

# AMHC Announces Michelle Ferris as Chief Operations Officer

January 19, 2022  
News

Ellen Bemis, CEO, Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC) has announced the appointment of Michelle Ferris, LCSW to Chief Operations Officer. “Michelle’s experience in direct service, administration, and as a member of the senior leadership team, combined with her 15 years of service to AMHC makes her well suited for the role.”

As COO, Ferris will oversee AMHC’s day-to-day operations across all services and sites in partnership with the senior leadership team. She replaces Jennette Hitchcock, LCSW, who will retire as Chief Operations Officer in late February.

Ferris joined AMHC in 2006 and assumed increasing roles of responsibility primarily in emergency services. She joined the senior leadership team in 2019 as the Program Director of Emergency Services in Aroostook, Washington, and Hancock counties. Michelle is a graduate of Columbia University School of Social Work in the City of New York.



AMHC announces appointment of Michelle Ferris, LCSW as Chief Operations Officer.

Celebrating more than 57 years, AMHC is a nonprofit organization supporting nearly 5,500 clients annually. The agency has 26 service sites and 325 employees located across Aroostook, Washington, and Hancock counties providing mental health, substance use, crisis, and sexual assault services. For more information, connect with AMHC at [www.amhc.org](http://www.amhc.org).

# Aroostook Recovery Center of Hope Welcomes New Volunteer Coordinator

February 17, 2022  
News



AMHC announces that Gregg Spelta has joined Aroostook Recovery Center of Hope as Volunteer Coordinator and Peer Support Specialist.

Aroostook Recovery Center of Hope (ARCH) is pleased to announce the addition of Gregg Spelta, Volunteer Coordinator and Peer Support Specialist. ARCH is a place where individuals can come and receive support for their recovery journey, connecting people to resources and serving as a venue for various recovery meetings.

“We are excited to have Gregg join our team,” said Stacie Holton, Peer Center Manager. “As a person in long-term recovery, Gregg is ready to support others in their journey. We encourage people to give him a call or stop in to visit. He is looking forward to sharing all the ways ARCH supports individuals in recovery.”

ARCH is open to everyone, including people in recovery, struggling with substance/alcohol/opioid use disorder(s), affected others, allies, and community members. Located at 59 Main Street in Houlton, ARCH is an Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC) service collaborating with Link for Hope. For more information about ARCH services, please contact Spelta by email at [gspelta@amhc.org](mailto:gspelta@amhc.org), phone at 254-2213, or on Facebook at ARCH04730.

# AMHC Welcomes Sarah Wright to Senior Leadership

March 10, 2022  
News



Ellen Bemis, CEO, Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC), has announced the appointment of Sarah Wright, MHRT-CSP, to Program Director of Emergency Support Services.

“I am pleased to welcome Sarah to the senior leadership team,” said Bemis. “As Program Director, she will oversee Mobile Crisis Services in Aroostook, Washington, and Hancock Counties as well as Adult and Children’s Crisis Stabilization Units in Aroostook. When it comes to the delivery of

AMHC Announces Sarah Wright, MHRT-CSP, as Program Director of Emergency Support Services. crisis services, Sarah has a collaborative approach with our community partners that will grow in her expanded capacity.”

Wright has fifteen years of behavioral health experience. She joined AMHC in 2015 as an Emergency Services Specialist and, after a brief hiatus, rejoined the agency in 2019 as the Supervisor for the Mobile Crisis Team for Aroostook County. Wright is currently pursuing her Master of Social Work. She lives in southern Aroostook with her family.

# March is Brain Injury Awareness Month

March 24, 2022  
News



Penny Thompson, Caribou City Manager, delivered a Brain Injury Awareness Day Proclamation on March 16, 2022 to AMHC's Center for Integrated Neuro-Rehab. Accepting the proclamation was (l to r): Reagan White, Pam Searles, Thompson, Benjamin White and Betty Hendricksen.

## *Center for Integrated Neuro Rehab Highlights Brain Injury Services in Aroostook County*

Center for Integrated Neuro-Rehab (CINR), a program of Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC) is pleased to highlight Brain Injury Awareness Month during the month of March. Penny Thompson, Caribou City Manager, delivered a Brain Injury Awareness Day Proclamation designating March 16, 2022 as Brain Injury Awareness Day.

