



The Northwest Catholic Counseling Center

Access for all, regardless of ability to pay.

NWCOUNSELING.ORG

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503-253-0964



Pause, Gather, Grow

Mark your calendars! We are turning 40, and we want to celebrate with you!

Please Save the Date for our 40th Anniversary Celebration on April 30, 2026, at Avenue Portland!

Join us that evening as we intentionally pause during these busy times to gather in shared humanity. Together, we will raise essential funds to grow our ability to ensure all, especially those seeking equitable access to care, can receive the compassionate mental health care they need.

Invitations are coming to your mailbox and inbox soon! Keep an eye out—we can't wait to celebrate four decades of service with you!

Can't wait?
Visit auctria.events/NCC40th
for a preview!

From the Director's Desk

Four Decades, One Mission: Mental Health for All

As we step into 2026, we find ourselves at a momentous threshold. This year, The Northwest Catholic Counseling Center celebrates its 40th anniversary—four decades of listening, supporting, and walking alongside our neighbors through their most challenging moments.

Reflecting on this history brings one fundamental truth to the surface: *There is no health without mental health. That statement is as true today as it was when our founding sisters made the commitment to open our doors in 1986.*

While the world has changed significantly since 1986, the core of our mission has remained steadfast. We have always believed that mental wellness is the invisible infrastructure holding our community together. When an individual has access to compassionate, professional counseling, the "ripple effect" is immediate. A parent who learns to manage anxiety becomes a steady anchor for their children; an employee who receives support for depression regains their stability; a neighbor in crisis finds hope instead of a dead end.

By providing care regardless of financial barriers for the last 40 years, we have worked to ensure that healing is never a luxury. We aren't just treating symptoms; we are breaking cycles of generational trauma and building a more resilient social fabric.

As we look toward the next 40 years, our mission remains clear: to be a place where anyone can find the tools they need to thrive. With that in mind, I hope you'll join me on April 30th at Avenue Portland for our 40th Anniversary Celebration event – Pause, Gather, Grow. The funds raised from that evening will help us grow into the future as we continue to serve our community. Your support of our nonprofit mission makes this legacy of healing possible. Thank you for believing that a healthier community begins with a healthy mind.

With gratitude for 40 years of partnership,

Erin Peters
Executive Director





From Our Clinical Team

Shaking Off Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

As the days get shorter and the familiar gray skies return, it's completely normal to feel a little low—often called the "winter blues." For those of us here in the Pacific Northwest, this lack of sunlight hits especially hard: studies show the rate of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is notably higher here than the national average. If you're feeling impacted, you are definitely not alone!

SAD is a type of depression directly linked to the change in seasons, typically triggered by our reduced exposure to sunlight in the fall and winter months. The lack of light can disrupt your body's natural clock and affect key brain chemicals that regulate mood and sleep, like serotonin and melatonin.

If you or a loved one are struggling, it's helpful to know what to look for. SAD is more than just feeling sad; symptoms can include:

- Persistent low mood, lack of energy, or fatigue.
- Cravings for carbohydrates, overeating, or weight gain.
- Sleeping for longer than usual but still feeling tired.
- Loss of interest in activities you normally enjoy, or social withdrawal.

The good news is that SAD is very treatable! Here are a few things you can do to take care of yourself during the darker months:

- **Soak Up the Sun (When You Can):** Try to get outside every day, especially first thing in the morning. Even on our cloudy days, outdoor light helps regulate your mood.
- **Keep Moving:** Regular physical activity is a powerful mood booster and stress reliever.
- **Stay Connected:** It can be easy to "hibernate," but make an effort to socialize with friends and family you enjoy.
- **Schedule Activities:** Try planning different activities and hobbies for yourself—even ones you've never tried before! You can always experiment and make adjustments based on what you find enjoyable.
- **Reach Out for Support:** If your symptoms are severe or last for more than two weeks and are impacting your daily life, please know you don't have to manage it alone. NCC can help!

Call us at 503-253-0964 to learn how to access compassionate mental health support.



