



## Strawberry Fields, Inc., to Join Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health

*Enhancing Services for Individuals and Families in  
Centre County with Intellectual and Developmental  
Disabilities, Autism, and Mental Health Challenges*

**State College, Pa. – Feb. 19, 2025** – Strawberry Fields, Inc., a nonprofit organization offering comprehensive community-based supports and programming for individuals and families with intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism, and mental health challenges, today announced it will become an affiliate of Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health, one of Pennsylvania’s largest nonprofit behavioral healthcare providers, serving thousands of children and adults across 12 states.

As an affiliate of Devereux, Strawberry Fields will remain an independent legal entity, with **Cynthia “Cindy” Pasquinelli** continuing to serve as chief executive officer. Strawberry Fields will maintain its name and full employee base, as well as its community partnerships. In addition, Strawberry Fields will continue to offer its full array of programs and services, including its social enterprises: the [Good Day Café](#) and [Scraps & Skeins](#). Individuals and families currently served by Strawberry Fields will continue to receive the high-quality, compassionate care they expect, in the same program locations.

As a result of this partnership, Strawberry Fields will gain access to Devereux’s national model of clinical and evidence-based best practices; quality and safety programs; and technological and financial infrastructure and systems; along with advanced recruiting resources and benefits, including the [ASCEND Career Accelerator Program](#).

“I am excited to announce this partnership with Devereux. This mission-driven collaboration combines Devereux’s extensive national resources and proven clinical expertise with our deep community roots. We are particularly excited about the ASCEND Career Accelerator Program, which offers transformative benefits including tuition assistance, student loan repayment and professional mentoring opportunities,” said Strawberry Fields CEO Cindy Pasquinelli. “As an affiliate of Devereux, we will now have the ability, along with the financial backing, to expand and enhance our programs, while preserving our 53-year tradition of providing critical services to individuals and families who need our help and support in Centre County.”

Consulting For Human Services, led by **Stacy DiStefano**, advised Strawberry Fields on the transaction. “In the face of ongoing challenges in the behavioral health sector, forward-thinking leaders are proactively seeking sustainable solutions,” said DiStefano. “This partnership represents a true win-win – aligning missions while ensuring the continued impact of both organizations’ exceptional work. It’s a testament to the power of strategic collaboration in strengthening services for those who need them most.”

Devereux President and CEO **Carl E. Clark II** added: “What makes Strawberry Fields so special is its unwavering commitment to personal choice, personalized care and community integration,

enabling individuals to live as independently as possible while emphasizing inclusion within the community. Strawberry Fields is an inspiration throughout Centre County, and I am thrilled to partner with Cindy and her team. This synergistic partnership between our like-minded and people-driven organizations will result in better serving the growing needs of Centre County, while building a sustainable model for long-term success in the areas of person-centered, community-driven care.”

“I am excited to see the affiliation between two strong RCPA members – Strawberry Fields and Devereux,” said RCPA President and CEO **Richard S. Edley, Ph.D.** “As the human services landscape continues to evolve, the administrative and financial pressures on public sector agencies continue to mount. It is important to be proactive and develop affiliation and other strategies that strengthen smaller providers to continue their great work into the future. We look forward to working closely with this newly structured organization.”

### **Benefits for Strawberry Fields, Inc.**

As a Devereux affiliate, Strawberry Fields will gain access to Devereux’s national model of clinical and evidence-based best practices; quality and safety program; technological and financial infrastructure/systems; and the ASCEND Career Accelerator Program.

Specific benefits include: enhanced employee training, professional education and skill enrichment; advanced recruiting resources from Devereux’s national talent acquisition platform; enhanced benefits and advancement opportunities for Strawberry Fields teams; enriched programs and services from Devereux’s internationally recognized clinical, medical and leadership resources; and enhanced quality and safety protocols, and risk management data systems. This affiliation will also provide access to Devereux’s financial, information technology, legal and executive management resources and systems.

Strawberry Fields employees also will benefit from Devereux’s [ASCEND Career Accelerator Program](#), designed to provide behavioral healthcare employees the support and financial assistance they need to reach their full potential through:

- multi-track career path and advancement opportunities;
- financial support for tuition and education costs;
- personalized career coaching; and
- dedicated mentoring and professional development.

Under the ASCEND program, full-time team members in career-aligned tracks can receive 100% of tuition, fees and textbook costs – up to \$15,000 for undergraduate classes and \$25,000 for graduate-level classes on an annual basis. Student loan repayment also provides up to \$200 per pay period for eligible full-time team members, and up to \$100 per pay for part-time staff utilizing the national Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, where applicable.

This relationship will support Strawberry Fields in its efforts to advance its mission of serving individuals and families throughout Centre County, while building a stronger and more sustainable workforce for the future.

### **Benefits for Devereux**

Partnering with Strawberry Fields supports Devereux’s strategic plan for expansion in the areas of community-based supports, specialty mental health and education services, while positioning the nonprofit for growth in central Pennsylvania. Specifically, Devereux will benefit from Strawberry Fields’ expertise with its Early Intervention and Fairweather Lodge services – programs Devereux

has identified as growth opportunities within its continuum. The two organizations also will explore opportunities to expand educational services for youth and adults in Centre County.

The affiliation will be effective Feb. 18, 2025, subject to customary legal and regulatory approvals. To help oversee the partnership, the Strawberry Fields Board will become an interlocking model in which certain current members will be joined by Devereux's executive team members. The combination of services and support functions between the two organizations will evolve over the next 12 to 18 months.

### **About Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health**

Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health is one of the nation's largest nonprofit organizations, providing services, insight and leadership in the evolving field of behavioral healthcare. Founded in 1912, Devereux operates a comprehensive national network of clinical, therapeutic, educational and employment programs that positively impact the lives of thousands of children, adults – and their families – every year. The organization's unique approach combines evidence-based interventions with compassionate family engagement. With more than 6,000 employees working in programs across the country, Devereux is a trusted partner for families, schools and communities, serving many of our country's populations in the areas of autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities, specialty mental health, education and foster care. For more than a century, Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health has been guided by a simple and enduring mission: To change lives by unlocking and nurturing human potential for people living with emotional, behavioral and cognitive differences. Learn more: [www.devereux.org](http://www.devereux.org).

### **About Strawberry Fields, Inc**

Founded in 1972, Strawberry Fields, Inc., is a nonprofit organization offering comprehensive community-based supports and programming for individuals and families with intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism or serious and persistent mental health challenges. Serving Centre County, Strawberry Fields is dedicated to fostering independence and community engagement through residential services, supported employment, mental health (blended) case management and early intervention programs tailored to meet the specific needs of each individual. Strawberry Fields' mission is to create opportunities, provide support and improve the lives of those served. Learn more: [www.sfionline.org](http://www.sfionline.org).

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