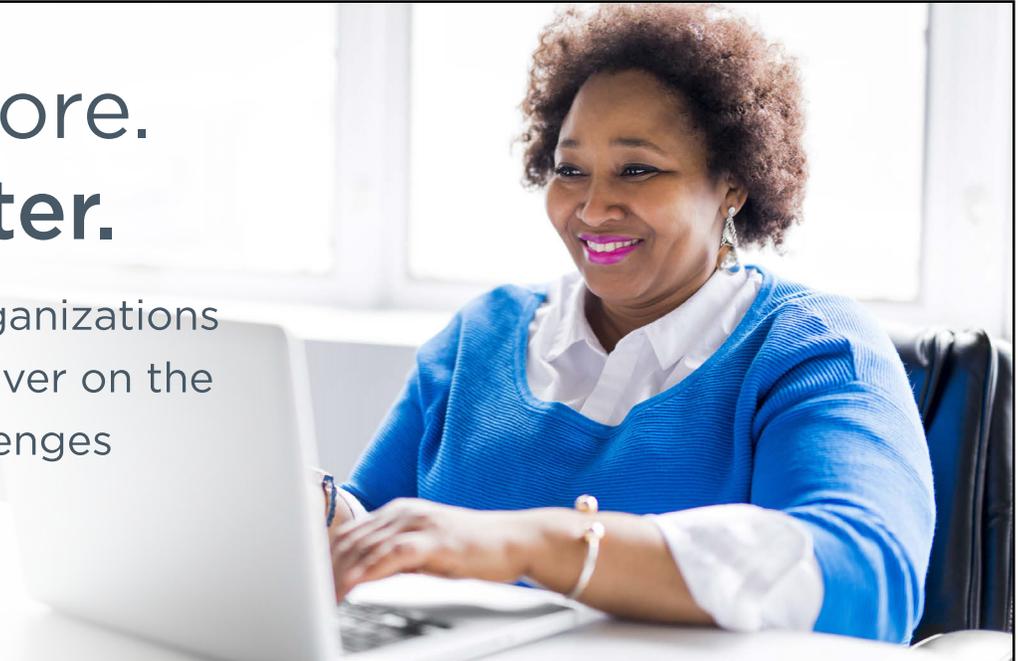
If you enjoyed getting to know Orville Mercer, be sure to let him know next time you see him.

If you’d like to be interviewed for a future **mhca** member spotlight article, please contact of Director of Communications & Membership Lonnie Parizek at [lparizek@mhca.com](mailto:lparizek@mhca.com). ■



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# New Faces & Places

Welcome our new members and keep an eye out for these new faces at future conferences!

**Bridgeway Center, Inc. (BCI)** has been serving children, adults and families in Florida's Okaloosa County for over 50 years. They provide comprehensive psychosocial healthcare to more than 150,000 Okaloosa County residents annually through both outpatient office visits and in-home visits for insured



Bonnie Barlow

and uninsured clients. CEO **Bonnie Barlow** has been with BCI for 33 years. She started at the age of 18 as a part-time Alcohol Center secretary and

has held numerous positions over the years, most recently serving as COO before being appointed CEO last year. One of Bonnie's greatest professional accomplishments is earning her certification as a Senior Professional in Human Resources and as a SHRM Senior Certified Professional.

**Cascade** is a nonprofit Community Mental Health Center and Chemical Dependency Clinic located in Centralia, Washington. Cascade has been serving Lewis County and surrounding areas for more than 50



Richard Stride

years and recently opened an Evaluation Treatment Center with 22 beds – 16 of which are for involuntary treatment.

Cascade CEO

**Dr. Richard Stride** has more than 20 years' experience in community mental health as a clinician and administrator. He holds doctoral and master's degrees in Psychology, as well as an MBA in Healthcare Management. He served in the Medical Service Corps of the US Army Reserve from 1999-2008 where he obtained the rank of Captain and was the Executive Officer for his unit. Richard is very active in the local community and is a member of the Chehalis Rotary. He believes his main job as CEO is "taking care of the employees; they are our greatest asset and our future". In his free time he enjoys, fishing, repairing old tube radios, and playing guitar. He and his wife Connie enjoy bike riding, hiking and traveling.