"We're very grateful to the City of Caribou for joining us in highlighting Brain Injury Awareness Month," shared Pamela Searles, OTR/L, CBIS, Neuro-Rehabilitation Services Manager. "Our clients enjoyed sharing their artwork with Penny and sharing their stories of recovery. We hope this month has been a great opportunity for the community to learn more about brain injury prevalence in Aroostook County."

Traumatic brain injuries (TBI) are more common than many people think. In Maine alone, on average every week, there are nearly 200 TBI-related hospital emergency department visits. CINR works with individuals to assist them with gaining more skills in the areas of physical function, language/cognition, social/emotional wellbeing, and more independence with life skills. It is important that the community knows there is hope and help in overcoming the challenges associated with traumatic brain injury.

Brain injuries are most commonly sustained through falls, as well as strokes, and motor vehicle accidents. Since 2007, CINR has supported hundreds of individuals and their loved ones. Fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), CINR is currently accepting client referrals. Services are available in Caribou and Houlton; please contact them at 207-498-3820 for more information and/or eligibility requirements.

Celebrating more than 57 years, AMHC is a nonprofit organization supporting nearly 5,500 clients annually. The agency has 26 service sites and 325 employees located across Aroostook, Washington, and Hancock counties. In addition to brain injury services in Aroostook, AMHC provides mental health, substance use, crisis, and sexual assault services in its three county service area. For more information, connect with AMHC at [www.amhc.org](http://www.amhc.org).

# AMHC Welcomes Shannon Gove to Senior Leadership

May 5, 2022  
News

Ellen Bemis,  
CEO, Aroostook  
Mental Health  
Services, Inc.  
(AMHC), has  
announced the  
appointment of  
Shannon Gove,  
LSW, MHRT-C,  
OQMHP, to  
Program Director of  
Residential/Crisis  
Units in Washington  
County.

“It is my  
pleasure to welcome  
Shannon to the  
senior leadership  
team,” said Bemis.  
“As Program  
Director, she will  
oversee the  
residential programs



AMHC Welcomes Shannon Gove as Program Director of Residential/Crisis Units in Washington County. in Calais, including children’s residential and both the children and adult crisis stabilization units. Throughout her eight years with the agency Shannon has demonstrated strong leadership and a passion for delivering excellent services to our clients. I look forward to working with her in this expanded capacity.”

Gove joined AMHC in 2014 as a Targeted Case Manager/Outpatient Site Coordinator in Calais. In 2019, she was appointed the Children’s Services Manager for Washington and Hancock counties. Gove received her Bachelor’s in Behavioral Science from the University of Maine Machias. She lives with her family in Dennysville.

# AMHC Highlights Mental Health Month in May

May 11, 2022  
News



## AMHC

*Making a difference in your community every day*

AMHC Highlights Mental Health Month in May.

understand what one is experiencing; after that, it is important to talk to a trusted friend, family member, teacher, etc. about the results, and as appropriate seek professional help.

AMHC encourages anyone who is struggling to reach out to the resources that are available.

- Maine Crisis Line: 1-888-568-1112. Available 24/7 to call, text, or chat
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Available 24/7
- StrengthenME: 207-227-8198. Available 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. seven days a week to anyone in Maine experiencing stress reactions to the pandemic
- Maine Frontline Warmline: 207-221-8196 (Text: 898-211). Available 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. seven days a week for Maine's health care workers, first responders, and school personnel who are experiencing stress as a result of the pandemic
- For more resources, including AMHC services county-wide, please visit [www.amhc.org](http://www.amhc.org) or call the AMHC Call Center at 1-800-244-6431.

May is Mental Health Month, and Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC) is pleased to join Mental Health America in highlighting its "Back to Basics" campaign.

"The past few years have highlighted how important mental health is to overall well-being," said Ellen Bemis, CEO. "Part of AMHC's mission is to reduce the stigma associated with mental health. Our agency encourages all community members to know the resources available to support you or a family member in a time of need."

