

Dr. John Rudisill – Keynote Address for 50th Anniversary Celebration (5/29/08)

Thank you, John. I would be remiss if I didn't publically acknowledge the extreme importance of your leadership of Eastway in bringing us to this exciting time in our history.

I am deeply honored to be asked to be the keynote speaker for this celebration of Eastway's 50 years of service to our community. It's my chance to look forward with you to what might happen in the next 50 years of Eastway's contribution to the people of this region.

When I read this speech to my wife, she didn't get the jokes. So in giving this talk, I feel a little like Ray Romano did when he talked about his difficulty getting started in the standup comic business. In his first engagement only two people were in the audience and shortly after he got started those two people walked out on him. Ray felt dejected so he went home to talk with his parents. When he got there he said, "Why did you guys leave?"

For about the past 30 years, my "job" has been to ready a portion of the workforce who will be the providers of mental health services to our communities. In addition to academics, my "touch points" for knowing something about what is needed in the community have been my community board experience including ADAMHS and Eastway, and consulting with many public and private organizations in the area. When I arrived in Dayton back in 1977, one of the first persons I met was Stan Eichenauer. Stan offered me a job as a therapist at a branch location of Eastway. Although the offer was very tempting, I've never been able to resist trying to clean up a mess so I became chief psychologist of the Dayton Mental Health Center and was part of the process of moving people from asylums to community mental health centers such as Eastway. So, when John asked me to give this talk, he said a penny for your thoughts. I gave him my 2 cents worth. And I'm still waiting for my change, John!

The Eastway approach has always been proactive, laying a foundation for what is to come. Eastway has a strong strategic planning process for the immediate future which has a number of important stretch goals and lays out accountability at each level of its management. In response to improved management processes, Eastway has had unparalleled success the past three years. Out of a serious financial crisis, came teamwork and innovation which has dramatically turned around Eastway's fortunes. Eastway has learned not to rest on its laurels. It constantly reexamines and renews itself and will need to continue to do this over the next 50 years.

Why is Eastway important to our community? John reminded me that when I gave a talk to the Eastway board prior to my becoming a member of the board that I had mentioned that I thought Eastway was one of the most important agencies in our community. I've felt that way for a long time. It's not just because Eastway is the largest provider of behavioral healthcare in the region. Nor even because of the great historical significance of Eastway. Eastway began as a small outpatient clinic spawned from the Dayton Mental Health Center under the guidance of two of my mentors Arnold Allen, a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, and Scott Bowers, a clinical psychologist. Under Arnie's tutelage at Eastway, Scott became the first psychologist in the area to do psychotherapy. From that modest beginning, Stan Eichenauer and his team built Eastway into a large and influential organization. My regard for Eastway is not even because of its winning *softball team!* The reason I have always admired Eastway is because Eastway has

always embraced the most difficult, most important, and often most thankless human development tasks in our community. Eastway has always been the leader in providing treatment for disenfranchised individuals suffering from severe mental health disability. With the proposed closing of Twin Valley, we will see this role expand even further. Eastway has always been the leader in providing housing and employment supports for individuals in need. These are difficult, messy jobs that, at any moment, can result in embarrassing incidents that appear in the Sunday news. Eastway has embraced its role in providing rehabilitation for many voiceless, poor, and rejected members of our society, helping them to regain their sense of worth and make a contribution to our community. Eastway's work is not glamorous. When the marketing for the Human Service Levy campaign was designed you didn't see the emphasis on the incredible amount of suffering from mental illness and substance abuse. It was just something of which people didn't want to be reminded. Our community needs an Eastway. Along with our other fine community mental health centers, Eastway does what many others don't want to do.

It is important that all of us care about "Planting the Seeds for Hope", Eastway's new theme. Increasingly, agencies like Eastway are going to need private funding to have the resources to provide the services that our community needs. Eastway provides access to treatment for many who would go without such crucial services. I can promise you that Eastway's psychiatrists are not like the doctor's office where a nurse reported to the doctor that there was an invisible patient in the waiting room and the doctor replied, "Tell him I can't see him now. Next." With your financial support, Eastway can reduce the barriers to treatment that accompany financial hardship. Life is tough. We were born crying, naked, wet, and hungry and it just gets worse from there. Eastway addresses the human condition. Every person has a face and is treated as an individual of worth. Without the work of Eastway, many more people will end up homeless or in our penal system, or even dead through suicide. Others will end up filling up the welfare rolls or unnecessarily burdening their families to the breaking point. Eastway addresses the underlying causes of many of these important societal problems.

What's in store for Eastway? I think we will increasingly see Eastway's service impact expand and be felt across the region. Eastway's staff have demonstrated the capacity to develop highly effective, specialized programs that are of value across the state. Webster Street Academy and Northcutt just to name two are good examples of programs that are cutting edge. New health care delivery systems will be developed and look for health and mental health to become more integrated as we recognize the importance of treating the whole person. As taxpayers demand increasing efficiency, who knows but we may see Eastway take leadership in the development of a superagency that reduces management costs and duplication of effort while insuring quality services to consumers.

Eastway has always been on the forefront of empowering and involving consumers in their own treatment. I think this trend will continue and we will see even stronger consumer communities and family support groups who will teach us the providers better ways to deliver services and to meet our mutual goals.

In recent years, Eastway has shown leadership in the development of the technology of mental health assessment and treatment. Eastway has IT systems that can measure individual therapist

productivity, remind providers when their documentation is due, and pinpoint problems in client access. Look for this emphasis to continue as Eastway embraces state of the art systems and programs that are empirically validated. Eastway will need to stay on top of developments in genetics, psychopharmacology, as well as the behavioral sciences.

I hope that Eastway will assume the leadership role in helping our community understand the vital importance of good mental health. Eastway will need to lead in reducing stigma and creating a world where mental health screening and prevention is as commonplace as sports physicals.

I predict that Eastway will continue to be an organization where staff are valued and treated with respect and where staff in turn will continue to show their caring for clients by going the “second mile”. It’s not often that you get that kind of service. I went to the bookstore the other day and asked the saleswoman, “Where’s the self-help section.” She said if she told me it would defeat the purpose. Eastway will need to continue to provide treatment that is sensitive to age, gender, race, and culture. As in most public mental health programs, our staff are not getting rich and it takes the most dedicated people to be able to continue to give of themselves year after year. Eastway has a wonderful succession training plan that prepares staff to take over leadership from departing management staff who are often attractive to other more resource laden organizations. Eastway does provide hope and perhaps more importantly it delivers on that hope with well trained staff, well conceived programs, all provided with respect and caring.

I would like to add my personal thanks to each of you for coming tonight. Your interest in the important, good work that Eastway is doing is much appreciated. The work of an Eastway is easily dismissed. Much of the human suffering that Eastway addresses is invisible. Your attendance today and your involvement in Eastway, acknowledges the vital importance of Eastway and its pivotal role in the health of our community. So happy next 50th anniversary, Eastway. This is a landmark achievement that truly deserves celebration. Thank you.

In honor of this occasion, we are pleased to premier a video which captures some of the stories, accomplishments, and features some of the people that make Eastway special. I think you will enjoy this. As I have heard CEO John Strahm say many times, “We have a tremendous story to tell.” Amen, John.