



2025 Leadership Awards Reception

*Celebrating Outstanding Leaders
Making a Difference in People's Lives*

Presented By



New York University Kimmel Center
Wednesday, May 21, 2025

Thank you for joining us at the MHNE 2025 Leadership Awards Reception to celebrate tonight's honorees: Lauri Cole, MSW, Brett R. Friedman, PharMerica, Evan Sullivan, and Ira H. Minot, LMSW. Our five honorees have had a tremendous impact on the behavioral health and autism communities, devoting their careers to making a difference in people's lives, and we are honored to recognize their leadership and commitment to people living with autism, mental illness, and substance use disorders. We thank you for joining us in honoring them tonight!



This year, we are especially honored to recognize Ira for his visionary leadership—rooted in his own journey of recovery—that, over 26 years, led to the founding and growth of Mental Health News Education and its publications, [Autism Spectrum News](#) and [Behavioral Health News](#), providing trusted education, resources, and hope to improve lives and reduce stigma for individuals and families affected by mental health challenges, substance use disorders, and autism. His unwavering dedication has not only built a lasting legacy of awareness and compassion, but has also transformed countless lives with the message that no one is alone in their journey.

Your participation and support of this evening's celebration will enable us to continue expanding and developing the nonprofit educational mission of Autism Spectrum News and Behavioral Health News. With these publications, Mental Health News Education, Inc. aims to reduce stigma, promote awareness and disseminate evidence-based information that serves to improve the lives of individuals with mental illness, substance use disorders and autism spectrum disorders, their families, and the provider community that serves them.

And finally, thank you to our wonderful Board Members. As a staff of just two people, we are so fortunate to have such a dedicated group of volunteers who share their knowledge and expertise with us and make our work possible.

Sincerely,

David Minot

Executive Director
Mental Health News Education

Ira H. Minot, LMSW

Founder
Mental Health News Education

Program

Welcoming Remarks

Rachel A. Fernbach, Esq., Board Chair, MHNE

David Minot, Executive Director, MHNE

Dr. Ann Marie T. Sullivan, MD, Commissioner, NYS Office of Mental Health

Award Presentations

Lauri Cole, MSW

Executive Director, NYS Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
Behavioral Health Advocacy Award

Brett R. Friedman

Partner, Ropes & Gray, LLP
Health Care Innovation and Leadership Award

PharMerica

Corporate Leadership Award

Evan Sullivan

Executive Vice President, Ostroff Associates
Autism Advocacy Award

Ira H. Minot, LMSW

Founder, Mental Health News Education
Founder's Legacy Award

50/50 Raffle Drawing

Closing Remarks

Yvette Brissett-André, MPA, Board Vice-Chair, MHNE

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Empowering Citizens with Autism

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sity and Pace University

The ASN Editorial Board is made up of esteemed autism professionals, advocates, and self-advocates who have devoted their lives to improving the autism community.

In keeping with the publication's evidence-based mission, the ASN Editorial Board will only accept articles and advertising offering science-based information and/or promoting treatments proven safe and effective for autistic individuals.

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2025 Leadership Awards Reception

Leadership Awards Reception History of Past Honorees

2024

Bruce E. Feig
Rita Gardner, MPH, LABA, BCBA
Dr. Rosa M. Gil
Relias
Harvey Rosenthal

2023

Emily Grossman, MA, CPRP
Ann M. Hardiman
Steve Miccio
The New York Community Trust
Robert W. Myers, PhD, LMSW

2022

Tyler Hoffman
Alexa Santoro
Steve Miccio
Gary Mayerson, Esq.
Christopher Duffley

2021

Marco Damiani
Tony Hannigan, LMSW
Hillary Kunins, MD, MPH, MS
Allison Sesso, MPA
Ian Shaffer, MD, MMM, CPE

2019

Steve Coe
Daniel Etra and Eran Rosenthal
Peter Provet, PhD
Joyce Wale

2018

Tino Hernandez
Ilene Lainer and Michelle Smigel
Mitchell Netburn
Jim Spink

2017

Donna Colonna
Gary Lind
Arlene González-Sánchez
Dr. Fred Volkmar

2016

Peter C. Campanelli, PsyD
John J. Coppola, MSW
Linda Rosenberg, MSW
Ann Marie T. Sullivan, MD

