

A newsletter for and about AltaPointe Health's employees

Fall 2019

AltaNews

AltaPointe.org

One team, One goal.

We are AltaPointe Health.



From our CEO...

As healthcare providers, we must stay current and well versed in evidence-based insights shaping the future of our industry. We must explore avenues to implement best practices in a value-driven system and create opportunities for our staff to reach their highest potential in this ever-evolving environment. By doing so, we will enhance our overall delivery of care and create an internal culture of supporting one another. The end goal is to help our patients and individuals receiving services live their best lives.

We are fortunate to have a team at AltaPointe that demonstrates the ability to add value to everything we are doing with their dedication, creativity, and resourcefulness. Thanks to the hard work of our 1,550 staff members across seven counties, we have been able to do a better job of serving our patients and keeping up with the demands of the healthcare industry. 

Our patients put into words what we cannot. "I came in on a Friday afternoon in a full-blown panic attack. I was suicidal and did not plan to live past the weekend. I was surrounded by a group of ladies and given the most incredible support. I believe these ladies saved my life. Thank you, AltaPointe."

Stories of life-saving work by the AltaPointe team exist across our continuum. These stories of hope and wellness make leading through times of change a bit easier.



Tuerk Schlesinger, CEO



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The merger between AltaPointe Health and Mobile Arc builds upon already excellent care provided by improving accuracy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Technology allows for timely, cost-effective care



In a recent interview with Netsmart, Sandra Parker, M.D., said...

telehealth is a convenient and cost-effective treatment option. Parker says patients respond favorably to the process, as well, and agrees telemedicine is the future of healthcare. “We can train psychiatric residents to deliver virtual services that are quickly becoming the standard method of delivering care,” Parker said. “Implementing telemedicine allows us to stay ahead of national trends and provide the best possible outcomes for our patients.”

Telehealth continues to make waves as an effective and innovative way to deliver quality behavioral healthcare services. It's evident that the popularity of virtual care is rising, as around 7 million people used telehealth services in 2018 in the United States. AltaPointe clinicians provided 8,163 telehealth services across seven counties in Alabama in 2018.

“Telehealth removes geographical barriers to care, allowing providers to virtually see clients anytime, anywhere through the use of mobile technologies,” **Tuerk Schlesinger**, AltaPointe Health CEO, said.

The scalability of telehealth is proving to be the new standard of care delivery for emergency room consultations. AltaPointe partners with local emergency departments to deliver virtual psychiatric care through its services called ConsultPointe.

Here's how ConsultPointe works. The emergency department nurse initiates the virtual session with the AltaPointe psychiatrist. The patient presents in the virtual waiting room within the psychiatrist's electronic health record, and the psychiatrist completes the psychiatric assessment virtually by the bedside.

“Average wait times to secure a psychiatric consultation have decreased from 24 to 72 hours to less than one hour. This virtual visit using telehealth provides a 33 percent reduction in emergency department costs for individuals conducting a psych consult,” said **Steve Dolan**, AltaPointe's vice president for administrative services. Dolan oversees AltaPointe's information technologies department. “The telehealth program provides value to the hospital, not only driving down costs, but also improving outcomes and more

timely care to all of our partner hospitals,” he added.

AltaPointe's philosophy is to be the best IT-driven behavioral health center in the country.

“We developed an infrastructure that was so strong that when opportunities came around, we were able to take advantage promptly. The more we were prepared to take on those new strategic initiatives, the more other providers and partners were paying attention,” Schlesinger said.

Schlesinger credits the partnership with Netsmart as helping AltaPointe diversify its creative model and make AltaPointe the premier model for behavioral health clinics across the country.

Schlesinger says plans are being made to expand telehealth services to AltaPointe's primary care division (Accordia Health).

Merger to strengthen services for people with intellectual disabilities



Tuerk Schlesinger, AltaPointe Health CEO, and Jeff Zoghby, former executive director of Mobile Arc, pictured during an orientation and benefits fair for Mobile Arc staff.

Mobile Arc (formerly MARC), founded in 1956 for people in Mobile with intellectual and developmental disabilities, merged with AltaPointe Health in July 2019.

The merger allows the two organizations to serve more individuals with intellectual disabilities and provide more resources to the community. The partnership also opens the door for additional grants and funding.

"The public sector, like the private sector, is starting to merge and use those economies of scale to continue to grow and provide the same amount of services," **Tuerk Schlesinger**, AltaPointe Health CEO, said. "Our partnership means that hopefully Mobile Arc will be a financially

healthier organization and have more resources at its discretion."