There is no single cause for a mental health condition; many possible risk factors can influence how likely a person is to experience a mental health condition or how severe the symptoms may be. Mental Health America has a screening tool at <https://screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools/> which may assist an individual to better

# MECASA Recognizes Wendy Page with Advancing the Mission Award

May 18, 2022  
News

# Congrats!



## Wendy Page

AMHC Sexual Assault Services Coordinator, was recognized with MECASA's 2022 Advancing the Mission Award.

Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA) announced the recipients of the 2022 MECASA Awards – given annually to people and organizations whose work has had a significant statewide impact on the services and policies that support survivors of sexual violence in Maine.

“We’re very pleased that Wendy Page, AMHC Sexual Assault Services Coordinator, was among several recipients statewide who received the Advancing the Mission Award,” shared Julia Miller, AMHC Program Director for Prevention and Sexual Assault Services. The award is given to one or more individuals employed by a MECASA member center or member centers ‘who demonstrate an extraordinary and unwavering commitment to advancing the statewide mission of MECASA.’

“Wendy participated with other MECASA members in developing and implementing a statewide, standardized advocate training and a facilitator’s guide and updated advocate manual,” said Miller. “The materials took more than two years to finalize. We’re grateful to Wendy and the entire team for their efforts.”

The annual MECASA Awards are presented each April in conjunction with Sexual Assault Awareness Month, a time when sexual assault providers around Maine raise awareness about the impacts of sexual violence on our communities and the services available to survivors. One in

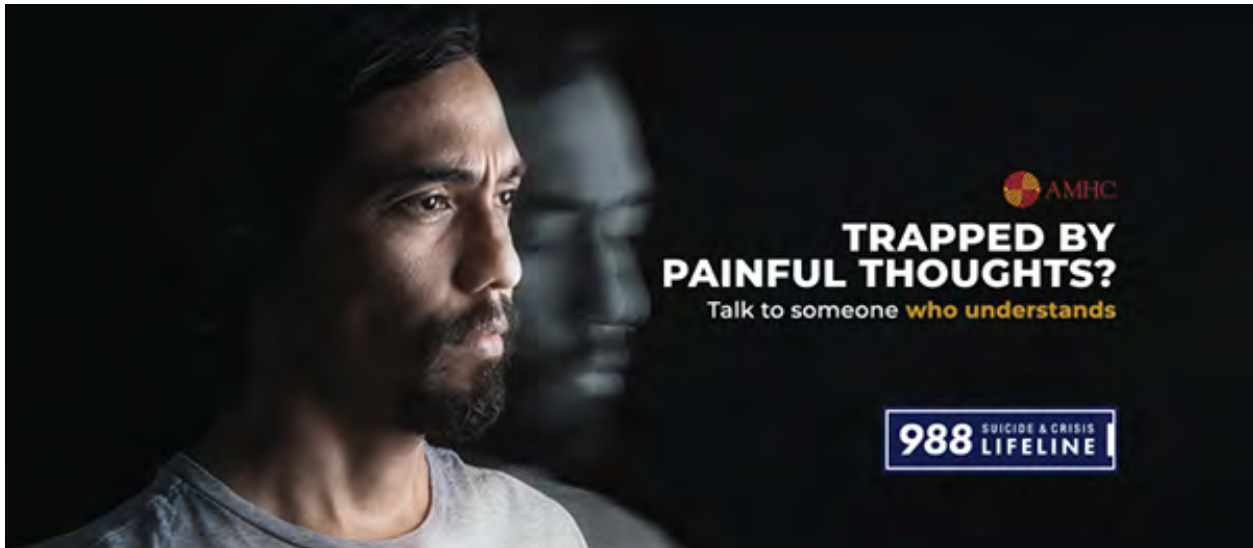
five people in Maine will experience sexual violence at some point in their lives.

AMHC Sexual Assault Services Advocates support nearly 400 victims per year in Aroostook, Washington, and Hancock counties. They can be reached by calling the 24-hour Sexual Assault Helpline at 1-800-871-7741. Text and chat are also available Monday – Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m. The service is free and confidential. For more information, visit AMHC Sexual Assault Services at <https://www.amhcsas.org/>.



# AMHC Highlights Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

August 31, 2022  
News



September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, and Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC) encourages everyone to be aware of the signs and symptoms of suicidal thoughts and what to do and not do in response to helping a loved one.