2015

Alan B. Siskind, PhD, LCSW
Andrew Solomon, PhD
Phillip A. Saperia, MAT
Peter Pierri
Robert H. Ring, PhD
Richard P. Swierat

2014

Joseph D. Buxbaum, PhD
Alison Singer, MBA

2013

Charles N. Cartwright, MD
Linda Walder, Esq



Lauri Cole, MSW

Executive Director

New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare

Behavioral Health Advocacy Award

Lauri Cole, MSW, is the Executive Director of the [New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare](#), New York's oldest integrated behavioral health membership association, representing the interests of 165 community-based mental health and substance use disorder agencies across New York. An accomplished advocate and lobbyist, Lauri has led numerous cross-sector advocacy campaigns, resulting in the enactment of new state laws and significant policy reforms that have expanded access to community-based care for tens of thousands of New Yorkers, while strengthening the viability of the agencies that serve them.

Lauri's accomplishments include securing two insurance rate mandates for mental health and substance use disorder agencies to ensure providers receive adequate reimbursement for services. She also successfully compelled state leaders to enforce a Managed Care Organization (MCO) contract provision that has returned hundreds of millions of dollars to OASAS and OMH, allowing the funds to be repurposed for significant rate increases for providers across the behavioral health continuum of care.

In 2020, Lauri was the recipient of the National Council's prestigious Individual Advocacy Leadership Award. Before representing providers, she worked in community-based agencies in the Capital District. She obtained her Master's Degree in Social Work from the State University of New York at Albany. Prior to joining the New York State Council, Lauri represented 100 nonprofit homeless shelter providers in New York City.



Brett R. Friedman

Partner

Ropes & Gray, LLP

Health Care Innovation and Leadership Award

Brett Friedman is a health care partner who advises clients at the forefront of the health care industry in areas such as government insurance programs, digital health, accountable care and value-based payments, and regulatory compliance. A former leader of one of the largest Medicaid programs in the country, Brett provides valuable insight and solutions to health care companies and investors navigating complex transactional, regulatory, enforcement and policy matters. Clients rely on Brett not only for his unique experience running a large governmental insurance program, but also his strategic insights into health care investments and deep regulatory knowledge.

Over the course of his career, Brett has held top positions at the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), including Director of Strategic Initiatives and Special Medicaid Counsel, and most recently, Deputy Commissioner and State Medicaid Director. While at NYSDOH, Brett oversaw all aspects of New York State's expansive Medicaid program, which provides health coverage to more than 7.4 million New Yorkers and has an annual operating budget of over \$90 billion. He led many innovative efforts during his tenure, including in the areas of Medicaid 1115 research and demonstration waiver programs, value-based care programs, managed care reform, social care integration strategies, and support for investor-backed companies looking to innovate in the governmental payer space.

Brett also has extensive private sector experience. He was a partner at [Ropes & Gray, LLP](#), before joining NYSDOH, as well as co-head of the firm's digital health initiative. At the firm, Brett advises payers and providers on the transition to accountable care and value-based payment, and assists investors with a range of transactional needs. Additionally, he counsels clients facing government investigations, audits and self-disclosures, as well as violations of health care fraud and abuse laws.

Brett values pro bono service and has handled many healthcare pro bono matters, including spearheading the legal analysis that was instrumental to the establishment of the first overdose prevention centers in the United States and developing a first-in-the-nation, outcomes-based contract for Medicaid funding of children's legal advocacy services that remediate a client's underlying health care issues.



Ira H. Minot

Founder

Mental Health News Education

Founder's Legacy Award

Ira H. Minot, LMSW, grew up in Harrison, New York, and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from the University of Arizona, followed by a Master's in Social Work from NYU. In his late 30s, after experiencing significant personal losses, Ira faced a decade-long struggle with severe depression that left him homeless and destitute.

