

For Immediate Release

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**The Florida Behavioral Health Association Kicked off its Annual Conference with
Adventurer Aron Ralston**

Orlando, Fla. – The Florida Behavioral Health Association (FBHA) kicked off its annual conference, BHCon2026, with adventurer [Aron Ralston](#) opening the conference in his energetic and uplifting keynote address to over 1,800 audience members. BHCon is the largest behavioral health conference in the Southeast, and continues to provide innovative, evidence-based training sessions based on current practice for behavioral health professionals.

"The annual Florida Behavioral Health Conference brings together the full cast and crew of our field, the professionals who show up every day to support recovery and build resilience, who are the bridges to brighter futures for individuals and families across Florida," **said FBHA President and CEO Melanie Brown Woofter**. "This year's 'Lights, Camera, Action!' theme shines a spotlight on the dedicated individuals who are the real stars of behavioral health, and whether these individuals are providing care on the front lines to families across our state, supporting recovery, or cultivating leadership in their organizations, every role matters and each contribution moves our story forward.

Aron Ralston, mountaineer and motivational speaker, who is best known for surviving a climbing accident in 2003 by having to amputate his right arm and whose story was featured in the film *127 Hours*, opened the conference with his keynote address.

"It was an honor to open BHCon2026 and spend time with so many professionals whose work helps people overcome life's greatest challenges. My story is often remembered for survival, but I hope it reminded attendees that resilience is built one choice at a time and that, as I have often said, 'May your boulders be your blessings. May you be able to embrace them. And may you find what is extraordinary in yourself.' I am grateful to have shared that message with a community dedicated to helping others find hope, healing, and strength," **said adventurer Aron Ralston**.

BHCon2026 kicked off on Wednesday, August 26, and will run through Friday, August 28, with additional motivational keynote addresses from boxing champion [Cam Awesome](#) and musician [Gregory Offner](#).

In addition to the incredible speakers, BHCon provides the opportunity to highlight the best in Florida's behavioral health workforce through the annual Awards of Excellence ceremony. This year's winners include:

- Supervisor/Administrator of the Year: Dr. Susana Montalvo, Citrus Health Network
- Peer/Recovery Support Specialist of the Year: Thomas Green, Agency for Community Treatment Services (ACTS)
- Adult Clinician of the Year: Skye Larabee, Aspire Health Partners
- Youth Clinician of the Year: Charles Owens, Directions for Living
- Medical Professional of the Year: Patricia Clark, Peace River Center
- Support Services Staff of the Year: Sharon Mitchell, Gateway Community Services

Brown Woofter added, "BHCon2026 is our opportunity to share innovations and update our professional practice, all to ensure the highest level of service is available in Florida's communities. We celebrate the successes of our field and renew our passion to continue this good work."

BHCon2026 brings together 197 speakers, featuring 119 training sessions, 156 exhibitors, 13 sponsors, and offering up to 14.5 continuing education credits per attendee.

To learn more about BHCon2026, visit BHCon.org.

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The Florida Behavioral Health Association (FBHA) represents over 70 community mental health and substance use service providers throughout the state. FBHA's members span from Pensacola to Key West, serve over half a million individuals each year, and provide services in every county in Florida. These community providers are the safety nets, primarily serving the uninsured, underinsured, and Medicaid populations. Visit Floridabha.org to find a list of community providers and get connected with mental health and substance use treatment, along with other services.