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## **Green Tree Peer Center Wins 2019 Innovation Award for Community Inclusion**

Pinehurst, NC (December 5, 2019). Green Tree Peer Center was recognized with the i2i Center's Community Inclusion Innovation Award for 2019. i2i's Executive Director Mary Hooper explained, "The purpose of the Innovation Awards is to recognize innovation in services and programming to increase integrated, whole person approaches to care. This is year two for these awards, and it is clear that those in our system and community are making headway in the move to whole person care. The Community Inclusion award recognizes initiatives that bring together community partners/stakeholders to promote the inclusion of individuals in their local communities. Green Tree is a perfect example of a successful inclusion program making a real difference in people's lives."

Green Tree's Community Inclusion project is called, "Including MYSELF." It has several components. The first is a Peer Partnership program where individuals are paired up with a peer and decide on community activity goals. Supporters offer encouragement, help to remove barriers to accomplishing objectives, and accompany individuals to participate in activities or events they might not otherwise go to in order to further empower them to participate in their community. Another aspect of the program is called the Photo Voice Community Participation Study. Winston-Salem State University Occupational Therapy graduate students under the directorship of Dr. Chinyu Wu are collaborating with Green Tree to produce a photography based study of participant impressions of community inclusion. Participants are provided cameras so they can photograph and share images that convey their ideas and experiences of community inclusion and boundaries.

Another feature of the Green Tree program is Diversifying our Relationships: Green Tree and its participants are working to weave more local, supportive friends into their activities both at the center and in the Winston-Salem community. This means working with local organizations to connect participants to activities or inviting people from the community to join them to share a meal at the program. Green Tree participants have also been involved in the state-wide I'm IN: Community Inclusion Advisory Group activities offering their input on outreach and educational activities that promote inclusion.

#### About i2i Center for Integrative Health

The mission of the i2i Center is to foster collaborative and evidence-based initiatives for improving the quality and efficacy of the behavioral health, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and substance use care and support services systems within a comprehensive system of whole person care. The i2i Center accomplishes its mission by convening stakeholders, strategizing solutions, and activating change.