At a critical crossroads, Ira underwent electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) at New York Hospital in Westchester, a treatment that proved transformative in his recovery. With the support of community mental health services, he gradually rebuilt his life, emerging with a renewed sense of purpose and a vision to help others facing similar challenges.

Motivated by this mission, Ira founded Mental Health News, a newspaper designed to bring hope and education to individuals with mental illness and their families. Before the rise of the internet, Ira personally delivered free copies to hospitals, clinics, and treatment centers throughout Westchester, Manhattan, Long Island and the Hudson Valley, ensuring the information reached those who needed it most.

From these early efforts grew the award-winning organization that publishes [Behavioral Health News](#) and [Autism Spectrum News](#). Today, these publications reach over 500,000 annual readers online, providing free access to more than 3,000 educational articles. For 25 years, these trusted resources have served as a cornerstone for education, advocacy, and awareness in the mental health and autism communities.

Reflecting on his journey, Ira shares:

"I am extremely proud of the wonderful organization I have created and deeply grateful to the friends and leaders in the mental health community who have been instrumental in our success. As I step down after 25 years, I look with pride as my son David takes the helm to lead our organization into the future."

Looking ahead, Ira is excited about the next chapter of his life, offering his expertise, vision, and hard-earned insights to support other organizations in their missions.



PharMerica

Corporate Leadership Award

PharMerica delivers personalized pharmacy care through dedicated local teams, serving health care providers such as skilled nursing facilities, senior living communities, and hospitals. They also cater to individuals with behavioral needs, infusion therapy needs, seniors receiving in-home care, and patients with cancer.

With 30 years of senior care pharmacy experience, PharMerica combines the personal touch of a neighborhood pharmacy with the resources of a national network. They operate over 180 long-term care, home infusion, and specialty pharmacies across all 50 states.

PharMerica's comprehensive solutions, backed by industry-leading technology and regulatory expertise, ensure accurate medication access, cost control, and compliance with best-in-class clinical standards. They are committed to enhancing resident health, reducing staff burdens, and supporting client success.



Evan Sullivan

Executive Vice President

Ostroff Associates

Autism Advocacy Award

Evan Sullivan joined Ostroff Associates with a wealth of legislative and political experience, spanning more than a decade at the highest echelons of State Government. With over a decade of legislative and political experience in and around New York Government, Evan has established himself as a formidable figure in the field.

Before his tenure at Ostroff Associates, Evan was pivotal in his role as the Director of Legislation and Senior Advisor to the Independent Democratic Conference in the New York State Senate Majority Coalition. Holding a critical position on the senior staff, he was instrumental in shaping, advancing, and realizing legislative, policy, and budgetary priorities.

Throughout his career, Evan has been a key figure in drafting and negotiating significant legislation and budget proposals across a broad spectrum of issues, demonstrating his versatility and expertise in legislative matters.

In a prior capacity, he played a leading role in State budget negotiations, addressing critical concerns across many issue areas including Health, Mental Hygiene, Housing, and Education. This involvement not only showcased his ability to lead but also his commitment to impactful governance.

Evan started his career in the Office of Senator David Carlucci, where he held various positions, including Deputy Chief of Staff and Legislative Director. He also served as the Committee Director for both the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities and Social Services Committees in the Senate.

Through all his roles, Evan has cultivated a deep understanding and insight into the legislative and budget processes at both the City and State levels.

His expertise has enabled him to guide clients through these complex landscapes with efficiency and efficacy. In recognition of his significant contributions and expertise, Evan has been honored as one of Albany's "40 Under 40 Rising Stars" by City & State Magazine and recently named to the prestigious Upstate Power 100 List.

Evan graduated from Siena College with degrees in Political Science and Economics.

Ropes & Gray
is proud to support
**MHNE's 2025
Leadership Awards
Reception**

Our heartfelt
congratulations to:
Brett Friedman
*Ropes & Gray
Health Care Partner,*
and the rest of this
afternoon's honorees.

