

# Journeys

## LIVING *in the moment:* Chad's Story

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## Alumni Spotlight: Lauren P.

“ There is still work to do to get where I want to be personally, but I am okay with that because I am making progress. I never believed I would find any sense of peace or happiness in my life. Skyland Trail equipped me with the tools I have used to build this new road for myself, so I trust they will get me the rest of the way, too. Being a part of Skyland Trail not only changed my life, it saved my life so I could create the one I always wanted to live. ”



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Each of our clients has a unique journey. This publication tells their stories and ours in aiding them along their way.



Located in Atlanta, Skyland Trail is a nationally recognized nonprofit mental health treatment organization serving adults ages 18 and older with a primary psychiatric diagnosis. Through our residential and day treatment programs, we help our clients grow, recover, and reclaim their lives.

Joint Commission  
Gold Seal of Approval  
since 1998



Member of:  
National Association of  
Therapeutic Schools and Programs



American Residential  
Treatment Association



Association for Community  
Integration Programs





*Safe spaces, where we can practice being mindful and present in the moment are important. In these spaces, we may learn to accept and appreciate who we are now instead of focusing on who we want to become.*

Instead of allowing past harm and pain to consume our thoughts, we may allow gratitude to blossom, creating room to celebrate the positive people and nourishing experiences in our lives today.

Staying focused on the present moment can be difficult in our fast-paced, image-driven world, especially for people struggling with depression or anxiety.

Skyland Trail provides that safe space for reflection, mindfulness, and growth. As part of our community, you help us bring together the right combination of expertise, therapeutic environments, and peer support that clients need to heal.

Recovery begins here in our residences, gardens, and classrooms and continues as clients return to their families and communities. Our clients are able to use the skills they build here to create safe spaces wherever they go.

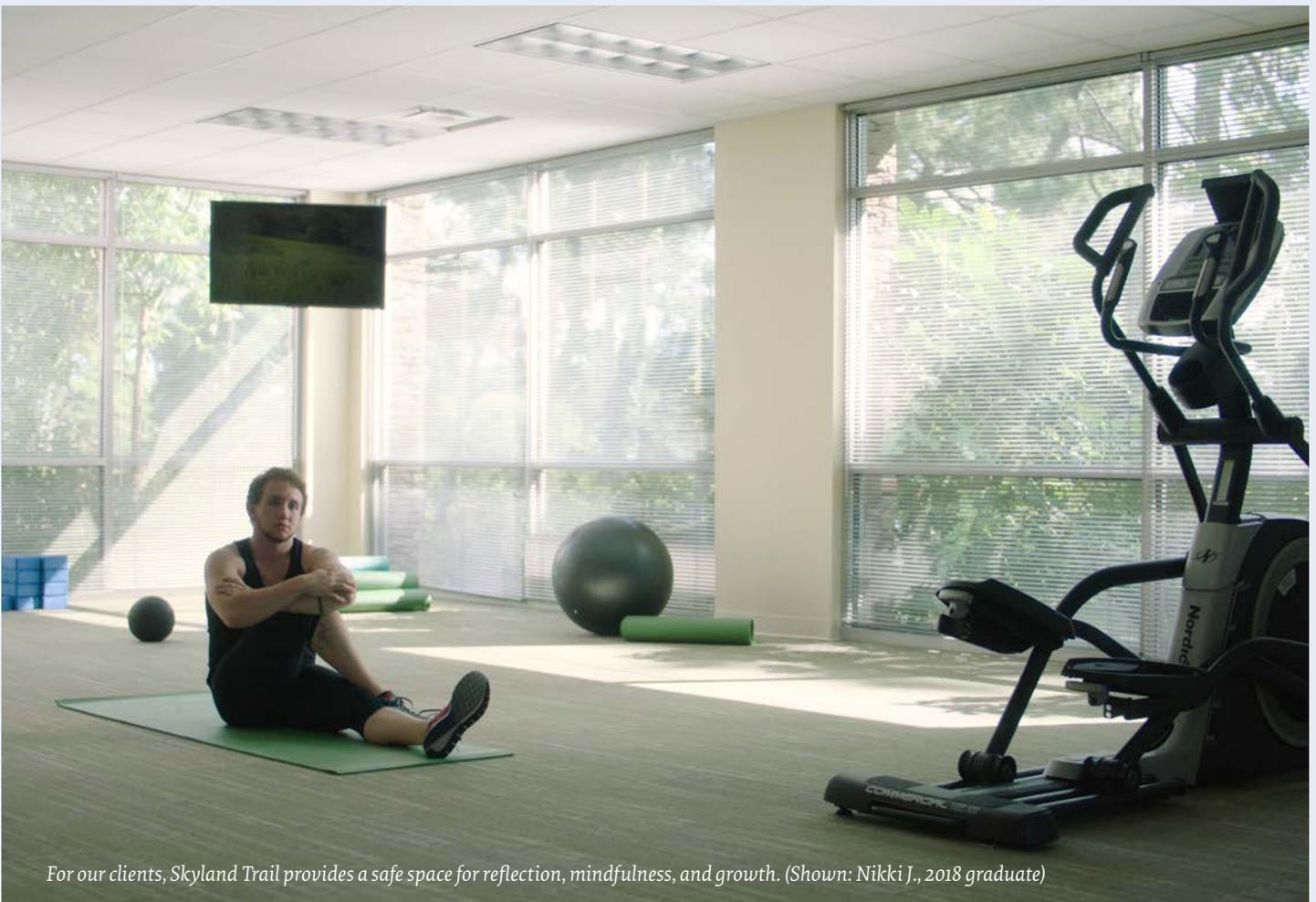
They are more capable of navigating life's challenging moments and also more open to fully experiencing moments of serenity and joy.

Thank you for helping us create this safe space and this powerful treatment program. In moments of reflection and gratitude, I think of all of you.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth".

Beth Finnerty, President & CEO



*For our clients, Skyland Trail provides a safe space for reflection, mindfulness, and growth. (Shown: Nikki J., 2018 graduate)*

**Rex Fuqua Named Philanthropist of the Year**

Skyland Trail Board member Rex Fuqua has been named 2018 Philanthropist of the Year by the Greater Atlanta Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Fuqua is being honored for his contributions to many Atlanta nonprofits, but especially for his support of organizations offering effective and evidence-based solutions to individuals struggling with mental illness.



**Kristen Lewis, JD, CPA, joins Skyland Trail as Vice President of Finance**

Kristen Lewis joined Skyland Trail in May 2018 as Vice President of Finance. Previously, Lewis served for six years as the tax director of Piedmont Healthcare. Prior to that, she was a manager in the National Federal Tax Services practice of Deloitte Tax, LLP. Lewis received her B.B.A. in accounting and B.A. in Spanish at Georgia State University. She is also a graduate of the Wake Forest University School of Law.



