

May 12, 2020

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

With much of our country and our community focused on COVID 19, it is difficult to “escape” all of the talk, news, events and predictions surrounding this pandemic. Cross Over Ministries is grateful for all of the people in our community who have been doing the hard work of keeping Montgomery County moving forward during this different time in all our lives. If we tried to list all of you, we would fail to mention someone, so we will just say “THANK YOU ALL” and we hope to one day be able to say thank you in person.

Yes, life has changed. For many, it has brought about the reality of why relationships are so very important to our well-being. For some, it has given rise to their ability to look to the needs of others and do something about those needs. And maybe for all of us, COVID 19 has brought us face-to-face with some things that need to be put in place sooner than later in order to minimize the effects and impact of isolation, separation, anxiety and depression.

In one of our recent Board Meetings, Dawn Young who is our Secretary and also a Nurse Practitioner with Springfield Clinic in Hillsboro, shared with us a comment that an infectious disease doctor made. To paraphrase, he stated that when this pandemic is more under control, we won't need as many medical doctors as we will doctors and people who work in the mental health field.

COM did not get up and shout, “Hurray, we are going to be very busy”, over this comment. All of us had heavier hearts because of it. Why? The complex, simple answer is this: our County already suffers from a lack of services for people with mental health conditions and substance use disorders. What is going to happen when the needs are even greater?

If we relied on ourselves to come up with the answer, we would be defeated before we even started to explore avenues of recovery and wellness. But... we are not defeated. That is because we have always relied upon the wisdom, power and grace of Jesus Christ to lead us. It is not that we throw up our hands and say, “Do something, Lord”, and wait to see if He is listening to us. Rather, we throw up our hands in praise and thank Him for putting in our hearts and minds some thoughts, ideas and ways to keep moving forward with the mission and vision of Cross Over Ministries. Here are a few of the things we are blessed to be doing:

- The Board and volunteers are meeting monthly via Zoom (and you can join us if you like)
- We “adopted” Chris-Mont County Emergency Management Agency and Montgomery County Health Department to encourage them during a difficult time.
- We created stickers for people, hospitals and businesses so that they will have a visual of how much they mean to our community.
- We are developing a modified training program for people interested in becoming Certified Recovery Peers who will eventually be employed by COM and offer support and referral information for people struggling with their own recovery and wellness.

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- We are moving forward with creating a COM Presentation so that more people will know who we are, what we are doing and why we are doing it. We hope this will inspire people to join us in any way they can.
- We are looking into ways to give monetarily to other organizations or individuals who are working hard to make sure people have food, especially when the school lunch programs end.
- We are having a Virtual Walk in May to honor those who have died by suicide and to support their family and friends (we will send out more info about the Walk at a later date).

Some of our 2020/2021 goals have been put on hold for a while (visiting Mental Health Crisis Centers called, “Living Rooms” to give us a better idea of how a “Living Room” would benefit Montgomery County”, mental health training programs for our community, etc.) but what we have found is that there are other ways to live out our mission. And, we will continue to pray for wisdom about how some of COM’s goals can be accomplished even if social distancing continues throughout the summer.

Which gets me (finally!) to the main topic of this newsletter:

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You may not be able to participate as much as you would like in helping people with mental health conditions and substance use disorders. But here are some things you can do right now despite COVID 19 restrictions:

- Form relationships with and value people with mental health conditions and substance use disorders who are working hard every day to stay in recovery and maintain their wellness.
- Educate yourself about mental health conditions and substance use disorders. Two good websites are www.Nami.org (sign up to be #Stigma Free) and www.Samsha.gov.
- Stop the Stigma by being an advocate of compassion and understanding. When others are saying things like, “He’s nuts”, “That girl is just plain crazy”, or “They are drug addicts”, you can retort, “He has a mental health condition”, she has bipolar disorder”, or “They have a substance use disorder”. Then ask them if they would like to learn more about mental health and refer them to the above-mentioned websites.
- Tell your story of recovery and wellness to anyone who will listen. Be brave and put an article in the paper.
- Let your legislators know about the need for more mental health funding and to include the funding in the COVID 19 Relief Packages. You can email Rep. Avery Bourne at Bourne@ilhousegop.org, or call her at 217-324-5200, email Congressman Rodney Davis at www.rodneydavis.house.gov or call him at 217-791-6224, and email Senator Tammy Duckworth at www.duckworth.senate.gov or call her at 217-528-6124.
- Participate in any local training or fundraisers that COM and other organizations offer.

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- Have these numbers in your phone: Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255) or text HOME to 741-741, NAMI Helpline (800-950-NAMI), Illinois Warmline (866-359-7953), and Montgomery County Crisis Line 888-324-5052.
- Pray for the Lord to be the Provider and Leader of any and all services that Montgomery County now offers and will offer to people with mental illnesses.

You may have other ideas or suggestions and COM would love to hear them. You can go to our website at crossoverncfp.com and leave your comments or you can text Linda Liebscher at 618.210.0313. We thank you in advance for caring.

Lastly, our prayer for you is simple but heartfelt:

BE WELL STAY WELL LIVE WELL,

In Him and For Him,
Your COM Team