

May is Mental Health Matters Month Community Comment Mike Goldsby, May 11, 2017

Lots of talk about healthcare but very little of that talk is about mental health. It is much easier for our Federal decision makers to ignore that. Denial.

Leaders in Britain are brave enough to discuss it. The Prince, and the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge (that is, Harry, William and Kate) are leading an open discussion of mental health issues, to reduce stigma and improve access and services.

Harry and William were teenagers when their Mother, Princess Diana, died in a car crash. Both of them now say they experienced a form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. They shut down emotionally and suffered for years. Kate discusses her struggles with stress and postpartum depression.

They hope to lead by example. William said, "At some point, someone has to be brave enough to force that conversation."

I don't see that kind of courage in our national leaders. But a growing number of regular folks are speaking up and taking action to reduce the stigma of mental illness and to improve access to treatment, care and respect.

May has been designated Mental Health Matters Month and a number of activities are planned, statewide and locally, to acknowledge the importance of mental health. These events are sponsored by The Department of Health and Human Services, St. Joseph Health, First Five Humboldt and many others. To learn more about the calendar of events, call Kellie Jack at (707) 441-3783.

Mental Health First Aid "is an 8-hour course that teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a ~~mental health or substance use~~ problem or experiencing a crisis." The Southern Humboldt Family Resource Center is hosting a Mental Health First Aid training on Friday, May 19, from 8 to 5. Lunch is provided. Call (707) 441-5565 to learn more.

The Willow Creek Family Resource Center and The Hope Center are hosting a barbeque that same day, Friday, May 19th at Noon. The Bringing Awareness barbeque will be held at the Veteran's Park in Willow Creek.

A number of local advocates have stressed the importance of addressing childhood mental health and reducing the incidence of Adverse Childhood Experiences. They successfully got these areas identified as funding priorities for local marijuana tax funds. There are many community partners, but one place to learn more is First Five, at (707) 445-7389.

Connections Matter. There will be a Connections Matter Barbeque in Fortuna, at Rohner Park on Saturday, May 13, from Noon to 2. Another will be held in Eureka on Friday, May 26th, from 11 to 2 at Carson Park.

Anxiety and depression are more common than you might think. So are substance use disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. Bi Polar disorder and schizophrenia are less common. Recovery from all of these is possible in spite of stigma.

The Affordable Care Act made some great strides towards reducing stigma and increasing access for mental health treatment. Much of that is being set back a decade or so. "But, at some point, someone has to be brave enough to force that conversation," again.

This is Mike Goldsby for Community Comment.