*Favorite thing about Skyland Trail: "The staff and clients are all incredibly friendly and kind, and there are these amazing gardens..."*



**Skyland Trail Breaks Ground on Adolescent Campus**

In summer 2018, Skyland Trail began construction on the Adolescent Campus, scheduled to open in 2019.

*See page 14 for more details!*



**Renovations at Skyland Trail South**

Upgrades were recently completed at Skyland Trail South, our residential community for clients ages 25 and older. Improvements were made to the dining room and entry hall as well as to private client rooms.

**Via Twitter**

Skyland Trail to break ground on new teen treatment center. Congratulations! @namigeorgia

Things move fast on #MorningRushATL, but I'm grateful for the times when we get to slow down + really dig into important issues like #suicide. @SkylandTrail @jleslie11alive

**Via Facebook**

"Today marks our one year anniversary as part of the Skyland Trail family. Through this journey our loved one has learned how to live with her condition, how to ask for help, and how to care for others who have mental issues too. Her life is filled with joy and hope for her future. She is living on her own and is enrolled in graduate school. None of this would be possible without Skyland Trail. Skyland was also there for her family. Whether we needed to learn about her condition, deal with insurance or just needed our own support, staff at Skyland was always there to help us. While this was a challenging year for us all, it was made better because of Skyland."

- Sylvia S.

"It has been a little over a year since I walked through the doors of Skyland Trail. I went through some things that seemed impossible to live with, but I learned not only how to handle things, but how to live. Today I am happier than I ever knew possible. My entire family is happier. Thank you to everyone. I am blessed."

- Myra R.



# Chad's story: Learning to live in the moment

“Fishing was among the first things I learned how to do with my father,” reflects Chad H. “And now when I am in the water, I think of only the best things that have been part of my life: my family – my mom and dad, my wife, my son, my daughters, and, as much as anything, my brother..”

For the last few years, the river had become one of the only places where Chad felt completely comfortable.

“When I’m on the river, I experience complete solace. I can be in the moment, not thinking about the future or the past. I hear the water, the birds, and, if I’m lucky, an otter or mink chasing us up the shoreline. If my kids or friends are with me, I enjoy nothing more than watching them have fun.”

“When I’m on the river, I experience complete solace. I can be in the moment, not thinking about the future or the past.”



Chad spends as much time as he can at the family home in the mountains fishing with friends and family. But, until recently, every time he inched down the driveway to return to Atlanta, he could immediately feel unease and uncertainty taking hold. It was a painful feeling that was all too familiar to him.

“Knowing I had to go home was always miserable. Real life was on the verge of taking hold, and that was always a terrible feeling.”

For as long as Chad can remember, symptoms of depression and anxiety have kept him cycling between feeling stuck in the past and fearing the future.

As a child, Chad’s family moved frequently, due to his father’s job. After each move, Chad had to put his friends, his community, and, to a great extent, his identity in the past and start over in a new place.

His younger brother, Lorne, likely struggled with the family moves as well. “We could eventually find our footing in the new schools and groups,” says Chad. “But every time we moved, Lorne was always my first and best friend. I always went out of my way to take care of him. He was everything to me.”

While Lorne used his expressive character to fit in, Chad relied almost solely on sports.

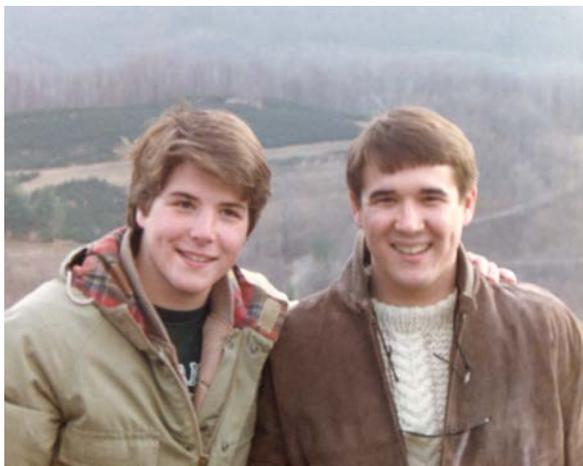
Being the quarterback in the fall and the pitcher in the spring was the easiest way to get noticed and become part of the group. “My dad always encouraged me to be a leader in that way,” says Chad.

While sports did help Chad make immediate friends and build an external identity, on the inside, his true passion was a love of music that was fostered by his mother, a very talented teacher and pianist. Chad was able to play many instruments by ear, and in high school, he was the primary trumpet for jazz bands in Michigan and Atlanta.

While he acknowledges the important role sports have played in his life, looking back now, Chad places a higher value on music. “Had I to do it all over again, I would pick music,” he says.

Throughout Chad’s childhood and teen years, his mom was loving and supportive, and he idolized his dad. Chad did not realize until recently that his father also likely suffered from depression. Chad fondly remembers time spent with his father and brother. “He taught us so many things. He grew up in a less than desirable situation and became a self-made man, absolutely with the help of my mother. They were an outstanding team.”

A move from Michigan to Atlanta during his sophomore year of high school was particularly difficult. Starting over at The Lovett School in Atlanta, Chad’s depression hit harder than it ever had. “I spent a lot of time alone. I missed all my Michigan friends desperately. I was not prepared for Atlanta. My head was constantly down.”



*In addition to being brothers, Lorne and Chad were best friends through their youth.*



After high school, Chad attended Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Texas. Chad remembers constantly working to present a façade of self-assuredness and ease to the world that he did not feel on the inside.

“The lack of self-confidence was overwhelming. I had been faking happiness and confidence since grammar school. College was merely an extension.” While he was able to establish friendships that he still values today, he always took more comfort from talking to strangers than to friends.

“I couldn’t figure out where I fit in. During my senior year, with the exception of my best friends, I had no direction, no interests. Even in highly emotional

situations, I couldn’t feel anything. Chrissy was my beacon.”

He was in a relationship with Chrissy, a young woman he had been friends with since high school who also attended SMU. Chad remembers feeling a constant and overwhelming insecurity and fear that their relationship would not last. “Depression and anxiety were more aggressively taking hold.” Shortly after graduating from college, Chad and Chrissy got married and had their first child, and then two more children. Chad recalls feeling the pressures of providing for a new family and the constant worry of possibly losing everything. I was never sure where I measured up. My thoughts of insecurity overwhelmed me.

**For as long as Chad can remember, symptoms of depression and anxiety have kept him cycling between feeling stuck the past and fearing the future.**

Chad was very involved in the lives of his children, volunteering at The Lovett School and coaching sports. But rather than feeling affirmation from his involvement, internally he still felt driven by a fear of losing his family if he let anything slip. "I was always extremely paranoid of letting them down."

Tragedy entered Chad's life when Lorne, Chad's brother and best friend, took his own life. Chad's father passed just five years later of cancer. The weight of his grief was immense.

"The 2,000 pounds on my shoulders became more and more heavy," says Chad. "I couldn't fake it any more. I couldn't be everything to everybody. I thought it was my fault. I didn't know who I was."

