

# Elevating the Standard of Care

As the group CEO leading Belmont Behavioral Health and other regional healthcare facilities, **Laura Longstreet** champions innovation and positive change in the mental health arena.

**L**aura Longstreet has devoted her professional life to caring for the health and well-being of vulnerable populations. She traces her journey's outset to, of all places, a swimming pool.

While looking for a job to support herself through college, Longstreet found work as a lifeguard at a residential facility for individuals with disabilities. This was anything but "a typical summer job." She found inspiration in the strength and resilience of the people she worked with every day, and the experience ignited a spark that would serve as a beacon throughout her career.

For the past eight years, Longstreet has been a member of the leadership team at Acadia Healthcare.

She spent five years as the CEO of Philadelphia-based Belmont Behavioral Health before her recent promotion to group CEO. In her new role, she continues to oversee Belmont Behavioral Health and has also assumed additional responsibilities for other Acadia hospitals in the Pennsylvania market, such as Tower Behavioral Health and Geisinger Behavioral Health Center.

"This expanded role enables me to build upon existing professional relationships and create a supportive network among healthcare leaders in the Pennsylvania market," she says. "By fostering collaboration and teamwork, I believe we can collectively address challenges, advocate for patient-centered care, and drive positive change within the healthcare landscape."

Longstreet's tenure with Belmont has been one of tremendous change and innovation. In June 2021, for example, Belmont opened a new, six-story hospital devoted to providing evidence-based psychiatric and mental health services for children, adolescents, and adults. The new hospital has enabled the expansion of services and the addition of specialty programming, including a dedicated service for children who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder or other neurologically related conditions.

The new hospital also includes a neuro-modulation suite where patients can receive electroconvulsive therapy and transcranial magnetic stimulation, in both inpatient and outpatient settings. The hospital also facilitated the opening of a licensed private school where longer-term patients can earn credits while receiving treatment.

If that weren't enough change, Belmont recently transitioned from paper medical records to electronic health records. Longstreet says this "leap forward" is intended to improve efficiency, enhance patient safety, and deliver the highest standard of care.

Longstreet looks forward to building on Belmont's reputation as a teaching and training destination for future clinicians, which has been honed through academic affiliations with the likes of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Jefferson Health, and Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. In fact, Belmont recently entered into a formal affiliation agreement with Thomas Jefferson University's Sidney Kimmel Medical College and Jefferson Health to further teaching and clinical care opportunities for students in behavioral health care.

The newly formed primary academic affiliation with Thomas Jefferson University will broaden the scope of the relationship, making Belmont and other local Acadia facilities primary clinical behavioral health teaching sites for Jefferson's psychiatric residents, fellows, and health-sciences and medical students. In addition to supporting Jefferson's clinical teaching mission, the partnership will further integrate behavioral health care with medical care, enhancing clinical outcomes, and improving access to state-of-the-art programs to meet the growing need for behavioral health services.

"Participating in these exciting changes has been both invigorating and humbling," Longstreet adds. "We have embraced a culture of innovation, encouraging our team to think creatively and push boundaries in delivering exceptional mental healthcare services. Through collaborative partnerships, interdisciplinary approaches, and a



Belmont Behavioral Health's Philadelphia campus

focus on personalized care, we are driving meaningful change and making a positive impact on the lives of individuals seeking treatment."

As new challenges and opportunities arise, Longstreet brings to bear 15 years of experience in leading and developing behavioral health teams. She finds the work incredibly rewarding because of the profound difference she gets to make in the lives of Belmont patients and employees alike.

"I strongly believe that developing emerging leaders and recognizing talent are key drivers of organizational growth and success," she says. "By investing in their development, we not only empower these individuals to reach their full potential but also cultivate a pipeline of skilled and compassionate healthcare leaders who can shape the future of the industry."

"I am immensely proud of the strides we have made at Belmont, as we continue to elevate the standard of mental health care and prioritize the well-being of our patients," she continues. "It has been an honor to be at the helm of these transformative efforts, and I am deeply committed to championing innovation and positive change in the mental health arena moving forward." ■

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