Oakland Community Health Network

Developmental Disabilities • Mental Health • Substance Recovery

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Oakland Community Health Network's Hope Giver Wins Award

OAKLAND COUNTY, MI (October 8, 2025) - Oakland Community Health Network (OCHN) is proud to announce that Sherri Rushman, Education Specialist, Certified Peer Support Specialist, and author, has been honored with the prestigious 2025 Cookie Gant Spirit Award.

"We are incredibly proud of Sherri and the well-deserved recognition she has received," said Dana Lasenby, OCHN Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director. "Sherri has been a vital part of OCHN for decades, and through her Hope Giver Training Series, she has inspired and empowered hundreds of individuals. She truly embodies the spirit of hope and resilience. We are honored to have her as part of the OCHN family."

Rushman received the award during the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services' annual Recipient Rights Conference. The Cookie Gant Spirit Award is presented annually to an individual who exemplifies unwavering commitment, compassion, and advocacy for people with mental health needs and developmental disabilities, all values that defined Cookie Gant's life and legacy.

A licensed Social Worker and a Certified Peer Support Specialist, Rushman has dedicated her career to uplifting individuals with disabilities and their families. In 2023, she published her first book, *Catching Hope: Hope Givers, Hope Receivers & Hope Stealers*, which combines her lived experience, professional insights, and the core principles of her "Catching Hope" framework.

About the Cookie Gant Spirit Award:
Cookie Gant was a Michigan native and nationally recognized human rights advocate, disability activist, and fierce champion for diversity and inclusion. Known for her unyielding advocacy in the mental health system, Gant was a vibrant and courageous presence who brought humor, heart, and tenacity to every cause she touched. Following her death in 2003, the State Recipient Rights Committee established this award to honor individuals who mirror her passion, strength, and dedication to human rights.

About OCHN

OCHN is contracted by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to lead a provider service network and manage care for approximately 30,000 Oakland County residents at more than 400 service sites across the county. People who receive public behavioral health services through OCHN's provider network include those who have an intellectual or developmental disability, mental health concerns, or substance use disorder. Most of these individuals have Medicaid insurance coverage.

OCHN's goal is to ensure these individuals are aware of and have access to services and supports that will improve their health and quality of life, as well as ensure their engagement in full community participation. Its mission to “inspire hope, empower people, and strengthen communities” reflects an unyielding belief in a "Valuable System for Valued People." Programs and supports provided by OCHN's service network are available at www.oaklandchn.org.

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