Mobile Arc was formed initially under the name GARC by a group of parents who wanted to improve the lives of people with intellectual disabilities. The organization grew to serve 1,400 people by the 1960s. In 1974, GARC became known as MARC and, most recently, as Mobile Arc.

In addition to financial stability, AltaPointe brings advanced technology systems to Mobile Arc that will improve the accuracy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the already excellent care provided.

"We recognize Mobile Arc's significance to the community, and the people it has helped live a better life for more than six

decades. AltaPointe remains as committed today to the well-being, dignity, and rights of people, with intellectual disabilities as did the founders of Mobile Arc," Schlesinger said.

Moving forward, the two are one team with one purpose and one name: AltaPointe Health.

Jeff Zoghby, former executive director of Mobile Arc, will take the helm of the intellectual disabilities division.

"We are excited to expand and create more comprehensive services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Mobile area," Zoghby said. "As a combined entity, we will be able to meet more needs of individuals in

the community and help the missions of both organizations."

The merger was approved following months of negotiations between both the Mobile Arc and AltaPointe boards of directors.

"It was a difficult task and a tough decision. What started as an effort by a few families in the Mobile area has grown to an organization that has been a staple in the community for many years," **Joseph Betbeze Jr.**, former president of the Mobile Arc board of directors, said. "This ensures the continuity and quality of services those families worked so hard to create for the community more than 60 years ago."

He added that the needs are growing and the funding is shrinking. The merger allows additional resources for use in the intellectual disabilities programs. "Operations costs have gone up significantly, and nonprofits have worked hard to stay ahead of that challenge by doing things like merging and sharing resources is one way of addressing that," Zoghby added.

The two organizations share a mission of providing services to the Mobile Area community to people with intellectual disabilities through day and residential programs that include community outings, inclusive activities like art and Taekwondo, and community integration through jobs and volunteering at places such as Feeding the Gulf Coast, the Mobile Animal Shelter, YMCA, and Mobile Urban Growers.

About 160 of Mobile Arc's employees are now under AltaPointe Health. In June, Schlesinger and Zoghby met with staff and answered questions about the merger.

"We were all anxious when we heard the news, but now that we have transitioned, all is well," Julie Pittman, program manager, said. "I think this will be a very positive thing for the people in our programs. Moreover, it may make some of our jobs easier. AltaPointe is a big organization, and there are a lot of resources and expertise available. Everyone we've met has been competent, knowledgeable, friendly, and helpful."

Services will continue at the Mobile Arc locations at the Fred Delchamps Center, and Moorer Learning Center on Gordon Smith Drive in Mobile. The annual "Reveling Cavaliers" Mardi Gras parade will also continue. Next year will be the 38th year for the parade that features other local nonprofits that share the same mission.

Families hope merger brings additional services

Mary Louise began attending the Mobile Arc at the age of 7 when the program served children. Later, she attended Augusta Evans and came back to Mobile Arc when she turned 21. Mary Louise, now in her 50s, still attends the day program at the Fred Delchamps Center.

"The programs offer people with different levels of ability all kinds of opportunities. They all have different challenges, and I think that's the great thing, that they learn how to interact," said Frieda Raue, Mary Louise's mother.

Freida Raue is an active member of the Family Support Group for people with intellectual disabilities, and she hopes the merger allows the programs to expand and offer more services.

"A mother wants the most opportunities offered to her child. I think overall; the program is very good. She has to interact with people her age, and those not her age, and make choices. I don't know that she would have been able to do that without the program," Raue said.

Raue says the transition has been a smooth one and is hopeful it will continue. "It was a big change, but I feel like it has continued to be the responsible program that we had hoped for our daughter. Mary Louise and her friends do not like a whole lot of change, and it could have been more traumatic if their instructors and routine were changed. However, I think the instructors are devoted to the people they serve, and I think if there are changes, hopefully, they will come slowly, step by step," Raue shared.



Mary Louise Raue has been a day rehabilitation program participant for more than three decades.

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New option for treating n



Sadness is a natural part of life. People may feel sad or depressed when someone they love passes away, or they experience one of life's challenges, such as a serious illness or divorce. These feelings are normal and often short-lived. However, for some, the feeling of sadness can persist and intensify for extended periods. When that happens, they may have major depressive disorder. Major depressive disorder is one of the most common mental health disorders in the United States and the most common diagnosis treated by AltaPointe clinicians.