He tried outpatient therapy, but the sessions did not improve his symptoms or alleviate his pain. In fact, his symptoms worsened, and he was not able to sleep for months. Not sleeping concerned him.

"I had a couple of friends who had experienced the pronounced lack of sleep and ended up harming themselves. I let Chrissy know that I was very worried. Thankfully, she was very understanding."

He decided to enter the day treatment program at Skyland Trail. He, Chrissy, and his mother had been involved with Skyland Trail as volunteers and supporters for many years. Chrissy chaired Skyland Trail's signature fundraiser, Benefits of Laughter, in 2002.

As part of his treatment, Chad participated in transcranial magnetic stimulation treatment, or TMS. TMS is a noninvasive treatment for depression that often works when traditional medications are not effective. Chad's depression symptoms gradually lifted.



*Chad and wife, Chrissy, whom he describes as "the love of my life"*

He also participated in intensive Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, or CBT, an evidence-based therapy that is particularly effective in treating anxiety. Chad learned to use CBT skills to reframe his anxious thoughts.

"It sounds simple," says Chad, "But it takes real work to change patterns of thinking one has developed since he was 5-years-old."

After completing several months of intensive treatment, Chad was proud to stand up in front of his peers at graduation and reflect on his progress. He urged the younger clients to fully engage in treatment, to take the time now to learn these skills so they can take advantage of all that life has to offer. "Don't take as long as I did to realize and ask for help with these difficult feelings," he urged.

Today Chad says his depression is waning and he feels more in control. "When depression symptoms emerge, I can generally work my way out. I don't have to spend weeks or months in the horrible space like I did before."



*Chad and wife, Chrissy, with their children at their daughter's 2016 wedding*

# “Today I know I don’t need to be happy all the time, but I also know when I am unhappy, I can do something about it.

He’s still working on anxiety, but now when he has worrisome moments he uses his CBT skills to redirect his thoughts.

“I reassure myself that nobody is in danger, nobody is hurt, and I have things to look forward to. Thinking about time with my kids always helps. Whatever that nagging thought is, I have to remember that it is not going to be the end of my world. I also have Chrissy and my mother as my biggest advocates. That is very reassuring.”

“I am among the most fortunate people in the world. I have been married 31 years to the love of my life and I have the three best and most responsible kids anyone could ever ask for. Now that I am beginning to recognize how I feel, why I feel it, and how to explain it to others, our relationships have reached a new level. I can never thank my family enough for the support each has given me.”

Chad feels like completing treatment has given him a second chance and that he’s “living life all over again.” He stays healthy by spending time with his family, enjoying his favorite hobbies like golf and fly fishing, working on his health and giving back to his community.

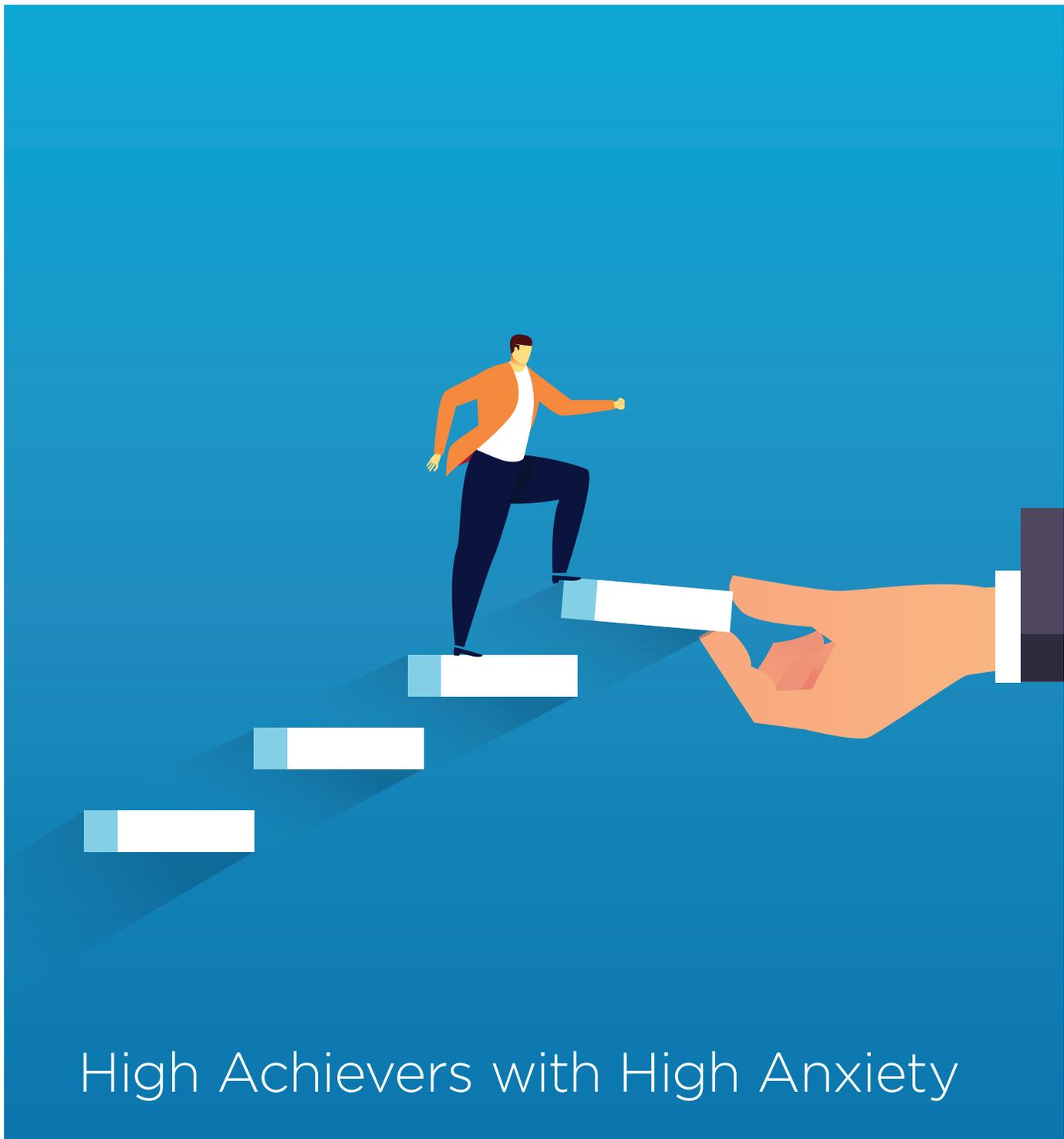
Years ago, while his children were students at The Lovett School and officers in the Vestry, Chad started accompanying the kids to Sunday dinners at Trinity House Community Ministries in downtown Atlanta. Trinity House is a residence and recovery program for men with histories of addiction, homelessness and incarceration. Chad was recently elected to the Board of Directors and visits the men at Trinity House several times a month, including participating in weekly Bible study meetings with other volunteers. He describes his relationships with the men and leaders at Trinity House as “among the most important things in my life.”