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2025 Leadership Awards Reception

**CONGRATULATIONS
TO**

**ADAPT BOARD DIRECTOR
BRETT FRIEDMAN**

**2025 HEALTH CARE
INNOVATION AND LEADERSHIP
AWARD WINNER**

**FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT
ADAPT COMMUNITY
NETWORK**

ADAPT [we change]
COMMUNITY NETWORK

2025 Leadership Awards Reception



Congratulations

IRA H. MINOT

BRETT R. FRIEDMAN

EVAN SULLIVAN

LAURI COLE

PHARMERICA

Your leadership and expertise have impacted the lives of people with autism and developmental disabilities, their families, and the providers that support them



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2025 Leadership Awards Reception



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2025 Leadership Awards Reception

Congratulations to all of the Mental Health News Education 2025 Honorees!

Melmark, a national leader in the human services field, recently broke ground on the development of an intentional adult planned community on a three-acre site in Tewksbury, Massachusetts. With an expected cost of over \$15M, the pilot project will focus on providing evidence-based and instructional adult services for individuals with autism, intellectual, and developmental disabilities.

Building the Future of Adult Services in Massachusetts

- ▼ Daily living activities, supports, community engagement, and the ability to age in place
- ▼ Four residences housing a total of 20 adults
- ▼ Instructional and vocational day program for 50+ individuals
- ▼ Vocational coffee shop social enterprise
- ▼ Affordable staff housing



Melmark 

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Construction of the adult planned community will rely on significant philanthropic donations as we seek to raise \$5M in support of this transformational adult services project. To learn more, scan this QR code or visit **www.melmark.org**.

2025 Leadership Awards Reception



Savills proudly supports the

Mental Health News Education

and their mission to improve the lives of individuals living with **mental illness, autism, and substance abuse disorders.**

Congratulations to this year's honorees for their exceptional contributions to mental health advocacy and their dedication to making a positive impact in this space.

Join us in celebrating:

Lauri Cole, MSW

Evan Sullivan

Brett R. Friedman

PharMerica

Ira H. Minot, LMSW



RiseWell Community Services proudly supports Mental Health News Education and their mission to reduce stigma, raise awareness, and provide trusted information on mental health.

RiseWell congratulates Lauri Cole on being honored with the Behavioral Health Advocacy Award! The community thanks you for your inspirational leadership and dedicated advocacy.

A big congratulations to all award winners and honorees for their impactful work.

RiseWell Community Services is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) multi-service, community-based health and wellness agency serving Long Island and New York City. We are a major provider of health and wellness services, senior and children's care, addiction recovery services, affordable housing and support, and more. For over 50 years, we have been transforming lives, brightening futures, and strengthening the fabric of our community.

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2025 Leadership Awards Reception

AHRC New York City

is happy to join Mental Health News Education in celebrating these leaders who are dedicated to making a difference in people's lives.

Congratulations

Lauri Cole, MSW

Behavioral Health Advocacy Award

Brett R. Friedman

Health Care Innovation and Leadership Award

Ira H. Minot, LMSW

Founder's Legacy Award

PharMerica

Corporate Leadership Award

Evan Sullivan

Autism Advocacy Award

AHRC NYC supports New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities of all ages and their families throughout the five boroughs.

For support, resources, or to donate visit **AHRCnyc.org** or call **212-780-4491**

Raymond Ferrigno
President

Marco Damiani
Chief Executive Officer



2025 Leadership Awards Reception

With Wishes for a
Wonderful Evening
and Thanks for All You Do



Ostroff

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Congratulates **Evan Sullivan**

Recipient of the
**Mental Health News Education
Autism Advocacy Award**



Evan Sullivan
Executive Vice President

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2025 Leadership Awards Reception



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The
Jewish
Board

The Jewish Board is proud to
support Mental Health News
Education and congratulate
this year's honorees!