BayView introduces a new therapy

AltaPointe's BayView Professional Associates is offering a new treatment option to help adults struggling with major depressive disorder, specifically for those who have tried and failed other treatment options and medications.



Olivia Nettles

"We are excited to offer Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) to adult patients at BayView," said **Olivia Nettles**, director of BayView Professional Associates.

"Treatment-resistant depression is a devastating condition associated with early death from suicide or poor physical health and an impaired ability to work. There is a population of patients who do not respond to antidepressant treatment, and this is another option available to help them live a better life."

How does TMS work?

TMS is a noninvasive procedure that uses magnetic fields to stimulate nerve cells in the brain to improve symptoms of depression.

When a nerve cell "fires," an electrical impulse travels along its length. It



communicates with other nerve cells by releasing neuro-transmitters, which create an electrical impulse in other cells. In depressed patients, electrical activity in certain areas of the brain is reduced. TMS uses a focused electromagnetic coil to rapidly pulse a magnetic field to the targeted area of the brain.

The magnetic pulses induce an electrical current in the brain, stimulating the nerve cells and increasing the brain activity to normal levels.

Is TMS right for you?

John Conrad, assistant director of BayView Professional Associate, and a licensed independent clinical social worker with more than 25 years of experience, encourages people to learn all they can about the treatment.

"If you have been diagnosed with major depressive disorder and medication is not working, or the side effects are intolerable, you should ask your doctor about TMS," Conrad said. "Treatment-resistant

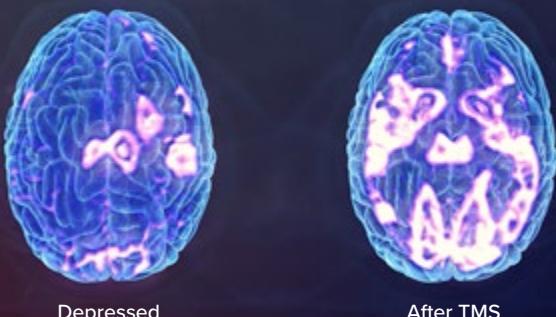


John Conrad

Major depressive disorder

depression is historically debilitating; this is a new option with fewer side effects than traditional medications and offers a chance to live life anew."

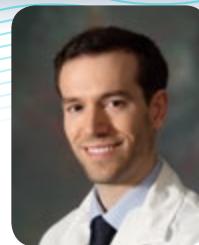
Brain activity in depressed individual before and after TMS therapy.



Psychiatrists support the use of TMS

Some people living with major depressive disorder cannot remember life without depression. The National Institute of Health estimates 10 to 30 percent of people with depression do not respond to first-line treatments. Treatment-resistant depression is a clinical concern and can pose significant burdens to patients and, their families.

"TMS is readily incorporated into the patient's treatment plan and allows for minimal disruption during the day.



Appointments run 35 minutes at the most. Research supports the use of TMS to treat major depressive disorder, as well as anecdotal experience," **Sean Sinclair, M.D.**, said. "This new option for patients adds immensely to our services here at BayView."

A TMS specialist with specialized training will administer the therapy under the supervision of Dr.s' Sinclair and **William Billett, M.D.**



William Billett, M.D.

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Day reporting centers provide a second chance

Day reporting centers (DRC) are gaining popularity. A DRC is a re-entry effort of the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles, a “one-stop-shop” for high-risk probationers and parolees. Participants are allowed to change criminal thinking and behavior through a combination of counseling, educational training, and close supervision.

Unlike traditional halfway houses, day reporting centers do not require the offender to reside in the program. Participants in day reporting programs are generally required to report to the center each day, prepare an itinerary for their next day's activities, and report by phone to the center throughout the day.

AltaPointe plays a role in the process by providing mental health and substance abuse services to program participants. “AltaPointe first started providing services at the Mobile DRC as part of a federal grant through the Pardons and Paroles Board. At that time, only Mobile and Birmingham had DRCs. The success of these two programs led to additional legislation to open more throughout the state,” said **Brandie Johnson**, LPC, treatment coordinator for the Alabama Centers.

AltaPointe Health now operates five DRCs strategically placed throughout the

state. People enrolled in the program work closely with case managers and employment specialists to develop goals and make positive life changes.

To date, almost 800 people are served through day reporting centers in Alabama, including Birmingham, Huntsville, Montgomery, Tuscaloosa, and Mobile. “We are the treatment providers and work alongside parole officers to help

these men and women rebuild their lives,” Johnson added.