“Being a part of this community is a huge part of my own recovery and my ability to now feel good. These men need our support, our time, our contributions, and our prayers. The success rate is so much better for those who graduate from this program, and I plan to continue to work to secure futures for these courageous men.”

**Of his volunteer involvement at Trinity House, Chad says, “They have been through so much and are working so hard. I get so much more from them than they ever receive from me. These men help shape me every day.”**



Before Skyland Trail, Chad was in incredible pain. “I hated waking up every morning. For no specific reason, it was literally painful to face every day. Today I know I don’t need to be happy all the time, but I also know that when I am unhappy, I can do something about it. I look forward to being happy. I can experience moments of joy and sadness, acknowledge and feel both of those emotions, and feel glad to be me, living my life and smiling more than I ever have. I am most grateful for my family and Skyland Trail. I now look forward to things as opposed to looking back. This has truly been a life saver for me.” ■



## High Achievers with High Anxiety

by Raymond J. Kotwicki, MD, MPH,  
Charles B. West Chief Medical Officer,  
Skyland Trail

### **How do you know if a high-achieving person has a “type A” personality or an anxiety disorder?**

If you draw a graph plotting anxiety against functionality, you see an upside down U shape. There's a midpoint, at the top of the U, where having some anxiety maximizes functionality. But at the ends of the graph, no anxiety or too much anxiety can cause disability.

Some high-achievers have enough anxiety to drive them to achieve success without experiencing pain or disability.

Other individuals are successful AND miserable, to the point of experiencing disability. They are never as successful as they should or could be, their success doesn't result in the love or reward they desired, their friends or rivals are always more successful, they are afraid their success is undeserved and will all be taken away, etc. These individuals likely have an anxiety disorder and would benefit from psychiatric assessment and mental health treatment.

### How do you know when someone needs mental health treatment for anxiety?

Unfortunately, “high-achievers” sometimes find it more difficult to ask for help than others. Furthermore, family and friends may not recognize when someone needs help because, on the outside, everything looks fine.

For example, high school and college students may not exhibit a decline in grades or performance. Parents and close friends may notice, in a more subjective sense, that their loved one is struggling or in pain.

A more visible red flag is a dramatic change in social habits. If someone starts avoiding social activity or abruptly abandons one social group to join another, that might be a reason to encourage a loved one to be evaluated by a mental health professional.

Physical symptoms could also trigger an evaluation. Solid research shows that anxiety changes your cortisol levels and activates the parts of your brain that are responsible for autonomic blood pressure, etc. Many people may report or seek treatment for GI problems, chronic headaches or sexual dysfunction before revealing any psychiatric symptoms.

Finally, consider how the individual uses alcohol. Studies show that high-achieving adolescents in higher socioeconomic populations tend to drink alcohol to mitigate their anxiety as compared to other high school students who more often drink alcohol for social reasons. If a college student tends to rely on alcohol to be able to function in social or performance situations, this could be another red flag.

### What are effective treatments for high-achievers with anxiety?

Psychiatrists generally believe that anxiety is one of the most responsive diagnoses to treatment with medications. Evidence-based psychotherapy is also important. Medications are effective at mitigating current symptoms, but those symptoms tend to morph from one form to the next unless you can address the anxiety's root internal cause. Cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT, often is effective.

At Skyland Trail, we are increasingly using biofeedback as an adjunctive therapy to

CBT. A patient can connect to a monitor measuring how much her hands are sweating, how tense her muscles are, or even the speed at which her heart is beating while working with a therapist. If she can effectively modify her thoughts, she can see immediate results on the monitor of how her body is responding through changes in these parameters. Biofeedback can provide a sense of empowerment, when patients see evidence that they have some control over their own thoughts and physical reactions even in stressful situations.

**When young people are allowed to fail early and often when the stakes are low, they are given valuable opportunities to build resiliency.**

A certain class of medications that are typically used to control high blood pressure also can mute the physical symptoms often associated with anxiety while not dulling someone's cognition. If used correctly, these medications can help uncouple physical tension from anxiety and eventually lead people not to expect that they will feel miserable when in stressful situations. That confidence frequently works amazingly well to break the cycle of anxiety resulting in physical distress which – in turn – further exacerbates anxiety.

By definition, anxiety is about what is going to happen in the future and being afraid of a loss of power, prestige, resources, etc. If you are mindful and focused on the present, you cannot be anxious. Employing a “temporal” philosophy, we incorporate mindfulness training and compassion-based meditation into treatment and help patients adopt skills to prevent constantly forecasting into the future.

Our treatment model also helps patients shift from an external to an internal locus of control, or source of motivation. In the field of recovery, we often call this process discovering “your true north.” High-achievers often feel driven by a need to please or impress others or may

evaluate their self-worth by comparing themselves with others. If you excel in school, win awards, and are celebrated for superlative performance, it's easier to start looking externally for why you do things. Through psychotherapy, clients identify what is meaningful to them rather than what holds valance to someone else, and use that as the foundation for their thoughts and actions.

### What are the best protective factors against anxiety?

Having meaningful relationships is one of the best protections against developing anxiety. If you imagine anxiety being the air inside a balloon, you can prevent the balloon from popping by letting out some of the air. You can do that through meaningful conversations with people you trust.

One of the best ways parents can help young people avoid developing anxiety problems is to help them develop resiliency instead. Instead of always protecting children from bad situations, find opportunities to encourage young people to be OK in uncomfortable or stressful situations. When young people are allowed to fail early and often when the stakes are low, they are given valuable opportunities to build resiliency. Starting when kids are young, enroll them in activities for which they have little aptitude or practiced skill. They will learn that they can experiment with new things and realize that an activity may be valuable or meaningful to them even if they do not win medals or rank at the top. Show them that they can still be valued and celebrated by friends and family for just participating and putting in the effort.

