

Practical Rehab Services Ltd. committed to helping clients

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ALTON - Practical Rehab Services Ltd. has been helping those in need for 25 years, its mission being to "improve the quality of life for individuals and their families through safe, effective and compassionate treatment."

In recognition of the rehabilitation center, the River Bend Growth Association has awarded it the honor of Business of the Month for November.

"I want to thank the (RBGA)," owner Sharon Johnson said. "They have wonderful events, like the Grapes for Growth and the Small Business Expo. Every business should belong; it is a great networking opportunity, and they have a tremendous staff."

Johnson, a speech/language pathologist, is proud to have opened a female minority-owned business, one that is a Medicare-certified, outpatient facility. Starting out as a speech pathology entity, the center has grown to include among its services social work, counseling, audiology and communication, and physical, occupational and massage therapy.

Johnson graduated from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville in 1982 with a master's degree in speech pathology.

"I have been doing this since around 1985," she said. "My first office was in the trunk of my car."

Originally calling her company Practical Communications, Johnson soon realized it was time to find an office, and she moved into an empty space in the Meridian Bank.

As she began offering more services to the community, she realized she had outgrown the name of the company.

"Everyone thought I was in telecommunications, plus we had expanded our services beyond speech therapy, so we decided it was just smart to change the name," she said. "That is when we became Practical Rehab Services."

A certified firm with the State of Illinois Minority and Female Business Enterprise, the business was incorporated in 1994 and employs 25 skilled technicians, including speech and language pathologists, audiologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, social workers and counselors, and massage therapists.

In 2004, a chance encounter led Johnson to determine she was ready to expand even further.

"An attorney came in for physical therapy and he said I should start a DUI program here," she said. "I think our DUI evaluations and risk education classes are vital.

"I realize that not everyone has a problem; they just may have gone out one night, had too much to drink and gotten caught. The key is taking responsibility. Counselors try to motivate the client. We are not about pointing fingers; we just try to show the repercussions and hopefully the clients will motivate themselves to make the changes they need to make."

Three years ago, the center also started a substance abuse program for adolescents as well as adults, adding to its stress, depression and family-related assistance.

"We do a lot of things under one roof," Johnson said. "We also outsource; we provide services to a lot of schools, hospitals, government facilities, nursing homes and health care facilities."

Johnson said treatment plans are formed as a team, with the client involved in every step of the process. She said she believes follow-up is vital to continued success.

"When they are discharged, we follow up with them and develop a discharge plan, as well," she said. "They are not just kicked out the door and told 'See ya.'"

Johnson, who specializes in head injuries and is a former president of the Illinois Head Injury Association, was the first female president of the Alton-Godfrey Rotary, and serves as a charter member of the Riverbend Rotary.

Her personal motto is "committed to excellence, dedicated to service, and motivated by success."

Practical Rehab Services Ltd., 3550 College Ave., Suite A, Alton, services a 100-mile radius and is open for appointments from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. every day.

For information, call (618) 465-6566.