Johnson said that nationally, the recidivism rate is between 40 and 70 percent. However, she added that AltaPointe DRC participants have been more successful, with no one who completes the program returning to prison.



*“We are the treatment providers
and work alongside parole officers
to help these men and women
rebuild their lives.”*

AltaPointe’s Assertive Community Treatment expands to the Sylacauga Region

Assertive community treatment, or ACT, is an evidence-based practice that improves outcomes for people with severe mental illness: people who are most at risk for psychiatric crisis and hospitalization. ACT is a multi-disciplinary approach with outreach in the community.

AltaPointe has been offering assertive community treatment in its southern region – Mobile and Baldwin counties – for more than a decade. It hopes to model the work and progress in the Sylacauga Region.

Cindy Atkinson, associate executive director of community mental health for the Sylacauga Region, believes consistent, caring, person-centered relationships demonstrated by ACT teams

have a positive effect on outcomes and quality of life of the chronically mentally ill. “ACT is how to reduce hospitalization, increase housing stability and improve quality of life for people with the most severe symptoms of mental illness,” she said.

Atkinson says the first ACT Team for the Sylacauga Region covered Coosa and Talladega counties. She adds the process is underway to place a second team in Clay and Randolph counties. “Our ACT teams provide an intensive level of service across AltaPointe’s north region that we have not had previously. These teams are geared toward persons whose needs exceed what we would be able to provide in an outpatient clinic setting,” she added.

The team includes a master’s level therapist, case manager, RN, and psychiatrist. **Brandy Richardson**, associate clinical director for AltaPointe Health’s Sylacauga Region, said ACT allows AltaPointe to provide services at a higher level while helping individuals maintain their independence in the community.

“Having the ACT team in our rural communities has allowed us to bring the support and help our individuals need to them, instead of waiting for them to come to see us,” Richardson added.

On average, the teams serve more than 50 people each month. Individuals are seen at least once a week, or more often depending on their needs.

Culture of Safety



Day-in and day-out, AltaPointe's leadership team strives to create and sustain a "culture of safety" in which there is simply no room for errors.

"There was a time in the U.S. healthcare system when some people believed that errors, while not desirable, were inevitable," said **Robert Carlock**, environment of care director. "Those days are long gone."

Several years ago, he said, the Joint Commission – which accredits more than 21,000 U.S. health care organizations and programs – had a "big push" for zero tolerance throughout the health-care community.

At AltaPointe, according to **Sherill Alexander**, director of compliance, the culture of safety affects every department, every employee, and every program. "It's a matter of looking at processes and figuring out where we are vulnerable," she said.

"Errors are not acceptable," Carlock added. "We are always assessing procedures to see how we can improve."

Indeed, they said, safety assessments are an ongoing process at AltaPointe, in which supervisors and staff members evaluate procedures, analyze potential issues they spot and institute changes when and where needed.

"The employees are our eyes and ears," Alexander explained. "We want the staff to look at their individual environments and tell us what they see, and to bring this information to us. We depend on them."

Carlock cited an example in which he and Alexander learned from the staff that there were problems with one of the outpatient office parking lots. After studying the flow of vehicles and patients, they redesigned the parking, installed mirrors in strategic locations and altered the way buses were dropping off patients.

"We were able to make it a much safer parking lot," Alexander said, "and it happened because the staff was observant. Employees have to feel comfortable reporting safety issues without fear of

retaliation, and they have to be confident that the issues will be addressed."