### What should you do if you suspect someone is suffering from anxiety?

A psychiatric assessment from a mental health professional is the best next step for someone experiencing symptoms of anxiety. Family involvement can be very helpful in the assessment process as well as in treatment. Select a mental health provider with specialized experience in treating anxiety, who adheres to evidence-based treatment approaches, and who can develop a treatment plan using both medications and psychotherapy to help effectively address the specific diagnoses and goals of the patient. ■

# From first steps to the next milestone

**At Skyland Trail, clients gain strength and confidence to start a recovery journey... and skills to keep going through whatever life brings.**

*When graduating from intensive treatment, Victor B. shared these words with his peers, reflecting on his progress to date and the road ahead.*

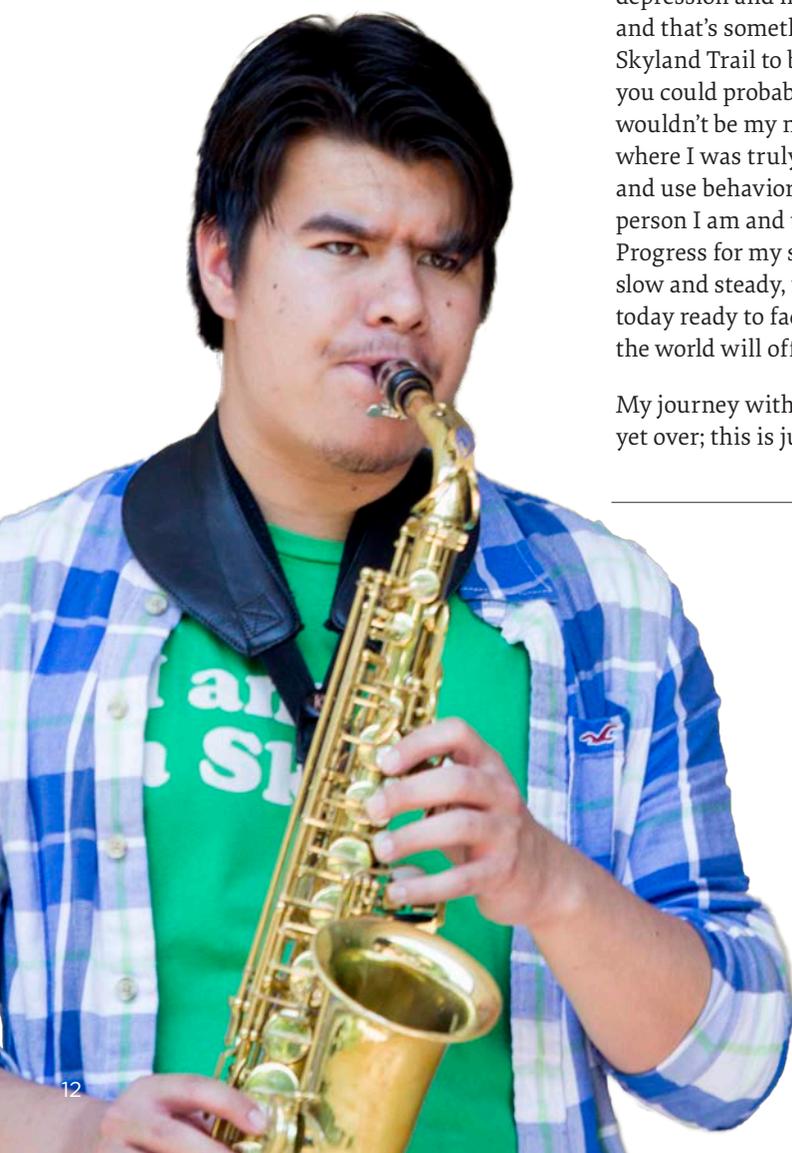
When I came here I was an internal mess. I had been hospitalized twice in the past four months and had hurt myself days before my intake. I was sort of looking for a quick fix, a place that would cure my depression and make everything better, and that's something of what I expected Skyland Trail to be. Of course, as most of you could probably tell, Skyland Trail wouldn't be my magical cure, but a place where I was truly challenged to learn and use behavior therapy to live with the person I am and the world around me. Progress for my stubborn self has been slow and steady, yet I'm standing here today ready to face and accept whatever the world will offer me next.

My journey with mental health is not yet over; this is just the first intensive

phase of recovery. Despite having come a long way since I got here, I still have many more milestones yet to reach, many skills to hone, and many experiences to mindfully observe. I'm not free of problems, concerns, or stressors, and I know I never will be, but thanks to Skyland Trail, I am finally able to make peace with that fact and the idea that I am who I am.

I'd like to thank my treatment team for helping me on this phase of my journey. This whole facility is really unlike any other I've been to before and has truly pushed my limits and made me into a much stronger and wiser person than I was three months ago. And for that, I am hugely grateful to Skyland Trail.

**Victor B, 2018 graduate**



*Victor B. playing saxophone at the May 2018 Arts in Garden, Skyland Trail's celebration of Mental Health Month*

Tara B. visiting Skyland Trail for Arts in the Garden 2018, four years after graduation



Four years after graduating from Skyland Trail, Tara B. shares how the skills she learned helped her establish independence and thrive.

#### **Recovery is a process.**

This spring of 2018, Arts in the Garden gave me the perfect excuse to drive to Atlanta for the weekend. It was wonderful to see my amazing staff again, as well as several fellow clients with whom I shared my journey of two months at Skyland Trail. That is when my recovery from depression began.

#### **Recovery is frightening.**

I had been so desperate. A perfect storm of menopause, job loss and a toxic relationship caused a major depressive episode with extraordinary anxiety, and I went spiraling down until I hit bottom in January 2014. Something had to change, and Skyland changed it. I arrived in Atlanta in the midst of its worst ice storm in history, with my cold hands shoved in my pockets and my head hanging. I had no idea what I was doing there. I was terrified.

#### **Recovery is confounding.**

Within the first two days, clients and staff had me standing up straight and interacting, even smiling, talking, and eating again. How could I have missed this kind of miracle in my life? Why

didn't I find it sooner? What would it take to make it work, to make it last?

#### **Recovery can be so rewarding.**

The groups began to challenge my tormented brain. Individual therapy validated and comforted me as I struggled to make sense of each day. EVERY staff person knew my name, and little did I know that they kept in very close contact with one another to track EVERY client's progress. The Skyland magic began to weave in and out of my consciousness. I learned to meditate; I played piano again, did yoga, went on expeditions, and challenged myself to go to Starbucks on my own. You have no idea what a huge thing that was for someone who was too scared to shower without someone in the bathroom with me.

#### **Recovery means learning.**

I gained tools I had never before had at Skyland Trail. The friendships I made were like any others: some for a reason, some for a season, and some for a lifetime. I absorbed and I shared. I cried and I smiled. I hugged and I was held. When I graduated, Jeff accompanied me on guitar as I sang "Bridge Over Troubled

Water," the perfect expression of gratitude to those on whom I counted to help me on that precious path to recovery.

#### **Recovery is a lifelong commitment.**

I've regained my life. I live on my own for the first time ever, accounting to no one but my dogs. I'm active in 12-Step Programs which support and sustain me, regularly attend Mass, work part-time in mental health, and have developed my own podcast and Facebook LIVEcast. I have begun again to thrive, not survive.

Nothing is perfect. Mornings are still hard, and it takes until midday until I feel like myself. I know what to do, though: distress tolerance learned in Dialectical Behavior Therapy carries me through the hard times. And that's the point. Get through the hard times, and relish the good ones.

Envision your own success, won't you? Reach out and start your new life, today. Rejoin the world. Do you believe your life can never be better, your future can never be brighter? Think again, my friend. Look at me.

Recovery IS Skyland Trail.

