

## **Celebrating 5 years**

Northern Lights Therapy's journey of growth, community and mental health awareness

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S WE CELEBRATED FIVE YEARS IN March since the opening of Northern Lights Therapy, I couldn't help but reflect on how far we've come. When I first started this journey, I had no idea what to expect. In fact, with COVID just having happened, I wondered if I'd even be able to grow my caseload.

Fast forward five years, and here I am proudly leading a team of 19 clinicians across three locations — and still growing. It's humbling to see how far we've come and how supportive our community has been along the way.

But we didn't just celebrate our anniversary quietly — we made a splash with the You Matter Wellness Event in Maricopa. This event was a perfect example of how we aim to combine valuable resources, local support and important conversations about mental health — all with a dash of creativity. The event featured incredible tattoos centered around suicide awareness, mental health and more, with designs that were as beautiful as they were meaningful.

And with such an amazing turnout and overwhelming positive feedback, we've decided to make the You Matter Wellness Event an annual gathering. Next year, we're planning to make it even bigger and better, so stay tuned!

While I'm excited about our past, I'm even more focused on our future. When I founded Northern Lights Therapy, my primary goal was to create a place where people could feel heard, validated and, most importantly, safe. Mental

health is something that touches all of us whether you've struggled personally or have someone you care about who has.

It's not always easy to talk about, but we have to keep talking. We have to push past those uncomfortable conversations and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health. This is how we'll make real change

Arizona, unfortunately, has limited resources and support when it comes to mental health. And while I might not be storming the halls of Capitol Hill (at least not yet), I'm dedicated to making a difference right here in our own community.

My goal has always been to provide accessible, quality mental health care for anyone who needs it. I want to build programs based on what's truly needed and asked for by our community. If there's a gap, I want to fill it. If there's something missing, I want to create it.

At Northern Lights Therapy, we're more than just clinicians; we're a part of this community. I truly believe that when you feel supported, heard and cared for, you can face the world with more confidence. Whether you're facing your own challenges or supporting someone who is, know that you're not alone. There is always someone you can turn to - and I'm here for you, along with my amazing team.

But let's take a step back. What does mental health really mean? It's often a term that gets thrown around, but what does it truly encompass?

Mental health affects how we think, feel and act. It's crucial to how we relate to others, make decisions and handle stress. And yet, it remains one of the most under-discussed areas of health. In a world where we're so open about our physical health — talking about everything from getting the flu shot to fitness routines why is it still so hard to talk about mental health?

The reality is, it's not just about people with mental illness. Mental health affects everyone. We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health. And just like our bodies need care and attention to stay healthy, so do our minds. So why not start talking about it more?

It's time to make the uncomfortable comfortable. It's time to normalize the conversation. I'll be the first to admit that life hasn't always been smooth sailing for me. Like many of you, I've faced my own struggles - both professionally and personally. There have been times I've been knocked down and wondered how I would get back up.

But here's the thing: No one is immune to hard times. Whether you're a therapist, a mechanic, a nurse or a stay-at-home parent, life can throw curveballs when you least expect it. And we all need support.

In addition to offering therapy, we've also been busy building programs that help address the specific needs of our community. From youth programs to family counseling, we are committed to providing the resources that make a real difference. Our focus is on the people we serve, and we adapt and grow based on what you need. That's why I am so passionate about continuing to support our community in any way I can. I don't just want to help people survive; I want to help them thrive.So, as we move into May, which marks Mental Health Awareness Month, I encourage you to take a moment to check in with yourself and those around you. Ask how they're really doing. Ask how you can support them. And if you're struggling, remember it's okay to ask for help. Mental health doesn't need to be a taboo topic. We can be open, we can be kind, and we can make a difference. And as we look to the future, know this: the best is yet to come. We're just getting started. Thank you for your continued support, Maricopa. Together, we can make our community stronger and healthier, one conversation at a time.

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