

Family Houston invites Mattress Mack's daughter to speak on OCD for Mental Health Month

Elizabeth McIngvale opens up during Family Houston's annual "Pillar of Strength" luncheon at the Briar Club

By **Amber Elliott** Updated 5:14 pm, Wednesday, May 10, 2017



IMAGE 2 OF 23

Guest speaker Elizabeth McIngvale poses for a photo at the Family Houston luncheon at The Briar Club Wednesday, May 10, 2017, in Houston.

Family Services of Greater Houston has provided Bayou City residents with the counseling and guidance needed to create a strong community since 1904. Though obstacles have evolved from influenza and the Great Depression to wartime and cultural change, Wednesday's "Pillars of Strength" luncheon centered around mental health issues. Fitting, as May is Mental Health Awareness Month.

"Family Houston provides counseling to anyone who walks through our doors regardless of their ability to pay," explained **Ronald K. Martin**, board chair. "And we've recently begun admitting children."

Mistress of ceremonies **Sharron Melton** shared a few fresh luncheon additions, too: each table was topped with social media fans to encourage the 200 lunch-goers to post photos using the #FamilyHouston online. Artist **Patti Lennon-Potter** live-painted a Texas flag from the back of the Briar Club's ballroom. Two auction bidders each ponied up \$3,000, bringing the total amount raised to \$225,000.

Kathy Williams, a longtime Family Houston client, is grateful. She's witnessed the organization's impact over a 30-year period from the time she first walked into the clinic as a severely depressed mother of two children in the 1980s.

After Williams's moving testimony, keynote speaker **Elizabeth McIngvale** next chronicled her own ongoing battle with obsessive-compulsive disorder.

(Story continues below ...)

Trending Lifestyle Video

Hopefully I begin and end with the same message, she said. That mental health matters.

"You probably wake up to my dad screaming at you from the television that he'll save you money," McIngvale joked. Her father is Jim "Mattress Mack" McIngvale. "And he will, but that's not what I'm here to talk about today."

Her in-depth remarks centered around the ongoing support that she received from immediate family members, and later, the Menninger Clinic.

Around age 13, McIngvale first began to experience what she described as "bizarre, intrusive thoughts." She soon became crippled with fear that those close to her would suffer unless she "fixed" it with rituals and repetitive actions.

A 12-week stint at the Menninger Clinic placed McIngvale on the road to recovery. She's now founder of the Peace of Mind foundation, runs OCDChallenge.org, and serves as an assistant professor at Baylor University's Diana R. Garland School of Social Work.

"One of the things I learned from Brene Brown is that we can't live a full life if we're not vulnerable," McIngvale said. "My favorite line from her books is 'If we deny our illness, it owns us. But if we own our illness, we get to write the ending.'"

This year's gathering recognized another ending; honoree Paz A. Guerra recently retired from after four decades of service.

"I love my 40 years at Family Houston," Guerra said in closing. "It was difficult to leave, but time for me to go."

