



Investing in independence for Philadelphia's disabled community at Inglis



The ribbon is cut at the opening ceremony for Inglis' new Innovation Center on Dec. 17, 2019. Photo: Nigel Thompson/AL DÍA News.

A new Innovation Center at the longtime disability care organization will be the technological, behavioral and career center for the community.



By [Nigel Thompson](#)

January 03, 2020

Walter Proschinger's journey to Inglis starts in Montana, where an injury left him unable to walk and reduced his hand function. As a result, he moved back home to Philadelphia to consider his options.

He was physically disabled, but Proschinger still wanted to regain some of the independence he lost with his injury.

"Inglis was that shining star," he said.

Proschinger first came to the Inglis House on Belmont Ave. in Wynnefield Heights for its adaptive technology services, but eventually enrolled in the independent living program.

"It's a nice first step," he said.

His participation made him eligible for residency at Inglis' then-new Inglis Gardens apartment complex, also on Belmont Ave.

Proschinger was one of the first to move into the complex three and a half years ago.

Now, he will be one of the first to be able to use Inglis' new Innovation Center, unveiled on Dec. 17.

The Innovation Center is Inglis' newest building aimed at continuing its offer of care to disabled Philadelphians while also supporting their independence.

A \$3.2 million investment, the center was conceived in January 2019 as the new focal point for all of Inglis' community-based services, including its adaptive technology lab, and Journeys and Connections programs.

"This project was completed between mid-June and, really, a couple of days ago," said Jim Logue, chair of Inglis' board of directors.

Dyann Roth, president and CEO of Inglis, gave a breakdown of what she and others in leadership told the designers and architects.

"We want it to be fun, and funky and warm, and like a big hug," she said, "and totally disability competent."

Logue continued to say that the services provided by Inglis to the disabled community in Philadelphia are "desperately needed," and the Innovation Center will further help to meet that need.

"This is our opportunity to be on the leading edge of providing those services to those who need them," he said.

For Maria Bell, director of Care Management and Behavioral Health Services at Inglis and Regina Melendez, a certified peer specialist, the Innovation Center will allow Inglis to provide their resources under the same roof.

No longer will those needing certain services have to be referred to different locations to receive them.

"Being housed in the same location, I think will really help us to provide a continuum of care," said Bell.

Both Bell and Melendez are heavily involved in Inglis' new Journeys program, which will be headquartered at the Innovation Center.

Journeys, which started in November 2019, pairs certified peer specialists with disabled clients for mental health support. All of the certified peer specialists either have a disability themselves or have experience working with the disabled community.

Melendez said the work is done face-to-face and is all about setting a goal and achieving it.

Those goals often range from going out into the community on a daily basis to finding work, and budgeting. But there's no limit to them.

"It could be just about anything," said Melendez.

Right now, Journeys serves 10 clients, but the Innovation Center allows for the program to scale up to serve between 75 to 90 people, according to Bell.

Proschinger plans to use the Innovation Center for its newest adaptive technology, which includes everything from 3D printers for custom-made parts to an accessible computer lab.

Given his experience at Inglis, he also plans to get involved in mentoring some of its newest clients.

The message is one of hope and possibility.

"There's no limits," said Proschinger. "You come with an open mind and you can achieve a lot of things."