Behavioral Health Advocacy Award
Lauri Cole, MSW

Health Care Innovation and
Leadership Award
Brett R. Friedman

Founder's Legacy Award
Ira H. Minot, LMSW

Corporate Leadership Award
PharMerica

Autism Advocacy Award
Evan Sullivan

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2025 Leadership Awards Reception



PROUDLY SUPPORTS
Mental Health News Education
2025 Leadership Awards Reception

CONGRATULATIONS TO 2025
Award Recipients

Lauri Cole, MSW
Behavioral Health Advocacy Award

Brett R. Friedman
*Health Care Innovation and
Leadership Award*

Ira H. Minot, LMSW
Founder's Legacy Award

PharMerica
Corporate Leadership Award

Evan Sullivan
Autism Advocacy Award

Understanding People. Providing Homes.
Serving Communities



**OUTREACH DEVELOPMENT
CONGRATULATES THE RECIPIENTS OF THE
MENTAL HEALTH NEWS EDUCATION'S
2025 LEADERSHIP AWARDS**

WE JOIN MHNE IN HONORING:

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVOCACY AWARD

LAURI COLE, MSW

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
NYS COUNCIL FOR COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE

HEALTH CARE INNOVATION AND LEADERSHIP AWARD

BRETT R. FRIEDMAN

PARTNER, ROPES & GRAY, LLP

FOUNDER'S LEGACY AWARD

IRA H. MINOT, LMSW

FOUNDER, MENTAL HEALTH NEWS EDUCATION

AUTISM ADVOCACY AWARD

EVAN SULLIVAN

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, OSTROFF ASSOCIATES

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP AWARD

PHARMERICA

BEST OF LUCK AND CONTINUED SUCCESS!

**PAUL VITALE, INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO
BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF OF OUTREACH**

2025 Leadership Awards Reception

125+
YEARS OF CHANGING LIVES



**CATHOLIC
CHARITIES**
Brooklyn &
Queens

Congratulations and Best Wishes

to

Mental Health News Education

on the

2025 Leadership Awards Reception

*Celebrating Outstanding Leaders Making a
Difference in People's Lives*

and warmest congratulations to

Lauri Cole, MSW

Executive Director NYS Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
Behavioral Health Advocacy Award

and all other honorees

Wishing you all the best for a successful event!

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2025 Leadership Awards Reception

A decorative border at the top of the card featuring colorful streamers and confetti in shades of orange, yellow, green, blue, and red.

Congratulations!

Lauri Cole!

*Sincere congratulations from your friends
at Horizon Health Services
& Horizon Village.*

*Your fierce advocacy has made
immeasurable advances for the
communities we serve.*

*Sincere thanks and admiration:
Erin, Brandy and team*



Horizon
CORPORATIONS

2025 Leadership Awards Reception



**The NYS Council Board of Directors
congratulates *Lauri Cole*, our
tenacious leader, on her Behavioral
Health Advocacy Award**



Lauri has led the fight to secure numerous state policy and financial reforms that have opened access to care, and enhanced provider viability, for mental health and substance use disorder/addiction community agencies and the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers they serve each day. *Nothing could be more important!*

NYS Council Recent Achievements under Lauri's Leadership include:

- ✓ Secured statute implementing Medicaid APG government rates.
- ✓ Compelled Executive to enforce a health plan contract provision that led to recoupment of over \$500M in funds that have been returned to OASAS and OMH and utilized to deliver across the board rate increases for OASAS and OMH providers.
- ✓ Secured commercial rate mandate after 10 years of persistence and leadership.
- ✓ Published a first-of-its-kind CCBHC Demo Financial Analysis that led to the expansion of the CCBHC Demonstration Program in NYS.
- ✓ Secured agreement from the Executive to establish a NYS CCBHC Demo Uncompensated Care Pool.
- ✓ Twenty years of significant association growth and a 99% member-retention rate from year to year.
- ✓ Numerous bills passed that require robust surveillance, monitoring, and enforcement of protective metrics that signal changes in access to care throughout our systems of care.

Congratulations to this year's
Leadership Award honorees:

Lauri Cole, MSW
Brett R. Friedman
Ira H. Minot, LMSW
PharMerica
Evan Sullivan

Your commitment and
passion are an inspiration!



www.greatermentalhealth.org

2025 Leadership Awards Reception



comunilife
healthy living in community

Congratulations to the Leadership Awardees

Blanca Ramirez
President & CEO
www.comunilife.org



**We Proudly Support
Mental Health News Education
and its
2025 Leadership Awards Reception**

**Congratulations to All of The Honorees
on Their Well Deserved Honors**

Rachel Fernbach, Esq.
Chair, MHNE Board of Directors



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PharMerica is honored to support **Mental Health News Education** and its commitment to improving the lives of individuals and their families in the behavioral health and autism communities.