“According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, on average, one person died by suicide every 32 hours in the State of Maine in 2020,” explains Sarah Wright, Director of Crisis Services. “Suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages 10-34 and the fourth leading cause of death for ages 35-54.”

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) says the following warning signs could signal that someone is experiencing suicidal ideation (thoughts about suicide):

- Comments like “I wish I weren’t here” or “Nothing matters”
- Increased alcohol and drug use
- Aggressive behavior
- Withdrawal from friends, family, and community
- Dramatic mood swings
- Impulsive or reckless behavior

NAMI offers this advice: If your friend or family member struggles with suicidal ideation day-to-day, let them know that they can talk with you about what they are going through. Make sure that you adopt an open and compassionate mindset when they are talking. Instead of “arguing” or trying to disprove any negative statements they make (“Your life is not that bad!”), try active listening techniques such as reflecting on their feelings and summarizing their thoughts. This can help your loved one feel heard and validated.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis, AMHC is available to anyone in Aroostook, Washington, and Hancock counties. To access AMHC’s Mobile Crisis Services team, please call or text the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988 or the Maine Crisis Line at 1-888-568-1112.





# Link for Hope Presents Check to Aroostook Recovery Center of Hope

October 27, 2022  
News



(l to r) Aroostook Recovery Center of Hope staff members Stacie Lamoreau and Gregg Spelta receive a check from Trudy Rairdon and Mary Howland, Link for Hope Community Coalition members.

During Aroostook Recovery Center of Hope's (ARCH) grand reopening on Saturday, October 22, 2022, Link for Hope presented ARCH with a check for \$3,835. The funds have been set aside to support the needs of ARCH, including helping individuals that may need financial assistance to purchase resource materials for programs provided at the center.

"The Link for Hope Coalition is a community-based coalition whose vision and purpose is to promote the health, safety, and quality of life for all youth, families, and communities in Southern Aroostook," said Trudy Rairdon, co-chair. "Our mission is to enhance the quality of life in Southern Aroostook by reducing problems related to alcohol and other drug use and teen suicide."

After holding a public viewing of the documentary, *The Anonymous People*, the Link for Hope Coalition held focus groups to determine what the greater Houlton area community considered was a need to strengthen and empower people combating substance use disorder. It was a unanimous consensus that a recovery center would be extremely important for individuals. Shortly after that, Link for Hope was approached by AMHC to partner with the agency on a grant to open recovery centers in Aroostook County.

"Thanks to the tremendous support of the members of the coalition and the people in the greater Houlton area, Link for Hope raised money for ARCH," explained Rairdon. "We are grateful for the generosity of our community members who have helped this center become a reality."

Aroostook Recovery Center of Hope (ARCH) is located at 106 Main Street, Houlton. Located across the street from the Greater Houlton Chamber of Commerce/The Aroostook County Historical and Art Museum, ARCH is a place where individuals can come and receive support for their recovery journey, connecting people to resources and serving as a venue for various recovery meetings. ARCH is open to everyone, including people in recovery, people struggling with substance/alcohol/opioid use disorder(s), affected others, allies, and community members.

ARCH is open on weekdays from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and on some weeknights and weekends. For more information about the center, recovery groups, and more, please contact Spelta by email at [gspelta@amhc.org](mailto:gspelta@amhc.org) or by phone at 207-254-2213. ARCH is a program of AMHC. For more information about agency services, please visit [www.amhc.org](http://www.amhc.org).

# AMHC Welcomes Julia Macek to Senior Leadership

November 9, 2022  
News



Ellen Bemis, CEO of Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC), has announced that Julia Macek, LCSW, has joined the agency as Program Director of Behavioral Health and Integration in Aroostook County. The position was previously held by Lorraine Chamberlain, LCSW, CCS, who retired in November 2022.

“I am pleased to welcome Julia to the senior leadership team,” said Bemis. “As Program Director, she will oversee a variety of substance use and mental health programs and services for adults, children, and families and lead in new program development, enhancement, and implementation.”

Macek has more than 30 years of behavioral health experience in hospitals, residential treatment, outpatient mental health, and, most recently, in early care and education. She is a certified poverty coach, president of the board for Healthy Maine Families, and co-chair of the Aroostook Community Collaborative. Macek lives in Wade with her husband, David.