**Tara B, 2014 graduate**

## Groundbreaking: Skyland Trail’s Adolescent Campus

Thanks to incredible volunteer leadership and community support, Skyland Trail exceeded the \$20 million goal of the *Building Resilience, Changing Lives* campaign in spring 2018. On May 23, board members, campaign supporters, staff, and friends gathered to celebrate the ceremonial groundbreaking of the adolescent campus. Scheduled to open in Fall 2019, the campus will be home to a treatment program for adolescents ages 14 to 17 with mood and anxiety disorders.

Founding donors of the *Building Resilience, Changing Lives* campaign include the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, The Realan Foundation, the O. Wayne Rollins Foundation, The Wilbur and Hilda Glenn Family Foundation, The James M. Cox Foundation, The West Foundation, Jennifer and Tom Bell, Mary and John Brock, Susan and Jim Hannan, Beth and Tommy Holder, Edwina and Tom Johnson, Melanie and Rob Palumbo, and three anonymous friends of Skyland Trail.

The groundbreaking ceremony marked the beginning of construction on the adolescent campus, which will comprise a treatment facility, a residential hall, and therapeutic outdoor spaces. Located in Chamblee, an existing 30,000 square-foot, two story office building will be renovated to meet the specialized treatment and education needs of adolescents. The renovated building will include individual and group therapy rooms, art and music therapy rooms, a media center and dedicated space for patients to complete their school work, a kitchen and dining area, and offices for clinical and administrative staff.

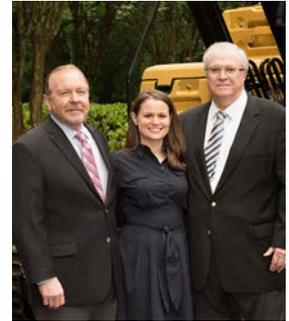
A two-story residential hall will be constructed adjacent to the treatment center. It will include 26 private patient rooms as well as a common living area, family room, kitchen, and nurses’ station. Outdoor spaces will be developed into a courtyard and gardens, as well as specialized areas for fitness and recreational activities.



**IMAGES: (above)** Beth Holder, Mark West, Rev. Joanna Adams, John Brock, Susan Hannan, Jim Hannan, Tom Glenn, Rand Glenn Hagen, Lou Glenn, Amy Rollins Kreisler, Rex Fuqua, Duvall Fuqua, Jennie Blake, Margie Wynne; **(right/lower)** Rand Glenn Hagen, Tom Johnson, Dorothy Jordan, Richard Parker, Rex Fuqua, Beth Finnerty; **(right/upper)** Campaign Chairs: Rand Glenn Hagen, Tom Johnson, Rex Fuqua. **Photos:** Lee Patterson

**“Skyland Trail’s adolescent treatment program will fill an urgent need in our region for evidence-based, high-quality residential mental health treatment for teens.” – Rex Fuqua**

Scheduled to open in Fall 2019, the campus will be home to a treatment program for adolescents ages 14 to 17 with mood and anxiety disorders.



**Campaign Chairs**

Rex Fuqua  
Rand Glenn Hagen  
Tom Johnson

**Campaign Committee**

Rev. Joanna Adams  
Thomas D. Bell, Jr.  
Duvall Fuqua  
Allison Hill, JD, PhD  
Jim Howard  
William E. Huger, III  
Clay Jackson  
Amy Rollins Kreisler  
Melissa Lowe  
Lorri McClain  
Ned Montag  
Colleen Nunn  
Richard Parker  
Nina Schwartz





*Susan and her family are committed to helping others in need through gifts that support financial aid. Susan is shown above with her daughter, Darienne, and granddaughter, Madison, a former Skyland Trail client.*

## The Search for Healing and Recovery

I entered the mental health morass as the result of helping my daughter and her husband find a treatment program for my then 20-year-old granddaughter, Madison. As a long-term business leader and innovation specialist, I thought I intuitively knew the process to find just the right program for her. How wrong I was! I was thrown by the business complexities, financial focus and secondary concern for the patients of the mental health organizations I researched. After hours of research and numerous conference calls, we traveled hundreds of miles to a center we thought was “perfect.” What we experienced was deplorable – all the beautiful pictures, superb programs and outside activities were falsely represented. We returned home deflated, and worse, Madison returned home terrorized by the experience. In our minds, we were fearful that we would never be able to persuade her to enter any other program. Desperation sent me back through all I had researched, and I found my notes on Skyland Trail and scheduled a personal visit. The professionalism, resources, and programs were in direct contrast to what we had experienced in the past. A second visit was scheduled with Madison. As we entered the administration building, Madison was like steel – every wall up, as closed as one could be. The admissions representative gently guided Madison through the tour, intuitively

sensing her resistance and fear. Through the next two hours, we slowly saw the crumbling of her walls and the softening of her face – there was hope.

Madison entered treatment in January 2017 and graduated in April 2017. She experienced, as did we, the care of the “total person.” The management of her physical health issues, DBT skills training, psychological assessment and oversight, group therapy sessions, medication assessment and genetic tolerances, fun and expressive therapies, substance, meditation and relationship counseling established a strong foundation to take her back into the world.

**The assurance that my granddaughter was going to live – not just exist, but be the vibrant, driven, successful and loving soul she had been in the past – made me forever thankful to God for the team at Skyland Trail.**

Their dedication, honesty, persistence and compassion saved not only my granddaughter’s life, but brought hope to our entire family.

The greatest gift I could give was providing funds for another precious life to receive the treatment and healing that he or she so desperately needs. My financial gift can literally save a life. What greater act of compassion is there? Skyland Trail will forever be a significant recipient of my charitable giving.

– Susan B.

*Nell’s son received treatment at Skyland Trail in 2018. Financial aid helped her son fully engage in treatment and helped her family heal.*

Dear Skyland Trail:

I feel compelled to write this letter of profuse thanks for financially supporting our son. Mental health services are not something we saved for, and with three college-age children, the financial burden has been substantial.

Nonetheless we have been diligent in seeking the best care and the best fit for our son. The Skyland Trail treatment team, DBT program, structured day, and competent staff – have all contributed to growth in my child that I don’t think I could have imagined five months ago. And I will add, greatly contributed to our growth as a family.

Your action, through the financial aid award, speaks to your conviction of what is right for our son. Thank you for your gift of funding, and thank you for the work you all are doing.

*Nell R.*



## Grateful Family: The Gift of a Future

Like many of the families who have been treated at Skyland Trail, we were surprised and unprepared when it became apparent that our daughter was living with mental illness. We felt isolated and afraid.

Without any knowledge of what to do or how to help, we were confronted with a crisis like none we had ever faced before. We were unable to find effective mental healthcare in our community for our daughter, and we were determined to access the best treatment we could for her. When Skyland Trail was mentioned to us as a potential treatment option, and after researching similar programs all over the country, we became convinced that Skyland Trail offered exactly what we needed.