**SummitStone Health Partners** is a private nonprofit organization with the mission of providing unsurpassed behavioral health prevention, intervention and treatment services to the people of Larimer County. SummitStone Health Partners serves more than 9,000 clients each year at 3 offices and 26 co-locations throughout Larimer County, and of those served, one-third are children and adolescents.



Michael Allen

CEO **Michael Allen** brought more than 20 years' experience as a direct-service provider and administrator with him when her took the helm at

SummitStone three years ago. He most recently served as the Vice President of AspenPointe in Colorado Springs. He is currently active on several boards and committees including the Homeward 2020

Alliance, North Colorado Health Alliance, and the Larimer County Criminal Justice Advisory Committee, Interagency Oversight Group, and Community Corrections Advisory Board. He is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Certified Additions Counselor with a Bachelor of Psychology from Brigham Young University, an MSW from Case Western Reserve University, and an MBA from Colorado State University.



Susan Devlin

**Susan Devlin** succeeded Peter Scerbo as Executive Director of **Comprehensive Behavioral Healthcare** in February. Susan has been with the

organization for 29 years, having started as a hospital liaison when Bergen New Bridge Medical Center was known as Bergen Pines Regional Medical Center. She held a variety of positions over the years, most recently serving as Associate Executive Director.



Kelly Rigger

**Kelly Rigger** succeeded Curt Gillespie as CEO of **MH Services of Clark & Madison Counties** on June 3. She was previously the Chief Program-

ming Officer for Children's Home of Northern Kentucky. Kelly has more than 20 years of experience in behavioral healthcare and

*Continued on page 8 >>*

# Summer in the Beehive State

We hope you're planning to join us in the Beehive State August 13-16 for **mhca's** Summer Conference. You won't want to miss this opportunity to recharge your battery and connect with your peers while exploring new ideas for the future of behavioral healthcare. If you are unable to attend personally, we encourage you to send a member of your leadership team so they can bring innovative ideas back to your organization.

During our Tuesday afternoon Innovation Incubator, we'll discuss AI platforms and networks. In our general sessions on Wednesday and Thursday, we'll discuss how digital technology can help you capitalize on the changing healthcare landscape, how you can disrupt yourself before someone else does, and how to protect your organization from cyber security threats.

We'll also learn how a collaboration of over 40 public, private and faith-based organizations turned the tide in a community that averaged 2-3 suicides a year to achieve zero suicides over a nine-year period. Dr. Hudnall will present his community model, Circles4Hope, introduce a school-based peer-to-peer suicide prevention program, and share the latest research on youth suicide prevention. Check out the full agenda online at [mhca.com](http://mhca.com).

It can be lonely at the top - but it doesn't have to be! Take advantage of this opportunity to connect with fellow behavioral healthcare leaders during our sessions and nightly receptions. Review the registration list ahead of time to identify a few people you'd like to get to know better, then come prepared with a question or two to get the conversation started.

Taking some time away to recharge and gain perspective is good for

you and good for the future of your organization - and what better place to unwind than The Grand America? This Forbes 4-star hotel is located in downtown Salt Lake City just one block away from Washington Square and a mile from Temple Square. You'll enjoy spacious, lux-

ury accommodations with access to 24/7 room service, free Wi-Fi, indoor and outdoor pools, and a spa and fitness center. Our hotel block is nearly sold out so, if you're having trouble getting in, contact Gena Matthews for assistance ([gmatthews@mhca.com](mailto:gmatthews@mhca.com)). ■



It's not just about providing medicine.  
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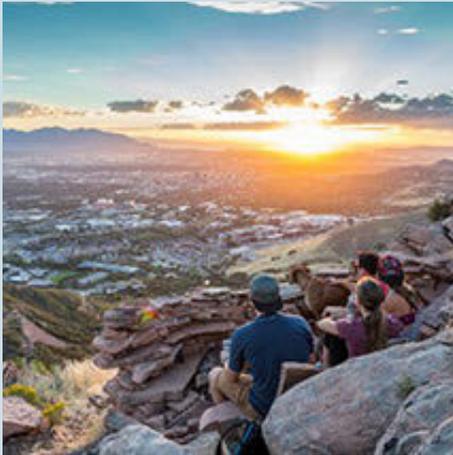


Genoa is the **largest provider of pharmacy and telepsychiatry services** for people with behavioral health and other complex chronic health conditions.