Welcome Kestley!

We are thrilled to introduce the newest member of our team, Kestley Sasaki (she/her/hers), Professional Counselor Associate!

Kestley joined us in December, bringing a passion to empower clients to embrace their most authentic selves. She believes that while starting counseling can be intimidating, the therapeutic relationship—based on trust and collaboration—is key to finding hope and confidence in the healing journey.

Kestley works with adults (18+) using a flexible approach that draws on CBT, Psychodynamic, and IFS techniques to address issues like ADHD, anxiety, and depression.

To learn more about Kestley, her experience, and her therapeutic approaches, you can read her full bio at:

www.nwcounseling.org/our-team

"I want to share how much my daughter has been helped by counseling here at NCC! The whole staff are wonderful. My wife came here for counseling 18 years ago. Now I'm here with my daughter to get her the support she needs."

– Father of a 12-year-old client



Leventar Program Recognized

We are thrilled to share that in August 2025, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) approved our Leventar Program as a Culturally and Linguistically Specific (CLS) service!

What does this mean? CLS services are powerful because they are grounded in the unique cultural values and experiences of communities that have faced historical injustices and barriers. This recognition elevates the voices and experiences of the communities we serve.

Leventar, which means "to rise up" in Spanish, offers culturally-specific, trauma-informed mental health services to Latine individuals, couples, and families in Portland and the surrounding areas. We created this program specifically to support those facing barriers like low income, lack of insurance, or immigration difficulties.

Our wonderful team of bicultural clinicians, some of whom are fluent in both English and Spanish, brings both deep compassion and cultural humility to their work. They represent and ally with the diverse identities of our community. We are dedicated to making mental well-being accessible in a truly safe and nurturing environment for everyone.

Circle of Strength Success!

On September 27th, we were honored to host our 24th annual Circle of Strength. More than 100 incredible women gathered for an inspiring morning.

Because of your united purpose and generosity, we raised an amazing \$90,655! This funding goes directly to ensuring women and children who face financial hardship in our community can access the critical mental health care they need.

Thank you to every single donor, attendee, and supporter who made this event a resounding success! Your compassion changes lives.

We are especially excited to celebrate our 25th Anniversary of Circle of Strength this fall! Keep your eyes open for more info coming soon.



Honoring Sister Mary Bertoli, SNJM

NCC mourns the loss of Sr. Mary Bertoli (December 11, 2025), a cherished friend whose service spanned decades and disciplines. From her days working with elementary students in rural Mississippi to her leadership at Rita's Place (a shelter for domestic violence survivors), Sr. Mary's life was a testament to compassion. We are especially grateful for the visual legacy she left us. She created the art for our Circle of Strength logo (seen above), which stands as a daily reminder of her spirit. She remains an inseparable part of our history and our hearts.



What is Your NCC Story?

Are you a former client somewhere in our 40-year history? Are you willing to share the story of your journey with us? Are you a donor?

We want to hear from you!

Former client testimonials are powerful ways to support others to seek help. They tell our story of impact to financial supporters.

Donor stories encourage others to support our mission in any way they can. These stories help others understand how critical access to mental health care is.

Tell us your story here:
<https://www.nwcounseling.org/contact-us/tell-your-story/>

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Honored To Be One of Oregon's Best ... Again!

We are incredibly proud to announce that in October of 2025, we received a repeat honor of being named to Oregon Business Magazine's 100 Best Nonprofits to Work For in Oregon!

This recognition is a huge affirmation of our commitment to creating a supportive and positive environment for our entire team. It's an honor to be listed among other great Oregon nonprofits who also prioritize best-in-class workplace practices.

This list is special because it's based entirely on what our employees have to say! Oregon Business surveys our staff for feedback on several key areas of workplace quality, including:

- Work environment
- Management and communications
- Mission and goals
- Career development and learning
- Benefits and compensation

Thank you to our dedicated team.

Your daily commitment to our mission and to each other truly makes us one of the best!

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