What the staff at Skyland Trail did for us was nothing short of remarkable. On our arrival at the campus, we immediately felt the relief that comes with being in a place where you feel truly understood and supported. We relaxed for the first time in several months, knowing intuitively that our daughter was in competent and caring hands, and that she was receiving excellent treatment. The multidisciplinary approach at Skyland Trail was impressive.

While working with our daughter intensively every day, the staff communicated with us regularly, and included us in the treatment plan. She learned the tools that she needed to cope with her condition from the team assigned to work with her, while we set about doing our part. We learned that our well-intended strategies for communicating with her were ineffective and often had unintended negative results.

We learned how to communicate more effectively, how and when to be firm, how to truly show emotional support, and how to set appropriate limits when needed. We learned the importance of validating her experiences, and how to do that effectively. The Skyland Trail staff held us all accountable, and gave all of us the strategies we needed to move forward in this new reality.

Our daughter finished her treatment at Skyland Trail over a year and a half ago, and has been continuing her progress at home. She did very difficult and productive work during her time at Skyland Trail, and we are fortunate that she accepts her diagnosis and is willing to do the hard

work of practicing the methods given to her in DBT while she was there. We are confident that when the inevitable hard days come along, she will use the resources she internalized while in treatment to move back to a place where she can cope. There is so much more for us all to do, but the foundation Skyland Trail provided has given us what we need.

**We will always be grateful to Skyland Trail for giving us the opportunity for a future with our daughter.**

We are fortunate that we have a large and loving extended family and many wonderful friends who have supported us through this journey. We are also fortunate that we had the insurance coverage and resources to access the care at Skyland Trail when we needed it. We are aware that there are many families who may not be as fortunate. This is why we give. Having benefited, we want to do all we can to help make Skyland Trail strong and available to all who may benefit.

– James and Beth S.

## Giving Inspired by Friends and Motivated by Family

by Mary and John Brock

We first learned about Skyland Trail when we attended Benefits of Laughter as guests of Kelly Loeffler and Jeff Sprecher. We were so impressed. And we continued to learn more about the important work Skyland Trail was doing from Dr. Ed Craighead at Emory and others in the community working to improve access to mental health treatment.



Mary and John Brock (right) were first introduced to Skyland Trail as guests of Kelly Loeffler and Jeff Sprecher at Benefits of Laughter (left). The friends are shown here at Benefits of Laughter 2013.

We tend to support causes that have impacted our family in some way. We support cancer research because we lost John's mother to lung cancer despite her never smoking. Mental and emotional health challenges have also affected our family, and so we support mental health research and treatment, contributing to Skyland Trail as well as Emory's Child and Adolescent Mood Program. Equally important to us is supporting education, particularly for financially disadvantaged youth.

When we learned that Skyland Trail was developing a residential treatment program for adolescents, we felt committed to help. Adolescents and their families here in Atlanta and beyond desperately need more access to quality mental and emotional health treatment. Expanding Skyland Trail's treatment programs to impact this important group is especially exciting to us, and we are pleased to be able to support the Outdoor Sports Pavilion at the new campus, given our love of sports and Mary's co-ownership of the Atlanta Dream WNBA team. There is a tremendous need for more people to understand that individuals

"If we can impact adolescents early in their lives, there is a chance to change and improve the future for many young people who can then have productive and happy lives."

-Mary and John Brock



who struggle with mental or emotional illness can come from any family and from every socioeconomic group. We are proud to be able to support Skyland Trail as the organization continues to grow to meet the needs of our community.

## Growing Better with Local Garden Clubs

The Skyland Trail horticultural therapy program is fortunate to benefit from long-standing partnerships with local garden clubs. In 2018, partnerships with the Cherokee Garden Club, Druid Hills Garden Club, and the Ivy Garden Club allowed our clients to create and develop unique horticultural projects across our campuses, including a garden amphitheater, an interactive mandala for meditation, and a redesign of the quintessential cottage garden. Clients lead and participate in these

projects through expert-led horticultural therapy groups and specialized client employment opportunities. The hands-on experience allows our clients to interact with nature, one another, and the community.

If you are a member of a garden club and would like to learn more about the Skyland Trail horticultural therapy program, please contact Sarah Buckley at [sbuckley@skylandtrail.org](mailto:sbuckley@skylandtrail.org) or 678-686-5949.



A client adds flowers and other elements of nature to the interactive mandala for meditation.

## Meeting the Needs of Future Generations

Individuals who support Skyland Trail through a planned giving commitment become members of The Cypress Society. These legacy gifts ensure that Skyland Trail continues to meet the needs of future generations through state-of-the-art facilities and innovative, leading-edge treatment programs.

Contact: Elizabeth Alexander, [ealexander@skylandtrail.org](mailto:ealexander@skylandtrail.org), 404-709-3172

Learn more: [www.skylandtrail.org/cypress](http://www.skylandtrail.org/cypress)



“We have to plan for the future. We have to look ahead. The needs are only going to grow, especially needs for financial aid. We hope our support through the Cypress Society will help to maintain the level of quality and excellence we see consistently from Skyland Trail and will help the organization continue to be on the cutting edge of mental health treatment.” - Jackie & Tony Montag



Jackie, Ned, Tony, and Andrea Montag



“For more than 10 years, I have witnessed what horticulture can demonstrate to Skyland Trail clients. When explaining that a bulb has everything inside it to bloom if only given water and light, it is an easy transition to the client’s experience at Skyland, where they receive the nourishment they need for productive lives.” - Virginia Almand,

*Cherokee Garden Club*

## How you can help: Events

EACH YEAR, SKYLAND TRAIL HOSTS several unique fundraising events. Each event offers a fun and distinct experience and an opportunity to support recovery for individuals with mental illness. We are honored by your participation and especially grateful to our volunteers and sponsors.

### Associates Spring Luncheon and Fashion Show 2018

On March 23, 2018, Skyland Trail held its 11th annual Associates Spring Luncheon and Fashion Show at Piedmont Driving Club. Led by event co-chairs Sue McKinley and Suci Jackson, the event welcomed 280 guests and raised more than \$98,000. Guests enjoyed lunch, a fashion show by Neiman Marcus and a presentation from keynote speaker, Andrea Petersen. Andrea Petersen shared her personal experience with mental illness and discussed her first book, *On Edge: A Journey Through Anxiety*.

Event Chair: Sue McKinley  
Event Co-Chair: Suci Jackson



**IMAGES: 1** Beth Finnerty, Sue McKinley, Suci Jackson, Andrea Petersen **2** Lib Quirk, Karen Parker, Helen Izlar **3** Rev. Joanna Adams, Katy Barksdale, Liz Blake **4** Kim Marks, Nancy Bryant **5** Lauren Pfrogner, Sue McKinley, Michael Mock, Jenny Pruitt **Photos:** Kimberly Link

### Southern Shindig 2018

On August 23, 2018, Skyland Trail hosted its eighth annual Southern Shindig at Monday Night Brewing Garage. More than 200 young professionals attended the fundraising event, generating more than \$48,000 from ticket sales and a silent auction to support financial aid scholarships and unique therapeutic programs. Guests enjoyed music from Fukushima Tuna while sampling Monday Night brews and bidding on unique items and experiences.