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# Explore with Your Peers



The capital of the Beehive State, Salt Lake City boasts breathtaking scenery along with amazing restaurants, retailers and entertainment venues. Check out the conference registration list at [mhca.com](http://mhca.com) and invite a few of your peers to join you for a hike, a meal, or a night on the town.

## Explore the Great Outdoors

Embark from the Natural History Museum of Utah parking lot up the **Living Room Lookout Trail**, a 2.7-mile route that leads to a photo-worthy plateau “furnished” with an assortment of chairs and settees assembled from loose sandstone rock, or wander through **Red Butte Garden**, a botanical garden with a waterfall, pond and nearly five miles of natural area hiking trails.

## Check Out a Concert or Catch a Minor League Baseball Game

Catch Courtney Barnett with Snail Mail and Choir Boy August 15 at 6 pm at the **Gallivan Center**. General admission tickets are just \$10 in advance and \$15 the day of the show.

Or watch the **Salt Lake City Bees** take on the El Paso Chihuahuas later that night at 7 pm at **Smith's Ballpark** – there are lots of great seats under \$20. Bonus: your favorite characters from the Wizarding World will be on the concourse during the game and kids will be

able to ride the Hogwarts Express on the berm.

## Shop ‘til You Drop

An eclectic community of shops and restaurants in the midst of a quaint residential area, **9th and 9th** has some of the best restaurants and outdoor art in the city. Home to boutique shops, farm to table cuisine, great treats, movies, and more, you’re sure to enjoy your visit to the heart of “hip.”

**The Gateway** offers the best of national stores like Abercrombie & Fitch, Sur La Table and Urban Outfitters, along with Utah-based stores. The Gateway is also a public plaza with a unique fountain, a stone version of the 2002 Winter Olympics snowflake logo that shoots musical water jets every half-hour.

**East Broadway** features locally owned shops including Jitterbug Antiques, Toys & Collectibles, UTah Artists Hands and Antoinette’s. If you go in the evening, be sure to hit Bar X, Copper Common, or dueling piano bar The Tavernacle.

**Weller Book Works**, Salt Lake’s iconic bookstore, is located in **Trolley Square**, old trolley barns remodeled as a shopping mall featuring Whole Foods market, Pottery Barn, Williams- Sonoma

and unique local boutiques like stationery store **Tabula Rasa**.

With more than 100 stores like Macy’s, Michael Kors, Nordstrom, Pandora, Brooks Brothers and Tiffany & Co., **City Creek Center** is a power-shopper’s paradise.

## Enjoy Fabulous Food & Drinks

Go for brunch at **The Park Café**, get your taco fix at **The Red Iguana** or grab the Machine Gun sandwich at **Bruges Waffles & Frites**. If you’re interested in trying a local brew, head to **Uinta** or **Epic**.

You can also sign-up at the **mhca** registration desk to join a few of your peers for dinner on Tuesday at either **The Copper Onion** or **White Horse**, and lunch on Wednesday at **From Scratch**, **R&R Barbecue** or **White Horse**. All these are top-rated restaurants within walking distance of The Grand America.

## Getting Around

Salt Lake City has one of the best public transportation systems in the United States, thanks to TRAX, but walking and biking are also great ways to get around downtown. There are Green Bike rental stations all over Downtown SLC to make biking even easier. The first 30 minutes are free. The next 90 minutes are \$5 and up. ■

>> *New Faces & Places*

holds an MSW from St. Louis University and an MBA from Baker University.