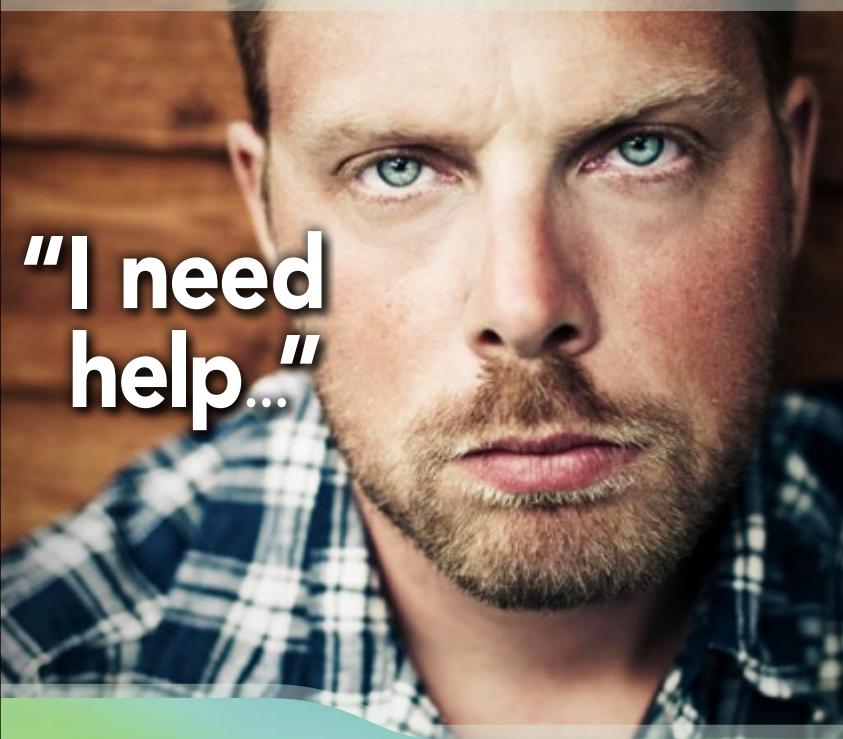
She and Carlock agreed that AltaPointe's emphasis on technology in recent years has helped them do their jobs – for example, by being able to track data and incidents daily.

"We don't have to wait for a quarter to spot a trend," Carlock said. "We can see it in real-time."

They can also use technology to analyze and prepare responses to natural disruptions such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and winter ice. Tactics include annual drills to make sure all employees understand their responsibilities in a weather crisis.

They added that weather isn't the only disruption they've got to anticipate. Others include human-related, technological, and chemical/hazardous events.

"We assess, we drill and we analyze each program's responses," Carlock said.



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Bravo!

Physician honors & recognition

At the end of each academic year, USACOM residents recognize the **Faculty Teacher of the Year** – the faculty member they feel showed the most excellence in teaching. This year **Lori Lowthert, M.D.** was selected by the residents.

Congratulations to **J. Luke Engeriser, M.D., Praveen Narahari, M.D., and Marianne Saitz, D.O., M.P.H.**, for recently passing their examinations to become board certified in addiction medicine by the American Board of Preventive Medicine.

Tuerk Schlesinger, AltaPointe Health CEO, was appointed to the mhca executive committee for a one-year term, and was re-elected to a second term on mhca's board of directors. mhca is a national association of innovative, entrepreneurial behavioral healthcare organizations focused on the development of executives by enhancing leadership and strategic connections. Schlesinger also was appointed to the Statewide Health

Coordinating Council and will serve as chair of the Home Health Division.

Kudos to Robert A. Carlock III, MBA, CHE, director of environment of care, on being appointed to the Alabama Society for Healthcare Engineering Board of Directors. He will chair the Standards and Codes Committee. AlaSHE is a professional society of Alabama healthcare facility and safety professionals working together to increase knowledge and advocate for science-based codes and standards which improve patient and associate safety.

BayView Professional Associates therapist **Elizabeth Wood, PhD, LPC, BC-TMH, CDMHS**, has received her credentials from the American Mental Health Counseling Association, recognizing her as a board-certified telemental health provider. She has also been named a diplomate and clinical mental health specialist in child and adolescent counseling as well.

One of AltaPointe Health's teenage patients was chosen to be featured on this 2019 Children's Mental Health Awareness Week poster. The patient was recognized

Children's Mental Health Awareness Week



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by **Gov. Kay Ivey** during the signing of the proclamation declaring Children's Mental Health Awareness Week in Alabama.

Alabama Department of Mental Health's Office of Peer Programs and the Alabama Directions Council recognized **Laura Bell**, AltaPointe Bridge Team case manager, as one of the recipients of the **2019 Respect Award**. Each year at the annual Alabama Institute for Recovery conference, the Respect Awards are given to people who are consistently respectful and supportive to individuals with mental illness. Bell was nominated by Sister Lucinda Claghorn, a long-time recipient of AltaPointe Health services and advocate for mental healthcare in the state.



The Baldwin County Community Alliance (BCCA) unveiled its newest tool to fight prescription drug abuse, an incinerator, on Sept. 23 at the Daphne Police Department. The incinerator will be used to properly destroy prescription drugs collected from the nine permanent drug drop boxes located across Baldwin County. The BCCA is comprised of multiple community agencies collaborating to decrease underage drinking and prescription drug misuse by Baldwin County youth.