*Event Co-Chairs:*  
Connor & Maddie Davidson  
and Morgan & Mike DiOrio

*Auction Co-Chairs:*  
Farley Sirockman & India Waters



**IMAGES:** 1 Connor & Maddie Davidson and Morgan & Mike DiOrio 2 Libby & Brooks Barge, Grady Lucky, Liz & Chaz Smithgall 3 Melissa Mykulak and Kaylie Walter 4 John Hobart, Adam Cronk, Mike DiOrio 5 Abbie & Colin McBurnette 6 Farley Sirockman, India Waters **Photos:** Lee Patterson

“Southern Shindig allows us to not only raise awareness and funding for Skyland Trail, but also help eliminate the stigma around mental health conditions. We need more candor and unabashed conversation about these illnesses that affect not only individuals but their families as well.”

– Maddie & Connor Davidson

“While there are many worthwhile causes to support in the Atlanta area, Skyland Trail holds a special place in our hearts. Mental health is such an important and often overlooked part of wellness, but something that impacts all of us.” – Morgan & Mike DiOrio

**Benefits of Laughter 2017**

On October 19, 2017, Skyland Trail held its 20th annual Benefits of Laughter fundraising event at The St. Regis Atlanta. The event welcomed more than 500 guests and raised more than \$825,000 to support Skyland Trail clients and programs. As part of celebrating 20 years of laughter and philanthropy, past event chairs, starting with Beth Jones, were recognized, and guests applauded the cumulative impact of the event on Skyland Trail clients and families: a total of more than \$11 million dollars raised and, as a result, financial aid awarded to more than 1,100 clients. As part of the program, a Skyland Trail graduate shared her personal story of living with a mental illness and how treatment at Skyland Trail helped her heal and recover. And, proving that laughter often is the best medicine, guests enjoyed a comedic performance by Nate Bargatze.

*Event Chairs:*  
Jane & Clay Jackson

*Corporate Chair:*  
Andy Stull

*Patron Chairs:*  
Christine & Bill Ragland



**IMAGES: 1** Andy & Nola Stull, Richard Parker, Jenny Pruitt, Jane & Clay Jackson **2** Christine & Bill Ragland **3** Carrie & Whit Lanier **4** Sam, Beth, and Don Inman **5** Betsy and Mark West **Photos:** Kimberly Link and Lee Patterson

## Join Us for Benefits of Laughter 2018

Event Chairs Donna and Stan Sands invite you to join us Thursday, October 18, 2018, for an exciting Benefits of Laughter.

Our signature fundraising event, held at the The St. Regis Atlanta, Benefits of Laughter offers a unique and fun-filled evening as Atlanta's philanthropic and corporate leaders gather to celebrate and support recovery for individuals struggling with mental illness.

To learn more about patron and corporate sponsorship opportunities, visit us at [www.skylandtrail.org/BOL](http://www.skylandtrail.org/BOL). For more information, contact Kathleen Rast, [krast@skylandtrail.org](mailto:krast@skylandtrail.org) or 678-686-5913.

*Event Chairs:*

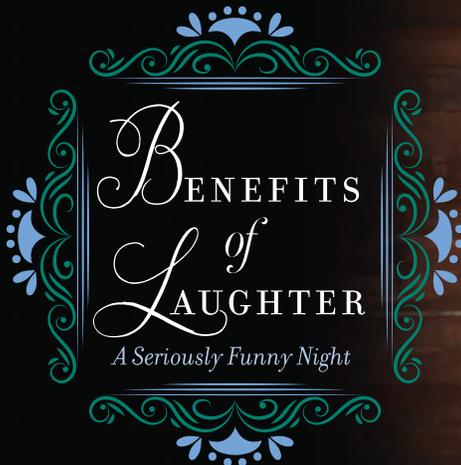
Donna & Stan Sands

*Corporate Chair:*

Robert Wynne

*Patron Chairs:*

Mary & Tom Watson



Thursday, October 18, 2018  
The St. Regis Atlanta



**Entertainer Roy Wood Jr.**

is a stand-up comedian with previous appearances on The Late Show with David Letterman; The Late, Late Show with Craig Ferguson; Conan; The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon; Late Night with Seth Meyers and The Late Show with Stephen Colbert.



Event Chairs Donna & Stan Sands

“Through friends, we’ve seen first-hand the anguish and desperation families face during a mental health crisis, as well as the transformational healing provided by Skyland Trail. From the moment our friends’ son stepped through the door, he was on his way back to a fulfilling and productive life. Later, attending Benefits of Laughter, we learned from a former patient how tragically common our friends’ story is today. We determined that our financial support of Skyland Trail is an important way for us to give back to our community. By lending our support to Benefits of Laughter, this year as event chairs, we are excited to share the Skyland Trail message with others and leverage our support to help individuals and families recover.” – Donna & Stan Sands

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✚ *New members in 2018*



*(Left to right)* ● **New Board members:** Brooks Barge, Thomas D. Bell, Jr., Cindy Ferguson ● **New Advisory Board members:** Wendy Conrad Aronson, Nan Easterlin, Loretta Lepore, Colin McBurnette, Caryl Smith, Ty Smith, Becky Riley, Tricia Rosenbaum.

## Thanks to our event sponsors!

Businesses that support Skyland Trail through event sponsorship help our clients grow, recover, and reclaim their lives.

We are pleased to recognize the organizations that sponsored 2018 events including Benefits of Laughter, the Associates Spring Luncheon & Fashion Show, and Southern Shindig.

### Benefits of Laughter 2018 (as of August 1, 2018)

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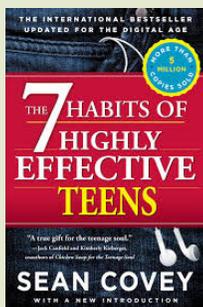
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A panel discussion led by Raymond J. Kotwicki, MD, MPH, Skyland Trail Charles B. West Chief Medical Officer, will follow Sean Covey's keynote address. The panel, featuring the Georgia State University Center of Excellence for Children's Behavioral Health, will focus on school-based mental health models and crisis prevention and early intervention in schools and family systems.

The Dorothy C. Fuqua Lecture Series is made possible by Duvall and Rex Fuqua and Edwina and Tom Johnson in honor of Mrs. Fuqua.

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AT SKYLAND TRAIL

Speaker: Sean Covey

**November 8, 2018**

7-9 p.m.

The Carter Center

*The event is free of charge.*

*Seating is limited.*

*Pre-registration required.*

**[skylandtrail.org/DCFlecture](http://skylandtrail.org/DCFlecture)**