Adam Roberts

**AspenPointe** welcomed **Adam Roberts** as the new President and CEO in May. He previously served as COO for Valley-Wide Health Systems in Colorado

where he was responsible for their behavioral health service line. A native of Alamosa, Colorado, Adam earned a BS in Business Administration from Regis University in Denver and his MBA in Health Administration from the University of Colorado, Denver. He serves on the board of the Colorado Health Administration Alumni Associ-

ation and facilitates an executive mentorship program. He has a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt and recently completed the 2018 UCLA/Johnson & Johnson Health Care Executive Program.



Tamara Player

**Tamara Player** succeeded Larry Green as CEO of **West Yavapai Guidance Clinic** in June. She was previously CEO of Buckleup Programs

in California. She has a degree in social work from the University of New England and 26 years experience making a difference in people's lives.

**Laura Montgomery** is serving as Interim President & CEO of **Catalyst Life Services** following the



Laura Montgomery

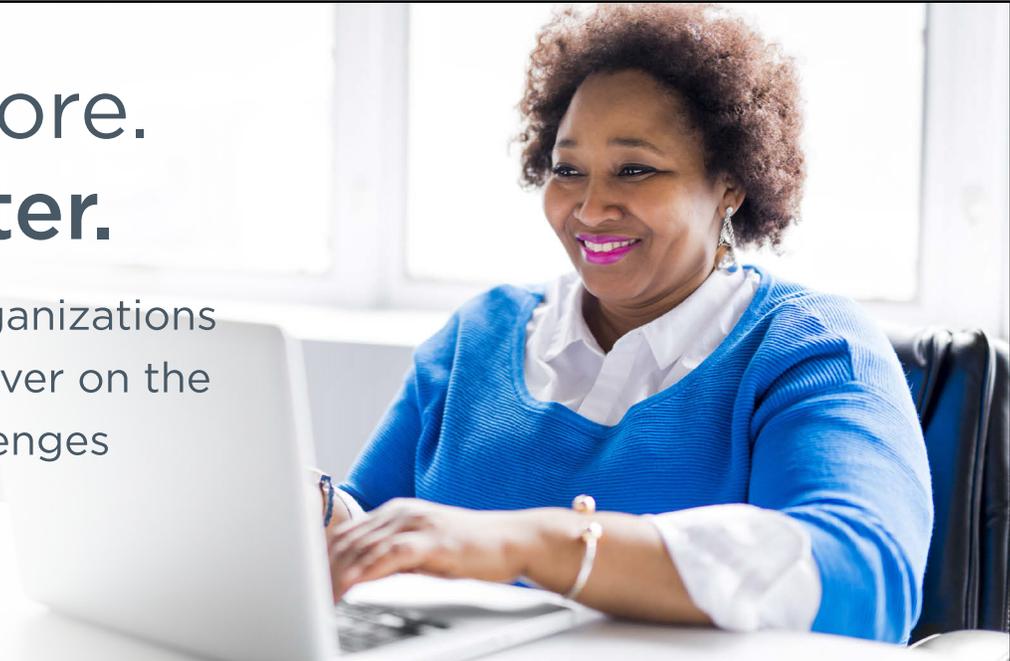
departure of Harry Donahue. She previously served as Vice President of Human Resources and Housing Services. Laura hold a BS in Health Ser-

vices Administration and has been with the organization for more than 13 years.

Also of note: **Cape Counseling Services** and **Robin's Nest Inc.** just completed a merger with New Point Behavioral Health Care and the new entity, known as **Acenda Integrated Health**, will be led by **Dr. Anthony DiFabio**; and **Bluegrass.org** just completed a rebrand and will now be known as **New Vista**. ■

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# Food for Thought in NOLA



*Small Group Learning Activities*

A big thanks to MHRRG for sponsoring our inaugural Leadership Incubator on Tuesday morning - it was a huge success. Attendees discussed the ins and outs of transitioning to value-based payments, knowledgeable **mhca** peers shared their experiences with related contracting processes, cultural changes, organizational and individual performance metrics and KPIs, and everyone got to know each other better over a casual lunch following the morning session. Our next Leadership Incubator will be held during our Fall Conference in Atlanta, so we hope all of our new and aspiring CEOs will make plans to be there.

We also thank Netsmart for sponsoring our afternoon Innovation Incubator which focused on creating a community problem-solver mindset as a key to unlocking added value for long-term sustainability.

