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Christine Mallory, Editor

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Mental Health Awareness Growing in Lake County

By Kitty Mayo

The Lake County board of commissioners declared May Mental Health Awareness Month to emphasize the importance of mental health and the enormous effect it has on entire families and communities.

The proclamation points out that our mental health is part of our overall health, and impacts each individual's capacity to adapt to change or handle adversity, as well as affecting relationships and productivity.

Despite symptoms of mental health problems being frequently overlooked, the county proposes increased efforts to identify and treat such health issues more rapidly to aid in recovery. The issue of stigma is also covered in the proclamation, pointing out that the stigmatization of mental illness has all too often created a barrier of silence that gets in the way of appropriate help

The organization Northland Healthy Minds is named in the proclamation as a group working on public education and community activities to meet those same ends. Northland Healthy Minds

is a collaboration of a number of groups in northeast Minnesota and Douglas County, Wisconsin.

One of the most compelling features of the Northland Healthy Minds website is a comprehensive calendar of mental health related events in the area. The calendar for May 2019 runs the wide gamut from training and classes held around Duluth for issues from mental illness, to a free community movie about the ripple effect of suicide, to the art exhibit at Zeitgeist featuring Barb Kellogg's "What Mental Health Feels Like", and free family support groups held by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) in Douglas County.

Another local group meets monthly to discuss similar issues, the Lake County Mental Health Task Force is made up of county representatives and mental health professionals from the community, as well as community members.

Kim Graden from the Human Development Center in Two Harbors is part of the task force, and is also the coordinator for the

Waterfront Center.

Run by HDC staff, the Waterfront Center is a drop-in center with the mission of providing a welcoming space for people experiencing mental illness to gather and socialize. Supported by the county in various iterations in past years, the center has undergone some remodeling and programming is now run by HDC.

"I think the most important thing for people to know is what the Waterfront Center is all about, a lot of people don't know the purpose or what we do here," said Graden, "A lot of good things come out of the center."

The center is open from 1:00 to 4:00 pm Monday through Friday, with two outside activities a month. Sometimes consumers go to a movie in Duluth, hike at Gooseberry, or stroll through Canal Park. In-house activities include lunch on the last Thursday of every month (also open to the public), Bingo every Friday at 2:00 pm, and a variety of other planned activities. Organized crafts, or drop-in for coffee, or

snacks are also ongoing, and a Family-Fun group is held from 10:00 am to noon on Fridays.

Graden says that she welcomes community involvement at the center, and encourages all community members to stop in and say hello, or talk to her about a way they could get involved.

"Anybody can come in, I feel like mental health has an affect on all of us in some way, whether that is the grief over losing a loved one to issues like schizophrenia and depression. Some people come down and help out or socialize, and that can be a really important part of feeling better," Graden said.

A list of mental health services is available through the Lake County Directory of Services at: http://www.co.lake.mn.us/document_center/HHS_Doc_Center/Directory%20of%20Services.pdf. The website for Northland Healthy Minds can be found at: <https://www.northlandhealthyminds.org/>

Tree Steward Program in Silver Bay

By Kitty Mayo

A cleaner watershed and a nicer looking entry to the city of Silver Bay are two goals being met by the same means: tree planting.

In a collaborative effort that rolls several needs together, the city will be hosting a Tree Steward training program this month to prepare for the planting of trees along Outer Drive.

Valerie McClanahan with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources says that the project is turning out to be a great way to work with the city to engage citizens in community forestry while addressing an area that sees significant stormwater runoff into Lake Superior.

"As soon as the trees are planted they have an impact by slowing down the runoff, with the result of less sediment from erosion and salt going into the lake," said McClanahan.

As the trees mature they will have an even greater effect of slowing rain water so that more of it is absorbed into the soil, rather than bringing pollutants into the watershed.

Step one of the program is to

train any interested community members in appropriate care and management of the trees to be planted. Called the Tree Steward program, participants will attend two free classes that teach them how to plant the incoming trees so that they can lead other groups of volunteers in that process.

"They'll be learning best practices for planting trees based on new research, and we'll cover some myths like planting deeper is not better. Root systems need to keep closer to the surface because that's where their resources are," said McClanahan.

Pruning and ongoing maintenance will also be covered in the training. While pruning will not happen for a year or two, McClanahan says that early pruning will help set up a good structure for the future.

"The chemical that creates leaves is in the tree roots, and that chemical that creates roots is in the leaves. They are a perfectly balanced, amazing creation," said McClanahan.

The MnDNR is also doing a similar program in Grand Marais, Hermantown, and Duluth.

The project will consist of a variety of tree plantings on the cliffside of Outer Drive as it enters town. One-hundred and forty trees will be planted along Outer Drive, and an additional 60 trees will be planted along boulevards throughout the city.

"The grant gave us the chance to devise a plan that met a number of needs, from handling stormwater runoff, to beautification that will create a gateway effect into the city," said Fralich.

Another aspect being rolled into the same project will be adding wayfinding signs, an idea that came from previous community planning meetings. Decorative lighting will also be installed along Outer Drive on the opposite side of the street.

"When the DNR approached us, we saw this as a way to combine all these things into one big project," Fralich said.

DNR's forestry fund will be covering the educational component for caring for and maintaining the plantings, and the training will be provided by the University of Minnesota.

"We need volunteers to be tree stewards, people who will be trained to be our eyes and contact us if a tree looks off," said Fralich.

The choice of trees, when they are mature, are intended to be a mixture that is at its best in each season. Flowering trees in the Spring, Fall foliage, and evergreens during the Winter will keep and create continuity throughout the year.

Two meetings are scheduled to train Tree Stewards, with attendance at both required for the volunteer position. They will be held at Silver Bay Reunion Hall (Outer Drive) on Tuesday, May 14th and Thursday, May 16th, from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm each day.

The actual planting days are yet to be determined and all community members are encouraged to attend. Please contact the Silver Bay city hall if you will be available for planting for planning purposes (218) 226-4408. It is possible to attend the Tree Steward training without making a commitment to maintaining the trees to be planted, as well.

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