State and local leaders gathered for the ribbon-cutting including; Dane Haygood, Mayor of Daphne; Tuerk Schlesinger, AltaPointe CEO; The Hon. Carmen Bosch, Baldwin County Circuit Court; Beverly Johnson and Lauren Blanding, Alabama Department of Mental Health.



AltaPointe Health working to improve patient's quality of life through fitness

A new evidence-based fall prevention program to help adult residential services' residents live an active life is showing signs of success. Stay Active & Independent for Life (SAIL) is a program based on the belief that performing exercises that improve strength, balance, and fitness can help adults stay active and reduce their chances of falling.

Patricia McNair, assistant director adult residential services, says since the program's inception in March 2019 more than 100 people have signed up for SAIL classes.

"Our staff has taught more than 350 SAIL classes, and 35 residents have had stellar attendance with 35 more showing ongoing interest, and attendance," McNair said. "The potential for this program to improve our resident's quality of life is exciting."

Gwen Mose, a master certified trainer for the SAIL program, leads the team of staff members responsible for teaching the classes, evaluates the program fidelity, and maintains outcome measurement data for participants. Instructors are carefully selected for their ability to deliver effective and efficient training while adhering to the core components of the SAIL Program.

David Beech, director adult residential services, says "the program complements the move to measurement-based care. SAIL is more than fitness; it's about outcomes. It will deliver outcomes we can measure, such as fitness ability and attendance, among other factors." Beech said. Outcome data collected the first six months of the program show those actively participating are improving.

AltaPointe offers the SAIL program in its Mobile Bay Region with plans to expand to the Sylacauga Region. The Washington State Health Department developed the SAIL program.

Welcome to the TEAM



Ashley Babb, APR, joins AltaPointe Health as its public relations coordinator. She has more than 10 years' experience in television news as an award-winning journalist in various Alabama and Florida markets, and has spent more than 10 years in public relations working in the communications department at Universal Studios Orlando Production Group and with public relations and advertising firms in the Southeast United States. She also served as Public Information Officer for BP during its 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Babb obtained her Accreditation in Public Relations in 2016.

2019 AltaPointe Stars of the Year

AltaPointe Health strives to be a leader in behavioral healthcare. Using specialized training, best clinical practices, and innovative technology, it works to provide the best care possible for its patients.

Leadership says staff makes it all possible. Each year, five staff members across the continuum are chosen as AltaPointe Stars of the Year. They are recognized for providing compassionate, accountable, respectful, and encouraging care in a healing and safe environment.

Congratulations to the following AltaPointe staff members.



John Conrad
BayView Professional
Associates,
Assistant Director



Lisa Miller
Finance & Accounting,
Accounts Receivable
Specialist



Melissa Smilie
Adult Outpatient Services,
Coordinator, Baldwin
County



Terry Shattuck
Adult Residential Services,
Registered Nurse



School-based therapist and Shining Star of the Year.

AltaPointe garners *coast-to-coast* headlines

Suicide prevention, expanded children's services and information on supported employment programs are some of the topics that put AltaPointe Health in the headlines from coast to coast.

AltaPointe continued its partnership with WKRG-TV in Mobile to host a hotline dedicated to preventing teenage suicide. During the two hours, people of all ages called to speak to AltaPointe mental health professionals with concerns and questions about accessing services. In a separate story, **Christina Talerico, M.D.**, talked to WKRG's Rose Anne Haven about the dangers of internet hoaxes and what parents can do to keep their children safe.

John Conrad, assistant director of BayView Professional Associates, continued outreach efforts

with a guest appearance on WALA's Good Day Gulf Coast to talk further about suicide prevention and possible warning signs.

Shay Robinson, children's outpatient services assistant coordinator, teamed up with NBC 15 to help reduce back to school anxiety in children. Robinson was featured as an expert during a prime-time broadcast.

Media outlets from New York to California shared with potentially 30 million people AltaPointe's efforts to help people living mental illness, substance use disorder, and intellectual disabilities live their best lives.

Social media proves to be a powerful channel for reaching the masses and promoting AltaPointe's expanding services. Earlier this year AltaPointe launched a summer day



program for children living in Coosa County and, using social media, AltaPointe Public Relations Department was able to spread the word, reaching nearly a third of the area's population.

Aside from its role as a catalyst in transforming mental healthcare, AltaPointe has also made community outreach a

top priority, participating in more than 250 events within the past two years.

If you would like AltaPointe to attend your next event, send us an email to info@altapointe.org or call (251) 662-8007.

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