The most popular sessions during our Spring Conference were those from Josh Rubin from Health Management Associates. Both his general and break-out sessions focused on the trends buffeting behavioral healthcare providers and presented a variety of strategies for gaining the leverage needed to successfully transition to integrated care. Be-



*Dinner with Peers*

yond “get big, seem big, or become unavoidable” – an important part of the day’s discussion centered on defining quality in a way that is meaningful to all of our stakeholders so that cost cutting doesn’t become the only way to improve value in the equation  $\text{Value} = \text{Quality} / \text{Cost} \times \text{Population}$ . Of the myriad of metrics in medical care, there is



consensus that the BIG 3 are ED visits, hospitalizations and readmissions. What are the BIG 3 metrics we can agree upon in behavioral healthcare? How can we tie what we care about into what the medical system cares about?

We have a capitalist healthcare system where risk and reward go hand in hand. Evolutionary progress and future sustainability will require sacrificing some things we have



*Name Badge Flair*

grown accustomed to so we may embrace what is coming. Are you prepared to make investments with uncertain payoffs? If not, you may not be around much longer.

Jim Link’s presentations on creativity as a skill that can be practiced were also especially well-received. He provided some good examples of “directed curiosity” in which curiosity drives analysis, which creates idea links, which are the fuel for making unique connections. He challenged us all to keep a file of “interesting things” and to reframe our problems to foster a growth mindset and encourage disruptive thinking that challenges assumptions. Thanks to Afia for providing a copy of Jim’s book, *Idea Links*, to all in attendance.

We also offered a few new opportunities for member engagement during the conference including a Connect 4 game with great prizes and an opportunity to sign up to join a few peers for dinner Tuesday night. The Tuesday dinner was popular and will be expanded in Salt Lake City to include lunch sign-ups on Wednesday.

Presentation materials from the Spring Conference are available under the “Documents” tab at mhca.com and in the conference app. ■

## >> *The Art of Inquiry*

make the MRI experience less frightening for kids?"

- Passive to active: President Kennedy challenged citizens "ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country."
- Positive to negative: instead of "what can we do to improve morale?" – ask "what are the things that most demoralize staff?"
- Liability to asset: instead of "what part of this job might an introvert be able to perform at an acceptable level?" -ask "in what type of setting could an introvert capitalize on their relative strengths?"
- Answers to questions: instead of brainstorming for answers – try brainstorming for questions!

Tina Seelig, author of *Insight Out: Get Ideas Out of Your Head And Into the World*, offers three techniques for reframing and finding innovative solutions:

1. Rethink the question: Instead of "How should we plan a birthday party for David?" ask "How can we make David's day memorable/special?" Different sets of solutions will evolve.
2. Brainstorm bad ideas: Removing the pressure to come up with good ideas can help you see a host of possible solutions. The terrible ideas can then be re-evaluated to determine how they might become good ideas.
3. Unpack your assumptions: Identify the perceived rules/assumptions and then theorize thinking about what would happen if you did the opposite. (Remember the George Costanza theory of management: If every instinct you have is wrong - doing the exact opposite must be right.)  
Certainly, Elon Musk could be regarded as good at asking

big questions. He approaches problems in 2 ways:

1. First principles: Identifying what are merely assumptions about what can and cannot happen (v) what is the reality that must be accepted.
2. Cross-fertilization: Is there some way to apply a solution from a different industry?

Clayton Christensen and Hal Gregersen in their landmark book *Innovators DNA*, found the key skill of innovators is their questioning behavior. An analysis of their communications found that they had more questions than answers. The best problem-solvers (innovators) ask the best questions, and the questions they ask often reflect a unique perspective. For a successful leader it's not about asking more questions, but asking the right kind of questions.

Those of you with a clinical background know that questions have the power to foster new insights and reinforce behavioral changes. They help one get unstuck. Great questions have a catalytic quality that excites and encourages creativity. We have all experienced that Eureka or Aha moment when a new question reveals new insight, but even questions that don't immediately unlock answers hold the power to spark our imaginations and give us reasons to hope. That emotional response unleashes energy.