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**Congratulations to Lauri
Cole for this Very Well-
Deserved Award &
Recognition.**

**Proudly Representing Lauri
and the NYS Council for
the Last 15+ Years.**



Reid, McNally & Savage, LLC

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Congratulations, Honorees!

Mental Health News Education 2025 Leadership Awards Reception

Behavioral Health Advocacy Award

*Lauri Cole, MSW, NYS Council for Community
Behavioral Healthcare*

Health Care Innovation & Leadership Award

Brett R. Friedman, Ropes & Gray, LLP

Founder's Legacy Award

Ira H. Minot, LMSW, Mental Health News Education

Corporate Leadership Award

PharMerica

Autism Advocacy Award

Evan Sullivan, Ostroff Associates

2025 Leadership Awards Reception

We are proud to support
Mental Health News Education
and extend our heartfelt congratulations to

Ira Minot,

recipient of the Founder's Legacy Award.

His visionary leadership and unwavering dedication have made a
lasting impact on the behavioral health community.

We wish him the very best in his retirement!



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www.searchforchange.org



Services for the UnderServed (S:US)
congratulates

Honorees

Lauri Cole, MSW

Executive Director

NYS Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare

Brett R. Friedman

Partner

Ropes & Gray, LLP

Ira H. Minot, LMSW

Founder

Mental Health News Education

PharMerica

Evan Sullivan

Executive Vice President

Ostroff Associates



for their tireless efforts to improve the
quality of life for individuals on the
autism spectrum and people with
behavioral health challenges

S:US

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2025 Leadership Awards Reception

CONGRATULATIONS TO

EVAN SULLIVAN

2025 AUTISM ADVOCACY AWARD WINNER

*FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT ADAPT
COMMUNITY NETWORK*

ADAPT [we change]
COMMUNITY NETWORK



**We're proud to join Mental Health
News Education in congratulating
the 2025 Awardees.**

Celebrating leaders
making a difference in people's lives.
Thank you for your vision and guidance!

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**United
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Community Plan

2025 Leadership Awards Reception



CP State

Congratulations

EVAN SULLIVAN

Recipient of the *Autism Advocacy Award*

& the other outstanding 2025 Leadership Awardees!

From Your Friends and Colleagues at
Cerebral Palsy Associations of NYS, Inc.



MENTAL HEALTH NEWS EDUCATION

PUBLISHER OF AUTISM SPECTRUM NEWS AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEWS

The Mental Health News Education
Board of Directors proudly congratulates
our esteemed founder, **Ira H. Minot, LMSW**,
on receiving the Founder's Legacy Award.



For 26 years, your visionary leadership has
inspired us through your unwavering dedication
to improving lives and reducing stigma by
providing trusted education on mental health,
substance use disorders, and autism.



2025 Leadership Awards Reception

Congratulations and
Our best wishes to

Lauri Cole

With our appreciation
For all you accomplish.

David Mandel, Chief Executive Officer
Adam Lancer, Chief Operating Officer
Yitz Elman, Director



VERITY

Congratulations and Best Wishes
to All of the Award Recipients!



Verity is a motivational incentive program for
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would like to extend its sincere thanks to



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and Board Chair

Rachel Fernbach

*for their commitment to improving the lives
of individuals living with autism, mental
health challenges, and substance use
disorders while also supporting their
families, caregivers, and the professional
communities that serve them*

the harris project proudly congratulates

Lauri Cole

2025 Behavioral Health Advocacy Award Honoree

Your leadership inspires lasting change.

Celebrating Lauri and this year's
Mental Health News Leadership Awards
recipients:

Brett R. Friedman • Ira H. Minot • Evan Sullivan



2025 Leadership Awards Reception

2025 Leadership Awards Reception

*Celebrating Outstanding Leaders
Making a Difference in People's Lives*

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