



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Nationally-renowned recovery advocate and motivational speaker Bill Carruthers joins Highland Rivers Health**

DALTON, Georgia – January 30, 2018 – Bill Carruthers, a nationally known advocate for recovery and the peer support movement, has joined Highland Rivers Health as director of peer workforce development. Carruthers, who has shared his personal story of addiction, mental illness and his journey to recovery throughout the nation, was most recently director of the peer program for Gateway Behavioral Health Services in Chatham County, Georgia.

“Bill Carruthers is an extremely passionate and energetic individual, and it’s impossible to hear him recount his personal story without feeling both compassion and inspiration,” said Highland Rivers CEO Melanie Dallas. “With peer support increasingly recognized as vital to mental health and addiction recovery, Bill is the right person to help grow our agency’s peer workforce while being a high-profile voice for recovery in the communities we serve.”

A native of Kansas City, Carruthers, 58, began using alcohol and drugs as a child, and lived a transient life for years, often homeless and moving from city to city all over the country. Eventually landing in Savannah in the 1980s, Carruthers grew tired of substance use and its associated problems and sought treatment eleven years ago. He has lived in recovery ever since.

During his recovery, Carruthers became involved in the peer movement in order to share his experience and help others. He became a peer-to-peer facilitator for the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) in 2008, and a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) in 2012. In 2016, Carruthers attained the highly specialized Certified Psychiatric Rehabilitation Practitioner (CPRP) credential.

“Recovery is not just about solving the crisis or stopping using drugs or alcohol, but about what comes after that – about building a life in your community that will sustain you and your recovery,” said Carruthers. “The services and supports that help people do that are vital and valuable to the community, and that is the heart of Highland Rivers Health, that’s what brought me here to keep doing my work.”

Carruthers has made numerous television and speaking appearances and in 2016 was invited to the White House to share his story. He is a certified CIT (crisis intervention team) trainer and has provided mental health/substance abuse crisis response training to law enforcement agencies across the country. He has been chair of the NAMI Georgia consumer council and continues to be a member of the NAMI Georgia executive board of directors.

Carruthers is available to speak to organizations in communities served by Highland Rivers Health, including schools and colleges, parent/teacher organizations, church groups, law enforcement agencies, recovery groups, civic organizations, government agencies and other community groups.

**About Highland Rivers Health**

Highland Rivers Health provides comprehensive treatment and support services for adults, children, families and veterans affected by mental health disorders, addictive disease, and intellectual and developmental disabilities. One of the state's largest public safety net providers, Highland Rivers operates more than two-dozen treatment facilities across a 4,400-square mile area of Northwest Georgia that includes Bartow, Cherokee, Fannin, Floyd, Gilmer, Gordon, Haralson, Murray, Paulding, Pickens, Polk and Whitfield counties. The agency is a Tier 1 safety net Core Provider for the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, and serves nearly 16,000 consumers annually. Highland Rivers Health and its governing board are accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). For more information, visit <http://highlandrivershealth.com>.

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