As Peter Drucker said, "The important and difficult job is never to find the right answers, it is to find the right question." What are you doing to model the value of asking questions and develop a culture that supports questioning?

*"The important and difficult job is never to find the right answers, it is to find the right question." -Peter Drucker*

Some possible initiatives include:

- Developing the habit of looking at problems from different perspectives - a different question could drive a more effective solution.
- Being more conscious in general of your probable wrongness (knowing there are things you don't know you don't know, and those things could be key); being more receptive to disconfirming and other challenging evidence you have avoided noticing or taking seriously.
- Getting out of your comfort zone. Discomfort drives innovation, but CEOs are often isolated. When the CEO only gets information from their direct reports – they are likely not getting the most unconformable information. Too many execs get their information catered - picked, prepared, and plated for them in a way they have indicated they find palatable. Start talking to different people and engaging with your critics.
- Listening. Stop selling and start listening to understand verses listening to respond/defend.

Join your peers at **mhca** to discuss the questions you should be asking to move your team forward. See you in Salt Lake City! ■

# Celebrate with Us!



We hope you'll plan to join us at mhca's 2020 Winter Conference and Annual Meeting to help us celebrate our 35th Anniversary. Throughout the conference, we will have special activities and events to honor our founders, celebrate our successes and prepare for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

This exciting event will be held March 3-5, 2020 at the Sandpearl Resort in Clearwater Beach, Florida. In addition

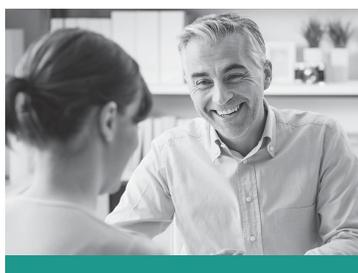
to compelling conference sessions, the agenda will include a special celebratory reception and casual beach-front buffet dinner on Wednesday evening sponsored by Genoa Healthcare. Current members and retired member CEOs are all invited to attend to reconnect and reminisce.

The full conference agenda and additional event details will follow in November, but we encourage you to book your rooms now because this venue

will sell out. Contact the Sandpearl Resort at 1-866-384-2995 or online at <https://www.sandpearl.com> and use code MHCA20 for our block rate.

If you attempt to book your room and are unable to get the nights you need, please contact Gena Matthews at [gmatthews@mhca.com](mailto:gmatthews@mhca.com) for assistance.

## Our Exclusive Commitment to Insuring Behavioral Healthcare, Addiction and Social Services Organizations



### Introductory background about MHRRG:

<b>Date Established</b>	1987
<b>Type of Business</b>	Insurance company owned by policyholders in behavioral healthcare and related social services organizations
<b>Products</b>	Liability insurance coverages exclusively for behavioral healthcare and related social services organization
<b>Clients</b>	Policyholders/Shareholders
<b>Availability</b>	Through agents & brokers exclusively via Negley Associates
<b>Eligibility</b>	Most classes of behavioral healthcare, addiction and social services organizations are eligible



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Our room blocks fill up FAST - book your hotel rooms now and register for the conference at [mhca.com](http://mhca.com) once we enable online registration (typically 90 days out). Please book only the rooms you need, and if your plans change, call mhca to cancel your reservations.



**Summer Conference**

**August 13-15, 2019**

The Grand America Hotel

Salt Lake City, Utah

Reservations: 800-437-5288

Hotel Group Rate: \$269

Reservation Deadline: July 10

**Fall Conference**

**November 5-7, 2019**

Loews Atlanta Midtown

Atlanta, Georgia

Reservations: 404-745-5000

Hotel Group Rate: \$239

Reservation Deadline: Oct. 11

**Winter Conference**

**March 3-5, 2020**

Sandpearl Resort

Clearwater Beach, Florida

Reservations: 866-384-2995

Hotel Group Rate: \$304

Reservation Deadline: Feb. 1

**Spring Conference**

**May 19-21, 2020**

Westin Copley Place Boston

Boston, Massachusetts

Reservations: 617-262-9600

Hotel Group Rate: \$289

Reservation Deadline: April 25